



# imPULSE

*A Periodic Newsletter of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission* ISSUE 2 • 2005

## Character counts: Medal awardee spreads message to youth

### RECOGNITION OF HEROIC ACT LAUNCHES ETHICS INITIATIVE

**April 16, 1993.** It was 6 a.m. and still dark in High Point, N.C., and it had rained heavily during the night.

Paul J. Lessard of Greensboro, N.C., was en route to the YMCA for a squash match when he encountered a portion of roadway that was flooded by the overflow of an adjacent creek. He next saw that a car had been carried into the creek's channel, then 12 feet deep, fast flowing, and muddy. Its driver, a 62-year-old grandmother, was trapped in the car, which was beginning to sink. Lessard swam to the vehicle and broke its rear window with a hammer that he obtained at the scene. With help from John P. Kavanagh III, in town on business from New Canaan, Conn., he pulled the woman from her car and took her back to the bank. For their efforts, the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission awarded the Carnegie Medal to each of the men.

**April 16, 1994.** With the monetary stipend that accompanied the medal, Lessard established The Lighthouse Project, a non-profit foundation dedicated to helping young people of the Guilford County, N.C., community build solid foundations of character upon which to make the hard choices that they may encounter in their lives. "We believe that our society has consistently failed to hold up strong, positive role models to our children," Lessard says.

Addressing that concern, The Lighthouse Project, now in its 11th year, has reached 250,000 young people with its core message: *Character counts.*

By Paul J. Lessard • Founder, *The Lighthouse Project*

As is often in life, a seemingly random series of events brought Jack and me to a very remote area at the precise time we were needed to help save Ella Mae's life.

While some may call this coincidence, both Jack and I would maintain that our actions that day were guided by divine providence—I've always believed that God is intimately involved in our daily lives. When I think back on that morning, I have to believe that His hand was upon all three of us. The memory of that day continues to be very meaningful and affirming.

So many of us who have received the Carnegie Medal have done so because someone instilled in us a sense of compassion and the heartfelt belief that servant leadership calls each of us to lay our lives down for our friends. Each of us in turn has a moral, ethical, and spiritual obligation to invest in our children, to teach them right from wrong, and to show them that there are indeed successful people "out there" who have achieved greatness with character, grace, and honesty. We owe this to future generations, especially since our culture and media do not have a great track record in presenting positive role models.

It was for this reason that I used the grant that accompanied the medal to establish a non-profit program—The Lighthouse Project—to bring nationally known role models to speak to young people attending both public and private schools in the Guilford Country, N.C., area. (*continued on page 2*)



*The Lessard Family: Paul, 1994 Carnegie Medal awardee, and Jayne are parents of Jordie, 13, and Taylor, 16.*



## BOARD NOTES

### WIDE-EYED WONDER

By Sybil P. Veeder, Ph.D.  
Chair, Executive Committee



When I was nine or ten, I used to visit my grandparents for the weekend. They always had all kinds of magazines about, and I was fascinated by the stories in Reader's Digest. Often the stories were of people who did interesting things or performed heroic deeds. It was in the Digest that I encountered my first Carnegie Hero.

Although I do not remember the rescue, I remember being so amazed and in awe of the person and the medal that I scoured future issues for other heroes. Many years later I relocated to Pittsburgh, where, 13 years ago, I was invited to sit on the Hero Fund Commission. I now have the good fortune to chair the meetings at which the medals are awarded.

The work of the Commission is to determine which of the acts of heroism brought to our attention meet Andrew Carnegie's criteria for being recognized. The guidelines were set more than 100 years ago: There must be conclusive evidence that the person performing the act voluntarily risked his or her life to an extraordinary degree in saving or attempting to save the life of another person, or voluntarily sacrificed himself or herself in a heroic manner for the benefit of others. The act of rescue must be one in which no full measure of responsibility exists between the rescuer and the rescued.

The Commission's Executive Committee meets five times a year to evaluate the cases presented by the staff researchers. The cases are sent to each committee member for review prior to the meeting, and discussion at the meeting is encouraged as we view each case in light of the awarding requirements. Research by the staff is extensive, and all information obtained on the cases is available at the meeting to aid in our deliberations.

Although I still consider the accounts of all of the rescues to be wonderful and heroic, we award the medal only to those rescuers who voluntarily encounter an extraordinary degree of risk. This requirement of life risk gives the medal its special value and honor, and that in turn makes serving on the Commission such a special privilege for each member.

During the Commission's centennial celebration last year I had the opportunity to meet some of the heroes. I found myself as wide-eyed and excited as the nine-year-old girl who first read about the medal in a magazine.

(Dr. Veeder joined the Commission in 1992 and in 2002 was named Chair of the Executive Committee. A native of New Rochelle, N.Y., she is a graduate of Connecticut College and the University of Pittsburgh, where she received a doctor of philosophy degree, and she is a retired psychotherapist.)

Character counts:  
Medal awardee  
spreads message  
to youth  
(continued)

We began modestly with a single speaker in 1994, U.S. Marine Lt. Clebe McClary, whom I had heard speak at a Christian athletes camp when I was a senior in high school. Clebe is a Vietnam War hero who sacrificed greatly for his country—a firefight cost him his left arm and left eye, badly mangled his right hand, and seriously disfigured his face—but he possesses a very positive and proactive outlook on life despite his injuries.

Clebe both inspired me and called me to live more morally and spiritually. I was blessed with great parents who were wonderful role models, but, like all young people, I was trying to decide who I was and what I wanted to stand for. Clebe became a valued mentor, and, in fact, I still have a relationship with him today, some 30 years after our first meeting.

In the fall of 1994, Clebe spoke to students of six high schools about character, making wise life choices, and taking responsibility for their lives and for one another. The program was an instant success, with teachers, students, and parents responding enthusiastically. Over the next 11 years, the six schools grew to 10...then 20...then 30...and this year the project will bring in four speakers to reach out to the students of about 40 schools.

We strive to have variety in our speakers. They have included James Bradley, the best-selling author of *Flags of our Fathers*; Coach Boone of *Remember the Titans* film fame; Dana Scott, the sister of Rachel Scott, the first victim of the 1999 Columbine High School shooting; Gazelle Abramson, a survivor of a Nazi concentration camp; Clifton Taulbert, the author of the Pulitzer-Prize-nominated civil rights classic, *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored*; Robert Woodson, a MacArthur Fellowship recipient for his work with young people in the inner city, and many more.

In its 11 years of existence, the project has addressed more than 250,000 young people. The project was recognized by President Bush last year for its commitment to youth and its conviction that character counts. As I look back, I know one thing for certain: The Lighthouse Project would never have been established without the generosity and the moral support of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission. They have been like an extended family to me and have not only been there to provide moral support but to help us celebrate our victories along the way.

I see many more years of reaching out into the schools not only to impact the lives of young people but also, in some small way, to pass on the blessings such as I have received over the years. Five years ago, the project began to award a "student of the year" college scholarship to the student in the county school system who has taken a stand for character and service in his/her school and community life. Like the Carnegie Medal, the scholarship recognizes those who are willing to reach out and make a difference in their world, and that seems fitting, given how the project was started.

My association with the Hero Fund has been one of the most humbling and cherished experiences of my life. I feel privileged to be counted among the very special people, these heroes, whom I read about each year, those who so willingly risk their lives that others may live. There is no more noble or important endeavor.

(Lessard is Executive Director of High Point, N.C., Community Foundation.)



## Tested by Fire

MARYLAND MAN FOLLOWED CHILDHOOD ADVICE IN RESPONDING TO VICTIMS OF BURNING HOUSE

June 2, 2000, was an exceptionally hot day in Mitchellville, Md. By evening, temperatures were still stuck in the high 90s, and Kevin W. Brown, 28, returning from the hardware store, still had yard work with his father to look forward to.

Once he was home, however, events took an unimaginable turn.

Brown was talking to his sister when his father interrupted with an urgent message, "Call 911! The house across the street's on fire!"

Before that evening, Brown had never wondered if he would ever enter a burning building to save someone—he knew his response to that hypothetical question was no, and it always had been. But when the situation actually arose, he had no time to ponder the hypothetical. Immediately he and his father ran to the burning house, as they knew a family lived there and might still be inside.

Failing to find anyone on their first entry, father and son saw no option but to try again. Crawling low to the carpet, they found the house's owner, who lay semiconscious on the floor upstairs. They drew him down to the first floor and outside, where he regained consciousness. He pleaded with the men, "My daughters are in the house!"

The man's urgent focus on the fate of his children compelled Brown to climb the stairs a third time. Beneath heavy smoke and in furious heat, he came to the realization that the floor print of the burning building was identical to that of his father's house. Lacking a better option, he made his way to where he knew a bedroom would be located. There, he heard the cry of a child. He called out but received no response, and then, nearly overwhelmed by the billowing smoke, Brown turned back.

Confronted with the situation, Brown learned that he would indeed enter a burning building to save a life. But even after he and his father [William A. Brown] were each awarded the Carnegie Medal for their bravery, the source of his courage remained a mystery. Whether it was instinct, faith, upbringing, or a combination of all three, he still cannot determine what drove him to act. Allowing for this ambiguity, there is a strain of consistency as Brown describes his home life and his heroic actions.

While Brown was growing up, his father always told him, "You get only one life." Brown took that to mean life is a singular and precious gift, that human life has value. On a stifling June day, his taking on great risk for the sake of others proved he had learned that lesson.  Tom Laskow, former student intern

### CENTENNIAL FILM AVAILABLE ON WEB

A Century of Heroes, a 14-minute film produced by the Carnegie Hero Fund last year to cite the centennial of its founding, has been placed on the Commission's Website: [www.carnegiehero.org](http://www.carnegiehero.org).

The film was shot partially on the site of the Harwick, Pa., coal-mine disaster, which, claiming 181 lives, prompted Andrew Carnegie to act on his long-held notion of recognizing civilian heroes. Adding authenticity to that part of the filming was its timing, 100 years to the day of the January 25, 1904, explosion. Other sites in the film are Washington, D.C., scene of one of the featured heroic acts, and, of course, Pittsburgh, the Hero Fund's home.

Mark Laskow, Commission President, comments on the Fund's philosophy in the film, which also includes interviews of several Carnegie Medal awardees.

The film was underwritten by the family of the late Benjamin R. Fisher, Jr., who served on the Commission from 1992 until the time of his unexpected passing in 2002. Ben was the first chairman of the Centenary Committee.



### OF HERITAGE AND "THINGS CARNEGIE"

It strikes me from my vantage point of almost a century from when my grandfather [Michael J. Franklin] received the medal, and knowing some small history of the American centuries, what a great difference the Commission made in bettering the life of brave men and women in a hard age, of extolling bravery which sought no reward, but, by giving such, reaffirming those virtues—and also helping provide some respite in necessity. My family was enriched then on notable levels, some members have fallen in various wars for their country since then, most have passed away, the numbers grow thin, but the spirit still prospers.

I feel fortunate to be linked in minute measure to this history and am grateful that the Commission is still intact today.

Brownstown/Pittston (Pa.) are no longer mining communities or railroad hubs, but the industry still remains vivid in the tales passed down to this generation. A proud part of that was and is the acknowledgement my grandfather received from the Carnegie Hero Fund. That will always be so, a proud part of our American heritage.

*Michael Franklin J. Dessoye • Bridgewater, N.J.  
(Michael J. Franklin was awarded the Carnegie Medal in 1919  
for helping to save two boys from a collapsing coal mine.)*

The spirit of the Carnegie Hero award is beautiful. I have received my medal and am greatly honored.

I did not help a police officer for awards and recognition. I helped him because his life was in danger. Two of my most treasured items are cards from Marcus's two children. When I read the crayon-drawn words of his young daughter, "Thank you for saving my daddy," my eyes almost always water. The fact that I saved his wife and children the great sadness and pain that comes from losing a loved one means more than anything.

I am glad to report that my arm is getting near full strength. A few months ago I started being able to do pull-ups again. Before I was stabbed I could do 30, and now I can do 20. One of the items I purchased with the grant money was a total gym, which has significantly increased the speed of rebuilding my shoulder. Thank you.

*Brett M. Schott • Vancouver, Wash.  
(Schott received the medal in 2004 for helping  
to rescue a police officer from an armed assailant.)*

Greetings from Dunfermline. Thank you very much for our copies of *imPULSE*. I was pleased to read the gist of David McCullough's talk and to see some kent faces (kent = "known" in Scottish).

I made my presentation on Pittsburgh to the Dunfermline Rotarians last week. The Dunfermline Press caught the spirit of my talk and condensed it superbly:

*(continued on page 4)*



IN OTHER WORKS

## Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy cites giving for “common good”

*The man who dies thus rich, dies disgraced.*

Andrew Carnegie's thoughts on the stewardship of private fortune are found in those words, taken from his 1889 essay, *The Gospel of Wealth*.

Carnegie encouraged the distribution of personal wealth for the common good, and by his example, he lived up to his standards. With the 1901 sale of his steel businesses for \$480 million (equaling about \$15 billion today), Carnegie began in earnest to give away what just might have been the world's largest private fortune. By the time of his death in 1919, he had distributed some \$350 million, mainly to philanthropic and educational organizations in the U.S. and Europe.

Honoring “inspirational philanthropists,” who, like Carnegie, have dedicated their private wealth to the public good, became the idea behind the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy, inaugurated four years ago by a consortium of the 22 institutions that Carnegie founded. Given every two years, the award, which may well be regarded as the “Nobel Prize for philanthropy,” goes to one or more individuals who have sustained an impressive career as a philanthropist.

The recipients must share Carnegie's vision that distributing one's accumulated wealth for the common good is just as important a task as building up that wealth in the first place. Their philanthropic works must also reflect a range and depth of endeavors and demonstrate a sustained record of accomplishment. Finally, the impact of their philanthropy on a field, a nation, or on the international community must be both strong and continuous.

Each recipient receives a bust of Andrew Carnegie, an original work of art cast in bronze and created specially for the awards, and a bronze medal.

The first awards ceremony, hosted in 2001 by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, took place at the New York Public Library, symbolizing the great importance Carnegie placed on libraries. Awards were presented to an impressive list of individuals by an equally distinguished list of national and international leaders: **George Soros** presented by Dr. Mamphela Ramphele; **Irene Diamond**, presented by Bill Moyers; the **Rockefeller Family**, presented by Richard Parsons; **Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg**, presented by Barbara Walters; **Ted Turner**, presented by Tom Brokaw; **Brooke Astor**, presented by David McCullough, and the **Gates Family**, presented by Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Two years later, the Carnegie Institution of Washington served as host for the ceremony, in which the **Sainsbury Family** of Great Britain and **Dr. Kazuo Inamori** of Japan were award recipients. Robert MacNeil, formerly of the MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour, was the master of ceremonies. Presenters were David Rockefeller and Thomas Foley, former speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives and former ambassador to Japan.

Scotland, where Carnegie was born in 1835 and where his philanthropy and influence are still profoundly evident, will be the setting for the 2005 presentation ceremony, to be held Oct. 4 in the new Scottish Parliament Building in Edinburgh. Hosted by Carnegie's four U.K.-based institutions, the event will have four aims: to celebrate the medal recipients, to engage participants in a high-level dialogue on the role of philanthropic foundations, to showcase the work of the Carnegie foundations internationally, and to spotlight the contribution that Scotland is making in the field of philanthropy.

William Thomson, Carnegie's great-grandson who is chair of the Carnegie U.K. Trust, said it is “not only a tremendous honor, but extremely fitting that such a prestigious global event is ‘coming home’ to Scotland.” As representatives of the Carnegie Hero Fund will be among those in attendance, look for details in an upcoming issue of *imPULSE*. ■■■



Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy

THE GOSPEL OF WEALTH...CALLS UPON THE MILLIONAIRE TO SELL ALL THAT HE HATH AND GIVE IT IN THE HIGHEST AND BEST FORM TO THE POOR BY ADMINISTERING HIS ESTATE HIMSELF FOR THE GOOD OF HIS FELLOWS...SO DOING, HE WILL APPROACH HIS END NO LONGER THE IGNOBLE HOARDER OF USELESS MILLIONS; POOR, VERY POOR INDEED, IN MONEY, BUT RICH, VERY RICH, TWENTY TIMES A MILLIONAIRE STILL, IN THE AFFECTION, GRATITUDE, AND ADMIRATION OF HIS FELLOW-MEN...

Andrew Carnegie

### TO THE HERO FUND (continued)

“Dunfermline Rotarians have opened a dialogue over a possible twinning with their counterparts in Pittsburgh, where the streetscape already features names like South Dunfermline Street and Forbes Avenue. The Dunfermline resonances are strong because Andrew Carnegie founded his steel empire at the confluence of the three rivers from which an earlier Laird of Pittencraff, Gen. John Forbes, expelled the French in the 18th century. Rotarians heard how the memory of the great industrialists in the once ‘Smoky City’ lived on in their many benefactions to the now beautiful and vibrant city.

“Mrs Jessie Spittal, who recently visited Pittsburgh to represent the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust at the centenary of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, recalled how she and her companion had been shown by a kindly local how to order in a bagel shop. ‘When we had chosen our bagels and walked up to the till, we were told that there was nothing to pay—the gentleman had paid for ours along with his own,’ she said. ‘That is the warm heart of Pittsburgh. If something comes of your proposed Rotary links, I am sure that is the spirit you will find among the people you will meet.’”

I have retired from the Carnegie Trusts. I shall miss the duties, but I don't think the connection will ever be lost and certainly not my interest in all things “Carnegie.”

Jessie Spittal • Dunfermline, Scotland

 BEHIND THE SCENE 

## RICH IN TRADITION, VARIED IN DUTY

By Eileen J. White, Financial Manager  
Carnegie Hero Fund Commission



Like the work of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission itself, the role of the Commission's financial manager is steeped in tradition and has a rich historical background. It's been an honor for me to have filled that role for the past seven years.

The financial fundamentals and goals of the organization were stipulated by the original bylaws in 1904 as vehicles to manage the fund, which was established by the Deed of Trust as written by Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie's initial endowment—\$5 million—has over the past 101 years generated more than \$27 million in philanthropic giving and a current portfolio of \$34 million.

A budget, which represents the organization's financial objectives, is the first step in the annual accounting process, and it takes both administrative and award expenses into consideration. Award expenses include grant payments, which are made to the recipients of the medal or their survivors, payments for death benefits, and educational assistance. A myriad monthly financial statements record all income received, monies spent, and assets retained by the organization. These statements also provide a tool for monitoring actual income and expenses against the budget. Coordinating the annual audit and tax return complete the accounting cycle.

Special projects include working with the Commission's finance and audit committees and, not incidentally, maintaining the *imPULSE* mailing list (616 recipients in 42 states, the District of Columbia, 10 Canadian provinces and territories, and nine foreign countries).

Because the Carnegie Hero Fund has a small staff, the financial manager position also performs the functions of employee benefits and insurance administration, purchasing, and human resources management. These functions involve working with vendors, insurance brokers, auditors, and banks, as well as the Commission's executive director and board members.

Last year I had the pleasure of working on the Commission's centennial observance. Planning a dinner for 250 guests and making travel arrangements for our out-of-town visitors were certainly a challenge, but also lots of fun! As arrangements included a bus tour of the city for our guests, I had the opportunity to meet many of our heroes, beneficiary families, and representatives of Carnegie's hero organizations in Sweden, Switzerland, and Great Britain.

## Fourth-graders address heroes in school writing assignment

Ruffsdale Elementary School is in a small, rural community about an hour southeast of Pittsburgh. Its students, as in every elementary school, have their "heroes," and, as you might suspect, they come from the sports world and the entertainment industry.

Cindy Poorbaugh, a fourth-grade teacher at Ruffsdale, now has her students thinking about heroes in an entirely new light.

About a year ago, Poorbaugh came across an article in her local newspaper recounting the heroic acts of several Carnegie Medal awardees. She then came up with the idea of having the children write letters to the heroes to ask them about their rescues and other thoughts they might be willing to share. The project was to be a part of the school's writing curriculum.

Those first letters were mailed simply to a name and the town or city in which the hero lived. Nonetheless, most of the letters found their intended target, as most of the awardees responded.

Encouraged by the experience, Poorbaugh this year contacted the Commission to ask for complete addresses of several of the awardees named last December. With consent of the awardees, the addresses were provided.

Just before the students sent their letters, Douglas Chambers, the Commission's Director of External Affairs, visited the school and talked about the Hero Fund. A highlight of his visit was watching the reaction of the students as they got to touch an actual Carnegie Medal, which they cautiously passed around the classroom. Joining the class that day were Carol Grubich and her class of third-graders.

Those interested in learning more about the project may write Poorbaugh and her students at Ruffsdale Elementary School, Route 31, R.D. #1, Box 101, Ruffsdale, PA 15679. 



Cindy Poorbaugh, right, and Carol Grubich with their third- and fourth-grade students.



**Happy 80th—Natalie Jaguszczak**, left, the beneficiary of a monthly grant from the Carnegie Hero Fund, was visited on the occasion of her 80th birthday in March by Commission representatives Susan Marcy, right, and Melissa Spangler, who took the photo. Natalie, living in Marianna, Pa., lost her husband Stephan in 1960 when he entered a tank at a food processing plant in Pittsburgh to rescue a coworker from suffocation. He was posthumously awarded the Carnegie Medal the following year.



◎ FROM THE ARCHIVES ◎

**O**n the morning of April 4, 1917, when late-winter ice still crusted the Atlantic waters of Bonavista Bay, off Cape Bonavista, Newfoundland, brothers Philip, 57, and Robert Way, 42, and another man, John Marsh, went onto the ice field to hunt seals.

Later that day the wind changed direction and blew at 40 m.p.h., producing five-to seven-foot seas. The ice broke into cakes, which were pulled away from shore by the tide. Too late the men realized that return to shore was impossible. Each was on a separate cake, and each cake continued to drift farther from the others; they were all helpless. Marsh, whose ice cake was especially unstable, slipped into the sea and drowned. The Way brothers were more than two miles from shore but separated from each other by a half-mile.

A 30-foot-high lighthouse stands on the cape, and from it the alarm keeper observed the men's plight. Although a message was sent to the colony's Minister of Fisheries to enlist the assistance of sealing steamers, the latter would not have been able to reach the three men in time to preserve their lives.

Five fishermen—brothers David, 58, and Hezekiah Abbott, 62; H. James Abbott, 42 (not related), and David Butler, 57, and his nephew Isaac J. Butler, 38—all local men and none a swimmer, launched a 20-foot-long "punt," a rectangular-shaped, flat-bottomed boat. Armed with oars, sticks known as "gaffs" that were fitted with a metal hook for use in landing seals, and a day's supply of food, the men made their way through broken ice, rowing in open water but at times forced to push ice cakes from their course, even to exiting the punt and sliding it along ice.

After struggling for at least one hour, the men reached Philip and took him aboard the punt, then began the struggle to reach Robert. One-half hour later, they had Robert aboard. Meanwhile, other men proceeded in a motorboat to the edge of

the ice field to await the arrival of the punt. When the two groups met, the boats were attached, and the motorboat towed the punt to shore, where hundreds of people were waiting.

A St. John's newspaper reported the rescue in rhyme:

*Among the true sons of Bonavista  
Are some of life-saving fame,  
And the five men who saved their two fellows  
Proved heroes indeed to the name.*

For their actions, each of the five rescuers was awarded the Carnegie Medal and reimbursement of up to \$1,000 for various expenses.  Marlin E. Ross, Case Investigator



*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:*

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