



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, 15/A

LIST OF LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH ANNIVERSARIES FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY:

February 3, 1969 - STEVE CHARLIE BARANOWSKI - Captain- Station 37
February 3, 1973 - LEWIS W. "MOE" RICHARDSON - Captain- Station 7
February 4, 1977 - JACKIE DUNHAM LUDWICK - Sr. Captain- Station 7
February 9, 1929 - JAMES MAGERSON "MAG" SMITH - Fire Fighter- Station 10
February 14, 1921 - H. A. HARRIS - Fire Fighter - Station 10
February 14, 2000 - LEWIS E. MAYO, III - Fire Fighter - Station 76
February 14, 2000 - KIMBERLY ANN SMITH - Fire Fighter - Station 76
February 29, 1954 - WOODROW WILSON ERWIN - Chauffeur - Station 24

LIST OF RETIREE'S WHO HAVE RECENTLY DIED:

DELPHIA JOE STRICKLAND - served HFD from 1950 to 1973, Died on January 3, 2003
MAURICE, J. DUFLILHO, JR. - served HFD from 1936 to 1971, Died on January 1, 2003
JESSE KENNETH GARRETT - served HFD from 1955 to 1978, Died on December 20, 2002
DONALD G. DOUGET - served HFD from 1963 to 1990, Died on December 16, 2002
JOE E. WHIGHAM - served HFD from 1971 to 1984, Died on December 16, 2002
CHARLES R. LAWRY - served HFD from 1945 to 1972, Died on December 15, 2002
ISAAC L. SKERROUSE - served HFD from 1969 to 1989, Died on December 4, 2002
GLENN E. HOLLEMAN - served HFD from 1969 to, 1992, Died on November 29, 2002
WILLIAM F. KOEHNE - served HFD from 1962 to 1991, Died on October 10, 2002

Personally, Valentines Day has meant different things. Valentines Day 1960, I was ten years old and it snowed! Not only did it snow, but the snow stuck to the ground and lasted until the next day. The principal at Alamo Elementary in La Marque, Texas dismissed the students and we all went home early. I was able to make a snowman with the other kids in the neighborhood and I have pictures to prove it. That was one Valentines Day that I will never forget.

On February 14, 2000, Valentines Day quickly began to mean the exact same thing to every member of the Houston Fire Department. This is the day that the roof of a burning McDonalds restaurant collapsed and fell on two Houston Fire Fighters, Kimberly Ann Smith and Lewis E. Mayo III. Both Fire Fighters were killed. On that day, the number of Houston line-of-duty deaths went from 54 to 56. This would also mark the day that the Houston Fire Department had the first female Fire Fighter killed in the line-of-duty.

It was not discovered until after Kim and Lewis died, that on February 14, 1921, Valentine's Day, around 7:00 in the evening, a wall of a burning building near downtown Houston fell on seven Houston Fire Fighters. One Fire Fighter did not survive. His name is H. A. Harris, a Houston Fire Fighter for only 15 days. He had been a Fire Fighter in Dallas for 12 years and moved to Houston and joined the ranks of the Houston Fire Department. For some reason, Harris was never listed as a line-of-duty death. In early 2000 his name surfaced when it was discovered in a scrapbook originally owned by Chief Grover Adams, Sr. who served the HFD from 1915 to 1960. The newspaper clipping in the scrapbook had a hand written notation of 2-15-1921. This hand-dated *Houston Chronicle* newspaper clipping allowed me to research the tenth Houston Fire Fighter killed in the line-of-duty.

On Valentines Day 1995, The City of Pittsburgh Pennsylvania lost three fire fighters. Thomas A. Brooks, Patricia Ann "Pat" Conroy, Marc R. Kolenda.

That day also marked Pittsburgh's first female lost in the line-of-duty. I discovered this fact while I interviewing Kim Smith's parents for the 2000 HFD yearbook's Memorial Section. Kim's mother heard about Pat Conroy's death and also heard the two Fire Fighters had several things in common. They both were the first female Fire Fighters to die in the line-of-duty in their department. They both died on Valentines Day, Pat in 1995 and Kim in 2000. The fires were deliberately set, the one in Pittsburgh by a homeowner in an attempt to collect insurance money, the one in Houston was the result of a burglary. The memorial services were both held on the 18th of February in a large stadium. Kim and Louis' services were at Rice Stadium, Pat's and her fellow Fire Fighters were held at Three Rivers Stadium. The two share the name, "Ann", as their middle name and their fathers had a long career in law enforcement. Is there more? Of course there is. They both have three siblings, two sisters and one brother. I pretty much stopped there with finding out what these Fire Fighters had in common. I am sure I could find more similarities. Oh, I almost forgot, the two were both devout Catholics, and were very involved with their church.

In closing, Valentines Day has become a day of remembrance. So remember these Fire Fighters who were doing their job that day and paid the ultimate price.

For updated retired Fire Fighter deaths refer to: www.houstonmemorial.org. Click on "Recent Houston Fire Fighter Deaths", please copy those pages and put it on the station bulletin board.