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News, Entertainment, Sports, Food

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## SURFING THE GREAT LAKES

July 27, 2012 · by ErieMedia · in Lake Erie, Sports, Surfing



When Buffalo firefighter Magilla Schaus walked into my office more than 14 years ago, I didn't know a thing about surfing on the Great Lakes.

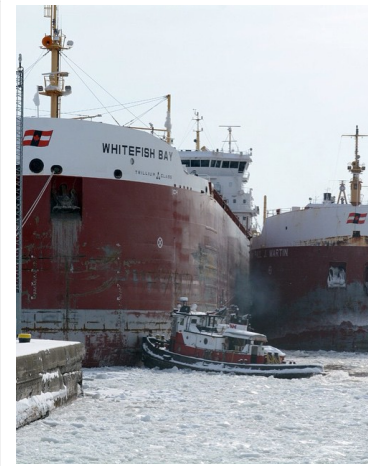
We have big waves during storms, but I never gave much thought to the possibility that people would be surfing the north shore of Lake Erie in the area I live.

Magilla, one of the nicest people I've ever dealt with, talked to me for more than an hour. We talked about the history of surfing on the

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Great Lakes and the Wyldewood Surf Club, founded some 40 years ago.

Not only did we talk surfing, but we also talked beach clean-up and keeping the lakes clean. But when we were talking about surfing on the lakes, I figured it was just the spring to fall season we were discussing.

I was wrong.

Magilla told me surfers hit the waters pretty much all year round.

As long as the lake wasn't frozen or pretty much ice-free, surfers would be out there.

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 Parliament must reject Harper's secret policeman bill [fw.to/qIGCr3N](http://fw.to/qIGCr3N)  
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**DeannaVilella** 101  
 @JobGym  
 All of our Job Gym sites are closed today. #Welland #FortErie #StCatharines due to the weather. We expect to re-open tomorrow.

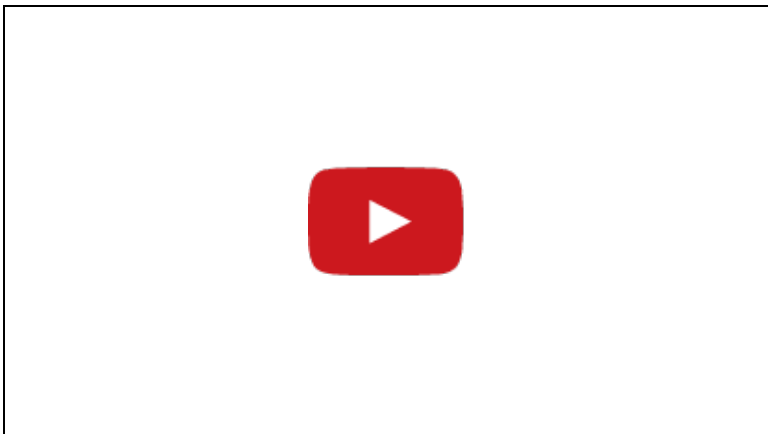
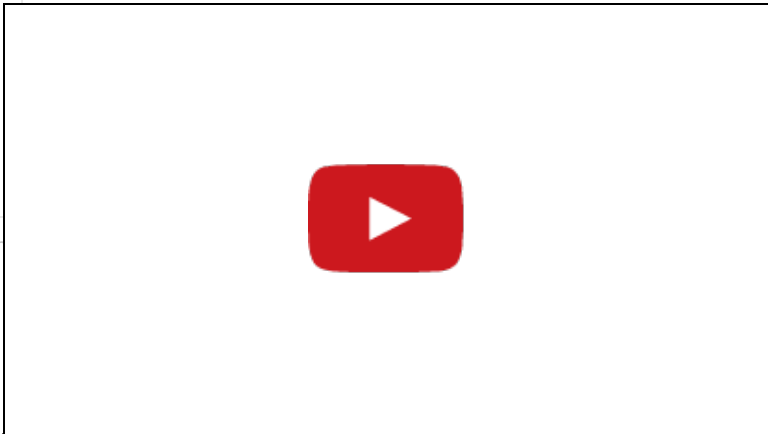
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**S. Ontario WX Alerts** 61  
 @sontario\_alerts

ALERT: WINTER STORM WARNING ENDED, Niagara Falls - Welland - Southern Niagara Region  
[goo.gl/Alhr6s](http://goo.gl/Alhr6s) #onstorm

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I hadn't heard from Magilla in a while, but one day he came to see

AMP  
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me in my office. This time, he had a present for me. It was a book by author P.L. Strazz and it was called Surfing the Great Lakes: An Insider's Guide to Monster Waves Along North America's Fresh Coast. I think the book was even signed.

I read it and inside I found photos going back decades of surfers hitting the waters of all the Great Lakes. The book, which I still have, had a lot of great stories in it, too.

Once I had that book, I started to search out surfers. I wasn't 100% sure where to go. There were some locations in the book, but others weren't listed.



One really windy fall day, I decided to head out and see if I could find surfers.

I did.

As luck would have it, I found two men, one from Burlington, Ont. and the other from St. Catharines, Ont., if I remember correctly, pulling boards off of the cars.

I followed them down to the beach, where the waves were coming in fast and heavy.

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Since it was fall and a bit cool, they were in surfing wetsuits. I was in jeans, a T-shirt and a shirt over top of that. I wish I was dressed better that day.

Unfortunately at that time I didn't have a very long lens, so to get good shots, I had to go in the water.

I was knee deep in the water, with waves breaking at my waist and above at times. It was worth, I think, because I got some decent shots as they cut through the waves. I wish I could find those photos.



Whenever the weather was bad, I'd head out and look for surfers. I didn't always find them. I didn't know how to read the wind and waves or understand what made good surfing waves. I still don't, but I'd like to think I'm slowly learning.



The last time I saw Magilla was sometime in 2002. A year later I was made an editor, I was no longer a reporter and didn't get much of a chance to go out and look for surfers.

In November 2009, the same month Magilla died from cancer, I started to seriously look for surfers and headed out any time the weather was bad.

For the past three years, I've gone out in nice warm weather and really snowy, blizzard-filled days to shoot surfers. I've frozen my face, hands, feet and loved every second of it.



These are some sites about Great Lakes surfing:

<http://www.surfontario.ca> <http://www.notlsurfclub.com/>

<http://freshcoastsurf.net> <http://www.greatlakessurfer.com>

<http://www.preconceivednoceans.com/>

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