



HEROISM IN THE ABYSS: THE VALIANT STORY OF JACK DIPERT

By Sarah Cashwell

The depths of Lake Michigan hold many secrets within its deep, cerulean waters, amongst them lay the story of a young coast guardsman who selflessly gave his life upholding the values that the United States Coast Guard strives to attain today. In Muskegon, Mich., storms can be violent, unmercifully destroying any person or vessel in its path. Today, the sun is shining down brilliantly, painting a picturesque scene across the infamous Michigan coast. To see the diamond like, glistening waters of Lake Michigan, it is hard for anyone to fathom the disaster that occurred on November 30, 1934. The storm that night was one of the worst ever recorded in Muskegon's history and would amount to a legacy of epic proportions. A frigid breeze lightly blew John Jack Dipert's chestnut brown hair as he walked into the U.S. Coast Guard Life Saving Station on Friday, November 30, 1934 to report for evening watch. After enjoying an entire day on liberty and looking forward to a championship football game the next day, the drafty watch tower did not seem to be too much of an inconvenience. John, better known as Jack, had enjoyed the Coast Guard since he had joined that preceding June. His father, William Dipert, a 27 year veteran, was also deeply affiliated in the Coast guard and was the officer-in-charge of Station Frankfort. Both men would soon make the ultimate sacrifice for their professions. One would lose his only son, the other, was destined to give his life for his fellow man, following the well-known purpose of a coast-guardsmen; "So others may live."

That night, Jack looked out into the seemingly black abyss of churning, tumultuous waves. The cold from the windy November day seemed to lurk in the watchtower with an eerie, foreboding presence. Just after 10:00 p.m. the irritating clang of the emergency alarm bell jarred Jack from his tedious watch. In that instance there was no time for thought, no patience for fear, just methodical action, which came from many hours of strenuous training for an event such as this. Jack Dipert seemed to fly down the stairs and was also met at the storage shed by four other members

(Continued on next page.)

We thank Sarah Cashwell, U.S. Coast Guard, for researching and writing this article about a Pentwater resident who gave his life in the line of duty.



Sarah Cashwell, USCG

Sarah Cashwell was born in the Philippines and enjoyed her childhood traveling to places such as Ohio, California and eventually, resided in Georgia with her father, who was in the Air Force, her mother and younger sister.

Upon graduating high school early, Sarah enlisted into the United States Coast Guard in February of 2008. "I had a desire to do something worth-

while in my life. I did not want an office job. The military life was in my blood and nothing less than an intense adventure was an option." Sarah says smiling.

Upon enlisting, Sarah was given orders to U.S Coast Guard Station Muskegon, MI. "Michigan was different than I imagined it would be. For one very cold, but along with the weather came beautiful sunsets and the challenge to live the Coast Guard life while working in Search and Rescue and Law Enforcement." Ms. Cashwell describes.

After she arrived, she learned of an inspirational story about a young coast guardsman who gave his life in the line of duty while attempting to save victims of a shipwreck along the North Muskegon breakwall. "I saw the plaque for Mr. Dipert and after I learned of his story I felt compelled and inspired to write a story about him so the public would not forget his sacrifice to society. The public must not forget the power and potential Lake Michigan possesses. Respect must be a part of interacting with this powerful Great Lake."

Sarah Cashwell still works at Station Muskegon in Search and Rescue and Maritime Law Enforcement. "I will not soon forget the story that occurred here nearly seventy-five years ago and I will be sure to follow my career with the same cause and example Jack Dipert displayed."

of the crew: Chief Boatswain John Basch, Edward Beckman, Roger Stearman and Charles Bontekoe. In the early hours of the night it seemed Poseidon had risen from Lake Michigan to challenge the crew in the most dangerous fight of their lives.

The defiant, deafening roar of Muskegon's raging storm could be heard for miles. The five men paid no attention to the imminent danger at hand as they pulled their 36-foot, forty-hp gasoline engine quickly down the iron tracks and into the channel. The 315-foot freighter had crashed into the North Break wall, endangering the lives of a 25-person crew. The Henry Cort was a familiar sight in Muskegon and frequently transported loads of ore and pig iron to a factory located in the Muskegon harbor. The Captain of this vessel, Charles V. Cox, blamed a light load and wind complications for the fatal crash while attempting to transit into Muskegon's Harbor. Regardless of reason or circumstance the five daring men set out to save the crew of the freighter that was partially in shambles. Chief Basch, who was also an officer-in-charge with twenty-five years of experience in the Great Lakes, determinedly took the steering wheel while the four other crewmembers secured themselves to the boat and braced their bodies in anticipation of what was soon to follow. The heroic men somehow expertly maneuvered their way through an arctic-like sixty mile gale out into the harbor, in which, their mission of rescue quickly transformed into one of survival. The indefinite darkness was pierced with a cry of, "Man overboard!" Incidentally, three of the five crewmembers were hurled overboard. Chief Basch maintained his meticulous, highly stressful job of navigating and driving the small vessel while Edward Beckman assisted Bontekoe and Stearman back onto the weathered deck, out of the murderously hostile seas. In a particularly violent wave, Jack Dipert, the handsome, six-foot three, popular native of Pentwater, Mich., silently disappeared as the water claimed the life of this bright, young surferman. In terror, his crew frantically searched for him before being overtaken with the present elements and capsized very close to the stern of the vessel which was stubbornly still entangled in the break wall.

The four remaining nearly frozen surfmen clung to their overturned boat as Lake Michigan roared with disappointment as they were washed onto the north shore beach of Muskegon's harbor, still clinging to their overturned vessel. The distressed crew was immediately assisted by a large crowd of spectators that had begun to accumulate hours before. Wind blurred the scene into a collage of swirling sand and water as ambulances quickly assessed the defeated crew for hypothermic complications from exposure

to cold water. No thought was given to the treacherous experience by the crew; the only concern was for their lost shipmate, who was overtaken by the churning storm and the freighter's crew, still in danger.

The Coast Guard Station located in Grand Haven and the coast guard cutter Escanaba maintained the responsibility of standing by throughout the rest of the night. Later that morning, a hazardous rescue of every crewmember aboard the Henry W. Cort was accomplished; no soul was lost of the freighter's crew. The U.S. Coast Guard Ensign of Grand Haven's large ninety-hp surfboat waved with victory as a line was cast over and the crew of the Cort followed the line, one by one, across the jagged rocks a quarter mile to safety. That fateful night many people from Muskegon, along with the Grand Haven-based Coast Guard, helped patrol shoreline, to look for the hero lost at sea. Despite numerous searches for a number of weeks, John Jack Dipert's body was never recovered from the deep, infinite water.

Nearly seventy-five years later, divers can see the scrap yard of wreckage from the Henry Cort, an eerie reminder of the power and wrath Lake Michigan has the potential to unleash. U.S. Coast Guard Station Muskegon still remains active and assists in both Search-and-Rescue and Maritime Law Enforcement cases today. Although Jack Dipert's body was never found, a plaque was created, in his honor, which is now located in his home town of Pentwater, Mich. This young man's story will never be forgotten within the U.S Coast Guard and the personnel of Station Muskegon. Through his exemplary example, we strive to follow with that same cause of heroic principle and the Guardian Ethos, so others may live.

DUES ARE DUE

Membership dues for the 2009-2010 are due September 1, 2009. If you see "09" or an earlier year following your name on the mailing label, it is time to renew your membership. The dues amounts are shown on the Membership Application form on the last page of the newsletter.

Please send your check to:

The Pentwater Historical Society
P.O. Box 54, Pentwater MI 49449.

2009 EVENTS

Pentwater Historical Society

Mark your calendar with these always informative programs and fun social gatherings.

Summer Dinner & Program, Wednesday Aug 26.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE PENTWATER HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1942

Only four members out of 14 from Pentwater's 1942 graduates are still with us today. Bruce Bates is one of them, and his story is one that I would like to share with you through this article.

The 1942 Pentwater graduating class included Bruce Bates, Arleen Bowden, Jean Corey, Charles Daggett, Alfred Fromm, Jack Gray, Hazel Hepworth, Gertrude King, Stanley Kompik,

born in Port Huron on June 28, 1924. In that same year, when Bruce was just six months old, the Bates family moved to Pentwater where his dad became a local electrician. Bruce had a brother Gerald (deceased), and two sisters, Marion and Marjorie.



Harry Raymond, Bill Ringwald, Tom Roberts, Claude Stevens and Mary Jane Van Boxel. Bruce fondly remembers these special people in his life.

So often we meet and greet people, and then share in a little conversation without realizing just how much there is to know about them. Having known Bruce Bates for a good many years, it wasn't until spending time with him in preparing for this article that I found out just how accomplished he is at living a full and productive life !!!

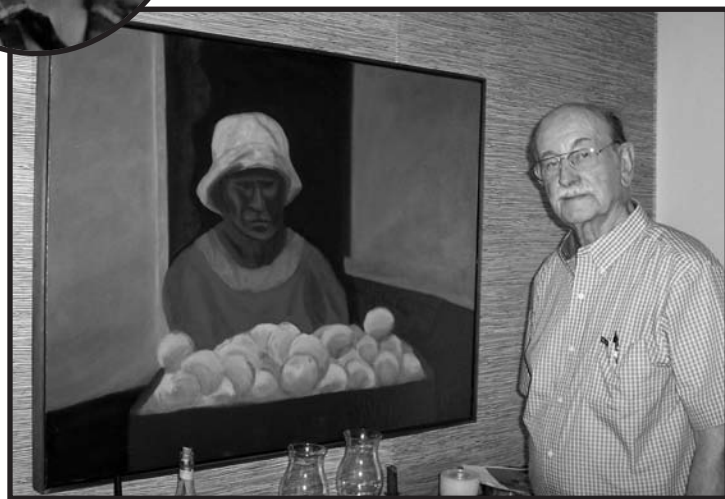
Bruce's parents were Melville A. Bates of Talbot, Indiana, and Mable M. Stanhope of Hart, Michigan. Melville came to Hart in about 1907, and Bruce was

Above Left: The 1942 Graduating Class of Pentwater High School.
Top: Graduation Photo
Right: Bruce shows one of his many paintings

Like most of the schoolboys, he was a member of the "Falcon" Basketball and Baseball teams. In December of 1942, Bruce along with five other local men joined the military. While stationed in Great Britain Bruce was a member of the 392 Bombardment Group where he worked on B 24 Bomber aircraft radios and instrument landing systems during the war. He was discharged from the U. S. Army Air Corps on October 25, 1945.

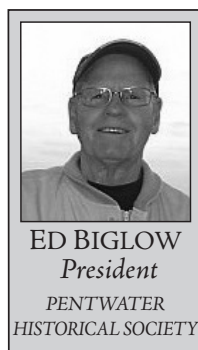
After WWII, Bruce continued his

education through the years, attending South West Photography Arts Institute in Dallas, Texas (1947-8), Arizona School of Photography in Tucson, Arizona (1951-2), Michigan State University (1962), West Shore Community College (1988-9), and then received his associate degree in Applied Arts from the Lansing Community College in 1990. The majority of his studies covered Graphic Arts, Etchings, Oil Painting and Business Management courses. Should the occasion arise to visit Bruce at his home, you will find many fine paintings, etchings, pencil drawings and photographs that



he has produced. There is also a studio for his art work and another for picture taking and film developing. The studios are where he spends many happy hours practicing his favorite hobbies.

At the Pentwater VFW, you can view photos of the post commanders along with many other pictures taken by Bruce.



ED BIGLOW
President
PENTWATER
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We have windows, floors and doors
 short doors, long doors, doors galore
 wide doors, narrow doors, doors that last
 doors of wood, doors of glass
 doors of hope, doors of sorrow
 doors that open for tomorrow
 Carpenters pride, painters delight
 beauty by day beauty at night
 fit for rich and poor as well
 strong as a mule sound as a bell
 handwork may build a solid core
 but only the heart can make a door
 Wordsworth pondered in words so fit
 that far surpass these words of wit



THE DOORS *of* PENTWATER

By: Bruce Bates

COMPOSED BY THE SEASHORE

*O sad it is, in sight of foreign shores,
 Daily to think on old familiar doors,
 Hearths loved in childhood,
 and ancestral floors;*

*Or, tossed about along a waste of foam,
 To ruminate on that delightful home*

-&-

*But to each gallant Captain and his crew
 A less imperious sympathy is due,*

*Such as my verse now yields,
 while moonbeams play*

*On the mute sea in this unruffled bay;
 Such as will promptly flow from every breast,
 Where good men, disappointed in the quest
 Of wealth and power and honours, long for rest;
 Or, having known the splendours of success,
 Sigh for the obscurities of happiness.*

Wordsworth, William. 1888.
 Complete Poetical Works. 1833.





Hear this informative presentation by Amanda Holmes about the history of Fishtown at the Pentwater Historical Society Summer Dinner!

Amanda holds a Ph.D. in Folklore and Folklife and a Certificate in Historic Preservation, both from the University of Pennsylvania. She has written numerous architectural, landscape, and engineering studies for the National Park Service, as well as published an award-winning history of Omena, Michigan.



Amanda Holmes

Amanda trained at the Salt Institute for Documentary Studies in Portland, Maine, and in addition to teaching writing at the university level, has presented living history programs about nineteenth-century farm life. She received her undergraduate degree in American Studies from Amherst College.

THE PENTWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUMMER DINNER

Wednesday, August 26, 2009

Social Hour 6:00pm (BYOB)

Swiss Steak or Chicken Dinner 6:30pm

At The Pentwater VFW Hall

This event open to the public.

Featuring:

Amanda Holmes

FISHTOWN-CREATING NEW HISTORY

Enjoy this social and educational event

ONLY \$13.00

(Must be obtained by noon, August 22)

TICKETS ON SALE AT: •Society Officers •The Pentwater Township Library •Durand's Wine Shop

Festival of Tables 2009



The Memorial Medical Center Volunteers, a volunteer group at Ludington's Memorial Medical Center, sponsored the "Festival of Tables 2009" event to raise funds

for digital mammography and the women's imaging center. This event featured uniquely themed tabletop settings created by business, clubs, local artisans and residents using personal collectibles, antiques, photos, china, linens and theme accessories. The festival took place on Sunday, June 28, 2009 at the Stearns Hotel in downtown Ludington.

The Historical Society sponsored board member Myrna Carlson's entrance to the festival. Myrna decorated a table around the theme of the Nickerson Inn featuring tableware, pictures and artifacts from the historic Nickerson Inn. Our thanks to Myrna for her hard work, her display was well received.

NEW MEMBERS

•Gladys Panis •Susan Burns •James & Ann Carlson •Edwin & Joyce Ricketson
•Patric & Marilyn Sullivan •Ann Tierney •Bill Krystiniak •Doug & Gladys Pider

NEW LIFE MEMBER

Kristie Clegg

EXISTING MEMBER TO LIFE

Cynthia Edith Wrisley-Chandra

DEATHS: Yvonne Tubich Russell Christianson

DONATIONS: Charles O. Harthy Karen Way

MEMORIALS

From: Mark Carlson, Jeff Carlson, "RE" Evans,
Tori Fitzgerald and Judy Evans

In Memory of: Russell Christianson

2007-2008 OFFICERS & TRUSTEES OF THE PENTWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Ed Bigelow
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William O'Donnell
V-President

Jim Ege
Secretary

Kenneth Lindstrom
Treasurer

TRUSTEES: Roger Bailey, Myrna Carlin and Bob Childers

MEMBERSHIP CHAIRWOMAN: Karen Way

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Sharon O'Donnell
Editor

Jim Pikaart
Layout/Design

Bruce Bates
Photo Editor

by Bob Childres

Lee had a job teaching Junior High science in Ludington for

In August of 1987, Mary Jo took it to 'show' at a quilt show held at Lakeview Elementary School in Ludington. It hung in our Pentwater School Library for several years and then came home to my house, where it was packed away. 'Unearthing' it last year, I decided that our own Pentwater Historical Society might enjoy having it for their collection. High school students, Sandy Loncar and Kevin Stevenson were my high school aides that year, along with Kris Ward, so each of those kids did blocks also. Some of the students in this class were Rebecca Ringquist, Shawn Seelhoff, Brooks Peterson, Holly Kisler, Jane Floyd, Denny Greiner, Megan Becke, and April Stone to name a few.



The Celebration Quilt for the Michigan Sesquicentennial.

USE THIS FORM TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE PENTWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HOME ADDRESS _____

SUMMER ADDRESS _____

From _____ To _____

NAME _____ NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ PHONE _____

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP: •Patron \$500* •Life \$125* •Sustaining \$40*
 •Annual \$10* •Student \$3 (* Includes Spouse)

STATUS: ☐ New
 ☐ Renewal

Would you like to be contacted to participate in society activities? If so, your area of interest is: _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO:
 The Pentwater Historical Society, P.O. Box 54, Pentwater, MI 49449

AUTHORIZED
 SIGNATURE _____



This old photo is labeled "The Francis Flying Boat, Pentwater Mich".

The arrival of any aircraft well before any airfield was nearby was a major event that brought out plenty of galkers dressed in their "Sunday Best". Suits and straw hats for the gentlemen and white dresses and parasols for the ladies.



People have come down to the South beach at Pentwater to have a close-up look at this Curtis Flying Boat.



PENTWATER
 HISTORICAL
 SOCIETY
 P. O. BOX 54,
 PENTWATER,
 MICHIGAN 49449

PENTWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUMMER DINNER AT THE VFW HALL WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, AT 6 PM