



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, 15/A

LINE-OF-DUTY-DEATH ANNIVERSARIES FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER:

December 1, 1913
ROBERT RUTHERFORD GLASS
Fire Fighter, Central Station

December 1, 1984
ROBERT MUNGUIA REYES
Fire Fighter, Station 62, Riding Engine 15

December 2, 1998
STEVEN CLYDE MAYFIELD
Fire Fighter, Station 92

December 4, 1996
RUBEN LOPEZ
District Chief, Houston Volunteer, Riding Engine 25

December 18, 1954
WILLIAM HENRY KERSTEN
Chauffeur, Station 19

December 20, 1929
AARON LOYOLA O'BRIEN
Fire Fighter, Station 19

December 21, 1929
WILLIAM M. WARD
Fire Fighter, Station 14

December 24, 1908
THOMAS A. O'LEARY
Fire Chief, Central Station

★ ★ ★

RETIREE'S WHO HAVE RECENTLY DIED:

WILLIAM F. KOEHNE
Served HFD 1962 to 1991 - Died October 10, 2002

WILLIAM D. MAY
Served HFD 1951 to 1976 - Died September 30, 2002

CLARE L. TRAVELBEE
Served HFD 1956 to 1978 - Died September 8, 2002

WALLACE ANDREW WHITLEY
Served HFD 1946 to 1973 - Died September 5, 2002

★ ★ ★

For updated retired firefighter deaths, refer to:
<http://www.houstonfirememorial.org>
click on Recent Houston Fire Fighter Deaths.

Traditions are created with family and friends with one initial beginning. They have no end. It is infinite. Fire Fighters are a family, thus traditions are created. When one firefighter falls, we all mourn and grieve because a brother or sister has been lost. With honorariums, tributes, and traditions created in their honor, they are never forgotten.

Fire department traditions vary from city to city. I noticed many years ago that a lot of the older cities such as San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, and New York City have many strong traditions. They have plaques or tributes honoring their fallen on the walls of their stations and on their apparatus.

In the many years I have been part of the Houston Fire Department I have noticed that there are few Houston fire traditions. Most of the things that firefighters have done have been done on their own with very little help from the higher ups.

Unknown to a lot of fire fighters is the fact that when old Station 16 on Westhiemer closed down and the new station opened up, the firefighters there removed the station plaque, on their own, cleaned it and installed it in the new station. Now to me that is a tradition.

The pictures on the walls of the station of fire fighters killed in the line of duty or a picture of a "great old" officer who died and went on to another assignment, are always a good start to carrying on traditions. This kind of tributes can be seen at stations such as, Station 2, Station 7, Station 16, Station 37, and Station 28. These are the ones that I know of and if your station has pictures "of the past" please let me know, I would like to list them on our memorial web site. Also if your station would like a photo of someone who died in the line of duty from your station, if it is shown on the web site or in one of the yearbooks I will be able to furnish it to you.

Now what got me started, again, on the traditions of the Houston Fire Department or the lack there of, was the fact that I received an email from a fellow fire fighter who works at Station 28. He informed me that an E/O named Mike Smith had literally plastered the station with 911 photos and Houston memorial photos. Mike had accomplished this mostly on his own, but with the support of all four shifts.

I visited Station 28 to see for myself. I walked into the front stairwell and quite frankly was totally overwhelmed. I was told that Station 28 is referred to, besides "the rock", as The Houston Fire Museum "West Campus", the name is most fitting.