

02-17-1987 Rancho Cordova CA – Ronald Harknett –FF PSD Recovery LOST

Ronald Hopkins Harknett

American, aged 38. **Rancho Cordova** firefighter and member of the **Drowning Accident Rescue Team**, one of four divers searching the Sacramento River for a child and adult lost overboard when a boat sank. Failed to surface, drowned.



<http://www.thediversassociation.com/index.php/sheets>

DART has lost only one member in its more than 30-year history. Ron Harknett, a full-time firefighter with Rancho Cordova, died on Feb. 17, 1987 during a DART mission in the Sacramento River near Miller Park. Harknett disappeared while in the water. His body was never found.

FEBRUARY, 1987 CALIFORNIA

A 38 yoa firefighter and volunteer regional dive team member drowned during a search for two drowning victims in the Sacramento River. Five adults and two children were in a fourteen foot boat that had run out of gas. The occupants were paddling to shore when the wake of another boat swamped their boat. The boat sank and one adult and one child drowned. The dive team responded to the night time operation and made two underwater searches without success. Due to poor witness accounts and the lapse of too much time, the rescue mode operation was canceled until the next day. The search continued the next day with new information that the child may have been tied to the boat in her PFD. The search area was described as approximately 30 feet deep with 50 degree water temperature and a current of 0-6 knots. Bottom debris consisted of scattered trees and it was an area the team was familiar with. A police boat had identified a possible target on sonar near a piling located in the river. The first search consisted of sending three divers down to run a sweep search pattern utilizing the piling as the pivot point. Nothings was found. With new information from an eyewitness the search area was moved slightly and a second 20 minute search was conducted utilizing a weighted line search. During this search utilizing two divers, a large tree was found and suspected to be the target seen on sonar. At this point the divers took a break for refreshments and rest. The firefighter who make the first two dives was asked on three occasions if he was rested and ready to make another dive. He stated he was ready. After discussing the plan and reviewing line signals the firefighter entered the water first, followed by three other divers to begin the weighted line search. After reaching their assigned locations on the rope, the group then waited for four or five minutes for the signal from the firefighter to begin the search. The firefighter did not respond to line signals and the three other divers surfaced. A diver was sent back down to check the entire length of the rope and could not locate the firefighter. A diver attempted to go down the furthest-out

buoy, which was connected to the weighted line, had a hard time getting down due to the swift current. Numerous dives were made attempting to locate the firefighter. The firefighter and the two original drowning victims were never recovered.

Ronald Hopkins Harknett	
California Death Index	
Name	Ronald Hopkins Harknett
Event Type	Death
Event Date	17 Feb 1987
Event Place	Sacramento, California, United States
Birth Date	16 Oct 1948
Birthplace	Louisiana
Gender	Male

<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VP8M-DM2>

Sheriff's Donation Will Help DART Buy New Diving Equipment

[HTTP://FOX40.COM/2013/05/25/SHERIFFS-DONATION-WILL-HELP-DART-BUY-NEW-DIVING-EQUIPMENT/](http://fox40.com/2013/05/25/sheriffs-donation-will-help-dart-buy-new-diving-equipment/)
MAY 25, 2013, BY CECILIO PADILLA - SACRAMENTO—

When the volunteer Drowning Accident Rescue Team lost one of their own in 1987, Ron Harknett – a Rancho Cordova firefighter – dove into the water to search for a 3-year-old girl and her father.

Harknett never resurfaced and his body has never been found.

“We do feel the grief that the families feel. And we do feel the sadness. And we are at least able to help out a little bit by bringing the victims back to their families, so they can get a little bit of closure,” said Kelly McFarlane with DART.

Last week, DART searched for a man who possibly purposely drove into the river at Sutterville and I-5. His body was found yesterday.

“There was fishing line everywhere down there. And several of our divers, including myself, got tangled on this fishing line,” said Jason Alexander, a volunteer.

A situation Harkett likely encountered.

Thanks to a \$25,000 donation from the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department, brand new equipment will be purchased that will enable divers to talk to each other underwater.

"One member is way too many to have something go wrong under water," Alexander said.

DART a volunteer strictly non-profit organization relies heavily on donations, so if you would like to help, visit their website at <http://dartsac.org/>

Ron Harknett

<https://www.iaff.org/hs/LODD/searchResultsDetail.asp?personID=4050>



District Number: 10
Rank: Fire Fighter
Gender: M
Local L0522, Sacramento, California

Cause of Fatal Injury: Caught/Trapped
Nature of Fatal Injury: Drowning
Type of Duty: Water Operations

Date of Death: 2/17/1987
Year Placed On Wall: 2015

From teacher to life saver: Woodland resident part of drowning rescue team in off-time

<http://www.dailydemocrat.com/general-news/20131012/from-teacher-to-life-saver-woodland-resident-part-of-drowning-rescue-team-in-off-time>

10/12/13, By DON FRANCES

By day, Leslie Robinson is a kindergarten teacher at Gibson Elementary School, where she supervises a room full of small children.

Her after-work activities are even more dangerous.

Robinson is a member of DART - the Drowning Accident Rescue Team, based in Sacramento - whose volunteers routinely go into the frigid, fast-moving waters of the Sacramento River and other bodies of water in order to save (or retrieve) the people who fall in.

Although she isn't yet doing rescue dives - even expert SCUBA divers like her must first complete extensive training - Robinson is avidly learning the various tasks involved, such as completing an emergency vehicle operation course.

"There's so many opportunities in DART, that's what I love about it," the Woodland resident said recently.

Another thing she likes about the group is its spirit of volunteerism. In fact, Robinson said, when she first learned about a year ago that DART is staffed entirely by volunteers, she had to sign on.

It reminds her of her first vocation, she said: As a teacher, "I always say we are in community service. ... A lot of our hours are volunteer hours."

As for DART, its 50 or so members - about 30 are active - train, educate and, when duty calls, risk their lives without pay.

This dedication to service holds the group together despite different backgrounds.

"I call us the misfits, because we come from all walks of life," Robinson said of her fellow DART members. "We've got a couple of teachers, we've got PG&E people, we've got a heating-and-air guy..."

The list also includes law enforcement personnel and other first-responders. But during DART calls they, like the rest, are doing it as a volunteer service rather than a job.

"It's just a great group of people," said Robinson. "And for me, personally, part of it was I wanted to be part of a team."

To join that team requires a great deal of training. In the Sacramento River especially, conditions are uniquely dangerous - "completely different from recreational diving," explained DART spokeswoman Kelly McFarlane.

For one, there is zero visibility in the river. During training, DART divers go into the water with duct tape over their face masks to simulate the blindness of a rescue mission.

That means divers have to use other senses to communicate, including simple tugs on a guide rope.

DART team members used the guide rope method last March when they attempted to rescue Mussarat Chaudhary, a 58-year-old West Sacramento woman who lost control of her Toyota Camry on Old River Road and drove into the river. Chaudhary called 911, but was not able to escape her vehicle.

First responders found tire tracks but no vehicle. The DART divers scoured the waters downstream, eventually locating the car - with Chaudhary's body inside.

"The majority of our calls are recoveries," acknowledged DART spokeswoman Kelly McFarlane. Often, the conditions are simply too dangerous for the victims to survive.

Even so, "We do it because there's always a chance" to save them, McFarlane said. "It doesn't happen very often, but there's always a chance."

And besides, Robinson said, recovery is important to the victims' families. She noted that members of her own family have served under dangerous conditions - her son is a firefighter and her daughter served in the Army. (Her ex-husband, Greg Robinson, is a battalion chief with the Woodland Fire Department.)

"If something happened to them, I would want their body to be returned to me," Robinson said. "I want to provide this closure to the family."

Despite the dangers, DART has lost only one member in its more than 30-year history. Ron Harknett, a full-time firefighter with Rancho Cordova, died on Feb. 17, 1987 during a DART mission in the Sacramento River near Miller Park.

Harknett disappeared while in the water. His body was never found.

"We still talk about it," McFarlane said. Because of the very real dangers, she added, "We train every single month."

Their work isn't all grim, however. DART members are regulars at public events throughout the region, where they provide water safety education and other services. Both Robinson and McFarlane noted the important work that DART volunteers can do just by educating the public.

Those not able to dedicate volunteer hours can always offer financial help. According to McFarlane, "We specifically need new face masks that have communications units. Our dive masks, some of them are 20 years old."

For the most part, she said, the group's funding comes through donations and fundraisers and "depends on what's going on in Sacramento." As for Robinson, she remains full steam ahead with DART.

"I've been on it for about a year, and I'm almost ready to start training in the pool," she said.

"I am so proud to represent an organization that is all-volunteer, and we're all there to provide a service. I love that."

To learn more about DART or to donate, visit www.dartsac.org.

RESOLUTION No. 87-137

Adopted by The Sacramento City Council on date of

FEB 24 1987

RESOLUTION MEMORIALIZING RON HARKNETT

IT IS HEREBY NOTED that the people of this city suffered a great loss in the passing of Ron Harknett on February 17, 1987 in Sacramento, California; and

WHEREAS, Ron Harknett devoted his life to helping other people, as a member of the Drowning Accident Rescue Team, and in his career as a firefighter with the Rancho Cordova Firefighters and the Citrus Heights Firefighters; and

WHEREAS, Ron Harknett was a generous man who put himself at great personal risk for his community; and

WHEREAS, Ron Harknett was an exceptional person who touched the lives of many and will be deeply missed by all who came to know him;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that this Resolution be entered with the minutes of this meeting, in addition to which, this meeting shall be adjourned in respect for the memory of Ron Harknett; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be tendered to his bereaved family, as an expression of this Council's deepest sympathy.



Mayor

ATTEST:



City Clerk

RESOLUTION 87-137

FEB 24 1987