



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, 15/A

LIST OF LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH ANNIVERSARIES FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY:

January 04, 1983 - LONNIE LUZETTE FRANKLIN - District Chief- Station 7

January 07, 1954 - FRANK CATINO - Fire Fighter - Station 1

January 21, 1949 - VERNON JOHN DORSETT - Assistant Fire Chief - Station 1

January 31, 1951 - JOSEPH "BULL" CONNOR - Chauffeur - Station 1

LIST OF RETIREE'S WHO HAVE RECENTLY DIED

ISAAC L. SHERROUSE - served HFD 1969 to 1989 (Died 12-04-2002)

GLENN E. HOLLEMAN - served HFD 1969 to 1992 (Died 11-29-2002)

WILLIAM F. KOEHNE - served HFD 1962 to 1991 (Died 10-10-2002)

For updated retired Fire Fighter deaths, refer to:

<http://www.houstonfirememorial.org>

click on Recent Houston Fire Fighter Deaths.

Just recently, I realized that we have some Fire Fighters missing. An estimated 50 to 100 Houston Fire Fighters who were employed as city fire fighters from 1895 to somewhere around the 1930's have disappeared. Due to poor or lack of record keeping, the names of these Fire Fighters did not pass down from administration to administration. Additionally, the City of Houston had two major fires at city hall many years ago; thus causing the records of these fire fighters to disappear. For example, there was a firefighter by the name of H. A. Harris who was a line of duty fatality in early 1921. His name never made it to our generation and was lost for over 70 years. We were able to get information of his death through a scrapbook of a fire fighter name Grover Adams who served from 1915-1960.

During the early days of our fire department, especially during the horse drawn era, life was not easy for a young man starting his career. Long hours at the station prevailed. There were horses to take care of, calls to make and virtually no time off. Now days we get a call to a house fire in the middle of the night. The fire is put out, the clean up takes place, we roll the hose, we all climb aboard the apparatus, the E/O presses D on the console and takes off back to the station. Then we dump off the dirty hose by the back door for the "B" shift to wash, and then we go back to bed. In the old days after the fire was out they had to go around the corner to retrieve the horses then bring them back, hook them and then return them to the station, unhook the horses and feed and clean them. There wasn't a "B" shift waiting because there was only one shift. This made it hard on the fire fighters. I noticed through research that a man was shown on the roster of the HFD one year then the next year he was a clerk at one of the local grocery stores. He probably made more money and had Sunday's off!

If the Fire Fighters were not continuing their careers because of the difficult nature of the job, then there were other reasons. A few months ago I went to the "Texas Room" at the Houston Public Library and began going through the old city directories. The old

Houston city directories are now the only way we are able to document the existence of these lost Fire Fighters. I noticed that a lot of these gentleman where showing up in the directory as a city firefighter, then never appearing in subsequent years. This was more prominent in records dated from 1916 to 1921. I realized that a possible clue as to why these fire fighters seemed to have "fallen off the face of the earth" was a flu epidemic that took place during that era and killed a large number of Houstonians, possibly some of them being our fire fighters.

Other factors that prompted the lack of documentation was the result of fire fighters being drafted around 1917 to become "dough boys" and fight in the trenches in France and Germany. It is possible that some of the men did not survive WW1 or just stayed and made the military their career. None the less, they disappeared. Now this is a lot of speculation on my part and it could be anybody's guess as to what caused the "great disappearance" of the early 1900's. I now spend at least one day a week at the library trying to find the names of these great fire fighters who preceded us in history. It is my hope that they can get their names placed on the memorial wall, like their brother fire fighters who followed them down the trail of history.

In closing if you happen to run across one of these lost fire fighters please send me his name, so that his name can "reappear" and be part of our history.

<http://www.houstonfirememorial.org>

