

# Depth charge

## Diving deep for icy shipwrecks

By MARIE MCGEE

It didn't take famed marine biologist Jacques Cousteau and his expeditionary crew long to learn when they were in Michigan recently what Brian Schulze has known most of his life.

And that is that the icy, clear waters of Lake Superior make it the best in the world to go diving for shipwrecks and — because it figures in the Great Lakes shipping passageway — there are plenty of them to choose from.

The part of frigid Lake Superior Schulze, a Livonia teacher, knows and loves is centered in the Isle Royale-Keeweenaw peninsula area where he has been diving for sunken ships long before the Calypso ever made its way north to the Great Lakes to make a documentary for the Canadian government.

Schulze is now a math teacher at Churchill High School after several years at Lowell Junior High. He has also taught scuba diving in the Livonia Public Schools adult education evening program.

He grew up in Crystal Falls in the Upper Peninsula, and has been diving since he was 12. After graduating from the University of Michigan, he moved to this area to begin his teaching career. But he returns to the UP every summer to dive for lost ships and to manage a five-week youth camp for Iron County for whom he also is a deputy sheriff, assigned strictly to the recovery work in drowning cases.

**SCHULZE WATCHED** the Cousteau expedition with a great deal of interest and admiration. They were diving in his backyard, but in greater depths than he could ever do because of the sophisticated equipment they had — including a minisubmarine.

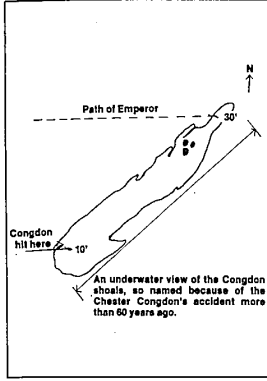
While they were in Lake Superior, the Cousteau crews in a sub were the first to view the sunken ore carrier Edmund Fitzgerald, which went down in 500 feet of water in one of the lake's infamous November storms.

Although on a smaller scale, Schulze's accomplishments have been no less dramatic. Either on his own or with friends, he has taken part in numerous "finds" of ships that sank either by going aground on some of Superior's tricky shoals, or in winter storms that make shipping on the Great Lakes a perilous venture from late October to spring.

According to marine writer/researcher Julian Wolfe, there are in excess of 900 documented ship wrecks in Lake Superior. Schulze said.

Schulze figures he's explored at least 30 of them.

**TWO THAT HE** recalls most vividly are ore carriers that Schulze has dived on. One is the 525-ft Emperor that sank in 1947 with 12 hands listed as dead. The other is the Chester Congdon, a 535-foot



Sketch shows where the two ore carriers went aground after hitting the shallow water near the Canoe Rocks.

ore carrier that went down in 1918. Both got in trouble in a shallow reef near the Canoe Rocks off Isle Royale. They foundered within three miles of each other but 29 years apart. The Emperor lies at a 35-degree angle with its bow in 60 feet of water — badly smashed by ice from winter storms — while the stern and engine room are in approximately 180 feet of water.

Besides scuba diving, Schulze has a new pastime — underwater photography.

Using a Bolex camera with a special underwater casing and auxiliary lighting, he has thousands of feet of the Emperor taken over a period of several summers with the help of some friends. One of them is Livonia firefighter Carl Furmanek, who accompanied Schulze several years ago on an underwater filming trip. He met Schulze through a night school scuba diving class at Franklin High School.

The films show the disarray of the cabins that occurred when the boat went aground, blowing a giant hole in the roof of the engine room. The stern and wheelhouse are intact, however. The galley cookstove is there along with gauges, pipes and electrical panels — their brassy-look relatively unchanged by the passage of time in all that water.

Because underwater time is limited to 15 minutes, Schulze says, it was necessary to make the descent at the deeper end of the ship rather than the shallow end which would mean swimming downward the length of the ship.

"It would have taken too much time to do it that way," Schulze said. Instead, he said he and his crew anchored — or tied onto — the Emperor's mast in 80 feet of water — and then descended through the engine room, winding down the catwalks until he reached the lower level at the 190-foot level. Water temperatures are a chilly 39 degrees.

After the allotted time is up, it's back up for 45 minutes of decompression — first at 30 feet, then 20 feet, and finally 10 feet.

On most trips, his wife Paula tends to topside duties aboard their boat outfitted with underwater scanning equipment. And that includes tending to their 3-year-old daughter Kristie, who goes along on all the trips.

"WE CAN ONLY make two dives a day so the



Churchill math teachers Ed Segowski (left) and Brian Schulze check footage of underwater film Schulze shot of the ore carrier Emperor in 180 feet of water off Isle Royale. (Staff photo by Art Emanuele)

filming goes slowly," Schulze said. He's not quite sure what he will do with the film once it is completed. "I hope to add a narrative when I get time. But after that, I'm not sure what I will do with it," he said. He's already had several requests to show the film to groups, "but I don't want to get into that just yet."

Locating the sunken ships is a thrilling enough, Schulze said, but finding them in such perfect condition is mind-boggling. Railings on the Congdon, for instance, show up in Schulze's films as a bright red with little or no water corrosion after almost 62 years in its watery grave.

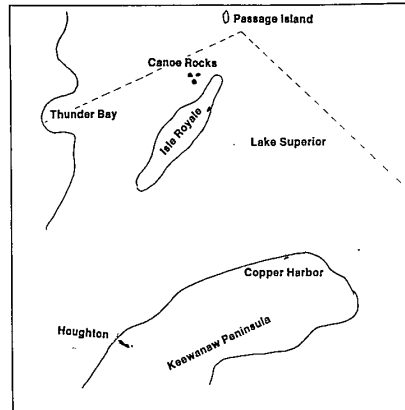
Cousteau's crew learned that fact, too, when they "discovered" the 69-year-old luxury yacht Gunilda that went down in 1911 in 260 feet of water on the Canadian side of Lake Superior. Unlike the encrusted ships they are accustomed to finding in salty sea water, Calypso crewmen marveled at the Gunilda's "perfect condition."

Cousteau's crew was not the first to find the Gunilda, however, Schulze said. "Actually, the ship was found a long time ago by divers from Minnesota."

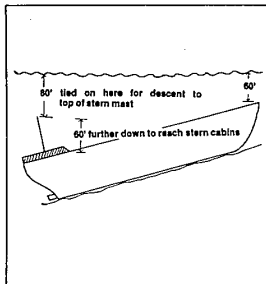
Built like a linebacker, Schulze's clear blue eyes flash as he recounts his underwater experiences. Undoubtedly, it's this spontaneous enthusiasm that continually wins him new recruits for his summer excursions.

The latest are teaching colleagues Ed Segowski and Dave Westover. Their initiation came last summer, but only after practicing scuba fundamentals all winter in the Churchill pool. Under Schulze's experienced eye, they dove down 50 feet to explore a steam-driven paddlewheel that went down in 1860.

Now they're hooked.



The dotted lines show the Great Lakes shipping lanes. Schulze confines his diving to the Isle Royale-Keeweenaw Peninsula area.



The ore carrier Emperor, owned by the Canadian Steamship Lines, lies tilted at a 35-degree angle in 180 feet of water off Isle Royale after going aground near the Canoe Rocks.



Manning the underwater camera is Livonia teacher Brian Schulze, an Upper Peninsula

native whose hobby is diving for, and filming, Lake Superior shipwrecks.



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