



# imPULSE

*A Periodic Newsletter of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission* ISSUE 46 • JUNE 2016

## HERO FUND NAMES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Eric P. Zahren, recently retired Special Agent in Charge of the Pittsburgh Field Office of the U.S. Secret Service, has been elected Executive Director of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission. Already on the Commission's board, Zahren is now to assume responsibility for the Hero Fund's program and administrative functions.



*Mr. Zahren*

A native and resident of the Pittsburgh area, Zahren, 47, concluded a 25-year career with the Secret Service in May. While in charge of the Pittsburgh office over the past seven years, he oversaw all investigative, protective, recruitment, and liaison activities in 25 counties in Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Previously, he was Special Agent in Charge of the Service's International Programs Division and its Office of Government and Public Affairs, both in Washington, D.C. From 2002 to 2005, Zahren was stationed in Berlin, where he supervised protective and investigative responsibilities throughout a 15-country region, and he served Presidents William J. Clinton and George W. Bush and their families while assigned to the Presidential Protective Division.

In announcing his election, Commission Chair Mark Laskow said that Zahren "was attracted to the Hero Fund because he was attracted to the fundamental values that it celebrates. Like Andrew Carnegie and all of us, he admires the altruism, the selflessness that has motivated the Carnegie heroes over the years. We were attracted to Eric because, in our judgment, he has lived those values in his own life."

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## 'The best day of my life'

That's what Edward P. Blomquist, right, told a reporter from *The Register-Guard* of Eugene, Ore., on being reunited with the man who saved him from a burning car.

The man is **Frederick Wetzel**, 52, a general contractor from Dexter, Ore., shown here embracing Blomquist in late March, shortly after it was announced that he was to receive a Carnegie Medal for his heroic actions. The men were reunited at a construction site.

Their first meeting was on Nov. 14, 2014. Blomquist, then 77, was driving a minivan through a rural area near Cottage Grove, Ore., when the vehicle left the roadway, struck a tree, and broke into flames at its front end. Unconscious, he was slumped over the steering wheel when Wetzel drove upon the scene. Wetzel made his way to the vehicle, which was tilted toward the driver's side on an embankment, and struggled to open the driver's door. Growing flames by then had reached the dashboard.



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## BOARD NOTES

### 'SMALL' MORAL CHOICES PREPARE HEROES FOR THE BIG MORTAL ONE

By Mark Laskow, Chair  
Carnegie Hero Fund Commission



*It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so.*

—From "The Big Short"

There are a number of things about the Carnegie Hero Fund that fascinate almost everyone, especially the question of why the heroes do what they do. Is the heroic

impulse "nature" or "nurture?" If it is "nurture," what is the source? Family, religion, education, or culture?

About 15 years ago I gave a speech in which I tried to step outside the nature-vs.-nurture debate and consider another dimension of "why heroism?" Our popular culture regularly produces stories, usually movies, in which the lead character leads a hapless and carelessly selfish life. One day a great problem arises involving great harm to another person or community that can only be avoided by a great, selfless act by our character. Will he or she rise above the habit of a mediocre lifetime and meet the challenge? It makes a better movie if they do, so you know how it usually turns out there. But in real life?

I've also found some loftier support for this view in the opening of a hymn my boys sang regularly in grade school:

*Once to every man and nation, comes the  
moment to decide,  
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good  
or evil side;  
Some great cause, some great decision, offering  
each the bloom or blight,  
And the choice goes by forever, 'twixt that dark  
ness and that light.*

Young voices singing these words can bring tears to your eyes, and I do believe that grace can bring redemption to an indifferent life. But is this what caused our nearly 10,000 Carnegie Heroes to risk their lives, often when others nearby did not act?

Another theory is that many of our heroes had developed a habit, consistently if not perfectly, of making small moral choices as presented by everyday life. When a waitress leaves an extra bill in the change, they put it right back on the table. If they find a wallet, they pull their mobile phone out and begin dialing. You get the idea. They have the habit in these things of moving to action, the right action, without requiring a lot

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*Friends studying Carnegie Heroes' DNA for any suggestion of genetics influencing altruistic behavior are, from left: Drs. Andy Russell, Alexis Chaine, and Camille Bonneaud.*

## Does DNA help prompt altruistic behavior? Researchers looking to heroes for answers

Are there gene variants in humans associated with a greater probability to help others in an emergency? That is, is being a hero in our DNA?

The question intrigued three friends—Alexis Chaine, Andy Russell, and Camille Bonneaud—all biologists and colleagues with diverse backgrounds but complementary skills and common interests in studying behavior and cooperation. They had been studying animals because these sorts of things are hard to study in people.

Or so they thought. They then heard a segment on *Radiolab*, a public radio show that highlights the links between science and society. The segment featured the Hero Fund and kicked off an animated discussion among themselves. Carnegie Medal awardees, these Ph.D.'s realized, could change everything, as they have shown a willingness to jump in and help others who are in dire need. "Studying the awardees would finally allow us to understand how genes might contribute to altruistic behavior in humans and possibly other organisms too," Chaine said. Developing a research plan, the threesome managed to get funding for the study from the Laboratory of Excellence TULIP, a working group that Chaine is a part of. After a positive response from the Hero Fund, the project got underway earlier this year.

Altruism – where someone puts themselves at risk to help another – "captures our imagination in often repeated stories," Chaine said, "yet we still have a relatively poor understanding of what moves people to be altruistic. Many might think of themselves as a hero, but only a minority has done something truly heroic. Why we vary in our propensity to participate in a heroic act lies at the heart of understanding societal stability."

Recent research has shown that the environment and experience (such as training for rescue personnel) at key moments in life can influence a person's future likelihood of helping others in need, by changing levels of hormones and neurotransmitters. Many of these insights have been made possible by the participation in research studies by people like recipients of the Carnegie Medal. More recently, it has been suggested that how cooperative a person is might even have a genetic basis, meaning that people with certain genes are more likely to show a given behavior like cooperation under certain contexts.

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## Looking to heroes for answers


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“While it is abundantly clear that genes do not directly control behavior,” Chaine said, “we do know that variants of some genes are linked with differences in physiology that might make some people a little bit more likely to help in an emergency. We have been reaching out to the medal awardees to test this idea. Through this study, we hope to better understand the role that physiology and genetics may or may not play in heroic acts under specific situations. The participation of the heroes in this project is critical to the success of our research.”

Requesting participation by medal awardees in scientific research projects is not unusual. Results of three such studies have appeared recently in *imPULSE*: *Over 100 years, heroes have grown older, while other factors show little change*, by Temple University graduate student Thomas Dixon; *Heroes may act first and think later, according to Yale Study on altruism*, by Yale University professor David G. Rand; and *Exploring similarities and differences in characteristic profiles of heroes*, by Brian R. Riches, a doctoral student at Claremont (Calif.) Graduate University.

The Chaine *et al.* study, however, is unusual in its method, as participants are not being asked to be interviewed but to provide a sample of their saliva. DNA is then to be extracted and scrutinized for specific genes known from past studies to relate to cooperative behavior. Measures are being taken to ensure confidentiality of the information gathered and the anonymity of the participants. Initially about 130 of the most recent awardees of the Carnegie Medal have been asked to participate, with the researchers hoping for a target of at least 100 participants.

Chaine, Russell, and Bonneaud met at a remote field station in the French Pyrenees. All three were developing projects there, and chance would have it that they converged at that place and time despite their research activities throughout the world. Chaine grew up near San Francisco and is now a researcher at the National Scientific Research Center (CNRS) in France, with field projects in both France and California. He is particularly interested in social interactions between individuals in a variety of animals, and cooperation has always intrigued him.

Russell grew up in Scotland and has now settled down as a professor at the University of Exeter, U.K., after working at Sydney, Oxford, and Harvard. With main projects currently in France, Australia, and Finland, he is very interested in understanding to what extent the things learned from a variety of animals can be applied to humans. Bonneaud shared her time between Paris and California, and after conducting research at UCLA, Harvard, Sydney, and southern France, she is now a lecturer at the University of Exeter. Her focus is on how specific genes come about and spread through populations with her main projects in France and throughout the central U.S. 

More information on the DNA research project can be found at <https://altruismgenes.wordpress.com/>.

## ‘The best day of my life’

(continued from cover)

Although outweighed by Blomquist, Wetzel grasped him, pulled him from the car, and dragged him a short distance away. By then, he said later, he was nearly exhausted. Other motorists who stopped helped take Blomquist to safety. The minivan was destroyed in the fire.

Wetzel is one of the 24 newest awardees of the medal, whose actions are detailed on pages 10-15. The photo of Wetzel and Blomquist on the cover, by Andy Nelson, is courtesy of *The Register-Guard*.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

(continued from cover)

(See pages 4 and 5 for Zahren’s comments on his role with the Hero Fund.)

Zahren is a *summa cum laude* graduate of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, where he received a bachelor’s degree in criminology with a minor in German. International studies were done at Duisburg University, Germany, and the University of London, where he received a postgraduate diploma in laws in 2014. He is a former member of the Jefferson Awards Foundation’s advisory committee and the advisory board of Community College of Allegheny County’s Criminal Justice/Homeland Security studies program.

## BOARD NOTES

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of thought. You can’t really practice for the big heroic rescue, complete with serious risk to your life. After all, the recipients of the Carnegie Medal represent just 3/1000th of one percent of the current population, even less of the total population over the medal’s 112-year history. But all of us face many of these smaller choices in the course of our lives. I believe that if a study could be done, we would find that our Carnegie Heroes routinely get these things right, without a lot of overthinking. They are more ready than most for their big day...and how lucky for those they rescue.

Now, what about that opening quote from the 2015 film, *The Big Short*? This winter I worshiped with a group of Quakers, which we did in a borrowed Christian Science church. As I often do when visiting, I picked up a hymnal and thumbed through it to see if the locals sang my favorite hymns. (This is what passes for theology in my life!) I was startled to turn to one of my favorites and read this line:

*Oft to every man and nation, comes the moment to decide...*

“Oft!?” It was supposed to be “Once!” I was in a panic. I had so often not just quoted that line but made it the pivot point of a presentation. “Oft” implied a different point, albeit one that supported my own view. Immediately I choked on Twain’s words. I had been betrayed by what I knew for sure, but just wasn’t so.

Google saved me. It seems that Mary Baker Eddy was a careful, detail-oriented woman. Before she released traditional Christian hymns for use in her new Christian Science church, she tweaked the lyrics into compliance with her theology. She too thought it more important to emphasize life’s smaller but important challenges. That’s nice. Few of us will ever face the mortal challenges our heroes faced to win the Carnegie Medal. All of us can daily meet those smaller daily challenges presented in our lives, the very kind I think helped prepare our Carnegie Heroes for their big day.



*Mr. Campbell, holding the Coles medal*

#### **MEDAL AWARDED POSTHUMOUSLY BOUGHT AT AUCTION BY COLLECTOR**

**Ivah J. Coles** of East St. Louis, Ill., gave his life for a friend on June 8, 1904, within two months of the Hero Fund's founding in April. He was posthumously awarded a silver Carnegie Medal, which was given to his mother.

The medal surfaced this spring when it was put up for sale on eBay by a jeweler from O'Fallon, Mo., who acquired it through someone wanting to sell scrap silver. Matthew Campbell of Washington, Pa., a member of the Pennsylvania Association of Numismatists (PAN), put in the winning bid; it turns out that the Hero Fund was the only other bidder during the anonymous proceedings. The Hero Fund attempts to re-acquire medals when located on the open market, feeling that they are not to be traded like commodities but to be held by the awardees or their families for posterity, or kept in a manner befitting their dignity, such as by a museum or historical society.

Campbell had never heard of the Hero Fund, but the medal immediately piqued his interest, as he recognized its quality. An alumnus of Carnegie Mellon University, he visited the Hero Fund's offices in mid-April to learn more about the Coles case and do some research for an article he is considering for *The Clarion*, PAN's journal. "In reading Carnegie's autobiography," Campbell said, "I was taken with this line, 'The heroes of the barbarian past wounded or killed their fellows; the heroes of our civilized day serve or save theirs.' I plan on writing about the organization's mission."

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## *Commission's new Executive Director: Heroism never fades, needed now as ever*

*Concluding a 25-year career with the U.S. Secret Service, most lately as special agent in charge of the Pittsburgh field office, Eric P. Zahren was recently elected the Commission's Executive Director (see related article, cover). Here are his thoughts.*

***Q imPULSE:*** What attracted you to the Hero Fund? How did you first learn of it?

***A Mr. Zahren:*** It was at least 10 years ago that I first read of the Hero Fund in a Carnegie biography, and not more than a couple of weeks later, I saw a newspaper report on the latest Carnegie Medal awardees. I was immediately struck by the strength and simplicity of the Hero Fund's mission and by Carnegie's very personal convictions to recognize and support civilian heroism, a great idea that was strictly his own. And the Pittsburgh connection didn't hurt for a fairly well-traveled native Pittsburgher with more than a little hometown pride!

***Q*** You said you "followed my heart" in pursuing an association with the Commission. What was your heart telling you?

***A*** A career with the Secret Service is a unique and multi-faceted experience, one that I feel prepared me to go in any number of directions when it came to an end. In considering future pursuits, I couldn't shake the powerful gravitational force of the "inspirational path" represented by the Hero Fund and what it stands for, the presence of true altruism in our society in the persons of heroes

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*The Hero Fund's new Executive Director, Eric P. Zahren, seated at left, met with the staff for the first time on March 30. They are, seated to right of Zahren: Melissa A. McLaughlin, case investigator; Walter F. Rutkowski, president and secretary; and Jeffrey A. Dooley, investigations manager and network administrator. Standing, from left: Douglas R. Chambers, director of external affairs; David C. Schwab, financial manager; Gloria A. Barber, administrative assistant; Susan M. Rizza, case investigator; Jo A. Braun, awards coordinator; Julia M. Panian, case investigator and social media coordinator; and Christopher M. Foreman, case investigator. Journalistic integrity compels us to disclose that Chambers was not present at the meeting but was added to the photo anyway.*

## Commission's new Executive Director

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through their truly selfless acts. This impulse was far stronger, and carried far greater weight, than any other path that I could have considered. Also, having had the experience of collaborating with organizations such as the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Special Olympics, and the Boys & Girls Clubs, I felt profound satisfaction at giving back and making a difference for others, and it stuck as a general future objective.

### **What parts of your training and experience might dovetail with the Hero Fund's work?**

I have spent the past 25 years fundamentally as an investigator, and that is at the core of the Commission's work. The thorough manner in which the Hero Fund has investigated cases of heroism through the years is what sets it apart and establishes the unparalleled integrity of the work and the Carnegie Medal itself. In addition, I am fortunate to have served in diverse roles throughout my career, overseeing areas ranging from personnel and budget management to strategic planning and media and public affairs. These all align with the Commission's work. But more so, dealing openly and effectively with all types of people has led to past successes and I trust will serve me in moving forward.

### **Is naming heroes a quaint, or perhaps an outdated, concept? What is the purpose of it?**

Heroism is a timeless concept. This aspect of timelessness is one of the most important and compelling inherent characteristics of the Hero Fund, one worthy of our full devotion and protection. Heroism never fades, and the world needs it now as much as ever. How uplifting that it can still be found, and in such remarkable quantities. It is a most important work to recognize that fact and carry it forward.

### **Given that Mr. Carnegie's Deed of Trust, outlining our goals, was written in 1904, what 21st century realities might shape your oversight of the Hero Fund's work?**

The Hero Fund has done a tremendous job of maintaining its identity and the foundation of its practices while at the same time incorporating the right amount of modern touches. Technology, and specifically modern communication channels such as social media, is now being utilized to carry Carnegie's vision forward in a useful and efficient way. This is both consistent with and complementary of Carnegie's mandate, while still maintaining its spirit and classic form in terms of case investigation and the many meaningful personal touches that set it apart.

### **Popular culture applies the term "hero" broadly, whereas the Commission's definition is much narrower, limited to those who risk their lives saving others. That said, who were—or are—your "heroes" or role models?**

I have always been deeply impacted by those who place others before themselves. This applies to heroes in both the general sense and surely in terms of the Hero Fund's more limited definition. The words of John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, than a man lay down his life for his friends," embossed on every Carnegie Medal, are now and always have been for me very powerful. I have been fortunate to have had a front-row seat and a 360-degree view of heroism through the years, and it has had a deep and lasting impact on who I am today. I have witnessed tremendous courage and selflessness on the parts of others. In 2009, when my brother-in-law, Pittsburgh Police Officer Paul Sciallo, along with officers Stephen Mayhle and Eric Kelly, were killed in the line of duty, I experienced firsthand both the intense pain and the profound pride of a loved one's sacrifice as well as the more unexpected and almost inexplicable hope generated by the recognition and support of others. These experiences have served to intensify my conviction to honor the true heroes of civilization, those who risk all for the love of others, even strangers.

@CARNEGIE.HERO

To the best of my knowledge, the Carnegie Hero folks have never had to say, "Nope, no one worth giving hero awards to this year." –Tweet by @Lawilc01

Thought today about my great grandfather's medal and the lessons of bravery each medal teaches us. #bravery –Tweet by @ccbtcolumnbus regarding Carnegie Medal awardee #2 **Gideon K. Marshall**

Great things happen in the #TexasPanhandle –Tweet from @TXlege in response to news of Carnegie Medal awardee #9823 **Glenda Clement Beech**

It's my pleasure to welcome to @twitter none other than Andrew Carnegie. At least, @carnegie\_hero. #awesomestories" –Tweet from @bobbatzjr

Our stories live in the hearts and minds of future generations ... Thank you [to] the entire staff recognizing heroes and heroines among the nation ... This is awesome, extraordinary, outstanding, [and] sometimes beyond belief. – Facebook comment from Carnegie Medal awardee #6134 **Victor Carl Edwards**

Some people make great neighbors. This man is one of them. –Facebook comment from Peter Stipe regarding the actions of Carnegie Medal awardee #9783 **William Ayotte**, who rescued his neighbor from an attacking polar bear.

Very humbled and overwhelmed. The list of awardees is incredible. Such an honor to have our names listed with theirs. –Facebook comment from Carnegie Medal awardee #9776 **Liane Heather Wood**

It changes your life knowing you were going to give up your life for someone you don't even know. People think that all the goodness is gone in the world but they are wrong. – Facebook comment from Carnegie Medal awardee #9468 **Robin Adair Berube**

### MEDAL AWARDED POSTHUMOUSLY

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The Hero Fund provided Campbell with the details of Coles's heroic act. Coles, 21, a bricklayer, and a friend, Richard E. Crumwell, 20, a carpenter, were on a swimming outing at a reservoir in Gillespie, Ill. While attempting to climb up the steep, high bank, Crumwell fell back into the water and began to sink. From the bank, Coles waded into the water toward Crumwell but sank within eight feet of him. The men's bodies were found in water 10 to 12 feet deep; the Commission's report indicated that they were victims of cramps, caused by the chilliness of the water.





### "BOY HERO" RECALLED 100 YEARS AFTER DEATH

A century after his heroic death, **George C. Reitmeier's** story lives on at the "boy hero's" gravesite in Cumberland, Md. George was just 9 when he died Jan. 20, 1916, attempting to save a 15-year-old boy from drowning in the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in Cumberland. On the 100th anniversary of his death this year, a small group of George's extended family still living in Cumberland, including his nephew, John Reitmeier, Sr., and niece, Norma Clark, met at the gravesite with representatives of the Cumberland Historic Cemetery Organization to commemorate the heroic act.

Volunteers for the cemetery group have kept careful watch over George's grave since 1993, when the organization helped to install a ledger crypt describing his heroism at SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Cemetery. The epitaph references the posthumous awarding of the Carnegie Medal, which the Hero Fund announced nine months after George died.

George's great-nephew, John Reitmeier, Jr., of Cumberland said the cemetery group has done well to preserve the ledger crypt over the years. The original grave marker is so weathered that it's hard to make out George's name or the phrase *Our Little Hero* on a cross. "It's very important," he said. "We appreciate all their work. I know it takes money and time for them to maintain it."

George, whom the Reitmeier family still calls "Georgie," was one month shy of his 10th birthday when the accident happened. J. Louis Laber was ice skating on the canal when the ice broke and he fell into water several feet deep. George, who also was skating, went to the hole and extended a short board toward the boy, according to the Hero Fund's records. The ice under George then broke, and he also fell into the water, ultimately drowning. Others at the scene used a long iron rod to rescue Laber.

Reitmeier, Sr., lived with George's parents as

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## Carnegie Hero's actions retold in centennial of catastrophic flooding

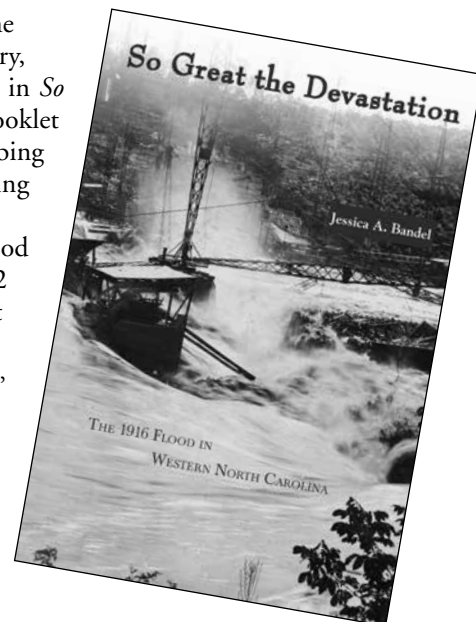
In mid-July 1916, the remnants of two hurricanes collided over western North Carolina, inundating the mountain region and the western Piedmont with historic rainfall. The result was catastrophic. Landslides wiped out whole families. Currents ripped babies from their parents' arms. Rivers washed away thousands of jobs. When the water finally receded, at least 50 lay dead, damages totaled in the millions of dollars, and a thick black sludge remained where crops once stood. One hundred years later, the storm remains one of the worst ever experienced in the Tar Heel State.

Jessica A. Bandel, a research historian with the North Carolina Office of Archives and History, summarizes the catastrophe with those words in *So Great the Devastation*, a recently published booklet that complements a centennial exhibit describing the flood and its effects. The exhibit is traveling throughout the western part of the state this year and will include a symposium on the flood in Asheville on July 16. An unprecedented 22 inches of rain fell in parts of the state on that date a century ago.

The storm revealed a "capacity for resilience," writes Michael Hill of the state's Historical Research Office in the booklet's foreword. "Perhaps most noteworthy were the efforts of neighbor to assist neighbor." One such effort led to the awarding of a Carnegie Medal, to **William P. Clark**. In Bandel's words:

"In Morganton, Joseph L. Duckworth's store sat 200 yards from the bank of the Catawba River. By Saturday night, however, the Catawba had

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*The Duckworth store (upper right) is shown half-submerged in this photo of the 1916 flooding in Morganton, N.C. This photograph and the accompanying one on page 7 were submitted by the estate of Jean Conyers Ervin and provided by Picture Burke, a digital photograph preservation project of the Burke County (N.C.) Public Library. Thanks to Laurie Johnston of the library.*

## Flood hero's actions


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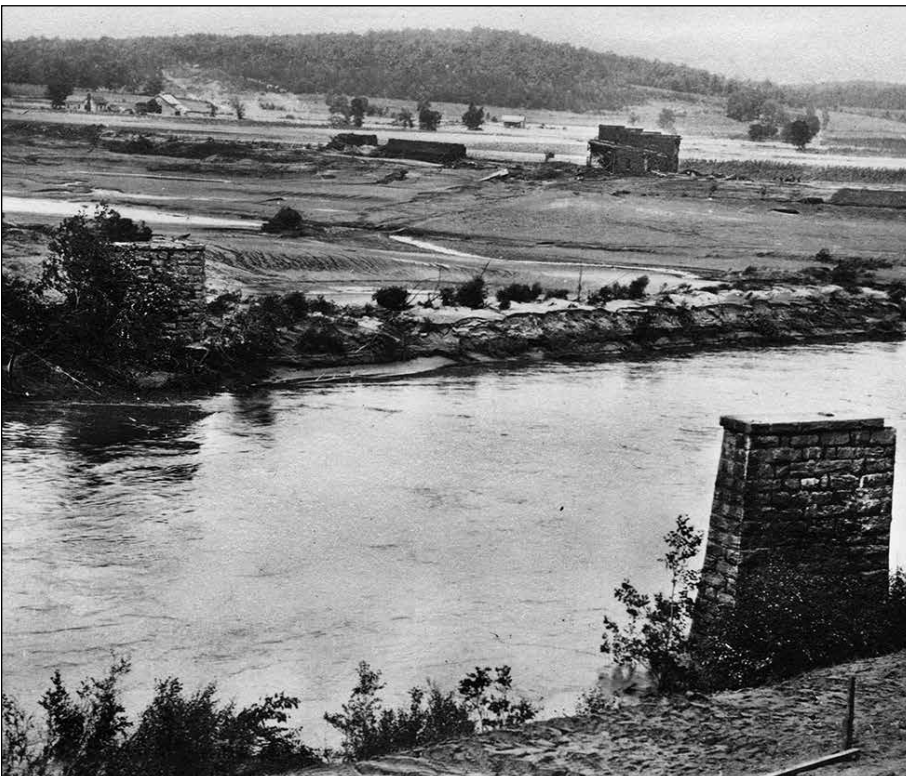
begun to creep into the building. Joseph and two of his sons worked feverishly to salvage what they could from the store. When his father and brother left for the safety of higher ground, Alphonso (Duckworth) remained behind to gather money and important records. Before he could make his escape, however, a sudden surge of water marooned him. Moving to the second floor, he fabricated a makeshift boat out of lumber, passed it through a window to the water's surface, and carefully tied it off. By morning, however, he found the boat had been swept away. The water continued to rise and poured into the second floor. Climbing to the roof, Alphonso waved frantically to the crowd gathering 800 feet away on the swollen river's edge. The onlookers quickly raised a pledge of \$1,200 for anyone who would attempt the rescue.



*William P. Clark*

"Only one man stepped forward, 25-year-old William P. Clark. The six-foot-tall, 190-pound Clark put in a half-mile upriver in a 15-foot boat around 10 a.m. The 20 m.p.h. current carried him swiftly to the store, where Duckworth climbed aboard and asked to be taken around to the porch roof so that he could climb into the second floor. Clark obliged. With the records and money in hand, Alphonso returned to the boat, and the two men made their way for shore. When the townsfolk attempted to award Clark the \$1,200 purse, he flatly and unflinchingly refused it, saying he would risk his life for his neighbor but not for a sum of money.

"Clark's selfless courage would not go unrewarded. C. E. Gregory, a pastor at a Presbyterian church in Morganton, reported Clark's heroism to the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission. Established in 1904 by American industrialist Andrew Carnegie, the fund seeks to recognize those who 'risk their lives to an extraordinary degree saving or attempting to save the lives of others.' Following a thorough investigation of the rescue, the Carnegie Hero Fund awarded Clark \$1,000 and a bronze medal. This recognition Clark humbly accepted." 



*Same view: The Duckworth store after the floodwaters receded*

## THE HERO FUND IN THE CLASSROOM

Fifth-grade teacher Reed Chambers of Colter Elementary School, Jackson, Wyo., gave a presentation of the Hero Fund to about 200 fourth-graders in mid-April.



*Student Nico Yeomans and classmates learned of the Hero Fund from teacher Reed Chambers*

The students were starting a study unit on heroes that was to culminate in a mock wax museum in the school's gymnasium. Each student was asked to choose someone in history considered to be a hero and then research that person

using digital and informational literacy skills. Chambers's presentation included an overview of the Hero Fund, a viewing of its centennial video, *Heroes Among Us*, and a grade-wide discussion of the definition of a hero.

The presentation was a success: From Ronnie Bernard, fourth-grade teacher: "Thank you for helping support the students in this unit! The presentation really helped the students to think about their definition of a hero. My class had a powerful discussion when we got back to the classroom, as well as a lot of positive feedback for you! Many of them want to read the (centennial) book!" From Lindsay Watsabaugh, another fourth-grade teacher: "My kiddos were fascinated by the stories." From Nico Yeomans, a fourth-grade student: "I learned about what heroes could be and other people's definition of a hero. I remember the story about the kid who

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*Dep. Sheriff John P. Williams, a Carnegie Medal recipient, at a school presentation in Wisconsin.*





15:13

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a teenager, and he said he remembered Laber occasionally visiting the family. "He always sent a Christmas card to my grandmother," Reitmeier, Sr., said of Laber.

At the time of the crypt dedication, Mary Lippold, the last surviving of George's three siblings, was a member of the cemetery group. Lippold, who was 7 when George became a hero, died a year after the dedication.

Since the cemetery organization began, volunteers have placed more than 800 monuments at historic and noteworthy gravesites along the East Coast, said group president Edward W. Taylor, Jr. The group's affiliation with the SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Cemetery dates back to 1983, when Taylor co-founded the self-funded organization. "As we live in this world that changes, the monuments are there to tell the great history of the nation," he said.—Chris Foreman, Case Investigator

**15:13** calls to mind those in the Hero Fund's 112-year history whose lives were sacrificed in the performance of their heroic acts. The name identifies the chapter and verse of the Gospel of John that appears on every medal: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Of the 9,845 medal awardees to date, 2,015, or 20.5% of the total, were recognized posthumously. **They are not forgotten.**

#### IN THE CLASSROOM

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went into a well when the little baby fell in, and I wondered if I would ever do something like that. If I were to be a hero one day I would have to be brave, encouraging, and trustworthy."

Meanwhile, Dep. **John P. Williams** of the La Crosse (Wis.) Sheriff's Dept., a 2012 Carnegie Medal awardee, was a career-day speaker at Bangor (Wis.) High and Middle Schools this spring. He and an associate talked about a wide range of topics, including how they picked a career in law enforcement and what the Carnegie Medal is. "It was an overall hit," Williams said, "and we were asked to come back next year."

## Account of Native Americans' heroic rescue kept alive by family, historians, researchers

Don Stoll of Good Hart, Mich., is the great-grandson of **Joseph Okenotego**, one of the first Native Americans to be awarded the Carnegie Medal, and 108 years after his great-grandfather's heroic act, the Hero Fund gave him a grave marker cast in the likeness of the medal to further commemorate his heroism. Stoll, who according to locals "lives simply and follows the old way," remains on his great-grandfather's property, on the east shore of Lake Michigan near the tip of the state's Lower Peninsula. Okenotego, who died at age 89 in 1942, is buried in nearby St. Ignatius Cemetery. Stoll is a member of the Grand Traverse Band, consisting of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians.



*Joseph Okenotego, left, known to his friends as Tagwagne, was a fisherman and farmer. He and his wife, Sarah, are pictured with six of their children.*

Initially forgotten after its occurrence on Nov. 8, 1908, the heroic rescue act was called to the Hero Fund's attention in 1910 by Father Agatho Anklin of Harbor Springs, Mich., a Catholic missionary among the Ottawa (Odawa) Indians. While researching the

incident, he was assisted by Mother Mary Drexel, who was canonized a saint in 2000. Hero Fund investigators looked into the case in 1911 and 1914, and awards were made in 1914 to both Okenotego and his co-rescuer, **Joseph Kijigobinessi**, also a Native American. Grants of \$500—the equivalent of \$12,000 today—were given to the men.

Okenotego and Kijigobinessi were named heroes for rescuing three men from their storm-tossed boat on Lake Michigan at Good Hart. Although more than 100 years have passed, the story of their heroism is kept alive by family members, local historians, and researchers. Accounts of it appear in books *The Indians of Hungry Hollow* and *The Place Where the Crooked Tree Stood*; in *Traverse, Northern Michigan's Magazine*; and of course in the files of the Hero Fund, which has retained a copy of the investigator's 1914 case report.

A forceful storm that struck the northern end of Lake Michigan in early November 1908 left William Prout, Alfred Shampine, and Amab Lavake, all fisherman, stranded in their 28-foot, gasoline-powered boat on the sixth. The men were homeward bound when their boat's engine failed in strong winds and waves from six to eight feet high. They put down an anchor but it did not hold, and at the mercy of the seas they drifted, without food, until the following afternoon. When the anchor did take hold, at a point about a half-mile from shore, the men decided to wait out the storm rather than risk going ashore amid the high breakers, even though all were "cold and faint" in the 40-degree air. They hoisted a distress flag.

On shore, Okenotego, 53, and Kijigobinessi, 37, noticed the men's plight, called for a rescue tug, and built a fire on the beach as a signal. The storm continued unabated that night, and by the next morning, hope was waning that a tug would appear. Okenotego and Kijigobinessi volunteered to take Kijigobinessi's boat into the lake and attempt a rescue. They obtained the 16-foot, flat-bottomed, wooden vessel from a point 1.5 miles away and launched it, Kijigobinessi handling the oars and Okenotego tending the rudder.

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*'Seeing them move ahead with their lives... isn't that what Carnegie is really about?'*



*Kirby Crump, with Carnegie Medal awarded last September.*

Awarded the Carnegie Medal last September for helping to save the pilot of a small crashed and burning airplane in West Jordan, Utah, on Aug. 10, 2014, **Kirby Crump** of West Jordan had this to say: "I have had the medal for about six weeks now and am past due for a thank you to the Commission. When the man I helped to save stopped in town last summer to see us, his wife came over for a hug and to tell me that they're almost 100%. I put my arms around her and whispered in her ear, 'No one gets back 100% from something like this. But 85% or 90% - I think you should take it!' She cried and smiled all at the same time.



*Mr. Crump, center, with Steven G. and Kathleen Sedlacek, victims of airplane crash. Below, firefighters extinguish the plane's wreckage.*

"At the end, isn't that what Carnegie is really all about? That kind of moment, to see how well they're moving ahead with their lives. The Commission, the City of West Jordan, the police, the executive director of a radio show...all have been pulling me from the shadows and into the light. I understand now, when I see people's reaction to the story, how it touches them. They come up to me, start talking, and tear up. The day of the rescue is still pretty tough for me, but I would like to thank everyone at Carnegie for everything they've done."



#### AT THE CORE OF HIS HEART

"Andrew Carnegie" made a guest appearance March 18 at Pittsburgh's city hall to help celebrate the city's bicentennial. Founded as British Fort Pitt in 1756, Pittsburgh was officially incorporated by the Pennsylvania State Legislature on March 18, 1816, allowing its citizens to vote locally, elect a mayor, and provide a mechanism for self-governance.

Carnegie was not born in Pittsburgh but settled in the adjoining city of Allegheny at age 12 with his parents and younger brother in 1848 on emigrating from his native Scotland. It was in Pittsburgh that he launched his business career, making a fortune in the iron and steel industries, and it was Pittsburgh that he held dear: "Pittsburg (sic) entered the core of my heart when I was a boy," he wrote in 1901, "and cannot be torn out. I can never be one hair's breadth less loyal to her, or less anxious to help her in any way, than I have been since I could help anything. My treasure is still with you, my heart is still with you. And how best to serve Pittsburg is the question which recurs to me almost every day of my life."

Carnegie remains a cultural icon in the city, which is home to four of the institutions established by him: the Hero Fund, Carnegie Mellon University, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh. Carnegie was portrayed at the Incorporation Day celebration by John Suhr, a locksmith for the city's department of public works. Photo, by Andrew Rush, is copyright© *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 2016, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.



### LATEST AWARDEES OF THE CARNEGIE MEDAL

SINCE THE LAST ISSUE OF *imPULSE*, THE FOLLOWING 24 INDIVIDUALS HAVE BEEN AWARDED THE CARNEGIE MEDAL, BRINGING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS TO 9,845 SINCE THE HERO FUND'S INCEPTION IN 1904. THE LATEST AWARDS, WHICH WERE ANNOUNCED ON MARCH 23, ARE DETAILED ON THE COMMISSION'S WEBSITE AT [WWW.CARNEGIEHERO.ORG](http://WWW.CARNEGIEHERO.ORG). THE NEXT ANNOUNCEMENT OF AWARDEES WILL BE MADE ON JUNE 30.

**Jeffery A. Houlemard**, 34, an electronics technician from Hesperia, Calif., saved a neighbor boy, Hunter M. Mastaler, 4, from an attacking dog on Feb. 8 last year. Hunter was in the backyard of his family's house when an unsecured 75-pound Belgian Malinois, a police dog, attacked him, holding him to the ground. Houlemard responded from his nearby house to the scene, where he broke down a gate to gain access to the fenced-in yard. He kicked the dog, but it did not release the boy. He then grasped the dog by the muzzle and pried open its mouth, releasing Hunter. Others took the boy to safety as Houlemard held the dog until Hunter's father responded shortly and secured it. Hunter required hospitalization for treatment of a severe injury to his leg, and Houlemard injured his shoulder during the rescue, later requiring surgery.

**Glenda Clement Beech**, 61, a homemaker from Borger, Texas, died attempting to rescue her granddaughters, Adonica J., 12, and Ameria Clement, 6, and her brother, Aubrey Clement, 69, from their burning house on Dec. 3, 2014. At night, the family members were in their one-story house after a fire broke out in a bedroom. A neighbor responded to the front door and was banging on it when Beech approached him from the rear of the



*Gary Spurling, a newspaper carrier for The Bellingham (Wash.) Herald, made his way through frigid floodwaters before dawn to rescue a coworker who was stranded in his car after it was washed from the roadway. Photo, by Philip A. Dwyer, is courtesy of The Bellingham Herald.*



*Larry "Buck" Koos is a Jackson County (Iowa) Supervisor, and it was at a supervisors' meeting at the county courthouse that he took down a disturbed gunman who shot at a county employee in attendance. Koos sustained a severe cut on his wrist in the process. "I had trouble with the hero title," Koos told a reporter. "It was pretty hard to accept that word, because I've always thought of heroes as police officers and firefighters and soldiers. I'm a farmboy." Photo, by Mary Willie, is courtesy of the Des Moines (Iowa) Register.*

structure. When she told him that the house was occupied, the neighbor kicked in the front door, which opened to the living room. Beech entered the house. The neighbor followed but retreated because of the smoke, and when he reached for Beech, she was beyond his grasp. Firefighters removed Beech, Adonica, Ameria, and Clement from the house. All had died of smoke inhalation.

**Larry J. Koos** of La Motte, Iowa, saved Debra L. Lane from assault in Maquoketa, Iowa, on Sept. 9, 2014. At a county courthouse, Lane, 52, was leaving a board of supervisors meeting when an unstable man there waved a loaded gun in the supervisors' direction and then in Lane's. Koos, 55, one of the supervisors, was among those at the meeting who addressed the assailant to de-escalate the situation. As Lane fled through a door in the rear of the room, the assailant fired a shot at her and then ran toward the door. Opting not to use a nearby side exit that opened to the safety of other offices, Koos ran across the room and grabbed the assailant. He trapped the assailant's arms against his body and forced him against the door. After they collapsed to the floor, the assailant fired again, fatally wounding himself. Koos required sutures to close a significant laceration to a wrist.

Cousins **Richard G. Williams**, an international trade specialist from Stratford, Conn., and **Anthony F. DellaMonica, Jr.**, 57, a veterinarian from

Madison, Conn., rescued Edward S. Popadic, 61, and another man from proximity to a burning boat in Long Island Sound off Milford, Conn., on June 7, 2014. Popadic and two deckhands were working on a 40-foot clam boat about a mile off shore when fire broke out in the cabin and grew quickly. All three men jumped into the water, with one of the deckhands swimming to safety. Popadic and the other deckhand struggled to stay afloat alongside the burning vessel, the fuel tanks of which contained about 500 gallons of diesel fuel. Williams and DellaMonica were in a 20-foot fishing boat nearby. Williams took his craft to within 10 feet of the burning one, and DellaMonica threw one end of a line to Popadic and the deckhand. They held to it but were drawn toward the stern of Williams's boat. Not wanting them to be injured by his boat's propeller, Williams maneuvered the boat to reposition the men, taking it even closer to the burning one, as DellaMonica guided the rescue line. Williams then backed slowly away, pulling the men to safety as small explosions on the burning boat threw debris into the water.

**John D'Alonzo**, 42, a mental health case manager from Glenolden, Pa., helped to rescue Lee D. Silverman from assault in Darby, Pa., on July 24, 2014. Silverman, 52, was in a session in his office with a male patient and the patient's caseworker. A few minutes into the session, the patient, who

*(continued on page 11)*



## LATEST AWARDEES

*(continued from page 10)*

was distressed, produced a handgun and shot the caseworker, mortally wounding her. He then turned the gun on Silverman as he crouched behind his desk. D'Alonzo was seated in the office suite's waiting room when he heard the gunfire. He climbed through the reception window and ran to Silverman's office door, finding it locked. He then heard additional gunfire, after which Silverman, wounded and bleeding, ran from his office, the assailant following. D'Alonzo grabbed the assailant and wrestled him to the floor, and another man who responded removed the gun from the assailant and secured it.

**Gary E. Richie** of Cocoa, Fla., and his son, **Jacob Daniel Richie** of Palm Bay, Fla., rescued occupants of a minivan from assault in Orlando, Fla., on Jan. 24 last year. After being involved in a minor traffic accident, one of the drivers exited her vehicle, a minivan, to confront the driver of the other vehicle, a pickup truck. The driver of the pickup leaned through his window and pointed a handgun at her. About then, a passenger in the minivan exited that vehicle, as did the passenger of the pickup, who was armed with a shotgun. Gary, 54, a distribution manager, and Jacob, 35, an electrician, were walking nearby and came upon the escalating confrontation. Seeing the pickup passenger's shotgun, Gary charged him, grasped the weapon, and wrestled it from him. When that assailant attempted to regain possession of the gun, Jacob intervened, pinning the assailant against the truck as Gary backed away with the



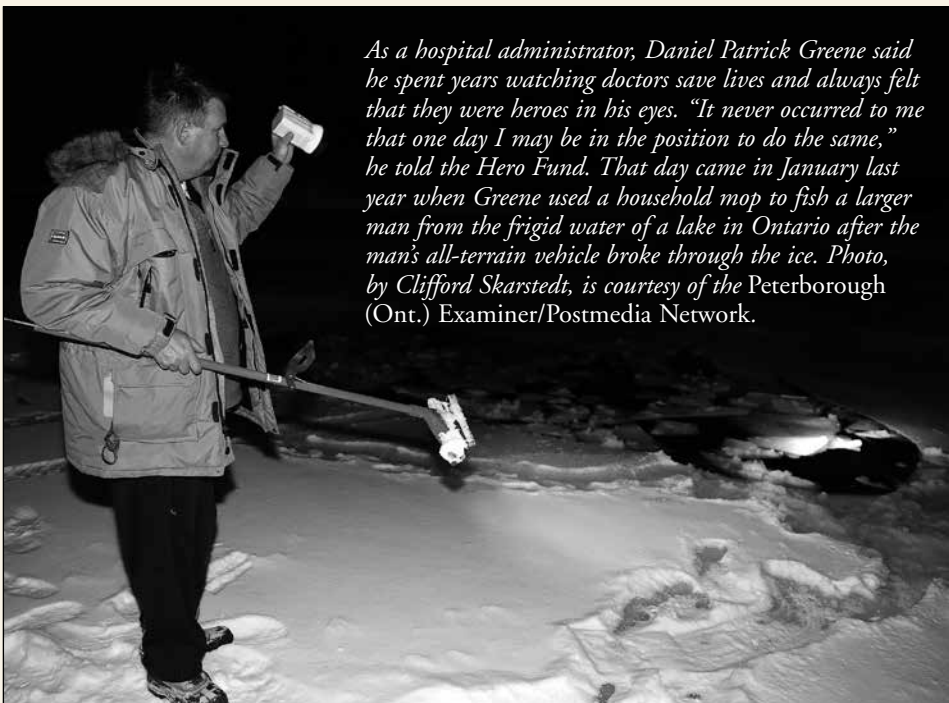
*Jack C. Rickman, Sr., of Brooklyn Park, Md., holds one of his favorite photos of his son, Christopher Mark Rickman, who died attempting to save two neighbors from a burning house last year. Looking on is Rosemary Rickman, Jack's wife of 51 years. Photo, by Brandi Bottalico, is courtesy of The Capital, Baltimore, Md.*

weapon. Meanwhile, the driver of the pickup was approaching the driver of the minivan. Jacob intervened there and then resumed controlling the other assailant. Police responded shortly and arrested the assailants.

**Adam James Tarnowski** helped to save Cameron L. Winters from his burning pickup truck after an accident in Stony Plain, Alta., on July 7, 2014. Winters, 19, was the driver of a pickup that collided with a minivan, overturned, and came to

rest upside down on the grassy berm. He remained in the driver's seat, his legs pinned in the wreckage, as fire broke out overhead in the engine area. Tarnowski, 31, a welder apprentice from Onoway, Alta., stopped at the scene, as did others. He went to the driver's side of the burning pickup and with help bent the window frame of the driver's door upward to enlarge access to Winters. He then knelt, reached into the cab, and freed Winters's legs. Withdrawing from the vehicle, Tarnowski pulled Winters from the truck shortly before flames grew to engulf it.

**Christopher Mark Rickman**, 45, of Brooklyn Park, Md., died attempting to save his neighbors Lettitia N. and Sundima G. Sinnah from their burning house on Feb. 10 last year. Lettitia, 39, and her son Sundima, 17, were in their 1.5-story house after fire broke out in a bedroom on the first floor. Lettitia escaped the house with other family members but then re-entered it for Sundima, who was in a second-floor bedroom. Rickman, a business operator who lived across the street, ran to the scene, where he learned that Lettitia and Sundima were on the second floor. Despite growing flames and dense smoke that had filled the structure, Rickman entered the house through its front door and ascended the nearby stairs to the second floor. Arriving firefighters found him and Lettitia and Sundima in the same second-floor bedroom and removed them from the house. They died of smoke inhalation.

*(continued on page 12)*

*As a hospital administrator, Daniel Patrick Greene said he spent years watching doctors save lives and always felt that they were heroes in his eyes. "It never occurred to me that one day I may be in the position to do the same," he told the Hero Fund. That day came in January last year when Greene used a household mop to fish a larger man from the frigid water of a lake in Ontario after the man's all-terrain vehicle broke through the ice. Photo, by Clifford Skarstedt, is courtesy of the Peterborough (Ont.) Examiner/Postmedia Network.*



## LATEST AWARDEES

(continued from page 11)

Mechanic **Levi Parker Teuton** of Myakka City, Fla., rescued Chicago A. Gainer from a burning pickup truck after an accident in Myakka City on April 5, 2015. Chicago, 15, was trapped in the truck's front passenger seat after the vehicle struck a tree and broke into flame at its rear end. The truck had been carrying propane tanks and gasoline containers, and both of those fuels contributed to the growth of flames on and inside the vehicle. Teuton, 35, drove upon the scene and approached the pickup's front passenger door but found it jammed shut. Despite the advancing flames, he partially entered the passenger compartment through the door's window opening, grasped Chicago, and, pulling repeatedly, freed him. He was backing through the window with Chicago when one of the propane tanks exploded, forcing both of them from the pickup to the ground. Others moved Chicago away from the vehicle. Teuton was hospitalized for treatment of third-degree burns and missed five months' work.

**John W. Gallie** of Toronto, Ont., saved Kevin and Sean Murphy and others from a burning house in Glace Bay, N.S., on May 13, 2014, and **Craig Alexander Morash** of Goodwood, N.S., helped to save Maryann Murphy. Disabled brothers Kevin, 43, and Sean, 47, were in bedrooms on the first floor of a 1.5-story house after a fire broke out in the adjoining kitchen at night. Also in the house were their sister, Maryann, 46, and her boyfriend, Morash, 43, who were on the upper floor, and Maryann's son, Gallie, 28, customer service representative, who was in the living room. Awakened to the fire, Gallie entered Kevin's



*When Adam James Tarnowski came upon an overturned and burning pickup truck, he joined others in the attempt to save its driver. With limited room in the wreckage, Tarnowski reached inside and freed the driver's legs, allowing him to be pulled from the vehicle. Tarnowski is shown with his 19-month-old daughter, Autumn.*



bedroom and carried him out the nearby front door to safety. Gallie then re-entered the house and advanced to Sean's bedroom. By then, flames in the kitchen had grown to the ceiling and were spreading along the walls. Gallie guided Sean to the bedroom doorway, but Sean fell there, and Gallie dragged him outside. He again re-entered the house and crossed the kitchen to bang on a ladder extending to the upper floor to alert Maryann and Morash. He then fled the house. Assuming that Maryann was following him, Morash descended the ladder to the main floor and went to Sean's

bedroom to check on him. Hearing Maryann screaming from the upper level, Morash returned to the ladder, having to pass through the burning kitchen, and climbed to the upper level, flames following him. Morash led Maryann to and through a small window, jumped the 10 feet to the ground, and broke Maryann's fall as she jumped, flames then issuing from the window. Gallie and Morash were hospitalized for treatment of serious smoke inhalation, and Gallie for first-degree burns on about six percent of his body.

Teacher **Brady Olson**, 43, of Lacey, Wash., saved an indeterminate number of people from assault in Lacey on April 27 last year. A 16-year-old boy took a fully loaded .357 revolver to the high school he attended and fired a shot into the ceiling of a stairway. He then descended the stairs to the school's commons area, where students and others were gathered before the start of classes. Olson was in the commons when the shot was fired and immediately ran the 50 feet to the stairs. The assailant proceeded into the commons and fired another shot, also into the ceiling. Olson approached him, grasped his gun hand, and tackled him to the floor. Pinning the assailant, Olson got possession of the revolver and removed it from him. Others who were responding secured the weapon and helped restrain the assailant until police arrived and arrested him.

Friends **Stephen Ross**, 57, a construction company (continued on page 13)



*Ronaldo Freitas and his wife were taking their son to school when they witnessed a fiery crash in Somerville, Mass. Freitas immediately responded to a burning car and removed its driver, who was unconscious and badly injured. She made a miraculous recovery, attributing it to "that first act of heroism (that) made everything else possible."*



## LATEST AWARDEES

(continued from page 12)

general manager, and **Keiren J. Tompkins**, 59, a union executive director, both of Halifax, N.S., saved Julien M. Rouleau, 21, from drowning at Uisge Ban Falls at Baddeck, N.S., on Jan. 11, 2014. While hiking, Rouleau, 21, broke through ice at the base of the iced-over falls and struggled in a pool of rushing water that was about four feet below the surface of the ice. Ross and Tompkins were hiking in the vicinity. Seeing Rouleau fall, Ross crossed the ice to the hole created by his breaking through but did not see him. Tompkins joined him, lay at the edge of the hole, and with a hiking pole prodded the water as Ross held to his legs to stabilize him. When Rouleau grabbed the pole, Tompkins pulled him against the current toward the hole and then grasped him by the arms. Joining Tompkins at the edge of the hole, Ross also grasped Rouleau, and together they pulled him up to and through the hole, others aiding in taking Rouleau to safety and warming him.

**Patrick Smith**, 44, an officer with the Ontario Provincial Police, helped to save Shane Plumb-Saumure from drowning in the Ottawa River at Pembroke, Ont., on July 13, 2013. While swimming, Shane was caught in the swift current and, stranded, held to a rock at a point about 200 feet from the bank. Just beyond him was a series of rapids that contained a trench filled with debris. Smith, of Pembroke, responded to the scene. Finding that Shane was cold and weakening, he donned a life ring with a line attached and entered the water as other officers secured the free end of



*Orlando (Fla.) Police gave good citizenship awards to Gary E. Richie, right, and his son, Jacob Daniel Richie, for intervening in a road-rage incident at night. The men were witnesses to an escalating confrontation between occupants of two vehicles that involved the threat of firearms. The Richies subdued the armed participants and held them for police.*



*Friends Keiren J. Tompkins, top left, and Stephen Ross, top right, were hiking at the base of an iced-over waterfall in Nova Scotia when they witnessed Julien M. Rouleau, top center, break through the ice and disappear into a pool of rushing water. They lay on the ice at the edge of the hole created by Rouleau's fall, reached into it, and using a hiking pole, pulled Rouleau to safety.*

the line. He swam and was carried to Shane. As the others were pulling them toward the bank, the line separated, stranding Shane again, and Smith was washed into the rapids, where he stabilized himself. Firefighters using a Zodiac boat removed Shane from the river but could not access Smith. Removed by helicopter after being in the water about 90 minutes, Smith required hospital treatment for hypothermia.

**Gary Spurling**, 40, a newspaper carrier from Bellingham, Wash., saved a coworker, Dennis K. Dupraw, 81, from drowning in floodwaters of the Nooksack River at Ferndale, Wash., on Nov. 29, 2014. At night, Dupraw became stranded in his car as he was driving through a flooded area. The car was washed off the roadway, where it lodged against a post in water about 3.5 feet deep. Spurling drove to the scene after being alerted to the accident. In darkness, he waded about 200 feet through the deepening water to the driver's side of the car, which was being flooded through the opened window of the driver's door. He pulled Dupraw through the window and, with Dupraw on his back, returned to the roadway and retraced his path toward his vehicle, an arriving police officer aiding them as they neared the water's edge. Dupraw required hospitalization for treatment of hypothermia.

**Frederick Wetzel** saved Edward P. Blomquist from his burning minivan after an accident in Cottage Grove, Ore., on Nov. 14, 2014. Blomquist, 77, was unconscious in the driver's seat of his vehicle after it left the roadway, struck a tree, and broke into flames at its front end. Wetzel, 50, a general contractor from Dexter, Ore., drove upon the scene. He approached the vehicle, which was upright on the slope of an embankment, and pulled open the driver's door, which had been jammed. Despite spreading flames, which by then reached the interior of the vehicle at its dashboard, Wetzel extended his upper body into the minivan and untangled Blomquist from his safety belt. He then grasped Blomquist and pulled him out of the vehicle. Other responding motorists helped to take him back to the roadway, flames increasing shortly to engulf and destroy the minivan.

Hospital administrator **Daniel Patrick Greene**, 54, of Uxbridge, Ont., saved Reinhold Pentzek, 54, from drowning in Buckhorn Lake at Trent Lakes, Ont., on Jan. 30 last year. Pentzek was riding an all-terrain vehicle when he broke through ice atop the lake about 100 feet from the bank. He attempted without success to climb back onto solid ice. Witnessing the accident from his cottage on that bank, Greene grabbed a household mop with a four-foot handle and immediately responded

(continued on page 14)



## LATEST AWARDEES

(continued from page 13)



Levi Parker Teuton, left, was named an honorary firefighter by the Myakka City (Fla.) Fire Department in recognition of his rescue of a teenaged boy from a burning pickup truck. He sustained third-degree burns in the rescue, during which a propane tank in the truck exploded. Presenting Teuton a certificate is Charley Matson of the fire department. Photo, by James A. Jones, Jr., is courtesy of the Bradenton (Fla.) Herald.

out onto the ice. Daylight was waning, and the air temperature was 4 degrees with a wind chill below zero. Extending the head of the mop to Pentzek, who outweighed him, Greene made repeated attempts to pull him out of the open water, on two occasions Pentzek again breaking through the ice. After successfully pulling Pentzek atop the ice, Greene left to alert help. He returned with blankets for Pentzek and waited with him until firefighters responded shortly and removed him to safety.

**Ronaldo J. Freitas**, 45, a contractor from Somerville, Mass., saved Soraya A. Alivandi, 26, from her burning car after an accident in Somerville on March 20 last year. Unconscious and badly injured, Alivandi remained in the driver's seat of her car after it was struck from behind and broke into flames at its rear end. Witnessing the crash, Freitas ran to Alivandi's car and tried to open its driver's door as flames were issuing along the driver's side. Unsuccessful, he ran to the passenger door but likewise was unable to open it. He then reached through a window, unlocked the door, and opened it. Despite flames having entered the car from the rear and spreading forward, Freitas leaned inside and unbuckled Alivandi's safety belt. Entering completely, he knelt on the front seat, grasped Alivandi, and, backing, pulled her from the car. He dragged her to safety moments before an increase of flames engulfed the vehicle.

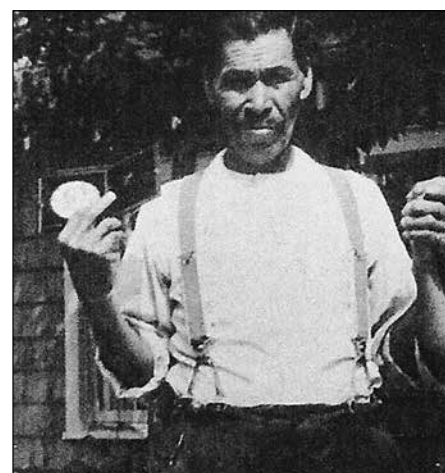
(continued on page 15)

## Native Americans' heroic rescue

(continued from page 8)



Don Stoll, left, holds the Hero Fund's grave marker, recently given to honor the rescue actions of his great-grandfather, Joseph Okenotego, shown holding his Carnegie Medal.



As the men proceeded, the boat was tossed so that it stood nearly on end, and they bailed out shipped water with a 10-quart can. Those on shore lost sight of them in the high seas, and a lone man sang a bravery song on the bluff overlooking the lake as they challenged the storm. Once Okenotego and Kijigobinessi reached the stranded vessel, Prout snagged the rescuers' boat with a pike pole, and he and his companions boarded it. The rescue boat contained considerable water and with the added weight of the men sat low. Okenotego and Kijigobinessi took the craft straight toward the beach. The first set of breakers nearly swamped it, and the second set threw it 60 feet forward, leaving it stranded about 20 feet from shore. Those on the beach ran out and pulled it in, two hours after the rescue commenced, and all five men survived. —Susan M. Rizza, Case Investigator, contributing.

## HOMETOWN'S HERO



Shown helping to install his plaque on the "Wall of Honor" at Janesville (Wis.) High School, 2008 Carnegie Medal awardee **Kermit R. Kubitz** was cited by his alma mater in April for dedicating his life to serving his country and improving the lives of others. The school has so honored 41 of its graduates since the wall was created 10 years ago. In an assembly, Kubitz, a 1964 graduate—he was the salutatorian—encouraged the high schoolers "to be empathetic and heroic in their own lives," and he paid tribute to his hometown for instilling the moral roots of his character. While in high school,

Kubitz was a member of the National Honor Society and the debate team, which won a state championship. He then earned a degree in economics from California Institute of Technology before serving during the Vietnam War, winning Bronze Stars for courage and selflessness under fire. Returning home, he earned degrees in law and business from Harvard University and made his career as an attorney. In May of 2007, Kubitz, then 60, was in a bakery in San Francisco, Calif., when he stopped a man who was attacking a teenaged girl with a knife. Kubitz himself was stabbed twice during the rescue, requiring hospitalization. *Hats off, Kit!*



## FRIENDS REMEMBERED

**Kenneth W. Daniels**, 81, of Havelock, N.C., died March 29. He and a co-rescuer were each awarded a Carnegie Medal in 1961 for saving a crewman who was trapped in a supply vessel that had overturned in the Gulf of Mexico four miles off Burrwood, La., on Aug. 14, 1960. A professional diver, Daniels entered the boat repeatedly with his co-rescuer and in complete darkness searched for the victim, who had been trapped for more than two hours. They found him in the ship's lounge, the remaining air of which contained strong diesel-fuel fumes. Daniels gave the man a mask and led him from the vessel, ending his five-hour ordeal.



*Mr. Sargent*

**Hershal B. Sargent**, 87, of Gahanna, Ohio, died Dec. 20. Sargent was one of five men who were each awarded the medal in 1967 for their heroic actions of July 3, 1966, at a sewage treatment plant in Columbus, Ohio. After a plant attendant was overcome in an eight-foot-deep pit containing sludge, a plant operator entered the oxygen-deficient pit in a rescue attempt but was also overcome. Sargent, then 38, another plant attendant, was summoned, and he too entered the pit, twice, in successful efforts to rescue the plant operator. The original victim was removed by the arriving rescue squad. Sargent was a U.S. Navy veteran, having served during World War II.

**Earl L. Zimmerman**, 87, of Williamsville, N.Y., died Feb. 26. As Zimmerman, then 23, was pulling the unconscious driver of a wrecked truck from its cab on March 15, 1951, gasoline from one of the truck's tanks, which was ruptured, ignited, followed by the exploding of a second fuel tank. Both men's clothing was ignited, but Zimmerman took the driver to the pavement, landing amid flames. He and the driver, who was reviving, then crawled away. The driver died of severe burns, and Zimmerman was hospitalized four months for treatment of burns, up to third-degree, to his hands, arms, face, and legs. He was awarded the medal by the Hero Fund in 1952 and also given the American Legion Award for Outstanding Heroism. Zimmerman served in the U.S. Marines during World War II.



*Mr. Zimmerman*

## OVERHEARD

*I looked up from the ground and saw the blue sky and said, "Thank you, God."*—**Levi Parker Teuton**, Carnegie Medal awardee #9832, who survived a propane-tank explosion while rescuing a teen from a burning pickup truck on Easter morning.

*Each of our heroes saw someone in peril and in the instant recognized that the two of them shared an equal claim on life.*—Commission Chair **Mark Laskow**, writing in a recent *imPULSE*.

*This is not the way it's supposed to go down. We're both supposed to be getting back on shore.*—**Patrick Smith**, Carnegie Medal awardee #9838, on being stranded in rapids after his life line separated while he was helping to save a swimmer.

*It wasn't until I held (the medal) and read the back that it really hit me.*—**Laurence T. Norton III**, Carnegie Medal awardee #9809, who rescued a woman from an assailant armed with a knife.

*You and your foundation are doing great things to restore people's belief in good things do happen, in a time when the national media and our political candidates are fostering an atmosphere of divisiveness and negativity, so thank you!*—Police chief responding to Hero Fund inquiry on a case under investigation.

*If we just went on with life and I saved the guy's life, that would have made me feel great in its own right.*—**Daniel Patrick Greene**, Carnegie Medal awardee #9841.

*He was there when you needed him.*—Niece of **Glenn L. Graham**, Carnegie Medal awardee #9843, who died in a house fire attempting to save his great-niece.

*You do what you're supposed to do when you're supposed to do it.*—**Kelly Winters**, Carnegie Medal nominee #87436, who rescued the driver of a burning tanker filled with gasoline.

## LATEST AWARDEES

(continued from page 14)



*Mr. Graham*

**Glenn L. Graham**, 56, of Detroit, Mich., died attempting to rescue Tanisha L. Lowe from a burning house in Detroit on April 26, 2015. Lowe, 27, was in a bedroom on the second floor of a 2.5-story house after a fire broke out at the front

of the structure at night. Her great-uncle, Graham, a customer service representative, and a young cousin were in other bedrooms on that floor. Awakening to smoke, Graham and the cousin went to the first floor, where they found flames in the living room, near the front door. After they exited the house through a side door, Graham sent the cousin to alert help and said that he was returning to aid Lowe. Graham re-entered the house as flames quickly spread, soon engulfing the structure and causing much of it to collapse. Firefighters found Lowe's and Graham's bodies in the debris.

Plumbers **Kirk P. Yankasky**, 49, and his son, **Jonathan T. Yankasky**, 22, both of Glendale, Ariz., attempted to rescue a woman and her son from an armed assailant in Scottsdale, Ariz., on Feb. 3 last year. A 5-year-old boy screamed

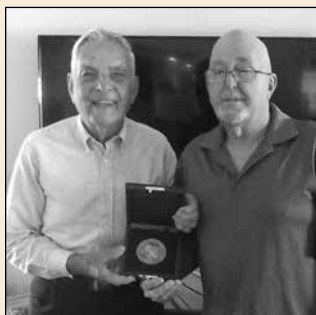


*Jonathan Yankasky*

for help as his mother, 33, struggled against an assailant, just inside the front door of their house, for control of a loaded pistol. Working across the street, Kirk and Jonathan heard him and ran to the scene. Seeing the woman and the assailant through the doorway, Kirk entered the house and joined in the struggle for the weapon as Jonathan shielded the boy just outside the house. The gun fired during the struggle, after which Kirk took possession of it. As the assailant then went deeper into the house, Kirk guided the woman outside and retreated with her, Jonathan guiding the boy toward the street. The assailant then exited the house and, threatening them with a loaded revolver, followed them across the street. There, he struck the woman on the head with the revolver, taking her to the ground. Kirk and Jonathan ran to their nearby van and started toward the scene with it for use against the assailant, but the assailant fatally wounded the woman and then himself. The boy was secured by others.



## PRESENTING



### FELLOW FLORIDIANS AND HEROES

When **Clifford A. Wright**, right, of Sarasota was announced an awardee of the Carnegie Medal in December, fellow Floridian and medal awardee **Julian W. Fant** of nearby Treasure Island volunteered his services as presenter. Wright was cited for his rescue of two occupants of a sport utility vehicle that entered a pond near his home and started to sink. Witnessing the accident, the retired electrician, then 72, swam out to the car and pulled an 82-year-old woman from it. As she swam to the bank, Wright dislodged the car's driver, 86, and towed him to safety.

Fant, who was awarded the medal in 1960 for a 1958 ocean rescue, says about 30 of Wright's family and friends were on hand for the presentation, including the woman who was rescued. "It was a rewarding afternoon for me," he said, noting that he and Wright will undoubtedly visit again.

### BOY'S RESCUER CITED

**Joel Kevin Kyle, Jr.**, shown holding his Carnegie Medal, is named after his father, leading family members to call him "Junior" to avoid confusion. Wanting any further confusion to be at a minimum but also to keep some form of the name in the family, Joel named his son Joelian. There was no confusion, however, as to which "Joel" was the center of attention at a private Hero Fund lunch in February in the family's hometown of Altoona, Pa. *Junior* was presented the medal to cite his May 4, 2014, rescue of a 23-month-old boy from a burning house in Altoona.



Kyle, then 29, was visiting on the first floor of the two-story house when fire broke out in a bedroom upstairs and filled that floor with dense smoke. (The house is pictured.) Knowing that the child was on the second floor, he ran upstairs to the boy's room, having to pass the burning one. He scooped the boy up from his crib and returned downstairs, flames by then starting to breach the burning room. Both Kyle and the boy were taken to the hospital, where Kyle was treated for smoke inhalation, the boy unharmed.

Presenting the medal from the Hero Fund were Douglas R. Chambers, director of external affairs, and Melissa A. McLaughlin, the case's investigator. Present were, from left, Celestial Mills; Joel Kyle, Sr.; Joel Kyle, Jr.; Kathie Kyle (mother); and James and Barbara Kyle (grandparents).



### NEIGHBORS TO THE RESCUE

Members of the Maquoketa (Iowa) Fire Dept., Police Dept., and Jackson County (Iowa) Sheriffs Dept.—plus family and friends—were on hand for the March 22 presentation of the Carnegie Medal to heroes **Cory Alan Simonson**, center, and **Matthew L. Tranel**, right, both of Maquoketa. The men were cited for their actions of Dec. 14, 2014, by which they rescued a wheelchair-bound man from his burning house (pictured) in Maquoketa after the Christmas tree in the living room caught fire. The medals were presented by **John P. Williams**, left, of the La Crosse (Wis.) Sheriff's Dept., himself an awardee of the medal, in 2012.

Although Tranel, then 39, is a volunteer firefighter for Maquoketa and was on his way to the fire station on being paged from his nearby home, he stopped at the scene of the fire and without benefit of equipment or backup forced entry through the house's side door. Simonson, then 29, who also lived nearby, responded and joined him, and together the men crawled through dense smoke across the kitchen to reach the victim, whose wheelchair was immobilized by a malfunction. As flames were spreading in the adjoining living room, the rescuers maneuvered the wheelchair to the side door, and the victim, who suffered smoke inhalation, was taken to safety. Photo of the house, by Brooke Taylor, is courtesy of the *Maquoketa Sentinel-Press*.





## FROM THE ARCHIVES

*Hero's legacy strong through 112 years*

By Margaretmary McCann  
and William Norbert

Our relative, **Thomas H. McCann** of South Portland, Maine, was the sixth recipient of the Carnegie Medal and the first *Mainer* to be honored. If our research is correct, the first nine awards were made on May 24, 1905, and Thomas was among them. Three silver medals and six bronze medals were awarded.

From the Hero Fund's records:

*Thomas H. McCann, 32, draw-tender, died saving Alfonso Sekosky, 8, from drowning, Portland, Maine, June 29, 1904. McCann jumped from a bridge, 25 feet high, into Portland Harbor and swam with the boy to a boat but was too fatigued to get into it himself. He was drowned.*

Thomas was employed as the draw-tender at the bridge, the old Portland-South Portland bridge, which spanned the Fore River. His widow, Cora, was awarded a bronze medal and \$600 toward her support. The medal is still in the family.

Thomas was the son of Daniel E. and Annie Flanagan McCann. As a young boy, Daniel emigrated from County Limerick to Maine with his parents around 1850, and he served in the Union Army during the Civil War. The family lived in the Knightville neighborhood of South Portland, where they raised their large brood of nine children.

In 1904, Thomas was working two jobs, first for his father's carriage-making and sign-hanging business, Daniel E. McCann and Sons, located at 37 Preble Street in Portland, and second, as the draw-tender of the Portland-South Portland bridge. Although we cannot be certain of the exact details surrounding Thomas's rescue of Alfonso that day, a likely timeline can be gleaned from news accounts of the time and from the family's oral tradition. Portland's *Eastern Argus* newspaper published a detailed story of the sad incident, and subsequent accounts were published in the *New York Times* and Chicago newspapers.

On the day of the rescue, a Wednesday, Thomas and his assistant, Michael Flannagan, were opening the draw to allow passage of a vessel when at about 10:15 a.m. the cry of "boy overboard" attracted their attention. Thomas left Flannagan, quickly removed his coat, and plunged head first into the river from the end of the partly opened bridge to rescue the young boy, who was struggling in the water. According to family tradition, Thomas failed to remove his hip-waders prior to entering the river, and this omission alone may have proved fatal, since waders fill quickly with water and become heavy weights. The exact cause of the boy falling into the water is not clear, but it appears that he may have been fishing from the bridge and distracted by the vessel passing through the open draw.

Despite the commotion, Thomas had the presence of mind prior to entering the water to direct some of the boys who were with Alfonso to get a boat and take it to him after he reached the boy. Thomas quickly reached the boy and a struggle often associated with panicked swimmers ensued. Alfonso fiercely clutched Thomas about the head and tightly locked his arms about his neck. The boy resisted all of Thomas's efforts to free himself. Consequently,

Thomas's head was beneath the surface of the water during much of the ordeal, which lasted several minutes. Thomas did make some progress toward the end of the bridge pier, but the current was too strong for him to continue.

Three of the other boys, about 12 years of age, rowed a boat to the scene and helped hoist Alfonso aboard. As Alfonso released his hold of his rescuer, Thomas apparently threw up his arms and sank instantly. The Hero Fund's investigator learned that Thomas's arms "seemed to relax" and that he did not surface again. Another boat quickly responded to the scene, but tragically it was too late.

The *Eastern Argus* noted that, as word of the incident spread about the peninsula, a large crowd of approximately 1,000 people gathered at the scene and remained for some time: "The popularity of McCann was fully demonstrated by the fact that there was hardly a dry eye to be seen while the operations to recover the body were in progress." An initial search of the surrounding water proved fruitless.

Thomas's father monitored the search from the shore. Heartbroken but determined to retrieve his son's body, he hired a local diver by the name of Nat Gordon to complete the mission. After a search of about an hour, Gordon located Thomas's body about 15 feet from the place where he sank. Family history has it that the body was found with its clothing caught on a nail in a wooden piling of the bridge. The paper noted that "[a]s the body was taken from the water, the entire crowd seemed to heave a sigh of relief, silently turned away from the place, and wended their way sorrowfully to their homes." His father reportedly stated at the time, "Thank God, he never proved himself a coward."

After Thomas's body was transported to the undertakers, Duddy and Son, they examined his right leg and hip and discovered that his muscles were severely contracted. Officials concluded that Thomas likely had been stricken with cramps during his struggle in the cold water with Alfonso. Thomas, who was an expert swimmer, had been employed as draw-tender for two years and during that time reportedly had saved the lives of four other boys who fell into the water. A news account noted that he enjoyed a long record as a lifesaver and that, during his brief life, he participated in no fewer than 10 rescues.

In addition to his widow, Thomas left behind a 15-month-old daughter, Irene. Sadly, Irene died less than a year after his passing. His widow never really recovered from these tragedies. Unfortunately as well, it was reported that Alfonso failed to make the best use of his second chance at life in that he turned to alcohol and became a less than productive member of society.

Thomas was laid to rest alongside his mother and grandparents in Calvary Cemetery in South Portland. His father was interred beside him just three years later. Although we never knew Thomas, we feel as though we do through his heroic story. We know and celebrate Thomas H. McCann as brave, strong, and selfless, a true hero and a credit to his family and to Irish-Americans everywhere. ❧

*Margaretmary McCann, of Portland, is the niece of Thomas McCann, and William Norbert, of Brunswick, Maine, is his second cousin three times removed.*



Thomas H. McCann

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*imPULSE* is a periodic newsletter of the CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION, a private operating foundation established in 1904 by Andrew Carnegie. • The Hero Fund awards the CARNEGIE MEDAL to those throughout the United States and Canada who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others. • The Commission also provides financial assistance, which may include scholarship aid and continuing grants, to the heroes and to the dependents of those awardees who are disabled or die as the result of their heroic acts.

Further information is available on-line or by contacting the Commission.

**Any ideas?** *imPULSE* welcomes your submissions for publication, and your ideas for consideration. Be in touch!

**Address change?** Please keep us posted!

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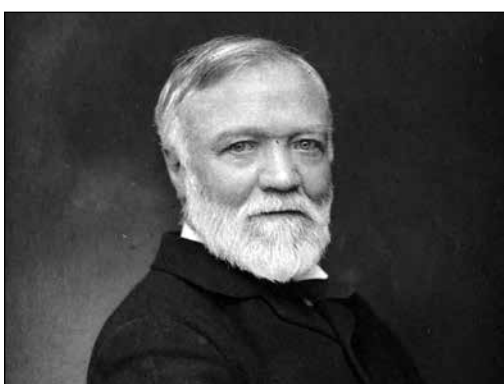
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## THE QUOTABLE A.C.



*Man was not created with an instinct for his own degradation, but from the lower he had risen to the higher forms. Nor is there any conceivable end to his march to perfection. His face is turned to the light; he stands in the sun and looks upward.*

—Autobiography, p. 339 (1920)

## CONTINUUM

**GRAVE MARKERS** Bronze grave markers (below), cast in the likeness of the Carnegie Medal, are available at no cost to the families of deceased awardees. They are designed for mounting on stone or bronze memorials. Contact Susan Rizza ([susan@carnegiehero.org](mailto:susan@carnegiehero.org)) or write her at the address given below.

**MEDAL REFINISHING** The Hero Fund will refinish Carnegie Medals at no cost to the owner. The medals are to be sent to the Hero Fund's office by insured, registered mail. Allow a month for the process. The contact is Jo Braun ([jo@carnegiehero.org](mailto:jo@carnegiehero.org)).

**OBITUARIES** Written accounts of the awardee's life, such as contained in an obituary, are sought for addition to the awardee's page on the Commission's website. Contact Chris Foreman ([chris@carnegiehero.org](mailto:chris@carnegiehero.org)).

**ANNUAL REPORTS** Copies of the Hero Fund's most recent annual reports (2013-2014) are available by contacting Gloria Barber ([gloria@carnegiehero.org](mailto:gloria@carnegiehero.org)).

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