



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, Retired

October was once one of my favorite months. Back when the fire trucks were minus air conditioning, all summer long I would profusely ask my Captain and my wife "is it October yet?" I always looked forward to October and when it finally came around my wife and Captain were relived as well. Well, all that changed for me personally on Saturday morning, October 13, 2001.

Prior to the above date, I was still in my personal nightmare dealing with the 343 FDNY Fire Fighters who died September 11, 2001, when the World Trade Center's Twin Towers were struck by commercial air liners flown by fanatical terrorist. And I do remember thinking several times, while dealing with the tragedy, that things could not get worse. Well, I was severely wrong.

October 13th was an A shift day for me at Fire Station 15. I arrived a little after 6 a.m. I was stunned when I walked into the back of the station, the entire B Shift was sitting in the TV room and several of them had HFD handheld radios - not a good sign. As I stepped in the door, I asked the first Fire Fighter that I had eye contact with, how many? He said probably one member down and one crew was still unaccounted for. I immediately had this terrible feeling that the Fire Fighter down was not only someone I knew but someone I knew well. Most of these "overwhelming" feelings I get ring true and this one was no exception.

The downed Fire Fighter was Jay Jahnke. I first met Jay when I was the chauffeur on the Engine at Station 28, the same shift that his dad, Claude, worked. Jay was 19, and even back then the young man gave me the impression that he was "biting at the bit" to follow in his Dad and his 3 Uncle's footsteps. One year later, 1981, Jay became a proud Member of the Houston Fire Department and it did not take me long to realize that Jay had an extreme passion for the fire service and this passion continued all throughout his career.

Jay's remarkable 21-year career ended as his crew battled a blaze at The Four Leaf Tower, a 41 story high-rise located at 5110 San Felipe (The West Tower). Ironically, this building was located next to an identical building and was built and considered "twins" as in "twin towers".

As most of you know, my main mission when it comes to our fallen Fire Fighters is **"Remember to Never Forget"**.

Who did Jay leave behind. A devoted wife, two great kids, a boy and a girl, ages 8 and 11, two sisters, a brother, and many nieces and nephews. His dad had 8 siblings and his mom had 2. His best and closest friend was Brad Stewart, who is a Fire Fighter as well. Jay had lots of friends - everyone liked Jay. Last but not least, his Fire Fighter family: 3500 Brothers and Sisters linked by one thing - dedication to protecting the citizens of the City of Houston, Texas.

Now, on to one of my favorite subjects - Jay's daughter Jayne. Jayne, who will turn 19 this October, is already off to college. All these years I have kept up with the family. I do identify with Jayne. In my childhood, I lost my mom to cancer a month before I turned 11. Jayne lost her dad a day before her 11th birthday. My dad died three years before. I woke up one morning shortly after my mother's death living with a family of five that I had never met before.

The difference is that Jayne and her younger brother had their mom who has stayed strong all these years and dealt with the pain and helped her children deal with the fact that on the morning of October 13, 2001, their dad did not come home.

To finish this month's article, I am adding a picture of Jay along with the two other brave Fire Fighters who also died In The Line-Of-Duty during the month of October.



**October 13, 2001 - Captain, Station 2
JAY "JAY BIRD" PAUL JAHNKE**



**October 19, 1971 - Fire Inspector, Training Academy
TRUXTON JOSEPH HATHAWAY, JR.**



**October 31, 1954 - Chauffeur, Station 17
DELBERT HARVEY SHERFY**

Remembering To Never Forget

MELVIN GRISBY, JR.

*Served HFD 1964 to 1994
Died September 11, 2009*

ANTHONY WAYNE FOSTER, SR.

*Served HFD 1982 to 2005
Died April 26, 2009*

RONALD WAYNE GUNNELS

*Served HFD 1964 to 2001
Died March 11, 2009*

KENDALL LEE CURRIE

*Served HFD 2004 to 2009
Died September 2, 2009*

LEORY EDWARD WARD, JR.

*Served HFD 1959 to 1984
Died April 23, 2009*

PHILLIP STEVEN "STEVIE" SCHULTZ

*Served HFD 1967 to 2002
Died March 5, 2009*

BENNIE RAY BURNES

*Served HFD 1960 to 1990
Died August 9, 2009*

KYLE QUINCEY RANEY

*Served HFD 1973 to 2008
Died April 16, 2009*

BOBBY DEE CARRAWAY

*Served HFD 1968 to 2004
Died February 18, 2009*

MICHAEL ALLEN BENSON

*Served HFD 1975 to 1990
Died July 19, 2009*

DAMION JON HOBBS

*Served HFD March 7, 2009 to April 12, 2009
Died April 12, 2009 - **Line-of-Duty Death***

PHILLIP LEE HUDGENS

*Served HFD 1977 to 2005
Died February 1, 2009*

VINCENT EARL O'LEARY

*Served HFD 1963 to 1991
Died July 2, 2009*

JAMES ARTHUR HARLOW

*Served HFD 1979 to 2009
Died April 12, 2009 - **Line-of-Duty Death***

RODNEY DALE WATERS

*Served HFD 1985 to 2009
Died January 31, 2009*

SEYMORE WILLIS

*Served HFD 1951 to 1977
Died June 16, 2009*

ALTON LAMAR KLUTTS

*Served HFD 1950 to 1986
Died April 12, 2009*

THEODORE GREGORY HILL

*Served HFD 1970 to 1990
Died January 21, 2009*

BRIAN ELLIS RHONE

*Served HFD 1998 to 2009
Died May 25, 2009*

JERRY JOE HUBENAK

*Served HFD 1958 to 1983
Died April 11, 2009*

GEORGE HARLAN CONWAY

*Served HFD 1952 to 1977
Died January 13, 2009*

LASKAR ANDREW "PAT" MULLENS

*Served HFD 1953 to 1974
Died May 7, 2009*

JAMES DONALD "J.D." ROBINSON

*Served HFD 1941 to 1970
Died April 8, 2009*

TRACY BIRKELBACH

*Served HFD 1961 to 1991
Died January 1, 2009*

CLAUDE HARMON HARRIS

*Served HFD 1950 to 1974
Died May 6, 2009*

ARNOLD IVY BAKER

*Served HFD 1952 to 1977
Died April 6, 2009*

**Total from January 1, 2009 to present -
27 Deaths**

Total for the Year 2008 - 39 Deaths

COHNWAY MATTHEW JOHNSON

*Served HFD 2009 to 2009
Died May 2, 2009*

WILLIAM JAMES CLEMONS

*Served HFD 1963 to 1987
Died March 26, 2009*

Scott Mellott - Mission Statement:

My main goal has always been to preserve the memory/history of our deceased Houston Fire Fighters. This is something I take very personal. I put myself in charge of the memory of the Line-of-Duty Fire Fighters back in 1987 and since 2000 have included all Houston Fire Fighters. I will continue to do this as long as it is possible. I could, however, use some help with my endeavors. If you think you might be interested in helping, please contact me.

Please visit my Memorial Website which contains information on current Houston Fire Fighter Deaths, Obits, Line-of-Duty Deaths and many other items. Many new items have been recently added. If you do not have access to the website or you have any questions about my memorial endeavors, please call me at (713) 729-6536 or email: scottmel@juno.com.

www.houstonfirememorial.org

Thanks – Scott Mellott

The Faces of Local 341

1932 to 2009

Houston Professional Fire Fighter's Association

Photos on this page submitted by Scott Mellott (Retired)



Chief Bob Swisher - 1980's

Photo provided by Local 341



**Captain David Lankford - 9800 Pagewood
2-11 Fire - September 15, 1988**

Photo provided by Local 341



1969 Fire Station 24 - 1503 Palmer Street

1954 Mack Pumper

(l-r) Oliver Lewis, Jerry Sanders, and Kirk Williams

Photo provided by Local 341



Ladder 33/C - 7117 Fannin April 4, 2008

**(l/r) Jim McMillan-FF, Paul Hamilton-E/O, Doug Swiech-FF
"I ran this in the September issue - made a mistake. The crew in
the picture is not the B Shift. Sorry"**

Photo taken by Scott Mellott

The Faces of Local 341

1932 to 2009

Houston Professional Fire Fighter's Association

Photos on this page submitted by Scott Mellott (Retired)



Jay Jahnke and dad Claude - 1980's

Photo provided by the Jahnke Family



Jay Jahnke next to his Dad's dedication plaque

Photo provided by the Jahnke Family



Fill-the-Boot 1982 - Station 28 and Station 3

(Top Row) Capt. Richard Ford, James Wathan-FF, Kenneth Jordan-FF, Tommy Erickson-Chauffeur, Capt. Lester Williams, Capt. Roger Campbell. (Bottom Row) Larry Ogrodowicz-FF, Malcom Armstrong-FF, Bob Roberts-FF, Neil Austin-FF, Kenneth Scrutchin-FF, Mark Newman-FF

Photo provided by Local 341