



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Scott Mellott, Retired

I was deeply saddened by the news of the passing of a long-time Fire Fighter friend that I have known for over 30 years. He died on Saturday, September 20th, a week after Hurricane Ike. He was hospitalized the Friday that Ike was bearing down on us and died a week later.

I met him on my first assignment as a newly promoted Chauffeur in October of 1978. My new assignment was Station 28 A Shift, driving Engine 28. When I walked in that morning, I saw him sitting on the end of one of the two couches in the lounge drinking his morning coffee. I later figured out that he was in the same seat on that couch if he was not cooking, cleaning or making a run. Most of us, out of respect, did not sit there and some of us would conveniently forget to tell "the rookie" not to sit there. The name of this Fire Fighter is John Dixie Fisher, or better know as J. D.

I would now like to introduce J. D.'s oldest son, Kelly, who has been a Houston Fire Fighter since 1983.

★ ★ ★

Dad lost his father when he was only a boy, about 6 years old, and was raised by his mother who he dearly loved. Dad was what you might characterize as a neighborhood hoodlum and dropped out of school in the 6th graded. His mother didn't become aware that he has dropped out of school until a year later. He shined shoes up and down Washington Avenue and even retrieved golf balls out of the ponds at the Memorial Park Golf Course to sell back to the golfers.

He met my mother, Darlene, where she lived just west of downtown in San Felipe Courts in 1951. They got married after he was drafted and completed boot camp for the U. S. Army in 1952. Three days later he left for Korea where he was assigned to an amphibious unit based out of Iwo Jima and shuttled Marines and Soldiers to the beaches of Korea. After two years in Korea, he came home and went to work for Gulf Oil, painting and rebuilding gas pumps.

In 1958, his first child, Kim, was born and later that year he was laid off at Gulf Oil and decided to join the Houston Fire Department. In order to meet the weight requirements, which at that time was a minimum body weight of 130 pounds, he put lead plates and lots of change into his back pockets. He completed his fire training in 1960 and was assigned to old Station 28's on Westheimer, where the 30 year legend of J. D. Fisher began. I was born in 1962 and 11 months later my brother, Kevin, was born.

My dad shared with me many "war stories" at old 28's where he drove the late Chief Max McRae for 12 years. He prided himself on the ability to remain calm and collective on the radio during many of the large fires they made together. My dad watched Station 28 become one of Houston's busiest fire stations. He met many of his great friends while working at 28's for 30 years. Friendships that he spoke about to his family frequently after he retired in 1990. He never had quite the same enthusiasm about going to work after Chief Claude Jahnke, Jay Jahnke's father, passed away after having a massive heart attack in June of 1984. Their friendship dated back to when they were both teenagers running around the west end of Houston together.



J.D. - 1990

My dad had a reputation of harassing brother Fire Fighters, and especially enjoyed harassing Chiefs and Rookies. I was told that he would go out of his way to pick on Deputy Chief Crowder, who was also assigned to Station 28, and any other Chief that came by the station. As far as station rookies were concerned, he would not acknowledged or talk to them for at least a year!

When I was a rookie myself I rode for one of my friends who was assigned to Station 28 on the same shift as Dad. This was quite a thrill for me to be able to work with him. After Roll Call that morning a couple of the Fire Fighters pulled me off to the side and asked me if J. D. was talking to me. They explained to me that J. D. would not speak to them. I started to laugh and explained that he did not have a choice since I was his son! I also let them know tha he was messing with them because they were rookies. Most of those men became life-long friends with my father.

I was very blessed to have a father who was not only my best friend, but who cared the world for his family and friends. We spent a lot of time together over the years, especially hunting the brush country in South Texas and Old Mexico. I was fortunate to hunt with him one more season in 2007-2008 in Mexico, months before he passed away. I knew he was gradually slipping away from us. It was one of the most difficult things to experience, to watch my hero's health progressively get worse and worse. I am still struggling with the loss of my father, even though the quality of life he had at the end was horrible. It was a blessing that the Lord took him home. My Dad had great faith. He was a Christian man who loved the Lord and his family. He set an example to be a man of integrity, take care of your family and to love the Lord with all of your heart.

Daddy, I know you told me to have a good cry and move on but I miss you very much. Thanks for always being there for me, my wife and children. We love you "Old Man!"

★ ★ ★

In closing this month's article, I would like to say some words to J. D. :

May your journey in Heaven be as profound as your journey on Earth. "God Speed" John Dixie Fisher, there are not words to describe how much I will miss you.

Kelly
and J.D. -
2006



More Fire Fighter information on page 12

Remembering To Never Forget

THOMAS HAROLD VAUGHN

*Served HFD 1960 to 1990
Died November 18, 2008*

CHARLES RAY CARTER

*Served HFD 1963 to 1987
Died November 5, 2008*

CHARLES EDWARD BYRN

*Served HFD 1964 to 1987
Died October 31, 2008*

ROBERTO SANCHEZ

*Served HFD 1962 to 1984
Died October 22, 2008*

JAMES R. JOHNSON, JR.

*Served HFD 1959 to 1994
Died October 21, 2008*

LEONARD BYRD

*Served HFD 1951 to 1976
Died October 18, 2008*

JOSEPH EDWARD HADLEY, JR.

*Served HFD 1986 to 2008
Died October 13, 2008*

JIMMY FRANKLIN MARTIN

*Served HFD 1965 to 1987
Died October 13, 2008*

RICHARD DUKE IRWIN

*Served HFD 1960 to 1983
Died October 6, 2008*

JOHN DIXIE FISHER

*Served HFD 1960 to 1990
Died September 20, 2008*

RAYMOND NEAL BAILEY

*Served HFD 1972 to 2003
Died August 24, 2008*

ROY WAYNE DEES

*Served HFD 69 to 1981
Died August 21, 2008*

BONNIE MORRIS COVIN

*Served HFD 1956 to 1976
Died August 9, 2008*

DAVID EUGENE ANDERSON

*Served HFD 1958 to 1982
Died August 4, 2008*

JOSEPH JOSHUA BLACKMON

*Served HFD 1964 to 1984
Died July 21, 2008*

JOSEPH FLETCHER HOLMAN, JR.

*Served HFD 1953 to 1991
Died July 2, 2008*

SCOTT STEWART WINTERHALTER

*Served HFD 1959 to 1990
Died June 29, 2008*

MICHAEL ALLEN MAYS

*Served HFD 2002 to 2008
Died June 24, 2008*

JOHN CHARLES EAGLIN

*Served HFD 1972 to 1999
Died June 18, 2008*

ROBERT LOUIS DANBERG

*Served HFD 1967 to 1980
Died June 10, 2008*

DELBERT LEE WARWICK, SR.

*Served HFD 1956 to 2005
Died June 1, 2008*

CHRISTOPHER JASON BOISVERT

*Served HFD 2008 to 2008
Died May 30, 2008*

DWAYNE FRANCES GUILLORY

*Served HFD 1996 to 2008
Died May 18, 2008*

BILLY ROYCE HESTER

*Served HFD 1955 to 1986
Died May 6, 2008*

LEON LARA EGUIA

*Served HFD 1957 to 1977
Died May 4, 2008*

CLARENCE DANIEL BYERS

*Served HFD 1951 to 1972
Died May 2, 2008*

JOEY SHELDON REED, SR.

*Served HFD 1989 to 1993
Died April 21, 2008*

MICKEY GENE PATE

*Served HFD 1979 to 2008
Died April 17, 2008*

OTTO W. MUELLER

*Served HFD 1956 to 1982
Died March 26, 2008*

ARLON FLOYD DRAKE

*Served HFD 1953 to 1973
Died March 9, 2008*

RICHARD HENRY DECKER

*Served HFD 1961 to 1984
Died March 6, 2008*

“WHITEY” LESTER O’NEAL MARTIN

*Served HFD 1949 to 1988
Died March 2, 2008*

ERIC DEWAYNE BRADY

*Served HFD 1980 to 2004
Died February 15, 2008*

BRICEY EUGENE CHILDRESS

*Served HFD 1959 to 1986
Died February 9, 2008*

DAVID LEE NORRIS

*Served HFD 1975 to 2003
Died February 1, 2008*

TED W. SANFORD

*Served HFD 1946 to 1974
Died January 26, 2008*

**Total from January 1, 2008
to present - 36 Deaths**

**Total for the Year 2007 -
43 Deaths**

For current information on
deceased Fire Fighters,
please go to my website:
www.houstonfirememorial.org
and click on
“Recent Deaths”
or email Scott at
scottmel@juno.com

The Faces of Local 341

1932 to 2008

Houston Professional Fire Fighter's Association

Photo on this page submitted by Scott Mellott (Retired)



(L-R) Fire Station 30/D Shift. Alejandro Saucedo, FF; Captain Howard Shaw; Kevin Searcy, FF; Cory Ogrodowicz, FF; Captain Carey Starrett; Brian Wishnewsky, E/O; David Zalesnik, E/O; Michael Payne, E/O.

Please visit my web site for recent updates -
www.houstonfirememorial.org.

The site contains information on current Houston Fire Fighter deaths, obits, line-of-duty deaths and many other items. There is also information on my memorial t-shirts. If you have any input on this site I would be glad to hear from you, email me at

scottmel@juno.com

Also visit www.firefighterclosecalls.com. Website where my friend and Fire Fighter safety advocate Billy Goldfedder has his information. Also while you are there sign up for his email newsletter The Secret List, where you will get current information on Fire Fighter injuries and deaths around the United States.

LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH ANNIVERSARIES FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

December 01, 1913
ROBERT RUTHERFORD GLASS
Fire Fighter - Central Station

December 01, 1984
ROBERT MUNGUIA REYES
Fire Fighter - Station 62
Riding Engine 15

December 02, 1998
STEVEN CLYDE MAYFIELD
Fire Fighter - Station 92

December 04, 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

November 23, 1901
FRANK W. MEDLENKA
Driver - Station 8



Captain Steve Jahnke - 1981

*We come from a family
Of great men that stand
For honor and truth
They lead, they command.*

*Most all of them fight
Or have fought in the past
Against such great heat
And they have such a blast.*

*They were pipemen,
they were chauffeurs
They were Captains, then Chiefs
They fought the big fires
They brought people relief.*

*They rode on the back
Of the pumpers and trucks
And the Chiefs then were driven
By Chauffeurs and such.*

*They'd jump off those pumpers
The plugs they would catch
With hoses in hand
They'd get them attached.*

*And then the big force
Of water would start
The firemen rushed in
They had to be smart.*

*They covered each other
Hollering, "I've got your back"
Oh, they could not tire
And they could not slack.*

Brothers

by Renee' Jahnke

*The fires they fought
With the heat and the blaze
Such courage they had
One would stand and amaze.*

*For it takes someone special
To go into a fire
One has to have heart
And also desire.*

*The chauffeurs had duties,
Not just driving alone
They had to take care
Of their brother, their own.*

*They had to make sure
The pressure was right
From the plug or the truck
No mistake or oversight.*

*The Captains would lead
They would charge with their men
Into the blazes
Again and again.*

*"You never give up
You never let go
Your head you keep down
You keep your head low."*

*The Chiefs would command,
From the ground they'd direct
They're calm and they're steady
The men show respect.*



Chief Steve Jahnke - 2000

*They see fires blazing
Sometimes out of control
So, they must take charge
To accomplish the goal.*

*To extinguish the fire
To depress and devour
To get the job done
To show who's got power.*

*To keep the men safe
To bring them all back
Not one getting lost
Or getting off-track.*

*The men are exhausted
Yet, more work is at hand
So, they will be ready
To lead and command.*

*Their job is not over
They're always on call
To always be brave
To always stand tall.*

*To go into places
That are burning and hot
Where you cannot see
And light, there is not.*

*These men are courageous
They are family to me
I see them as brothers
I hope you'll agree.*