



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, 15/A

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

December 01, 1913 - Robert Rutherford Glass
Fire Fighter - Central Station

December 01, 1984 - Robert Munguia Reyes
Fire Fighter - Station 62 - Riding Engine 15

December 02, 1998 - Steven Clyde Mayfield
Fire Fighter - Station 92

December 04, 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
Firefighter Station 19

December 21, 1929 - Michael J. Ward
Fire Fighter - Station 14

December 24, 1908 - Thomas A. O'Leary
Fire Chief - Central Station

*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.*

It is already December and 2004 is almost over. It has been a rough year and I consider any year rough that this department loses a firefighter in the line of duty. We had an average amount of retirees leave earth this year. Since I have been keeping track of the deaths it is usually somewhere between 25 and 35 deaths each year. I am not down playing their deaths as an average but a fact of life is that we lose 25 plus of our brother fire fighters every year. Next month I will be listing all of those names and will be able tell you about some of them.

Losing any firefighter is difficult and this year was not any different. For the exception of dealing with their losses, this past year has been good to me. I stay busy with my research of the past fire fighters, keeping my web site current, and writing these articles.

I have added something to my busy schedule. I have become involved in the Valor Committee that produces the Medal Day Awards Ceremony every year in October. In 2003 I was honored with an award, I received the Distinguished Service Medal. I liked the way the ceremony turned out and decided to join the committee. You all know how some members of this fire department are and no matter how much good a group does; someone is going to be unhappy with them. I heard a few negative things about the committee, but was so impressed with their end results I decided to see for myself.

I did not know how much effort it took to go through all the submissions. In many of the meetings most of the time was taken up

by going over the letters of recommendation we received. Each time someone on the committee had been given the tedious task of verifying the information. I had no clue the Committee would be so time consuming but it is worth every minute I spend with this committee. You all must remember that the only way to get someone recognized is to send the information to the committee. Please keep in mind that the better these submissions are written the easier it is for the committee to consider them.

I did however have a selfish motive for joining this group. Last year I was contacted by the committee and was told that they were entertaining the idea of inviting family members of our fire fighters killed in the line of duty. I figured by joining the committee I could help make this happen.

For many years in dealing with the line of duty firefighter deaths, I have found that the family members are as forgotten as some of the fire fighters. As you know I work very hard to keep the memory of all of our line of duty and retired fire fighters very much alive. I came to the conclusion that this would be one of the ways to keep in touch with the families of the line of duty fire fighters.

I was given the opportunity to invite these families. For the past few years I have been in contact with a lot of these families and am always searching for new family members. Since this would be the inaugural year to invite the families to the medal day ceremony I decided to keep the number small. We invited 8 families and 6 of those came. The two families that did not attend were unable to due to medical problems.

Each year I will be adding new families to the list. We are doing this gradually because when the families attend we have one of our committee members accompany them the entire time and it helps them to be introduced to other fire fighters and "VIPS".

If you are a family member of a firefighter who has died in the line of duty, I would really appreciate it if you could please reach me if you feel like you would like to attend the 2005 Medal day ceremony.

Here is a list of the fire fighters that have died in the line of duty that I have not been able to contact their families or have lost contact with the families through the years.

*Thomas Cooper-1982
James Walls-1971
Claude Hopkins-1962
William Kersten-1954
Woodrow Erwin-1954
Joseph "Bull" Connor-1951
James Lowth-1947
Alford Schutze-1938
Michael Ward-1929
Aaron O'Brien-1929
Harry "Red" Oxford-1929
Rudolph "Rudy" Hendricks-1929
James "Mag" Smith-1929
George Bishop-1926
John A. "Bob" Boyd-1923
Harry Dodd-1923
Patrick O'Hare-1913
Clifford A. Weise-1913
Herman J. "Dutch" Wagner-1912
Thomas Andrew O'Leary-1908
Barney C. Moffatt-1908
Clifford W. Johnson-1902
Emil "Ed" Thompson-1899*

My goal for the line of duty families is to keep them in our family even after I am long gone.