



Impulse

A periodic newsletter of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission

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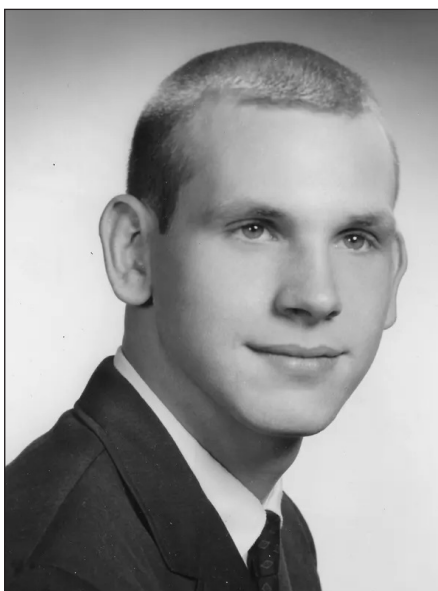


NEW PODCAST TELLS HERO STORIES TO WIDER AUDIENCE

A year in the making, season one of "Fear on Hold," a new podcast by the Carnegie Hero Fund, has recently launched.

Each short episode features a Carnegie hero who shares what was going on in their mind before and during their rescue, as well as additional commentary from victims, Hero Fund investigators, eyewitnesses, and others.

Season one includes individual episodes on Carnegie heroes Peter C. Di Pinto, Sr., who saved a woman from being struck by a train after an accident in Brookhaven, New York; Hiedi Johnston, who entered the 51-degree Humboldt Bay in Eureka, California, to save a 78-year-old man who remained in the driver's seat of his pickup after it entered the bay; Jenna Fanelli, who saved a 5-year-old boy from drowning at a community barbeque in Yonkers, New Jersey; Clerc Higgins Cooper, who, at the age of 14, saved two men from drowning in Lake Pontchartrain off of New Orleans; and Donald E. Thompson, who pulled a man from a burning vehicle on a ▶ [p. 2](#)



*A University of Akron donor renamed his scholarship for Carnegie Hero **Hugh Michael O'Neil** after hearing of his heroics.*



*Friends and family of Carnegie Hero **Jessica Lea Embry** created a music and swimming scholarship in her name.*

Scholarships honoring Carnegie heroes keep legacies alive

Even after death, some Carnegie heroes are providing for others. Two scholarships have been created in the names of **Jessica Lea Embry** and **Hugh Michael O'Neil**.

Embry, a 40-year-old fine arts teacher from Wilmington, North Carolina, lost her life on April 18, 2021, trying to save two young sisters who were pulled into the Atlantic Ocean by strong rip currents off of Kure Beach, North Carolina. Multiple people responded including Embry and Carnegie Hero **Rayna Michele Montgomery**, a 17-year-old high school student from Stuart, Virginia. Embry reached at least one of the girls in the water, but she was repeatedly submerged by rough surf and eventually lost consciousness. While the girls were eventually brought to shore, firefighters later pulled Embry from the water. Embry could not be revived; she had drowned.

Not only is Embry's physical presence missed by her family, but her local influence in her biggest passions – music and swimming – are also missed.

"She was amazing," said Martha Brunetti, Embry's aunt.

Embry was an accomplished swimmer at Robert C. Byrd High School in Clarksburg, West Virginia, where she attended. She still holds the school's record in the 200 Individual Medley from 1999. ▶ [p. 4](#)

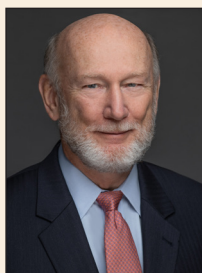


BOARD NOTES

HERO FUND'S UNIQUE MISSION REQUIRES UNIQUE METRICS

By Mark Laskow, Chair Emeritus Carnegie Hero Fund Commission

If we are open to it, a minor administrative detail can give insight into an important issue. Just such a detail nudged me into thinking more carefully just what it is that the Carnegie Hero Fund does for the heroes. Fundamentally, the Hero Fund marches to the beat of the instructions laid down by Andrew Carnegie in 1904. We award heroic acts with a medal and monetary hero grant and provide financial support to injured heroes and survivors of deceased heroes. But is that all, or is there something else here? Yes, emphatically yes.



Mark Laskow

The detail that set me thinking is a widely used measure of good governance by nonprofit organizations: the total spending that goes toward beneficiaries, such as Carnegie heroes and their families, compared to the cost to run the organization.

Our direct spending on medals and grants is not especially high in a relative sense. We spend much more investigating the cases to select the heroes and administering the fund to allow for case investigation, award consideration, and medal presentation. The Hero Fund does not fundraise, but members of the Commission do discuss this metric to assess our efficiency, and the discussion that follows begs the question: is case investigation "overhead," or do the heroes benefit from it in any way? In my judgment, if there is no investigation there is no medal, or at least no medal that means as much. It certainly would not be the Carnegie Medal we award to our heroes today.

The honor due a hero derives solely from his or her own courageous act. They would be due this honor regardless of Andrew Carnegie's creation of the Hero Fund. The Hero Fund stands as a witness to the world that each hero's act fell within the standards developed by Carnegie and his fund.

There are two separate ideas packed inside that last sentence. First, we independently confirm the facts of what happened. It is no criticism of

ROBERT H. BLASKO



Robert H. Blasko

Robert H. Blasko, 91, of North Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, died September 27, 2023, at his home.

He was born April 3, 1932, in Bradenville, Pennsylvania, a son of the late Andrew and Helen Blasko. Prior to his retirement, he was employed at Elliot Company as a Tool & Die Maker. He was a member of St. Agnes Church where he sang in the choir and enjoyed woodworking.

In 2003, Blasko rescued a woman from assault in White Oak, Pennsylvania. The 46-year-old woman was arguing with her boyfriend, 36, in the parking lot of a strip mall when the boyfriend grabbed hold of her and began to shake her. Blasko, then 71, was sitting inside his vehicle parked nearby and witnessed the assault. He exited the vehicle and approached the couple, yelling at the man to distract him. Blasko and the assailant then engaged in a struggle, after which Blasko took a few steps back. The assailant suddenly set upon him, striking him repeatedly in the face and sending him hard to the pavement. The enraged man then fled but was shortly apprehended by police. Blasko required extensive hospitalization for treatment, including surgery, of severe injuries, and a period of rehabilitation. He received the Carnegie Medal in 2006 for his heroism in the incident.

Blasko is survived by his wife, Marcella Jugan Blasko, son Robert D. Blasko, daughters Debra Mainiero and Diane Blasko, two brothers, Charles and Byron Blasko, and one grandchild, Daniel.

He was preceded in death by brothers, Thomas, George, and Andrew Blasko.

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New podcast tells hero stories widely

Los Angeles freeway on Christmas Day 2013.

Recorded interviews, original music by Big Science Music in Pittsburgh, and sound effects combine to bring listeners into these riveting rescue acts.

In Di Pinto's account, "Rescue on the Rails," listeners experience a heart-stopping moment when Di Pinto first sees a train headed toward them.

"We're gonna get her out, or we're gonna die together," he said on the episode. "Because there was no way I was leaving her."

Hero Fund Communications Director Jewels Phraner, who managed the project, said she thought that the podcast was a great idea.

"Every rescue for which we award the Carnegie Medal is life-or-death. They are truly heart-wrenching stories of bravery. Who wouldn't want to listen to those stories unfold on a podcast?" she said.

Staff at the Fund didn't have experience producing a podcast, so, it assembled a team that included production company Big Science Pods in Pittsburgh and consultant Bill Garrison.

Each episode involved dozens of phone calls to those involved in the rescues -- some dating back to more than a decade ago -- conducting interviews, writing and rewriting scripts, and sound mixing to create a stellar product that is now available to the public.

"Part of our purpose, set by founder Andrew Carnegie in 1904, was to spread the news about the Hero Fund and those it recognizes," said Eric Zahren, president of the Hero Fund.

In fact, in the Hero Fund's Deed of Trust, penned by Carnegie, he stated that an annual report containing a detailed statement of the Carnegie Medal

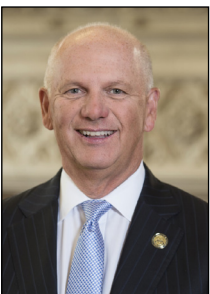


New trustees to join Hero Fund

At its Sept. 19 meeting, board members elected two new members to the Commission: longtime journalist Lisa Sylvester and David J. Hickton, a former U.S. attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania and founding director of the University of Pittsburgh Institute for Cyber Law, Policy, and Security.



Lisa Sylvester



David J. Hickton

Lisa Sylvester is a veteran network news journalist. Her on-air experience includes working as a main anchor in Pittsburgh local news and as a network correspondent for CNN and ABC News. Sylvester's work has been recognized with numerous awards, including Emmys for Anchor–Best Evening Newscast, Best Anchor in the Mid-Atlantic Region, anchor for breaking news coverage, and for her reporting on Pittsburgh's Underground Railroad, which also earned her a Golden Quill. She has also received several national awards, including a Business Emmy for CNN's "Exporting America" series, and a Peabody Award for her role in ABC's coverage of the Sept. 11th terrorist attacks. Sylvester has a bachelor's in science in International Economics from Georgetown University and a Master's Degree from Northwestern University. In addition to the Hero Fund, she serves on the Pittsburgh board of the Crossroads Foundation and is a member of the North Hills Ebony Women and McKnight Women's Association.

In addition to serving as a U.S. attorney, David J. Hickton is founder of the University of Pittsburgh Institute for Cyber Law, Policy, and Security. Hickton also has faculty appointments as professor in Pitt's School of Law, School of Computing and Information, and Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. Hickton served as staff director and senior counsel to the U.S. House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis from May 2020 to June 2021. He has been a staunch supporter of many civic organizations. He currently serves as the managing trustee of the National Opioid Abatement Trust II; as well as a senior advisor at the Center for Strategic & International Studies. Hickton is a 1978 graduate of the Pennsylvania State University and a 1981 graduate of the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

"Lisa and David bring a wealth of experience and enthusiasm for the Hero Fund's mission of recognition and support of selfless altruism, and we welcome their expertise and perspective on the Commission's board. As leaders in the Pittsburgh community and far beyond, we look forward to adding their significant talents to the important work of the Hero Fund moving forward," said Eric Zahren, the Hero Fund's president and chair. ☼

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Podcast

recipients awarded each year should be published in the newspaper.

"While we still remain robust in distributing press releases to national and local media regarding each of the heroes, times have changed, and our outreach efforts need to reflect that in order to reach new audiences," Zahren said. "Thus, 'Fear on Hold.'"

Fear on Hold is available on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or your favorite podcast platform. Listeners can all access it at fearonhold.org. ☼

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BOARD NOTES

the news media to say that the Hero Fund does that in a more thorough and reliable way. We regularly spend months on our investigations and produce files that are many, many times more voluminous than any media report. Second, the staff applies standards to the facts they have gathered and judge whether those facts meet our criteria for an award. If staff agree they produce a case report to the Hero Fund Commission that is thorough and disciplined. When the Commission meets to vote the members have read the case reports. Staff members are present to answer questions, and they have the full case file on hand.

Members of the Hero Fund Commission are curious and typically ask a lot of questions. They then take the final vote, adding another layer of judgment to the staff's careful work. And, yes, there are cases that are not approved.

You can see that this process is nothing like the evening news, and that is as it should be. Why? Why not just rely on a news report and be done with the time and expense of investigation and evaluation? Because our job is to find, confirm, and recognize the very best of the best. In our culture we use the word "hero" very loosely, to recognize the "salesman of the month" to a sports figure who had a good game. That's all great, but it is our challenge to make sure that a "Carnegie hero" is well recognized for the special human being that he or she is.

And about that word "recognized." It is part of our mission to tell the stories of the Carnegie heroes to our society at large. We don't do it to convince you or anyone else to step in front of a speeding train to rescue someone in a wheelchair – Andrew Carnegie recognized that heroism is instinctual many years ago.

We do, however, want to make recognition available to the Carnegie heroes. Often our heroes have to act alone, with no crowd to cheer them on or they're humble and say that they did what anyone else in that position would have done. But we at the Commission – with our nearly 120 years of hero data – know that's not the case: Not everyone acts when faced with danger. And while we are careful to respect the modesty of our rescuers, we want them, their families, and communities to know that what they did was truly remarkable. A wee bit of cheering afterward can't be too bad. And as for the families of Carnegie heroes who did perish in the rescue, we hope public honor for their dead helps a little bit. It can mean a lot to a family for an outside organization to come in and agree that yes, their loved one was a hero. ☼



IS THE 'HEROES FOR HEROES' PEER NETWORK FOR YOU?

Carnegie Medal recipients interested in talking to other heroes now have a vehicle by which to make those connections. The Hero Fund has initiated a peer support network for Carnegie heroes to speak with each other about their common experience in taking on great risk to save another person, often a stranger.

"We've long observed how beneficial it is for newly awarded recipients to talk to other Carnegie heroes," said Eric Zahren, Hero Fund President.

Participants will be paired with one of a handful of volunteer coaches to discuss after-rescue issues and challenges where there is need for supportive communication.

Although the Hero Fund has long offered to reimburse the cost of treatment of PTSD-related conditions that result from the heroic act, it has identified a need for broader support within its mandate.

Beyond the initial connection, the conversations will remain confidential from the Hero Fund, in case that, too, is an obstacle for some heroes.

"We want to provide support for heroes across the spectrum, and have no better resource to draw from than other awarded heroes who have experienced a similar life-altering event and have dealt with the realities of the aftermath in daily life," concluded Zahren.

To participate, e-mail carnegiehero@carnegiehero.org. ☼

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Scholarships honoring Carnegie heroes

Embry was also a talented musician with bachelor's and master's degrees in music. During her career, Embry focused on teaching music to students with disabilities, eventually bringing United Sound to her elementary school. United Sound is a nationwide initiative that pairs students with and without disabilities in a band and orchestra setting.

After her death, her friends appealed to high school alumni for the funds to establish the scholarship in her name.

"Jessica was a unique person who cared about children, and her friends wanted to honor her. They raised \$5,000," said Brunetti.

Applicants for the scholarship must be involved in the fine arts or swimming programs at Robert C. Byrd High School. Two students have received \$1,000 from The Jessica Embry Memorial Scholarship.

The 2022 recipient, Annalise Gentilozzi, said she was honored to receive the scholarship.

"Jessica Embry was known to be an amazing athlete, a stellar musician, and an overall great person. For me to receive the scholarship in the name of such an amazing person, it was truly an honor."

Gentilozzi attends West Virginia Wesleyan College, where she still swims.

A recent article from the University of Akron paints the history of the Hugh Michael O'Neil Scholarship in honor of Carnegie Hero Hugh Michael O'Neil.

On July 21, 1964, a car containing three people fell into a sinkhole, 30 feet deep and 20 feet across, after the roadway under them collapsed. A number of motorists, including 19-year-old O'Neil, stopped at the scene. With a rope tied around him, O'Neil descended a ladder and dropped 13 feet to the floor of the crater. Arriving Akron Police officer **Ronald Rotruck**, 27, tied one end of another rope around his waist and also entered the sinkhole. O'Neil forced open a door of the sedan and removed a 13-year-old girl. O'Neil removed his rope and tied her to the lower rungs of the ladder to be hoisted to safety. Rotruck helped the driver, 48, from the sedan. While O'Neil took the woman to the ladder, Rotruck returned to the sedan for the third victim. Suddenly, the sandy soil shifted, trapping Rotruck's feet. The men on the other end of his rope tried to pull him free, but his rope gave way. Rotruck sank to his waist. O'Neil approached Rotruck, but a second shift trapped O'Neil to his chin. The two sank, their bodies and the body of the third person, a girl, 10, were recovered later.

Six years earlier University of Akron alum, Ferdinand Brubaker, donated stock to the Akron university to establish the Ferdinand A. and Lorry Brubaker Scholarship Fund. Brubaker was so moved by O'Neil's heroic act, that he changed the name of his scholarship to recognize him instead.

In the nearly 60 years since the catastrophe, more than \$300,000 has been distributed through approximately 500 scholarships.

"It has helped students not only prepare for professional careers but, for some, it has touched their own deeper sense of purpose," the article stated.

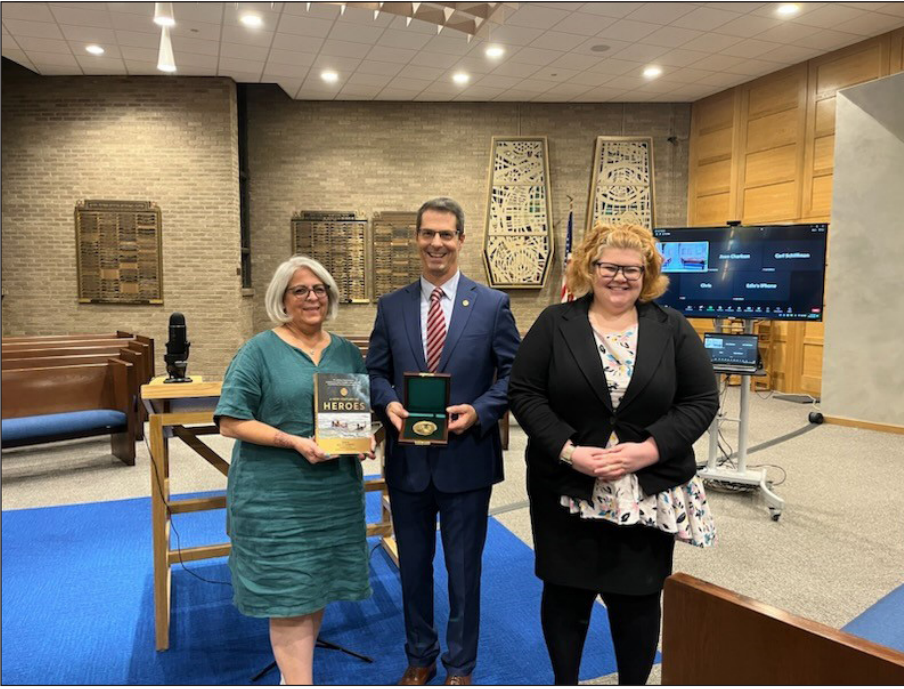
Emma McIntyre, an O'Neil scholarship recipient majoring in criminology and criminal justice, said the bravery of the men was moving and touched her profoundly.

"It was incredible that he ultimately gave his life to save individuals in need. If I could, I would (thank) Hugh O'Neil for his bravery. It takes a special kind of person to be courageous enough to act," she said.

To contribute to the Jessica Embry Memorial Scholarship, make checks payable to RCB Alumni Foundation, One Eagle Way, Clarksburg, WV 26301. In the memo line, write: Jessica Embry.

To make a gift to the Hugh Michael O'Neil Scholarship, contact Andrea Collins, assistant director of development special projects, at acollins@uakron.edu or 330-972-2603. ☼

— Griffin Erdely, communications intern



From left, Beth El Congregation of the South Hills (Pennsylvania) board President Lynda Abraham-Braff, Hero Fund President Eric Zahren, and Fund Communications Director Jewels Phraner pose for a photo after an Oct. 16 presentation at the Pittsburgh-area synagogue.

Presentation at Pittsburgh synagogue

Hero Fund staff participated in the Pittsburgh-area speaker series at the Beth El Congregation of the South Hills Oct. 16. Hero Fund President Eric Zahren discussed how the Hero Fund came to be, founder Andrew Carnegie's hopes for it, and, of course, the heroes.

Each session in the series is broadcasted over Zoom as well as providing for in-person audience members.

Synagogue board member Neil Ash invited the Hero Fund to the series after he saw the organization featured on *60 Minutes*.

"I was thrilled to find out that you guys are right here in Pittsburgh," Ash said at the event. ☼

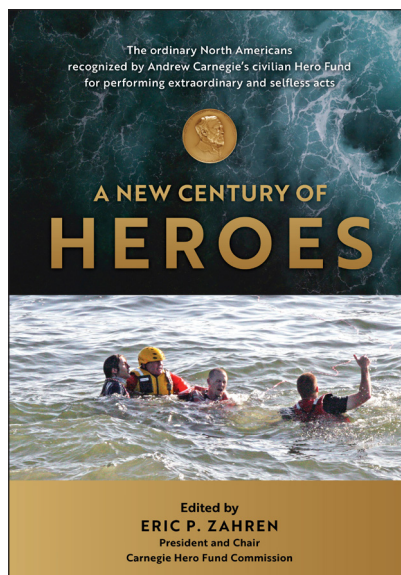
'A New Century of Heroes' available

A New Century of Heroes (2023, Lyons Press) was recently released. The book is the updated and expanded edition of *A Century of Heroes* (2004, University of Pittsburgh Press). Edited by Hero Fund President Eric Zahren, the book tells the stories of over 200 rescues from the Hero Fund archives dating back to 1904.

New sections include a chapter on the Hero Fund's response to disasters including the more recent Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition, several pages are dedicated to the Fund's 2018 celebration of 10,000 heroes.

Orders are being accepted at your favorite book retailers, including Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books-A-Million, Bookshop, and Target. ☼



OVERHEARD

I just really felt that little girl needed help. That was the main thing. It became apparent when she was flipped off the floatie that something needed to happen and it needed to happen quickly. – **Justin Leland Perry**, Carnegie Medal recipient #10277

He had a heart of gold, he cared for everybody. He would not have seen himself as a hero – to him if he sees somebody drowning or somebody needing help – he would reach out. That's just the way he was. – Sister of **Arthur R. Caballero, Sr.**, Carnegie Medal recipient #10280

Words cannot describe the pain of losing a parent, but it is even harder to describe my conflicting feelings of both pride and joy that result from knowing my father died a hero. – Son of **Carl J. Robinette II**, Carnegie Medal recipient #10281

I kept going simply because I knew he would not make it back alive if I didn't. – **Ross C. Johnson**, Carnegie Medal recipient #10305

If your heart tells you to do something, just follow it. Because it is what it is. There's no other way. – **Suzanne Fortin**, Carnegie Medal recipient #10319

I know a lot of people who talk about 'Oh I could do that.' No, I think most people would take 10 steps back for every step that he took forward in that moment. I am not even sure I could, and I think it is a very superhuman thing to know that he gave his life. – Brother of **Christopher K. Burkett**, Carnegie Medal recipient #10342

I'm just surprised how many people say they don't know if they could have done the same thing. We all have the opportunity to be someone's hero or do something heroic, but you just got to take that action – **Emilyn Golden**, Carnegie Medal recipient #10343

Much later I would reflect that a lifetime of thought is generated in split seconds of actions. Cognitive thoughts and primitive actions taking place simultaneously over the same time span. And, I had no control over any thoughts. It was 100% reaction to data my brain was taking in. – **Chad W. Chichester**, Carnegie Medal recipient #10348

He took on two armed men to save a man's life. If that's not a hero then I don't know what is. – Nominator of **Derek Winemiller**, Carnegie Medal recipient #10349



PRESENTING



Carnegie Hero **Robert Cody Moore** offering some words of thanks at the presentation of the Carnegie Medal held during a Sept. 18, Bellaire, Texas, city council meeting.

Moore was having dinner in 2021, when a car entered the 68-degree Houston Ship Channel nearby. Moore jumped from a ferry landing into the water 8 feet below. The driver exited the car, and Moore held him, keeping them both afloat. Swimming back to the ferry landing, Moore found no way to exit the water, so he swam to a nearby buoy, holding to its tether. Others in Moore's party tied together shirts and threw one end of it into the water. Moore towed the man to the lifeline and held to it, while those on land dragged them to a point where they could pull the man out of the water.

Bellaire Mayor Andrew S. Friedberg presented the medal to Moore with a proclamation from the city.

"By this proclamation (Bellaire officials) express our pride and appreciation as we join him in celebrating this significant honor," Friedberg said.

Emotional from the memory of the rescue, Moore cleared his throat before offering a few words of thanks.

"First of all I was praying the entire time I was in the water. Thank you God for," Moore paused and cleared his throat again before continuing, "protecting me. My kids were watching. My wife was watching."

He went on to thank his community's first responders.

"I know that our first-responders put themselves in this kind of harm every day. And I appreciate it a lot more now because accidents and bad decisions make for dangerous situations. So, I appreciate what they do for our community, and be careful out there," he said.



U.S. Rep. Morgan Griffith presented the Carnegie Medal to Carnegie Hero **Rayna Michele Montgomery** at a Sept. 6 ceremony held at the Virginia Motorsports Museum and Hall of Fame in Stuart, Virginia.

When Rayna was 17, she helped rescue a girl who was struggling in the Atlantic Ocean more than 100 feet from shore in Kure Beach, North Carolina. Rayna swam to the girl and towed her back toward the beach, but the panicky girl submerged Rayna multiple times. A man took the girl from Rayna at a point about 15 feet from the beach; Rayna exited the ocean to the beach, where she vomited water she had swallowed. Another rescuer who also responded drowned in her attempted rescue.

"I will tell you there is nothing I honor higher than courage. The courage to do something like this is amazing. While you may not have thought about it at the time, there were lots of other people on the beach who didn't do what you did, who didn't have that instinct to go into the water," said Griffith to reporters who attended the ceremony.

Montgomery said she was spurred to act because she heard that kids were in trouble.

"They were like, 'there are kids drowning,' and as soon as I heard 'kids,' it was just a heart drop, and I have to help them because they're kids," she told reporters. "You hear 'kids,' and you have to help them."



Carnegie Hero Fund Commission member Arthur M. Scully and Carnegie Hero **Kortnie Balls** pose for a photo after Scully presented the Carnegie Medal to Balls in an Aug. 2, 2023, private ceremony held in Chubbuck, Idaho.

Balls, of Pocatello, Idaho, entered a burning mobile home on March 23, 2022, in Pocatello. Amid exploding oxygen tanks, dense black smoke that made it nearly impossible to see, and spreading flames, she found the home's 76-year-old occupant, who was badly burned. Despite the man outweighing her by more than 100 pounds, Balls pulled him to the front door, passing under flames burning above them. She got the man partially out of the house when another bystander stepped up to help Balls move him fully onto the porch. Balls inhaled smoke, but she recovered.

"Thank you and everyone on the board for everything you have done," Balls said. "I am beyond grateful."

PRESENTING



Carnegie Hero **Kevin Conklin**, 19, examines the Carnegie Medal with Hero Fund President Eric Zahren, right, with Conklin's mother Qiang Conklin and stepfather Michael Shaughnessy looking on. Hero Fund staff had the honor on Aug. 9, 2023, of presenting the medal to Conklin at the Fund's Pittsburgh offices. In addition, Zahren informed the family that the Hero Fund would provide a \$7,000 check to Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, for Conklin's next semester of higher education.

"Andrew Carnegie said, 'For exceptional children, exceptional grants may be made for exceptional education,'" said Zahren. "So it is my pleasure to inform you that your scholarship application has been approved and we will be mailing this check to your university."

Conklin, of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was 16 in August 2020, when he entered a 5-foot, flooded ditch after a 6-year-old who had been playing in the ditch disappeared from sight. Conklin was on a walk with his mom in

the park near his home when the boy submerged.

"We couldn't stand by and watch a little kid drown," Qiang Conklin told Hero Fund staff as she recounted the event.

Conklin immediately waded into the flood water and submerged multiple times trying to find the boy who had been swept into a drain pipe, which extended 25 feet beneath a two-lane road. After many attempts, Conklin was also swept into the pipe. With the swift current carrying them downstream, both boys tumbled into the swollen stream at the other end of the pipe, where others helped them exit the stream. Both boys suffered bumps and bruises, but they recovered.

Zahren thanked Conklin's family for traveling to Pittsburgh for the presentation.

"Of course," Qiang Conklin said. "We wanted to meet everyone who helped honor Kevin."

Carnegie Hero **Joseph P. Cockerill**, center, receives the Carnegie Medal from Nebraska Lt. Gov. Joe Kelley, left, and Nebraska Sen. Beau Ballard at a ceremony held Sept. 11 at the Waverly, Nebraska, Community Foundation Building.

Two years earlier, Cockerill was on his way to work when he saw a tractor trailer on fire. The truck's unconscious driver remained in his seat as flames entered the passenger compartment. Cockerill attempted to remove the man from the cab, but his foot was caught between the seat and the center console.

It was then that Cockerill entered the cab and, amid the flames, he yanked as hard as he could, he later said, and the driver's foot finally popped free. He and another man then pulled the driver from the wreckage. Flames grew as high as 20 feet and spread to completely engulf the passenger compartment and set fire to nearby grass.

Cockerill told reporters at the ceremony that receiving the medal was an honor.

"When you go and read what all the people that have been awarded it before me did – to be put in the same category is quite humbling," Cockerill told a Waverly News reporter.



In addition to Kelley and Ballard, Waverly Mayor Bill Gerdes, Lancaster County Chief Deputy Ben Houchin, and County Commissioner Rick Vest recognized Cockerill at the public award ceremony. Waverly council members, city staff, and Cockerill's family also attended.

"It's one of the most prestigious awards that the United States and Canada give to civilians," Gerdes said.



LATEST AWARDEES OF THE CARNEGIE MEDAL

Since the last edition of Impulse, the following 16 individuals have been awarded the Carnegie Medal, bringing the total number of recipients to 10,387 since the Hero Fund's inception in 1904. The latest awards were made Sept. 19. The next announcement will be made in December.

A 62-year-old grandfather drowned July 16, 2022, while attempting to save his 4-year-old grandson from the same fate in the Saginaw Bay off of Essexville, Michigan. Kolton R. David, who was wearing a life jacket, fell off the back of a fishing boat into the bay. His father, who was also aboard the boat, jumped off the boat after him. Kolton was panicking and repeatedly attempted to climb onto his dad, who struggled in the water. **James G. David**, a sales associate of Saginaw, Michigan, entered the water and swam 200 feet to Kolton, whom he took from the father, instructing him to return to the boat. David and Kolton were separated. From 800 feet away, two men in another boat saw Kolton's brother, 9, jumping up and down and waving his arms on the boat that was still moving away from the scene at a trolling speed. They went to the scene and retrieved Kolton's dad and then Kolton from the water at least 15 minutes after they had entered. They found David about 10 feet north of Kolton. He had drowned. By then a marine patrol boat had arrived and assisted in bringing Kolton, his

father and brother, and David to shore. Kolton was taken by ambulance to a hospital for observation. He inhaled water into his lungs and had difficulty breathing and a cough. He recovered one month later. David could not be revived.

On July 28, 2022, a 52-year-old woman was driving nearby when she came upon a man holding his 18-month-old daughter over the ledge of a Philadelphia highway overpass threatening to drop her to a concrete parking lot 40 feet below. Although she made several attempts, the girl's mother failed to remove her daughter from his grasp. **Christine Dawn King**, a caretaker of Bensalem, Pennsylvania, stopped at the scene and grasped the assailant's torso, pleading with him to give the girl to her. The assailant, who was armed with a concealed handgun, threatened to shoot King. While she backed away from him, she continued begging for him to hand over the girl. The

assailant turned and, again, held the girl over the ledge. King wrapped her arms around his torso again to prevent him from dropping the baby. The mother also held onto her daughter. Police arrived shortly, and, while being held at gunpoint, the assailant gave the girl to the officer before he was taken into custody. The girl and King were uninjured.

A 25-year-old Mesa, Arizona, painter leaped into action Feb. 18, 2022, after seeing smoke issuing from a Mesa apartment building. As Carnegie Hero **Jonathon Baez** approached the building, he learned that at least one child remained inside a second-floor apartment. After dire conditions prohibited him from entering the apartment at its front door, he went to the rear of the building, climbed to the roof of a storage shed, removed a window frame from a bedroom window 12 feet from the ground, and jumped up, grasping the base of the window sill and pulling himself partially through the opening. Baez found a 2-year-old girl just inside the window, pulled her to him and retreated, handing her off to a police officer nearby. After learning that her 6-year-old ▶



James G. David who died July 16, 2022, while attempting to save his 4-year-old grandson from drowning in Saginaw Bay, Michigan.



Jonathon Baez with his children, Yamilex and Yanaiyla. On Feb. 18, 2022, Baez saved two children from a burning home in Mesa, Arizona.

LATEST AWARDEES

sister also remained in the apartment, Baez pulled himself to the window opening again, fully entered the bedroom and searched for the girl despite heavy smoke. Crawling, he found the girl in a closet, about 10 feet from the window opening. Holding her hand, he led her to the window and handed her down to another police officer. He then exited through the window to safety.

Suffolk County (New York) police officer **Sean Patrick Kalletta** responded to a Jan. 2, 2021, house fire in Selden, New York, where a couple remained inside the home while attempting to gather their frightened dogs. When Kalletta, 26, learned that people were inside the home, he ran into the home to the kitchen, where he told Debra M. Baker, 51, and Robert J. Baker, 55, that they needed to leave the house immediately. Debra Baker took one dog and left the home, but Robert Baker refused to leave without the other dog.

Kalletta reached down toward the dog, but it bit him. Smoke filled the kitchen. Flames grew and spread toward the kitchen. Kalletta pushed the man out of the house through a back door. He and another officer then helped the Bakers and one of the dogs over a fence to safety. The second dog was removed from the house and survived. Kalletta was treated at a hospital for smoke inhalation and the dog bite. No one was burned.

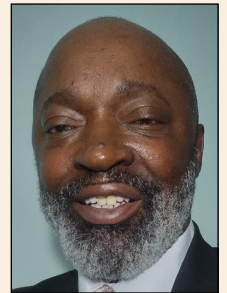
A 57-year-old club-goer jumped into action July 4, 2022, after a man struck his friend in the face with a handgun. As people inside the Baltimore club shouted that the assailant had a gun, **Lloyd Muldrow**, a retired safety and training manager of Jacksonville, North Carolina, entered the



Christine Dawn King



Sean Patrick Kalletta



Lloyd Muldrow

building. Seeing his friend, 71-year-old Marshall Cullens, bloodied, Muldrow struck the assailant in the face and forced him to the floor. Although Muldrow had a concealed and loaded handgun, he did not draw it during the altercation. When police arrived, they saw Muldrow and Cullens restraining the assailant on the ground. Medics at the scene treated Cullens, who did not require hospitalization. Muldrow was not injured.

A 49-year-old man lost consciousness behind the wheel of his four-door pickup ►



*A Jan. 2, 2021, house fire in Selden, New York, intensifies and spreads. Carnegie Hero **Sean Patrick Kalletta** responded to the blaze, entered the structure and guided its occupants outside.*



LATEST AWARDEES

truck, which left a Lincoln, Nebraska, road and entered a residential pond on Sept. 3, 2022. As the truck sank in water 7 feet deep, the man remained in the driver's seat. Carnegie Hero **Jordan B. Kurtzer**, a 35-year-old sheet metal worker of Lincoln, saw the accident and immediately responded, running down the bank and entering the pond. Assuming the truck doors were locked, Kurtzer jumped into the truck's bed. Another motorist responded to the bed with a tire iron, and Kurtzer used it to break the truck's rear windshield, leaning through the opening to unlock a rear door. Kurtzer opened the rear door, but doing so caused the truck to sink faster with water flooding the car's interior. Kurtzer entered the back-seat area of the truck, unlatched the driver's seat belt, and reclined his seat to grab the man's arm, pulling him to the back seats. Finding two child-sized life jackets, Kurtzer and the other motorist placed them around the man's arm and floated him out of the truck to safety. A police officer who had responded also entered the pond and helped Kurtzer and the motorist take the man to the bank.

A Palm Beach, Florida, police officer intervened in a June 18 suicide attempt in which a 67-year-old, distraught woman was perched on the ledge of a six-story building, about 50 feet above a parking



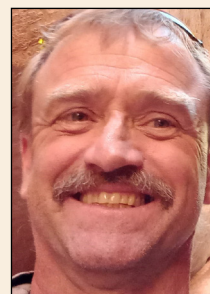
Jordan B. Kurtzer



Kendall Reyes



Tyler Badet



Joseph D. Donnell

lot. As police responded to the scene, officer **Kendall Reyes**, 38, arrived and attempted to establish a rapport with the woman. After several minutes of trying to lure her away from the edge of the roof, the woman sat on a 2-foot-high wall that lined the perimeter of the roof, her legs dangling over the side. Concluding that she was about to jump, Reyes sprinted 15 feet to the woman and pulled her backward from the ledge to the roof by her shoulders. As they struggled on the roof, other officers responded to help subdue the woman.

An 18-year-old man found himself amid crashing 10-foot waves threatening to pound him into seaside cliffs in San Diego while attempting a Jan. 6, 2021, rescue of a couple who had entered the Pacific Ocean at a cove and struggled in the choppy water. High school student **Tyler Badet** of San Diego was surfing nearby when he spotted the couple struggling to stay afloat in the V-shaped cove where the waves slammed into the rocky cliffs and circulated creating a whirlpool

effect. In the cove the 59-degree water was 9 feet deep. He paddled to them, and instructing the man to hold onto the nose of the surfboard, moved the man to an area of the cove where he could exit the water. Badet paddled back to the woman and did the same, but she panicked and would not let go of the surfboard to exit the water. Waves crashed around them, and after two more attempts to get the woman to safety, Badet paddled into the center of the cove and waited for help. Lifeguards arrived, entered the water, swam to the woman, and took her to safety. Badet paddled about 50 feet where he could exit the water safely.

A 9-year-old boy was trapped Aug. 22, 2022, in a pickup truck submerged in water 9 feet deep in a remote Oakley, Utah, reservoir. Paxton K. Knight was with two other children, ages 9 and 2, in the truck when it entered the water. Others rescued the other two children, but as the truck sank, Paxton remained inside. Retired state park ranger, **Joseph D. Donnell**, 55, of Kamas, Utah, was kayaking nearby when he saw the truck enter the 60-degree water. ►



June 18 body cam footage from another officer on scene shows the moment after Carnegie Hero **Kendall Reyes** sprinted to a suicidal woman on the ledge of a Palm Beach, Florida, building and pulled her back onto the roof.



Carnegie Hero **Jordan B. Kurtzer** fully entered a submerging truck in a Lincoln, Nebraska, residential pond to remove its unconscious driver and bring him to safety on Sept. 3, 2022.



Robert M. Wilson, Jr.



Andrew Reischl

Donnell removed his life vest and exited his kayak, swimming to the truck. He submerged to fully enter the truck and felt around the backseat area and floorboards for Paxton in the murky water. Not finding him, Donnell returned to the surface for air and then dove again, entering the truck through a rear door and searching for Paxton with his hands. Witnesses said Donnell dove at least six times. On the final dive, Donnell felt Paxton's clothing, pulled him to his chest, exited the truck, and returned to the surface. He swam him to the bank, where he and others performed CPR on the non-responsive boy. After 15 minutes of CPR, Paxton had a faint pulse. He was taken to the hospital by helicopter where he remained for eight days. He fully recovered. Donnell was tired and cold but not injured.

Two Glendale (Wisconsin) police officers entered the dangerously cold Milwaukee River on April 10, 2022, to rescue an unresponsive driver, 46, of an SUV that had entered the river and submerged in water



Photo by Scott Hopkins/San Diego Community News Group
*Carnegie Hero **Tyler Badet** using his surfboard to keep a woman afloat amid crashing 10-foot waves in a circular cove in San Diego on Jan. 6, 2021. He kept the woman positioned in the center of the cove until life guards arrived to help.*

9 feet deep. Officer **Robert M. Wilson, Jr.**, 32, arrived at the scene first and swam about 100 feet to the SUV, peering through its sunroof, but he could not see anyone inside. He swam back to the bank, and when officer **Andrew Reischl**, 34, arrived with a window-breaking tool, they swam to the SUV again. Seeing that the driver's window was partially down, Reischl kicked at it until it lowered completely. Holding

to the car's roof cargo bar, Reischl reached inside the car and cut the man's seat belt. Submerging, Reischl pulled on the man until he was through the window. Wilson and Reischl then swam the man back to the bank, where other officers helped them out of the water. The man was taken to the hospital and survived. Wilson and Reischl were also checked out at a hospital and recovered. ►



Anthony Diehl, center, poses for a selfie with his family. Clockwise from top right is his partner, Laura; and children, Athena, Sophia and Robert.



A screenshot from a police body cam shows officers **Robert M. Wilson, Jr.**, and **Andrew Reischl** swimming toward an SUV that was completely submerged in the Milwaukee River. Wilson and Reischl, on April 10, 2022, entered the frigid water and removed the unresponsive driver of an SUV that had completely submerged in Glendale, Wisconsin. Photo courtesy of Glendale police.



LATEST AWARDEES

Carnegie Hero **Anthony Diehl** died July 13, 2022, attempting to save his 7-year-old nephew from drowning near South Haven, Michigan. Elijah T. Britt was playing in the shallow water of Lake Michigan with a bodyboard when the waves became stronger and the current took him farther from shore than the other children in his party. Diehl, a 33-year-old restaurant manager of Beavercreek, Ohio, swam to Elijah, who was then about 65 feet from shore. Diehl was seen near Elijah, but soon the waves separated them and their family lost sight of them. The rough current brought Elijah to shore a short time later, but the boy could not be revived. Water conditions continued to deteriorate and thwarted the search for Diehl. His body was recovered the following day. He, too, had drowned.

A 25-year-old college student was driving in Irwin, Pennsylvania, on Oct. 16, 2022, when he saw the tractor trailer in front of him veer off the highway, collide into a guide rail, concrete barrier, and overpass. The cab came to rest facing the trailer and pointing to the sky; flames broke out in the twisted wreckage including burning near spilled fuel along the driver's side. **David P. Duffey** of Midway, Pennsylvania, hoisted himself through the passenger-side window opening, which had been



David P. Duffey



Stephen D. Rhodes

broken out in the accident. With difficulty, he pulled driver Shune E. Moore, 56, from the cab to the ground. Duffey and another man pulled Moore about 7 feet when an explosion knocked Duffey and the other man to the ground. Flames grew to 15 feet high. Duffey and others dragged Moore farther away to safety. Moore was treated at a hospital for injuries incurred in the accident; Duffey suffered a back injury. No one was burned.

A fish and wildlife enforcement officer jumped into action on May 7, 2022, to save a 7-year-old girl who was trapped underwater beneath an overturned boat in the Gulf of Mexico off of Grand Isle, Louisiana. After the boat capsized, eight of the nine passengers escaped the boat and climbed on top of the outside of the hull, but Jacqueline Toledo, a little girl who was wearing a life vest, was missing. After responding to the scene, **Stephen D. Rhodes**, 51, of Houma, Louisiana,



Jasmine and JaCora Lashale Morris

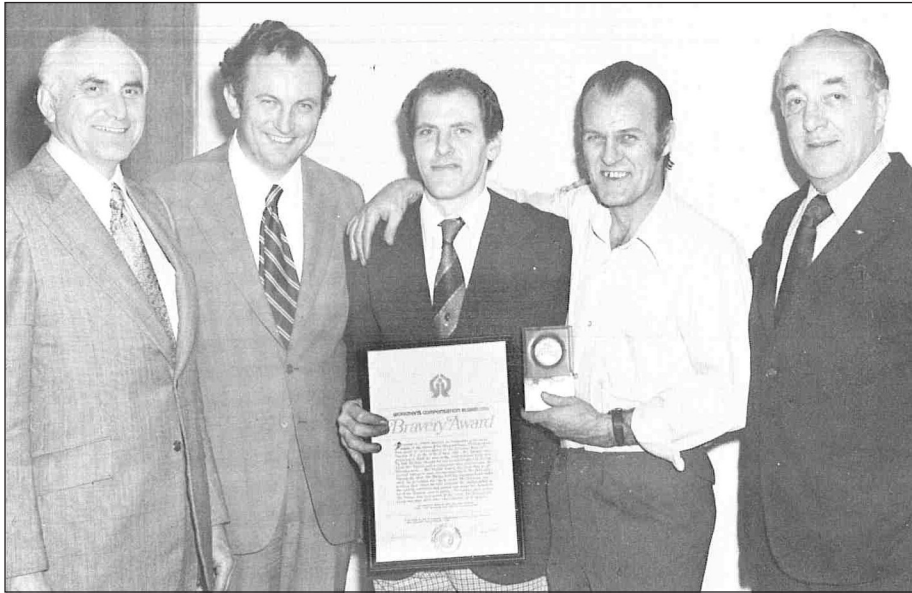
removed his ballistic vest, duty belt, and firearm, left his boat, and swam under the capsized boat, searching for Jacqueline with his arms in front of him. Failing to find her, he came back up to the surface for a breath of air and then submerged again. Failing to find her on his second attempt, Rhodes held onto the gunwale of the boat and used his legs to probe the underside of the boat until he felt something brush against his foot. Rhodes submerged again, swam 4 feet to Jacqueline who was unconscious, and brought her to the surface. Others took her to Rhodes' boat, where Rhodes returned and performed CPR. Jacqueline was resuscitated and she recovered. Rhodes was not injured.

Two teen sisters entered near-freezing water to save two young boys from drowning after the boys broke through the ice of a retention pond situated in their West Des Moines, Iowa, apartment complex on Feb. 25, 2023. The boys, who were about 9 years old, struggled in water 6 feet deep at a point about 10 feet from the nearest bank. After calling out for her sister, **Jasmine Morris**, 15, entered the frigid water and swam to one of the boys. She attempted to break a path through the ice with her elbow, but failing to do that, she pushed the boy up onto the ice, so he could crawl to the safety of the bank. By then, Jasmine's sister, **JaCora Lashale Morris**, 17, had entered the pond and pulled the other boy, who was sinking, up to the surface of the water. JaCora struggled to push the boy up onto the ice due to the weight of a backpack he wore. JaCora removed the backpack, letting it sink, and then pushed him up onto the ice. A bystander helped JaCora from the water, while Jasmine exited on her own. The sisters suffered minor cuts on their arms and legs but were otherwise uninjured. 🌀



*The wreckage of a tractor trailer that, on Oct. 16, 2022, veered off an Irwin, Pennsylvania, highway and came to rest with its cab overturned and facing the sky. After flames broke out, Carnegie Hero **David P. Duffey** pulled the driver from the burning truck. Photo courtesy of Youngwood Volunteer Fire Department.*

FROM THE ARCHIVES



Carnegie Hero **James Mellen** (center) poses for a photo with the Worker's Compensation Board Silver Medallion for bravery for the May-June 1974 edition of the WCB News Bulletin. Mellen was awarded the medal after saving his co-worker, Peter S. Norman (second from right), from impending explosions in the Silmonac mines. Photo by WCB News Bulletin.

Father of 3 returns for fellow miner despite impending blasts

It was 1973. Peter S. Norman, a 42-year-old miner from New Denver, British Columbia, was working 0.9 miles underground, deep in a Silmonac mine. There in a tunnel, about 8 feet wide and 10 feet tall, it was dark and dusty.

A narrow-gauge track for minecarts was situated in the middle of the tunnel. Other than the light from his headlamp, which allowed for 25 feet of visibility, it was pitch black.

The Silmonac mine, about 2 miles west of Sandon, British Columbia, was dug into the Selkirk Mountains. The tunnels carved in rock were mined for silver, lead, and zinc. At its peak production in 1971, 135 tons of minerals were harvested a day.

On May 24, Norman was tasked with using dynamite to clear out an area of the mine that would eventually be used for equipment storage. ►



FROM THE ARCHIVES

► from p.13

Father returns for fellow miner

Norman drilled 18-inch holes into four mounds that ranged from 1.5 to 2 feet high. He placed full sticks of dynamite in the largest mound and half-sticks in the other three. Then, starting with the farthest stick, he started to light them. Each stick of dynamite included a 3-foot long fuse, which gave Norman two minutes and six seconds to light the remaining three fuses and jog 50 feet to clear the area.

The next two fuses lit without difficulty, but the fourth and final fuse was wet.

Norman went to his hands and knees and continued to try to light the fuse.

James Mellen, a 35-year-old miner of Silverton, was about 15 feet from Norman.

Seeing Norman struggling with the last fuse, Mellen asked him if there was a problem.

"The last fuse won't light," Norman said.

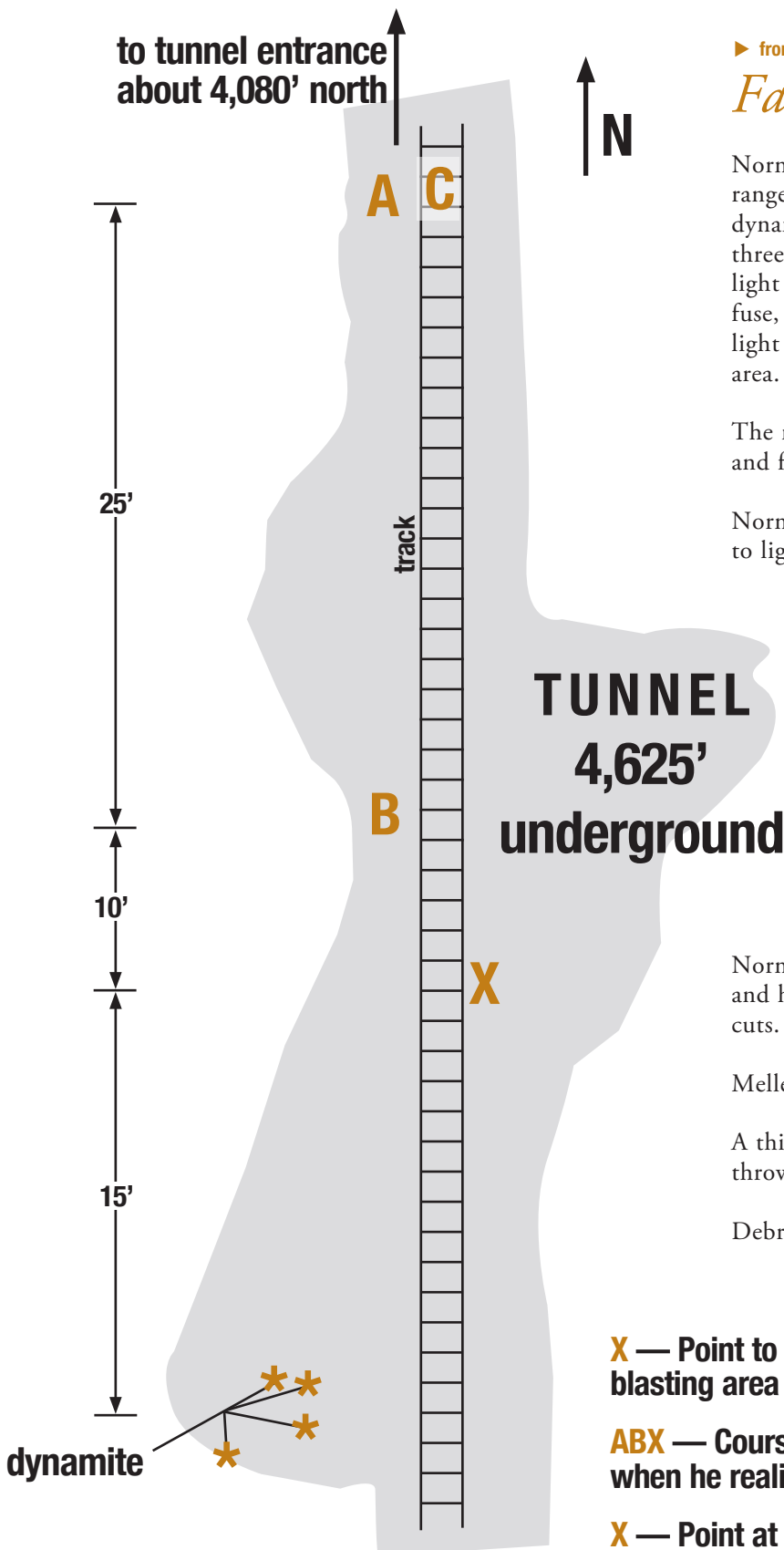
Mellen pulled some matches from his pocket and was approaching Norman when the first charge exploded.

Norman flew 8 feet northeast. He lost his leather helmet and headlamp. He suffered a broken arm along with severe cuts.

Mellen was knocked about 6 feet.

A third man, Duffy Turner, who was also nearby, was thrown backward.

Debris that included pieces of rock larger than a ►



*Recreation of sketch included in Hero Fund report outlining the area within the Silmonac mines where Peter S. Norman was injured. **James Mellen** carried Norman away from harm within the tunnel and received the Carnegie Medal for his bravery in 1976.*

X — Point to which Peter S. Norman crawled from blasting area after initial explosion

ABX — Course of James Mellen toward blasting area when he realized Norman had not escaped with him

X — Point at which Mellen picked up Norman and placed him on his shoulder

XC — Course of Mellen carrying Norman to safety

C — Point where Mellen and Norman were when second blast of dynamite occurred

softball rained down on them, and smoke and dust filled the air, reducing visibility to about 10 feet with headlamps.

Mellen managed to get to his feet and immediately ran north, knowing that two additional fuses had been lit. He shouted to Turner to clear the area.

Both men fled the blast area but paused and looked back for Norman. They could not see him or the light from his headlamp.

“Although he thought that Norman probably was dead,” Hero Fund investigator Walter Rutkowski was told, Mellen ran back to look for the miner despite the knowing that more blasts were coming.

Turner remained north of the explosion and watched Mellen disappear into the darkness.

The blast had filled Norman’s mouth with dirt, so he could not call for help. He managed to pull himself to a standing position when Mellen’s light shone on him.

Now, knowing Norman was alive, Mellen decided to help his co-worker escape from the impending blasts.

Mellen was described as being in, “excellent health and physical condition,” according to Rutkowski’s investigation. He had helped rescue a miner from a cave-in 14 years earlier.

With no equipment or anyone else in the tunnel, Mellen relied on his strength alone and hoisted Norman onto his shoulders.

The miner made his way back north while carrying Norman, “with thoughts of possible risk to his life since he knew there were other blasts impending...thinking only of getting as far away as quickly as possible,” Rutkowski noted in his report.

As Mellen continued 50 feet from the blast area with Norman, the second charge went off a minute after the first, but they had already fled far enough; neither man was affected by the blast or any of the significant debris.

Mellen kept on toward the exit when the third explosion occurred half a minute later, by which time both men were 100 feet away

He knew there were other blasts impending. [He was] thinking only of getting as far away as quickly as possible.

and safe. All in all, Mellen carried Norman more than 300 feet.

Mellen told Rutkowski that he did feel like he risked his life. Had he not moved fast enough, he could have been knocked down by the subsequent blasts or hit by debris.

Following the incident, Norman was hospitalized for two weeks as a result of his injuries and recuperated for three months before returning to work. He also had his blasting license revoked due to violated safety standards.

Mellen remained uninjured from the incident.

At the time of the Hero Fund investigation, he was married and had three children, a 17-year-old stepdaughter and two young children, ages 4 and 5. For putting his life at risk and his actions saving Norman from the impending explosions, Mellen was recognized with the Carnegie Medal along with receiving a silver medal from the Workmen’s Compensation Board and a gold medal from the Canadian Institute of Mines.

He told Rutkowski that he would use the Hero Fund grant money to visit his parents in England. ☒

— Griffin Erderly, *communications intern*

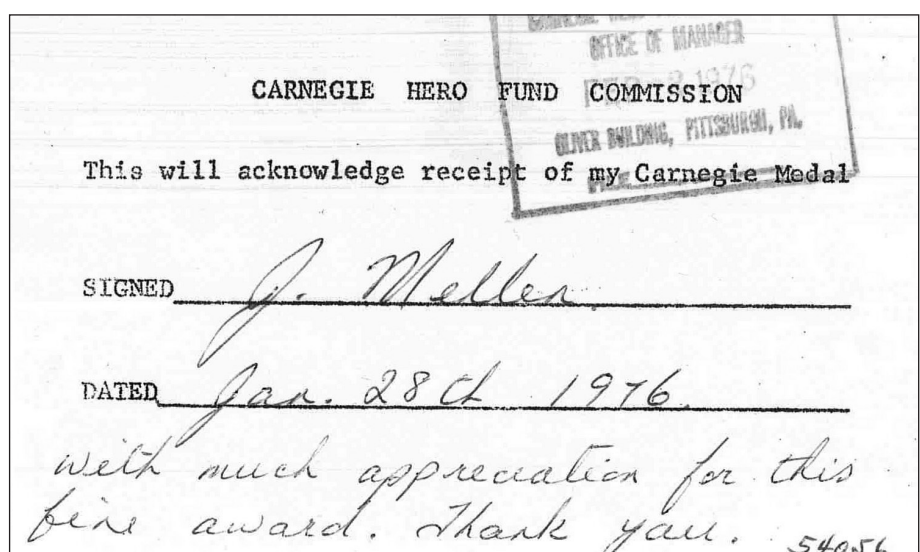


Photo of acknowledgment card signed by **James Mellen** as a receipt of his Carnegie Medal dated January 28th, 1976. Mellen received the Carnegie Medal for saving his co-worker, Peter S. Norman, from impending explosions after Norman had been injured.



Carnegie Hero Fund Commission

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Impulse is a periodic newsletter of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, a private operating foundation established in 1904 by Andrew Carnegie. • The Hero Fund awards the Carnegie Medal to those throughout the United States and Canada who risk death or serious injury to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others. • The Commission also provides financial assistance, such as scholarship aid and continuing grants to the heroes and the dependents of those awardees who are disabled or die as the result of their heroic acts.

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!

Address change? Please keep us posted.

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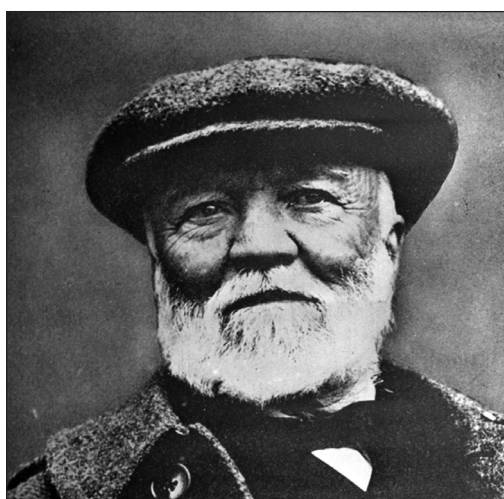
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THE QUOTABLE A.C.



"It is the fund that may be considered my pet ... because no one ever suggested it. Its reception here was not universal at first, some critics that I proposed to stimulate heroism, but now nothing I've done is so popular. It was time the Heroes of Peace had recognition."

— Andrew Carnegie in a March 16, 1911, letter to John Ross about the Hero Fund

CONTINUUM

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.

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