



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by *Scott Mellott, 15/A*

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

May 01, 1924
HAROLD A. DENNY
Fire Fighter, Station 9

May 03, 1971
JAMES LOUIS WALLS
Fire Fighter, Station 51

May 21, 1962
DON J. CONTORNO
Fire Fighter, Station 37

May 25, 1912
HERMAN J. "DUTCH" WAGNER, JR.
Captain, Station 8

RETIREEES WHO HAVE RECENTLY DIED:

B. J. MCDANIEL
Served HFD 1949 to 1976 - Died April 2, 2003

ROY KENT GRANBERRY, SR.
Served HFD 1959 to 1988 - Died March 29, 2003

JAMES E. WEST
Served HFD 1972 to 1990 - Died March 29, 2003

JIMMY WAYNE WHITE
Served HFD 1974 to 1989 - Died March 3, 2003

For more information, refer to: <http://www.houstonfirememorial.org>

In my search to find a topic for the May paper, I looked through a list of anniversary dates and the name, Herman J. "Dutch" Wagner caught my attention. Captain Wagner died in the line of duty in 1912. He was Houston's fourth line-of-duty-death. I remembered from my previous research that a lot of interesting things have been written about him.

With that in mind, I decided to do a profile on this great Fire Fighter to give you an idea of what he was like.

Herman Wagner born 1871 in Chicago, Illinois, joined the Houston Fire Department in 1894 at age 23. He was one of the first men hired to create an all paid department that went into full force in 1895. He began his career as a Fire Fighter, at Hose Company 3, located at that time at 408 Smith. A few years later he was transferred to Fire Station 5, located at 510 Hardy Street. In 1898 he left his firefighting job to work on the railroad, probably for more money and better working conditions.

After almost two years, "Dutch" could no longer resist the calling of the fire service; he rejoined the Houston fire department early in 1900. On his return to the department he was stationed at the Central Station. A year or two later he was promoted to driver and transferred to Station 8, located at 1307 Crawford. By 1905 he had been promoted to the rank of captain and remained as a captain at Station 8 until his death.

During his career he had several close calls. He was at the explosion that killed Chief O'Leary in late 1907. He was involved in a collision between an automobile

and the steamer he was driving. He escaped serious injury, however one of the horses pulling the steamer was killed. A few months later the steamer he was driving collided with the hose wagon from his station. In this incident he narrowly escaped injury, however the other driver and all four horses were seriously injured.

Captain Wagner responded to some of the largest fires that occurred in Houston around the turn of the century. Those fires included the Industrial Cotton Oil Mill, located in the Sixth Ward completely destroying the structure, this fire occurred in January of 1912. Captain Wagner was also present at another devastating fire, which broke out during the early hours of February 21st, 1912, in the Fifth Ward. This fire, which is considered the largest fire in Houston's history, destroyed 1 church, 1 school, 21 commercial properties, and 119 homes.

One of the larger fires of that time, the Stowers Furniture Building, 6 stories, built in 1903, located at Main Street and Capitol, was where he was killed. The fire broke out during the early hours, Sunday morning, May 19th, 1912. The blaze quickly turned into a general alarm, utilizing all the equipment Houston had in service at the time. In addition, the Galveston Fire Department sent, by railroad, three pieces of equipment and 20 Fire Fighters. The fire damaged or destroyed 4 buildings, doing almost a million dollars in damage.

By mid morning, Captain Wagner's crew had began putting out spot fires. Minutes before Captain Wagner and his crew due to take a lunch break; a heavy timber fell and struck him in the head.

He was taken to St. Joseph's Infirmary where he was in good condition until Friday morning when he took a turn for the worse. His condition was declining rapidly and the doctors decided to do surgery as a last resort to save his life; he never regained consciousness and died at 3:30 Saturday afternoon, May 25, 1912.

After Captain Wagner's death, his wife made a statement to the Fire Chief, that her husband had remarked, "if flames broke out in that building, it would be the death of me."

At the time of his death he had more years of service than any other Fire Fighter in the department. Fire Chief Ollre considered him one of the finest and most dedicated officers he had ever worked with.

Captain Wagner was survived by his wife, Venia and their two year old son, Herman J. Wagner, Jr.



*"Always Thinking
of You"*



Linda G. Delgadillo
October 10, 1960 - May 17, 1990

*Love, Joe Hector Delgadillo
Jacob Ryan Delgadillo*