



Boatswain Mate First Class (BM1) Edgar Culbertson, USCG

On April 30, 1967 a horrific storm passed through Duluth, Minnesota sending waves from Lake Superior over twenty feet above the walls of the "Duluth Entry" pier. Around 7:45 p.m. a witness reported to the Duluth Police Department seeing three teenage boys (brothers) at the end of this pier when one of the boys fell into the water after being struck by a huge wave. Reportedly, the other two boys were stranded at the end of the pier near a lighthouse held back by the

fierce waves, gale force winds with gusts up to 45 miles per hour and frigid 36 degree water.

The Duluth Police Department responded and found a vehicle parked in the municipal lot near the spot where the witness lost sight of the boys. After running a check on the vehicle, the Duluth officers located the owner who explained that their three teenage boys were using the vehicle but had not returned home after an evening gathering at their local church.

The Duluth Police called the U.S. Coast Guard Lifeboat Station in Duluth and requested assistance, searching for the missing boys. A crew of volunteers was mustered, led by Boatswain Mate First Class (BM1) Edgar Culbertson, to go out into the night and search for the lost boys. The crew tethered themselves together using a rope, with 25' spacing and set out searching the pier with only a hand lantern to light the way. The rope would help ensure their safety if one of the men was swept off the pier the others could pull him to safety, they thought.

The men shuffled their way out to the lighthouse without incident, but also without finding the missing boys. On their way back, Culbertson was knocked off the pier by a large wave causing him to fall below onto the rocks along the shores of the lake. Fellow coast guard member and rescuer, BM2 Richard Callahan suffered a severely broken wrist as he tried to hold on to the rope along with a third man; Coast Guard Fireman Ronald Prei. Despite their best efforts, BM1 Edgar Culbertson perished to the storm of the mighty Lake Superior. All three men were later awarded the Coast Guard Medal – the highest peace time medal awarded for heroism. At the time, this medal had only been previously awarded to 44 people. Culbertson's decoration was awarded posthumously to his parents, Mr. & Mrs. Weldon W. Culbertson. The three missing brothers also were taken by the storm and did not survive.



BM2 Richard Callahan, USCG



FN Ronald Prei, USCG