

NYC's Finest loses one more

An off-duty officer responding to apparent break-in next door to home trades gunfire with suspects, dies

This story was reported by staff writers **MICHAEL FRAZIER, BETH HOLLAND, DAVID LEPESKA, HERBERT LOWE, TANIA PADGETT, ROCCO PARASCANDOLA and LUIS PEREZ**

Written by Beth Holland. - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Newsday

In a fierce volley of gunfire yesterday in the Bronx, a police officer responding to sounds of a break-in next door to his home was fatally shot, and two men he wounded - one an actor in the movie "A Bronx Tale" and the HBO show "The Sopranos" - were captured as they fled the scene, police said.

Officer Daniel Enchautegui, 28, who had been on the force since 2002 and was assigned to the 40th Precinct, was pronounced dead at Jacobi Medical Center at 6:09 a.m. - less than an hour after he was shot once in the chest outside his home on Arnow Place in the Pelham section.

Steven Armento, 48, and actor Lillo Brancato Jr., 29, both of Yonkers, were wounded and are in serious condition at Jacobi, police said. Armento, whom police said was holding a .357 Smith & Wesson revolver when he was arrested near the scene, was shot four times - in the abdomen, left chest, right shoulder and right leg. Brancato was shot in the left chest and had a graze wound in his groin.

Charges against the two men were pending late last night.

For the second time in less than two weeks, **Mayor Michael Bloomberg** and **Police Commissioner Ray Kelly** bore the grim task of conveying news of a police officer's death. On Nov. 28, **Officer Dillon Stewart, 35**, of Elmont, was shot in Brooklyn as he and his partner pursued a man who had run a stoplight.

"We've twice witnessed the almost incomprehensible courage of a police officer who, although mortally wounded, stayed in the fight to help bring his killer to justice," Kelly said at a news conference at the medical center. "This speaks to the unequalled sacrifice that the men and women of this department are prepared to make - and of the dangers that they are willing to face both on and off duty every day of the week in this city."

A downcast Bloomberg, while noting that crime is at a dramatically lower level than in years past, said the officer's death "underscores the dangers and costs of bringing crime down."

With Enchautegui's death, he said, the city and its residents "have lost somebody who had dedicated his life to making sure that they could go about theirs safely."

Enchautegui had worked the 4 p.m.-to-midnight shift Friday at the 40th Precinct, in Mott Haven, and was off duty when he heard the sound of breaking glass at **3119 Arnow Place**, next door to the red-brick, two-story duplex in which he lived. He first telephoned his landlord, who said he hadn't heard anything, and then called 911 at 5:21 a.m., police said.

He will be classified as on duty at the time of the shooting, police said, because he assiduously followed proper procedure when he called 911. He identified himself as a police officer, described the unfolding situation, said he was armed and wearing his NYPD shield, and that he would meet responding cops outside.

"It was unbelievably by the book," Insp. Michael Coan said of Enchautegui's actions.

The mayor pointed out that the house apparently being broken into was vacant and hadn't been lived in for several months.

As the investigation proceeded yesterday, a law enforcement source said the two suspects told police they intended to rob a different address on Arnow Place where drugs are sold.

Kelly and officers at One Police Plaza gave a detailed account of the shooting and the crucial moments following:

Enchautegui went outside his ground-floor apartment. His landlord heard the officer yell, "**Police! Don't move!**" in English and Spanish before gunfire erupted.

The officer, though himself struck, **fired six times from his .25-caliber semiautomatic**, which was his authorized off-duty weapon. Police said they found six shell casings near his body.

Officers Jose Sepulveda and Courtney Mapp of the 45th Precinct, who were on patrol in a cruiser, heard the gunfire from about a block away and raced to the scene. They spotted a man at the corner of **Arnow Place and Westchester Avenue**, running toward a silver Dodge Durango parked near the intersection.

The officers confronted and subdued this man, whose blood was smeared on the Durango above the gas cap. He later was identified as Brancato.

Then the officers saw another man, this one carrying a gun, running along Arnow Place toward Westchester Avenue.

"Drop the gun! Drop the gun!" one of the officers shouted.

The man, later identified as Armento, fell to the ground in front of 3111 Arnow Place. He, too, was bleeding.

At this point, **Sgt. Michael Hurley and Officer Paul Maldonado**, in another police cruiser, pulled up.

"What are you doing?" Hurley asked Armento, according to police.

"I just got shot," Armento replied.

"Who shot you?" the sergeant asked.

Armento described Enchautegui's appearance.

"What were you doing there?" Hurley asked next.

Armento was silent.

Leaving Maldonado to watch over Armento, Hurley walked down the block to where Enchautegui lay on the sidewalk, his gun on the pavement, off to the side of one hand, and his cell phone in his other hand.

"He's face up, his shield around his neck," Coan said.

Hurley, realizing Enchautegui was a cop, called in an emergency services unit, whose members performed CPR until an ambulance arrived to take the officer to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

At the 40th Precinct, officers in uniform and in plainclothes streamed in and out of the precinct house through the morning and afternoon.

Sgt. Cyress Smith, the slain officer's supervisor, spoke words of praise.

"He was very respectful to the public and respectful to his peers. He always had a good attitude, even when things were bad," Smith said.

"He didn't deserve to die like that. There are too many guns on the street," the sergeant said. "If cops are dying in this manner, where does that leave the public?"

How it happened

A gun battle with a pair of apparent burglars left Police Officer Daniel Enchautegui dead yesterday.

1. Enchautegui is home at 3117 Arnow Place, Bronx, when he hears glass breaking next door.
2. Enchautegui identifies himself as a police officer; investigates scene at 3119 Arnow. Shots follow and Enchautegui is struck in the left side of his chest, below the heart. He empties his gun, striking each suspect several times.
3. Other officers on patrol at Westchester Avenue and St. Theresa Avenue see one of the suspects attempting to enter a get-away car. Officers subdue him and spot an armed suspect running on Arnow Place toward Westchester Avenue.
4. After being confronted by police, armed suspect drops the weapon and collapses from wounds in front of 3111 Arnow Place, about 50 feet east of Westchester Avenue.
5. Officers from emergency services unit administer CPR to Enchautegui. He is rushed to Jacobi Medical Center, where he is pronounced dead at 6:09 a.m.

Other shootings

In addition to yesterday's fatal shooting, at least eight other city and state officers have been shot in the line of duty over the past two years. Three were fatal.

TUESDAY: Two state troopers are injured inside a Bronx home by gun-toting drug suspect. One trooper, Peter Verdesi, 38, is hit in the leg. The other, Mark Ennis, 34, survives because the bullets strike his bullet-proof vest and helmet.

NOV. 28: 70th Precinct officer Dillion Stewart of Elmont, 35, is shot and killed in Flatbush after a motorist speeds into an underground garage and opens fire. The bullet just misses his vest and strikes him in the heart.

JULY 6: Two plainclothes Housing Bureau NYPD officers are shot and injured by an ex-convict in Harlem. **Officer Erik Hansen, 32**, is grazed in his right ankle. **Sgt. Patrick O'Boule, 42**, is grazed in the scalp, pelvis and leg.

JUNE 1, 2005: NYPD officer Patrick Caprice, 42, a 14-year veteran patrolman from Brooklyn, is shot in the arm and stomach by a drug suspect in Brownsville. Caprice, wearing a bulletproof vest, survives.

SEPT 10, 2004: NYPD detectives Robert Parker, 43, and Patrick Rafferty, 39, who work in Brooklyn's 67th Precinct, are shot to death while responding to a domestic disturbance complaint in East Flatbush.

Officer Dies Interrupting Burglary Near Bronx Home; Actor Is Held

By **ROBERT D. McFADDEN** - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Times

A police officer trying to stop a burglary in a neighbor's home was **fatally wounded in a gun battle in the Bronx early yesterday, but continued to return fire and wounded two suspects who were captured by arriving officers as they stumbled away bleeding, the police said.**

The slain officer, Daniel Enchautegui, 28, was the second city police officer to **die in the line of duty this year. As with the first, less than two weeks ago, the police said he had stayed in the fight despite a mortal wound near his heart, to aid in the capture of his assailants.**

The suspects - Steven Armento, 48, a burglar with three convictions and a history of violence, and Lillo Brancato Jr., 29, an actor who has appeared in "The Sopranos" and in "A Bronx Tale" with Robert De Niro and a dozen later films - were felled by multiple wounds, in a gunfight that shattered the peace of a residential street before dawn.

Law enforcement officials said last night that Mr. Armento had admitted shooting the officer. The officials also said they were investigating the possibility that the men had planned to rob a drug dealer but had hit the wrong house, one that was vacant except for two second-story tenants, and had come away with nothing.

Both suspects live in Yonkers, where the police and neighbors said they had histories involving drugs, guns, fights, thefts and other trouble. The ties between the two were murky, but a neighbor said that Mr. Brancato had dated a daughter of Mr. Armento's.

In what has become a somber ritual, **Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly** and **Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg** went to the scene of the shooting, to the hospital where the officer died and to the home of the officer's parents. And as the Police Department mourned, Mr. Kelly and Mr. Bloomberg spoke once more of the sacrifices made by officers who put their lives on the line.

"In the space of two weeks, we've twice witnessed the almost incomprehensible courage of police officers who, although mortally wounded, stayed in the fight to help bring their killers to justice," Mr. Kelly said at a news conference at **Jacobi Medical Center**. Besides Officer Enchautegui, he was referring to **Officer Dillon Stewart**, who, though shot in the heart by a suspect in Brooklyn on Nov. 28, drove in pursuit of his assailant for blocks before collapsing.

"He did everything he could, just as he was trained to do," Mayor Bloomberg said of Officer Enchautegui (pronounced EN-cha-tay-gee). "This is a devastating loss to the department and the city, still recovering from the loss of Dillon Stewart right after Thanksgiving. We now have another life to mourn, taken from us at a young age for no sensible reason."

The battle yesterday unfolded on Arnow Place near Westchester Avenue in Pelham Bay about 5:20 a.m., the police said, after Officer Enchautegui, who had been on the force for three years and worked in the 40th Precinct in the Bronx, was awakened in his basement apartment at 3117 Arnow by the sound of breaking glass.

Officer Enchautegui, who had been off duty for little more than five hours after working a 4 p.m.-to-midnight shift, got up and called his landlord, Henry Dziedzic, upstairs and asked if he had heard the breaking glass. The landlord said that he had not.

The officer put on a black winter coat, slung his police shield around his neck, took his cellphone and **off-duty pistol, an eight-shot KHR semiautomatic**, and went out to investigate, Commissioner Kelly said. On the side of the house next door, at 3119 Arnow, he saw that a basement window had been broken.

Officer Enchautegui immediately called 911 for backup officers. Following procedure, the police said, he

identified himself as an officer and said he was investigating a possible burglary next door. He also noted that he was armed and was wearing his shield on a necklace, and he described his black coat so that he would not be mistaken for a burglar and possibly shot by fellow officers, the police said.

As Officer Enchautegui waited on the tree-lined street of red-brick homes, two men, one of them armed, emerged from the house he had under surveillance.

"Police! Don't move! Police! Don't move!" Officer Enchautegui shouted, loud enough for his landlord to hear.

Investigators - who said they had pieced together an account of what happened from evidence at the scene and from neighbors' descriptions of the sequence of gunfire - said that the armed suspect, identified as Mr. Armento, who had convictions for burglary and possession of stolen property, had fired first, with a **.357 Smith & Wesson revolver**.

The bullet struck Officer Enchautegui in the left chest, but he responded with at least six shots, investigators said, striking Mr. Brancato twice in the chest and Mr. Armento four times in the abdomen, chest, right leg and groin, before collapsing.

As the officer went down in his driveway, the wounded assailants hobbled west toward Westchester Avenue, a half block away, where two officers had just pulled up in a patrol car, responding to Officer Enchautegui's 911 call.

They first spotted Mr. Brancato beside a silver, late-model Dodge Durango, parked on Westchester Avenue. He was bleeding onto the door handle and into the street. They searched him, found no weapon, and arrested him.

The officers then turned into Arnow Place and saw Mr. Armento running at them with a gun in his hand, according to the police. He, too, was bleeding. The officers took cover, one behind a parked car and the other behind the corner of a building, and shouted at the approaching gunman: "Stop! Police! Drop the gun!"

At that, the man dropped his weapon and collapsed in the street, about 50 feet from the officers.

Back at the shooting scene, another officer and a sergeant found Officer Enchautegui, lying face up and bleeding in his driveway. He was breathing shallowly, apparently near death, and appeared to be unconscious. Emergency service officers administered cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, and he **was taken by ambulance to Jacobi Medical Center**, where further efforts to revive him failed. **He was pronounced dead at 6:09 a.m.**

"This speaks to the unequal sacrifice that the men and women of this department are willing to make," Commissioner Kelly said later.

The two suspects were also taken to Jacobi, where they were in serious condition.

Police scoured the neighborhood for other suspects, using dogs and a helicopter, and subway trains on the No. 6 elevated line, whose tracks run along Westchester Avenue, were halted, but no other suspects were found.

The shooting stunned residents of Pelham Bay. Murray Walsh, 65, was watching television when he heard shots, a rare occurrence in the area, which he described as safe and diverse. "It's a beautiful, quiet neighborhood," he said. "Everybody lives here. We got Italians, Chinese, Greek, Spanish, Eastern European."

Though he was not on duty, Officer Enchautegui was acting in the line of duty in facing the men who killed him, the police said. He thus became the second city officer killed in the line of duty this year, and the ninth shot in the line of duty in 2005.

On Nov. 28, Officer Stewart, 35, a five-year veteran of the force, was fatally shot through the heart while

pursuing a driver who ran a red light. The authorities said that as the officer drew up alongside the suspect's car, the gunman fired five shots into his unmarked patrol car. The suspect, Allan Cameron, 27, wanted on drug and assault charges, was seized in an apartment nearby and has been charged with first-degree murder, and attempted murder in the Nov. 19 shooting of Wiener Philippe, 26, an off-duty officer who was robbed.

Officer Enchautegui joined the force in July 2002 and was first assigned to the 52nd Precinct in the Bronx. After a short time on what officers call an "impact post" - a beat where heavy criminal activity requires extra patrols - he was transferred to the 40th Precinct, which covers the Mott Haven section of the South Bronx.

He was unmarried and is survived by his parents and a sister, the authorities said. He lived with his parents, Maria Rosa and Pedro Enchautegui, at 1154 Bryant Avenue in the Bronx until two years ago, when he rented the basement of Mr. Dziedzic's two-story home.

Bounded by Bruckner Boulevard on the east and Westchester Avenue on the west, Pelham Bay is a quiet neighborhood of short streets and two-story homes, some with porches and awnings, where many residents put out Christmas decorations.

Friends said Officer Enchautegui visited his parents almost every day, and often escorted his father, who has been ill, to medical appointments. The officer, who was Hispanic and spoke Spanish fluently, was described by Mr. Dziedzic as a conscientious, friendly tenant.

All the officers who responded to the shooting yesterday wore black elastic mourning bands across their shields in memory of Officer Stewart. By tradition, officers wear the bands for about a month after an officer dies in the line of duty.

Mr. Brancato, in a moderately successful acting career, got his break in "A Bronx Tale," Mr. De Niro's 1993 coming-of-age film about a teenager torn between role models - his father (Mr. De Niro) and a local mobster (Chazz Palminteri) - in an Italian neighborhood.

A 1993 profile in The New York Times said he had the dese-and-dose speech and swagger of Johnny Boy, a character in Martin Scorsese's "Mean Streets" that had made a star of Mr. De Niro a generation earlier. "A handsome young man with powerful angles in his face and a pug's crooked nose, he could, in fact, pass for a De Niro scion," the profile said. "He's friendly, earnest, sweet-tempered, a fast talker, a salesman, the kind of goofy tough guy that once upon a time used to hang out on a city street corner but now you'd find in the mall."

Born in Bogotá, Colombia, and raised by adoptive parents in Yonkers, Mr. Brancato appeared in more than a dozen films, including "Renaissance Man," "Crimson Tide," "Enemy of the State" and "The Adventures of Pluto Nash." He also played an aspiring mobster, Matt Bevilacqua, in the 1999-2000 season of "The Sopranos," a recurring role that ended with a memorable departure: his execution by the fictional mob boss, Tony Soprano. He also appeared in the short-lived mob show "Falcone" and was a guest star in a 2002 episode of "NYPD Blue."

Mr. Brancato's most recent appearance was in court last June, after he was arrested by Yonkers officers who said that, in a routine traffic stop, they had found four envelopes of heroin in his possession. The disposition of that case was unclear yesterday.

The police were called to a domestic dispute at his home at 55 Rushby Way last week, according to neighbors, who said that the officers had found crack cocaine in his pocket. But there was no record of an arrest.

A law enforcement official said Mr. Armento had a history of 13 arrests on weapons, drugs, burglary and other charges and had served time in prison. A neighbor said she had obtained an order of protection against Mr. Armento after he had fired a shot at her and after his pit bull had attacked her fiancé. The police said he had been running with the murder weapon when captured, an assertion that will require ballistic tests to confirm.

There were no immediate plans to arraign either of the hospitalized suspects, a spokesman for the Bronx district attorney's office said.

Besides Officers Enchautegui and Stewart, at least seven city officers **have been killed in the line of duty since Sept. 11, 2001.**

Last Tuesday, two New York State troopers were shot and a drug suspect was killed in a shootout during a raid on a home in the Bronx. One trooper was shot in the leg and the other escaped serious injury when two bullets struck his protective armor. Both were part of a heavily armed **SWAT team of investigators from the Westchester County district attorney's office, the F.B.I. and other agencies.**

Reporting for this article was contributed by Al Baker, Nicholas Confessore, Kareem Fahim, Manny Fernandez, Janon Fisher and Matthew Sweeney.

OFFICER GOES DOWN FIRING

By LARRY CELONA, PHILIP MESSING and JOHN DOYLE - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Post

Another city cop **died in the line of duty** yesterday, gunned down while trying to stop a break-in at a neighbor's house by two men — including a drug-plagued actor who once starred in the Robert De Niro film "A Bronx Tale" and appeared in the HBO series "The Sopranos."

Despite being mortally wounded, **Officer Daniel Enchautegui, 28, managed to shoot both men before collapsing in his Bronx driveway — a bullet near his heart.**

Cops were investigating last night whether the men had mistaken the house on Arnow Place in Pelham Bay for that of a drug dealer who lived a block away.

It's also possible that the duo was looking to rob a former tenant of the now-vacant apartment. An NYPD source said a search of the home of suspect Steven Armento turned up a prescription-drug vial bearing the name of the apartment's last tenant.

The **bloody confrontation** was an act of bravery on the part of **Enchautegui** — who was said to have dreamed his whole life of wearing the **NYPD blue.**

Just last week, he attended the funeral of slain Officer Dillon Stewart.

Yesterday morning, **Enchautegui** arrived home after working a 4-to-midnight Friday shift at the **40th Precinct in Mott Haven.**

He heard glass breaking at 5:21 a.m., called 911, then checked it out himself.

"I'm armed, and I'll meet the Police Department in front of the location," he said in reporting the suspicious noise, according to **Police Commissioner Ray Kelly.**

The three-year member of the force then went outside and yelled, "Police! Don't move!" according to his landlord.

Said Mayor Bloomberg: "He did what he was trained to do."

After Enchautegui bravely confronted Armento, 48, and Lillo Brancato Jr. — a 29-year-old actor who played stockbroker-Mafia wannabe Matthew Bevilacqua on "The Sopranos" — he was struck by a bullet allegedly fired by Armento, cops said.

Undeterred by his ultimately fatal wounds, Enchautegui emptied his gun, hitting Armento four times and Brancato twice, police said.

Gunshots rang through the neighborhood, alerting Officers Josue Sepulveda and Courtney Mapp, patrolling nearby.

They rushed over and spotted Brancato at Arnow and Westchester Avenue.

He was leaning against his father's Dodge Durango — blood dripping all over the silver SUV.

Then, just as Sepulveda and Mapp noticed a second man running west on Arnow, Sgt. Michael Hurley and Officer Paul Maldonado pulled up and focused on Armento.

"What are you doing?" they asked.

"I just got shot," he replied, pointing toward the break-in site and describing Enchautegui.

"What were you doing there?" Armento was asked.

"That's when he didn't say another word," Inspector Michael Coan said.

As Hurley and the other three cops pulled up to the driveway, alarmed neighbors pointed them toward the slumped Enchautegui, telling them, "We think he's a cop."

Said Coan: "He's got a shield around his neck, his gun to his side and a cellphone near his hand. It was unbelievably by the book."

Enchautegui, struck by a bullet from a .357-caliber Smith & Wesson, died at Jacobi Medical Center. A single man, he is survived by his parents and sister.

Armento was listed in serious condition last night at the same hospital. Brancato — who, police said, was found unarmed — was in critical condition.

The mayor and the NYPD had nothing but praise for the fallen police officer.

"This is a loss to the department and the city," said Bloomberg, who joined Kelly at the hospital. "We now have another life to mourn, taken from us for no sensible reason."

Kelly praised Enchautegui's "incomprehensible courage."

There were no immediate plans to arraign the suspects, said Steven Reed, a spokesman for the Bronx district attorney.

He said they were "in pretty bad shape."

Brancato got his big break in 1993 playing De Niro's teenage son in "A Bronx Tale." More recently, he was in four episodes of the second season of "The Sopranos."

But even as his star rose in Hollywood, he continued to stick with his Yonkers pals — and continued to get into trouble with the law.

He was busted in 1994 for criminal mischief and again in June for possession of heroin.

And just Thursday, he was charged with disorderly conduct.

"It's terrible," Tony Sirico, who plays Paulie "Walnuts" Gualtieri on the hit HBO show, said, referring to Enchautegui's death.

Of Brancato, he said, "I hope he gets life. I got friends in uniform."

Brancato's friendship with Armento began, neighbors said, when he started to date the older man's college-age daughter.

Brancato "was supposed to go into rehab [tomorrow]," said Armento's neighbor, Frank Caiola, 31.

Caiola said Brancato had seemed angry and volatile of late.

"He had come to say thank you to my fiancée," Caiola said, but when Caiola showed up, words were exchanged and Brancato threatened him, saying, "I'll break your teeth!"

Brancato dated Stephanie Armento for about a year and a half, but they broke up recently.

Armento's rap sheet is considerably longer — sporting 13 arrests, dating back to 1976, along with three prison stints, one for burglary and two for possession of stolen property.

His last arrest, before yesterday, came in March 2004, for assault and harassment. And his neighbors had placed a restraining order against him.

Yet Armento told authorities that Enchautegui fired first — and that he didn't know he was shooting back at a cop.

As for the gun, it belonged to Armento's father, authorities said.

According to one neighbor, Armento had inherited property from his grandparents and sold some of it recently.

"He did very well for himself — a millionaire," neighbor Bill Murray, 58, said. "But he was a drunk and really didn't do anything with his life," even admitting once: "I'm a thief, but I'm not a liar."

Added Murray: "That's all he was — a thief."

Ironically, the neighborhood is also home to Katherine Narducci — who played Brancato's mom in "A Bronx Tale" and also has appeared in "The Sopranos."

Meanwhile, family friend Nercica Salgado, 66, recalled Enchautegui fondly. She said she had acted as a reference for him when he applied to the force.

"I know he was a good person, and I told him he was going to be a good cop," she said. "I've known him since he was nine or 10. I watched him grow up playing on the sidewalks with his cousins."

His parents are devastated at the loss of their youngest child. An older sister died of cancer, according to sources, and another sister lost her husband in the notorious massacre at a Wendy's restaurant in Queens in 2000.

"She's in shock," Jose Malave, 44, who lives in the same building as the Enchauteguis, said of the cop's mom.

"I'm worried about her . . . That's her only son. That's her baby."

The shooting was the **fifth** involving police officers in the city in the past month. Stewart was shot in the heart and killed Nov. 28 after a car chase in Brooklyn. A bullet missed his protective vest and entered his armpit.

A suspect in that shooting was arrested and charged with first-degree murder — and with attempted murder in another cop shooting nine days earlier.

And Tuesday, two state troopers were wounded and an armed drug suspect was shot dead during a predawn mob raid in The Bronx. The troopers were part of a SWAT team assisting investigators for the Westchester district attorney, the FBI and other agencies.

Additional reporting by Douglas Montero, Cathy Burke, Angela Montefinise, Georgett Roberts, Jennifer Fermino, Lorena Mongelli and Dan Gesslein

Cop is killed in shootout He hears a break-in, takes bullet to heart, still shoots both thugs

This story was reported by: JEGO ARMSTONG, VERONIKA BELENKAYA, ALISON GENDAR, BOB KAPPSTATTER, JOSE MARTINEZ, LISA MUNOZ, DON SINGLETON and TRACY CONNOR
It was written by: TRACY CONNOR - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Daily News

An off-duty cop who interrupted a break-in next-door to his home was killed yesterday in a blazing gun battle with the two burglars - one an actor who starred in "A Bronx Tale" and "The Sopranos," authorities said.

Officer Daniel Enchautegui, 28, took down the suspects even though he was mortally wounded with a hollow-point bullet in the heart - shooting thespian-turned-thug Lillo Brancato and ex-con Steven Armento several times before collapsing in his Bronx driveway, cops said.

"It looks like every bullet he **-fired** hit these guys," a police official said.

Brancato, 29, who was plucked from obscurity by Robert De Niro as a teen and went on to play a string of mobsters, and Armento, 48, a lowlife pal from Yonkers, were hospitalized with serious injuries.

The pair may have been hunting for a stash of dope they wrongly believed was in the house next to the cop's home, police sources said.

Enchautegui, a Bronx native and three-year NYPD veteran, **died** at **Jacobi Medical Center**, becoming the second cop killed in the line of duty this year, just two weeks after Officer Dillon Stewart was gunned down in Brooklyn.

"They took my son away from me," the hero's **mom**, **Maria Enchautegui**, told the Daily News, as family and members of New York's Finest consoled her.

At the hospital, a grim-faced **Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly** praised the young officer for his "bravery and dedication" in confronting the burglars while off-duty.

"He did everything he could just as he was trained to do," Kelly said. "For the second time in two weeks, we witness almost incomprehensible courage of a police officer."

Enchautegui had finished his 4 p.m.-midnight shift at the 40th Precinct and returned to his rented apartment at 3117 Arnow Place in Pelham Bay when he heard the sound of glass breaking about 5:20 a.m.

He looked outside and realized someone was trying to bust into a vacant basement apartment in the house next door, so he told his landlord and called 911 on his cell phone, Kelly said.

Enchautegui took pains to describe what he was wearing so he wouldn't be mistaken for one of the criminals. He put his police shield around his neck but did not have his bulletproof vest with him.

Once outside, he encountered the suspects, identified by sources as Brancato and Armento, both of Yonkers. "Police! Don't move!" the cop yelled at the duo, according to his landlord.

Brancato was unarmed, but Armento allegedly opened fire with a .357 Smith & Wesson that apparently belonged to his late father, hitting Enchautegui in the left side of the chest and piercing his aorta with a hollow-point bullet.

Still, the officer managed to return fire, emptying his off-duty .25-caliber pistol in what Kelly described as a "fierce gunfight."

Two officers from the 45th Precinct, Josue Sepulveda and Courtney Mapp, heard the shots and raced to the scene, where they caught Brancato as he climbed into his bloodied Dodge Durango, police said.

Two other cops, **Sgt. Michael Hurley and Officer Paul Maldonado**, drove up and grabbed Armento, who was dripping blood down Arnow Place as he tried to get away, the murder weapon still in his hand, police said.

Moments later, Enchautegui was found faceup in the driveway of his home, barely clinging to life - the gun next to him, his cell phone in his hand, his shield still around his neck.

He was rushed to Jacobi, where he was pronounced dead at 6:09 a.m.

Mayor Bloomberg said that even though Enchautegui was off the clock, his murder would be considered a line-of-duty death because he was trying to stop a crime.

Both suspects underwent surgery.

Brancato was in critical condition with two torso wounds.

His lawyer, Harvey Kaminsky of White Plains, said neither he nor Brancato's parents were allowed to see the suspect. Kaminsky said he planned to seek police permission to visit his client.

Armento was shot five times - in the stomach, chest, shoulder, leg and groin - and was in serious condition.

Sources said both men have criminal records.

The actor has two misdemeanor arrests, including a bust for heroin possession six months ago, and Armento has done at least four stints in jail.

Brancato made a splashy debut at age 16 with a star turn in 1993's "A Bronx Tale" as the teen torn between his bus driver dad, played by director De Niro, and the neighborhood mob boss, played by Chazz Palminteri.

In 2000, he scored a plum gig on "The Sopranos," as Matt Bevilacqua, a stockbroker and Mafia wanna-be who gets rubbed out in spectacular fashion by Tony Soprano. He also appeared in the TV miniseries "Falcone."

Enchautegui, by contrast, wanted to be on the right side of the law.

"Since he was a little boy he always wanted to be a cop," cousin Eddie Feliciano, 34, said at the cops' parents home a few miles away in West Farms. "This was his dream."

Wake, funeral plans

Visiting will be held for slain NYPD Officer Daniel Enchautegui tomorrow, 2 p.m.- 5 p.m. (family only) and 7p.m.- 9 p.m. (public), and Tuesday, 5 p.m.-7 p.m. and 7p.m.-9 p.m. (both public) at Schuyler-Hill Funeral Home, 3535 E. Tremont Ave., the Bronx. The funeral will be held at 10 a.m. Wednesday at St. John's Chrysostom Church, 1144 Hoe Ave., the Bronx. Burial will follow at St. Raymond's Cemetery, E. 177th St. and Lafayette Ave., the Bronx.

Police Officer Killed in Bronx Shootout

By DAVID B. CARUSO (The Associated Press) - Saturday, December 10, 2005, 6:10 PM EST

NEW YORK -- A young police officer dying from a bullet to his chest shot two burglars early Saturday, one of them identified as an actor who played a misfit mobster on "The Sopranos."

Officer Daniel Enchautegui, 28, collapsed in the driveway of his Bronx home and died shortly afterward.

The wounded suspects were quickly captured. Investigators identified one as Lillo Brancato Jr., an actor who got his break in the Robert De Niro-directed film "A Bronx Tale" in 1993, and played doomed mob wannabe Matt Bevilacqua during the 1999-2000 season of "The Sopranos."

Brancato, 29, of Yonkers, was also arrested in June for alleged heroin possession.

Police Commissioner Ray Kelly said the actor and another man were breaking into a vacant home when Enchautegui, who had just finished a late-night shift, heard the sound of smashing glass next door.

Enchautegui was off duty and in his street clothes, but he alerted his landlord and dialed 911 to report a possible burglary in progress. Then he grabbed his badge and a gun and went out to investigate.

His landlord heard Enchautegui shout, "Police! Don't move!" followed by a burst of gunfire, Kelly said.

The alleged gunman, Steven Armento of Yonkers, was shot four times and was in serious condition. Brancato, who police said was unarmed, was shot twice and was in critical condition.

Police said Armento had a lengthy history of arrests on weapons, drugs and burglary charges, and was running with the murder weapon when an officer spotted him near Enchautegui's home and ordered him to stop.

Because of their injuries, there were no immediate plans to arraign the suspects, said Steven Reed, a spokesman for the district attorney. He said he had no information about whether the suspects had lawyers who could comment.

Enchautegui, who was single and had been on the force for three years, was the second officer to die in the line of duty this year. Officer Dillon Stewart was shot in the heart Nov. 28 during a car chase; a suspect has been charged with murder.

"This is a loss to the department and the city," **Mayor Michael Bloomberg** said. "We now have another life to mourn, taken from us for no sensible reason."

Kelly praised the slain officer for his "incomprehensible courage."

* —

Associated Press writers Tom Hays and Verena Dobnik contributed to this report.

Officer was man who would 'give his right hand for you'

BY VERONIKA BELENKAYA, ALISON GENDAR and PAUL H.B. SHIN - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Daily News

Daniel Enchautegui always wanted to be a cop. That much was obvious since he was a child. But as he grew into a man, graduating from the Police Academy nearly three years ago, something else became apparent to Enchautegui's friends and loved ones: One day, he would go above and beyond the call of duty.

"He loved being a cop," said Edwin Ramirez, 46, a fellow officer at the 40th Precinct in the South Bronx, where Enchautegui, 28, had served since April 2003 after a brief stint at the 52nd Precinct. "I knew that he was going to be great," Ramirez said. "This guy would give his right hand for you."

"His dream was to become the police commissioner one day," said Officer Hector Espada, who went through the academy with Enchautegui and served with him.

Just last week, Enchautegui attended the funeral of slain NYPD Officer Dillon Stewart on his day off. "It's sad," said Officer Edward Washer, who sat next to Enchautegui at the ceremony. "You go to a funeral of a cop and a couple of days later \[Enchautegui\] gets shot and killed."

Enchautegui worked the 4 p.m.-midnight shift, patrolling the gritty streets of Mott Haven. But the job never hardened his heart or dampened his exuberant sense of humor, friends said.

"Even after he left the neighborhood, he would always come home to check on his family. He was a good son," said Ramon Garai, 62, a neighbor of Enchautegui's parents, Maria and Pedro, who still live in the West Farms section of the borough where their son was born and raised.

"He lived his dream," his grieving father told fellow cops.

The slain officer - a well-read history buff and graduate of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice - was the youngest of three children and the only son. One sister passed away several years ago, family members said.

"Now I'm just down to one child," his mother said.

Lately, Enchautegui had visited his parents daily to check on his dad, who lost a leg to cancer and recently underwent heart surgery, neighbors said.

"My son loved me too much," Pedro Enchautegui told his son's colleagues. "He did everything for me."

Fellow 40th Precinct cops said Enchautegui was blessed with a personality that brightened the mood when he walked into a room.

"Everybody liked him," said Officer Edgar Clases, one of dozens of officers who gathered at the stationhouse to console one another.

Officer Oscar Carranza, 36, who graduated from the Police Academy a year before Enchautegui, said his colleagues used to rib him about his last name. "We used to call him 'E' because no one could pronounce it," Carranza said.

But at the stationhouse yesterday, its entrance draped in black bunting, Enchautegui's name echoed through the hallways, along with another word: hero.

With Jose Martinez and Bob Kappstatter

***'The epitome of what a police officer should be'
Slain cop was always willing to help***

BY LUIS PEREZ AND TANIA PADGETT - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Newsday

Long before he became a cop, Daniel Enchautegui had already been looking after his neighbors.

About four years ago, a woman's screams shattered the quiet of an afternoon inside a two-story home in the Crotona Park East section of the Bronx, said Migdalia Torres, 53, a friend of the Enchautegui family. Torres and Enchautegui's family, who lived in the house, knew that the woman's boyfriend, with whom she had broken up, had returned to argue with her again.

Enchautegui, a quiet but strapping young man just about to become a cop, came upon his frightened neighbor and her ex-boyfriend while returning home from a security job.

"Do me a favor. Don't come back here anymore or I will call the police," Enchautegui told the intruder, Torres recalled yesterday.

"The man left and all was calm again," said Torres, who still lives at the house. "He didn't like to see people being abused. It would tear him up."

At 6 a.m. yesterday, nine miles away from his parents' home, Police Officer Enchautegui, 28, was shot and killed in the Pelham section of the Bronx while responding to an apparent break-in at a neighbor's house. He had three years on the job.

At the 40th Precinct in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the Bronx, where Enchautegui was assigned, black and purple bunting was lifted onto the facade by noon. No one there was surprised to hear that Enchautegui had been helping a neighbor when he died.

"He was his job. He was the epitome of what a police officer should be," said **Police Officer Robert Korn, 27**, Enchautegui's partner for a year.

The two officers, who first met at the police academy, were an odd pair -- Enchautegui was Puerto Rican, Korn is an observant, conservative Jew.

But when Enchautegui was assigned a 4 p.m. to midnight shift, Korn switched his hours as well -- meaning he could no longer keep Sabbath -- so he could continue to work with his partner.

"When I worked with him, I knew my back was covered," said Korn, of Washington Heights.

Together, both cops attended the funeral last week of **Officer Dillon Stewart**, who was fatally shot in Brooklyn. Korn said his partner was "very upset" by that shooting.

Born in Long Island City but raised in the Bronx, Enchautegui, an only son, worked his way through college as a security guard at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Manhattan, graduating from there in 2001.

Enchautegui's parents, Pedro Enchautegui and Maria Rosa, who moved from Guayama, Puerto Rico, to the United States as teenagers, both visited the hospital yesterday. But only the father took the elevator upstairs to identify his son's body, said a police official who was there.

"They still can't believe it," said Torres, the family friend. "They say it's a bad dream, because he was here yesterday."

Enchautegui's colleagues described him as a gentle soul who was also the type to get excited about an arrest. He was a Giants fan and was often the one who organized their hunting and camping trips to the Catskills.

"He was the kind of guy everybody always wanted to be around," said Officer Steve Puliga. "Some police officers, they're working a year on the job and they're disgruntled. You didn't hear any of that from Daniel. He never got mad and he never raised his voice."

Of course, none of his colleagues at the precinct could pronounce "Enchautegui," so the nicknames piled on. **Police Officer Noreen Kellie, 33, who had worked at the 40th Precinct**, preferred "**Enchilada**." Another moniker was "**Homer Simpson**," not just because Enchautegui was a fan, but also because some cops felt he bore some physical similarity to the cartoon dad.

He was large -- and everyone teased him about his weight. He stood at 5 feet, 11 inches and weighed 245 pounds.

Enchautegui took it all in with a grin.

Sgt. Cyress Smith, who supervised him, recalled his last conversation with Enchautegui. It was about how his bulletproof vest fit too snugly, leaving unprotected gaps around the armpits. (Enchautegui wasn't wearing a vest when he was shot.)

"Daniel, you have to fix those gaps in your vest," Smith recalled telling Enchautegui as a jab.

Both cops started laughing.

"Now, it's ironic," Smith said. "It's very sad."

TRAGEDY TOUCHES VICTIM'S KIN AGAIN

(Friends and Fellow Workers Comment on Hero P.O. Daniel Enchautegui)

By LARRY CELONA, JOHN DOYLE, LORENA MONGELLI and GEORGETT ROBERTS - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Post

He was the funny guy, the big cop with a big heart who always had a story to tell or some news to relay.

Daniel Enchautegui, 28, **slain** yesterday while off duty when he confronted two burglary suspects, was the one who raised money for his Bronx precinct — and to whom no one ever said no.

The guys at the 40th Precinct in Mott Haven teasingly called him Homer, after the lovable dad on "The Simpsons," his favorite TV show.

"He epitomized, at least to me, what a police officer should be," said his **partner, Robert Korn**, whose eyes welled with tears. "He always played by the rules, but he always got the job done correctly."

Few knew the hard road Enchautegui traveled to realize his dream, or the sadness that touched his life.

He grew up for the most part in the South Bronx, the youngest of three children, and the **only son of Pedro and Maria Enchautegui, natives of Puerto Rico.**

"He was his parents' treasure," said his aunt, Lucy Rosa.

An older sister, Yvette, died of cancer, according to a source; his other sister, Yolanda Nazario, was widowed in 2000 when her husband, Ramon, was among five people slain in a shooting massacre at a Wendy's restaurant in Flushing, Queens.

He set his goal early and never wavered, **graduating from John Jay College of Criminal Justice and joining the police force in 2002.**

Quick-witted and popular among his peers, he was studying to be a sergeant. "He wanted to be a boss," Nealon said.

"He was always into helping us," said **40th Precinct cop Oscar Carranza, 36.** "He was into teamwork."

"I can't come up with enough words to describe Danny," added **Officer Greg Kavanagh, 34.** "Good cop. Respected cop. There's not enough adjectives to describe what a good guy he was."

Slain Officer Was Known for Calm, Friends Say

By KAREEM FAHIM - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Times

Officer Daniel Enchautegui, who was gunned down in the Bronx yesterday, patrolled the streets of the South Bronx preferring the soft weapons of language and reason, hoping that sometimes they would be disarming enough.

He used both last year, when he and his partner confronted a man who had just escaped burglars in his home. In Spanish and English, and using the measured tones his partner said were his style, Officer Enchautegui calmed the man enough that he was able to give the officers the information they needed to arrest the criminals.

"He would rather talk than have to use his weapon," said Jose Malave, 44, a neighbor of Officer Enchautegui's parents on Bryant Avenue.

Yesterday, his voice was not enough.

Officer Enchautegui, who had borne his share of grief in his own life, died in an early morning gunfight after what investigators say may have been a botched drug burglary of the house next door to his in Pelham Bay. He had been off duty for more than five hours, but woke and responded to the sound of breaking glass.

When one of the burglars shot him in the chest, Officer Enchautegui returned fire with dazzling accuracy, police officials said, firing at least six shots, all of which struck his attackers.

"He responded exactly as we would want him to respond," **Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly** said. He added that when Officer Enchautegui called 911 to report the break-in, he had calmly described his own appearance, telling the operator he was wearing a black coat and was armed lest the responding officers mistake him for a criminal.

And then, as he must have done countless times in his life, he spelled out his last name - twice.

His father, Pedro Enchautegui, and his mother, Maria Rosa, met with Mr. Kelly after the shooting yesterday at their apartment. With the police chaplain at his side, Mr. Kelly said, he recounted the details of the gunfight that resulted in their son's death. Officer Enchautegui's older sister, Yolanda Rosa, also listened.

Another sister, Yvette Rosa, died several years ago, and her children, whose pictures Officer Enchautegui kept in his wallet, remained close to him. "He was a great uncle," said Derrick Rosa, one of Yvette's sons.

In a telephone interview a few hours after his partner's death, **Officer Robert Korn**, who worked with Officer Enchautegui two of the three years he was on the force, talked about the time they spent together.

Officer Enchautegui, who was born in Queens, had always wanted to be a police officer and **studied criminal justice at John Jay College**, paying his way through school by working as a security guard, Officer Korn said. Fascinated by the city's past, Officer Enchautegui would point out historic buildings to Officer Korn as they passed them on patrol.

"He was very concerned about his parents. They're not young anymore," said Officer Korn, who said Officer Enchautegui visited them every day, taking his ailing father to his medical appointments, and sometimes spending the night.

"He was very proud of his son," Officer Korn said of Mr. Enchautegui. .

Officer Korn added that his partner "wanted to stay in uniform."

"He wanted to make sergeant or lieutenant, but he wasn't in a rush," he said. "He'd say, 'If it happens, it happens.' "

For as long as he and Officer Korn were partners, Officer Enchautegui lived alone in the basement apartment on Arnow Place where he died yesterday. His landlord, Henry Dziejczak, whom he called when he heard the break-in, described him as an excellent tenant.. Officer Enchautegui had volunteered for the 40th Precinct, said Officer Korn, because it was busy and he liked the action. But he was happiest on trips they took to the Catskills, where his mind floated away from the things he saw on patrol.

"He didn't like to see kids or women mistreated," Officer Korn said.

The partners attended the funeral last week for Officer Dillon Stewart, who was killed in the line of duty on Nov. 28, and they had discussed the dangers that police officers face.

"In the thick of it, he was calm, collected and knew what to do," Officer Korn said.

Colin Moyhnihan and Matthew Sweeney contributed reporting for this article.

Officer is ninth shot this year

BY ROBERT F. MOORE - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Daily News

The hero Bronx cop gunned down yesterday was the second city officer **killed** in just **13** days and the **third shot** in less than a month.

The predawn slaying of Officer Daniel Enchautegui, 28, brings to nine the number of city cops **shot** this year, the highest since 2000.

That number doesn't include **two state troopers wounded** during an early morning raid Tuesday in the Bronx.

Officer Dillon Stewart, 35, was shot to death Nov. 28 in Flatbush, Brooklyn, after a round went through the underarm opening of his bulletproof vest and pierced his heart. Stewart pursued the gunman with his dying breaths. The married father of two young daughters was promoted posthumously to detective first grade and mourned Tuesday at a funeral that drew more than 20,000 people, including Officer Enchautegui.

Officer Wiener Philippe, 26, survived a gunfight outside his Crown Heights, Brooklyn, apartment Nov. 19. Philippe, with two years on the force, was off-duty when he was robbed of his NYPD badge, cash and jewelry. He was shot in the shoulder and returned fire at least nine times as he chased the gunman, who got away.

Police said both Brooklyn cops were shot by Allan Cameron, 27, who was collared after the Stewart slaying and charged with murder and attempted murder.

Also shot this year:

Officer Patrick Caprice, 43, was **shot** in the stomach and arm June 1, during an attempted drug bust in Brownsville, Brooklyn.

Officer Christopher Wiesneski, 32, was **shot** in the leg during a struggle over his gun in Queens on June 14.

Sgt. Patrick O'Boyle, 43, and **Officer Erik Hansen, 32**, were **shot** July 6 at a Harlem housing project.

Officers Dominick Romano, 29, and **David Harris, 40**, were **shot** outside a Queens church July 17 by a man with a history of mental problems.

POLICE IN LINE OF FIRE OFTEN THIS YEAR

By HASANI GITTENS - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Post

The **murder of Officer Daniel Enchautegui** is the latest in an alarmingly long line of police shootings that have marred the latter part of this year.

It seemed 2005 was being good to New York's Finest until June 1, when **Patrick Caprice** was **shot three times** in the chest after pulling over David Redden for buying marijuana in Brownsville.

Caprice survived, but Redden later killed himself.

Later that month, Officer Christopher Wiesnecki was shot in the leg after a struggle with a weed-smoking gunman in Cambria Heights, Queens.

Then, on July 6, **Sgt. Patrick O'Boyle** was hit in the head, pelvis and leg and his partner, Officer Erik Hansen, was grazed in the ankle by a double-fisted, gun-toting madman who emptied two clips at them in Harlem.

Both cops survived.

Eleven days later, **Officers David Harris and Dominick Romano** were ambushed in Queens Village by a shotgun-wielding nut shooting at a church statue. They both survived.

Off-duty Officer Wiener Philippe was shot in the shoulder during a robbery near his Crown Heights home on the morning of Nov. 19.

Officer Dillon Stewart was shot dead less than two weeks later, Nov. 28, after a wild car chase in Flatbush. His alleged murderer, Allan Cameron, was also indicted in the Philippe shooting.

And last week, a Bronx drug kingpin was killed by police after he'd wounded **State Troopers Peter Verdesi and Mark Ennis**.

'SEEMS LIKE COP SEASON'

By TATIANA DELIGIANNAKIS - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Post

Street cops — reeling from the shooting death of yet another of the Finest — said the bad guys are becoming more brazen.

"It feels like there's no justice, there's no respect in this city," said a rookie cop in the **114th Precinct** in Astoria. "You can never feel relaxed. You always have to be alert — even when you're off duty.

"It seems like this is cop season."

A fellow officer at the 114th said all cops should be more careful.

"We try to take precautions every day. We'll have to be more on guard now. This is a real eye-opening experience," he said.

Lt. Thomas Dowd of Transit District 1 in Columbus Circle said he hoped the pair of December cop killings

was just a "statistical blip. Nonetheless, he's paying attention to tactics.

"Simple things, like being alert, looking at people in the eye. You can tell a lot about a person that way," he said.

"I wear my vest every day. It's been working for me for the last 20 years."

A cop from Midtown North who was a pallbearer at the funeral of Officer Dillon Stewart — slain on Nov. 28 in Brooklyn — said it was a "shame" that cops don't have bulletproof vests at home.

He cautioned other cops: "If you see something, make sure to call for help. Get another cop to go with you."

The sounds of danger & death

(Det. Trish Heckman - Neighbor 'Heard Shots' and Responded)

By Michael Daly - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Daily News

Detective Trish Heckman heard the gunshots, dialed 911 and ventured from her home into the early morning darkness, as any cop would.

A radio car was already there, and Heckman walked up to tell the officers that she had definitely heard numerous shots. She then saw a man lying in the ice-crusted snow. She would only later learn the victim was himself an off-duty police officer who had ventured out after hearing something.

The sound 28-year-old **Police Officer Daniel Enchautegui** had heard was breaking glass coming from the building next-door to his basement apartment on Arnow Place. He, too, had first called 911. He told the operator he was a police officer and added **he had returned home from working a 4 p.m.-midnight at the 40th Precinct.**

Then, Enchautegui ventured into the freezing dark, a gun in one hand, a cell phone in the other, his shield hanging from a chain around his neck. He saw two men bolt from the building next door. He called out.

"Police!"

One of the men fired, and a bullet struck Enchautegui in the chest, slicing his aorta. Enchautegui still managed to return fire, striking one of the men five times, the other twice.

Enchautegui fell back on the snow as his wounded assailants made their way up a block twinkling with Christmas lights. They passed a porch decorated with five big wreaths and big red bows, the red of their blood spattering in the snow.

The radio car cops caught up with the two men as they tried to flee. One got as far as a gray Dodge SUV around the corner on Westchester Ave. He left smears of blood above the left rear wheel and by the driver's side door.

The suspects were taken to **Jacobi Medical Center**, where Enchautegui had been rushed. The cop proved to be beyond saving. Just five days before, Enchautegui had been among the 20,000 cops who attended the funeral for **Police Officer Dillon Stewart**. The city now grieved the loss of a second officer so remarkably dedicated he had kept on even after being shot in the heart. He had been a cop to his very last breath.

In another of fate's cruelties, the two suspects in the Enchautegui shooting were both expected to live. One was

identified as Lillo Brancato, an actor who had played Robert De Niro's teenage son in "A Bronx Tale."

Neighbors say another actor in the movie, Francis Capra, once lived in the very building where Enchautegui lived. Brancato may have visited Capra here and remembered the block as conveniently located for a getaway.

Or maybe Brancato had seen something valuable in Capra's house, had not known his co-star had moved away and doubled the mistake by hitting the wrong place. Whatever the reason, this was one tale too strange for the movies.

At the heart of yesterday's real-life Bronx tale was the willingness of a young cop who had already worked until midnight to step into harm's way as if it were only natural.

As dawn broke, the block's Christmas wreaths, lights, plastic Santas and reindeer were joined by yellow crime scene tape and numbered yellow evidence markers, one recording where the suspects dropped the murder weapon.

The brightening sun shone on the spot where Enchautegui had fallen after performing his final valiant duty, as pure in his soul as a child falling back in the snow to make a snow angel.

Heckman stood by her car and brushed the snow off the windshield. She was heading in to work, and she had the same purposeful light in her eyes as she had nine years ago, when a cop in her unit was shot to death. The cop's name was Kevin Gillespie.

"He's going to be [our] guardian angel," Heckman had said at the time.

Now the Bronx snow bore the mark of another guardian angel. An elderly man stopped and gazed past the yellow tape and asked what had happened.

"There was a cop killed," Heckman said. "A police officer."

The man walked on, and beyond the tape remained that truest and most heartbreaking of snow angels. A helicopter that had joined the flyover at Police Officer Dillon Stewart's funeral Tuesday clattered overhead, keeping watch over this suddenly holy place where Police Officer Daniel Enchautegui had given his life.

Detective Trish Heckman climbed into her car and drove off to spend another tour in harm's way, as do thousands of cops every day. They then go home, but even in this season of Christmas lights and decorations they are never more than a sound in the night away from venturing back into danger, guardian angels for us all.

Dynamic duo loved work & outdoors

(P.O. Daniel Enchautegui Was Partnered-up With P.O. Robert Korn in 40 Pct.)

By Veronika Belenkaya, Alison Gendar and Paul H.B. Shin - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Daily News

When cops become partners, it's often said the bond is so strong that it's like being married.

That was the way it was with Daniel Enchautegui and Robert Korn, who became inseparable buddies when they were paired up about two years ago at the 40th Precinct in the South Bronx.

They came from contrasting worlds. Enchautegui, 28, was a son of the Bronx, born to Puerto Rican

parents. Korn, 27, grew up in a conservative Jewish family in Pennsylvania.

But they clicked.

"We could read each other just by a look," a distraught Korn said yesterday. "We worked together well. We would anticipate what each other was thinking."

Enchautegui and Korn were cadets together in the Police Academy. But they became fast friends when they met again at the 40th Precinct and learned they shared a love of the outdoors.

It was respect for one another's professionalism that sealed the bond.

"He was the epitome, at least to me, of what a police officer should be," Korn said. "He always played by the rules, but he always got the job done."

"Working with him, I knew my back was covered," said Korn, who didn't work with Enchautegui on Friday but was expecting to patrol the beat with him on the 4 p.m.-to-midnight shift yesterday.

"I didn't wake up this morning thinking I would have to go through this," Korn said.

Officer Greg Kavanagh of the 40th Precinct said the slain officer and Korn were a dynamic duo. "They were the guys you wanted to be there," Kavanagh said.

WIDOWS FEEL NEW FURY & GRIEF

By LARRY CELONA - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Post

Grief and outrage erupted from the widows and orphans of other slain cops yesterday at the heart-wrenching news that yet another city police officer had been gunned down in the line of duty.

"How did this animal get a gun?" said a tearful **Rose Nemorin**, whose husband, **undercover detective James Nemorin**, was shot and killed two years ago in Staten Island.

"Something has to be done. There are too many guns on the street," Nemorin said.

"There needs to be a death penalty, so maybe, maybe, people think before they pull the trigger," said **Margaret Mosomillo, whose husband, Anthony**, was shot dead in Brooklyn in 1998 while trying to execute a bench warrant to arrest a paroled drug dealer.

The slaying of **Officer Daniel Enchautegui** as he tried to stop the burglary of a neighbor's house happened just hours before the **Patrolmen's Benevolent Association's annual Widows and Children's Christmas party.**

The party is supposed to ease families' pain of living without their murdered loved ones.

"We come here to have a good time — and something like this reminds us why we're here," Nemorin said, "not that we need reminding."

As children played and spouses mingled at Bridgewater's at the South Street Seaport, widows and children intimately familiar with loss dwelled knowingly on the grief that Enchautegui's family is suffering.

"When you hear stories like that, it breaks your heart," Nemorin said.

Nemorin's late husband and his partner, Rodney Andrews, were killed during an undercover sting that targeted illegal Staten Island gun dealers — just part of the police effort to rid the streets of deadly weapons like the one used yesterday to take Enchautegui's life.

Just days earlier, **Nemorin's son, Stephan, 10**, watched the funeral of **murdered Officer Dillon Stewart**, a father of two, on TV.

"Mom, they'll have no fathers — like us," Stephan said.

More than 100 families and children attended yesterday's party.

"There seems to be a proliferation of guns, and the bad guys always seem to get them," said Susan McCormack, whose husband, Joseph, was killed by a shotgun-toting maniac in The Bronx in 1983.

PBA President Pat Lynch recalled Enchautegui's grief-stricken father's telling him at the hospital: "He loved me too much."

"No one understands that better than the people in this room," Lynch said.

NYPD officer slain in Bronx; 2 Yonkers suspects shot (Westchester Slant on Shooting of P.O. Daniel Enchautegui)

By CANDICE FERRETTE - Sunday, December 11, 2005 'The Journal News' / White Plains, NY

NEW YORK — An off-duty police officer is **dead and two Yonkers suspects were in **critical condition** last night after an attempted burglary in the Bronx resulted in an exchange of gunfire before dawn yesterday, officials said.**

One of the suspects was identified as actor Lillo Brancato Jr., who played Robert De Niro's son in "A Bronx Tale" and had a short-lived role in "The Sopranos."

The slain officer, Daniel Enchautegui, 28, collapsed in the driveway of his Bronx home after the 5:15 a.m. shooting and was pronounced dead a short time later at **Jacobi Medical Center**.

Police Commissioner Ray Kelly said the actor and Steven Armento, the alleged gunman, were breaking into a vacant home in the Pelham section of the Bronx when Enchautegui, who had just finished a late-night shift, heard the sound of smashing glass next door.

Enchautegui was off duty and in his street clothes, but he alerted his landlord, dialed 911 to report a possible burglary in progress, then grabbed his badge and a gun and went outside to investigate.

His landlord heard Enchautegui shout, "Police! Don't move!", followed by a burst of gunfire, Kelly said. Enchautegui was struck with a bullet from a .357-caliber Smith & Wesson revolver.

Brancato, 28, of **55 Rushby Way**, made his professional acting debut in the 1993 De Niro movie and played Matt Bevilacqua during the 1999-2000 season of "The Sopranos." He had landed smaller roles in recent films including "Slingshot," 2004; "The Adventures of Pluto Nash," 2002; "Table One," 2002; and "R'Xmas," 2001.

In June, Yonkers police arrested him at Van Corlandt Park Avenue and Elm Street when they found four glassine bags of heroin in a cigarette box he was carrying, police said. Brancato was issued an appearance ticket and was charged with a misdemeanor.

Friends and family members gathered last night at the brick home on Rushby Way, a quiet cul-de-sac off of Mile Square Road, but declined to speak to reporters. The Colombian-born actor was adopted by Lillo Brancato Sr., a builder, and Domenica Brancato.

Police said Armento had a lengthy history of arrests on weapons, drugs and burglary charges, and was running with the murder weapon when an officer spotted him near Enchautegui's home and ordered him to stop.

Enchautegui had shot Armento four times, and Brancato, who was unarmed, was shot twice, police said. Both were being treated at Jacobi Medical Center, the same hospital where the officer died. Enchautegui, who had been on the force for three years, was the second New York City police officer fatally shot in the past two weeks. He is survived by his parents and a sister.

Actor's 'Bronx Tale' gone bad

(Cop Killer Skell a Junkie)

BY LISA MUÑOZ and ADAM NICHOLS - Sunday, December 11, 2005 N.Y. Daily News

NOTE: One news article for back round. This newsletter is not about glorifying dirt bag cop killers. - Mike

Lillo Brancato looked destined for great things.

Picked off a crowded Jones Beach by talent scouts who spotted the 15-year-old's natural tough-gangster looks, the Yonkers schoolboy was suddenly acting alongside his idol **Robert De Niro**.

But Steven Armento, his alleged partner in yesterday's break-in and **the man who cops say fired the shot that killed Officer Daniel Enchautegui, was simply a career criminal.**

Brancato's teenage role in "**A Bronx Tale**" launched a series of tough-guy performances for the actor.

But it seems his on-screen persona leached into his real life. Yesterday's burglary gone wrong was the latest, and most serious, encounter with the law for Brancato, now 29. He was arrested twice in Yonkers, including once in June, when he was allegedly found with four glassine bags of heroin.

While rubbing shoulders with actor gangsters in HBO's "**The Sopranos**" and CBS' "**Falcone**," it seems Brancato was also forming close associations with real-life criminals.

Neighbors say Brancato met Armento while dating his daughter Stefanie, 20. Armento, 48, of Yonkers, a father of twin daughters, has a criminal record spanning nearly 30 years, including four prison stints. His convictions include crimes involving firearms, drugs and burglary.

Armento's **ex-wife, Donna Nelson**, said she divorced him 19 years ago **because of his problems with drugs and drink** - though she stayed in contact for the sake of their daughters.

"He's always been on the wrong side of the tracks," she told the Daily News yesterday. "As far as I know, he has never killed anybody, but I was not at all surprised to hear this."

She said Brancato and her daughter met two years ago at a Yonkers gym where Stefanie worked. Stefanie tried to break off the relationship after six months because of his drug problems, but would date him sporadically, her mother said.

Three months ago, they split again. Nelson said Brancato started harassing her daughter after the breakup. She said police were called after Brancato broke into the home Stefanie shares with her dad on Wednesday. Several neighbors reported that cops visited both the Brancato and Armento homes Thursday night.

Born in Bogota, Colombia, Brancato was adopted by Italian-American parents in Yonkers when he was 4 months old. He still lives with them.

"I consider myself Italian," he once said. "I was raised to eat pasta."

As a teenager, he landed the part of a kid torn between two role models in "A Bronx Tale" - his hardworking, honest father and a local gang boss and his glamorous life. **Casting director Ellen Chenoweth** said at the time that Brancato looked like De Niro. "[And] he did these uncanny, entire scenes from 'GoodFellas' and 'Raging Bull,' " she said.

Since then, his screen portfolio has been packed with portrayals of criminals. **He played Mafia wanna-be Matt Bevilacqua in "The Sopranos,"** a character whose run on the show was ended by Tony Soprano in a rain of bullets fired in retaliation for an attempted hit.

After that, Brancato took a part as the mobster Lucky, a cold-blooded killer in CBS' series "Falcone" in 2000. Brancato said of that character, "He'll kill you in a second, not for too much of a reason, and he won't think about it twice." In "R Xmas," a 2002 flick from edgy director Abel Ferrara, Brancato co-starred as a heroin dealer who is kidnapped by a corrupt cop.
