



Torn in Two

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Dennis Hale reached the dock just in time to see the *Daniel J. Morrell* heading out to open waters, a 600-foot freighter that had plied the waters for sixty years, carrying ore from Minnesota's Iron Range to steel firms around the Great Lakes. The twenty-six-year-old watchman had, quite literally, missed the boat—which meant scrambling to rejoin the *Morrell* at its next stop or forfeiting a good chunk of his pay package. Seventy-two hours later, Hale would find himself clinging to a life raft alongside the frozen bodies of his crewmates in the violent waves of Lake Huron. The boat would not be reported missing for another twenty-seven hours and by the time the life raft was found, Dennis Hale would remain as the sole survivor of the wreck of the *Daniel J. Morrell*.

This is life-and-death drama on the inland sea as only Michael Schumacher can tell it. In *Torn in Two* the great Lakes historian recreates the circumstances surrounding the terrible storm of November 29, 1966, that broke the mighty freighter in half, sending twenty-five of the *Morrell's* twenty-nine-man crew to their deaths and consigning the surviving four to the freezing raft where all but Hale would perish. At the heart of *Torn in Two* are the terrible hours spent by Hale on the life raft with his crewmen, clinging to life for thirty-eight hours in freezing temperatures and wearing only a peacoat, life jacket, and boxer shorts. The fight to save Hale and find the others, the Coast Guard hearings into what happened, the discovery of the wreckage—Schumacher's vivid narrative captures every harrowing detail and curious fact of the *Morrell's* demise, finally doing justice to this epic shipwreck fifty years past.

Torn in Two Details

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From Reader Review Torn in Two for online ebook

Julie says

The massive ore boats of the Great Lakes are quite a sight to behold, and I remember watching for them while vacationing on the shores of Lake Superior in Upper Peninsula Michigan. So to read about a ship being torn completely in half and killing all aboard but one was quite remarkable. It details the history of disasters on the lakes, the conditions for such a calamity, sole survivor Dennis Hale's traumatic ordeal, and the ensuing investigation. It's not a long read, but the Morrell's fate is related in great detail. The final third of the book is supplementary material including the reports by various agencies. It was a decent account of the biggest shipwreck prior to the famous Edmund Fitzgerald sinking.

I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher.

Susan Paxton says

A good book and yet I was left wanting a lot more. Schumacher has done a decent job telling the story of the *Daniel J Morrell's* final voyage, her breaking up in heavy seas in Lake Huron, and the dramatic survival of watchkeeper Dennis Hale. He also adequately covers the investigation and the Coast Guard inquest. And yet I was looking for more analysis. How common was cracking among the longer freighters that came in in the early part of the 20th Century? How did shipping companies deal with the problem? How did this sinking compare to the loss of the *Bradley* a few years earlier and the *Edmund Fitzgerald* a decade later? How did fatigue cracking contribute to those accidents, if indeed it did? And he mentions a number of improvements that the Coast Guard and the NTSB called for after the accident - and never lets us know if any of them were adopted.

A readable book overall, well told and illustrated, but it really needed to be 50 pages longer.

Denise says

This book provides the backstory to the tragic tale of "The sinking of the Daniel J. Morrell and one man's survival on the open sea." What is really sad is that some common-sense precautions would have gone a long way towards preventing this, and other shipwrecks on the great lakes.

Margaret Sankey says

While the 1975 sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald is the disaster people from outside the Midwest know, the "Witches of November" posed a serious danger to many other vessels--this is the reconstruction of the sinking of the ore ship Daniel J. Morrell on Lake Huron in 1966, and the aftermath of rescue and emergency management. There isn't really any new information here, but a more through repackaging of the Coast Guard inquiries, the two near death experience memoirs by its lone and very traumatized survivor, and engineering speculation on why the ship broke in half in the storm. The really interesting piece mentioned by not explored (and wanting further study) is the way in which communities like Port Huron reacted to these

mass casualties--the Coast Guard had plans, but the local hospitals, churches and media scrambled to bad effect, and in the aftermath provided almost no support for Dennis Hale, who was tormented by PTSD and newspaper charges that he'd huddled under dead bodies to survive until finding some catharsis fifteen years later at a Great Lakes Shipwreck Society meeting.

Curt Bozif says

I really enjoyed Schumacher's book, November's Fury, about the 1913 Great Lakes Hurricane. Torn in Two, though well researched, was not nearly as riveting. Also, found 3 really bad typos. The second half of the book is the actual Coast Guard Documents about the sinking.

Mike Savage says

Pretty good book, as someone from Lake Wobegon might say. Liked the author's authoritative voice but the prose favored sterility over drama, which seems fair I suppose. But being as the content is significantly about Hale's suffering and survival, maybe a little drama wouldn't have hurt, as someone from Lake Wobegon might say. Fair number of editorial goofs for a book from University of Minnesota Press. The title makes an apt double entendre being as the boat and Dennis Hale were both Torn in Two. The artifact itself is nicely done. Cover is dramatic enough. Plenty of good quality photos of significance to the story.

Dave Hoff says

Story of the lone survivor of the sinking of the Daniel J. Morrill, an ore carrier, the victim of the Witch of November, Nov. 29, 1966. The shunning of the local town people he and the two survivors of the Bradley, another ore carrier received. Haunted for 15 years, the survivor reluctantly attends a memorial for the Morrill and finds it cathartic. He then regains an interest in sailing and telling of his battle to live til he was rescued. Pictures and quotes by two old Coasties I am in daily contact with. .

Fishface says

This is the story of how the "witch of November" took out another cargo ship on the Great Lakes, a few years before the 'Mighty Fitz' went down in almost identical circumstances. In this case there was a single unlikely survivor and we hear his story along with that of the sister ship, the same size and design, that shipped out with this one but made it home in one piece. A scary, gripping read.
