



LOCAL 341

HOUSTON FIRE FIGHTER

The Official Voice of the Houston Professional Fire Fighters Association

www.local341.org • email: hpffa@local341.org

VOL. 38 - NO. 10



OCTOBER 2006

Houston Fire Department Captain, Jay Paul “Jaybird” Jahnke

Born September 16, 1961

***Began Serving the
Citizens of Houston in 1981***

***Died In The Line-Of-Duty
October 13, 2001***



President's Report	page 02
Editor's Notes	page 03
Grievance Report	page 05
Fallen Fire Fighters	page 08
Remembering Never To Forget ..	page 09
Letters To The Editor	page 10
Medal Day Ceremony	page 11
Memorial Golf Tournament ..	page 12

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Blended Families	page 16
MDA Telethon	page 16
2006 Gala	page 18
Annual Physicals	page 22
48th IAFF Convention	page 22
Retirees/New Members	page 22

HPFFA Softball Tournament ..	page 24
Fire Fighter Mass	page 25
Fire Fest	page 26
Fire Prevention Poster Contest ..	page 27
Golf League Results	page 30
Second Profession	page 31
Calendars	page 42
Classifieds	page 43

Be Sure To View Your New Union Website - www.local341.org



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, Retired

I would like to introduce my guest writer for the month of October. In case you did not know, the subject of my article for October is usually reserved for Jay Jahnke. Jay died tragically on October 13, 2001. The Fire Fighter sharing his thoughts and feelings about Jay is Brad Stewart. Brad was Jay's best friend and I always referred to them as the "Twins."

On November 30, 1981, I entered the academy and on the first day we lost many recruits due to physical stress, they left for lunch and never came back. On the second day, this skinny guy walks through the door. The instructors introduced Jay Paul Jahnke as a replacement cadet. I didn't know it at the time, but this would be the day that I would find a friendship that one could only hope for. Jay and I began talking. Jay had a lot of knowledge about the fire department. His father, Claude Jahnke, and many family members were Houston Firefighters. Claude Jahnke was a District Chief in District 28. Jay told me how he would ride his bike to Station 38, which was down the street from where they lived. He would ask his dad, "What and how many runs did you make today?" The guys would pick at him but he didn't mind. Jay's mother, Ms. Jahnke (to me), his brother, Jeff and his sisters, Kiki (Karen) and MaryAnn would tell me other things that Jay would do, but I will hold on to those stories for myself. Jay told me how much he admired his father for doing the job he did and all he ever wanted to do was become a Houston Fire Fighter and follow in his father's footsteps. Jay's enthusiasm and the passion he had for the fire department inspired and encouraged me to strive for this great career. We became Pete and Repeat. We had a couple of names for each other, one being (Bubba) and if you knew us well you knew what Jay loved to call me, "I was his....." we'll just leave it at that. We were two young guys who accomplished the training at the academy and entered into our career of firefighting.

We graduated in March 1982 and worked together through four stations on the same shift always looking out for one another. Of course, we were the rookies wherever we went, so we endured many firehouse pranks. We started at Station 1 and spent about 1-1/2 years there. Jay married his first wife during this time. The bachelor party was one to remember. We then transferred to Station 75. 75's didn't open on time so for a while we were at Station 69. While there, Jay helped me through a divorce from my first wife. It was a hard time for me because I had a son and leaving him was a difficult thing for me to do, but Jay was there for me. We finally moved into Station 75 but only stayed for about a year. We then transferred to Station 38. It was here that we found a station where we would stay for a while. We met a group of Fire Fighters that would become dear friends. We became aware of what being a Fire Fighter family was all about. It was now 1986 and during this time I married my wife, Dina, and you could only guess who the best man was. Yes, Jay Bird. It was a strange time for us though. It was a joyous time for me and a rough time for Jay. Jay endured a divorce. As

time went by Jay met a special woman. He was so excited and wanted Dina and I to meet her. He said to me "Brad, I think this could be the one." We all met at a fellow Fire Fighters retirement party and from this moment on we all became best friends. We laughed, danced, drank, traveled and just enjoyed each other's company.

Our next venture would be studying. We made Chauffeur and this was the beginning of us separating from each other. Jay went to Station 6 B-shift and I went to Station 16 B-shift. Fear not; we did manage to stay in the same district. Again we found two stations where we would encounter more friendships. Our sense of being part of a Fire Fighter family had grown. These were fun times because we both drove ladder trucks. We would race to the fire to see who could arrive at the location first. We were like little boys spraying water from opposite sides of a fire.

During the years, Jay and I did many side jobs together. Some good, some bad, some hot and dirty. Those we worked for knew as long as Jay and I could work, sit, talk and spit, the job didn't matter.

It was now 1988 and Jay told me he was marrying Dawn. I told him how happy I was for him. He was marrying a caring, loving and devoted person. Over the years we became best friends. He was my brother. Nothing or no one could come between us; we often joked around with our wives and told others that our wives came second; "Hey, we slept together first and have been sleeping together longer than we have with them (at the fire station of course)". The four of us had some great times, vacation (even Jay & Dawn's honeymoon), dances, rodeo, etc.; then our children came along. First, Baby Jayne Jahnke on October 13, 1990 and if you see this beautiful young lady there is no denying she is a Jahnke. Second, Jordan Stewart on November 20, 1992. Five months later Hunter Jahnke on April 30, 1993. And my son, who was there from the beginning, born on August 19, 1982. We were both proud fathers.

On February 17, 2000, after attending the memorial service for Lewis Mayo and Kim Smith, I turned to my wife and said, "I don't know what I would do if I ever lost Jay".

Here I am today, to tell you about October 13, 2001, which would be the saddest day of my life.

Jay had promoted to the rank of Captain and was assigned to Station 2. I was assigned to Station 16 driving Ladder 16 and I also was on the same shift as Jay. I spoke to Jay early that morning and mid-afternoon. We were trying to get some time together because we were supposed to go to Jay's the next day to swim in their new pool. Our families had not been together in a while and after 9/11 we wanted to spend some time together. We could never tag up the rest of the day and kept missing each other's phone calls. I went to bed and early the next morning a fire in a high rise apartment building is dispatched. Jay's engine company was first to arrive on location. Once on location, Jay transmitted by radio that he had fire showing and immediately asked for additional help which is a 2nd alarm. The 2nd alarm included Station 16 and Ladder 16. I jumped up, got dressed and slid the pole as fast as I could. While in route, I heard Jay call for a Mayday; I thought to myself "He's O.K." I looked at Captain Bobo and asked if I could go in. At the time, we were riding three men on the apparatus. I think Captain Bobo knew I had to go in. As we exited off Hwy 59 heading west onto the 610 Loop, I heard Jay call for a Mayday for the second time. There was panic in his voice. It was at this time my heart began to race. In my

continued on page 11

Fallen Fire Fighters

continued from page 8

mind, he needed me and all I wanted to do was to get to him. I continued to listen to the radio reports.

We arrived and made our way into the building. There was white smoke up in the stairwell with a little heat. Other units started calling Maydays as well as crews trying to find Jay. As we made our way up the smoke turned from white to dark gray or black - no difference - we couldn't see. The heat turned extremely hot. I didn't know what floor we were on. We made our way up a few more flights of stairs when a fellow Fire Fighter came stumbling down on top of us saying he's out of air and can't breathe. A part of me thought it was Jay. We took him down and out of the building. It wasn't Jay, so I tell Capt. Bobo, "lets go back up." He tells me to change out my SCBA first. I went to my knees outside the back stairwell so my bottle could be changed. This is when they pulled Jay out from the building and placed him in front of me. I always thought how ironic that was. But I know now that's the way it was supposed to be. My best friend layed at my feet so that I could be with him on his last ride. I asked God to place breath back into this man but little did I know my best friend had already joined God and walked with him. I, along with other Fire Fighters began CPR. I stood up and said to Sam Norvick, "get me an ambulance." He said to me, "Brad, it's not mine." I said, "I don't care, get it and lets go!!" (in so many words). To you Sam - I say Thank You!! As we worked on Jay in the back of the ambulance, all I could think of was Dawn and the kids. How was I going to tell them? My heart ached. Jay and I had discussed that if this day ever came to be, we would take care of the others family. The rest of the story is mine, Dawn's, Dina's and our kids. As Dawn says, we are blessed.

I miss my phone calls "Hey Bubba," his laugh, smile and time spent talking. Jay and I were there for one another through good

times and bad, always giving support for whatever life had to offer. He is no longer by my side but will remain in my heart always and forever. "Gone but not Forgotten"

Jay was a man of integrity and loyalty. If you met him, you met a friend. Although Jay's greatest love was the fire department, his true love was his family. He was a good son, brother and uncle. He was a husband to Dawn and a father to Jayne and Hunter and this is what he treasured most.

I would like to conclude with two statements: First, To Dawn, Jayne and Hunter; I love you and will always be there for you. This was a promise I made and a promise I will keep. Second, stating what Jay believed "Fire Fighters are Real Heroes - Fighting Fire and Saving Lives, that's what its all about."

And a "**HERO**" he truly was.

★ ★ ★

Saturday, October 28, 2006 is the Medal Day Ceremony - See below.

★ ★ ★

Information and Future Events - more details on these later.

October 22, 2006 - Annual Firefighter Mass

March 17, 2007 - 7th Annual Memorial Service

The "Secret List"

Don't forget to sign up for the "Secret List". This is an email newsletter from Chief Billy Goldfeder (no email junk, and he does not give out your address, I promise!) that will give you line of duty death information from around the country. The newsletter will also give you insight on many safety issues facing this country's fire service. Go to www.firefighterclosecalls.com, the site's menu is on the left, click on "Secret List" and sign up.

Medal Day 2006

The citizens of Houston call for the help of Houston Fire Fighters more than 300,000 times per year. Some of the requests for service are nothing more than helping an elderly person who has fallen or a child that is unable to remove a ring from her finger. Then there are the emergencies that require these brave men and women to place themselves in harms way. All too often, they are killed in the Line-of-Duty.

In recognition of their dedication and service to the City of Houston, the HFD Valor and Service Awards Committee presents Medal Day. Medal Day is an annual event held in the month of October. Members of the Houston Fire Department nominate their fellow Fire Fighters for going above and beyond the

call of duty. The nominations are reviewed by the Committee and the appropriate award is granted to each deserving Fire Fighter. Fire Fighters are generally humble people. The Committee makes a great effort to include the Fire Fighters' family in this special moment. The husbands and wives, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, are filled with pride as Fire Fighter is recognized for a job well done.

Each year, the members of the Valor and Service Awards Committee ask Houston area businesses to support their Fire Fighters by sponsoring this very special event. This event is not possible without the support of the business community. Medal Day receives no financial support from the City of Houston or the

Houston Fire Department. It is presented by Fire Fighters, for Fire Fighters.

On Saturday, October 28, 2006, the Houston Fire Department will again honor our members for valor, heroism, and exceptional community service. Your support will be greatly appreciated. The ceremony will be held at the Marriott Westchase Hotel, 2900 Briarpark, Houston, Texas. Social hour begins at 6:00 p.m., dinner at 7:00 p.m. The Houston Fire Department Pipes and Drums Corps along with the Houston Fire Department Honor Guard will open the ceremony at 7:45. Dress is semi-formal. For additional information you may contact Alicia Whitehead at 713-495-7906 or Russell Harris at 713-777-1060 or 281-398-6435.