



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, 15/A

LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER:

- November 6, 1959 - Willis Neal McWhorter – Fire fighter - Station 30
- November 9, 1959 - D. H. “Jim” Chandler – Fire fighter - Station 19
- November 17, 1959 - Charles A. Jedlicka – Fire fighter - Station 30
- November 23, 1901 - Frank W. Medlenka – Driver - Station 8

RETIREES WHO HAVE RECENTLY DIED:

- Jeremy A. Cantu served HFD 2002-2003 Died October 7, 2003.
- Elmo P. Delasbour served HFD 1974-2003 Died September 30, 2003.
- Gay V. Simmons served HFD 1958-1988 Died September 26, 2003.
- Fred P. Lallier, Jr. served HFD 1950-1976 Died September 25, 2003.
- Eugene C. "Duke" Jahnke served HFD 1955-1995 Died September 14, 2003.
- Eugene W. Pilkerton served HFD 1966-2000 Died on September 11, 2003.

For more information visit my web site www.houstonfirememorial.org. Items include Houston's line of duty fire fighters, and the deceased retired firefighters. For information on current deceased firefighters click on: "Recent Houston Fire Fighter Deaths" from the site menu.

There are four fire fighters who died while in the line of duty during the month of November. Below are their pictures as well as information about each one.



Willis McWhorter



Charles Jedlicka

The first two fire fighters I will be telling you about are Charles Jedlicka and Willis McWhorter. They were fire fighters assigned to Fire Station 30. Their station was dispatched to a house fire on Airline Drive. While in route, Engine 30 entered the intersection of Fulton and Berry, and was hit broadside by a transport truck carrying steel pipes. The truck destroyed the back end of Engine 30 and flipped it upside down. McWhorter was pronounced dead at the scene. Jedlicka was taken to the hospital and later flown to Brook Army Medical Center in San Antonio. He died eleven days later. The captain, Everett Hatch, and the chauffeur James P. Miller, were seriously hurt and recovered from their injuries.



D. H. "Spud" Chandler

During the time the Houston Fire Department was dealing with a tragedy concerning three of their fire fighters, two hurt and one dead, another disaster struck. On November 8th 1959, 150,000-barrel tanker named The Amoco Virginia was taking on aviation gasoline at the Hess Terminal on the East Side of Houston. A leak developed in one of the loading lines and a passing tugboat's lantern ignited the leaking gasoline. An explosion occurred. There were 8 dead including Chandler and over 40 injured. Eight area fire departments assisted Houston in fighting the fire.

The next morning after the fire was extinguished the clean up began. The mangle deck of the Amoco Virginia was covered in foam, "fomite". While the crews were attempting to clean up after

the fire, Chandler inadvertently fell into one of the vats of gasoline and died. This was three days after Mcwhorter died and eight days before Jedlicka died.

Before the Houston Fire Department became paid in 1895, Frank Medlenka volunteered with Protection Hose Company No. 1. While doing this, he worked at the Houston Herald, a local newspaper that his father started. After working there for some time he found that the printers ink was making him sick. When the HFD started hiring, he decided to make a career change and joined their ranks as one of the first paid firefighters. When he was hired, he worked as a tankman on Steamer 4 located at the Central Fire Station. In 1897 he had worked his way up to driver and was transferred to Station 8 on 1307 Crawford Street and drove the steamer there until he died in 1901.

On the day that Frank died, his station was dispatched by fire alarm box # 315. Hose Wagon 8 pulled out ahead of Steamer 8 and began to go to the location. Steamer 8 then pulled out and followed the same route. At the corner of McKinney and Jackson, streetcar tracks were being installed. The work crew had covered the gap in the street with heavy timber planks. When Hose Wagon 8 rushed across the intersection the planks were disturbed which caused the street to be unlevelled. When Frank, his steamer and horses crossed the area, the steamer was toppled and fell on Frank crushing him. He was then taken to St. Joseph infirmary where he died later that night.



Frank W. Medlenka

Saturday, December 6, 2003

8:00 p.m. - 12:00 a.m.

34th Annual Houston Fire Fighters

Christmas

Party

Benefiting "The Last Alarm Club"

Greer & Lowdermilk
Conference Center
4225 Interwood N. Parkway

Featuring:

"The Telstars"

Tickets:

\$25.00
(per couple in advance)

\$35.00
(per couple at the door)

\$15.00
(for singles)

FREE BEER & SET-UPS • BYOB

Tickets available from:

Credit Union Main Office

Angie - CU North Branch

Brian McLeroy @ 45C

Buddy Russell @ 2D

Lisa Simmons @ 62A

John Burton @ 69A

Rita @ Union Hall

Greg Collins @ 56C

Jimmy White @ 30C

Jimmy Campbell @ 58C

Roger Campbell - Retired

Larkin "Pudge" Williamson @ 31C

Bubba Beasley @ 15C - Pager 710-0629