

## 06-11-1991 NY NY – Kenneth Hansen – LEO Water Rescue Training

### Kenneth Hansen

Police diver aged 26, drowned during a rescue exercise in New York Harbor, not wearing lifejacket or strobe, Officer in command charged with "Failure to supervise", speculation that he was told not to wear a life vest to make it more realistic exercise staged for visiting German TV crew. NY Times

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



## OFFICER DOWN MEMORIAL PAGE



REMEMBERING ALL OF LAW ENFORCEMENT'S HEROES

<https://www.odmp.org/officer/225-police-officer-kenneth-michael-hansen>



### **Bio & Incident Details**

**Age:** 26

**Tour:** Not available

**Badge #** Not available

**Cause:** Drowned

*Police Officer*

### **Kenneth Michael Hansen**

New York City Police Department, New York

### **End of Watch: Tuesday, June 11, 1991**

Police Officer Kenneth Hansen drowned while posing as a victim during a water rescue training session. He was reported missing and his body was recovered from New York Harbor in Lower Manhattan the next day.

Officer Hansen is survived by his father (a police detective), mother, fiancée, sister, and two brothers, who are both also police officers.

### **Officer Lost as Harbor Drill Becomes Emergency**

<http://www.nytimes.com/1991/06/12/nyregion/officer-lost-as-harbor-drill-becomes-emergency.html>

June 12, 1991 By CRAIG WOLFF

It began as a routine exercise. A police officer, playing the victim in a simulated rescue, jumped into the churning waters of New York Harbor yesterday so divers hovering in a helicopter could leap in and pick him up. Within moments, the officer disappeared and the playacting turned real.

The officer submerged almost instantly, and is believed drowned. Early this morning, helicopters and search boats were still scanning the waters despite a night of violent lightning storms and heavy wind and rain.

The accident took on an extra tragic aspect because the officer, 26-year-old Kenneth Hansen, is part of a family whose members have dedicated their lives to pulling people from New York's waters. His father, a brother and his fiancée are also members of the Harbor Unit.

### **No Life Preserver or Rope**

The accident stunned a department that has long been used to the idea that officers face danger on the streets daily, but that seemed bewildered yesterday that one of its own had died during a routine practice, apparently without anyone having taken any safety precautions.

The officer was not wearing a life preserver or scuba equipment, nor was he wearing a rope that might have allowed him to be pulled up if he sank. When he jumped from a police boat 250 yards off Battery Park about 12:30 P.M., he was wearing only a pair of shorts.

"It's yet another instance of losing a police officer," said Mayor David N. Dinkins, who rushed to the scene. "But we don't normally lose them in training exercises where the object is to save lives."

Officer John C. Cummings, a spokesman for the Harbor Unit, said he did not know why Officer Hansen had not been wearing a life jacket.

"I don't know why that happened," he said. "The ones I've been involved with, people always wore one. It may have been a personal choice. There will be some hard questions to answer."

In all other regards, Officer Cummings said, yesterday's drill was typical. Officer Hansen jumped into the water as 9 or 10 companions watched from the launch boat and the helicopter overhead. Had all gone according to plan, he would have been in the water for only a few minutes. But within seconds, he was under and divers in full scuba gear, realizing their mock emergency was now real, plunged after him.

Boats from the police and fire departments and the Coast Guard converged on the scene almost immediately.

Police Commissioner Lee P. Brown said Officer Hansen was not a trained scuba diver but was "an experienced swimmer." His main duties were as a boatsman aboard a launch, helping boats in trouble, he said.

"He was posing as a victim and did not have scuba gear on," Mr. Brown said. Asked if all precautions were taken, he added: "Clearly we will critique the event. If the situation suggests changes, we'll make them."

Officer Hansen had been with Harbor Unit C in Brooklyn since April 1988. He had joined the police force two years before and had received medals for excellent police duty and meritorious service, and one commendation.

On Monday, during the salute to the Persian Gulf troops, he pulled three men from the harbor who had parachuted into the water as part of the day's festivities, said Lieut. Robert Nardoza, a police spokesman.

In transferring to the Harbor Unit, Officer Hansen was following a family tradition that began when his father, John Hansen, joined the unit in May 1968. He is a detective with Harbor Unit A in Queens. A 29-year-old brother, Officer John Hansen Jr., is also with Harbor Unit C, which is based at the foot of 52d Street and First Avenue in Brooklyn.

Officer Hansen's fiancée, Officer Diane Devine, 26, a six-year veteran, joined the Harbor Unit only three months after he did.

Another brother, James Hansen, 25, is an officer with the 61st Precinct in Brooklyn. The accident set off a frantic search just off of the Marine Inspection Office Pier, between the Staten Island Ferry terminal and Battery Park, and on the pier itself.

Throughout the afternoon, the missing officer's older brother watched as police and fire department and Coast Guard boats gathered in the harbor and helicopters scanned the Hudson and East Rivers. For 30 minutes, he was joined by Officer Devine, his brother's fiancée.

By late afternoon, there were 24 divers from the police and fire departments in the harbor, working as Statue of Liberty tour boats cruised by.

A torrential rain impeded their efforts in the late afternoon, and last night, despite lightning streaking across the skies, divers were doing a "Braille search" of the bottom, groping through the murky water by hand, following grids laid out with ropes. They dropped Coast Guard sonar equipment and lights into the harbor and dragged a remote camera on a sled through the water.

Officer Cummings said that there was still a dim hope that the missing officer had somehow turned up on a piling along the shore.

"He was in good shape," said Officer Cummings. "If anyone could survive, it would be him."

The accident happened where the Hudson and East Rivers meet off the tip of Manhattan and tides and currents create treacherous waters.

"The whole New York Harbor is tough," Officer Cummings said. "The tides can be tricky and they run fast and furious, depending on the weather and the moon."

Information on exactly what Officer Hansen and the rest of team were doing was still sketchy last night. Officer Cummings even speculated that the drill might have been staged for a training film. Thus, he said, the officers on the helicopter might have been set to drop Officer Hansen a line.

### **Rotor Wash a Factor?**

The downdraft of the Aviation Unit's helicopter's rotors overhead might have pushed the officer deeper into the waters, Officer Cummings said, but it was not immediately clear how close the helicopter was to the water.

Officer Hansen had probably gone through the drill many times, Officer Cummings said, though he did not know if he had ever played victim.

Officer Cummings said the person playing victim usually goes into the water without scuba gear or a rope.

Lieut. Ronald Jurain of the Coast Guard, which sent two units to the search shortly after the alarm was sounded, said that in Coast Guard rescue drills, the person playing victim wears a flotation suit and that small inflatable boats are usually nearby in case help is needed.

No boats other than the launch Officer Hansen was on were used in yesterday's exercise, the police said. Lieut. Jurain said the Coast Guard drill teams did not tether the person jumping into the water out of fear the officer could become entangled.

The search continued into the early morning hours today despite periodic heavy rain and 20-knot winds blowing across the harbor. The tricky, constantly changing tides further complicated the effort.

"The search will continue until we find him," said Sgt. Mary Wrensen, a police spokeswoman.

Photos: A member of the Police Department's Harbor Unit was lost and feared drowned yesterday during a simulated rescue operation. Police Commissioner Lee P. Brown, second from left, and other officials waited for word as divers searched for the officer. (Ed Quinn for The New York Times); A patrol boat and a police helicopter searching the waters off Battery Park for the missing officer, Kenneth Hansen, who was playing the victim in the exercise. (Keith Meyers/The New York Times)(pg. B1); A small armada of police patrol boats searching the waters off

Battery Park for a police officer who was lost in a training operation. (Keith Meyers/The New York Times); Police Officer Kenneth Hansen. (Police Department)(pg. B2) Map of Manhattan showing location of Officer Hansen's disappearance. (pg. B2)

## **Training Officer Faulted In Police Diver's Death**

<http://www.nytimes.com/1991/07/19/nyregion/training-officer-faulted-in-police-diver-s-death.html>

July 19, 1991 By DENNIS HEVESI

A New York City Police Department inquiry into the drowning of an officer during a training exercise off the Battery last month has failed to determine why he was not wearing a life vest, but it recommended that the lieutenant in charge of the drill face departmental charges.

Officer Kenneth Hansen, 26 years old, a highly decorated member of the department's Harbor Unit, drowned 250 yards off Battery Park at about 12:30 P.M. on June 11, eight minutes after diving off a police launch to act as the "man overboard" during the training exercise.

Departmental regulations required him to wear a vest. A German television crew aboard another of three police boats at the scene was filming the exercise.

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Reading a statement during a news conference at Police Headquarters yesterday afternoon, Commissioner Lee P. Brown, said, "The investigation determined that the supervisor of the exercise, Lieut. Kenneth Mekeel, must be held accountable for failure to insure that Officer Hansen complied with the regulations of the Police Department concerning the use of personal flotation devices.

"As a result, Lieutenant Mekeel will be the subject of formal charges and specifications for this failure."

The department's Chief of Patrol, David Scott, said the charges would likely include "failure to supervise."

The Chief of Department, Robert J. Johnston Jr., said conflicting accounts had been given to investigators about whether Officer Hansen had been ordered to enter the water without a vest. He said Lieutenant Mekeel testified that he had ordered the officer to put on a vest before they got into separate boats.

Chief Johnston also said that another officer participating in the exercise, later identified by a department spokesman as Eugene O'Hara, had contended that at some point Lieutenant Mekeel told Officer Hansen not to wear the vest.

But Commissioner Brown said: "The investigation found no evidence to support allegations that Officer Hansen was denied the use of a personal flotation device prior to entering the water, or that he had balked at playing the role of victim in the exercise."

There had been speculation after the drowning that a flotation device was not used so the exercise would appear more realistic for the German television crew.

Addressing that question, Commissioner Brown said: "It was alleged that the exercise itself was staged for the benefit of the film crew. However, the investigation determined that the exercise was independently scheduled and part of regularly scheduled, continuing training involving members of the Harbor and Aviation Units."

"The film crew denies having any input into any of the critical decisions concerning this event," Mr. Brown added.

Officer Hansen, who joined the force in July 1987, was a strong swimmer and had received eight medals for bravery, including a commendation for rescuing a drowning woman from the East River on Jan. 16.

Commissioner Brown said the department had instituted new rules "to reduce the possibility of a similar incident." They stipulate, he said, that plans for training exercises be written in advance and that additional equipment be used, "including but not limited to dye markers, strobe lights and weather and current indicators, in addition to personal flotation devices."

## **Fallen NYPD Officer Kenneth Hansen honored in Brooklyn memorial service**

<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/fallen-nypd-officer-kenneth-hansen-honored-brooklyn-memorial-service-article-1.130806>

June 7, 2011 **LISA COLANGELO** ,

Twenty years training operation off [Battery Park](#).

Since that time, friends and family have honored his memory with a number of dedications, including an NYPD boat, a launch, a historic nautical bell and a bust of his likeness that sits in the 61st Precinct.

But this is the first year a memorial service is being held for the young police officer, whose family has deep roots in the Police Department and the Harbor Unit. "We want everybody to know how special he was and what a big heart he had," said [Judy Hansen](#), Kenny's mother. "He was always running errands and doing things for people."

The service is planned for 10:30 a.m. Friday at Our Lady of Guadalupe, 7201 15th Ave. in [Brooklyn](#).

Hansen grew up in [Mill Basin](#) with two brothers, John and James and a sister, also named Judy.

His nieces and nephews will participate in the Mass. A reception will be held after the service where people can mingle and share memories about Hansen.

"People also don't know he rescued somebody's life at the same spot, the day before," his mother said.

The details of Hansen's death are especially painful to relive for his family. The 26-year-old officer was posing as a victim, wearing street clothes and no life vest during the training exercise.

Hansen was a strong swimmer who grew up in Mill Basin around ago, [Police Officer Kenneth Hansen](#), a member of the [NYPD](#) Harbor Unit, drowned during a boats and water.

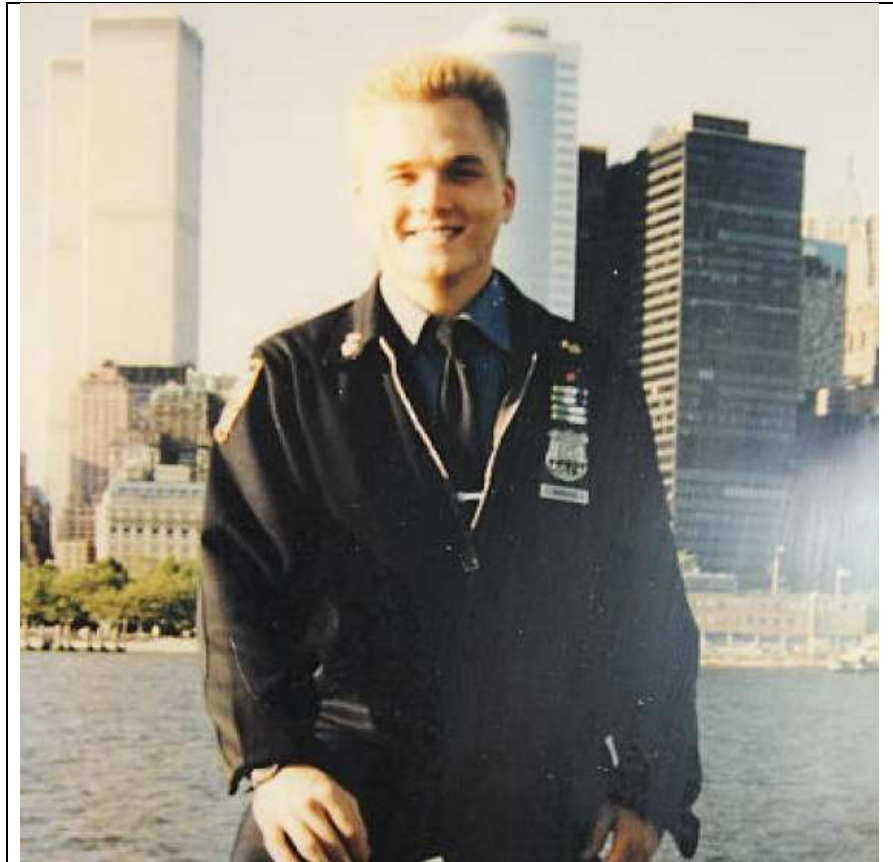
Officials said he suffered a leg cramp and disappeared under the water while waiting for a helicopter lifeline. His body was recovered the next day - June 12, 1991.

Both his brothers and his father, also named John, are retired members of the NYPD. His father was a detective with the Harbor Unit.

Coincidentally, his grandfather, [Michael Harrigan](#), was in the Harbor Unit in the early 1960s.

"He was an outgoing guy," his mother recalled. "He really lit up the room when he walked inside."

### **Golf outing to honor Finest**



**Police Officer Kenneth Hansen drowned in New York Harbor 20 years ago during a training exercise. His family will hold a public memorial service in Brooklyn Friday.  
(FAMILY PHOTO)**



The annual Anthony Dwyer Memorial Golf Outing takes place tomorrow at the Pelham/Split Rock Golf Course.

Dwyer died in 1989 after a struggle with a gunman on a [Manhattan](#) rooftop. His family has raised money in his memory for a series of projects, including scholarships, a community garden and a playground.

### **Assist for officer's family**

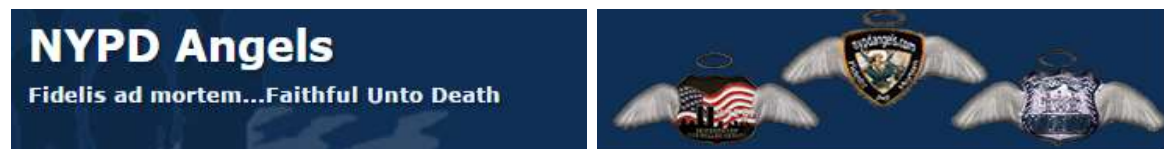
The annual Police Officer Richard Going Memorial Golf Outing will be held June 28 at the [Lido Beach](#) Golf Course on [Long Island](#).

The [West Islip](#), L.I., native spent his 13-year career at [Manhattan's Central Park](#) Precinct. He also owned a roofing company.

In 2005, the father of two died after falling off a roof and suffering a serious head injury. His family was left with a minimal pension and without medical coverage. All proceeds from the event go to help his family.

The day starts with a shotgun tee-off at 1 p.m. followed by lunch and dinner. Tickets are \$200.

Sponsors are also needed. For more information, contact Rich Holfester at (516) 749-4016 or send checks payable to the "Memorial Fund for Rich Going" c/o Rich Holfester, 30 Shubert Lane, Bethpage, N.Y. 11714.



<http://www.nypdangels.com/cop/cop.php?id=57>

**Name : Hansen, Kenneth**  
**Shield #: 6679**  
**Date of Death: 1991-06-11**

**Rank: P.O.**  
**Command: Harbor Unit**  
**Cause of Death: Drowned on patrol**

**Officer Kenneth Hansen, 26, drowned after apparently suffering a leg cramp while posing as a victim during an air-sea rescue training operation in the water off Battery Park. He was wearing street clothes and no life vest when he disappeared beneath the murky water while waiting for a lifeline from a helicopter hovering overhead. Officer Hansen was reported missing and his body was recovered from New York Harbor in Lower Manhattan the next day.**





**[Would you like to share something about Kenneth Hansen? Click here to add to thoughts.](#)**

### **Comments from Friends**

Although I did not personally know Kenny I sure felt as if I did. I got into the unit about a year after his unfortunate death. From all that knew and worked with this fine young man and outstanding Harbor Cop, he was definatly an asset to the NYPD and a real nice guy with a bright future ahead of him. My prayers are with him and his deep routed Family. Never Forget.

— Paul Arrigo

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I was the project manager at Gladding-Hearn shipbuilding when we built the Kenny Hansen and several other patrol boats for the NYPD Harbor Unit. The people I worked with in the the Harbor Unit (Mike Murphy, Bob Jahrns, etc.) were great people. I came accross this web site because I was looking for a write up on Kenny Hanson. I need the information to make a point to another other police unit that I work with now regarding life jackets. I have a picture that was taken of Kenny's father driving the vessel from the flying bridge. A picture is worth a thousand words, but the write up on this site along with the photo should make my point just fine. I'll always remember my involvement with the NYPD Harbor Unit and the names of the officers that grace the sides of the vessel we built. Mike McGurl Harbor Express Quincy, MA

— Mike McGurl

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I was there the day Kenny died. I can still see him standing on the deck of the Cigarette Boat piloted by Charlie A. Me, Johnny Cummings, Tommy Byrnes, and Gene O'Hara were on Launch 8 and watched the whole tragedy unfold. Thinking back I still get a feeling of surrealism. I remember how quickly Johnny Cummings jumped into action - "suiting-up\_ in his drysuit and hitting the water to look for Kenny in a matter of minutes. I remeber the quick response by everybody in hopes of finding Kenny treading water somewhere nearby. I remember as time passed and hopes grew thin the talk of how Kenny, if anyone, could still be safe. "He's a strong swimmer," they said. "We'll find him holding onto a piling, smokin' a butt and laughing" at how long it took us to find him. I also remember the moment when Charlie Fishman brought Kenny to the surface. The feeling of relief, mixed with utter heartbreak went through all of us. I'll never forget those two days as long as I live. I'll never forget the bravery, hard work, and unselfishness of everyone involved in trying to find Kenny. Men like John Cummings, Kevin Brodley, Ray Nalpant, Doug Hermann, Gene O'Hara, Mike Lucere, John Girani, Mike Riv, and many many more. Kenny didn't deserve to die so young because he made the

lives of all around him brighter. His wit, smile, laugh, and mere presence will always remain with the Harbor Unit, especially Harbor Charlie, I'm certain. I've been away from the Harbor Unit for nearly 10 years, but I remember that day as if it were yesterday. Kenny, in a short time you touched my life and made me appreciate how special our time here on earth is. Maybe, Kenny, that was your gift from God..to touch us all in that way? If it was, Bro, you did it well. I think of you and your family often, and you are all in my prayers. God Bles and stay safe. LT Dennis Schoeller, US Navy Kabul,Afghanistan - 22 September 2004  
— Dennis Schoeller

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Photos of Launch No 4 "P.O. Kenny Hanson" as well as photos of the memorial to Kenny can be viewed at the following website:  
<http://bentwheelclub.org/hansen/index.htm> My father worked with both Kenny and his father John and they were two of his favorite people to work with.  
— Bill Smith

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On the morning of July 15,1986 while being sworn into the New York City Police Department at NY Tech in Brooklyn I stood next to a "baby faced" recruit that would have an impact on the rest of my life. "PPO Kenneth Hansen" we used to call him Ricky Schroeder and go figure the real Ricky ended up doing a couple of seasons on the TV show. We ended up in the same company (86-53) and remained the best of friends until that tragic day in June 91. Remember getting pulled out in front of the entire gym class in the academy and getting yelled at because we were goofing off. I will never forget the one person that always made me laugh, that day we played soft ball while in NSU10 and some one was breaking into my car while I was up at bat and Kenny assured me that was not my car alarm blaring. We went back to my car after the game to find my windows smashed..... The great time we had in Ft. Lauderdale when we went on the spur of the moment for his birthday. In his final tour of duty he saved that guy that parachuted into the water the day we had the parade for the soldiers that returned from Desert Storm. He was always looking to help some one. Not a day goes by that I do not think about him and now almost 15 years later my children know him well as I always apeak of him as he is still here with me.  
— Tony Medaglia

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rest in peace.

— sjs

Posted: November 6, 2006, 9:20 am

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Happy Easter pal, not a day goes by that I don't think of you.

— Tony Medaglia Ret.MOS  
Posted: April 7, 2007, 10:57 am

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Although I didn't know Kenny personally- I do remember that tragic day. It was 17 Years ago today. I also recall how all of the MOS that did know Kenny had nothing but great things to say about him and his family. rest In Peace Kenny on your 17th Anniversary in Heaven.

— Trigger  
Posted: June 11, 2008, 2:32 pm

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OFFICER HANSEN AND I MET, WHEN WE ATTENDED THE ACADEMY TOGETHER IN JULY 1986. WE WERE ASSIGNED TO CO. 86-53. AFTER GRADUATION WE ALL WENT OUR SEPARATE WAYS, BUT I NEVER FORGOT THE GOOD TIMES AND THE LAUGHTER THAT WE SHARED. I LEFT NYPD TO WORK IN A SMALL MUNICIPAL POLICE DEPT IN MIAMI SHORES FL IN 1990, BUT THE MEMORIES OF HANSEN AND THE NEWS OF HIS PASSING, WAS UNEXPECTED. MAY THE ANGELS IN HEAVEN ALWAYS WATCH OVER YOU. GOD BLESS!

— JOSE RIVERA  
Posted: April 1, 2009, 9:43 am

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Rest in peace Frank Annunziata NYPD SCUBA (ret)

— Frank Annunziata  
Posted: June 25, 2009, 4:25 am

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Kenny, It's been 18 years since you were taken away from us but to your family the pain still feels like its yesterday. I wish you were here to see what has become of your family, your nieces and nephews they all have a little part of you in them especially your nephew john. your sister is always saying how he is just like you , whether its him being a class clown just to make his friends laugh or tuning your sister out just to make her blood boil then turning to me and laughing knowing he got under her skin. I always think of how it would be with you in the picture whenever we are all together as a family especially in the summer when we get together at woodloch pines. I know you would of been in your glory enjoying every minute with us. 18 years ago on june 11th you went to work never to return. I still will never understand why ,when ,what, and how that happened to you that day. your family including your mom and dad and your two brothers and sister are the strongest people I've ever come across, but I know the pain there feeling will never leave there hearts. Love ya, Your brother inlaw and family Philip Mattiello

— Philip mattiello  
Posted: July 14, 2009, 1:02 pm

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I thought the date sounded familiar, my son Patrick died on that date in 2007. He worshipped you and was always looking forward to that ride on the Harbor boat that you always talked about. Wish I had let you take him and his brother, like you wanted. The solace I get from my son dying on that day is he is with one of his heroes. Kenny, it was a pleasure to know you. Your mother and father are two very special people, I see now where you got it from.

— Sharon Cesario

Posted: March 20, 2010, 3:03 pm

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I knew Kenny from the neighborhood, Marine Park, Brooklyn. Kenny always had that infectious smile on his face and that bounce in his walk. He was a genuinely happy guy. Kenny always wanted to be a NYPD police officer. I believe he did a brief stint as a TBTA officer first at the Verrazano bridge and then went to the NYPD. When Kenny died, I felt like I lost a younger brother. He was too young to die and had so much more to give. I miss you buddy! Jim Byrnes Punta Gorda, Florida

— Jim Byrnes

Posted: March 25, 2010, 2:37 pm

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God Bless you Hansen

— West Side Irish

Posted: June 12, 2010, 2:22 pm

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you were my best friend for my entire stay in brooklyn. I think about you almost every day still. Rest well my friend. I will never get the image of your mom clutching the fence on a TV screen. I can hear your laugh, pCe

— james gillespie

Posted: July 3, 2010, 9:15 am

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I was in the navy with a John Hansen stationed in Newfoundland in the 50's. I'm 73 years old and wonder if this is the same guy.

— Dennis Lind

Posted: September 12, 2010, 7:29 pm

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Kenny today we honor you with your family as it's been 20 yrs since you've completed your final tour of duty. You will always be remembered and never forgotten.

— Tony Medaglia, Ret. MOS

Posted: June 10, 2011, 8:09 am

Worked with Kenny in NSU-10 back in 1/87 to 6/87. Hell of a sweet guy!  
When I heard a harbor PO drowned on the news, before they announced  
his name, I knew it was him. That was erie.

— Rich Lewis

Posted: February 28, 2012, 1:12 pm

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I worked with kenny and his brother jimmy in the ny aquarium and  
remember both very well, always with a smile. kenny was the mischevious  
one. lol. I always wondered how jimmy was doing and this month always  
stuck in my head for him and his family.. I am so sorry.. time may pass  
but memeories stay always...if jimmy wishes to contact me my email  
address is marieshonda@aol.com... my regards again to you and your  
family at this time...

— marie faust

Posted: June 11, 2012, 11:28 am

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PO Hansen, you lived not to far away. I knew you to say Hello and Good-  
bye. I remember this day as if it was still going on. You will never be  
forgotten. Keep watching over all of us like you have been. Rest in Peace  
Kenny.

— Tommy

Posted: June 12, 2013, 3:44 am

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Kenny we continue to pray for you. Always on our minds and in our hearts.  
Rest in Peace.

— Tommy

Posted: June 12, 2014, 6:10 am

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I worked with Kenny at Brooklyn Union Gas reading meters prior to him  
leaving for Harbor Patrol. The thing I remember most is his good spirits &  
big smile. No matter where we had to work or what the weather was like  
he always had a positive attitude. I reread these atricles now & then & still  
cant belive this happened to such a great guy. Im sure he is still missed by  
many & its great to see they built a boat in his honor. "Only the Good Die  
Young" 26yrs old unbelievable.

— Roger Menze

Posted: October 25, 2014, 7:44 am

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Kenny always thought about,always remembered. Rest in Peace.

— Tommy

Posted: June 2, 2015, 6:48 am

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Rest in peace Kenny . I worked with you n your brother jimmy at the New York aquarium. We also have been trying to reach jimmy over the years if anyone knows you can contact marieshonda@aol.com. Thank you

— Marie fsust

Posted: October 18, 2015, 11:40 am

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25 years today you were taken from us. There's not a day that goes by that you are not in my thoughts. Your were a great friend and I miss you dearly.

— Bobby Hahn

Posted: June 10, 2016, 5:44 pm