

About 2,000 Deaths Prevented

'Hug' Can Be a Life-Saving Maneuver

By KAREN FELD, *Independent News Alliance*

CINCINNATI—It is the well-known "hug" that can save a person from choking, the sixth leading cause of accidental death and the killer of 3,000 to 4,000 Americans annually.

It is the Heimlich Hug (or Maneuver), developed by Dr. Henry J. Heimlich of Cincinnati, for 20 years a thoracic surgeon specializing in the esophagus.

Heimlich says methods such as slapping the back, sticking a finger down the throat or cutting a hole in the trachea are worthless.

He found that they were not only ineffective but dangerous because they frequently pushed the foreign object deeper. In 1974 he developed his life-saving Heimlich Maneuver.

It is a simple technique that involves standing behind a choking victim and pressing a fist into his upper abdomen. The fist elevates the diaphragm, which compresses

the lungs, causing a flow of air that propels the food or foreign object out of the throat.

About 2,000 "saves" involving the Heimlich Maneuver have been documented.

One of the early famous victims of choking was Agathocles, Tyrant of Syracuse, who died in 289 BC when he choked on a toothpick.

Three-quarters of a century later, in 203 B.C., Quintus Fabius Maximus, a Roman general and statesman at the time of the Second Punic War, known by his clan name, Fabius, choked to death on a goat hair in the milk he was drinking.

Claudius I, emperor of Rome, married his niece, Agrippina, who served him poisonous mushrooms in 54 AD. His physician, Xenophon, shoved a feather down Claudius's throat in an effort to induce vomiting. Claudius choked to death on the

feather, which reportedly also was poisoned.

English historian Thomas May, an obese man who used strips of cloth to contain his drooping chin, choked to death in 1650 when he swallowed too much food at once.

Oil millionairess Olga Deterding, who inherited \$65 million from the royal Dutch Shell fortune, choked to death on a piece of meat at a New Year's Eve party in 1978.

Seventeenth-Century English dramatist Thomas Otway was so poor that he resorted to begging. Having gone days without food, he bought a bread roll with the first guinea he received and choked to death on the first mouthful.

Tommy Dorsey, the big-band leader, went to sleep on a full stomach after a Sunday dinner at home in 1954. He vomited during the night and choked on food lodged in his throat.



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Dr. Henry J. Heimlich

A ham sandwich was the cause of the choking death of pop singer "Mama" Cass Elliot, 33, onetime member of the Mamas and the Papas singing group. She choked in her London apartment during a solo engagement at the London Palladium in 1974.

King Farouk of Egypt died in a Rome hospital in 1965 after he had collapsed during dinner in a fashionable restaurant. The cause of his death has become known as "café coronary." The victim chokes at the dinner table, turns blue or black, and is dead within four minutes after the intake of air is cut off. He or she cannot speak and bystanders generally confuse the food-choking episode with a heart attack, hence the name.

A famous sports figure who died of choking was Jimmy Foxx, the baseball star.

Japan has many choking deaths on New Year's when sochi, a sweet molasses cake, is traditionally eaten.

Jack Lemmon used the Heimlich Maneuver to save fellow actor Walter Matthau at a Hollywood gala in 1977. Entertainer Danny Kaye saved a friend who choked on a grape while dining in his Beverly Hills home. Marlene Dietrich was saved from choking on chicken skin.

An aide to the late Nelson Rockefeller choked on a piece of chewing gum while dancing and was

"hugged" by her partner when he saw she could neither speak nor breathe. The gum popped out of her mouth.

Even a pet lizard has been saved by its owner with the Heimlich Maneuver.

Heimlich reports that the youngest rescuer he has heard of was a 4-year-old boy who used the maneuver to save his 2-year-old sister, who choked on a piece of chicken skin as their mother watched.

Singer Rudy Vallee, 79, is the oldest known rescuer. Vallee saved a 70-year-old friend while dining in a Seattle restaurant last year.

NBC anchorman John Chancellor choked on a piece of Gouda cheese during a high-level network luncheon with then-presidential candidate John Connally. Chancellor coughed and began to turn blue. Television personality Tom Brokaw came to his rescue, using the Heimlich Maneuver to dislodge the cheese from Chancellor's throat.

Ironically, although thousands of "saves" have been documented, Heimlich himself has never had the occasion to save a choking victim.