

04-20-1969 Monterey C - James Edward Collard – LEO Surf Rescue



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<http://www.odmp.org/officer/3263-police-officer-james-edward-collard>



Bio & Incident Details

Age: 29

Tour: Not available

Badge # Not available

Cause: Drowned

Police Officer

James Edward Collard

Monterey Police Department, California

End of Watch: Sunday, April 20, 1969

Officer Collard drowned while attempting to save the occupants of an overturned boat.

Santa Cruz Sentinel from Santa Cruz, California

April 21, 1969

<https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/59504635/>

Five Persons died in Northern California boating accidents during the weekend.

A cabin cruiser skipper and a policeman who tried to rescue him drowned in the surf off Del Monte beach near Monterey.

Dead were Clyde Kesner, 60, of Pacific Grove, and Monterey Policeman James E. Collard.

The Coast Guard rescued another man aboard the craft, George Lane, 30, Monterey, and another policeman who was with Collard, Allen Davidson, who was revived by mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

A Menlo Park woman drowned near the Golden Gate Bridge Sunday when a sailboat carrying six persons capsized near Point Bonita. She was Mrs. Wanda Lee Vallotten.

The other persons righted the boat and radioed for Coast Guard help. In another accident in the same area, Hank Mergi, 50, San Jose, drowned when an 18-foot boat capsized. Unable to swim, Mergi was held by three companions for several minutes, but finally sank.

The father of five children, Howard Wales, 40, San Lorenzo, drowned when a 16-foot motorboat capsized on a fishing trip near Port Chicago on Saturday. Three others on board were rescued.

A Monterey police officer drowned in 1969; for the first time, his grandson hears the story

http://www.mercurynews.com/crime-courts/ci_29830427/monterey-police-officer-drowned-1969-first-time-his?utm_campaign=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Twitter#link_time=1461961712

04/29/2016 By Tommy Wright, Monterey Herald

Monterey - Speaking in front of a plaque that memorializes James Edward Collard's death in 1969, the fallen officer's former partner and grandson met each other and spoke about the tragedy Wednesday night.

For the first time, retired Monterey police Lt. Allen Davidson, 71, told Monterey police officer Wayland Kopp the story of how Collard died on April 20, 1969, in a rescue attempt in the waters off Monterey Beach Hotel. After addressing members of the Monterey Police Department and the media, Kopp took his grandfather's former colleague out for a ride-along.



Retired Monterey police Lt. Allen Davidson speaks about losing his partner, officer James Collard, in the line of duty on April 20, 1969. Vernon McKnight Herald correspondent

"That was obviously a very, very traumatic time in my career and probably the most significant thing in my life, the most dangerous thing in my life," Davidson said.

It was a windy day and the surf was heavy the day Collard died, Davidson said.

"I know it was windier than the Dickens because we got up there and sand was actually blowing in our faces," he said.

Davidson said he just finished having coffee and doughnuts with Collard when they heard the call that a boat was in trouble. The two were the first to arrive to the distress call in the early afternoon. When they arrived, Collard and Davidson called the Coast Guard and watched the boat capsize.

"The boat just essentially blew up in the surf," Davidson said.

While Davidson stripped all the way down to his underwear before jumping in the water, Collard kept his motorcycle pants on.



**Officer Wayland Kopp of the Monterey Police Department, grandson of fallen officer James Collard, shows retired Lt. Allen Davidson a throw bag, a tool Davidson said he wished he had the night his partner drowned trying to save a life in 1969.
(Vernon McKnight Herald correspondent)**

"You look back and go, 'God I wish I had done something different,' " he said. "In hindsight, I wish Jim had done a few things different. No. 1 was take his motor britches off."

The two officers jumped into the water and tried to make their way out to the boat. Davidson said debris from the boat drifted toward them in the water.

"I was exhausted in no time at all because you just couldn't get anywhere and I finally realized that I needed more help, so I started back in to the beach and I couldn't see Jim anywhere," he said.

A member of the Coast Guard tied himself to a line and Davidson followed him back out. They pulled Collard and the occupants of the boat from the surf.

"I remember asking the sergeant ... 'Where's Jim? Where's Jim?' And he says, 'I don't know. Where'd you see him last?' And I says, 'Out there.' And, you know, that was the last I really ever saw of him," Davidson said.

Collard, 29, was pronounced dead on arrival at a nearby hospital. Clyde Kesner, the owner of the boat, was also pronounced dead at the hospital.

When he died, Collard was the first Monterey police officer to die in the line of duty. He had been on the force for 3 1/2 years and was attending Monterey Peninsula College.

He was born Aug. 10, 1939, in Oklahoma City and worked for two years with the Oklahoma City Police Department.

The Herald's story from 1969 said a black wreath hung from the front door of the Monterey police station following the tragedy. Each police car in the city had a black flag flying from a small staff mounted on the front.

The night of Collard's death, then-Police Chief Harold Benadom wrote in the police log: "Officer James Edward Collard, 29, gave his life in the aid of another. Man has no greater love. His were the actions that typify the dedication and sacrifice of police officers everywhere. Jim was a good man and a fine police officer."

The only other member of the Monterey Police Department to die in the line of duty was Sgt. Donald Herbert Lansing, who died in a traffic accident returning from the Fort Ord shooting range in 1971. Davidson, who spent 33 years with the department, said he knew Lansing as well.

Kopp, 39, wasn't born until after Collard's death. But he saw a plaque, just like the one hanging at the Monterey police station, every day at his parents' house growing up.

"Just looking at that, it was something I always wanted to do," Kopp said about the plaque and his decision to become a police officer.

After spending 2 1/2 years as an officer in Arizona, Kopp joined the Monterey Police Department just over four years ago.

Collard's death led to changes in hopes of preventing another similar tragedy.

"I don't know that it would have made any difference, but I wish somebody would have stuck flotation gear on motorcycles, which we now have," Davidson said.

Tommy Wright can be reached at 831-726-4375.