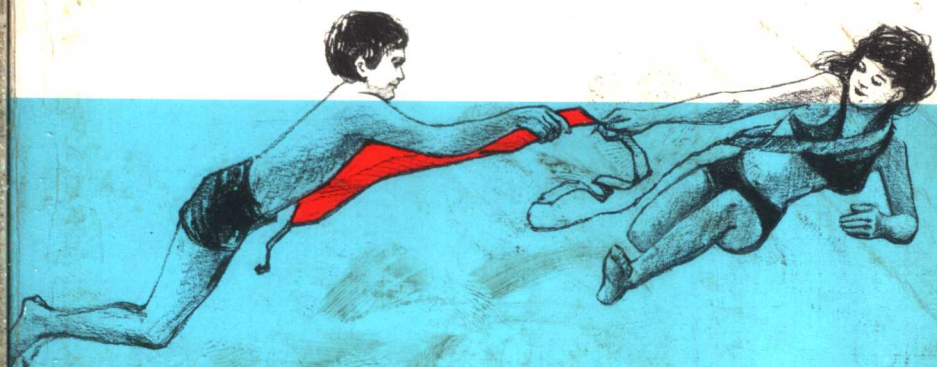




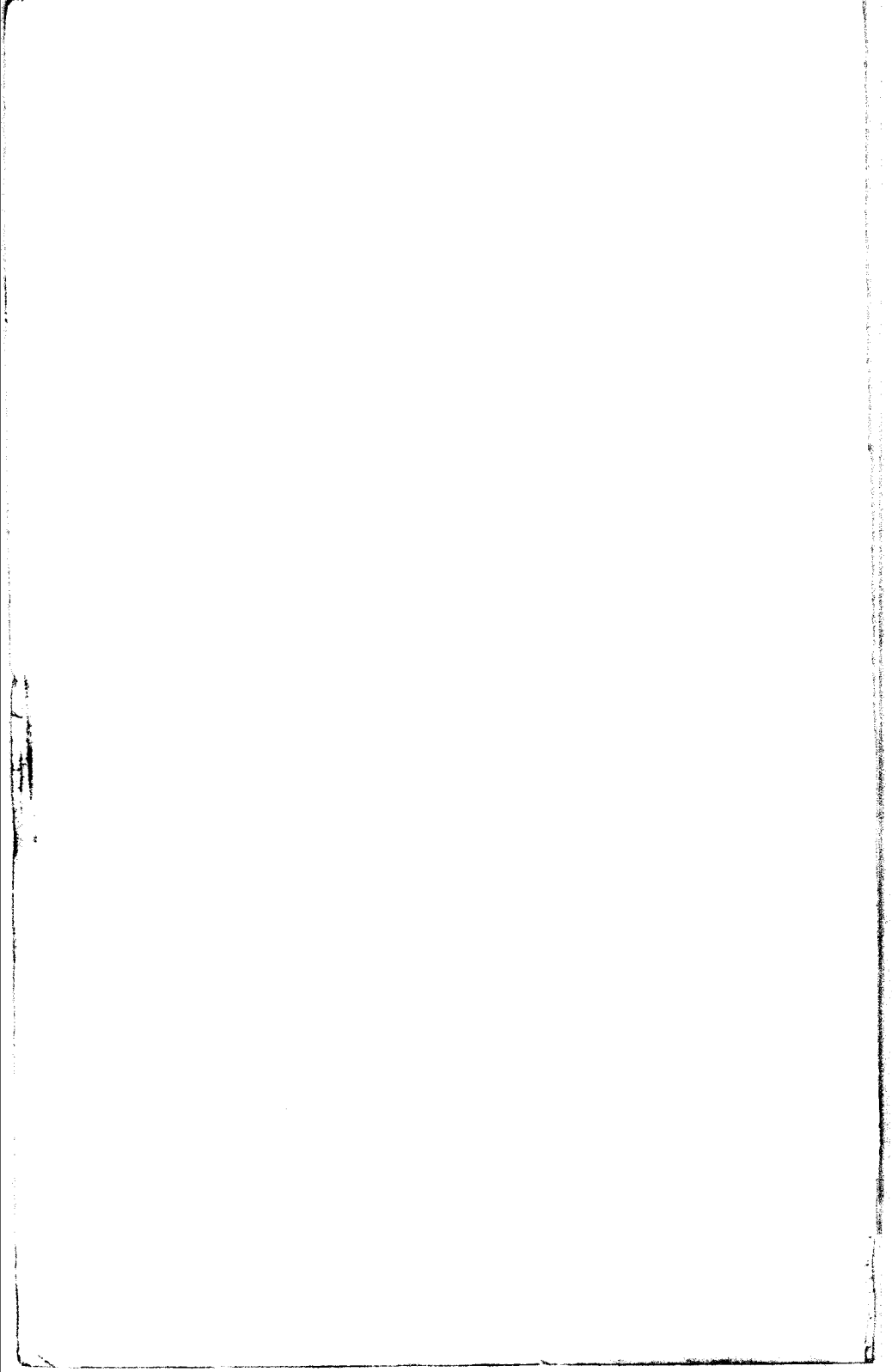
American  
Red Cross

# LIFESAVING

Rescue and  
Water Safety



**LIFESAVING**  
**RESCUE and WATER SAFETY**



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## **RESCUE AND WATER SAFETY**

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## PREFACE

Safety in and on the water depends upon a number of things. It begins, of course, with the ability to swim well enough to care for one's self under ordinary conditions. It does not, however, end there. Real water safety is also based upon such factors as the ability to recognize and avoid hazardous water conditions and practices. Ability to use self-rescue skills to get out of dangerous situations is also a factor. Finally, skill in rescuing or assisting persons in danger of drowning is a means of preserving a person's own life as well as saving that of someone else. The three major causes of drowning are, and always have been, failure to recognize hazardous conditions or practices, inability to get out of dangerous situations, and lack of knowledge of safe ways in which to aid persons requiring assistance in the water. (28)

When Commodore Wilbert E. Longfellow started the Life Saving Service of the American Red Cross in 1914, he concentrated wisely on the organization and training of volunteer lifesaving corps throughout the country to supervise otherwise unguarded bathing beaches. It soon became evident, however, that this was not the final solution to the problem of drownings, and changes in methods were reflected in the slogan coined by the Commodore: "Everyone a swimmer, every swimmer a lifesaver." The slogan reflects the philosophy that the best kind of lifesaving is being able to swim well, and that the next best way to cope with the accidental drowning situation is to train as many people as possible in lifesaving techniques.

Since 1914, the American Red Cross has published various texts, planned and written as resources to which anyone interested in water safety may refer. The books have been designed as texts upon which Red Cross lifesaving training courses are based and have been used by both instructors and pupils as authoritative sources of information.

The present text, developed by Edmond J. Mongeon, former national director of the American Red Cross Water Safety Program, is the resource textbook for Red Cross lifesaving and water safety courses and is dedicated to the task of teaching and disseminating the skills of lifesaving and water safety.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The American Red Cross wishes to acknowledge with appreciation the contributions made by Carroll L. Bryant and Richard L. Brown, former directors of its Water Safety Program. Much of the material is based on the 1938 textbook *Life Saving and Water Safety*, which was written by Mr. Bryant, and on the information contained in a number of instructor manuals later written by Mr. Brown.

Special acknowledgment and thanks are extended to the following lifesaving advisory committee, which met several times and gave invaluable guidance, advice, and direction to the text contents: Mrs. Prudence Fleming, formerly of Temple University and past chairman, Council for National Cooperation in Aquatics (CNCA); Mrs. Ruth Magher, Spartanburg, S.C., formerly affiliated with Queens College; Dr. Robert Bartels, Ohio State University; Charles C. Stott, North Carolina State University; Ralph Flanagan, Los Angeles Chapter, American Red Cross; and John T. Goetz, Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter, American Red Cross.

The revision of the lifesaving information was initiated at the Red Cross Lifesaving and Water Safety Symposium held in Washington, D.C., in 1969. At that time, in addition to the above committee, some 25 aquatics leaders representing 20 national agencies and organizations explored all the major aspects of water safety for the Red Cross to consider in bringing its material up to date.

In addition, the writer has drawn heavily upon the experience of hundreds of professional and volunteer water safety staff in the field, and at American Red Cross national headquarters, and of other water safety specialists as well. The advice and the cooperation of all these individuals are greatly appreciated.

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# 1

## PERSONAL SAFETY IN THE AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT

Human beings do not naturally belong in the water. Their whole physical makeup—posture, body temperature, breathing apparatus, shape and arrangement of arms and legs, specific gravity, functions, everything—have been developed for terrestrial living. There is literally nothing to indicate anything natural about man's aquatic activities, yet an unbounded curiosity, a dominant will, and a marvelously adaptable brain and physical structure have not only urged humans into the water but have also prompted them to develop forms of locomotion suited to their needs in the new element. Individuals have found comfort, relaxation, and enjoyment in the water. At the same time, however, experience has taught them that in the water there are definite limits beyond which they cannot safely go, and there is a certain amount of knowledge of the aquatic environment that they must acquire. Humans are one of the few animals—if not the only animal—that must learn how to swim.

Drowning is simply suffocation in the water. When the water closes over the mouth and nose and people are in such a position or condition that they cannot surface to breathe, drowning occurs. Learning how to swim, knowing when and where to swim, and being prepared for the hazards of the aquatic environment will equip a person with the major defenses against drowning and will enhance enjoyment of the aquatic environment.

In personal safety the first rule is to learn to swim and to swim well. The American Red Cross, as well as many other agencies, schools, camps, recreation programs, and individuals, provides swimming instruction. The time devoted to swimming instruction is well spent indeed.

### WHEN TO SWIM

There is little question concerning the time of year to swim out of doors. Temperature and weather conditions dictate the swimming



season to all but the exceptional swimmer. In some southern latitudes the swimming season extends over the entire year, while in some northern areas it may be but a few weeks. With the increased popularity of indoor facilities, covered pools, and heated water, the length of the swimming season has increased. When the water ranges in temperature from 70 to 78 degrees it is, apparently, most inviting to man.

The time of day when a person should swim is not particularly important as long as the applicable safety rules are observed, such as not swimming immediately after eating, when overheated, or during an electrical storm. Overexposure to sun rays should be avoided, particularly during midday. Chilling should be avoided on cool, overcast days.

The "morning dip," a quick plunge taken immediately upon rising, can provide real pleasure and exhilaration to the individual who can stand the shock of cool air and cool water and who reacts well to the experience. Some persons are rugged enough physically to enjoy a morning dip and benefit by it without any special preparation. Others can accustom themselves to it gradually by warming up easily before entering the water and by beginning with only the briefest periods of immersion. However, there are many to whom the quick transition from a warm bed to the chilled morning air and water is not only distasteful but also quite lacking in benefit, and sometimes actually injurious to health. Briefly, it may be said that the "morning dip" should be made a matter of individual choice.

The "starlight dip," or night swim, is a thrilling experience, and no one who has ever enjoyed a cooling dip just before retiring on a still, hot night can easily forget its pleasant qualities. When a person swims well, thoroughly knows the swimming place, stays close to shallow water, is accompanied by other swimmers, and follows good safety practices, there is little danger in a starlight dip.

The length of time a person may stay in the water without ill effect is governed by the sense of physical comfort. Usually, when people become chilled, enervated, or tired they begin to feel uncomfortable and get out of the water of their own volition. However, children frequently allow their sense of enjoyment to outweigh a growing feeling of discomfort and unduly prolong their periods of immersion. Uncontrollable shivering, a bluish tinge to the lips, a drawn or pinched face, and cold and clammy skin are indications that it is time to come out.

A large percentage of drownings occur early in the swimming season when individuals (usually young boys) decide to take the first few swims of the year. They are naturally out of condition for