



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, Retired

List of the line-of-duty death anniversaries for the month of August:

August 4, 1923

BOYD, J. A. "BOB"

Assistant Fire Chief - Central Station

August 6, 1941

GASSOWAY, HORRACE OSCAR

Fire Fighter - Station 10

August 19, 1926

EDMONDS, CLAUDE W. "RED"

Captain - Central Station

August 21, 1938

SCHUTZE, ALFORD HENRY

District Chief

August 22, 1934

ROGERS, ESKER J.

Fire Fighter - Station 17

See the list of our brother Fire Fighters who have died in 2006 on the back of this publication.

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In my April article (written in March), I wrote about a Fire Fighter friend who had lung cancer and had entered into hospice about the same time as retired Fire Fighter John Meador perished in a car accident. I also printed a poem about staying close to your friends and reaching out to them and as the poem said "Around the corner, a vanished friend. "I did go and see my friend and had planned on going back the next week, sadly he died before my next visit.

The retired Fire Fighter's name is Thomas Raymond Hutchins, Sr. Those that knew him, knew him as "Tom." He died the morning of Sunday, April 2, 2006 after a hard fought battle with lung cancer.

Tom, born in 1950, grew up in Springville which is upstate New York near Buffalo. He entered the US Navy the summer after he graduated from high school in 1968. His navy career spanned four years. He was a Boiler Mate 1st Class and was assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Franklin D. Roosevelt.

He met his life-time soul mate, Barbara, while on leave from the Navy. Tom was discharged from the Navy the summer of 1972 and they married in the Fall of 1972. Back then, the job opportunities in upstate New York were not very promising. Tom and Barbara were persuaded by an aunt and uncle, who lived in Friendswood, to come to Texas. So this young adventurous couple traveled the 1500 miles to Texas. Armed with less than 100 dollars and all their worldly belongings crammed into a Volkswagen "Bug" (not a van) and

arrived here to become life-long Texans.

From the marriage of Tom and Barbara came two great children. Dawn the oldest and Thomas, Jr. "Tommy."

After Tom was promoted to Chauffeur, he transferred to Station 37 in 1984. He worked there a little over 10 years. That is when I first met him.

My wife's Army reserve unit was activated during the Gulf War and she was gone to Saudi

Arabia for six months. Our daughter was 15 at the time and attended Lamar High School. Quite a few times I enlisted Tom to pick her up at school. The only problem was Tom had an old, well used, "Mustard" colored Chevy pickup. When Tom would turn off West Alabama to go the one more block to the back of the school, Kim would politely ask him to let her off on the corner so she could walk the rest of the way to save "embarrassment." Tom always thought that was really funny and told me that I could borrow his truck anytime to pick up Kim from school. I told him that was not necessary, because just the threat of me borrowing it was enough to keep her on the straight and narrow path!

Sadly a few years later Tom's son Tommy was shot and killed in a senseless tragedy. The young man who shot Tommy, who is not so young any more, is still in prison. Tom and the family and all of his friends were devastated by the death of a young man who had no chance to live his life.

Tom began to change things in his life. He transferred away from 37's in an attempt to get away from the memories of Tommy "growing up" at the station. He also completed his Master's Degree and left the department in 1997 to be a full-time teacher. This is what he had wanted to do for a long time. Tom taught until he was too ill to continue.

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I will close this article with the following message:

Tom: I am proud to have been able to call you my friend. You are a gentleman and a scholar. You were a stellar family man, great addition to the Houston Fire Department and a high quality educator which allowed you to touch the minds of many of Houston's younger generation.

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Information and Future Events - more details on these later.

October 7, 2006 - Dennis W. Holder Scholarship Fundraiser,

Houston Firefighter' Pension

October 22, 2006 - Annual Firefighter Mass

October 28, 2006 - Medal Day Ceremony

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.

