



2006 MOUNTBATTEN MEDAL - COREY WOOD

On 25th July 2006, Corey Wood, a Lifesaving Society of Canada National Lifeguard award holder, and Heather Kirwin were on vacation, driving a coastal road to Big Sur, California, USA. 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. Without hesitation, he started down the cliff to help the boy. Reaching the terrified and injured young man, he managed to pull the 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. As there was no cell phone service available, Heather tried to get other motorists to stop but to no avail. A highway patrol car then stopped just up the road and 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 could 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 were 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 was completely engulfed by the waves at times, barely able to hang on to the truck.

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 but eventually realised 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. In total he was involved for some 5 hours in the rescues.

For his selfless gallantry Corey Wood is awarded the Mountbatten Medal