



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, 15/A

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

Feb. 03, 1969 Steve Charlie Baranowski - Captain Station 37
Feb. 03, 1973 Lewis W. "Moe" Richardson - Captain Station 7
Feb. 04, 1977 Jackie Dunham Ludwick - Sr. Captain Station 7
Feb. 09, 1929 James Magerson "Mag" Smith - Firefighter Station 10
Feb. 14, 1921 H. A. "Ace" Harris- Firefighter Station 10
Feb. 14, 2000 Lewis Evans Mayo III - Firefighter Station 76
Feb. 14, 2000 Kimberly Ann Smith - Firefighter Station 76
Feb. 29, 1954 Woodrow Wilson Erwin - Chauffeur Station 24

FIREFIGHTERS WHO HAVE RECENTLY DIED:

Randall "Randy" Scott O'Guynn
served HFD 1990 to 2004 - Died on February 9th, 2005.

Darrell Keith Jackson
served HFD 1982 to 2005 - Died on February 7, 2005.

TOMMY JOE NETTLES
served HFD 1961 to 2004 - Died on February 6, 2005.

WALTER "JAKE" CHAVERS MALEK
served HFD 1965 to 1971 - Died on February 1, 2005.

JERRY EVERETT LITTLE
served HFD 1962 to 1981 Died on January 30, 2005.

JAMES CLYDE COLLINS
served HFD 1969 to 2000 Died on January 25, 2005 .

LOWELL LAVERNE DAVIS
served HFD 1964 to 1986 Died on January 10, 2005

Chances are you don't need me to tell you that being a fire fighter is a dangerous job. When you or your loved one gets up in the morning and puts on their uniform, he or she may not make it back home after their shift is over. Fire fighters live with this thought everyday. Most fire fighters don't give this concept much thought, they just do their jobs day in and day out.

I started thinking about this on December 20th, when the Baytown Fire Department lost one of their fire fighters. The Baytown Fire Department has lost three fire fighters in the line-of-duty during its' 50 plus year history. However, it does not matter how many fire fighters a city has lost or how long it has been since the last, the fact is that it could happen anytime anywhere.

The fire fighter that died was a young fire fighter named Nito Guajardo, with Baytown Fire Department Ladder 1. When I saw the news coverage of his death, the fire he responded to was a 4,000 square foot house in

Baytown's Country Club subdivision. Now, what got my brain working was the fact that we, HFD, lost a brother and sister fire fighter while they were fighting a fire in a McDonalds Restaurant. A lot of fire fighters all over the country were surprised that fire fighters were killed when the roof of a fast food restaurant fell in.

To quote myself, "uh, what is your point here?" My point is, the fact that a fire fighter does not pass by a large house or a fast food restaurant and say "that is a very dangerous building." Fire fighters would drive themselves crazy if they thought that way of every run down or dangerous looking building. In reality, most fire fighters pass by the same buildings day in and day out and don't give it much thought one way or the other.

Just recently New York City lost three fire fighters in one day. The first was in the Bronx when a truck crew and a rescue truck crew were operating at an apartment fire. These crews were above the fire looking for occupants on the fourth floor when conditions changed drastically. Fire engulfed the room they were in. With no escape other than the windows all six fire-fighters jumped from the building to escape the raging fire. Two fire fighters were killed by the fall and the other four were seriously injured. It was said that the one factor that trapped the fire fighters was a wall that was not supposed to be there. The wall was constructed by the owner to expand the number of apartments.

Later that same day a third fire fighter died while fighting a fire in a private two story resident in Brooklyn. The fire fighter with his crew were searching the basement for victims when he was separated and found a few minutes later on the stair case in respiratory arrest.

These two fires, I would think, were at the time of arrival, seemly routine to these New York City fire fighters. The apartment building and house from the outside were not any different from any of the other houses or buildings in the Bronx and Brooklyn.

As I was reading about the Bronx fire, I realized that this was a lot like the fire that killed our Captain Jahnke in 2001. The similarities in both fires were, multiple story residential building, inclement weather and too many things went wrong.

During my career I have heard fire fighters refer to incidents as routine. In my opinion, this state of mind is not good for any of us. If you think about it, there is never a response that a fire fighter responds to that is "routine." The saying "looks can be deceiving" can also ring true.

We should never underestimate the dangerous nature of our job because on any given day, what may seem "routine" could be our last alarm.

*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.*

UP COMING EVENTS

NITO GUAJARDO BAYTOWN FD MEMORIAL T-SHIRTS

Proceeds from the sale of these shirts will be used to send members of Nito's family and the Fire Department Honor Guard to Colorado Springs in September for the IAFF annual Firefighter Memorial Services. Please go to www.Ladder1.com.