

REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, 15/A

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-Station 7.

August 22, 1934 Rogers, Esker J.
Firefighter-Station 17.

RETIREES WHO HAVE RECENTLY DIED:

Charles O'Neal Clark
served HFD 1949 to 1980-Died July 16th 2003.

Mitchel "Micky" E. Brown
served HFD 1959 to 1990-Died June 28th 2003.

Douglas "Doug" Lee Holmes
served HFD 1965 to 1988-Died June 8th 2003.

Rocco R. Rao
served HFD 1971 to 2001-Died May 16th 2003.

It has been over a year since I began writing articles for this column. I have enjoyed providing you with insight and information about our deceased firefighters. Once I looked at the anniversary list for August, I thought it would be a good idea to show you pictures of these firefighters. I think that sometimes if you put a face to a name, it is a lot easier to remember them and that is what this column is all about, remembrance.

For those of you who do not know my background, back in 1987, I became the "curator" of the memories for our deceased firefighters. I volunteered to be on the staff of the 1988 yearbook and one of the choices given to me was to write the "Memorial Section". Not really sure what this meant, I learned that it would entail listing the names of Houston Firefighters who died in the line of duty. So the story begins, I began the project not knowing that the fire department did not have a lot of information on the line of duty firefighters. The names and the date of their death was the extent of what was archived. The 1971 and the 1977 HFD yearbooks had accounts of several of the deceased; however, not all of the information was correct. Learning this information allowed me to begin research, (a hobby of mine) and eight months later the memorial section in the 1988 yearbook later finished.

Years went by and I did not do much with this research. Then in December 1996 we lost the first Houston Volunteer Firefighter, Ruben Lopez, to die in the line of duty, then two years later we lost



"Bob" Boyd



Horrace Gassoway



"Red" Edmonds



Esker Rogers



Alford Schutze

Steven Mayfield. It would be in 1999 that the Fire Chief decided that a 2000 Yearbook, Millennium Edition should be published. The editor of the 1988 and 1995 yearbooks went to work on the yearbook. Part of his job was to try to talk me into being a member of the yearbook staff and to produce the memorial section. Frankly, this was not on my list of things I wanted to do. I am not sure as to the reason why, but part of it was my lack of willingness to commit the time it would take to be a yearbook staff member.

On February 14th 2000 at exactly 5:10 am I woke up feeling like something was wrong. After watching the news, I called my walking partner (who is also a firefighter) to confirm our morning walk and she was not at home. At that moment I realized why. The female that was missing in the McDonald's fire was one of my walking partner's "fire school buddies".

I was pretty much numb that day just like everybody else, however I chose to stay away from everything so I could collect my thoughts. Since my joining the ranks of the Houston Fire Department in 1974 there has been six line-of-duty deaths. I spent the day reflecting and thinking about the two firefighters who had just made the ultimate sacrifice.

The next morning it became clear to me why I first became involved in writing about firefighters killed in the line of duty. I remembered why back in the 80's I was involved with writing about firefighters killed in the line of duty. It was because someone had to step up and keep memories of these firefighters alive and some how I felt "chosen" for this job. I called the firefighter who was the editor of the 2000 yearbook (the one that had been "bugging" me for months) to tell him that I wanted my old job back because I had remembered why been involved in the first place.

So that explains how I became the "curator" of the memories of the deceased firefighter. Currently, I write this monthly article and maintain the memorial web site, which contains almost 200 pages. Please visit my memorial web site, the address is listed below.

For more information on HFD's line of duty deaths or deceased Fire Fighters, refer to my web site www.houstonfirememorial.org