



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, 15/A

LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER:

December 1, 1913

ROBERT RUTHERFORD GLASS
Fire Fighter - Central Station

December 1, 1984

ROBERT MUNGUIA REYES
Fire Fighter - Station 62 - Riding Engine 15

December 2, 1998

STEVEN CLYDE MAYFIELD
Fire Fighter - Station 92

December 4, 1996

RUBEN LOPEZ
District Chief Houston Volunteer - Riding Engine 25

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 24, 1908

THOMAS A. O'LEARY
Fire Chief - Central Station

RETIREEES WHO HAVE RECENTLY DIED:

RAYMOND ALFRED HARD

Served HFD 1938-1975 - Died November 26, 2003

WILLIAM WAYNE IRVAN

Served HFD 1961-2003 - Died November 24, 2003

GEORGE WALTER RADCLIFFE

Served HFD 1958-1978 - Died November 15, 2003

PAUL LAWRENCE CLINE

Served HFD 1963-1987 - Died November 10, 2003

CHESTER WILLIAM "CW" SMITH

Served HFD 1956-1984 - Died October 20, 2003

JEREMY A. CANTU

Served HFD 2002-2003 - Died October 7, 2003

ELMO P. DELASBOUR

Served HFD 1974-2003 - Died September 30, 2003

For updated retired Fire Fighter deaths, refer to:

www.houstonfirememorial.org - click on Recent Houston Fire Fighter Deaths.

I have updated information for you on Chief Thomas O'Leary. He died in the line-of-duty on Christmas Eve 1908. Back when I did my original research, I found that he was in an unmarked grave in Glenwood Cemetery. What made it worse, the family plot that he was buried in contained grass only and had no indication that there was anyone buried there. In fact, O'Leary's wife who died in the 1930's, and another woman were also in the plot in unmarked graves. The idea that one of our line-of-duty Fire Fighters was buried without a headstone was very unnerving to me and that several other Houston's line-of-duty Fire Fighters were in unmarked graves. As I reported last year, this problem was solved by the committee of retired Fire Fighters whose job was to raise money for the memorial at the new pension office. A side project was obtaining headstones for the eight line-of-duty Fire Fighters who were in cemeteries throughout the Houston area in unmarked graves. With this accomplished, the headstones were delivered to their respective cemeteries. However, when they arrived at Glenwood to deliver Chief O'Leary's headstone, they were told that the headstone could not be installed because of maintenance fees owed for over 70 years. After a couple of years and several conversations with the group at Glenwood, I convinced them to install the headstone on Chief O'Leary's grave. Ninety-six years after being buried, Chief O'Leary's gravesite is now marked with a headstone indicating that he was one of Houston's line-of-duty deaths.

A few months ago, I wrote an article in this column that concerned how hard it is for an active or retired Fire Fighter to get the news of the death of one of our retired Fire Fighters. What I am to understand is that the pension office will soon be starting a Listserve (a computer email system) to notify members of the deaths of our Fire Fighters and give you other important pension news. You should be sent a form to fill out to be on their list, I suggest that you do this and your email address will be used for only that purpose.

I would like to mention my web. My site is considered by the Houston Fire Department as the official memorial website. I assume that if you are reading this article that you have ventured into my site. I spend a lot of time researching the names on the deceased Fire Fighter list. At present I have almost 1500 names. These names came from the list of Fire Fighter names that were placed on the memorial wall at the memorial plaza at the Fire Fighters pension office. If you have a relative on this list or a good friend and the information included with the name is incomplete or incorrect, please contact me and give me the correct information. Email me at scottmel@juno.com or call me at (713) 729-6536.

Because of the fact that I feel a lot of the visits to my website are for genealogy purposes, I have decided to add obituaries to my site. I have found that my site is being used for genealogy research. If you have a relative or a friend on the deceased list on my web site and have access to the newspaper obituary, please contact me and I will arrange to have you send it to me.

In closing, I would like to recommend a website and e-newsletter that addresses Fire Fighter deaths and Fire Fighter safety issues. This is a great site and to explain what it is about, I will quote the website's producer Chief Billy Goldfeder's description:

"The Secret List" is an independent, opinionated and "commentary style" e-newsletter produced since the late 90's in an effort to bring forward issues involving injury and death to Fire Fighters, political, educational and other related issues that are often ignored, quickly forgotten or just not talked about. Originally started as a very informal e-mail group amongst some close friends in the fire service, it is currently received via www.FirefighterCloseCalls.com by thousands of Fire Fighters & related service members... and remains very informal.

I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a great and safe New Year.