



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, 15/A

LIST OF LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH ANNIVERSARIES FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH & APRIL:

March 1, 1928-George L. Bishop-Captain-Station 4

March 10, 1953-Charly A. Middlekauf-Ast. Chief-Central Station

March 12, 1951-Rufus John "Bullock" Templet-Captain-Station 5

March 31, 1947-James Edward Lowth-Fire Fighter-Station 26

April 14, 1949-Milburn, Robert "Bobby" Wier-Chauffeur-Station 7

April 26, 1908-Barney C. Moffatt-Firefighter-Station 7

April 27, 1899-Thompson, Emil "Ed"-Firefighter-Station 5

FIREFIGHTERS WHO HAVE RECENTLY DIED:

Louis "Louie" Joseph Butera

Served HFD from 1941 to 1978, Died Friday April 8, 2005

Clarence Arnold Merritt

Served HFD from 1957 to 1977, Died Monday April 2, 2005

Paul Clayton Wright

Served HFD from 1961 to 1992, Died Sunday March 27, 2005

Ira "Ted" May

Served HFD from 1954 to 1974, Died Tuesday March 22, 2005

Marvin Dean Shaull

Served HFD from 1950 to 1972, Died Monday, March 21, 2005

Antonio "Tony" Villa

Served HFD from 2000 to 2005, Died Friday March 18, 2005

Henry Lane Martinez Sr.

Served HFD from 1982 to 2005, Died Saturday March 12, 2005

Alcide Pierre Olivier Jr.

Served HFD from 1958 to 1978, Died Tuesday March 8, 2005

Samuel Kempt

Served HFD from 1955 to 1982, Died Wednesday March 2, 2005

Malin John Thompson

Served HFD from 1955 to 1985, Died Wednesday March 2, 2005

Just in case you did not know, the Houston Fire Department has an annual memorial service. First I want to give you some history and will fill in the details later.

In the 1880's, the Houston Volunteers Fire fighters decided to buy a large cemetery plot in the Glenwood Cemetery on Washington Avenue. The idea was to have somewhere for their volunteers to

have a final resting place. They also wanted a monument placed on the plot. They purchased a very large monument and ordered a statue to be placed on top. This statue was to be the likeness of Robert Brewster, who at the time was the oldest living volunteer Fire Fighter. The volunteers had an Italian marble statue made in Carrara, Italy, and this would be the statue that remains today marking the loss of our fellow Fire Fighters.

The monument was built and the statue of Robert Brewster arrived from Italy and now they were ready to have a dedication ceremony. That ceremony did not take place until 1900 and by that time the ownership of the "Fireman's Plot" was transferred to the Houston Fire Department from the now non-existing volunteer fire department. This ceremony can probably be considered the first memorial service. By that time there were several volunteers and one line-of-duty Fire Fighter buried there. The next burial was an active Fire Fighter who died in 1905 who was also the last Fire Fighter to be buried there.

For the next 70 years the "Fireman's Plot" probably did not receive much attention as far as I can tell. Mother Nature took its toll on the monument. Sometime in the early 1970's, the fire department decided to have the monument moved to the fire department headquarters, which at the time was located downtown on Bagby. No one really knows exactly why the fire department wanted it in front of headquarters, but when they started the process of having it moved they found that the monument needed repairs. The "Fireman's Monument" was repaired and moved to its' new home in front of the Houston Fire Department Headquarters where it remained until the early 1990's.

In 1990, a movement began to have the monument moved back to Glenwood. A small committee of Houston Fire Fighters formed and they found the funds to move it back to it's original home. Once again the monument needed repairs that were caused by Texas weather and Houston's pollution. Once the repairs were done and a new foundation was built on the plot in Glenwood, the "Fireman's Monument" was now ready for its' short trip back to the cemetery where it belonged.

On October 5, 1992 there was a dedication ceremony held to rededicate the monument. I am calling this the second memorial service held there since the plot was purchased in 1888. Each year after 1992 a memorial service was held at the "Fireman's Plot" during Fire Prevention Week in October.

So this brings us to the year 2000. In 2000, the buildings that make up the complex for the Houston Fire Fighters Relief and Retirement Fund were completed. This new complex contained the "Memorial Garden." Within this area are memorial benches and pavers. Also included is the "Wall of Honor" that contains the names of the past Houston Fire Fighters. In the center of all this is the statue called the "The Rescue." This memorial contains the names of HFD's line-of-duty Fire Fighters.

In March of 2001, a Memorial/Dedication Ceremony was held at the "Memorial Garden." Since the 2001 service, all future services have been attended by only a few and it continues to get worse each year; for the exception of this year's service. It was quite pleasing to see an increase in attendance. A new group of organizers (myself included) dedicated a great deal of time to make 2005 service a special one for the friends and family of those we have lost. This year's memorial service was attended by over 150 more than last years' and plans for the 2006 HFD Annual Memorial Service have already begun. The date for this service is Saturday March 18, 2006.

It is so important that we continue to remember our brothers and sisters that have dedicated their lives to saving others. Whether it's a marble statue or a service being attended by all who recognize the loss there will never be an adequate way to say thank you to those that served before us.