

## Final Assignment details:

**Word Count:** Between 2,000 and 2,500 words (**no more, no less**)

### Note:

After emailing your assignment **DO NOT REMOVE IT** from your hard drive until after having received your final mark. Make sure you have a copy, perhaps on a USB.

**Only send one document.** All info (story and sources) have to be in same file.

### Assignment requirements:

- A minimum of 5 original interviews.
- You are greatly encouraged to do **MORE** than 5.
- Your primary interview (s) could be in person. But this year can be by phone.
- Be aware that you might need to interview the primary person (and maybe some others) more than once.
- At least 3 of the other interviews must be in person or by phone.
- Email interviews are accepted as long as you meet the other interview requirements (**a minimum of 4 are NOT done by email**).
- Contact info (phone and email) must be included for all interviewees at end of assignment. They do not make up part of the word count.
- Include people you tried to interview but who declined or were unavailable.
- You must have a minimum of one scene in your article. If you don't do any in-person interviews, **you will need to reconstruct at least one scene.**
- A good idea, but not imperative, is to start the article with a scene (either witnessed by you or reconstructed). You can have more than one.
- Follow the CP style guide.
- Include your research information at the end of the article.
- It does not make up part of the word count.
- Include a word count.
- Have a tight, **catchy title.**
- **Indicate target publication.**
- No footnotes.
- You can provide Internet links (but they can't be used to explain your story).

- Sidebars are acceptable but not necessary; they are part of the word count. Make them tight. Give them a headline. Bullet points or other such formats are OK for a sidebar.
- Make sure the file has your name on it.
- For the **first draft only** you can use "TK," which means a certain detail will be forthcoming in the final draft. For example, "In TK, the company published a report..." The TK subs for the actual year, which you have yet to determine.

Lights in Dark Blue Waters, 2475 words

Target publication: DIVER Magazine

Just 27 km away from Whitefish Bay, Ontario, and 162 m underwater, the *Edmund Fitzgerald* rests in two broken pieces.

Despite the sinking in 1975, signs of humanity dot the devastation. A screwdriver stabbed into the lakebed and a blanket loosely hanging from the billet deck are some of the reminders that human hands once worked there.

But there is one more sign of life left behind: the preserved corpse of one of the 29 missing crewmen, slightly floating off the bottom and wearing a cork lifejacket.

Like the bodies left behind, shipwrecks now slumber in their final resting spot — but they don't always rest in peace. With some serving as gravesites, from the *Edmund Fitzgerald*'s 29 lost to the *Titanic*'s estimated 1517 lost, is it more respectful to the deceased and their family members to restrict or continue recreational diving?

For Ric Mixer, 57, wreck diving is a question of respect and the desire to honour the memories of the shipwrecks and their victims.

“I can think of no better way than to [talk about a ship] that was long-lost and forgotten,” he says.

Shipwrecks never fail to leave Mixer in awe. The video producer and diver considers his three children to be his “proudest productions,” but his educational concerts about shipwrecks with musician Dan Hall are a close second. However, he is just as known for his documentaries and lectures.

For Mixer's library lecture circuit, he begins each presentation with a booming voice and a smile, excited to share his findings. The self-described storyteller has full control over his audiences. As he laughs or hushes, the crowd quickly follows suit.

Mixer lives any passionate wreck diver's dream: to be able to explore shipwrecks while earning a living. Charismatic and witty, he doesn't rely on old scripts and outdated information to bring in crowds. Instead, Mixer meticulously updates his information, and is sure to bring something new to each lecture.

“He's one of the lucky people that's actually been able to make a living at [wreck diving]. I think he's very outright, honest from everything that I've seen,” says Kevin Magee, a diver and co-founder of Cleveland Underwater Explorers Inc. (CLUE) “He's not a showman. He's just enthusiastic about [his work].”

Mixer is known for his 1994 dive to the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, where he provided instructions on how to record a newly found body, which was later published in his documentary *Expedition '94 to the Edmund Fitzgerald*. This decision has led to some victims' family members questioning his character and accusing him of disturbing a gravesite. However, it is Mixer's desire to find the truth that has resulted in the *Edmund Fitzgerald* controversy.

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Mixer never imagined he'd be the adventurer he is today. While growing up with 10 relatives in a family trailer, he'd often watch his friend dive at a nearby quarry in their spare time.

"I always dreamt about scuba diving," he says. To his delight, in 1991, he experienced his first dives, after the TV station WNEM sought out volunteers to film a shipwreck story.

He began a broadcasting career at 16 in Ontonagon, Michigan, where he worked at WUPY 101.1 FM. A few weeks later, he was promoted to the rock 'n' roll station WMQT Q-107, where he adopted the nickname Rockin Ric Collins.

Over time, he transitioned to reporting and producing, and is now a video producer/writer/cameraman with Airworthy Productions.

He combines his passion for diving with his experience in broadcasting, production and reporting to create captivating and educational media.

While Mixer continues with his work, some family members of the deceased insist on leaving their loved ones' gravesite alone.

Before their deaths, Cheryl Rozman, daughter of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*'s watchman Ransom Cundy, and Ruth Hudson, mother of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*'s deckhand Bruce Hudson, tirelessly worked to restrict dives to the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, and to educate others on its history.

In a 2005 interview on memorial site *S. S. EDMUND FITZGERALD ONLINE*, Rozman firmly expressed her distaste for dives to the shipwreck. When asked if individuals or organizations should be able to dive to the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, she answered:

"DEFINITELY NOT!

"There have been 5 or 6 [sic] explorations to the site; there have been enough photographs & [sic] tests done to find the cause," she said. "If the expeditions were to gather their information to come up with a cause, fine. There is no need for any additional expeditions. Let the *Fitzgerald* and her crewmen rest in peace."

Rozman's request was triggered by the *Edmund Fitzgerald's* mysterious and violent sinking on November 10, 1975, during a storm so severe that it was later classified as a hurricane on the Beaufort wind scale table.

Through various expeditions and scans, a clearer image of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* emerges.

Deep under the waves and obscured by the dark blue water, a figure looms. Through Lake Superior's swirling sediment, white upside-down lettering appears, slightly tarnished by time: *EDMUND FITZGERALD, MILWAUKEE.*

Its deep red stern, once brightly painted, is now slightly muddied. Silent evidence of mass destruction is apparent: all structures on the stern lie upside down and flattened, crushed by their own immense weight.

The 5.9-metre single fixed propeller appears just above. Once responsible for pushing the *Edmund Fitzgerald* through unpredictable weather up to 26 km/h, it now lies still. A knotted rope dangles from the propeller's shoe, swaying from the current.

The inverted 77-metre stern stands proudly, serving as a testament to its strength. Yet, it wasn't strong enough.

Where the stern's structure is suddenly torn, an angry jumble of bent and shredded steel begins. After being mysteriously and furiously ripped in half during its sinking, the freighter let loose its load of 26,116 tons of iron ore.

In a 52-metre field, the ship rests in torn and bent pieces, with 61 metres of the midsection shattered. Rising out of the clay, a two-ton hatch cover is bent nearly in half and crumpled, as if made of aluminum foil instead of steel. Each fragment, sharp and dangerous, offers a story — cold and tragic.

Directly above some shattered portholes on the bow, the painted name appears again, large and black-on-white. Cracks throughout the structures are sombre evidence of how hard the ship slammed onto the bottom.

It is a scene of devastation and tragedy so complex that something new is seemingly found on each dive and expedition.

Several of these dives were held on July 25, 1994, when the tugboat *Anglian Lady* left Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. It carried a *Delta* submersible, businessman Fred Shannon, and his carefully selected team of divers and a video production crew. Among them was Mixer.

During their scheduled dives, members of the expedition filmed and photographed the *Edmund Fitzgerald*.

“[Seeing the *Edmund Fitzgerald*] took my breath away and I was just overwhelmed and excited,” says Mixer, “because it was the largest shipwreck ever lost on the Great Lakes.” After a moment, he “sobered up” in remembrance of the crewmen. “It required that kind of respect.”

After recording hours of video and photography footage of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, their dives were complete. However, two more people wanted to see the wreck: Jack Purvis, owner of the *Anglian Lady*, and his son, Scott Purvis.

After they descended, the *Anglian Lady* received a transmission from the *Delta* indicating a new find.

A preserved corpse had been discovered, just off the *Edmund Fitzgerald*. He wore a cork lifejacket, obscured by the mud. In all the prior expeditions, no one had ever seen any human remains.

Under careful guidance by Mixer, the submersible driver recorded footage of the body.

“We had face close-ups. I saw the footage only once aboard the tugboat, and I determined, there’s no way we’re going to share that,” he says. “So we showed one picture, far away, and the sub had already gone around and there was a halo of mist around [the body]. You couldn’t tell what it was.”

Even though the body wasn’t discernable, Rozman was furious.

“I can’t believe [Fred Shannon] is doing this to us,” she told [The New York Times](#) in 1995. “That is my dad’s grave and it should be respected. You don’t go digging up graves on land here, looking at bodies, taking pictures. There’s laws against that and there should be laws protecting an underwater grave site.”

The next year, Shannon announced his intentions to publish images of the remains against the wishes of several family members.

Not all families objected. Jack Champeau, brother of third assistant engineer Oliver Champeau, said in an interview that he tolerated Shannon’s decision to publish the images, but only if the body couldn’t be identified.

“The remains should be treated reverently and with respect,” he told *The New York Times* in 1995, “but the fact is that men have died.”

Despite some family members’ anger, the documentary *Expedition '94 to the Edmund Fitzgerald* was released in 1995, with Mixer as writer, director and producer.

In the hour-long documentary, the barely discernible body is featured for only a few seconds, clouded by sediment. However, this was enough to divide the diving community and propel some victims' families to push for legislation protecting the *Edmund Fitzgerald* and its crewmen from future dives.

In July 2006, Ontarian legislators passed the Ontario Heritage Act, heavily restricting dives on the *Edmund Fitzgerald* and two other shipwrecks, including submersibles and side-scan sonar.

"The sites we have chosen for special protection are unique," Culture Minister Madeleine Meilleur said. "We want to ensure that these fragile underwater sites — all of which contain human remains — are treated with care and respect."

While publishing the footage of the body is morbid, Mixer considers the published footage to be an important part of the *Edmund Fitzgerald's* story. No distress signal had been sent, and it is unclear if the crew were aware of their fate. The lifejacket offers a clue.

"That tells an entire chapter that was not known before. So for us, absolutely part of the story," says Mixer. "It was just up to us to make it reverent."

Kevin Magee, co-founder of CLUE, doesn't blame Mixer, but considers the conflict with the relatives of the deceased to be "handled pretty poorly."

"We've got to remember that there are families out there and it could be a missing member of their family," he said.

Despite these concerns, there are other shipwrecks with published footage of bodies.

Just 300 km away from the *Edmund Fitzgerald* and 79 metres underwater, the *SS Kamloops* rests on the lakebed of Lake Superior near Isle Royale, Michigan. After sinking in 1927, all 22 people aboard died, either on the ship or from exposure on the nearby shores.

Like the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, a preserved corpse remains, this time in the engine room. Photos of the crewman can be found online through a quick Google search.

While Mixer considers the publication of images of the *Edmund Fitzgerald's* corpse to be integral to unravelling the mystery of the sinking, he feels differently about the *Kamloops's* corpse.

"[Sharing pictures of the body] really isn't part of the story," says Mixer. "The question is: [why] did [the ship sink] so fast?"

Kimberly Monk, adjunct professor of maritime archaeology and history at Trent and Brock University, agrees.

“There needs to be restrictions when [human remains on shipwrecks] are encountered,” says Monk, citing respect and ethics. “If you were to pass away and scuba divers came down to photograph your remains, would you want that? I would suspect not.”

Like Mixter, diver and public speaker Kayla Martin believes that photographing remains can offer clues — with an exception.

“I think it should only be used for the documentation of the wreck and research purposes,” she says, “so not widely available to the public.” By restricting access, there’s less of a concern for exploitation, as it is only used with strict restrictions and by experts.

Magee offers another compromise: recording only a part of the body. While he considers full photographs of the *Kamloops* and *Edmund Fitzgerald* bodies not to be part of the story, he also knows the zoomed-in pictures can help divers deeply internalize that “shipwrecks are tragedies and people do lose their lives.”

However, opinions are mixed on photographing remains. Mixter often includes his experience with the discovery of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*’s body in his presentations, but doesn’t show the footage.

Most divers follow a code of conduct: take only pictures and leave only bubbles. Although the fear of disturbing wrecks is valid, exploring them can come with benefits.

Neil Burgess, president of the Shipwreck Preservation Society of Newfoundland and Labrador Inc., considers shipwrecks to be both a way to improve the economy and to share the stories of different communities.

“Each community [in Newfoundland and Labrador] has their own shipwreck story that deeply affected the community when it happened,” he says.

Like in Newfoundland, even some of the smallest towns in Ontario benefit from shipwrecks and their stories. The 65 residents in Northern Ontario’s Rosspoint are a testament to this.

Through chartering dives to the nearby shipwreck *Gunilda*, Paul Turpin, founder of Discovery Charters, is able to attract tourism to an otherwise quiet town.

“When the divers come up, they stay in motel rooms and eat at our restaurants. Now we have five bed and breakfasts,” he says.

Shipwrecks additionally provide a unique way to learn about history — for both enthusiasts and archaeologists.

For Monk, it represents an immersive way to study and better understand marine heritage.



Warren Oliver Bush, naval officer and co-author of *Historic Shipwrecks of the Southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia*, likens wreck dives to visiting museums, and to “live history.”

However, not everyone agrees with diving on all shipwrecks, such as recent wrecks, wartime wrecks, or ones with a great loss of life.

“I can understand why many service members don’t want divers swimming through a wreck where people who wore the same uniform as them may have died,” he says. When Bush dives on wrecks where people have died, he thinks of the victims and considers the experience to be a “way to remember.”

For those who can’t dive, digital media from others is often the only way they will experience shipwrecks and recognize the value of maritime history.

Bush, Burgess and Monk each hope to continue this by offering books, shipwreck scans, or university courses.

Despite concerns of disturbing gravesites, wreck diving continues to attract divers and enthusiasts, and the benefits only attract more. With the controversy of publishing images with human remains comes Martin’s compromise of restricting access, or Magee’s compromise to show only part of the body.

As debates and discussions are underway, divers wait on decisions. To dive wrecks like the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, they wait indefinitely — to the relief of some family members and legislators, and the dismay of enthusiasts.

## Sources

[House Legislative Analysis Section, laws](#)

[Expedition '94 to the Edmund Fitzgerald, Mixer's documentary that was pulled from shelves contains body footage](#)

[Edmund Fitzgerald Memorial, info on Fitzgerald](#)

[Edmund Fitzgerald: Decades of Speculation, Fascination and Grieving, info on Fitzgerald's last journey, transmissions](#)

[When Supertime Came, christening the Fitzgerald](#)

[Why Break Champagne at a Ship Christening?, maritime superstition](#)

[8 Facts behind the Edmund Fitzgerald, info on Fitzgerald](#)

[Second Saturday - "The Edmund Fitzgerald Investigations" w/ Ric Mixer \(Jan 2018\)](#)

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[A shipwreck, a young woman and a message in a bottle, info on Kamloops](#)

[Great Lakes Shipwrecks LIVE! - Dave Trotter, contains body footage](#)

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[Shipwreck Hunter, Gerry Volgenau](#)

[Edmund Fitzgerald: Why this tragedy sticks with us after 40 years](#)

## Scene reconstruction sources

[Through the eyes of Capt. Cooper: The night the Edmund Fitzgerald went down](#)

[The Fateful Journey](#)

[44 years after sinking, last communications from Edmund Fitzgerald still haunt](#)

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[August 1994 expedition footage to Edmund Fitzgerald](#)

[Rare photos: Edmund Fitzgerald](#)

[U.S. Coast Guard report](#)

## Direct quotes

[Interview with Cheryl Rozman](#)

[Legislation](#)

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## Additional sources (second draft)

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<http://willystreetblog.com/wp/2013/11/11/requiem-for-the-big-fitz/>

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[https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Hotels-g499295-c2-Rosspoint Thunder Bay District Ontario-Hotels.html](https://www.tripadvisor.ca/Hotels-g499295-c2-Rosspoint_Thunder_Bay_District_Ontario-Hotels.html)

<https://www.lakesuperior.com/the-lake/maritime/225feature/>

#### Interviews and contact information

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Kevin Magee: diver and co-founder of CLUE: [kdiveman@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kdiveman@sbcglobal.net)

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INTERVIEW COMPLETED, FINAL RESULTS NOT USED

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David Trotter, diver and shipwreck hunter, has agreed to an interview but I was unable to contact him. [DLTrotter@msn.com](mailto:DLTrotter@msn.com)