Last spring, Summer N. White earned her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from Oklahoma State University. Ten years earlier, White acted on an impulse to attempt to save a 32-year-old woman who lay injured and incapacitated on the road beside her car after a nighttime accident on an interstate highway in Mulvane, Kansas.

White, 18, was a passenger in a pickup truck that stopped at the scene. The injured woman screamed for help. White exited the truck and went to the woman’s aid. The threat of oncoming traffic loomed.

She grasped the woman’s arms and started to move her when a truck struck the damaged car, causing it to spin. White and the woman were struck and knocked against a median barrier wall. Both women were taken to the hospital. Over the next three days, White underwent treatment and surgery for injuries including fractures to her collarbone, shoulder, and back. The 32-year-old woman died.

On September 13, 2012, White was awarded the Carnegie Medal and a financial award for the extraordinary bravery she demonstrated that night.

“I don’t ever remember a distinct moment or decision, it was just instinct to help others in danger. I was in motion before I even had thought through the repercussions,” White said.

A decade later, as White reflects on her actions, she has clarity on the kind of individual she is and the strength which she possesses.

The Hero Fund saw increased interest in the Carnegie Medal and its heroes in the months after CBS’ news magazine 60 Minutes aired a segment about Carnegie heroes this past fall.

The piece, reported by correspondent Scott Pelley, focused on three awardees: Terryann E. Thomas, Peter F. Pontzer, and David Michael McCartney, as well as neuroscience research headed by Dr. Abigail Marsh about altruism and heroism.

60 Minutes staff conducted preliminary interviews with at least 200 Carnegie heroes before settling on their three subjects.

Thomas was awarded the Medal after rescuing a Topeka, Kansas, police officer, in 2015. “I remember thinking just almost instantly, ‘I am not gonna let somebody die,’” Thomas told Pelley.

Pontzer told Pelley he “just reacted” on a North Carolina Beach in 2015 when someone pointed to a boy struggling in a rip current. “It’s kind of like if you put your hand on a hot stove and pull it back right away without thinking. That’s kind of what it was like for me. It just needed to be done and I did it,” Pontzer said in the segment.

It was the same for McCartney, who pulled a woman from a burning vehicle in 2006 in Indiana. A minute after removing the driver, the car exploded.

The work of Dr. Abigail Marsh, a neuroscientist, was also featured on the show. At Georgetown University, she has published studies on the brains of two kinds of people—psychopaths who have no compassion for others and people who have so much compassion that they donated a kidney to a stranger.

“People who are psychopathic show very minimal responses in the amygdala when they see a frightened face,” Marsh said. “People who have given kidneys to strangers have an exaggerated response in the amygdala, which we think means that they are more sensitive than most people to others’ distress, better at interpreting when other people are in distress. More likely to pick up on it.”

Although that episode is now archived by CBS, Paramount+ users can stream it online.
That leaves the big question, would Jimmy played Zuzu, Karolyn Grimes, returns to Seneca Falls, New York, claims to be the inspiration for Odbody. This was discussed in a 2017 Hero article by Mark Laskow, Chair of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission.

At least one movie historian disputes Seneca Falls’ plaque which Capra may have seen while having town in the late 1940s. And Seneca Falls was the Capra, director of the film, when he passed through the town in 1947.

In the movie, George becomes distraught over the impending bankruptcy of the savings & loan bank. He gets drunk and, considering suicide, goes to a nearby bridge and prepares to jump. Before he can, his personal guardian angel, Clarence Odbody appears beside George and jumps into the river, where he struggles to stay afloat. George puts aside his own concerns and helps Clarence into the freezing water below. George successfully rescues him. On the surface, this looks like a good case, similar to many we have awarded in the past.

But, there are two issues. First, was George really attempting a rescue, or was he committing suicide himself just to get it wrong somewhere? Second, was George too drunk to be considered? George had gone on a bender the night before and was in a bad state when he went to the bridge. To award the Carnegie Medal, the rescuer must be able to understand the risk involved and make a reasoned decision to take the risk.

We don’t give the Medal because the rescuers made moral decisions to take personal risk to save the life of another. We also don’t give the medal for "hey, hold me by my taints". George’s actions answer both questions for us. We will award cases where the rescuer has used drugs or alcohol unless the rescuer could not understand the risk involved. In the case of George Bailey, his actions showed that he was fully capable of making an ethical decision. The rescuer was sober, made a reasoned decision to take the risk, and made it.

In the Sistine Chapel for the first ever meeting between the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Walton began his professional career with Gulf Oil Corporation, which was founded by his maternal grandfather William Larimer Mellon. In this industry, Walton and his family traveled extensively, spending time posted in Philadelphia, Houston, Tokyo, and Rome. Walton was also elected to Gulf’s Board of Directors. Walton enlisted in the Army and achieved the rank of First Lieutenant, serving in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and Frankfurt, Germany. Back stateside, Walton graduated from Harvard Business School with a master’s degree in business administration.

Family and faith were priorities for the Waltons. Wherever the family moved, they were involved with the local Episcopal Church. Walton raised money and offered guidance to parishes and ministers in the U.S. and abroad. In 1966, Walton, senior warden of St. Paul’s Church in Rome, was asked to be present in the Sistine Chapel for the first ever meeting between the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In 1968, Walton was appointed as the President of the Carnegie Museums and Carnegie Libraries of Pittsburgh. He held this position for 16 years. Highlights from his tenure include organizing the Pittsburgh, UPMC, Make a Wish, Foundation, Extra Mile Foundation, the Cultural District Development Committee, and others. Carnegie Mellon University and Allegheny College recognized Walton’s contributions to the city of Pittsburgh by awarding him honorary doctorate degrees.

His family described Walton as one of Pittsburgh’s great men who did his work with ready wit and good humor – a man who served with compassion, and was always welcoming and respectful. Walton was a corporate executive, philanthropic leader, and volunteer in his beloved Pittsburgh.

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Walton was born Dec. 18, 1930, to Rachel Mellon and John Fawcett Walton, Jr., in Pittsburgh. He attended ShadySide Academy and St. Paul’s School before continuing his education at Yale where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in English literature.

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And this, of course, is why it’s A Wonderful Life is a Christmas movie at heart. It’s about family, community, and obligations that burden, bind, and buoy us. So, with no authority at all to make this pronouncement, I say that if the imaginary world of Seneca Falls and the Carnegie Medal is a wonderful world, then award George Bailey the Carnegie Medal. Two medals actually. Watch the film just one more time and see for yourself why that might be.
In a screenshot of a Nov. 16 board meeting, Heidi Johnston, of Willow Creek, California, displays the Carnegie Medal for the Humboldt County supervisors, who recognized Johnston. Johnston helped save a 78-year-old man from drowning after his truck entered the 51-degree Humboldt Bay near Eureka, California, on Jan. 2, 2021. Johnston swam to the truck’s driver’s door, partially entered through the window opening and pulled the man from the truck shortly before it submerged completely. The man was treated at a hospital.

“Thanks for showing us and the rest of the community how it’s done,” said Supervisor Steve Madrone. “You don’t even think twice, diving into that cold water. That’s just so amazing.”

Photo courtesy of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors.

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Photo courtesy of the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors.

Carnegie Medal recipients Ernest Beauparlard and Ronald Rock pose with their partners after a private presentation held Nov. 2 at The Harvard Club of Boston, in which Hero Fund President Eric Zahren presented them with the Carnegie Medal.

Two years ago, Beauparlard and Rock responded to a burning building in Fairhaven, Massachusetts. An 83-year-old man who used a wheelchair was trapped on the second floor of the building with his adult daughter who refused to leave his side. Beauparlard and Rock entered the building, ran up a stairway, and grasped the man. As flames burned on the ceiling above them, they backed down the stairs and brought the man to safety.

Pictured, from left to right, are Robbie Raymond, Beauparlard, Rock, and Terry Rock.

Carnegie Medal recipients Stephen P. Carkhuff, left, and Alan R. Cote, right, pose with Fallon R. Andrews, one of the two people the duo saved from a burning vehicle on Oct. 23, 2019, in their Auburn, New Hampshire, neighborhood. After hearing a late-night crash, Cote and Carkhuff responded to the scene. Cote arrived first and forced opened the driver’s door as flames lapped over the windshield area. He entered the car, grasped the driver, and pulled him out of the car. Carkhuff and others helped him carry the driver to safety. Then Carkhuff returned to the car, crawled across the driver’s seat and center console, and was attempting to free Andrews from her seat belt, when Cote, through the passenger’s window, cut the belt. Freed, Carkhuff grasped Andrews and inched her out of the car, where Cote and others assisted him in carrying her to safety.

Hero Fund President Eric Zahren presented the Carnegie Medal to the pair at a Nov. 3 ceremony at Auburn Town Hall. Also present was Auburn police Chief Charles “Ray” Pelton.

Detroit Fire Commissioner Eric Jones, center, presented the Carnegie Medal posthumously awarded to Sivad H. Johnson to his brother, Jamal, left, and father, William, on Nov. 18. Johnson, an off-duty Detroit fire sergeant, died attempting to save three children from drowning in the Detroit River off an island beach in Detroit on Aug. 21, 2020. A firefighter for 26 years, Johnson was not assigned to a water rescue unit and entered the swift current without any safety equipment. He had been at the beach with his 10-year-old daughter, the younger of his two children. Johnson advanced toward the three endangered children, who were struggling in the water. A boat also responded to the scene. Ultimately, the children were safely removed from the water. Divers located Johnson, who had submerged, the following day; he had drowned. Jones presented Johnson’s medal during the Detroit Public Safety Foundation’s “Above and Beyond” awards ceremony.

“We are immensely proud of Sgt. Sivad Johnson, and we are thankful that the Carnegie Commission recognized his incredible act of love,” Jones wrote to the Hero Fund upon agreeing to present to Johnson’s family. Both Jamal and William Johnson also served as Detroit firefighters. Photo courtesy of the Detroit Public Safety Foundation.
Allen Linder, Jr., right, accepts the Carnegie Medal posthumously awarded to his father, Allen Robert Linder, from Huron County (Ohio) Commissioner Terry Boos on Jan. 6. The elder Linder, 65, a truck driver from Milan, Ohio, died in Cleveland on February 20, 2020, attempting to rescue a woman from suffocating in the chemical tanker trailer she was cleaning. Inside the oxygen-deficient trailer, the 39-year-old woman fell and was unconscious. Alerted, Linder responded to the trailer without a respirator or air supply. He climbed the ladder at the trailer’s side, reached the top, and entered the trailer through the small hatch. Shortly, Linder, too, was unconscious. Firefighters later removed both Linder and the woman. Both had suffocated.

Boos said it was “a true act of heroism,” according to the Norwalk (Ohio) Reflector newspaper. “It doesn’t surprise me, knowing your dad, that he would not hesitate to help anyone,” Boos said. “In that sense, it doesn’t shock me at all that he did that, but he was not only a hero but a great American.” Photo courtesy of Norwalk Reflector.

Beaumaris Yacht Club and president of the Beaumaris Fishing Club. He also co-founded the Pittsburgh Muskafa Foundation which provided a way for summer visitors to support year-round residents.

Walter valued time with his children, their spouses, and his grandchildren, often voicing how proud he was of all of them. His family remembers his humor, love of laughter, intelligent heart and mind, as well as his propensity to shed tears easily — especially for dear friends he hadn’t seen in a while.

He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Ellen; his four children, Joe (a member of the Hero Fund Commission since 2011); Rachel, Jimmy, and Mary; seven grandchildren; and his dog, Zeus. Walter is also survived by his sister Mary, numerous cousins, nieces, and nephews. He was preceded in death by his sister, Farley; brother, Jack; and son-in-law, Franny.

Ernest Lee Krueger, 72, of Spokane, Washington, died Wednesday, Sept. 22, 2021, after a tough battle with stomach cancer, with his beloved dog Piper by his side.

Krueger was born in Gordon, Nebraska, on Aug. 12, 1949. During adolescence he lived in Oregon, California, Wisconsin, and Washington. He attended high school in Yakima, Washington, and went on to join the Navy.

Krueger was stationed on the USS Independence and was a skilled helicopter rescue swimmer. During his years in the Navy, Krueger also enjoyed traveling to Europe. After serving, he graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in landscape architecture. Krueger's family still flies the Badger flag on Wisconsin game days.

In 1985, 36-year-old Krueger, 36, and his brother Nicholas P. Provoost, 38, were traveling in Leavenworth, Washington, when they came upon the scene of a fatal accident involving two cars. Flames spread over both vehicles while a 2-year-old girl remained fastened in her car seat inside one of the cars.

Amid intense flames, the brothers pulled the vehicles away from each other. Then, Provoost threw a rock through the passenger window of the car containing the toddler, which allowed them to unlock and open the passenger door. Flames entered the car as Krueger used a pocket knife to cut the toddler out of her car seat. The men pulled the girl from the car moments before its fuel tank exploded.

In addition to being awarded the Carnegie Medal, Krueger was also honored with the Washington State Patrol merit award for the heroism he demonstrated.

Krueger owned Coyote Construction, which maintained grounds and parks of Grand Coulee, Washington, and other areas. He finished his career as a financial advisor at Wells Fargo and retired in December 2020.

Krueger's family described "Ernie" as a vibrant person who enhanced the lives of those lucky to have met him. He was a loyal, respectful friend, free of judgement, who was always entertaining others with jokes and stories. Krueger was also enrolled as a tribal member of Oglala Sioux.

He found enjoyment in a variety of activities including basketball, scuba diving, sailing, mountain climbing, hunting, fishing, biking, and running. He was a passionate, self-taught chef who had a talent for pairing wines with his gourmet meals and desserts.

Later in his life, Krueger traveled to Japan, Canada, Tonga, the Caribbean, and Puerto Rico. One of Krueger’s and his partner of 35 years, Kay Stuev’s favorite travel play was international sailing in the San Juan with their friends.
Josef Gluck

A 15-year-old boy was stop a rocky breakwater with friends on June 24, 2020, when he noticed a younger boy drifting into deeper water in Lake Erie off of Mentor, Ohio. After shouting at the boy and receiving no response, Shane Morrison of Concord Township, Ohio, jumped in and swam to 13-year-old Donovan Conwell. Donovan had already struggled to remain afloat for several minutes, and as Shane approached, he panicked and submerged Shane repeatedly as Shane kept him afloat in the water. Shane attempted to swim back toward the breakwater, but he made little progress due to a strong current pulling them farther into the lake. Donovan was in and out of consciousness, as Shane trolled water. Authorities arrived in a boat, picked the boys up and took them to safety. Donovan, who ingested water, received treatment at a hospital; he recovered. Although nearly exhausted, Shane was not injured.

A 71-year-old man was mortally wounded to 13-year-old Donovan Conwell. Donovan had already struggled to remain afloat for several minutes, and as Shane approached, he panicked and submerged Shane repeatedly as Shane kept him afloat in the water. Shane attempted to swim back toward the breakwater, but he made little progress due to a strong current pulling them farther into the lake. Donovan was in and out of consciousness, as Shane trolled water. Authorities arrived in a boat, picked the boys up and took them to safety. Donovan, who ingested water, received treatment at a hospital; he recovered. Although nearly exhausted, Shane was not injured.

Randy Wilkinson, Jr.

A 71-year-old man was mortally wounded after a man armed with a machete entered a home containing 70 people and swung it indiscriminately, slashing anyone near him.

Gluck, 32, of Monsey, who managed the synagogue next door, fled the home with others and while many took shelter in the synagogue, Gluck reentered the home. Seeing the wounded man, who was recovering from recent heart surgery and had mobility issues, in a dining room, Gluck shouted for him to flee or hide, but the badly injured man couldn’t move. As the assailant entered the dining room, Gluck shouted at him, intending to goad him into following him outside. When the assailant failed to follow, Gluck entered the house again and threw a small table at the assailant, striking him. The assailant chased Gluck outside, and Gluck ran toward the synagogue, warning those inside to lock the doors. The assailant fled the scene, Gluck followed to record his license plate number. Police used that information to find and arrest the assailant two hours later. The 71-year-old man died from his injuries three months later. Four others who were injured recovered.

Neil Andrew Garrett

who he directed to climb onto his back. Towing the boy, he returned to the dock, and a police officer helped lift the boy to safety.

An unconscious, 10-year-old girl was floating in the Pacific Ocean about 375 feet from shore off the coast of San Diego on May 14, 2020. The 62-degree water was turbulent with large and frequent waves and a strong rip current. Neil Andrew Garrett, a 39-year-old aviator of Sannte, entered the water and swam to the girl. Hugging her to him with one arm, he sidestroked back toward shore, but made little progress in the rough conditions.

They were repeatedly struck and submerged by waves, and at one point, Garrett lost his grip on the girl, but quickly recovered her. A surfer approached them, and they placed the girl on the surfboard, the surfer moving her to shore while Garrett swam behind them. The girl was revived on shore and taken to a hospital; Garrett was nearly exhausted after the rescue, but both of them recovered.

A 64-year-old caregiver died trying to save her charge—a 71-year-old paraplegic woman—after a fire broke out in the woman’s Delhi, Louisiana, home on Nov. 23, 2020. Gwendolyn Theus, a 37-year-old man and his 3-year-old son were wading on a sandy shelf off an Apollo Beach, Florida, beach on June 11, when a strong tidal current carried them into the deep water of a channel that flowed toward Tampa Bay. Jansch Parackal called for help as he clung to his son while being carried to a point about 440 feet from the beach. Kristoff Jaleel Murray, 27, of Tampa, Florida, entered the water and swam toward Parackal and son Daniel. Murray swam at least 150 feet toward them, but was unable to reach them. At some point he was seen swimming back to the beach, but he submerged. Parackal and Daniel became separated as the current carried them farther from shore. Rescue authorities recovered them about a mile west of where...
After hitting a ditch and swerving four times, a burning sedan came to rest on its roof atop a chain-link fence, with its back end about 4 feet above the ground. Another subway rider, 52-year-old Sean P. Conaboy, of Lexington, North Carolina, entered the river near where his boat was anchored. On June 19, 2020, a family fun day on St. Joseph River. With the boy and reached him in the river, but then had difficulty swimming with the boy. Hearing the mother’s calls for help, Michael Byers, a 65-year-old retired business operator of Lansing, North Carolina, entered the river fully clothed, and swam to Jenkins and the boy. He grasped the boy’s arm and took him from Jenkins, towing him to the boat ramp where the boy safely exited the water. Byers was nearly exhausted and could not return to assist Jenkins, who was floating in the river. The boy was treated overnight at a hospital; Jenkins drowned.

In a Aug. 23, 2020, single-vehicle accident, a sedan left a Winter Garden, Florida, highway, struck a bridge’s guide rail and jumped 30 feet into the water. He swam to the girl, who was shallow water. He swam to the girl, who was submerged and did not resurface. Stahly and Meade, who entered the river from farther downstream helped the boy safely exit the water.

Carnage from Austin Michael Stahly and Cameron Meade pour after one of their recent adventures. The two were camping near Sodus, Michigan, when they spotted an 8-year-old boy struggling in the swift current of the St. Joseph River. Matthew Ryan Kihlstrand, a man in the boy’s party, had also entered the river, but as he and the boy drifted downstream Kihlstrand submerged and did not resurface. Stahly and Meade, who entered the river from farther downstream helped the boy safely exit the water.

A June 19, 2020, family fun day on St. Joseph River near Sodus, Michigan, turned deadly when an 8-year-old boy struggled to swim in swift current near where his boat was anchored. On the boat, 45-year-old sales mg Matthew Ryan Kihlstrand, of Banda, Michigan, entered the water and swam after the boy, the current carrying them both downstream. Kihlstrand ultimately submerged and did not resurface. Austin Michael Stahly, a 30-year-old manager of South Bend, Indiana, and Cameron Meade, a 31-year-old courier of South Bend, were camping nearby and responded, entering the water and helping the boy safely exit the river. Water rescue crews searched the scene that night and the following day for Kihlstrand, who was found about 1.5 miles downstream. He drowned.

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<thead>
<tr>
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Rench, then held to her as the other man pulled Hahn and ultimately Rench to safety. Rench sustained fractures, lacerations, and contusions to her body, but she was not burned. Hahn, who had inhaled smoke, was treated at a hospital for an injured right shoulder and a laceration that required sutures. He recovered.

A 73-year-old woman, Carol S. DeLuca, was tending her Obitie, South Carolina, backyard on the evening of July 3, 2020, near the bank of an 8-foot-deep pond when an alligator, weighing 275 pounds and measuring 10 feet long, emerged from the pond, bit down on her leg and dragged her into the water. Neighbor Kenneth Brian McCarter, a 44-year-old plant operations manager, was nearby when he saw her splashing in the water and calling for help. He entered the water and swam about 70 feet to DeLuca. He grabbed her around her waist and attempted to pull her up to the surface of the water, but he could not. They were then both pulled under the water. McCarter attempted again to pull her to the surface, yanking her free of the alligator’s jaws. McCarter dragged and pushed DeLuca, who was heavily bleeding, back toward the bank where McCarter’s teenaged son was waiting to assist them from the water. DeLuca underwent multiple surgeries but regained the ability to walk with a cane. McCarter was not injured.

Kelli A. Daley, 54, was standing on a subway platform in New York City, on May 19 waiting for a train home when a 22-year-old man with a knife ambushed her from behind and repeatedly stabbed her, even after she fell to the ground. Another subway rider, 52-year-old cameraman Sean P. Conaboy, of Brooklyn, New York, shoved the assailant to the ground, briefly separating them as Conaboy also fell. The assailant returned to his attack on Daley. Conaboy regained his footing, wrapped his arm around the assailant’s neck and pulled him off of Daley, as the assailant continued to attempt to stab Daley. Conaboy pinned the assailant to the floor. Pursuing the assailant Daley was taken to a hospital where she was treated for wounds to her neck, shoulder, and chest.

After hitting a ditch and swerving four times, a burning sedan came to rest on its roof atop a chain-link fence and a bamboo tree in a August 23, 2020, accident in Winter Garden, Florida. Its back end was about 4 feet off the ground. Carnegie Hero Corey A. Purinton was working nearby and pulled driver Richard J. Broccolo, who was badly injured, through the rear windshield opening, both of them falling to the ground. Purinton patted out flames on Broccolo’s clothing and dragged him away from the car to safety. Photo courtesy of Laura Broccolo.

They had last been seen. Murray’s body was found three days later on a beach about 1.5 miles west of the scene. Purinton, Dante, and Murray drowned.

Jason J. Hahn, a 48-year-old business owner of Mason City, Iowa, stopped at the scene of an overturned pickup truck on April 5 off a rural Mason City road. The truck’s diver, 61-year-old Donna K. Rench, was suspended by her seat belt inside the truck that had come to rest on its passenger side. Smoke filled the cab making it impossible to see Rench. Hahn broke out the truck’s windshield with the help of another man. Flames by then had spread to the truck’s engine and entered the cab on its dashboard. After retrieving a knife, Hahn partially entered through the windshield and cut the seat belt, causing Rench to fall into the cab’s back seat. With the other man grasping Hahn’s belt, Hahn felt blindly around the back seat area until he found

accident, and after learning what had happened to the girl, 23 months, he climbed over the bridge’s guard rail and jumped 30 feet into the shallow water. He swam to the girl, who was unresponsive. Holding her over his shoulder, he tapped her back until she coughed, spat up water, and opened her eyes. Bauer held her above the surface of the water until a pontoon boat arrived to take them to shore. The toddler was airlifted to the hospital and was released the following day. Bauer was core, but he did not require medical treatment.

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Dicken received the Carnegie Medal for saving a 64-year-old woman whose car was stuck on a railroad track as a freight train approached in 1975. Paralyzed by fear, the woman remained in her seat until 4 p.m. Seventy-nine people were aboard the Boeing 737 jetliner. 

Almost immediately, the 102,000-pound plane lost altitude. Less than a mile from the end of the runway, the jetliner crashed into the traffic-clogged 14th Street Bridge, where it struck seven occupied vehicles. Four people were killed and four others were injured.

The plane descended past the damaged bridge wall and tailing, breaking through the ice-covered Potomac River. The wreckage sank in 25-feet of water. About 73 people aboard lost their lives.

In the next 20 to 30 minutes, the six survivors of the crash would be shown selflessness and bravery by four men who came to their aid in multiple ways from the ground and air. Kelly L. Duncan, stewardess, Patricia Felch, and another man, surfaced amid remnants of the aircraft.

Roger Olian, 34, a flight-deck officer for Air Florida, was stationed at the hangar of the Aviation Hospital, and M.L. Skunnik III, 28, an office services assistant for the Congressional Budget Office, were among those trying to return to their suburban neighborhoods—Olian to Arlington, Virginia, and Skunnik to Lorton, Virginia.

By 4 p.m., Olian was stopped on the 14th Street Bridge as his car’s gas tank depleted and the battery went dead. Snow continued to fall and the air temperature was about 25 degrees. Skunnik sat in another vehicle on the bridge, accompanied by four members of his carpool.

Meanwhile, Donald W. Usher, 28, chief pilot from Gambells, Maryland, and Melvin E. Windsor, 41, rescue technician from Monrovia, Maryland, were stationed at the hangar of the Aviation Support Office of the U.S. Park Police, waiting for the winter storm to pass.

Earlier in the day, the train continued toward the crash site. Usher decided that no routine flying would be permitted because of the inclement weather.

At Washington National Airport, now Ronald Reagan Airport, flight delays abounded. Air Florida Flight 90, which was headed for Fort Lauderdale, Florida, was scheduled for takeoff at 2:15 p.m., but weather delays and the process of de-icing the plane delayed departure until 4 p.m. Seventy-nine people were aboard the Boeing 737 jetliner.

Trouble prior to takeoff did not end once the plane was airborne. Almost immediately, the 102,000-pound plane lost altitude. Less than a mile from the end of the runway, the jetliner crashed into the traffic-clogged 14th Street Bridge, where it struck seven occupied vehicles. Four people were killed and four others were injured.

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Olian was halfway to the victims, the line snagged on a fragment of ice. By now, he had been in the water for 20 minutes. However, in an effort to free himself from the line, Olian pulled himself closer to shore. Then, as he directed, the crowd pulled and released the line. Olian was free to resume his trek toward the six survivors.

As Olian approached the men and women clinging to fragments of the plane, albeit focused, he became increasingly physically tired. The pieces of ice to which he could cling or climb onto became smaller and there was jet fuel seeping from the area of the crash.

At 4:20 p.m., the sound of a U.S. Park helicopter, piloted by Usher and Windsor, reassured Olian.

Eleven minutes earlier, Usher and Windsor received a radio call from headquarters notifying them of a possible plane crash in the area. Despite the current weather conditions and Usher’s previous no-fly edict, the men decided to respond to the call. The duo rendezvoused and then directed the chopper, a Bell 206, and were off by 4:16 p.m.

Poor visibility meant Usher kept visual reference through the helicopter’s floor windows, using the highway as a landmark to guide him to the scene. During the four-minute trip, Usher and Windsor stayed connected with each other and the U.S. Park Police headquarters over the radio.

When the crowd saw the helicopter arrive on the scene, they pulled Olian to safety. He was within about 10 feet of the victims. Near shore, he was taken to a heated ambulance, and later to the hospital.

Taking the chopper over the jetliner’s exposed tail, Windsor and Olian saw six victims clinging to the wreckage, submerged to their shoulders and necks.

Usher circled the scene to appraise the situation at low altitude. He had extensive experience as a pilot in Vietnam and had performed rescues on the Potomac while flying with the Park Service, but the current conditions presented new challenges.

Usher maneuvered the helicopter so the skids were above the plane debris, and Windsor dropped life jackets and the looped end of a secured line to the victims.

The noisy craft prevented Windsor from giving any verbal direction so when Duncan, the plane’s stewardess, took hold of the rope, she followed his motioning to put the line around her chest, under her arms. On Windsor’s call, Usher took the craft up, and delivered Duncan to the crowd on the bank, which included arriving firemen. Skutnik’s group handed their rope to Windsor before Usher flew back to the wreckage.

Windsor secured the extra rope to the helicopter, and another line to a life ring. Hamilton took hold of the rope, and Stiley put his head through the life ring, while holding onto Tirado and Felch.

To maintain the helicopter’s equilibrium, Usher did not lift the victims from the water this time, but flew toward the bank, pulling them up to chest depth. He released Olian about 50 feet from the crash site, Felch fell back into the water and floated. Then, halfway to the bank, Tirado dropped onto a sheet of ice.

With Hamilton and Stiley still in tow, Usher continued to the water line where bystanders took hold of the men.

Three victims remained in the freezing water. Usher returned to Tirado and dropped a life ring to her, but weak and blinded by jet fuel, she was unable to locate it. Windsor then maneuvered the line so the ring touched her and she grabbed hold of it. In the same manner as before, Usher towed Tirado through the water, to shore.

Twenty feet from the bank, Tirado lost hold on the line.

After commotion on the bank, Skutnik, unable to watch Tirado’s suffering any longer, removed his boot and coat, and plunged into the frigid water. Although he had no experience in water rescues, his impulsive to try outweighed any unfamiliarity he had, he later said.

Tirado was on her back and submerging when Skutnik reached her. He supported her and swam toward a firman who met them. Together they took Tirado to shore.

After the fact, Skutnik, interviewed by Time, reflected that his part in the rescue of Tirado was “Something I never thought I would do. Somebody had to go into the water.”

When Usher and Windsor saw that Tirado had been rescued successfully, they took the chopper back to Felch, who was hobbing near the wreckage, too exhausted to grab hold of a rope or life ring. Seeing her fatigue, Windsor unhooked his seat belt and stood on the helicopter’s right skid, bracing himself against it. He steered and seized Felch with one arm and supported the back of her head with the other.

Windsor directed Usher to turn the helicopter slightly so the skid would move under Felch and support a portion of her weight. At this point the right skid was under water and the other rested on a sheet of ice. With Windsor and Felch delicately positioned on the skid, Usher returned to the bank, where rescue personnel received Felch. She was the last survivor out of the water, having endured 30 minutes of numbing effects, after surviving a deadly plane crash.

The sixth victim, whose identity could not be conclusively established despite Hero Fund staff’s best efforts, was initially spotted by Usher and Windsor, bloodied and visibly injured; he had twice passed on the rope offered to him, instead passing it along to two of the other five victims. Usher and Windsor flew back to the wreckage to search for him. They scanned the area for several minutes but could not find the man who acted with selfless resolve.

“If in a mass casualty, you’ll find people like him, but I’ve never seen one with that commitment,” Windsor reflected in an interview with Time magazine.

The five surviving victims were hospitalized and treated for hypothermia, internal injuries, and broken bones. All except Tirado were discharged a month later.

Olian took a 45-minute hot shower at the hospital, after which his body temperature rose to 97.5 degrees. He was sore for a few days and somewhat ill from what he suspected was ingested jet fuel. A month after the act he had yet to gain back full feeling in his extremities.

Skutnik was given a hot bath, but he was not detained at the hospital. Usher and Windsor’s clothing was saturated with absorbed jet fuel fumes. They were not injured.

All four men were awarded the Carnegie Medal and monetary grants.

“I can’t begin to tell you how proud I am to be a recipient,” Usher stated in a letter to then-Hero Fund President Robert Off.

In addition to receiving the Carnegie Medal for civil heroism, Olian, Skutnik, Usher, and Windsor received other recognition. Skutnik was invited to sit with Mrs. Reagan during the State of the Union address, and after mention of his act by President Reagan, Skutnik received a standing ovation. He also received the Robert P. Connolly Medal of Service Beyond the Call of Duty award.

Olian gave $2,000 to the National Hospital in Arlington, Virginia.

In 2004, Windsor and his wife Maureen, attended the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission’s Centennial celebration at Carnegie Hall in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Windsor was featured in the wreckage of Air Florida Flight 90 and the subsequent rescue of five survivors from the icy Potomac River in Washington, D.C. The event was highlighted in the ‘Heroes Among Us’ video at the ceremony.

Windsor was awarded the State of Pennsylvania’s Star of Courage, a U.S. Coast Guard Gold Lifesaving Medal, and the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission’s State of Pennsylvania Medal of Valor. Windsor was also awarded the U.S. Army Good Conduct Medal, the U.S. Navy Good Conduct Medal, a Purple Heart and a National Defense Service Medal.

In addition, Tanney and his wife were recipients of a Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, and the State of Pennsylvania’s Star of Valor medal.

The Red Cross presented three awards to the rescuers, including a Certificate of Appreciation, a Certificate of Merit, and a Certificate of Esteem.

The five survivors were discharged from the hospital, and were dismissed from the service after receiving a heroism citation.

Olian was awarded a Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, and the State of Pennsylvania’s Star of Valor medal. Skutnik was awarded the Navy Meritorious Service Medal, the Coast Guard Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Army Achievement Medal.

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**GRAVE MARKERS** Bronze grave markers (below), cast in the likeness of the Carnegie Medal, are available at no cost to the families of awardees who have passed. They are designed for mounting on stone or bronze memorials.

**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.

**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.

**ANNUAL REPORTS** Copies of the Hero Fund’s most recent annual reports (2019-2020) are available online or by contacting the Hero Fund.

**IMPULSE ONLINE?** Should you wish to receive Impulse in PDF rather than in your mailbox, let us know.

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“**A sunny disposition is worth more than fortune. Young people should know that it can be cultivated; that the mind, like the body, can be moved from the shade into sunshine.**”

— Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie, 1920

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**Further information is available online or by contacting the Commission.**

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

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**THE QUOTABLE A.C.**

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**CONTINUUM**

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