LIFESAVING SOCIETY
The Lifeguarding Experts

The Mountbatten Medal was instituted in 1951 by the Royal Life Saving Society Commonwealth and named after the Society's then Grand President, The Earl Mountbatten of Burma. The Mountbatten Medal is given annually for the most gallant rescue or rescue attempt undertaken throughout the Commonwealth by the holder of a Royal Life Saving Society Award.

COREY WOOD
of Calgary, Alberta, Canada
2006

On July 25th, 2006 Corey Wood, a Lifesaving Society National Lifeguard award holder, and Heather Kirwin were on vacation, driving a coastal road to Big Sur, California. On their way they saw a young man at the side of the road covered in blood. Corey and Heather stopped to assist the injured teenager and found that he and four other teenagers had driven over a 450 foot cliff in a pickup truck.

Corey looked over the edge and saw a truck upside down in the ocean and a second teenager clinging to the side of the cliff, a quarter of the way down. With the Lifesaving Society's motto of "Whomsoever you see in distress, recognize in him a fellow man" in his mind, Corey told Heather "There is no choice – I have to go".

Without hesitation, he started down the cliff, to help the first boy. Reaching the terrified and injured young man, he managed to pull this second teen to the roadside. With no first aid training to help her, Heather followed Corey's instructions to treat the two boys for shock. With no cell phone service available, Heather tried to get other motorists to stop to no avail. With luck on her side, a highway patrol car stopped just up the road. She ran up to the patrolman, who was able to radio for help.

Meanwhile, Corey had slid down the 275 feet to reach the third injured boy who was sitting on a small ledge in danger of falling. Corey had to forcefully instruct him to stay where he was or he'd fall. Corey then continued all the way down the cliff to the overturned truck. He found a fourth person trapped under the truck who showed no signs of life. The fifth victim was pinned in the truck.

Corey frantically tried every way he could to get into that truck, but with no success. Sounding like fireworks, the powerful waves moved the truck around so much that Corey feared for his own safety. Despite this, he stayed with the young man, warning him when the larger waves were coming in. That allowed the boy to hold his head up in time to breath.

Forty-five minutes into his ordeal, two volunteer fire brigade members scaled the cliff but had no rescue equipment. Finally a sledge hammer and crowbar was dropped down to the rescuers. They spent the next few hours trying to get the door open. As time went on and with the incoming tide, the waves grew in strength and height, relentlessly trying to pull Corey and the other rescue workers into the ocean. Corey would be completely engulfed by the waves at times, barely able to hang on to the truck.

"Whomsoever you see in distress, recognize in him a fellow man." **Lifesaving Society Motto**

Once they got the truck door open, they could see how wedged in the young man was. It was clear that without more equipment, it would be impossible to free him. With the waves relentlessly pounding them, Corey and the two men continued to do everything they could. They eventually realized that no more rescuers or equipment would arrive to assist them.

Sadly, there came the time when they knew that the water would overcome the teen. Corey then climbed in the truck beside the teenager and gently spoke with him. After the next set of large waves passed, Corey knew that their battle with the waves had finally ended.

Corey clearly risked his own life more than once, to rescue these young men. He also demonstrated considerable compassion by staying and talking with the driver until his final moments of life. It is for his selfless gallantry that Corey Wood was awarded the Commonwealth Mountbatten Medal and Canadian M.G. Griffiths Plaque and the Alberta/NWT Branch Lifesaving Medal with the Bar for Bravery.

Heather Kirwin is deserving of recognition for her perseverance and presence of mind by alerting the authorities and providing first aid. For her efforts Heather Kirwin was awarded The Commendation Citation.

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The M.G. Griffiths Plaque is the highest Bravery award presented by the Lifesaving Society Canada. Recipients must have demonstrated exceptional skill, personal risks, and a high degree of bravery and courage. Recipients of the M.G. Griffiths Plaque must be a Lifesaving Society award holder.

The Lifesaving Medal may be awarded to a person involved in a rescue or attempted rescue that took place in Alberta or the Northwest Territories. It may also be awarded to a resident of Alberta or the Northwest Territories involved in a rescue that took place elsewhere. A **Bar for Bravery** may be awarded when the nature of the rescue placed the rescuer's life in considerable danger.

The Commendation Citation may be awarded to a person who is deserving of recognition for a humanitarian act.

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