



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 -
Firefighter - Station 1
January 21, 1949 - VERNON JOHN DORSETT -
Assistant Fire Chief - Station 1
January 31, 1951 - JOSEPH "BULL" CONNOR -
Chauffeur - Station 1

In the spirit of last January article I am listing the fire fighters who died during 2004. Please look at each name and if you knew them, reflect back on when you worked with them.

IN THE YEAR 2004, WE LOST 30 BROTHER FIRE FIGHTERS.

- John Gilford Alford - 1951-1973 • Died August 28, 2004
Joseph Ray Cantrill, Jr. - 2003-2004 • Died July 21, 2004
Ishmel Worth Consford - 1954-1974 • Died July 15, 2004
Floyd Sylvester Correll - 1959-1988 • Died June 16, 2004
Luke Joseph Dragna - 1941-1977 • Died June 12, 2004
Roy A. Elliott - 1957-1978 • Died October 22, 2004
Charles Edgar Gilley - 1955-1984 • Died October 24, 2004
Harold Edward Gilmore - 1958-1982 • Died Sept. 11, 2004
Frankie Elmo Gore - 1977-2004 • Died March 15, 2004
William Henry Gortemiller 1951-1978 Died March 5, 2004
Jessie L. Greening 1954-1985 Died May 27, 2004
Edward Eugene Halliburton 1953-1956 Died May 20, 2004
Louis Bernal Halvorsen - 1958-1990 • Died Feb. 27, 2004
Clarence Raymond Hickman, Jr. - 1946-1985 • Died Jan. 8, 2004
James Daniel Hutchins - 1956-1988 • Died April 2, 2004
Joe Thomas Jones - 1955-1988 • Died June 18, 2004
Lonnie Krueger - 1958-1979 • Died Sept. 19, 2004
Kevin Wayne Kulow - 2003-2004 • Died April 5, 2004
In the Line-of-Duty
Johnnie Leggio - 1948-1978 • Died March 25, 2004
Vincent Charles Mauro - 1942-1987 • Died August 9, 2004
Lawrence "Larry" Nole McDuff - 1961-1978 • Died April 22, 2004
Roland "Hoss" Jerry Lawrence - 1963-1993 • Died December 26, 2004
Dennis Ray Lemons - 1980-1998 • Died December 29, 2004
David Bethel Mize - 1969-1990 • Died April 1, 2004
Gary Keith Phillips - 1981-2000 • Died July 5, 2004
Claude Christopher "Bud" Simonton - 1940-1980
• Died February 9, 2004
Woodrow "Woody" Wilburn Stahl - 1940-1976 • Died Nov. 18,
2004
Larry Wayne Stanley - 1984-2004 • Died August 5, 2004
Billy Joe Stasny - 1959-1981 • Died September 19, 2004
Donald "Donnie" Frank Watkins - 1968-1988 • Died Dec. 16, 2004

Two of the youngest fire fighters who died in 2004 were ironically in the same cadet class: "Fast Track Class 23". Kevin Kulow, unfortunately, was Houston's 59th line-of-duty death. He died April 5th while fighting a fire in an after hours club on Houston's north-west side of town. He was a Houston fire fighter for 202 days before he lost his life.

Kevin's classmate, Joseph "Joe" Cantrill died on July 21st. He lost his life in an unfortunate traffic accident in San Antonio, Texas. Joe's friend, Van Postell, wrote the following so that you could know something about this fine young brother fire fighter, who like Kevin, was taken from us way too soon.

I first met Joseph Cantrill while I was working part-time for the Helotes Fire Department just north of San Antonio in 1999. He was a junior in high school and would come over to the fire station after school and volunteer his time cleaning and working around the station while enrolled in our apprentice program. When he turned 18 and graduated, he became a full member of the department and started responding to calls with us. He started the San Antonio College Regional Fire Academy in 2001. After graduating as a certified FF/EMT, I encouraged him to continue to Paramedic School knowing that his chances to get hired on with a smaller department as a basic EMT would be slim. It took a total of 3 attempts to pass the infamous national registry paramedic exam but he was a FF/EMT-Paramedic at age 20. He then was hired with the Leon Valley Fire Department in June of 2003 where I had been employed full-time for 4 years. Being partners with him on the MICU units was always a fun time.

I knew that a change was needed for me after working for smaller departments over the last 8 years and I wanted to face the challenges of a "Big Department." We both tested for San Antonio in June of 2003 and both scored in the top 100. I convinced him to take a little "road trip" to H-town and challenge their excruciating 57 question exam later that month. Soon after, we found ourselves making phone calls and trips to Houston for the application process. I remember helping him cope with taking the polygraph test because that would be our first time on the machine. We both resigned from the Leon Valley FD on 9-11-2003 and started at the VJTF on 9-15-2003. We roomed at the Studio 6 Extended Stay Hotel at Fuqua and Hwy. 45 during the week and commuted to San Antonio on the weekends. Living on waffles and frozen pizza was a small price to pay to be able to sleep in until 06:00 am before academy p.t.

Joe continued to follow-up with SAFD about his application process and actually used a "sick day" during the academy to travel to San Antonio, complete his physical agility test, and drive back to Houston all in the same day. I told him he was crazy to do it, but he was determined to go back home and work near his family. Once we graduated the academy in November 2003, I offered my apartment for him to stay at on his middle day. He did not have any family here and only the friends he made were in Class 23 and Station 64. He slept on my really uncomfortable futon and would roam my apartment complex looking for a wireless internet connection on his laptop computer. I would often talk to him on the phone early in the morning, as he was driving into Houston from San Antonio

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to work, since we were both on the C-shift. We would always compare runs and call each other if one made a fire. I'd give him a hard time since he got sent to 64's and only made 5-6 runs a day. I told him he would have enjoyed his time here more if he had a better choice of stations (hotter) out of the academy. (Our class had 8 people sent to 64's)

In late April 2004, he got the letter he had been waiting on from SAFD accepting him to the academy and he resigned from Houston. I'll always remember what he told me about resigning from the HFD. He told me that he was asked to go down to the quartermaster and turn in his equipment and sign some papers. He had planned on spending an hour or two down at logistics. Joe told me that they literally pressed one button on a computer and he was done. Gone! He said that he really felt like just a number thrown in a hat. I explained to him that it is hard to be a close "family" like what he was used to, with a department of 3500.

He had just turned age 21 on April 8th and had begun to explore the nightlife that is associated with that age. I actually had noticed a difference in him when he started with SAFD because he didn't need to study or really even participate in class because he was already a certified paramedic. San Antonio does EMT school first for 3 months and then fire school for another 3 months. Joe just needed to show up on time and the rest was a breeze. I had several conversations with him warning him of the possibilities of getting into trouble and jeopardizing his career in the fire service, never really expecting to get the phone call I received at Station 06 the morning of July 21, 2004. Joe Cantril had died in a vehicle accident early that morning on his way home.

Joe was a very special person who was loved by many people and had many friends for being so young. Everyone that came into contact with Joe found something in him that they liked. I think about him everyday and have many reminders of him around me. Joe was truly a "Brother" in every sense of the word and will forever be missed.

For more information visit my web site www.houstonfirememorial.org. Items include Houston's line of duty fire fighters, and the deceased retired firefighters. For information on current deceased firefighters click on: "Recent Houston Fire Fighter Deaths" from the site menu.

ANNUAL FIREFIGHTER MEMORIAL CEREMONY

March 19, 2005 (time to be announced) at the Houston Fire fighter's Memorial Garden, 4225 Interwood Parkway, near JFK and Beltway 8. More information to come as the details of the 2005 ceremony are being worked out.

THE "SECRET LIST"

Don't forget to sign up for the "Secret List". This is an email newsletter from Chief Billy Goldfeder (no email junk, and he does not give out your address, I promise!) that will give you line of duty death information from around the country. The newsletter will also give you insight on many safety issues facing this country's fire service. Go to www.firefighterclosecalls.com, the site's menu is on the left, click on "Secret List" and sign up.



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