

course, where they would be protected by the highlands of the Canadian shore, across Lake Superior.

By the morning of November 10th, gale warnings had been increased to storm warnings, and by early evening the two boats were facing 25-30 foot waves, brought about by nearly 100 mile per hour winds. The *Edmund Fitzgerald* experienced difficulties throughout the day, and in a communication with Cpt. Cooper, Cpt. McSorley reported that he had "a fence rail down, two vents lost or damaged, and a list." The two captains agreed to seek protection and safety in Whitefish Bay, located just off the coast of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. At 7:10 p.m., as the ships neared Whitefish Point, Cpt. McSorley, in a conversation with Cpt. Cooper, said this of he and his crew: "We are holding our own." Approximately five minutes later, for reasons still unknown, the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, without so much as a cry for help, sank to the floor of Lake Superior. She remains there today, 535 feet below the surface of the great lake, and only 17 miles from the relative safety of Whitefish Point.

Mr. President, proper closure does not exist in a situation like that of the wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*. The event lingers on not only in the memories of the families of crew members but in the memories of all Michiganians. In recognition of the 25th Anniversary of the sinking, the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum at Whitefish Point will hold a ceremony during which the ship's original bell, recovered on July 4, 1995, will be rung 29 times for each member of her crew, and a 30th time for the many other men and women who have lost their lives on the Great Lakes. And, on November 12, 2000, for the 25th time, the Rev. Ingalls will ring the bell of the Mariners' Church of Detroit in tribute to the men of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*.

What this clearly illustrates, Mr. President, is that the spirit of these men still lives on in Michiganians, and particularly in those involved in the maritime industry. Perhaps, then, in a situation where closure is so difficult to find, recognition, at least to some degree, can be an adequate substitute. To know that the lives of these men have not been forgotten but are still cherished, lives unfortunately cut short but with spirits that remain, spirits that continue to live on in all of our lives. ●

TRIBUTE TO THE MIDGARDEN FAMILY

● Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I pay tribute today to a North Dakota family whose heritage not only spans the history of our state—and then some—but which also exemplifies the spirit of rural life and all that it contributes to our Nation.

Nils and Inger Midgarden started their family as homesteaders in North Dakota in 1874. That was 15 years be-

fore North Dakota become a state. They raised seven children, built a successful family farm, and just like thousands of other North Dakotans at that time, did the hard work that carved hardy communities and, eventually, a state from the prairie.

I have a letter I would like to share with my colleagues, written by one of Nils and Inger's great-grandchildren. It tells us a great deal about the founders of this family. It says:

Nils was a successful farmer and his sons greatly expanded the farming operation. When his children married, they built farms within sight of the homestead. Each one of those farms are today owned and occupied by the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Nils and Inger Midgarden.

Let me tell you, that's quite an accomplishment. As anyone who knows much about it will tell you, farming is hard work. When you consider that this family managed to survive everything from the Great Depression to droughts, floods and grasshoppers over the span of more than a hundred years—while raising a family that has remained across the generations a close knit one—you understand why their's is such a remarkable accomplishment.

The letter goes on:

The farm, while a potent symbol of the pioneer spirit my great-grandparents embodied, is not the greatest legacy they left behind. "Nils' and Inger's great grandchild writes. "Nearly everyone who know me and my family remarks on our closeness and old-fashioned values, characteristics fewer and fewer families seem to share these days. What Nils and Inger gave to their children—to us—was the gift of family. Through bountiful harvests and times of drought, through births, deaths, and marriages, joy and sorrow, the Midgardens have always stood together. Older cousins taught younger ones to swim, uncles pulled wayward nieces and nephews out of snowy ditches, and Sundays brought the family together in worship, meal, and play. Once during a tornado sighting, all the Midgardens in Walsh County drove out to the homestead to stand on the road, as if sheer will power and their bodies alone would protect the place Nils and Inger made home.

Today, Midgardens still live on those family farms, and while not all family members remain on the farm, those who moved away to pursue other livelihoods continue to draw on the basic strength that came from the farm: they remain a close knit family, wherever they are, wherever they go.

Those who moved away contribute to our state, regional and national life in a variety of ways. They became veterinarians, lawyers, advertising executives, architects, doctors, teachers, nurses, and even congressional staffers.

Families like the Midgardens demonstrate the importance of preserving family farmers and the rural communities they make strong. through the generations, the Midgarden family makes clear what those of us who grew up and live in rural areas know so well: family farms produce much more than the food that feeds this nation and much of the world. They also produce strong, solid families.

In closing, I ask that a tribute to the Midgarden family, written by another descendant of Nils and Inger for a family reunion earlier this year, be printed in the RECORD.

The material follows:

OUR LEGACY

The Laurel Wreath of Wheat is the symbol of two souls entwined a symbol of victory and triumph; a symbol of Inger & Nels. The Seedling in the center has seven leaves for seven living children—now gone, but very much alive in us all.

Amund, with his quiet contemplation, peace and vision; Alfred, with his forbearance and stoicism; Dewey, for his sparkle skillfully hidden behind the stolid Midgarden work ethic; Marion, for her elegance and grace; Gunder, for his mercurial spirit and sense of humor; Joann, for her boundless energy and endless creativity; and Chris—coming around the corners of life on two wheels; radiating a zest for living, affecting us all.

Inger & Nels and their seven children, eventually fourteen, as each found his or her irreplaceable mate: Bessie, Beulah, Clara, Olaf, Florence, Oscar and Evelyn, whose love and courage and enduring presence we are still blessed with on this day.

Fourteen children, seven couples, seven families forming the foundation of this Midgarden Millennium Celebration, counting over 200 family members gathered here today.

We remember the love, the closeness, the pioneer spirit, the dedication of these parents, and their embracing of not only their own—but us all.

Our memories are many and golden . . . oceans of flax fields in spring; the scent of alfalfa in early summer the heading of wheat in July; the way the grain felt on our skin when we rode in the hopper at harvest; haying time and the Tarzan ropes in Gunder's barn; burning fields in August; oiled wood floors of the Fedje store tracing aisles of supplies and stacks of wonder; the excitement of the first day of school in a one room country school house or a little brick school in Hoople.

Rows of potato sacks stretching endlessly on the autumn horizon; anticipation and humor in the air; Lena Olinger holding court in the cookk; harvest tables and blue tin mugs; excitement when it was our Mom's turn to take lunch to the fields and we could tag along.

Then mercury dipping to unbelievable lows—but our spirits high as the massive snowdrifts; Julebukken and Grandma's Christmas Eve; Uncle Oscar dancing in with potato sacks full of dime store treasures; then months of winter white only to turn once again to Spring.

Seasons of our family—seasons of our lives. Those who stayed here close to this earth, preserving the legacy of this land; and those of us who spread our wings to the four corners now span this wonderful family from coast to coast. Seeking and finding our way; sharing memories with our children and grandchildren; always knowing our roots are here in this blessed place where it all began.

Inger and Nels, their incredible children and the indelible people they found to marry . . . our parents, your grandparents and great grandparents . . . and each and every one of you share in this legacy of love and excellence.

And that is why there is a Laurel Wreath of Wheat with a Seedling in the center. It is our beginnings, our present, our future.

It is the gift that keeps on giving. ●