

# Church of God member rescues drowning man

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**By Dixon Cartwright**

DESTIN, Fla.—A 20-year-old Church of God member, in Florida for the 2009 Feast of Tabernacles, described for *THE JOURNAL* his harrowing experience that ended happily last year when he saved the life of a drowning man.

Scott Sherrod of Gobles, Mich., was at a Feast of Tabernacles site sponsored by the Church of God Big Sandy Oct. 10 when he talked to this writer about the day he impulsively jumped into Lake Superior. He was attempting to rescue a swimmer who was in way over his head.

## **Setting up camp**

It was Aug. 18, 2008. Mr. Sherrod was camping with his mother and other family members on the south shore of Lake Superior at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore near Munising, Mich.

"We were setting up camp the first day," he said, "when the camp host drove by in his truck and yelled that he was looking for a strong swimmer."

Mr. Sherrod and his stepfather, Gary Healy, ran to the bluff overlooking the huge lake, "and we saw two guys out there in the water struggling."

The endangered man, 300 yards from shore, was 52-year-old Bruce Brown of Traverse City, Mich. The other man, doing his best to save him from drowning, was Michael Teranes, 37, of Grosse Point Park, Mich.

A few minutes later Mr. Teranes, a prelaw student, was dejectedly swimming alone back to shore. He had been able to bring Mr. Brown only about halfway to the shoreline. But he had freed him from the rip current, thus preventing him from drifting out any farther.

By the time Mr. Sherrod, a junior at Western Michigan University, and his stepfather made it to water's edge, Mr. Teranes was apologizing to a woman and a little girl, the drowning man's wife and daughter.

"He was saying he was sorry he couldn't save him," Mr. Sherrod said. "He explained that the drowning man was just struggling too much and he could not save him."

At that point Mr. Sherrod's instincts took over.

### **How sad it would be**

He later said he was thinking how sad it would be for the little girl, who looked like she was about 10, to grow up without her father.

"I'm a pretty self-conscious guy," Mr. Sherrod told *THE JOURNAL*. "But before I knew it I was in my underwear about to jump in the water. It was just instinct, really. I didn't want to see the girl grow up without her dad."

It was a "rough day on Lake Superior," he remembers, "and when I got to him he was unconscious and discolored and, for some reason, fully clothed. But he was floating and making a gurgling noise, so I knew he was alive."

### **Time flies**

Lake Superior is the largest, deepest and coldest of the Great Lakes, with a surface area about the size of the state of South Carolina. Its average temperature in the summer is 40 degrees Fahrenheit (4 degrees Celsius).

When Mr. Sherrod jumped into the water, he braced himself for the shock of the cold.

Yet, he said, "I remember thinking: Wow, I can't believe Lake Superior's this warm."

Friends later informed him the water was very cold, not warm.

Mr. Sherrod estimates the whole experience took about 30 minutes.

"That's what everybody says. It went by pretty quick in my mind. When I got out to him, my only thought was to keep him afloat, because I couldn't make any headway in towards shore at all."

It was only after he reached Mr. Brown that Mr. Sherrod realized his own life was in jeopardy.

"But, when I was going out, it did seem to calm down a little bit, and that might just be in my head and it might not. But there's no question in my mind that I got a lot of help, because when I got out there I didn't know how I could make any headway myself.

"I just kept praying the whole time. Then some waves came and started pushing me forward a little bit. I kept kicking and tried not to float out farther. Before I knew it, I could touch him."

### **Touching bottom**

Heading back to shore with Mr. Brown in tow, Mr. Sherrod "kept kicking, and before I knew it I could touch the bottom again.

"Once I was in about three feet of water, I was met by a group of people that helped me pull him in the rest of the way."

Once Mr. Brown was safely on shore, he “started coughing up water, and everyone was throwing blankets and towels on him, trying to block the wind because it was a really windy day.”

Mr. Sherrod is not a professional lifeguard, but he admits he’s “kind of a good swimmer.

“Like, I haven’t really swum all that much, but I was always goofing around in pools and stuff. But I never trained in swimming or knew any lifesaving techniques.”

### **Real contact**

Modestly, Mr. Sherrod asked the park ranger not to reveal his name to Mr. Brown and his family. Therefore there has been no communication between Mr. Sherrod and the Browns.

“The only real contact I had with any of them was after I got out of the water and started walking back to try and dry off,” Mr. Sherrod said.

“The little girl came up to me and kind of patted me on the side, and she just said thank you and turned away crying. She was 10-ish.”

Newspaper accounts at the time identified her as 11-year-old Kelly Brown.

Kelly also did her best to thank Mr. Teranes. According to published reports, Mr. Teranes found a thank-you note from Kelly under a rock at his campsite.

The park ranger, Tom Colyer, was so impressed with the efforts of Mr. Sherrod and Mr. Teranes that he nominated the two men to receive an award from the U.S. Department of Interior.

On May 6, 2009, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar presented them with the Citizen’s Award for Bravery in a ceremony in Washington, D.C.

### **Own life in danger**

As reported in the Kalamazoo, Mich., *Gazette*, Ranger Colyer praised Mr. Sherrod for his efforts.

“To qualify for this award,” Mr. Colyer was reported as saying, “the rescuer has to have put his own life in danger, and Scott Sherrod certainly did. He very selflessly entered the same conditions as the person in trouble. He prevented the loss of life, and he prevented a family from being broken.”

Mr. Sherrod is the son of Roxanne Healy of Gobles and Rick Sherrod of Stephenville, Texas. He is engaged to marry Marissa Hunt in the summer of 2010.

At WMU Mr. Sherrod, a chemical-engineering major, participates in intramural sports, including basketball.

He has attended Sabbath services—with the Worldwide Church of God, United Church of God and independent groups—all his life.