

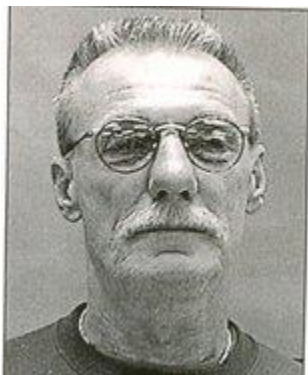


James Francis, 62

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By Staten Island Advance



Family Photo
James Francis, 2006

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — Mariners Harbor native James J. Francis Jr., 62, a Vietnam veteran who founded the Father Capodanno Chapter, Military Order of the Purple Heart, died Thursday at his home in Livingston Manor, N.Y.

The McKee High School graduate was 19 when he enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1967. A machine gunner and combat demolition specialist in the 1st Air Cavalry, he was hit by shrapnel during a rocket attack in the Vietnam highlands and was awarded the Purple Heart in 1968, a year before his discharge.

Mr. Francis also served as commander of the New York State Department of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, and was a certified veterans service officer who helped his colleagues obtain benefits.

In addition, he was the recipient of the Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Award in 1995 and his name entered into the permanent chapel roll.

He also was the catalyst for the creation of Purple Heart Week in the state. He first discussed the idea with the late Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly, who helped him lobby then-Gov. George Pataki.

After Pataki issued a proclamation in 1996 naming the first week of August in honor of American soldiers who were injured or killed in combat, Mr. Francis vowed to ask President Clinton to make the week apply to all 50 states and have it stand "until the end of the Earth."

He was junior vice commander of the Mariners Harbor Chapter, Disabled American Veterans, and Mariners Harbor Post, Veterans of Foreign Wars. Additionally, Mr. Francis was the commander of a Purple Heart chapter in Newburgh, N.Y., and also produced its newsletter.

Mr. Francis moved to Livingston Manor last year.

He worked as a state narcotics correction officer for two years before joining the city Sanitation Department. He retired from the Jersey Street garage in Tompkinsville in 1991, after 20 years on the job. He also was a volunteer firefighter and a licensed federal arms dealer.

Outgoing and compassionate, Mr. Francis was described "as the kind of guy who would give you the shirt off his

back.”

Among his favorite pastimes was hunting in the Catskills around the home he built with his brothers 25 years ago.

Surviving are his four brothers, John, Donald, Kevin and Kenny.

The funeral will be Monday from the Harmon Home for Funerals, West Brighton, with a mass at 9:30 a.m. in St. Teresa's R.C. Church, Castleton Corners. Burial will be in St. Peter's Cemetery, West Brighton.

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