

CONSTABLE ERLING WALTER HANSEN

#194-B

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Many young officers and staff members working in the Public Safety Building have had the occasion to see a tall, elderly gentleman walking through the building or having a late lunch in the cafeteria and wondered who he is. He greets everyone with a firm handshake and cheerful words, always telling them to keep a smile on their face.

That man is Walter HANSEN, a retired constable who came very close to giving his life in the line of duty. His remarkable survival is a part of the Department's history that should be known to those members that follow in his footsteps.

Walter was born in 1913 (yes, he is really 77 years of age) and he joined the department on October 1st, 1936. He served his first years on the beat and was then assigned to cruiser patrol in the North End, "E" Division.

On June 19th, 1944, Walter was working the North End cruiser with Constable John ADAMS #169E on an evening shift. About 9:30 p.m., a 1934 Buick owned by a Dr. Fred YOUNG was stolen from the parking lot of the Royal Alexandra Hotel at Higgins Avenue and Main St.



**Constable Erling
Walter Hansen**

The young car thieves, Mike KOSTICK and Stanley DROZDOWSKI alias Drowsy, both 19 years old, were intent on committing further crimes that night. Both were on bail for car thefts and B & E's at this time and both continued their activities while awaiting trial for what would occur this night to Constable HANSEN.

Within minutes of the theft, the car was spotted travelling slowly in the lane of Stella Avenue near McGregor Street. The two occupants did not appear to notice the cruiser pull in behind them with the lights 'out'. The lane was wide enough that it was decided that Constable HANSEN would jump onto the running board of the Buick and Constable ADAMS would accelerate past the car and cut it off.

Constable HANSEN got onto the running board of the cruiser and as it pulled parallel he jumped to the running board of the Buick. HANSEN reached in and grabbed the driver KOSTICK around the neck with one hand and at the same time grabbed for the steering wheel.

KOSTICK managed to turn the wheel and prevented the cruiser from passing and at the same time speeding up, swerving back and forth in the lane. KOSTICK drove into the ditch in the lane and ran the side of the stolen car against fences trying to

dislodge the constable. The stolen car was finally run against a telephone pole and struck a garage throwing Constable HANSEN off. Walter's left shoulder was broken as he hit the ground and his head struck a fence breaking the 1" board before he hit a garage to the rear of 769 Stella Avenue. The car continued only a short distance but struck a culvert which disabled it.

Constable ADAMS had radioed for assistance and gave the location. Downtown cars and Detectives rushed to the area and Detectives. Alex KOLOMIC and James ALLAN arrested KOSTICK running from the scene. DROZDOWSKI was identified and arrested later that night.

Walter was conveyed to the St. Joseph Hospital on Salter Street by the police ambulance in a critical condition. He remained in an unconscious state for some time due to a severe skull fracture. Walter survived but suffered some continuing problems that limited his ability to resume full duties. After 14 months he was finally allowed back on light duties in August 1945 and was assigned to the 'B' Division in Fort Rouge. He worked until 1961 when he was placed on extended sick leave.

In January 1967, Walter had completed 30 years of service with the Department and applied for a disability pension which he so rightly deserved. He left but maintained his interest in the Department and with his friends by visiting the station. As his fellow workers slowly retired, fewer people in the station knew Walter. Now few remain on the job who joined before his retirement.

KOSTICK was convicted of Cause Grievous Bodily Harm with Intent and Auto Theft on January 15th, 1945 and received 9 years and 3 years consecutive.

DROZDOWSKI was convicted of Wounding with Intent and Cause Grievous Bodily Harm with Intent as well as Auto Theft. He was sentenced to 7 years on each of the first two charges and 2 years consecutive on the car theft on March 1st, 1945. He was released in October 1952. In 1955 he was again convicted of Cause Bodily Harm with Intent in the stabbing of a man in a bootlegging establishment and received another 7 years. He officially changed his name to DROWSY and in 1977 met his own violent death when he was shot in the driveway of his home in Transcona. (this murder was never solved).