

Hero Awards Dinner



sponsored by
THE UNION LEADER
and
NEW HAMPSHIRE SUNDAY NEWS

The Chateau Restaurant

Wednesday, April 23, 1997



AN APPRECIATION

These newspapers are proud to honor the heroes of New Hampshire who have offered the ultimate sacrifice, risking their lives, in their selfless actions to save others.

At this 1997 Hero Awards Dinner, we again give recognition to this conduct which exemplifies the finest attributes of human behavior.

We not only want to acknowledge the state's debt to these fine citizens for their actions, but by calling public attention to their heroism, we hope to inspire other citizens to be equally responsible to the unusual and critical needs of others when circumstances clearly call for action beyond the normal and routine.

We congratulate tonight's award winners, and express the appreciation of all of us that New Hampshire boasts so many citizens distinguished by their willingness to help others, even at great risk to themselves.

**NACKEY LOEB, Publisher
The Union Leader
New Hampshire Sunday News**



Master of Ceremonies
Donn Tibbetts
State House Bureau Chief



Invocation
Sr. Carol Descoteaux
Notre Dame College



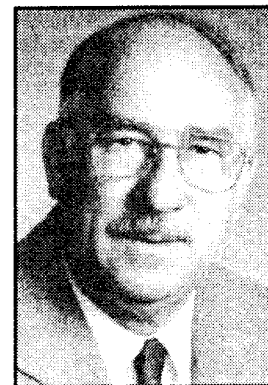
Presentation of Awards
Mrs. Nacky S. Loeb
President and Publisher



GOVERNOR
JEANNE SHAHEEN
Greetings from the
State of New Hampshire



MICHELLE TOLSON
MISS NEW HAMPSHIRE 1996
Pledge of Allegiance



MAYOR
RAYMOND J. WICZOREK

Greetings from the
City of Manchester

Hero Awards Dinner



VICTOR GOULET

Last April, Victor Goulet was driving on Huse Road in Manchester when he spotted smoke coming from a residence. He stopped to see if he could help. A neighbor said there were people trapped inside.

As he raced to the front door, a blind woman was attempting to escape from the burning house, having great difficulty finding her way out. Goulet was able to get her away from the house just before it erupted into flames.

She told Goulet there was another person still inside. Because of the heavy smoke and flames, Goulet could not re-enter the front door. He went around to a window, but access was blocked by an air conditioner.

By then, Lt. Mark Petrowski and Firefighter Normand Paradis had arrived on the scene, and with proper equipment were able to enter the house and rescue the trapped woman who unfortunately succumbed to her injuries a few days later.

We honor Victor Goulet for his bravery in entering the house to save the blind woman, risking his own life in the process. Victor Goulet was previously honored as a Union Leader Hero for his rescue of a person from the Spickett River in Salem in the spring of 1983.

Hero Awards Dinner



GILBERT MISIASZEK, SR.
Posthumously

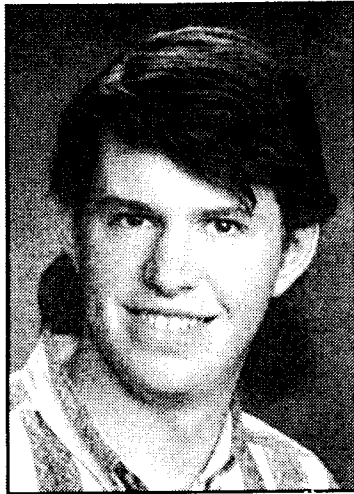
Without the bravery of Gilbert Misiaszek, Sr., Lauren Greene would not be alive today. A spring snowstorm had covered Longwoods Road in Deering and as she rounded a corner, Greene's vehicle took her on a terrifying ride, tumbling her into the Contoocook River. She rolled down her window and jumped into what she thought would be shallow water — and never touched bottom; she was in 20 feet of water, 35 feet from shore.

Unable to swim, and sinking again and again as she struggled to stay afloat, Greene flapped her arms and kicked her legs in an attempt to reach a rock and safety.

Gilbert Misiaszek came along, driving the town snow plow. Rather than call and wait for rescue personnel, Misiaszek immediately waded into the water, swam to Greene, and helped her to safety.

We honor Gilbert Misiaszek, Jr., who died March 8, 1997 of a massive heart attack, as he plowed and sanded the roads of Deering. We know his spirit lives on — most especially in Lauren Green, who literally owes her life to him. He was a reluctant hero, crediting his boss, Road Agent Peter Beard, for his training to be prepared for all emergencies.

Hero Awards Dinner



DENIS CURTIS

In May, Susan Clark was exceptionally fortunate that Denis Curtis happened to be driving on New Boston Road in Kingston when her car ran off the road and hit a tree.

He proved to be a hero, in any sense of the word, when he risked his own life to pull Clark from her car which burst into flames upon impact with the tree.

According to police reports, before the first officer arrived at the scene of the accident, Denis Curtis had already pulled the woman from the burning vehicle.

The driver was semi-conscious and disoriented, and indicated that her children might still be in the vehicle, so Curtis then doused the fire with a fire extinguisher and proceeded to search under the seats and dashboard and in the back seat for other occupants. It was only a matter of seconds before the entire vehicle erupted, due to the fuel pump still working, and the vehicle was fully involved.

A thorough search after police arrived indicated there were no other occupants of the vehicle; the children were safe at home. And Susan Clark was able to be with them again thanks to Denis Curtis' act of heroism for which we honor him.

Hero Awards Dinner



EDDIE LeBRASSEUR

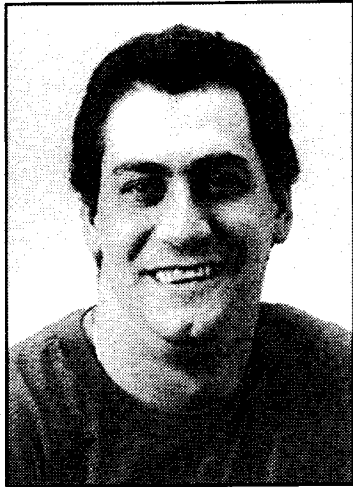
It was a lucky day at a Scarborough, Maine, pond for more than one little boy last July. Young E.J. LeBrasseur caught a 15-inch large-mouth bass that won him first prize in a fishing derby, and a little 5-year-old boy was rescued from the same pond by E.J.'s father.

It was supposed to be a quiet week-end of fishing for the LeBrasseur family, and it was, barring the excitement of winning the derby. Then, Eddie LeBrasseur heard a woman's panicked screams and watched as her truck splashed into the pond. One of the boys playing in the cab of the truck accidentally pushed the gearshift into neutral and caused the truck to roll down an embankment into the pond.

The woman jumped in and was able to pull her 3-year-old to safety. LeBrasseur, seeing the situation, jumped into the pond as well and was able to reach through the passenger window to pull the 5-year-old out of the cab's window. Immediately after that, the truck sank into about 12 feet of water.

According to Sgt. Eugene O'Neill, LeBrasseur's bravery saved the boy. "I'm not sure, with the pressure of the water entering the truck and the panic he was experiencing, that the boy would have gotten out," said the Sergeant.

Hero Awards Dinner



FRANK DIDONATO

Two children owe their lives to Frank DiDonato's coaching. No, not his coaching skills, but to the fact that he was coaching his son's Little League team practice at William C. O'Hara Field in Derry when he heard fire alarms and saw smoke pouring from windows in the Derry Green Apartments next to the baseball diamond.

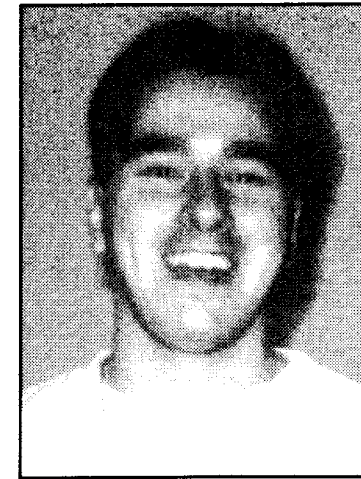
DiDonato raced around the building and as he went in, he met occupants leaving the apartment. The hallway was full of smoke, and DiDonato spotted two children, holding hands at the top of the stairs.

DiDonato grabbed the little boy in one arm and the little girl in the other and carried the crying children down the stairs from the top floor of the three-level apartment. "They were just kind of frozen there; they just didn't know what to do; they had inhaled a lot of smoke," said DiDonato later.

Fire Chief Ronald D. Gagnon said, "The fire could have been disastrous . . . if someone like DiDonato wasn't around to help rescue the apartment's occupants." It took nearly 30 firefighters about 45 minutes to contain and extinguish the two-alarm blaze.

We agree with Jim Bishop who watched his coach run out of the building carrying the children. "He's brave for going in there!"

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MARK VALLIERES

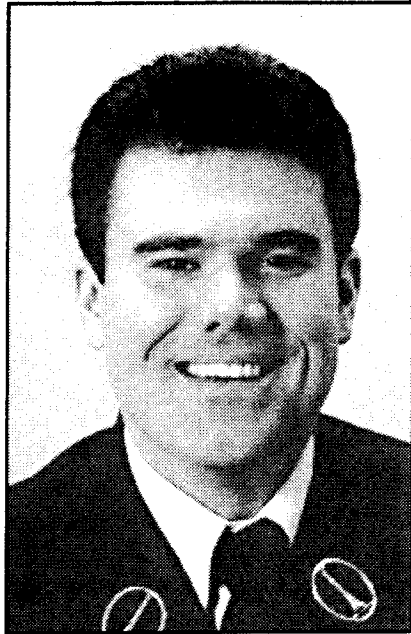
Last July, a fire in Berlin was sparked by a faulty fan in a second floor apartment of a three-story apartment building at about 5 a.m. Lucky for its occupants, Helen Vallieres had risen early that morning and was enjoying a cup of coffee on her porch on Rockingham Street when she spotted flames shooting out of a window from the building across the street.

Immediately after calling the fire department, she woke her family. Her son, Mark, ran across the street and started knocking on doors to awaken the nine people who lived in the building.

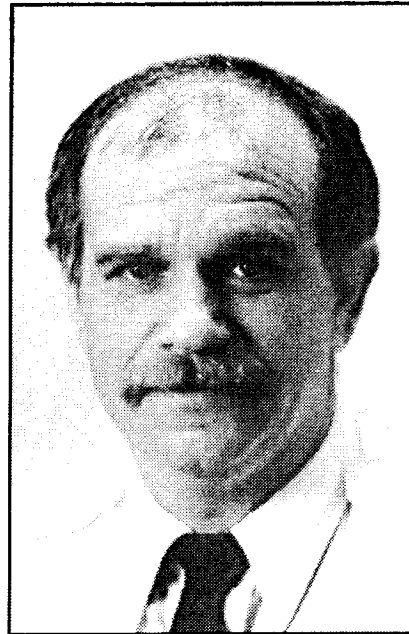
Not only did Mark Vallieres pound on all the doors, but he helped carry the children from the burning apartment to the outside. Fire Chief Paul Fortier said that "Due to Valliere's quick action, a real tragedy was averted," since all the occupants were sleeping at the time and the smoke detectors were not working. Firefighters were able to contain the fire to the one room where it started in the apartment where the two little boys lived.

We honor Mark Vallieres for his brave rescue of Cecil and Joshua Haley, 2 and 3 years old respectively at the time of the fire and know their mother, Vicki, joins us in thanking for his heroism.

Hero Awards Dinner



STEVE L'HEUREUX



GARY SIMPSON

In May, NH Route I-93 was the scene of an accident the likes of which had not, fortunately, been seen around here before.

An 18-wheel tractor trailer carrying sand rolled over, crushing a passenger car carrying two female occupants. The driver of the truck sustained only minor injuries, but the driver of the car died immediately, while the passenger remained alive but inexorably trapped.

Raising and cribbing the sand trailer enough so that extrication of the victim could be performed was needed and had to proceed at an exceedingly slow pace to avoid slipping, thus claiming a second victim. Gary Simpson, as Safety Officer, was assigned

MANCHESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT UNIT CITATIONS

RESCUE 1

Lt. Robert Cote
FF Hank Martineau
FF Brian O'Neil
FF Richard Fitzpatrick

ENGINE 3

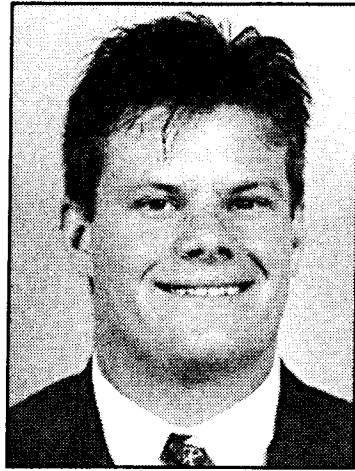
Lt. Jack Howe
FF Jeffrey MacDowell
FF Charles Kaczmarczyk

the responsibility of the trailer's stability. Rescue 1 slowly lifted the trailer using air bags while the crew of Engine 3 took care of cribbing. Steve L'Heureux was in charge of the injured passenger, staying with her while the trailer was being lifted.

It was a tedious process, involving removal of sand from the area, removing the vehicle door, enlarging the access area with spreaders and rams. The victim was safely extricated and transported to Elliot Hospital.

In addition to the personnel cited above, members of Engine 9 as well as Incident Commander District Chief Frank O'Donnell deserve great credit for the part they played in this rescue.

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TRAVIS KANIA

A Kingston mother and father drowned trying to save their son who had ventured into the deep water from a spot on a sandbar where the family had stopped for lunch. Travis Kania's quick actions last July saved 7-year-old Eric Chase from his parents' fate.

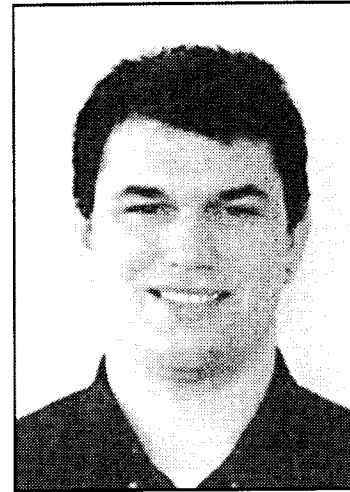
When Eric began hollering, his father, fully clothed, ran into the Saco River in Fryeburg, Maine and quickly disappeared under the water. His wife, also fully clothed, then jumped in and attempted to save her son.

Travis Kania was canoeing down the Saco when he heard the little boy's screams. As he pulled the canoe closer to the child, Kania saw that he was clinging to his mother's floating sneakered feet. Her head and chest were submerged in the approximately 12-foot-deep waters.

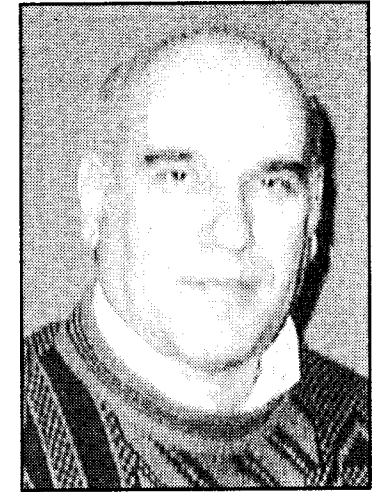
Kania dove in and tried to swim back with both the mother and child but started to go under. "I could see exactly how she could've drowned if she had tried to save her husband and her son," said Kania. After much urging from Kania, the boy finally let go of his mother and Kania was able to drag the child to shore. CPR attempts were futile; the mother had apparently been dead for some time.

He may be an orphan, but Eric Chase owes his life to Travis Kania, and we honor his heroism.

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GREGG COTE



RAY PENN

Unusually high tides and strong currents last July snapped the cables that held an oil tanker to its moorings, causing an oil spill on the Piscataqua River, notorious for its treacherous currents.

Three members of a private contracting company helping in the containing effort were pulled into the river when their boat capsized and sank. The men, all wearing life jackets, were quickly swept about 500 yards down the rapidly moving river.

Public Service of New Hampshire employees Gregg Cote and Ray Penn were standing at the shore when they saw the boat go down. They ran, jumped into another boat and racing down the river, were able to reach the three men and pull them aboard. Although the men were not far from shore, the speed of the current made it next to impossible to simply throw them a life preserver from shore and the whirlpool-like currents were making it hard for them to stay afloat.

"The boat sank in about three seconds ... like it was being sucked into the water from a giant hand," said Cote. The river was so dangerous that the Coast Guard had halted clean-up efforts in that area.

It's obvious Cote and Penn risked their lives to save those in jeopardy. We honor them for their bravery.

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JENNIFER O'KEEFE

On a July evening, around 5:30, when many people were probably getting ready for dinner, reading the daily newspaper, or, as was Jennifer O'Keefe, walking her dog, one agonized young woman was contemplating ending her life. Thanks to Jennifer O'Keefe's persistence, that young woman got some professional help which hopefully turned her life around.

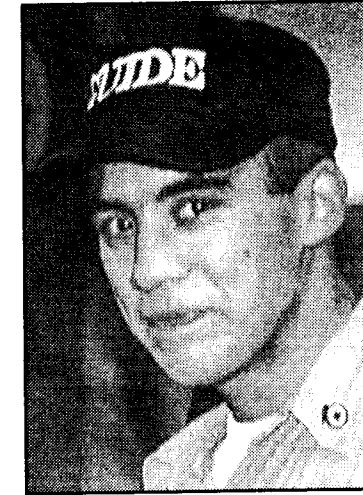
Many others might have ignored the woman, or even snickered as she talked to herself, but O'Keefe noticed that she was headed to the Notre Dame Bridge.

As she yelled to passing motorists to get help, O'Keefe followed the distraught female as she climbed the bridge rail and started up the fence. O'Keefe managed to grab her and hold on to her.

What appeared to Officer Harrington of the Manchester Police Department as some kind of an altercation was really O'Keefe's attempt to keep the woman from killing herself.

All the while the woman was yelling at O'Keefe, begging her to let her go. O'Keefe would not let go, and as Officer Harrington reported, she "put herself at risk by doing this ... she saved the woman's life." For her risking her life, we honor Jennifer O'Keefe.

Hero Awards Dinner



JOSE PEQUENO

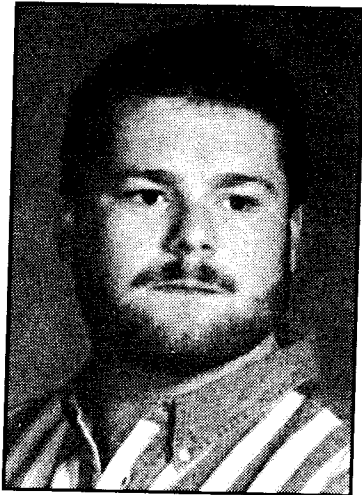
Lost River, located in Kinsman Notch, derives its name from the subterranean path it takes as it disappears below the surface in a narrow, steep-walled glacial gorge. The area is accessible by a series of boardwalks and bridges and is one of the many attractions of New Hampshire's White Mountains being visited by the Camara family of South Attleboro, Massachusetts.

Alfonse and Monique Camara and their three children were negotiating the tight quarters of the Lost River Gorge cave referred to as the "Lemon Squeezer" which requires visitors to "belly crawl" through it. Their two boys had gone on ahead of them, and the parents were passing 17-month-old daughter Kayla between them when she slipped from their grasp into a swirling pool of water.

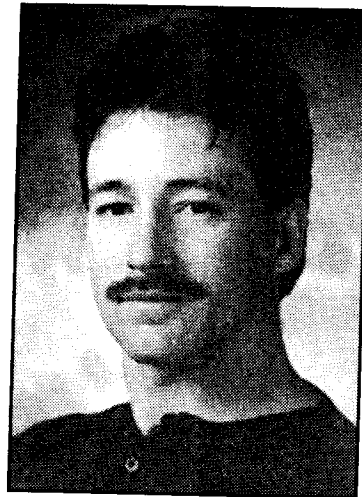
Pequeno, the first on the scene, shimmied through a narrow cave and wedged himself between the rock wall and a log. He grabbed for the sneaker he saw in the dark water — it was Kayla.

Pequeno shrugs off the "hero" label — and no one wants to dwell on what might have been had the child become caught in the current of the underground river. We recognize Pequeno for his courageous act in rescuing the child, giving the story a happy ending.

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BILL FUDGE



ROGER TOWER

It's a good thing for a couple of folks that Bill Fudge and Roger Tower were leaving Tower's mother's house around 10 a.m. one day last October. Because they got involved, people inside a burning house were rescued.

Tragedy was averted when the twosome pulled over when they spotted the fire on Concord Stage Road in Weare. "We saw flames shooting about seven feet out of the top of the house," said Tower. Then they heard someone shouting for help from the top floor.

Tower literally broke down the door and found a mattress for the man to jump on. Bertrand Bouillard was able to jump to safety.

As Tower broke into his apartment, Kevin Drown, a first-floor resident, awoke to the sounds of light bulbs exploding and Bouillard's cries for help and was able to escape, frightened but unharmed.

About 40 firefighters arrived shortly thereafter and battled the blaze for about an hour before flames were extinguished.

Fudge and Tower declined "hero" status at the scene later that day, indicating it was simply "natural instinct" that kicked in. "When you see something like this happening, the first thing you want to do is help out the people inside," said Fudge.

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SCOTT CURRIER

A drainage culvert on Hampstead Road in Sandown, usually a trickle, had swollen to a roaring torrent as the result of a rainy nor'easter last October. George Devine and his friends were tossing a ball into the water upstream to see it go through the culvert. When it stopped on the edge, Devine kneeled to reach the ball and fell into the swirling water. He knew he was in trouble when the current sucked his boots right off his feet.

When Sandown Police Chief Scott Currier arrived at the scene, only Devine's face was above water and rescue workers could not pull him out. Currier stepped into the water and was caught in a vortex and sucked into the culvert. "The only thing I was hoping was that I could hold my breath long enough to get through and that there was nothing I could get hung up on inside," recalled Currier. "It felt like I was going 2,000 miles an hour!"

Currier shot out the other side of the road, climbed out and went back to help extricate George who was limp and semi-conscious, turning blue, but did recover quickly at the hospital.

Currier joked later about selling tickets to "Currier's Water Slide!" There's a hero with a real sense of humor!

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GARY HARVEY



DOUG ROY



JIM CARAVONA

In November, a fire broke out in the Service Department of the Grappone Volkswagen/Mazda/Hyundai store at Bow Junction. That's when Bob Grappone's "team building" exercises really showed their merit.

Jim Caravona, working in the building, first noticed smoke, then saw flames roaring up both sides of a metal staircase leading to the upstairs employee lounge. Caravona knew that mechanic Bruce Dimond had headed that way just a few minutes earlier.

His only exit cut off, Dimond, dazed and disoriented from smoke inhalation, was unable to find his way around. To make matters worse, the circuit breaker tripped, shutting off the lights. His only exit, if he could have gotten to it, was a flaming gauntlet.

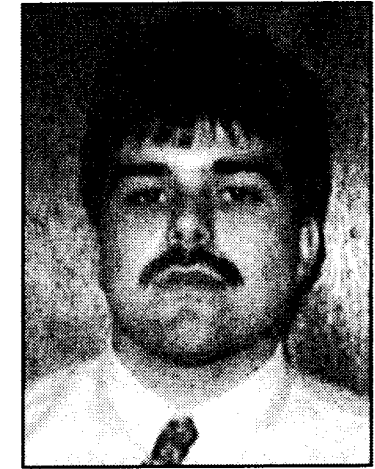
Caravona emptied seven fire extinguishers to try to control the flames, fueled by a continuous supply of motor oil which was stored in a 200-gallon pressurized tank in the closet-sized room under the staircase where the fire started. Finally the flames were down enough so that Gary Harvey and Doug Roy could run up the stairs. They quickly located Dimond and led him to safety.

Only five minutes had gone by, but an eternity for all — victim and heroes alike.

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MARIE ALTOBELLI



CHAD EVANS

In early November, on Route 11 at the Rochester-Milton line, there was a two-car accident late at night. Three men were in one of the vehicles, a small sports car. The third passenger was sitting behind the two seats, almost literally on top of the gas tank.

The impact of the accident ruptured the gas tank and the car was immediately engulfed in flames. The front seat passenger was unconscious and on fire when he was pulled out of the car by two people who lived nearby and ran to the scene — Marie Altobelli and Chad Evans. They pounded on the victim and threw dirt on him to extinguish his flaming clothing.

The third victim was trapped in the car by his legs. Again, our two heroes, with little thought to their own safety, worked tirelessly to free his legs, extricate him from the vehicle, and again, put out his fiery clothing.

Altobelli and Evans suffered from smoke inhalation and first degree burns on their hands; the two victims, both having sustained third degree burns, were transported to medical facilities and spent many weeks undergoing treatment.

The driver escaped shaken but unharmed.

Hero Awards Dinner



KIMBERLY ROBERTS

As anyone can imagine, the Swampscott River in Exeter in December can be mighty cold! For verification, you can ask Detective Kimberly Roberts and Lieutenant Richard Kane of the Police Department what a "smidge below freezing" feels like when you jump in.

Why would you jump in? In the cases of Roberts and Kane, to rescue a woman who lost control of her truck. It hit a patch of ice and then slid off Swazey Parkway, careened over a grassy area, through a chain-link fence, then down an embankment, plunging into 15 feet of water.

The driver, Rosemarie Croteau, who by her own admission "couldn't swim a stroke," managed to climb onto the top of the truck, which is where she was, about 25 feet from the river's edge, when Roberts and Kane arrived on the scene.

Kane jumped in as the truck was slowly submerging into the sea water. He pulled Croteau from the roof of the truck and began assisting her to shore. Roberts knew the danger of hypothermia setting in for both Croteau and Roberts if the rescue took too long. She also realized that often the person being rescued, in a state of panic, can drown the rescuer. So, with little thought to her own safety, Kane jumped into the chilly river to help them both quickly and safely to shore.



RICHARD KANE

Hero Awards Dinner

CIVIL AIR PATROL NEW HAMPSHIRE WING

Two young Connecticut pilots, Patrick Hayes and John Schwartz, took off in their Lear jet on Christmas Eve morning. Shortly after 10 a.m., they attempted an instrument approach to Lebanon Airport's Runway 18. They missed and began following a procedure for a radio approach on Runway 25. That's the last time they were heard from.

And thus began the largest air search and rescue mission ever conducted in New Hampshire.

Department of Fish and Game Major Ron Alie summarized the effort: "As of January 1st, twenty-eight hundred square miles were searched ... 66 towns in Grafton, Belknap, Sullivan and Cheshire counties were covered ... 288 sorties were flown."

The unselfish dedication and untiring commitment of everyone involved cannot be overstated. More than 1,100 total mission flying hours were logged. Low visibility, snow, icing, freezing rain, turbulence and fog placed all aircrews in harm's way on almost every mission.

It would be almost impossible to recognize and honor individually all who gave of their time, skill and heart, putting themselves at great risk in this attempt to find the downed aircraft. Personnel included members of the New Hampshire State Police Aviation Unit and air crews of the New Hampshire Army National Guard. Should we find ourselves in a like situation, it is comforting to know we have people of their caliber ready to serve.

However, because of their completely volunteer status, we specifically honor tonight the approximately thirty members of the New Hampshire Wing of the Civil Air Patrol. Their bravery and dedication is an example to us all.

Call for Nominations

Help The Union Leader-New
Hampshire Sunday News
locate residents of our
state who have risked
their lives to save
the life of
another.



HONOREES WILL BE RECOGNIZED AT A SPECIAL AWARDS
PRESENTATION DINNER TO BE HELD IN APRIL, 1998.

Nominee Qualifications:

1. That nominees, based on the newspapers' judgment, exhibited extraordinary bravery by risking their own lives to save someone else.
2. That their heroic action took place between January 1, 1997 and December 31, 1997.
3. Are residents of the State of New Hampshire, although the incident need not have occurred within the state to qualify.

If you feel you know someone who meets these requirements, make your nomination — in writing — by February 1, 1998. Nominations must be accompanied by supporting documentation such as newspaper clippings of the event or other verifiable testimony.

MAIL NOMINATION TO:

Hero Award, The Union Leader
P.O. Box 9555
Manchester, N.H. 03108-9555

The Union Leader NEW HAMPSHIRE SUNDAY NEWS

