



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, 15/A

LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH ANNIVERSARIES FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL:

April 14, 1949

ROBERT WEIR "BOBBY" MILBURN
Chauffeur - Station 7

April 27, 1899

EMIL "ED" THOMPSON
Fire Fighter - Station 5

RETIREEES WHO HAVE RECENTLY DIED:

PAUL D. HAYES
Served HFD from 1975-2003
Died Feb. 26, 2003

ROBERT E. BRADLEY
Served HFD from 1956-1978
Died Feb. 13, 2003

BUDDY WEAVER
Served HFD from 1962 to 2002
Died Jan. 16, 2003

JAMES O. BLEVINS
Served HFD from 1950 to 1974
Died Jan. 13, 2003

DELPHIA JOE STRICKLAND
Served HFD from 1950 to 1973
Died Jan. 3, 2003

MAURICE J. DUFILHO, JR.
Served HFD from 1936 to 1971
Died Jan. 1, 2003

*For an updated list of retired
Fire Fighter deaths, refer to:*

<http://www.houstonfirememorial.org>

*Click on Recent Houston Fire Fighter Deaths. Please
copy and place it on the station bulletin board.*

It really bothers me to bring up this subject up, because no matter how I approach it, it will seem like an editorial. I vehemently avoid editorials in this column because if I didn't, there would be several groups on my "hit list". So, let's see how this approach sounds...

The longer you stay in the department the more fire-fighters you know. Some of them you have known since your first day as a firefighter. You may lose contact with them because they retired and you may not ever cross paths with them again. You may wonder, "where is he going with this?" Well, it is that many times I have heard a fellow firefighter say "my first captain died and was buried while I was on my days off and I never knew about it and I would have liked the opportunity to attend the man's funeral." I have heard several variations of this statement many times and they definitely have a point.

Now don't get me wrong, I am not pointing any fingers, mainly because it is really not any one group's fault. The only way some firefighters find out about another firefighter's death is because it is listed in this column, but that is still after the fact. Even if they look at the obituary in the Houston Chronicle the obituary might not be there or it is after the firefighter is buried.

The notification of our firefighters' deaths is listed in several web sites including mine, but that seems to be morbid to look on a web site every day to see who died so that you won't miss a person's funeral.

I don't know if learning one of the old guys died that you rode the tail board with while the ink on your paperwork was still wet is important to you, but it is real important to me.

Part of the reason this really bothers me is that I really did miss my first captain's funeral. He was a traffic fatality in early November of 1991. I had been off on vacation at the time and never heard about his death. A month later I picked up my December issue of this paper and that is how I found out about his untimely death. It hurt that I was not able to pay my respect to the man who took care of me and trained me when I was a "wild-eyed" rookie.

So, I am jumping off of my soapbox, and I am sure you can figure out the solution to the problem. After all this is the 21st century and last time I checked we were still in the "age of technology".