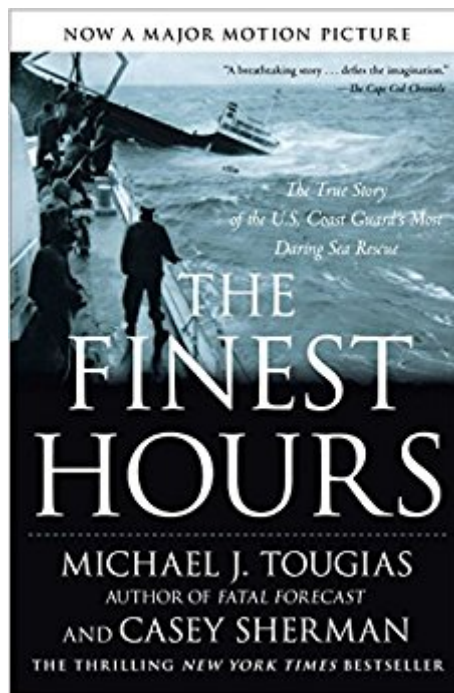




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# **The Finest Hours: The True Story Of The U.S. Coast Guard's Most Daring Sea Rescue**



## Synopsis

In the winter of 1952, New England was battered by the most brutal nor'easter in years. As the weather wreaked havoc on land, the freezing Atlantic became a wind-whipped zone of peril, setting the stage for one of the most heroic rescue stories ever lived. In the early hours of Monday, February 18, while the storm raged, two oil tankers, the Pendleton and the Fort Mercer, found themselves in the same horrifying predicament. Built with "dirty steel," and not prepared to withstand such ferocious seas, both tankers split in two, leaving the dozens of men on board utterly at the Atlantic's mercy. *The Finest Hours* is the gripping, true story of the valiant attempt to rescue the souls huddling inside the broken halves of the two ships. The spellbinding tale is overflowing with breathtaking scenes, as boats capsize, bows and sterns crash into one another, and men hurl themselves into the raging sea in their terrifying battle for survival. Not all of the eighty-four men caught at sea in the midst of that brutal storm survived, but considering the odds, it's a miracle—and a testament to their bravery—that any came home to tell their tales at all.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In a 1952 nor'easter, the distress of two ships off Cape Cod initiated a dramatic Coast Guard operation recounted here by coauthors Tougas and Sherman. Both vessels were World War II surplus, cheaply built, unwisely kept in service, and broken in two by the storm. All four halves floated, for the moment, and the authors' narrative accordingly tracks four separate search-and-rescue efforts that form the complete story. The most prominent, in the press at the time and in official honors conferred afterward, concerned one motorized lifeboat, a puny 36 feet long

and manned by four men, dispatched to do battle with the maelstrom's towering waves. This is the seascape of *The Perfect Storm*, and the authors do justice to the peril in a tight account of the action. Plotting the course of CG36500, the utilitarian name of the lifeboat captained by Bernie Webber (interviewed for this book), Tougias and Sherman reach their peak of tension in the sink-or-swim moments when mariners abandoned ship and chanced their lives on their rescuers' skill and bravery. An excellent entry in the disaster-at-sea genre. --Gilbert Taylor --This text refers to the Digital edition.

• "This book captures the wit, grit and sacrifice of Coasties and their boats." --Minneapolis Star Tribune  
• "A blockbuster account of tragedy at sea." --The Providence Journal

it would be nice had indicated that this was a version of the book made for kids. There is an adult version too (and by that I don't mean Adult version, or maybe it is, I don't know since I only got this one). but come to think of it, this is probably the one to get because soon this will be a big screen movie with really good looking people in it, and the kids version is about all you need to compare to that. BUT, having read it and gotten most of the way through before I realized it was for kids, I would still say this is an excellent kids book. would recommend at around age 11 or 12 kids might find this interesting. A good gift if you are in to giving kids books for gifts.

With "The Finest Hours" Michael J. Tougias and Casey Sherman have written one of the most compelling, captivating, and fast-paced accounts in the history of maritime drama. On February 18, 1952 off Cape Cod not one but two World War Two vintage oil tankers, the "Pendleton" and the "Fort Mercer," broke in two in a tremendous storm. Depending on which of the four sections of the ships people were on greatly influenced their ability to survive in the frigid Atlantic. While the premise sounds incredible enough, the heroic battle of the US Coast Guard to rescue survivors is an amazing testament to the skill and determination to those men. I was especially impressed with the actions in Bernie Webber's tiny and obsolete CG 36500 (fortunately now restored and on display in a museum) and the accounts of the crew's quiet heroism as related by the authors. This edition is for young readers, but is perfectly suitable for adults as well: the interview with the authors at the end clarifies what was removed from this version (largely technical information on the construction methods used in building oil tankers, etc.) As it is this version is eminently readable and thoroughly engrossing. Buy whichever version you prefer, but don't miss out on this incredible and incredibly well written tale of the sea.

My husband and I read this book together before going to see the movie that has arisen from it. The two -- book and movie -- are best when consumed as a package. The book is reasonably well organized, but is dealing with a time in which many actions are being taken at the same time. So its sequence of events is a little difficult to follow. However, having a pretty good idea of the truth helps when viewing the movie, which exaggerates the romance, but accurately dramatizes the actual rescues, which were amazing!

I am very much in the minority here, but I found this book to be more "meh" than mayhem. The actual rescue takes up about half the book. The rest is filled with one aside after another: the history of the Coast Guard; how one character met his wife; how fear raises your heart rate; a reporter driving through the blizzard to report the rescue. It all makes for a bit of a mess. There are chapters that really drag, as when the authors report on the findings of the post-rescue board of inquiry. The writing is bogged down by long sections of maritime jargon. There are continuity problems, too. On several occasions, the book mentions a nautical term, like hawser, without explaining what it is. Then later in the book, an explanation appears. Finally, the book ends on a really depressing note. The rescuers didn't really want the attention they received and in later years didn't share their exploits with their families. They just seemed to want to bury the past, but were also haunted by the experience. How unfortunate.

I loved this book but found myself wanting more. The section on the rescues themselves was well written and appeared to be well researched but I felt that the authors 'padded' the narrative for the last part of the book - including superfluous details on the history of people after the event, the public relations coup this event was for the CG, the effort to save the motor lifeboat and even a 50 year reunion of the crew and survivors. All of that material could have comprised a series of appendices; I wanted all the detail on the actual RESCUES.

I have a personal interest in *The Finest Hours* - and found it to be a true gift. Growing up I had heard a tiny bit about this unique Coast Guard rescue, but since my father never talked about it, my interest never really picqued until, as an adult, I started delving into his past. I was thrilled when I came upon two books, both written in 2010, that offered facts and stories that I might never have known without them. *The Finest Hours* is exceptional in its detail and approach to the separate simultaneous rescues of two ships' crews during a killer nor'easter on February 18 and 19, 1952 -

my father's 20th birthday. My father was one of the men that went out to the Fort Mercer. The story is still very heartwrenching for him to talk about; the loss of life is something he has never gotten over. I must say, though, that this book - and the book *Two Tankers Down* - has helped him open up to my many questions - and his memory of the details reflect perfectly the story that Mr. Tougias and Mr. Sherman tell so thoroughly. Living through it, he never really knew all of the details of the Pendleton rescue and I know that he has greatly appreciated learning the specifics from this accurate account. This book is a perfect read for anyone interested in maritime history, heroism, New England storms and of course the United States Coast Guard. I grew up very proud of that branch of the military and this book reiterates the fact that always being prepared to save lives is as honorable today as it was for those brave men battling waves, wind and weather during their ultimate challenge at sea in 1952, 59 years ago. I thank both authors for documenting this amazing story; it means the world to me, personally. It is a wonderful book.

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