



# REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

*by Scott Mellott, Retired*

Several months ago, Ryan Johnson sent me his words on Jay Jahnke, his Fire Fighter Uncle, who died in the line-of-duty in a Houston high rise building fire on October 13, 2001. Along with Ryan's article, he sent me the words of ten of Jay's relatives. I then had a small problem on how to print all of these fond memories of Jay's family. With the help of a friend, I came up with the idea of running one of these articles for October and one for November 2007 and again in 2008. My next problem was which family member to choose for November 2007, and I truly felt the decision was mine to make. I chose Marianne McNeill, one of Jay's older sisters, the third of the four Jahnke children . . . So here goes.

*I miss Jay's smile, I miss his presence, I miss his corny jokes, his sense of humor, and I miss his big bear hugs.*

*I could always count on Jay being there for me. If I needed to bounce something off of him where I needed a second opinion, or something of that nature, he was always there for me. I miss talking to him the most. There were four years age difference between Jay and I so we were pretty close. As children, we bickered as most siblings do, however, as we grew older, and got married, and raised our families, Jay and I used to have heart-to-heart talks; About our parents, our family, his work, (of course) and in general what was going on with each other's world. He always had advice for me whatever the subject was. Plus Jay "ALWAYS" got the last word in.*

*Not only was Jay there for me, he was also there for his mother Kay. He intentionally worked at Station #2 to stay near her in case she needed him after our father passed away. Jay used to load up his pickup truck with all of his yard equipment and take it to work with him. When he got off his shift the next morning, he would take her to breakfast and visit, then come back and mow her grass. He loved his mother very much, and she was his rock as she has been the rock for all of us.*

*I miss him at all of our family holidays, like Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthdays, etc. In honor of him, we started a tradition that I heard of right after he passed away. We burn a white candle by his picture to represent his presence in the room. It burns the whole time we are together. When everybody leaves, we blow it out, and we save the same candle for the next function. Somehow it gives us a sense of security that Jay is there with us. At one gathering, I witnessed my son (Kenny) walk by the candle and his picture, and place a cold Budweiser beer next to it. I asked him what he was doing, and he smiled and said, "Well, if Jay was here with us right now, he would be having a cold one with us."*

*I miss Jay during the Livestock Show and Rodeo season. We were members of the same Rodeo BBQ Cook team and Jay was always there with his big 10-gallon hat on and his black duster. He was so cute. He used to tell my husband (Tommy) and I, "Hey lets go walking around and go see the other booths!" But no sooner did we walk ten feet; he was stopping and shaking someone's hand. One time we didn't even make it down an isle because with all the friends and*



*connections he had, everybody loved to stop and visit with Jay. I guess I never realized how respected he was until he passed away. To me, he was just my brother, and I guess I never realized what an impact he made in his short lived 40 years of life. He had more friends than I will ever have in my lifetime.*

*I must say it has been very hard on all of us not to have Jay around. It has definitely been a huge void in our lives. We are lucky enough though to be able to bond and spend time with his kids. When I look at Hunter and Jayne I can see Jay in them, and that gives me comfort. I know Jay is in a better place, and one day we will all be back together. So for now, until I reunite with him, I will enjoy life and the rest of my family, and hang on to the many memories I have of him.*

*I will leave you with one memory or actually, a visual I always get when I think of Jay as a child. My dad used to work at Station 38, and we lived not too far from the Station. My mom used to take us to the Station to visit my dad and the firemen. Jay used to climb on the trucks and slide down the poles as young as 3 years old. He was eaten up with anything related to the fire department!!! One day, he was in the back yard playing by himself with yellow rubber boots on, shorts and a shirt with a raincoat over it, with a baseball bat in his hand and wearing a football helmet. He really looked silly. He heard the sirens coming down Silber Road towards our direction so he ran as fast as he could to stand in the middle of our street staring towards Silber Road in hopes that he could just get a glimpse of the fire truck. He started making his own siren sounds just bellowing them out. He sounded like a real fire truck, and he was only about 5 years old. My mom heard him, thinking it was the real fire trucks coming down our street and when she saw Jay standing in the middle of the road making the sounds, she just started laughing.*

***He was destined to be a Fire Fighter and that he was! He turned out to be a Hero! Our Hero! May God bless him!***

# Remembering To Never Forget

**JOSE "JOE" SALVADOR MENDOZA**  
*Served HFD from 1981 to 2007*  
*Died October 16, 2007*

**HILLARY DARNELL EVANS**  
*Served HFD from 1981 to 2007*  
*Died September 16, 2007*

**STEVEN SCOTT JAHNKE**  
*Served HFD from 1972 to 2007*  
*Died August 15, 2007*

**WILBUR LEO SANFORD**  
*Served HFD from 1963 to 1993*  
*Died August 13, 2007*

**ALBERT LEE ZUBRIK**  
*Served HFD from 1972 to 2002*  
*Died July 26, 2007*

**DANIEL "DANNY" WAYNE CASANOVER**  
*Served HFD from 1970 to 2002*  
*Died July 25, 2007*

**MARSHALL ROBERTS, JR.**  
*Served HFD from 1948 to 1980*  
*Died July 20, 2007*

**LLOYD EARL THYER**  
*Served HFD from 1942 to 1965*  
*Died July 16, 2007*

**JOHN RILEY VOLLENTINE**  
*Served HFD from 1973 to 1989*  
*Died July 12, 2007*

**WILLIAM "BILL" LEE WHITE**  
*Served HFD from 1974 to 1976*  
*Died July 10, 2007*

**MAX HENRY McRAE**  
*Served HFD from 1955 to 1994*  
*Died July 6, 2007*

**JASON TEAGUE**  
*Served HFD from 2001 to 2007*  
*Died June 20, 2007*

**HORRACE FONTENOT**  
*Served HFD from 1953 to 1966*  
*Died June 4, 2007*

**KENNETH JEFF ROBINSON, JR.**  
*Served HFD from 1948 to 1986*  
*Died May 28, 2007*

**DOYLE DWAYNE JOHNSON**  
*Served HFD from 1981 to 2006*  
*Died May 20, 2007*

**HENRY HALLIO**  
*Served HFD from 1952 to 1978*  
*Died May 3, 2007*

**ROY ALEXANDER FOSTER, JR.**  
*Served HFD from 1969 to 2004*  
*Died May 3, 2007*

**OSCAR FREEMAN WALLACE, JR.**  
*Served HFD from 1970 to 2000*  
*Died May 1, 2007*

**RICHARD FRANK SMITH**  
*Served HFD from 1978 to 2007*  
*Died April 28, 2007*

**GEORGE W. WARD**  
*Served HFD from 1945 to 1965*  
*Died April 14, 2007*

**LARRY JULIAN BLACKMON**  
*Served HFD from 1971 to 1978*  
*Died April 4, 2007*

**FRANK JACOBS, JR.**  
*Served HFD from 1947 to 1973*  
*Died March 29, 2007*

**BOBBIE JAMES "BJ" EVANS**  
*Served HFD from 1966 to 2001*  
*Died March 21, 2007*

**HOMER EUGENE FRANKS**  
*Served HFD from 1961 to 1977*  
*Died March 17, 2007*

**JOHN TURNER COMSTOCK**  
*Served HFD From 1978 to 1988*  
*Died March 11, 2007*

**DOYLE SHELTON HOLDER**  
*Served HFD From 1974 to 2005*  
*Died February 25, 2007*

**CURTIS E. MORRIS**  
*Served HFD From 1962 to 1986*  
*Died February 20, 2007*

**AUSTIN PEAVY KENNADA**  
*Served HFD From 1956 to 1983*  
*Died February 18, 2007*

**MAXIE GENE JONES**  
*Served HFD From 1959 to 1979*  
*Died February 9, 2007*

**WILLIAM RAY YOUNG**  
*Served HFD From 1955 to 1976*  
*Died February 5, 2007*

**WILBER MARTIN JONES**  
*Served HFD From 1945 to 1966*  
*Died January 21, 2007*

**JIMMY EARL LILLEY**  
*Served HFD From 1969 to 1991*  
*Died January 20, 2007*

**LARRY ANTHONY WESLEY**  
*Served HFD From 1979 to 2000*  
*Died January 19, 2007*

**GEORGE EARL LOWDERMILK**  
*Served HFD from 1950 to 2005*  
*Died January 12, 2007*

**KENNETH RAY JUDD**  
*Served HFD from 1963 to 1994*  
*Died January 7, 2007*

**LEE DITTA**  
*Served HFD from 1948 to 1978*  
*Died January 1, 2007*

*Total for the year from  
January 1, 2007 to present - 36 Deaths*

For current information on deceased Fire Fighters,  
please go to my website  
[www.houstonfirememorial.org](http://www.houstonfirememorial.org)  
and click on "Recent Deaths"  
or email Scott at [scottmel@juno.com](mailto:scottmel@juno.com)

## NOVEMBER DIED IN THE LINE-OF-DUTY ANNIVERSARIES

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. JEDLIKA**  
Fire Fighter, Station 30

November 23, 1901  
**FRANK W. MEDLENKA**  
Driver, Station 8

# *Celebrating 75 Years*

**1932 to 2007**

## **Houston Professional Fire Fighter's Association, Local 341**

As some of you may already know, this publication will be doing a two page picture spread each month for the year 2007. We will focus on the faces of our past and the present membership to celebrate Local 341's 75th year.

*Scott Mellott*



*Houston Fire Department 1932 -  
Station 16 at 1413 Westheimer.*

*(Top Row: L-R )William Miller,  
Thomas Cudd, Roy Miller,  
Oswald Bokemeyer, Fred Keepers,  
Unknown Fire Fighter.*

*(Bottom Row) Walter Dudensing,  
Malcolm Drohan, Urban  
Valentine, Unknown Fire Fighter.*



*Houston Fire Department 1932 -  
Station 10 at 205 Chartres Street.*

*(Top Row: L-R ) John Askew,  
William Michaels, Unknown Fire  
Fighter, Unknown Fire Fighter,  
A.P. Hartman, Unknown Fire  
Fighter*

*(Bottom Row: L-R) A. J. Stahl,  
Claude Feray, Laymon Johnson,  
"Froggy" Hughes, John Ruby,  
Leo Edmonds*

# *Celebrating 75 Years*

**1932 to 2007**

## **Houston Professional Fire Fighter's Association, Local 341**



*Arson Investigator Greg Chapa and Oliver*



*Senior Arson Investigator Alfredo Martinez*



*Engine 37*

*Apartment Fire at Kirby & SW Freeway - 1985*

*(L/R) Paul Hamilton, Tony Soza,  
Rodney Blair, "Eddie" Arthur*



*Fire Station 37 in 1983*

*Fire Fighters Marshall Hefley and Louie Judd*





# THE SECRET LIST 9-25-2007/ 2249 HOURS

*Hey ...*

This story is about an off duty Fire Fighter in Illinois with a blood alcohol level of

**Chief Billy Goldfeder** .227 (nearly 3 times the legal limit) who was involved in an off duty crash that killed one and critically injured others a few weeks ago. While this is always a horrible and avoidable situation, this one is worthy of your time. That's because the woman killed was the mother of another Fire Fighter (not from the same area) and the one critically injured was her husband, that other Fire Fighter's Dad.

Derek L. Winningham, 22, of Sherman (IL) was charged with two counts of aggravated driving while under the influence (a charge formerly known as reckless homicide in Illinois) and if convicted, he could face 3 to 14 years in prison. He is charged in connection with this multi-vehicle crash that killed Teresa L. Borero, 43, of Springfield ... a Fire Fighter's Mom. Three others were also hospitalized as a result. One was Borero's husband who was seriously injured. That's one seriously injured Dad of a Fire Fighter and one lost Mom of a Fire Fighter. Winningham's pickup rear-ended the Borero's van, pushing it into a third vehicle ... Winningham was going 81 mph when he hit them, according to a crash re-constructionist ... the speed limit on that road was 55 mph.

Teresa L. Borero, 43, (a Fire Fighter's Mom) of Springfield was pronounced dead at the crash site. A toxicology screening found no drugs or alcohol in her body. Borero's husband, brother and nephew (a Fire Fighter's Dad and the relatives) were all seriously injured, although they since have been released from the hospital.

Winningham was on his way home when he crashed into them ... and wasn't hurt. The road is a bit dark, but the taillights on the van were working properly. None of that matters: the Fire Fighter who killed the Mom and seriously hurt the Dad and injured the other relatives of that other Fire Fighter blew a .227 – nearly 3 times the legal limit. He was drunk.

Each of us have been with other Fire Fighters who have had too

much to drink. I don't know if anyone was with Winningham before this happened or not. But when we do see it, sometimes we intervene, sometimes we don't. That's amazingly sad because each of us has been on crashes where drunks killed someone and we are always "so thankful" that the victims under the sheets weren't anyone "we" knew or loved. But at social and other off duty times, we hang around "Brothers and Sisters" ... and see that they are toasted ... but yet sometimes, we "shy" away from stopping them from driving. The good news is that in recent years we are more apt to stop it than years ago. But no matter, we still see it and there are still times when we ignore it because of a dozen or so lame excuses on why "we don't wanna get in the middle of it."

Hanging around Fire Fighters who have been drinking is one thing. Letting them drive is another. Take the keys. Lock the car. Sit them down. Hide their car. Pop their tires. Hold them down. Whatever. Do whatever it takes to not let anyone drive drunk-and especially not your "Brother or Sister" Fire Fighter ... the one who you would risk your life for ... and all that other blah blah crap. Wanna save a life? Start with those who drive on the roads and who may encounter a Fire Fighter who has been drinking. Maybe even save the life of a drunk Fire Fighter who you don't let drive. Will they get mad? Do you care?

Whatever it takes, just stop it from happening ... keep them off the road if they have been drinking ... you never know who they may run into. In this case, the Family of another "Brother" Fire Fighter. And now that Fire Fighter and his family buried his Mom because of another Fire Fighter's deadly actions. It's all in the family. B.M.A.

Take Care - BE CAREFUL,

*BillyG*

## 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](http://www.firefighterclosecalls.com), the site's menu is on the left, click on "Secret List" and sign up.

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