Campground operated by posthumous awardee now part of forest preserve

A popular Wisconsin campground near Lake Superior that Carnegie Hero Dennis D. Swenson operated with his mother now encompasses the majority of a forest preserve that is open to the public.

Swenson, 62, died attempting to save his 95-year-old mother, Dorothy H. Swenson, from the burning house they shared in Cornucopia, Wis., on May 1, 2015.

With the Swenson family aging and no other relatives close by, the family already had been considering options for the recreation land before the fire to safeguard its natural features, said Cheri and Brent Surowiec, Dennis Swenson’s sister and brother-in-law.

“It just wasn’t going to be handed down, so we wanted to preserve it and keep the family’s wishes,” Brent Surowiec said.

Shortly after the fire, the Surowiecs, who live in Kingfield, Maine, found a willing partner in a nonprofit land trust now known as Landmark Conservancy, which has established more than 200 conservation easements across 20 Wisconsin counties.
Campground now forest preserve

Although the conservancy typically works with private landowners, its leaders worked with local officials to ensure the property would be accessible to the public while the conservancy maintains a conservation easement.

“Tough cases,” says the conservancy’s main maintenance manager, Paul Heid, “aren’t easy cases.”

They later expanded the property and shifted from farming operations to cottages in the late 1960s or early 1970s. Besides the five cottages on the campground, local enthusiasts visiting to fish in the Siskiwit River, a half-mile of which cuts through the property, the Surowiecs said.

The state of Wisconsin has designated the river on the property a Class 1 trout stream that has sufficient natural reproduction to sustain wild trout populations. According to the APG article, there was a huge outpouring of support for the project from the Cornucopia community.

“ar for a few weeks, our mailbox was flooded with donations and cards from supporters, sharing memories of the Surowiecs family and special times spent on the river.”

ABOVE: A narrow trail that runs through the property that will now be preserved for public access.

THE HARDEST CASES

These cases are completely within the award criteria for the Carnegie Medal. But here is a harder case: suppose a policeman is the first to arrive at the scene of a mass shooting by multiple well-armed attackers. The policeman, realizing the urgency of the situation, crosses an open space under a hail of fire to engage the attackers and stop the shooting. Suppose that under the circumstances this was so dangerous that only 1 percent of all police officers would have acted immediately rather than waiting for help. Or even 0.1 percent? Nevertheless, that act itself — protecting citizens from armed attack — is squarely the kind of thing police are hired to do. This can be hard at times, but it is the kind of thing we do.

The value of the Carnegie Medals we award is defined by the medals we choose not to award.

Granddaughter marks Herman D. Sigal’s headstone

Gregory Mann adheres a grave marker to the headstone of his wife’s grandfather, Herman D. Sigal, who died in 1944.

In 1929, Sigal saved a 58-year-old man by pulling him from a raging river. The value of the Carnegie Medals we award is defined by the medals we choose not to award.

“The hardest cases” are cases where the hero dies in the rescue. In each case, the rescuer was far outside the Carnegie Medal, and they are right. But police receive almost all of their awards for police bravery. In each case, the rescuer was far outside the Carnegie Medal, and they are right. But police receive almost all of their awards for police bravery.
Grieving mother thanks hero

Those thoughts wound up tormenting Clark, she said, aggravating some physical ailments that eventually required surgery and serious bouts of depression and bipolar disorder. But Clark said she found she could move past her debilitating grief by focusing on her happy memories with Michael — and by putting Stubner’s ill-fated attempt to save Michael’s life in the proper perspective.

The book includes a chapter on Stubner, who was caught in churning waters at the dam’s base — known as a “boil” — when he tried to save Michael, and suffered brain damage that still affects his short-term memory and ability to read.

Clark came to appreciate that Stubner was there with Michael, convincing Clark that Michael died knowing that someone cared enough to try to rescue him.

Clark didn’t learn the particulars of Stubner’s rescue attempt until the day after his son disappeared into the river when she visited Stubner in the hospital. Clark said she worried about intruding on Stubner’s family “given the circumstances.”

“They were wonderful to me, and I really wondered what I’d be walking into,” Clark said. “As it turned out, that wasn’t the case at all. We grieved together. I will always hold all of them dear to my heart.”

Clark quickly became friendly with Stubner’s family, especially his mother Betty, now 79.

“I remember when it first happened, we couldn’t feel better,” Betty Stubner said. “Kids do things, it was an accident.”

It was that first day in the hospital that Clark learned the details of Stubner’s heroic rescue attempt.

Stubner, then a 25-year-old project manager for a major construction firm, was riding Jet Ski when he learned that Michael had gone over the dam on an air mattress he was using as a raft and got caught in the boil. Stubner sped up river to help Michael, but was knocked from his Jet Ski into the turbulent waters and also became trapped in the boil.

Stubner surfaced minutes later downstream and would be comatose for two weeks. Michael’s body never surfaced that day; some of his remains were found and identified weeks later.

Michael, whose happy-go-lucky nature belied his strapping 6-foot-5 frame, was still in high school but had a summer job at his uncle’s diesel repair shop. Michael drove a beat-up used car that got him to and from his job, but on the day of his death, the jalopy was in the repair shop — again — so Clark dropped him at home on her way to work.

“I told him, ‘I’m really sorry your car’s always breaking down,’” Clark recalled.

“Wheels aren’t everything, Mom. That’s the least thing he said to me. It’s just itching in my brain.”

Through talking to Stubner’s family and Michael’s friends, Clark has been able to put together a narrative of what happened that day.

Buoyed by warm, late-spring weather, Michael and two friends went to the river. His friends rode on a yellow rubber raft; Michael, somewhat of a daredevil, used an air mattress.

There were a couple dams they had to cross on the way down the river and Mike exited the river and walked along the shore around the dams, concerned that his air mattress wouldn’t fare well being washed over them, Clark said. But because the river was rain-swollen, the boys came to a dam where the waters were especially high, so the drop over the dam didn’t appear to be as steep or treacherous. What Michael didn’t realize was the rain-swollen river had the fact that the boil at the base of that dam was deeper and more violent than he anticipated.

Clark came to appreciate that Stubner was there with Michael, convincing Clark that Michael died knowing that someone cared enough to try to rescue him.

Although Michael’s friends on the raft managed to get over the dam and out of the boil, Michael did not.

As Stubner approached the boil, he sensed the danger and warned his fiancée, riding on another Jet Ski nearby, to stay away before falling into the churning waters which repeatedly drew him underwater and popped him up to the surface before he lost consciousness and, finally, drifted downstream where he was rescued. A portion of Michael’s body was found by a fisherman downstream about five weeks later.

Stubner was still intubated and in a coma when Clark first saw and briefly spoke to him in the hospital, the day after the accident.

“I approached this severely hurt young man, bent over, and whispered to him, ‘I know things didn’t turn out the way you would have liked, but I thank you for what you tried to do,’ Clark wrote in her book. “They said it was just reflex, but John gave me a slight smile.”

Although his injuries ended his construction career, and Stubner had to re-learn how to walk and talk, he recovered enough by 1997 to begin working an entry-level maintenance job with Grainger. The industrial supply company services businesses but is growing into a direct online retailer of cleaning supplies, tools, and other hardware stored at a massive warehouse in Minooka, another Chicago suburb, where Stubner is now a key staffer.

Stubner’s brain damage has left him with short-term memory issues and he struggles to read material that is not in all capital letters. He has tried to read part of the chapter about him in Clark’s book, and appreciates what motivated her to write it. He remembers only brief snapshots of his attempt to rescue Michael.

“I remember just seeing the water and things like that,” Stubner said. Stubner has thrived in his rehabilitation, in part, because his brother Ray and his family have helped Stubner establish a regimented life and work routine that enables Stubner to read material that is not in all capital letters but is growing into a direct online retailer of cleaning supplies, tools, and other hardware stored at a massive warehouse in Minooka, another Chicago suburb, where Stubner is now a key staffer.

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Clark came to appreciate that Stubner was there with Michael, convincing Clark that Michael died knowing that someone cared enough to try to rescue him.
There is no better example of the power of an individual to make a difference than the life and legacy of Andrew Carnegie," he said. "As the president of the university that bears his name here in Pittsburgh, I am reminded of Andrew Carnegie's impact on education every day.

Today, Carnegie Mellon University includes nearly 14,600 students in more than 26 degree programs in 14 countries around the world. Carnegie emigrated from Scotland at the age of 12 and went straight to work as a bobbin boy in Pittsburgh. On Saturdays, Col. James Anderson would invite working boys to his home to select a book to borrow and read that week. "Mr. Carnegie credited this reading for his success, as he went on to become the richest man in the world," said Mary Frances Cooper, president & director of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. "One hundred years after his passing, we still look to him as an example of an immigrant who came to this country, worked hard, achieved astounding wealth, and gave back." Carnegie funded the construction of 2,509 Carnegie libraries from Malaysia to Australia. "He coined the idea that knowledge should be "free to the people," and, with access to books and reading and self-directed learning, a person could be anything he or she wants to be. Andrew Carnegie's true legacy is how his particular brand of philanthropy reflects a fundamental faith in people and in our individual and collective desire to do the right thing," Cooper said.

Toward the later years of his life, Carnegie became a fierce proponent of peace, and attempted to foster worldwide military disarmament, the end of the arms race, and compulsory arbitration (instead of war) for disputing countries. At home, he championed a shift of society's attention from glorifying military heroes to honoring civilian heroes. At another Carnegie event held Sept. 24 at the Peace Palace in The Hague, historian David Nasaw talked at length about Carnegie's campaigns for peace. "Most of the monuments in this world," Carnegie had discovered were "to somebody who has killed a lot of his fellowmen." That was not heroism. His Hero Fund would call attention to, recognize, and reward the true heroes of this world," Nasaw explained quoting Carnegie.

"At the Pittsburgh event, Hero Fund President Eric Zaharen emphasized on this, explaining the reason for starting this, the Hero Fund's mission and Carnegie's legacy and the Hero Fund continues to be relevant today. It is important to remember why the work of honoring heroes transcends geography and time and becomes relevant to all civilization, he said. "And that is hope. The hope that is born, despite the realities of the challenges of the world — Carnegie's and our own — through the glorious meeting of courage and ultimate respect for another human being. Hate, violence, intolerance, war itself cannot, by definition, exist in such an environment of universal individual selflessness," Zaharen said.

On the occasion of Carnegie's death centenary, Zaharen added, "Carnegie stands alone, univaled, as the all-time greatest individual contributor to the city of Pittsburgh."

The Koppers Building houses the Carnegie Hero Fund. The flag of Scotland is a colors of the flag of Carnegie's home country, Scotland — as a nod to Carnegie's omnipresent influence in Pittsburgh. "The Koppers Building with the flag of Scotland, with Carnegie emigrated from Scotland to the U.S., reaching Pittsburgh, where he found work as a bobbin boy in Pittsburgh." Carnegie had discovered were "to somebody who has killed a lot of his fellowmen." That was not heroism. His Hero Fund would call attention to, recognize, and reward the true heroes of this world," Nasaw explained quoting Carnegie.

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Scholarship allows student to focus on grades, extracurricular activities

Hero Fund Commission scholarship recipient Niya Townsend, 22, from Detroit, will graduate with a degree in entrepreneurship and a minor in youth studies from Central Michigan University in December. She excelled in her role as a campus leader, served as a volunteer in the local Mount Pleasant, Mich., community, and performed as a member of the Rampage Dance Team.

In 2010, Townsend’s father Garrett T. Townsend, Jr., was posthumously awarded the Carnegie Medal after he died helping save a 7-year-old boy from drowning. The boy entered a residential construction site and fell into an excavated pit, 15 feet deep and partially full of about 10 feet of murky water. Townsend, a 58-year-old financial planner, was inside his nearby home when he became alerted to the boy’s plight. Despite having limited swimming ability, he entered the pit and held the boy up before submerging himself. Another man swam to the boy, and they were removed to safety. A police officer who had arrived entered the pit and located Townsend who emergency personnel then removed from the pit. He was taken to the hospital, but he could not be revived.

As Niya Townsend prepared for college, she said it brought her peace of mind knowing she could continue her education with scholarship assistance from the Hero Fund.

“My father was very big on education. Although I would love to have my father here with me, I know he is proud of me,” she said.

In an email to the Commission, Townsend wrote that without the added financial stress of paying for a college education, she focused on grades and extracurricular activities. During the past four years, Townsend said she has formed meaningful connections with her peers through participation in campus organizations that celebrate diversity.

Starting her freshman year, Townsend became involved with the Organization for Black Unity, serving on the executive board as a representative for the group, then fulfilling the role of vice president and president.

According to the university website, the organization was established by students in 1976 and is committed to maintaining a strong minority presence on campus and in the community. Members promote high academic standards, community service, and support and present culturally informative events to create a bridge between the minority and non-minority communities.

“(The organization) has been successful in making students feel confident in their ability to express themselves because we care,” Townsend said.

During her time as the student government association representative, Townsend acted as a liaison between the organization and the student government body, serving as a member of the diversity committee, which included planning the group’s annual fashion show from start to finish.

“One last fashion show had more than 800 people in the audience, including family members, friends, students, staff, and local fashion designers,” Townsend said.

Townsend’s duties, along with fashion directors and other executive board members, included booking venues, stage design, and finding vendors for the show including T.J. Maxx, JCPenney, Kohl’s, and individual designers.

Apart from the annual fashion show, the organization held round table discussions ranging from matters of race relations and police accountability to implementing positive communication in relationships.

Townsend said she found rewarding to lead her group and develop friendships with those who served on the executive board during the 2018-2019 school year when she served as president.

“When you have a good team behind you it makes leading an organization on campus that much more fun and fulfilling,” she said.

Nominated by members of the organization’s executive board, in fall 2018 Townsend received a university E-board excellence award for her leadership.

Townsend also served as volunteer coordinator for Phenomenal Brown Girls, an organization she described as being dedicated to making black and brown girls on campus feel powerful and love their skin.

As volunteer coordinator, Townsend planned events including a hygiene drive for woman and a canned food drive.

In addition, she volunteered in the local Mount Pleasant community, specifically at the Salvation Army, Goodwill, and in Flint, Mich., as part of an alternative spring break, where Townsend worked at the Whaley’s Children Center.

“We helped clean up the donation center, which contained clothes, hygiene products, and school supplies. Afterward we went to play with the children that lived there. It was one of the most fulfilling things that I’ve done during my time at [Central Michigan University],” she said.

When she’s not volunteering, Townsend said she enjoys dancing for Rampage, the university’s dance team. The team competes statewide and performs on campus. They also host an annual showcase, inviting fellow students and individuals from other schools to participate, she said.

In November 2018, the team placed first at a competition held at Western Michigan University.

(“Winning the dance competition) is my favorite memory with the team because we worked super hard for the competition, and we were all so grateful to have won,” she said.

As Townsend wraps up her undergraduate studies, she said she is most proud of the connections she has made and credits the inspiring environment at Central Michigan University for helping her come out of her shell. “I have met some really great people who have helped me a lot during my four years. Their leadership, compassion, drive, and communication are all inspiring to me,” she said.

In April 2019, Townsend welcomed a baby boy.

“He pushed me even harder to go for what I want in my life. I was already a hardworking and determined young lady before he came into my life. With him here now, he pushes me 10 times harder than I want anything but good for my life, even though I was young. I want other children in Detroit to have those same opportunities and experiences that I did,” she said.

Congratulations, Niya!”

— Abby Brady, outreach and education assistant/coord.
Jason P. Maxwell, a 43-year-old vessel operations manager of Maple Valley, Wash., on Aug. 13, 2018, entered deep, cold water at a Seattle dock to save a crewman who was floating face-down in the water near a large cargo ship.

Maxwell jumped from the dock, which was 15 feet above the surface of the 59-degree water. He swam about 150 feet to the man, who had submerged and swam to him at a point about 80 feet away. A responding lifeguard on a personal watercraft rescued both men and took them to a nearby boat. Maxwell was unconscious and in cardiac arrest. Both men were taken to the hospital, where Maxwell, nearly exhausted, was treated for bruises and scrapes. And, Maxwell, who was revived, required extensive hospitalization and therapy.

The wreckage of the crashed and burned van from which Carnegie Hero Richard Thomas Kruchta saved Scott C. Smith and Denise M. Kostrzewa along U.S. Highway 24, near Woodland Park, Colo.

On March 4, 2018, Kote Mhitari, 54, of Sandy, Utah, attempted to rescue his adult son, Georgi Davidov, 28, from drowning in the Pacific Ocean, while the family was vacationing in Lahaina, Hawaii. Mhitari and Davidov, as well as their partners, were visiting a cliff about 15 feet above the ocean, when Davidov fell into the ocean. Despite being a poor swimmer, Mhitari, a truck driver, jumped into the water and swam to his son. They grasped each other until rough surf separated them. Davidov tried to swim near rocks at the base of the cliff, and Mhitari was carried to a point about 80 feet away. A responding lifeguard on a personal watercraft rescued both men and took them to a nearby beach. Mhitari was unconscious and in cardiac arrest. Both men were taken to the hospital, where Davidov, nearly exhausted, was treated for bruises and scrapes. And, Mhitari, who was revived, required extensive hospitalization and therapy.

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The wreckage of the crashed and burned van from which Carnegie Hero Richard Thomas Kruchta saved Scott C. Smith and Denise M. Kostrzewa along U.S. Highway 24, near Woodland Park, Colo.

Michael Douglas Barkhouse of Walton, N.S., was driving to work when he spotted the woman in a forced kernel with the dog and heard her screaming. Wearing leather work gloves and using a wooden stake that he took from his truck, Barkhouse forced open an outer latch on the kernel and entered it. He yelled at the dog and struck the dog with his feet and hands until it released the woman. As the dog retreated, Barkhouse dragged the woman to the kernel’s holding area and closed the inner gate to separate the dog from them. The attendant was hospitalized for treatment of numerous bites. Barkhouse’s right hand was bruised.

Leon Wright was shopping Sept. 8, 2018, in Orlando, Fla., when he heard a car horn honking erratically. A couple was parked at a drive-through bank machine nearby when a man armed with a box cutter approached their car and reached through the driver’s window in an attempt to...
Allen Sirois, of Dalado, Texas, responded to the scene: a concrete mixer truck had overturned onto its driver’s side, flames were burning in the engine area, and its driver, Melvin K. Belcher, 60, was trapped inside. Sirois used a fire extinguisher in an attempt to douse the flames, but it did little to extinguish the blaze. He kicked a small hole in the windshield, but he could not gain access to the cab from there. He climbed the truck and, standing on a platform between the cab and the mixer, he opened the passenger door. He saw Belcher inside the smoke-filled cab, which flames had breached near the driver’s door and windshield. Sirois reached through the open door and pulled Belcher partly out of the cab. Another man moved onto the truck and pulled Belcher fully free from the cab. Others took Belcher to the ground and carried him to safety. Belcher and Sirois sustained minor burn, and they recovered.

It was a late Sunday night when Truman State University student Jordyn Scott Lambay became alerted to a June 29, 2018, attack occurring outside his Kirkukvl, Mo., home. Leaving the house barefoot, Lambay, 22, ran to a man who had dragged a bloodied woman into a neighborhood street and was hovering above her with an ax. Despite weighing 40 pounds less than the assailant, Lambay grabbed the man’s hand with his hands, prevented the man from hitting the woman again, and took him to the ground. Lambay joined the man to the pavement and attempted to wrestle the ax away from him until his partner seized it and removed it from the vicinity. The woman, who had been hit with the ax several times before Lambay intervened, was treated at the hospital for serious injuries; she survived. Lambay was not injured.

Freight tracker Richard Thomas Krochta of Florissant, Colo., saved Scott C. Smith, 70, and Denise M. Kostrowa, 59, from inside a burning minivan Aug. 29, 2018, after an accident in Woodward Park. Colo. Krochta, 56, was driving nearby and spotted the burning vehicle when it had crashed in a wooded area. Krochta went to the van, where fallen tree branches blocked his access to the driver’s door. Hearing Smith call for help, Krochta moved to the van’s passenger side and haggled on the passenger door, forcing it open several inches. He reached through the small gap and, by the collar, pulled Smith from the passenger seat, where he stoodstraddling Kostrowa’s prone body, and out of the car. Smith told Krochta about Kostrowa, who was still inside the van. As flames grew and spread, Krochta returned to the van, located Kostrowa and pulled her through the passenger-door opening as well. Smith and Kostrowa were hospitalized for crush-related injuries; they were not burned.

Nineteen-year-old Mercedes C. Ramos was trapped inside a burning sport utility vehicle after an April 20, 2018, accident in which the front of her vehicle struck and became wedged beneath the rear end of a truck in East Patrogy, N.Y. Flames broke out on the vehicle’s hood and spread to its interior. Suffolk County Police Officer Richard J. Gandolfo, 55, responded to the scene, but he could not open any of the vehicle’s doors. Passing motorists Robert M. Hosey, 38, construction worker of Coplay, Pa., also responded and, with difficulty, opened the rear, driver’s-side door. Working together, Gandolfo and Hosey maneuvered Ramos into the backseat of the car and then removed her to safety. Another man helped the duo move Ramos away from the burning car, which was shortly engulfed by flames. Ramos sustained second-degree burns to her legs and a broken ankle. Gandolfo sustained smoke inhalation and burns to both hands. He recovered. Hosey was treated at the scene for smoke inhalation.

Bus passenger Nathan Scott Wansala of Santa Cruz, Calif., rescued a woman, 25, and her toddler daughter, 3, from assault aboard an interstate bus on March 5, 2018, in Visalia, Calif. A passenger armed with a knife forced her way between the mother and daughter, put the girl in a chokehold, pointed the knife at her throat, and threatened to stab her. The girl’s mother quickly pulled her daughter away from the assailant and urged her to run to the front of the bus. The assailant stabbed the mother twice in the torso. Wansala, 30, moved between the mother and the assailant and grasped the man’s right arm in both of his hands, attempting to wrest the knife from her. They both struggled for control of the knife; Wansala was stabbed in the wrist and cat on his hands during the altercation. Others helped Wansala subdue the assailant. The mother was hospitalized for treatment of the stab wounds, and the toddler suffered an abrasion to her forehead. They both struggled for control of the knife; Wansala was stabbed in the wrist and cat on his hands during the altercation. Others helped Wansala subdue the assailant. The mother was hospitalized for treatment of the stab wounds, and the toddler suffered an abrasion to her forehead. They both struggled for control of the knife; Wansala was stabbed in the wrist and cat on his hands during the altercation. Others helped Wansala subdue the assailant. The mother was hospitalized for treatment of the stab wounds, and the toddler suffered an abrasion to her forehead. They both struggled for control of the knife; Wansala was stabbed in the wrist and cat on his hands during the altercation. Others helped Wansala subdue the assailant. The mother was hospitalized for treatment of the stab wounds, and the toddler suffered an abrasion to her forehead. They both struggled for control of the knife; Wansala was stabbed in the wrist and cat on his hands during the altercation. Others helped Wansala subdue the assailant. The mother was hospitalized for treatment of the stab wounds, and the toddler suffered an abrasion to her forehead.

After a May 26, 2018, highway accident in Belton, Texas, 25-year-old delivery driver Allen Sirois, of Dalado, Texas, responded to the scene: a concrete mixer truck had overturned onto its driver’s side, flames were burning in the engine area, and its driver, Melvin K. Belcher, 60, was trapped inside. Sirois used a fire extinguisher in an attempt to douse the flames, but it did little to extinguish the blaze. He kicked a small hole in the windshield.
RIGHT: Tami Wahler, right, the widow of posthumously awarded Carnegie Hero Bradley Eugene Murphy, speaks to audience members at the Owensboro (Ky.) City Commission meeting held June 4.

“Our hearts are full of love and pride tonight,” she said.

Owensboro Mayor Tom Watson, left, presented her husband’s Carnegie Medal to her and declared June 4 Steven B. Wahler Day in the city.

“Tami Wahler is one of the many examples of how we can all be heroes to someone else,” Mayor Watson said. “Her heroic actions that day saved the life of a young boy and now have received national recognition.”

Wahler, a 47-year-old IT manager from Owensboro, and Murphy, a 21-year-old landscaper of Elberta, Ala., both died during an Oct. 9, 2017, rescue of a 12-year-old boy who was carried by a rip current 100 feet from shore near Gulf Shores, Ala. Ocean conditions included rough surf and waves 5 feet high breaking near shore when Wahler entered the water with a boogie board and swam to the boy, placing him on the board. Wahler began pushing the board toward shore, but a breaking wave separated the two. The boy’s mother, also using a boogie board, reached her son and guided him back to shore. Murphy, who had also entered the water, swam toward Wahler and appeared to reach him before both men submerged.

“It’s the pride of our family to know that he would give his life to someone else,” Tami Wahler said. “And we’re thrilled to know that the little boy lived.”

“IT’s a sad thing to see, but the honor was well-deserved,” said Koniar. “It brought the family back a lot of pain and that was a sad thing for me, but the honor was well-deserved.”

LEFT: From left, Foley (Ala.) Mayor John Koniar presents the Carnegie Medal to Mary Dueitt and Fred Murphy, the surviving parents of Carnegie Hero Bradley Eugene Murphy during a July 15 city council meeting at Foley City Hall.

“The proclamation tonight is well-deserved,” said Koniar. “It brought the family back a lot of pain and that was a sad thing for me, but the honor was well-deserved.”

First responders showed up on masse to show their support for longtime Brookhaven (N.Y.) firefighter Peter C. Di Pinto, Sr., center, who was presented the Carnegie Medal by Hero Fund President Eric P. Zahren, left, of center, before the Brookhaven town board meeting on July 29.

“We use this time right before the town board meetings to honor and recognize special people who accomplished great things,” said Michael Lagunovic, Brookhaven’s district C councilman. “We have a great leader. A member of Brookhaven Fire Department who did a very heroic thing.”

Firefighters from Di Pinto’s department, in addition nearby Mastic, Medford, and Ridge hamlets, as well as personnel from South Country Ambulance attended the ceremony, and Di Pinto’s family. Both of his sons are also members of the Brookhaven fire Department.

“It’s great to see so many people here to honor our awardee today, especially all the first responders. We all know you put your life on the line for us, and we thank you every day for it.” said Zahren.

Di Pinto, a retired teacher of Brookhaven, saved a woman from being struck by a train Oct. 10, 2017, in near his home.

The woman, 43, was driving a van when it collided with another vehicle and came to rest straddling a nearby railroad track. Di Pinto heard the crash from nearby and responded. He ran to the driver’s door of the van, which was smacked and told the driver woman that she needed to exit. Suddenly the crossing’s gates descended and lights flashed warning them of the approaching commuter train, traveling at 65 m.p.h. Di Pinto ran to the passenger side of the van, opened the front, passenger door, crashed in, and grabbed the woman. Di Pinto pulled her through the door and moved her off the track to safety seconds after Di Pinto had removed her.

“We’ve recognized over 10,000 heroes. Each and every one of them is special and should remind us of the good within all of us, of our capacity for good when we listen to our better angels and act in behalf of another human being in danger for our own safety,” Zahren said. “Peter Di Pinto certainly embodies Carnegie’s ideal, ‘the very best in human nature.’


Cromwell (Conn.) Deputy Mayor Richard R. Newton, Cromwell Police Chief Denise Lamontagne, and three other police officers also attended the private ceremony to honor Dixon, a maintenance supervisor of Cromwell, and his life-saving actions to save a police officer from a May 17, 2018, assault inside an apartment building in Hartford, Conn.

The bipartisan support from legislators on both sides of the aisle and range of local, state, and federal officials who saw to Dixon’s recognition was poignant to Lesser, who said Dixon’s heroic actions “bring us together as who we want to be as a community, a state, and a nation,” according to a local report.

Dixon stated that he does not consider himself a hero, but he and colleague Jesse L. Casanova were alerted that a police officer, 34, needed help in an upper-floor apartment and responded. In the hallway, they saw a female resident of the building holding a kitchen knife and choking the officer, who had already been stabbed repeatedly in the neck.

The men ran to them; Dixon grabbed the assailant from behind and Casanova seized the knife from her hand. Dixon restrained the assailant while a building manager tended to the officer’s wounds until backup officers arrived.

In addition to receiving the Carnegie Medal, Newton presented Dixon with a key to the town of Cromwell.

“We know having you live here in Cromwell,” he said.
Held hostage for hours, Carnegie hero saves seven colleagues, takes down man who had murdered three

The events leading up to the 1959 heroism of Louis Gorman in behalf of seven other men held hostage at their workplace for several hours began with a hunt for a 21-year-old Jerseyville, Ill., man wanted on suspicion of committing three homicides across the Midwest. Jerseyville police spotted the man arrive home but as they made their presence known, the man fled by car and by foot, eluding officers once again.

Upon word that the assailant was seen, more than 100 police, state troopers, and sheriff’s deputies responded to Jerseyville and among leaking diesel fuel from the truck.

The driver was semi-conscious and partly buried by wheat grain inside the cab of the tractor-trailer after it collided with a train at a crossing. Flames broke out in the truck’s engine compartment, in the spilled grain,

Two years earlier, Schafer, a local tax assessor of Hayti, S.D., helped save a 16-year-old farmer from a burning semi-truck after an Aug. 17, 2017, accident in Blunt, S.D.

The driver was semi-conscious and partly buried by wheat grain inside the cab of the tractor-trailer after it collided with a train at a crossing. Flames broke out in the truck’s engine compartment, in the spilled grain.

Schafer was driving nearby when he came upon the accident and went to the truck. He briefly fought flames and among leaking diesel fuel from the truck.

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Kroeschel called out to Gorman, who was in the bathroom.

Just then, the assailant appeared, armed with a .22-caliber semiautomatic rifle that held 19 rounds. With 35 more cartridges in his pocket, the man ordered Cordes and Kroeschel to raise their hands, enter the office, and sit with their backs against the south wall.

He positioned himself in the doorway, which was obscured from outside view. He then ordered Gorman out of the bathroom.

Meanwhile, inside the bathroom, Gorman hastily opened the bathroom window, but failed to disloge its screen. Hearing the commotion, the assailant threatened to shoot through the door and at one of the truck drivers if Gorman didn’t exit the bathroom. Gorman verbally obliged and exited the restroom with his hands up, joining his coworkers seated on the floor.

While keeping his rifle pointed at the three men and staying in their line of sight, the assailant moved to the main office. Squatting behind a counter to conceal himself from anyone outside the building, he demanded that Gorman open the door. Gorman told the man that none of the hostages knew the combination combination, and, despite arguing and making threats, the man eventually acquiesced.

William M. Kuehnel, locomotive engineer, manager Ernest G. Pohlman and truck drivers Edward L. Fitzgibbons, Hershel E. Andrews, and Darrell M. Smith, arrived to the office. L. Fitzgibbons, Hershel E. Andrews, and Pohlman all stepped over their tied ankles. As instructed by the gunman, Gorman tied up the men, first, Kuehnel; then Fitzgibbons, and then Smith. He tied their ankles together and their hands behind their backs. According to police reports, the assailant’s plan was for Gorman to tie up the others, and he would retraint Gorman himself.

In his notes, Urling described Gorman as shrewd and observant by nature. He stated that during his captivity, Gorman had watched the gunman constantly and had completely assessed his habits. Further, he noted Gorman’s observation that after any sudden movement, the man’s strength, agility, and habits. Further, he highlighted that firing the gun would be detrimental to the man’s hiding place, he worried that the assailant would shoot through the window, but failed to do so.

While he pondered, the assailant seemed to recognize his own vulnerability while Gorman remained in the line of sight. Reformulating previous threats, he called up to Gorman, saying he’d “knock over five or six of his buddies” on his way out. Gorman tried to draw attention from a passerby or provoke trouble.

Familiar with the gun’s quick fire, Gorman told Urling later that he feared assuring his own safety would be deadly for the others. Meanwhile in the office, the seven men were unable to see anything of the event.

Although they discussed plans for action, they were scared to move, call out, or act lest their actions lead to Gorman’s death.

Gorman descended the ladder, gathered the rope, and with the gunman returned to the office.

According to Urling, Gorman’s perception of the assailant was that he was absolutely broud, pitless, and completely at home with firearms. He could see that he was sharp and quick.

Although, Gorman was reassured by the fact that firing the gun would be detrimental to the man’s hiding place, he worried that the assailant wouldn’t wait until 1 p.m. to take some form of action.

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Keeping his study in mind, Gorman finished tying Smith and stood between him and Andrews. He stretched as if his back had cramped and friged a reel as if to faint. With a contrived

The man scanned his surroundings for rope and saw some atop a 20-foot-long sand and gravel bin, located about 30 feet east of the building’s east door. The assailant selected Gorman to retrieve the rope and ordered the hostage to face down with his hands against the wall. He covered his gun with plastic and ordered Gorman to precede him out the door. Before the two men exited, the assailant threatened the others, stating he would shoot Gorman if any of them were uncooperative.

Once outside, Gorman ascended the bin’s ladder as the gunman stood watch so he could see Gorman and the other men through a window. Gorman climbed 36 feet and entered the bin. He cut the rope slowly, stating later that he hoped someone outside would take notice, while also brainstorming ways to freedom.

Gorman said that he thought he could submerge into the sand and that the gunman wouldn’t be able to shoot through 4 inches of timber and 1 4 feet of sand. To climb the ladder the man would incapacitate the assailant from shooting and, in that time Gorman could call for help and throw sand on the man without exposing himself.

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Gorman called out, “Come on, boys!” and the united men, Andrews, Cordes, Kroeschel, and Pohlman all stepped over their tied counterparts. They secured the gun and assisted Gorman with the assailant.

One of the men summoned help, and authorities arrived and took the assailant to jail. He was tried and found guilty for three murders.

Gorman and the men were crampd and agitated, but they recovered.

After having spent three years in the Army and serving as a military policeman in charge of a prison, Gorman revealed to Urling that he considered his tackling the assailant to be the greatest danger he’d ever faced.

A successful man, Gorman and his brother owned the largest builders’ supply yard in the county. He opted to refuse the $10,000 bounty offered by the North Carolina Governor that took place June 21, 1960.


—Abby Brady, operations and outreach assistant/archivist
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We should all prefer to start low that we should rise than to begin high that we should fall.
— Andrew Carnegie in undelivered rectorial address at his installation, St. Andrew’s University, Oct. 22, 1902