



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, Retired

Many years ago, a young man entered the Houston Fire Fighters Academy with great hopes and motivation. He graduated this academy at the age of 20. It was 1980 when he began his journey helping the citizens of Houston. The miracle of this beginning also includes the story of a great friendship, a great bond between our brother Joe and the Fire Fighter Brothers at Stations 26, 36 and Station 71, as well as all the other fire stations in the City of Houston where our brother served. It is with great pride and honor that we write this tribute because it allows my family and me to share about Joe's bond with his HFD Brothers.

Joe S. Mendoza was his formal name, but he did not go by Jose, he wanted everyone to call him "Joe." He devoted his life to his job and more importantly to helping other Fire Fighters beginning their careers. He shared his experience and knowledge for the job without hesitation. Mentoring young Fire Fighters was his calling.

Our brother gave of himself wholeheartedly to his HFD family. He had a great passion for his job and served with great honor. One thing that comes to mind was the manner in which he treated everyone. He was always so respectful even to those he did not know. It could have been someone he was helping on the job or even just a convenience store clerk; he was always kind and respectful and shared his beautiful smile generously with any person he came in contact with. That is what I will keep close to my heart about my big brother.

Joe was a private man and he always had God in his heart. He lived the way God wants us to live with honor, integrity, forgiveness, and love. He was always willing to help anyone at any time.

One thing we were told about my brother Joe was his persistence in always riding 1st line on the pumper. He always wanted to be the first to fight fires. It was just understood and respected that no one would take his "seat," however, if there was a rookie that accidentally tried to sit in his spot, all it took was that intense look (I remember that look from when we were kids). I guess God needed a good man on 1st line in Heaven and Joe will be looking out for all of you guys from there.

Joe was an amazing person, a kind person, a giving person. He loved his job and his HFD family. You guys were his anchor; you guys were always there... when no one else was. I am forever changed having witnessed this bond of friendship and it is with great appreciation and with all the love and respect we have to say THANK YOU from the bottom of our hearts. We thank God for the blessing of you, his HFD family.

The words from his HFD Brothers are a testament of his dedication to his job as well as to the great friendships that he had with all those who were able to work with him.

Mendoza Family

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I normally introduce my guest writer at the beginning of this column. This month is an exception. The above was written by Joe Mendoza's Sister, Mary, one of Joe's five siblings. Joe lost the battle for his life October 16, 2007 after fighting his illness for several years. During his time in hospitals, the family came up with the idea of leaving a journal next to Joe's hospital bed for his visitors to sign, so the family could have some idea of who his visitors were. However his

*Joe Mendoza -
HFD March 1981
to October 2007*



Fire Fighter visitors did not just "sign in", they expressed their feeling about the impact that Joe's life made on their own life. The following were a small part of the many journal entries that the family picked out to share with you. So read on...

"Joe, you are truly what a Fire Fighter is suppose to be: a friend, a leader, a role model, but most of all my brother. I will never forget your famous words to me: "Don't complain about the stuff you have to do at the station, that's the easy stuff, the hard stuff is out on the streets fighting fires."

Robert Ramirez 26/D.

"I am always indebted to you for showing us young guys how to be a better person and better Fire Fighter. I will never forget you and will always hold you in a special place in my heart. Thanks for being the best and thanks for everything you taught me."

Edward Escamilla, 26/D.

"I am grateful to have worked with you at Station 26, you taught me things I would have not known otherwise, thank you so much."

Aaron Sedlar, 52/A.

"Thank you for being a good Fire Fighter and even better friend and person. Joe you will never be forgotten even though I didn't work with you very long, the times together, I did learn a lot. I will see you later in heaven with all our other Brothers and Sisters."

Eddie Perez, 36/D.

"Joe, thank you for sharing all of your knowledge and all of your help guiding me through my first year and a half in HFD. Thanks for all the talks about life in general and all those late night Seinfeld episodes."

Greg Olmstead, 26/D.

"Thank you for always being willing to help us at M/29 when no one else would. Thank you for being a friend and HFD brother."

Adrian Trevino, M/29.

"Man, it seems like yesterday, I was a rookie at 35's and we were talking about how our stations were being competitive on who would get there first, first to put the fire out and be the first to go home. Brother, I know you are headed to God's Station now and I will truly miss you and all the times we talked. It could have been about anything. Just to let you know, I always looked up and respected the way you did your job and lived your life. No regrets brother. Watch over all of us Bro!"

Charlie Salazar, 35/B, 70/D.

"You are a very dear friend of mine. You will be missed. I enjoyed working with you and will see you in the future,"

Willie, 26.

"Hey Joe, I always gave everyone a station nickname and every once in awhile when you would visit with us at 40s, your title was "Smokin Joe" that's what is gonna stay with me until we meet again old friend, until then old friend."

Mario Chavez, 40/D.

Remembering To Never Forget

LUKE CANALITO

Served HFD 1952 to 1974
Died November 16, 2007

GEORGE ANTHONY JAMAIL

Served HFD 1970 to 2004
Died November 8, 2007

JOSE "JOE" SALVADOR MENDOZA

Served HFD 1981 to 2007
Died October 16, 2007

HILLARY DARNELL EVANS

Served HFD 1981 to 2007
Died September 16, 2007

STEVEN SCOTT JAHNKE

Served HFD 1972 to 2007
Died August 15, 2007

WILBUR LEO SANFORD

Served HFD 1963 to 1993
Died August 13, 2007

ALBERT LEE ZUBRIK

Served HFD 1972 to 2002
Died July 26, 2007

DANIEL "DANNY" WAYNE CASANOVER

Served HFD 1970 to 2002
Died July 25, 2007

MARSHALL ROBERTS, JR.

Served HFD 1948 to 1980
Died July 20, 2007

LLOYD EARL THAYER

Served HFD 1942 to 1965
Died July 16, 2007

JOHN RILEY VOLLENTINE

Served HFD 1973 to 1989
Died July 12, 2007

WILLIAM "BILL" LEE WHITE

Served HFD 1974 to 1976
Died July 10, 2007

MAX HENRY McRAE

Served HFD 1955 to 1994
Died July 6, 2007

JASON TEAGUE

Served HFD 2001 to 2007
Died June 21, 2007

HORRACE FONTENOT

Served HFD 1953 to 1966
Died June 4, 2007

KENNETH JEFF ROBINSON, JR.

Served HFD 1948 to 1986
Died May 28, 2007

DOYLE DWAYNE JOHNSON

Served HFD 1981 to 2006
Died May 20, 2007

HENRY HALLIO

Served HFD 1952 to 1978
Died May 4, 2007

ROY ALEXANDER FOSTER, JR.

Served HFD 1969 to 2004
Died May 3, 2007

OSCAR FREEMAN WALLACE, JR.

Served HFD 1970 to 2000
Died May 1, 2007

RICHARD FRANK SMITH

Served HFD 1978 to 2007
Died April 28, 2007

GEORGE W. WARD

Served HFD 1945 to 1965
Died April 14, 2007

LARRY JULIAN BLACKMON

Served HFD 1971 to 1978
Died April 4, 2007

FRANK JACOBS, JR.

Served HFD 1947 to 1973
Died March 29, 2007

BOBBIE JAMES "BJ" EVANS

Served HFD 1966 to 2001
Died March 21, 2007

HOMER EUGENE FRANKS

Served HFD 1961 to 1977
Died March 17, 2007

JOHN TURNER COMSTOCK

Served HFD 1978 to 1988
Died March 11, 2007

DOYLE SHELTON HOLDER

Served HFD 1974 to 2005
Died February 25, 2007

CURTIS EDWARD MORRIS

Served HFD 1962 to 1986
Died February 20, 2007

AUSTIN PEAVY KENNADA

Served HFD 1956 to 1983
Died February 18, 2007

MAXIE GENE JONES

Served HFD 1959 to 1979
Died February 9, 2007

WILLIAM RAY YOUNG

Served HFD 1955 to 1976
Died February 5, 2007

WILBER MARTIN JONES

Served HFD 1945 to 1966
Died January 21, 2007

JIMMY EARL LILLEY

Served HFD 1969 to 1991
Died January 20, 2007

LARRY ANTHONY WESLEY

Served HFD 1979 to 2000
Died January 19, 2007

GEORGE EARL LOWDERMILK

Served HFD 1950 to 2005
Died January 12, 2007

KENNETH RAY JUDD

Served HFD 1963 to 1994
Died January 7, 2007

LEE DITTA

Served HFD 1948 to 1978
Died January 1, 2007

**Total for the Year
from January 1, 2007
to present - 38 Deaths**

For current information on
deceased Fire Fighters,
please go to my website
www.houstonfirememorial.org
and click on "Recent Deaths"
or email Scott at
scottmel@juno.com

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



The pictures on this page were taken by Houston Fire Fighter J. D. Robinson. The location was Texas City, Texas, during what is now referred to as the Texas City Disaster which began when a ship caught fire and exploded. The top picture shows Monsanto Chemical Plant on fire and the bottom picture shows some of the damage to the town of Texas City. The bottom picture also shows some of the men and equipment that were sent by the Houston Fire Department.



Celebrating 75 Years

1932 to 2007

Houston Professional Fire Fighter's Association, Local 341



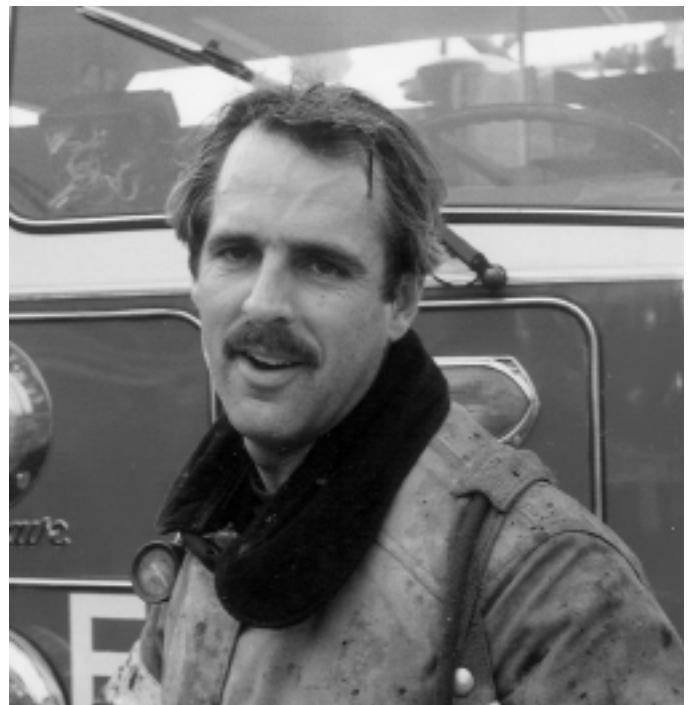
Captain Elmer "Red" Blevins-1990's



Captain Larry Dolch-1988



Erwin Kaspar-1980's



Tommy Erickson-1988

Photo provided by Local 341