



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, Retired

My first article for this column was published March 2002. This article consisted of 262 words including the title. Not sure how or who convinced me to write the article but it seems like I just threw some words together and turned it in. Back then I never realized that almost 8 years and 99 articles later I am still going strong with my mission to "Remember the Fallen Fire Fighters."

Along with the articles, I also do research on our deceased Houston Fire Fighters. I don't consider myself the expert, but I am always looking into the past of our Fire Fighters in order to document their history. I started in 1987 when I volunteered to do the research for Houston's Line-Of-Duty Fire Fighters, immediately finding that the list I was working from was not complete. This project took over 8 months and after completing this I was able to publish an accurate list of our fallen Fire Fighters.

This research appeared in the 1988 HFD year book in the form of "The Memorial Section." The next year's book came about in 1995, since there were not any new line-of-duty Fire Fighter deaths, it was decided there would be no memorial section. And at the time I had not done any additional research to add to the new year book.

When the 2000 year book began production, I, by choice was not part of the staff. No particular reason other than I was doing other projects not related to the HFD and was not willing to find the time.

During the time the 2000 year book staff was hard at work, two Houston Fire Fighters died while fighting a fire at a McDonalds on the southwest side of Houston. The day after the two deaths, I remembered why I had been involved with the Line-of-Duty Death's before and the same day I joined the staff as the author of the 2000 year book "The Memorial Section."

Also during this time, a group of Houston Fire Fighters organized a memorial committee who's mission was to raise funds for the new "Memorial Gardens" located on the grounds of the newly built Fire Fighter's Pension Office. One of their Committee Members, Max McRae, was in charge of compiling all the names of past Houston Fire Fighters dating from 1895, the year the HFD went from a volunteer to a paid department. The total number of names complied were about 1200. Those names were etched on the "Wall of Honor" and these are the names that started my research. After obtaining a copy of this list, I expanded the information for each name. In this beginning research I added the Fire Fighter middle name, his date of birth and the day he died. Years later, I began documenting the burial place and a copy of the Fire Fighter's obituary.

All of these names plus the Fire Fighters who have died since I've started my research are on my website, which entered cyber space November of 1999. This website began with about 20 pages and now has several hundred pages. Since March of 2004, my site has attracted almost 65,000 visitors. www.houstonfirememorial.org.

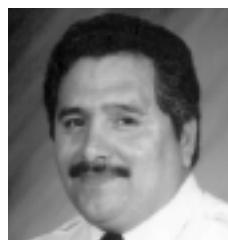
With all the above said, my main mission, no matter what kind of projects I have going, is to keep the memory of all our past Houston Fire Fighters. My motto will always be

"Remember to Never Forget"

LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH ANNIVERSARIES FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER



December 02, 1998
STEVEN CLYDE MAYFIELD
Fire Fighter -
Station 92



December 04, 1996
RUBEN LOPEZ
District Chief -
Houston Volunteer Riding Engine 25



December 01, 1984
ROBERT MUNGUIA REYES
Fire Fighter - Station 62
Riding Engine 15



December 18, 1954
WILLIAM HENRY KERSTEN
Chauffeur -
Station 19



December 20, 1929
AARON LOYOLA O'BRIEN
Fire Fighter -
Station 19



December 21, 1929
MICHAEL J. WARD
Fire Fighter -
Station 14



December 01, 1913
ROBERT RUTHERFORD GLASS
Fire Fighter -
Central Station



December 24, 1908
THOMAS A. O'LEARY
Fire Chief -
Central Station

Remembering To Never Forget

ALVIN "BUSTER" CLYDE GREEN

Served HFD 1950 to 1974
Died October 30, 2009

OMER EARL STANFORD

Served HFD 1952 to 1978
Died October 16, 2009

LESTER WARREN TYRA, SR.

Served HFD 1959 to 1980
Died October 8, 2009

MARTIN DAVID MAY

Served HFD 1974 to 1994
Died October 7, 2009

NORMAN WALTER KIESEWETTER, SR.

Served HFD 1971 to 1991
Died October 3, 2009

CLOVIS EUGENE GOSS

Served HFD 1954 to 1971
Died September 30, 2009

MELVIN GRISBY, JR.

Served HFD 1964 to 1994
Died September 11, 2009

ROBERT LEE HARRINGTON

Served HFD 1977 to 2006
Died September 5, 2009

KENDALL LEE CURRIE

Served HFD 2004 to 2009
Died September 2, 2009

BENNIE RAY BURNES

Served HFD 1960 to 1990
Died August 9, 2009

MICHAEL ALLEN BENSON

Served HFD 1975 to 1990
Died July 19, 2009

VINCENT EARL O'LEARY

Served HFD 1963 to 1991
Died July 2, 2009

SEYMORE WILLIS

Served HFD 1951 to 1977
Died June 16, 2009

BRIAN ELLIS RHONE

Served HFD 1998 to 2009
Died May 25, 2009

LASKAR ANDREW "PAT" MULLENS

Served HFD 1953 to 1974
Died May 7, 2009

CLAUDE HARMON HARRIS

Served HFD 1950 to 1974
Died May 6, 2009

COHNWAY MATTHEW JOHNSON

Served HFD 2009 to 2009
Died May 2, 2009

ANTHONY WAYNE FOSTER, SR.

Served HFD 1982 to 2005
Died April 26, 2009

LEORY EDWARD WARD, JR.

Served HFD 1959 to 1984
Died April 23, 2009

KYLE QUINCEY RANEY

Served HFD 1973 to 2008
Died April 16, 2009

DAMION JON HOBBS

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

JAMES ARTHUR HARLOW

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

ALTON LAMAR KLUTTS

Served HFD 1950 to 1986
Died April 12, 2009

JERRY JOE HUBENAK

Served HFD 1958 to 1983
Died April 11, 2009

JAMES DONALD "J.D." ROBINSON

Served HFD 1941 to 1970
Died April 8, 2009

ARNOLD IVY BAKER

Served HFD 1952 to 1977
Died April 6, 2009

WILLIAM JAMES CLEMONS

Served HFD 1963 to 1987
Died March 26, 2009

RONALD WAYNE GUNNELS

Served HFD 1964 to 2001
Died March 11, 2009

PHILLIP STEVEN "STEVIE" SCHULTZ

Served HFD 1967 to 2002
Died March 5, 2009

BOBBY DEE CARRAWAY

Served HFD 1968 to 2004
Died February 18, 2009

PHILLIP LEE HUDGENS

Served HFD 1977 to 2005
Died February 1, 2009

RODNEY DALE WATERS

Served HFD 1985 to 2009
Died January 31, 2009

THEODORE GREGORY HILL

Served HFD 1970 to 1990
Died January 21, 2009

GEORGE HARLAN CONWAY

Served HFD 1952 to 1977
Died January 13, 2009

TRACY BIRKELBACH

Served HFD 1961 to 1991
Died January 1, 2009

Total from January 1, 2009 to present - 35 Deaths

Total for the Year 2008 - 39 Deaths

The months that I will submit my "Remembering the Fallen Fire Fighter" articles are as follows: January, February, April, June, August, October, and December. Along with my article will be the "Remembering to Never Forget" page with two picture pages, "The Faces of Local 341." On the off-months, the "Remembering the Fallen Fire Fighter" page along with one of the "The Faces of Local 341" pages will be published.

Please visit my Memorial Website, www.houstonfirememorial.org, 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 if you have any questions about my memorial endeavors, please call me at (713) 729-6536 or email: scottmel@juno.com.

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)



Photo provided by Local 341

Crew of Station 17 C Shift - 1988

*(l-r) Tommy Miller, FF; Johnny Villarreal, FF;
Captain Terry Don Shell.*



Photo from the HFD Archives

*Star Wholesale 4-11 Fire - October 1998
Chief K. C. Whitehorn - Shift Commander.*



Photo by Scott Mellott

Ambulance 64 C Shift - Oct. 5, 2009

(l-r) Andrew Garcia and Robert O'Bryant Sta. 16B.



Photo provided by Local 341

Local 341 Annual Retirees Luncheon - Dec. 1987

(l-r) Val Jahnke, Lester Tyra, Charlie Musachia.

The Faces of Local 341

1932 to 2009

Houston Professional Fire Fighter's Association

Photos on this page submitted by Scott Mellott (Retired)



Photo by Scott Mellott

Station 27 A Shift - 6515 Lyons Ave. - October 17, 2009

(l/r) Gerado Rodriguez, FF; Captain Steve Noack;
Ronnie Schneider, E/O; Brian Richison, FF.



Photo by Mark Newman

Station 15 A Shift - 5603 N. Main St.

April 16, 2006
Rene Neria and Daniel Estes.



Photo by Laura Saavedra

(Top l-r) Tara Grace, Grace Olivares, Laura Saavedra, Melissa Yszaguirree,
Jeannice Mitchell, Lisa Kimball, and Shelly Squires.

(Bottom l-r) Celeste Fatheree, Chrystal Koeppen. Houston Women Fire Fighter 2010 Calendar.

Missing Station Dedication Plaques

by Scott Mellott, Retired

I am back with more details on the Houston Fire Department Fire Station Dedication Plaques.

Some of you may know that I am the person installing old station plaques. In early 1990, I began on my own working on a project that would place the old station plaques into their new homes. I took this project on my own because no one I talked to was interested in either doing it or helping. I was able to coordinate with the HFD with permission to do this plus help from the building maintenance department.

Through the years when an old station was closed down to make way for a new one, by theory, the metal dedication plaque for the retired station should have made it to the new station. Only one time in the history of the HFD has a station plaque made it to the new station. The only time that happened was when station 16 was relocated from 1413 Westheimer to the present location 1700 Richmond. One of the shifts took it on themselves to clean up the plaque and attach it on the apparatus floor of their new quarters.

Each of the installed plaques were cleaned, polished, sandblasted by me and put up in the respective station with the help of an HFD carpenter. To date, 15 total (I will list them next month) have made it to their new home. Seven plaques are waiting to be installed, four of those are being readied to be installed in the near future and three are waiting for me to have time and the cool weather to put them through the sand blast process.

For those who followed my plaque articles - know that one of my

passions is that of tracking down plaques that never made it to HFD storage. Six of the plaques were MIA until I relentlessly, with the help of several Fire Fighters, tracked them down and had them returned.

In the spring of 2001, Station 8 closed and the crew relocated after being in the same place since 1895. The station was closed and torn down so Houston's professional basketball team could have an arena built, which is now known as the Toyota Center.

I think you might know where this is going. When Station 8 closed down, the original plaque that was placed on the building when it was built in 1970 went missing. I was not aware of this until the new station 8 had there dedication in May of 2005. Since then, several Station 8 Fire Fighters have made numerous attempts to locate the plaque.

Plain and simple, whoever is in possession of the Station 8 dedication plaque dated 1970, please let me know so that I can come get it so that it can be installed into the new Station 8. My home number is 713 729 6536 my email is scottmel@juno.com.

In the January issue I will update you on this plaque and give you the list of the other lost plaques that I have been looking for. Also, I will print a list of the plaques that I have installed into their new homes.

My contact information is as follows: Email: scottmel@juno.com Home: 713 729-6536



THE SECRET LIST

Hey . . .

Each December, there are some very significant dates for the fire service, worthy of note and well worth discussion with Fire Fighters - especially your younger ones. For example, every Fire Fighter should be well familiar with the multi LODD loss in Buffalo (NY) when 5 BFD Ladder 5 Fire Fighters (and 2 civilians) were killed in a propane explosion in December 1983. And that's just one example.

As we now approach December 2009, we remember that 10 YEARS AGO (December of 1999), there were also 2 very significant multi-LODD fires that we must remember.

The first is the Worcester Cold Storage fire that occurred on December 3, 1999. The second, discussed below, is the loss of 3 Fire Fighters in Keokuk, Iowa.

WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS WAREHOUSE FIRE TAKES THE LIVES OF SIX FIRE FIGHTERS

We all remember wonderful but also (and sadly), tragic events that have occurred in our lives as well. As a kid, I remember when President Kennedy was assassinated (Nov 22, 1963), as well as Dr. Martin Luther King's murder (April 4, 1968). When the Challenger shuttle blew up (January 28, 1986) and the "23rd Street Fire" in NYC (October 17, 1966) - we remember what we were doing when events like that happened - they get, as some say, "etched" in our mind.

On December 3rd of 1999, I was attending a community Christmas celebration in our town when beepers started to beep providing initial details about missing Fire Fighters in Worcester, Massachusetts - and then more details - and then even more info and the final incredible details came out.

The Worcester Fire Department responded at 1813 hours to Box

Alarm 1438 for a fire at 266 Franklin Street. (NOTE: 266 Franklin Street is now the address and location of WFD's E-6, E-12, L-1, R-1 and Scuba-1 quarters)

Two members of Rescue 1, Fire Fighter Paul Brotherton and Fire Fighter Jerry Lucey, entered the building searching for occupants. Fire conditions worsened in the building at a rapid and unexpected rate. FF's Brotherton and Lucey, on the fifth floor, became disoriented in the smoke-filled building. Lost, and running low on air, they called for help. Several crews began searching for the lost Fire Fighters. Two crews reaching the fifth floor also found themselves disoriented in the smoke and trapped by the maze of interior walls: Lieutenant Tom Spencer and Fire Fighter Tim Jackson from Ladder 2, and Fire Fighter Jay Lyons and Fire Fighter Joe McGuirk from Engine 3 were now trapped. Though many more highly heroic Fire Fighters attempted to locate their missing brothers, their efforts proved futile.

Be sure to read the link below, entitled "A Chiefs Perspective" about WFD District (Ret) Chief Mike McNamee, who made the beyond difficult decision to end search operations for the missing members - and saved more lives by doing so.

The Line-of-Duty Deaths of Worcester Fire Fighters Paul A. Brotherton, Timothy P. Jackson, Jeremiah M. Lucey, James F. "Jay" Lyons III, Joseph T. McGuirk, and Lt. Thomas E. Spencer devastated Worcester, the Fire service, the nation and the world. Their Line-of-Duty deaths marked the worst loss of Fire Fighters' lives in more than 20 years in a building fire in America, and the third worst fire in Massachusetts' history. R.I.P.



Billy Goldfeder