

03-15-1998 Ventura CA - Paul Korber – LEO Harbor Patrol Successful Rescue Attempt



OFFICER DOWN MEMORIAL PAGE

REMEMBERING ALL OF LAW ENFORCEMENT'S HEROES

<https://www.odmp.org/officer/15062-harbor-patrol-officer-paul-d-korber>



Bio & Incident Details

Age: 46

Tour: 11 years

Badge # Not available

Cause: Drowned

Harbor Patrol Officer

Paul D. Korber

Ventura Port District Harbor Patrol, California

End of Watch: Sunday, March 15, 1998

Harbor Patrol Officer Paul Korber drowned while attempting to save a woman and her three children from a treacherous riptide near a jetty.

Officer Korber was assisting in the rescue when he sank beneath churning surf for at least 30 seconds. He was pulled from the water unconscious. Several lifeguards administered CPR on Officer Korber but were unable to revive him. He was pronounced dead at a local hospital after extensive efforts to revive him failed.

The area that he was making the rescue is well-known for treacherous conditions.

Officer Korber is survived by a child.



CALIFORNIA PEACE OFFICERS' MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

Honoring Our Fallen Heroes

<https://camemorial.org/honor-roll/tribute/paul-d-korber/>

Officer Paul D. Korber	Date of Birth November 7, 1951	Appointed June 1985
Department Ventura Harbor Patrol	End of Watch March 15, 1998	

Hundreds of harbor patrol officers, police and fire officials from throughout California led a procession to Ventura's Ivy Lawn Memorial Park Saturday, March 21, following the funeral service at the Ventura Missionary Church for Officer Paul D. Korber.

Korber died a hero's death when he drowned Sunday, March 15, while rescuing, Karen Van Deventer, and her 7- and 11-year-old sons off the South Jetty of Ventura Harbor. The victims had been walking in shallow water along the beach when a rip tide reportedly pulled one of the children in. Another son, 14-years-old, was able to rescue himself.

The Harbor Patrol received several reports of swimmers in distress south of the South Jetty. Korber and Operations Manager, Scott Miller, responded by vessel. Three people were clinging to a Boogie Board about 250 feet from shore in 4-to 6-foot swells when they arrived. Although they were able to get close to the people, they couldn't reach them. Korber stripped off to his uniform shorts and entered the water with a rescue tube. He swam with the victims to the Harbor Patrol boat that was waiting just outside the breaking waves.

They were pushed back toward the jetty by a set of waves. Korber, with the assistance of bystanders, tried to remove the victims from the water onto the South Jetty. Everyone was swept back into the water despite numerous rescue attempts. Two state lifeguards arrived on the scene and began swimming the victims out of the surf. They were quickly taken aboard the Harbor Patrol boat. Korber, who had disappeared under the water, was rescued by a third state lifeguard. He was towed unconscious to the boat, and CPR was begun immediately. Although CPR continued during Korber's transportation to a local hospital, he was pronounced dead after the efforts to revive him were unsuccessful.

During the funeral service Miller stated, "Paul was one of the best harbor patrol officers I have ever worked with. He was always striving to improve himself in all aspects of the job. He especially enjoyed his role as a coordinator and instructor for the Rescue Boat Handling Class that the harbor patrol hosts annually for officers throughout the state."

A family friend, Mark Ellison, particularly touched the group of mourners with a poem filled with fond remembrances. He had written the poem "Heroes in Heaven"

for Korber. In part the poem said "There's heroes in heaven, that's easy to see. Paul Korber is one, for great deeds did he."

Barrett, Korber's 9-year-old son, was told by Harbor Patrol Officer David Glaser, one of Korber's closest friends, that he had a bunch of "big brothers and sisters" in the harbor patrol that he could depend upon. He received numerous gifts including four caps; one from the Seattle Mariners signed by player Ken Griffey Jr. and another from the Dodgers signed by player Mike Piazza.

The hats were presented to Barrett, along with a hat rack, by Rev. Bob Herrington who told him that he could always hang his hat on God.

More than 40 water-oriented agencies, fire departments, police agencies, from across the state attended the funeral services. Miller said, "Paul had a heck of a lot of friends. He exemplified everything that was good in a human."

A U.S. Coast Guard helicopter unit honored the fallen hero with a "fly-over." Korber had served in Vietnam as a helicopter gunner.

Korber, 45, was buried alongside his wife, Cindy, who died of breast cancer in 1995. She had also been a Ventura Harbor Patrol Officer.

Korber is survived by his 9-year-old son, Barrett; father and stepmother, Frank and Carol Korber of Cardiff; sister, Jeri Hough of Rochester, Minn.; three brothers, Jeffrey Korber of Chico, Eric Christeson of Ventura and Russell Brown of Lompoc. The Ventura Port District, in conjunction with the Bank of Ventura, has established the "Paul Korber Memorial Fund" to benefit Korber's son Barrett. Donations may be made to the fund in care of the Bank of Ventura, 5808 E. Telephone Road, Ventura, CA 93003.



National Law Enforcement Officers
MEMORIAL FUND
RESPECT. HONOR. REMEMBER.

Deadly Dangers Patrolling Our Waterways

<http://www.nleomf.org/newsroom/news-releases/deadly-dangers-patrolling-our.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>

October 9, 2000

Paul Korber was a strong swimmer and a dedicated law enforcement officer. He worked for the Ventura, California, Harbor Patrol. On March 15, 1998, Officer Korber received a call for help. Two young boys and their mother had been caught in an ocean rip tide and were struggling for their lives.

When efforts to reach the family by boat failed due to rough seas, Officer Korber dove in to make the rescue. He reached the family and managed to keep them afloat long enough for lifeguards to get them to safety. But, Officer Korber wasn't

so lucky. Tossed into a jetty by the six-foot waves, he became disoriented and drowned. Paul Korber, an 11-year veteran of the department saved three lives that day . . . and in doing so, he gave up his own.

Shortly after that terrible tragedy, a letter appeared in the local newspaper. It was written by the man who had called the Harbor Patrol for help. The man was humbled by what he had witnessed that day and he wanted others to know. He wrote, "We often hear comments directed at firemen, lifeguards, harbor patrols and other safety professionals about the ease of their jobs. In the absence of catastrophe, some people assume their work is rather inconsequential. But those of us who have been saved . . . know the real truth. And the truth is that if 364 days go by without incident, and on the 365th, that man or woman has to break through a burning door, or swim out through the swells on a big day, they earn everything we pay them in that moment. For Paul [Korber] and his family, that debt, in fact, can never be paid, but we understand the value of his commitment."

Rescuer Dies After Saving Woman and 2 Sons in Riptide

<http://articles.latimes.com/1998/mar/16/local/me-29471>

March 16, 1998 | TROY HEIE, SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

A 10-year veteran of the Ventura Harbor Patrol died Sunday after saving a woman and her two young children from a deadly riptide near the harbor's south jetty, authorities said. Paul Korber, 45, was assisting in the rescue around 2 p.m. when he disappeared beneath the water, said Harbor Operations Manager Scott Miller.

When Korber resurfaced, he was unconscious and not breathing, Miller said.

"I don't know for sure, but I think he may have hit his head on some rocks," said Miller, who was one of four emergency officials who participated in the rescue.

Korber, a Ventura widower, was an avid skin diver and scuba diver who was trained in such water rescues, Miller said.

"He was well-prepared for any situation in the water," he said.

Miller said this was the first rescue-related fatality involving a Ventura Harbor Patrol officer in the agency's 46-year history.

The South Jetty Beach is well-known for its treacherous conditions. On Labor Day in 1996, more than a dozen swimmers had to be plucked from riptides near the beach.

Sunday's incident occurred about 250 feet offshore when Karen Van Deventer of Canyon Country and her two sons, ages 7 and 11, were wading in the water near the south jetty next to Harbor Cove. Suddenly, a riptide pulled them out to sea, said Paul Hudson, a lifeguard who assisted in the rescue.

"People don't realize that they're being carried out. It happens so fast," he said. No lifeguards are normally stationed at the harbor beach, and swimmers are advised to enter the water at their own risk.

Miller and Korber arrived at the scene in a harbor patrol boat, and Hudson and another lifeguard who responded from the adjacent state beach ran out on the jetty to the location of the victims.

There were dozens of spectators on the jetty, and several sunbathers attempted to assist in the rescue, Miller said.

Korber dove off the boat and was trying to lead the trio out of the riptide when the accident occurred. Van Deventer and her children were on a boogie board when Korber reached them.

"It didn't look like he could swim them in, or out of the riptide, so he tried to get them to the jetty," Miller said.

"They were almost in the rocks," Hudson said.

Miller maneuvered the boat so that Van Deventer and her children could climb on board. When they were safely aboard, rescuers noticed that Korber had gone under the water, Hudson said.

The waves were about 3 to 4 feet high at the time, and sea conditions were extremely choppy, Hudson said.

"The waves were coming in close together, and the boat was literally lifted in the air by some of the waves," Hudson said.

Korber, who was plucked from the water within moments, was raced to shore and transported to Ventura County Medical Center. He never regained consciousness and was pronounced dead at the hospital, a spokesman said.

Korber had been a paramedic prior to joining the Harbor Patrol in June 1987. He taught himself Spanish over the years to communicate better with the public, Miller said.

"He was a terrific officer," Miller said. "He was well-versed in all phases of the job." Korber is survived by a son, Barrett, 10, and a great-aunt who lives in the area, as well as his parents, who live near San Diego. His wife died of cancer several years ago.

Korber's parents were notified of their son's death Sunday afternoon, Miller said. The seven remaining members of the Harbor Patrol gathered in a special meeting after the accident.

"They're dealing with it individually," Miller said.

Rescuer Drowned, Autopsy Concludes

<http://articles.latimes.com/1998/mar/17/local/me-29893>

March 17, 1998 DAWN HOBBS

Although a Ventura Harbor patrolman who drowned Sunday while saving swimmers hit his head on a rock during the rescue, authorities said that did not appear to be related to his death.

Paul Korber, a 10-year veteran, died after saving a woman and her two young children from a riptide near the harbor's south jetty.

"He's a hero to everybody here," said Mitch Breese, a Ventura County medical examiner.

Breese said that although Korber, 45, hit his head during the rescue, it was a minor bump and did not appear to be a factor in his death.

An autopsy performed Monday determined the cause of death to be asphyxiation by drowning, Breese said.

Korber is survived by his 10-year-old son, Barrett, a great aunt who lives in the area and parents who live near San Diego. Korber's wife died of cancer three years ago.

Harbor Patrol officials said Korber's death was the first rescue-related fatality involving a Harbor Patrol officer in the agency's 46-year history.

Sunday's incident occurred about 250 feet offshore when Karen Van Deventer of Canyon Country and her two sons, ages 7 and 11, were carried out to sea by a riptide.

"As I understand it, [the children] were accidentally swept off the beach," said Scott Miller, harbor operations manager. "It wasn't like they were swimming. . . . And she tried to rescue them."

Korber and Miller arrived at the scene in a harbor patrol boat.

Korber dove off the boat and tried to lead the trio out of the riptide while Miller maneuvered the boat so Van Deventer and her children could climb on board.

It wasn't until after the three were safely aboard that anyone was able to help Korber.

"We noticed he was in trouble, but we had to get the woman and her children on board before we could give assistance to Paul," Miller said.

Korber was removed from the water within moments, but never regained consciousness. He was pronounced dead at Community Memorial Hospital in Ventura.

A trust fund has been set up for Korber's son. Contributions should be made to the Paul Korber Memorial Fund, Bank of Ventura, 5808 E. Telephone Road, Ventura, CA 93003.

Heroes in real life

[http://www.lafire.com/lastalarm_file/1998-](http://www.lafire.com/lastalarm_file/1998-0323_Mccomb_Reiner_Butler/newspaperarticles/032498_fire3_dailynews.htm)

[0323_Mccomb_Reiner_Butler/newspaperarticles/032498_fire3_dailynews.htm](http://www.lafire.com/lastalarm_file/1998-0323_Mccomb_Reiner_Butler/newspaperarticles/032498_fire3_dailynews.htm)

March 24, 1998 Daily News

L.A. and Southern California mourn those who died in crash

Los Angeles grieves again today. The crash of the Los Angeles Fire Department air ambulance claimed four lives Monday: 11-year-old Norma Vides, who was being rushed to Childrens Hospital Los Angeles after an auto accident; firefighter-paramedics Michael Butler and Eric Reiner; and helicopter crewman Michael McComb.

On March 8, Joseph C. Dupee died fighting a blaze--the Los Angeles Fire Department's first death in the line of duty in 14 years.

These courageous firefighters put their lives on the line every day for the betterment of our community, and they died as heroes.

We honor them.

On a day when the Hollywood dream factory was honoring the film industry's achievements with Academy Awards, three firefighters were killed and two others badly injured as they went about their chosen work, risking their lives as a matter of daily routine.

They are not alone.

On March 15, Harbor Patrol Officer Paul Korber drowned after courageously saving the lives of three swimmers struggling against a riptide near Ventura Harbor.

Every day, men and women police officers, firefighters and others face terrible challenges in service to the community.

The greatest respect the public can pay to all these heroes is to ensure that they did not die in vain.

We must investigate what went wrong and make sure the problems are corrected. Friday, the Los Angeles City Council voted to restore jobs to the Fire Department

that had been cut to save money--jobs that might have made a difference in the fire that killed Dupee.

There is obvious cause for concern in Monday's tragedy. The aircraft was a 22-year-old workhorse, and officials said its tail rotor fell off before the crash.

We must face what went wrong and fix it. Paramedic services are basic to our lives together in this city, and money must be found to provide for our community's health and safety even if other things must go.

Too often, City Hall has spent too much on what is not basic and necessary to our lives, too often at the expense of what is critical.

We don't know whether that applies in this latest tragedy, but the truth will save us as a community.

In the Line of Duty Deadly dangers patrolling our waterways

By Craig W. Floyd

<http://community.nasbla.org/HigherLogic/System/DownloadDocumentFile.ashx?DocumentFileKey=6d6df1ee-cb7f-9efb-7f25-dfc41f15f78a&forceDialog=0>

Paul Korber was a strong swimmer and a dedicated law enforcement officer. He worked for the Ventura, California, Harbor Patrol. On March 15, 1998, Officer Korber received a call for help. Two young boys and their mother had been caught in an ocean riptide and were struggling for their lives. When efforts to reach the family by boat failed due to rough seas, Officer Korber dove in to make the rescue.

He reached the family and managed to keep them afloat long enough for lifeguards to get them to safety. But, Officer Korber was not so lucky. Tossed into a jetty by the six-foot waves, he became disoriented and drowned. Paul Korber, an 11-year veteran of the department, saved three lives that day...and in doing so, he gave up his own life.

Deadly Dangers Patrolling Our Waterways

<http://www.nleomf.org/newsroom/news-releases/deadly-dangers-patrolling-our.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>

October 9, 2000

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Paul Korber was a strong swimmer and a dedicated law enforcement officer. He worked for the Ventura, California, Harbor Patrol. On March 15, 1998, Officer Korber received a call for help. Two young boys and their mother had been caught in an ocean rip tide and were struggling for their lives.

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so lucky. Tossed into a jetty by the six-foot waves, he became disoriented and drowned. Paul Korber, an 11-year veteran of the department saved three lives that day . . . and in doing so, he gave up his own.

Shortly after that terrible tragedy, a letter appeared in the local newspaper. It was written by the man who had called the Harbor Patrol for help. The man was humbled by what he had witnessed that day and he wanted others to know. He wrote, "We often hear comments directed at firemen, lifeguards, harbor patrols and other safety professionals about the ease of their jobs. In the absence of catastrophe, some people assume their work is rather inconsequential. But those of us who have been saved . . . know the real truth. And the truth is that if 364 days go by without incident, and on the 365th, that man or woman has to break through a burning door, or swim out through the swells on a big day, they earn everything we pay them in that moment. For Paul [Korber] and his family, that debt, in fact, can never be paid, but we understand the value of his commitment."

Paul Korber is one of roughly 170 law enforcement officers who drowned, died in boating accidents, or were killed enforcing fishing laws on our nation's waterways. All of their names appear on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Those officers typify the selfless heroism that is the norm for the law enforcement profession. They include heroes like Kentucky Conservation Officer Denver Tabor, who in 1973, drowned while trying to save a young boy who fell overboard from a boat; and Sergeant Karl Kelley, of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, who drowned in 1998 while trying to rescue two of his colleagues who had fallen into swirling waters during a dangerous training exercise; and Pennsylvania Fish Warden Raymond Schroll Jr., who in 1958 had nearly swum ashore after his boat overturned in a rain-swollen river, but drowned when he heard his partner's cries for help and returned to attempt a rescue.

A review of these cases also points to the senselessness of so many attacks on those who enforce our laws. Just ask the officers serving with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. They can tell you the story of Wildlife Officer Dewey McCall who, in 1971, was shot to death after issuing a man a citation for an undersized fish. Or, let the deputies in St. Clair County (MI) tell you what happened to Lieutenant Donald Bezenah when he tried to arrest a drunken boater. Instead of stopping, the drunken man rammed his boat into Lieutenant Bezenah's, killing the 51-year-old law enforcement veteran.

Or, talk to members of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. They will remind you of what happened nearly 80 years ago to the legendary fish warden, William E. Shoemaker, the first line of duty death in the department's history. Fish Warden Shoemaker loved having a job that kept him close to the natural world. He performed his duties in an aggressive and no-nonsense manner. In those days, not everyone agreed that the government had the right to regulate the taking of fish and game, let alone charge a fee for the right to do so. In fact, Fish Warden Shoemaker was actually barred by the railroad from boarding its trains and

checking for hunters and fishermen. But, that was nothing compared to the treatment he received on the evening of August 25, 1921. As he was returning home around 9:30 p.m., Fish Warden Shoemaker spotted two men spearfishing in a local creek. He was preparing to arrest one of the men for fishing without a license when the other one grabbed the lawman's gun and fired at point-blank range. William Shoemaker died 28 days later. His assailant served less than 10 years in jail for the crime.

Robert C. Banker, a conservation officer with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, suffered a similar fate on March 19, 1987. After issuing a fishing citation, he was shot in the chest three times. One of the darkest days for our nation's conservation officers occurred on July 12, 1940, in Minnesota. Three officers with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources — Douglas P. Brady, Melvin A. Holt, and Marcus E. Whipps — were conducting what they thought was a routine interview with some commercial fishermen when they were shot and killed.

So often, the law enforcement officer puts himself or herself in harm's way so that others can be safe. Certainly, that was the case with many of the officers who have drowned while trying to spare others from danger. In 1903, Kansas City (MO) Patrolman Joseph P. Keenan drowned when he was swept away by flood waters while attempting to take a group of citizens to safer ground. Ten years later, Captain Allen D. McGown, of the Findlay (OH) Police Department, was trying to rescue a family from their home in eight feet of flood waters when the boat they were in capsized and Captain McGown drowned. Michigan State Trooper Ralph Broullire was attempting to rescue two boys stranded on an ice flow in Saginaw Bay when he fell in the water and drowned on December 18, 1937.

In the law enforcement profession, even the most routine of circumstances can become life threatening. That is especially true when the officer is working on or near water. In 1966, Maryland Natural Resources Police Officer George T. Mullikin suffered a fatal heart attack while scuba diving on the job. On May 28, 1990, Texas Game Wardens Franklin Hill and William Decker drowned when their patrol boat struck a submerged tree stump. On May 24, 1998, Deputy Sheriff Edward R. Callahan, of the Douglas County (NV) Sheriff's Office, was on routine patrol with his partner on Lake Tahoe. As they were coming into the dock, a large wave overturned their boat. Deputy Callahan was pulled under the water and never resurfaced.

And, even more recently, Captain John Garlington of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries drowned on February 10 of this year while investigating an illegal fishing report. In June, Sergeant Alane Stoffregen died during a deep-water diving exercise with the Chicago Police Department's marine unit.

Some departments have begun to pass policies making it mandatory that officers wear personal floatation devices while patrolling our waterways. History tells us that such measures will help to save lives. But, more needs to be done to protect our officers on the water and on land, because the only certainty of police work is that danger could strike at any moment.

Family, friends and co-workers gather for Peace Officers Memorial

<http://archive.vcstar.com/news/family-friends-and-co-workers-gather-for-peace-officers-memorial-ep-368857127-349488791.html>

May 20, 2010 *By Adam Foxman*

As an American flag flew at half-staff overhead, Tobi Haynie touched her father's name on the county's peace officer memorial wall and laid flowers at its base. Haynie was just 5 when her father, Narcotics Detective Donald E. Haynie, was fatally shot during a raid on the Fillmore home of a suspected drug dealer.

Now 44, she was among many survivors of local police killed in the line of duty who gathered Thursday at the Ventura County Government Center for the county's annual Peace Officers Memorial. Scores of law enforcement officials and other community members also attended the event, which was presented by the Peace Officers Association of Ventura County.

During the ceremony, Detective Haynie's name was read aloud along with those of the other 30 local peace officers killed in the line of duty. A bell tolled along with each name, from Oxnard Police Constable Andrew McNaughton, who was fatally shot in 1906, to Sheriff's Deputy Robert Bornet, who died in a car crash in 2006.

"This memorial displays the names of 31 brave men and women who knew the danger when they put on a badge but were more than willing to accept the risk," Sheriff Bob Brooks said as he stood in front of the peace officers' memorial wall. "We as a community are forever indebted to their service and sacrifice."

As he spoke to the crowd, Brooks shared personal experiences with some of the officers whose names are engraved on the wall. He recalled the impact of sitting with the family of Lt. Hank Varat while Varat died in the hospital from Rocky Mountain spotted fever after being bitten by a tick on a search and rescue exercise; spending time with grieving deputies after Deputy Peter Aguirre Jr. was fatally shot while standing between a gunman and a victim of spousal abuse, and the loss of Senior Deputy Lisa Whitney, who was killed in 1998 when another driver broadsided her car.

"These and others have sacrificed their lives protecting the residents of Ventura County and they'll forever be remembered," Brooks said.

Varat's wife, Barbara Varat, said the annual memorial is very meaningful for the officers' relatives.

"Our minds go back to the day when our lives were forever changed and then come fast forward to the present," she said. "The hardest thing I have ever had to do in my 74 years of life was to tell our son on Oct. 20, 1973, that his father had died during the night."

Whitney's mother, Jan Bryant, said her daughter was very proud to be in law enforcement. She said the yearly memorials recognizing Whitney and other police killed in the line of duty make her feel loved.

"We know that all of the law enforcement community remembers," said Bryant, 64, of Fillmore.

California Department of Justice: William Garvey, 2005.

California Highway Patrol: James Vandeweg, 1945; Robert E. Reed, 1960; David Copleman, 1984; James O'Connor, 1990.

Naval Base Ventura County Police Department: Stan Chiachana, 1999.
Ojai Police Department: Harry L. Hunt, 1943.

Oxnard Police Department: Andrew McNaughton, 1906; W.E. Kelly, 1921; Albert Gasperetti, 1956; Frederick Clark, 1971; John Adair, 1980; James O'Brien, 1993; James R. Jensen, 1996.

Santa Paula Police Department: Henry N. Norman, 1913; James E. Barmore, 1953.
Simi Valley Police Department: Michael Clark, 1995.

Ventura College Campus Police: James Doyle, 1975.

Ventura County Sheriff's Department: Edmond G. McMartin, 1921; Bryce Patton, 1960; Earl Mendenhall, 1961; Donald Gregory, 1961; Chester Larson, 1969; Donald E. Haynie, 1969; Harvey A. Varat, 1973; Thomas Collins, 1975; Peter J. Aguirre Jr., 1996; Lisa D. Whitney, 1998; Robert Bornet, 2006.

Ventura Harbor Patrol: Paul Douglas Korber, 1998.

Ventura Police Department: Darlon C. Dowell, 1978.

Colleen Cason: Sea change comes to orphan's life

<http://archive.vcstar.com/news/colleen-cason-sea-change-comes-to-orphans-life-ep-292696720-351690601.html>

June 01, 2013 *By Colleen Cason*

The last time I saw Barrett Korber was at his father's funeral. He was smiling. It did not appear to be the vacant smile of someone in shock. It seemed pleasant, as if people were being nice to him and he wanted to return the kindness.

Barrett had just been orphaned. He was 9 years old. His father, Harbor Patrol Officer Paul Korber, died a hero while saving a family caught in a rip tide off Harbor Cove Beach in Ventura 15 years ago in March. His mother, Cindy, had passed away a few years earlier of breast cancer.

Barrett had sweet memories of building sand castles with his mom while his dad fished and kayaked. But the years after her death were rough, especially on his

dad. Paul cobbled together a nanny network to care for Barrett while putting in the long shifts public-safety work demanded. Still, Paul found time to share the '60s hard rock he loved with the son named after Syd Barrett of the band Pink Floyd.

Barrett's future seemed far from secure 15 years ago. He would move to Lompoc to live with Russell and Lisa Brown, an uncle and aunt he didn't know well.

Over the years, I often thought about Barrett. And the recent debate over the cost of lifeguards in Oxnard reminded me how treacherous the ocean can be and how Paul Korber paid the highest price of all.

I wondered what kind of resilience a child would need to stay on course after those early storms.

As it happens, the tide turned for Barrett, now 24 and living in Pasadena with his bride of a few months, Jennifer. They're looking to start a family, Barrett volunteered when we spoke last week.

He remembers the funeral well, he said. Baseball greats Ken Griffey Jr. and Mike Piazza sent their condolences in the form of autographed caps.

He even recalls Karen Van Deventer approaching him. She and three of her sons had been saved in the rescue that claimed Paul's life. At the funeral, she knelt down beside Barrett and introduced him to the boys Paul helped save. Barrett's smile vanished. His face went blank.

Did he blame her for letting her kids wade into that treacherous stretch of water? "I remember not feeling mad at her at all," Barrett said. "She must have felt I'd be bitter, but I have no hard feelings whatsoever."

After the funeral, Barrett bonded with his new parents.

"They showed me so much love," he said. "They are awesome."

For much of his childhood, they ran a cabinet shop out of the garage, so someone was always at home for him.

He later discovered one of his dad's old friends from his Ventura days lived on the same block.

"So I got to hear plenty of stories about my dad. I love, love, love hearing them," he said.

During high school, Barrett wrestled, played football and served in student government.

His junior year, he signed up for a class to learn to play the trumpet. By mistake, he was assigned a graphic design course. He liked it so much, he stayed.

He studied graphic arts at California College of the Arts in the Bay Area, an education paid for by the memorial fund set up after his dad's death.

"Because of people who gave to the fund, I got to do what I wanted to do in life," he said.

Today, he works as a graphic designer for Oskoui + Oskoui Inc., which creates digital graphics for the entertainment industry.

He tapped his creativity to make a tribute film about parents. Posted on his website, thisisbarrett.com, it shows the tattoo that honors them: an anchor for his dad because he loved the sea and a cross for his deeply Christian mother.

He'll return to Ventura next month to run the Shoreline Half Marathon along the coast his father loved. It's his first race of that distance, and he wants to do well.

He's running in his dad's honor.

The way Barrett sees it, life provided everything he needed: faith from his mother, optimism from his father, two sets of loving parents, caring relatives, great friends of all ages and generous support from the community. Fate finally smiled on the little boy who had enough heart to smile on his darkest day.

Email Colleen Cason at casonpoint101@gmail.com.