



# REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

*by Scott Mellott, 15/A*

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

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

## RETIREES WHO HAVE RECENTLY DIED:

- CLARENCE R. HICKMAN**  
Served HFD 1946 to 1985, died January 8, 2004
- THOMAS IVAN DOWNEY**  
Served HFD 1959 to 1984, died December 31, 2003
- CHARLES EUGENE HAWTHORNE**  
Served HFD 1961 to 2001, died December 20, 2003
- KENNETH LEE RICHARDS**  
Served HFD 1968 to 2001, died December 21, 2003

Seems just like yesterday I was writing last year's February article. It seems that no matter what I try to do to escape it, the month of February still brings sad memories to my mind. Valentine's Day is and always will be a day to remember Houston's three Fire Fighters who died in the prime of their lives.

- H. A. "Ace" Harris-1921
- Lewis Mayo-2000
- Kim Smith-2000

Recalling the Fire Fighters who died in the line of duty is and always will be very hard for us to deal with. We should never take for granted our role as a Fire Fighter. We should never assume that we are immortal because we are labeled as heroes. Unfortunately the world doesn't always appreciate the danger we are placed in on a daily basis while performing our job.

I was on vacation the night Kim and Lewis died. I did not go to the scene and was not able to bring myself to visit the

site until several months later. I don't live in that direction and had not been forced to pass by the site where the McDonalds once stood. Once I arrived at the location where the McDonalds had been open for business for 17 years, I had no clue what I would see. I found a concrete slab that contained only some floor tiles still adhered where they had been since the building of the restaurant. The first thing that occurred to me was that if a person did not know about the fire that night they could be standing there looking and not know that anything had happened there at all.

I had not been back there until recently and I can imagine that it is tough for those fire companies out in that area to pass by there going on a run or coming back from a run. When I went back there a few days ago it was still hard to stand there and look at the site where two of our Fire Fighters died that fateful night four years ago. And what is very ironic is that going there I had to pass the "replacement" McDonalds on the corner of Beltway 8 and Bissonnet.

All that remains of the "old" McDonalds is the original landscaping in the front, a lot of grass, a "Rent a Fence" around the lot, and of course a sign that reads, "For Lease". Once again there is still no indication to the average person passing by as to what happen there.

Years ago when I worked at old Station 11, I worked with a Fire Fighter that had a habit of freelancing. We would be at a structure fire and he would go into the burning building alone. When I was the acting captain I would ask him to stay with his crew and he would answer, "Hoss, you guys need to keep up with me!" On one occasion when he told me this and I told him, "if you died in this building you would instantly make your wife a widow, and your children fatherless. Then after your body was removed, the owner would have the remains of the building put in a dumpster, collect the insurance money and rebuild. The new building would be a lot better than the old building you died trying to protect. And guess what? The owner and the city would most likely not erect a memorial in front of the building indicating that this is the spot that caused your death and your wife to raise your children alone and your children to grow up without their father."

Unfortunately, sometimes it does not matter how closely you abide by the rules or follow your captain's instruction. Sometimes, fate has a different plan of events in store for you. I am often asked why I write articles on a subject that is so hard to deal with. My reason is simple, it is important that our line-of-duty heroes are remembered and that their families know that even though a memorial is not in the place where their family member died, there will always be words used to commemorate their heroism.

Whether it involves placing a wreath at the site, a grave or calling the loved-one of a fallen Fire Fighter, there are so many ways we can show our respect.

Please make plans to attend the Annual Fire Fighter Memorial Service held in honor of Houston's Line-of-Duty Fire Fighters. The memorial service will be on March 20th at 10 am, at the Houston Fire Fighter's Memorial Garden, 4225 Interwood Parkway, near JFK and Beltway 8.

Be sure to visit my memorial web site at  
[www.houstonfirememorial.org](http://www.houstonfirememorial.org)