

For Immediate Release

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Thomas James Hanlin

Commissioned – August 17, 1937
End of Watch – May 26, 1945



The Washington State Patrol's ninth fallen officer succumbed to medical complications after being involved in a serious collision on the snow-blanketed Mount Baker Highway. Initially thought to be minor, Patrolman Thomas J. Hanlin's head injuries resulted in his death nearly five years later.

Born in Tacoma, he had worked as a railroad brakeman before joining the Patrol. The husband, father, brother, and son died at the age of 38. We remember...

BIO

Thomas James Hanlin was born August 21, 1906, to John and Eva Hanlin, in Tacoma, Washington. He was the third of seven children: Nelda J., Paul, Margaret, Gene, Marion, and Helen. Hanlin attended school in South Prairie and graduated from Buckley High School.

At 17-years-old, Hanlin started work at the Northern Pacific Railway Company as a brakeman. He left the company in 1925 and worked at St. Paul and Tacoma Lumber Company as a brakeman for 12 years.

Hanlin married Florence T. Pratt on March 8, 1928, in Pierce County. The couple raised a son, Terrill Thomas.

Thirty-one-year-old Hanlin was commissioned with the Washington State Highway Patrol on August 17, 1937, under the command of WSP's first chief, William Cole. He was then assigned to Bellingham.

END OF WATCH

Three years after his commission, Hanlin was involved in a serious collision on the Mount Baker Highway near Deming. Hanlin was responding to a two-car collision in his paddy wagon when he lost control on the snow-blanketed pavement and flipped.

Initially his injuries were believed to be minor – mainly bumps and bruises – but diagnosis later revealed he suffered from a head injury. Hanlin underwent surgery at the Mayo Clinic Institute in Rochester, Minnesota, to remove a blood clot in his brain.

Patrolman Hanlin's recovery from that surgery took six months and he eventually returned to Washington and to active service with the Patrol. He was reassigned to Tacoma in 1942 where he was involved in the school boy safety program.

After fighting complications from his past injury, Hanlin died three years later on May 26, 1945. At 39, His death occurred nearly five years after his on-duty collision. He was survived by his wife and son.

The Washington State Patrol remembers Thomas Hanlin with appreciation and respect. His death came five years after an incident common to his craft but with uncommon and tragic consequence. He suffered through a serious injury, surgery and prolonged recuperation. The lingering damage from his injuries eventually claimed him but he still offered years of additional and important service to his state, community and agency. Now more than three quarters of century later, we continue to hold our dear friend in the highest regard. We remember...



WSP began in the early 20s as a motorcycle-only operation in a state with fewer than 1,000 miles of paved road. Automobiles were not introduced into Patrol service for a number of years as roadways slowly improved and the capacity for speed steadily increased in newer and more numerous vehicles. By the time of Patrolman Hanlin's hiring, paddy wagons similar to the one above with an unnamed Patrolman by its side, were becoming a primary platform of operations.

Washington State Highway Patrolman Thomas James Hanlin

End of Watch – May 26, 1945

Gone But Never Forgotten

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