

# THE OLDE FIRE BELL

SPRING 2013

GULFCOASTSPAAMFAA.ORG

SINCE 1975



## FOUR HOUSTON FIREFIGHTERS HONORED FOR ULTIMATE SACRIFICE by Tom McDonald

Four HFD firefighters were killed in the worst such single incident in the department's 118-year history just after noon on Friday, May 31, 2013. Two members of Station 51 and two from nearby Station 68 died when a large section of a heavy tile roof fell in on them as they advanced hoses into a burning motel restaurant in southwest Houston.

Captain Matthew Renaud and Engineer Robert Bebee of Station 51, and Firefighters Robert Garner and Anne Sullivan of Station 68 were killed. Garner and Sullivan's Captain William Dowling was critically injured in the collapse but was rescued alive. Sullivan, who had been on the job only a month and was just beginning her probationary period, is the second female in HFD history to die in the line of duty.

At least a dozen other firefighters were injured, several seriously, trying to rescue those five trapped firefighters after the collapse, doing so amid thick smoke, high heat, and the very real potential for more collapse. In fact, a second collapse of a portion of brick wall resulted in the most severe injuries sustained by

Rescue 42 members Captain Anthony Livesay and Firefighters Robert Yarbrough and Foster Santos.

Five days later on June 5, a memorial service for the deceased members was held at Houston's largest venue, Reliant Stadium. Thousands of HFD members were joined by thousands of fellow firefighters, some from as far away as Alaska, as well as thousands more Houston citizens to honor the fallen.

The service began at 10 AM but only after the entire contingent of firefighters marched more than a mile in escort of the two apparatus on which the four had been riding to the call at which they were killed.

Although still admitted to a local hospital, both Livesay and Yarbrough were allowed to attend the memorial service. Livesay was brought in on a stretcher; Yarbrough in a wheel chair. The men received a standing ovation as they were lead in.

The emotion in the vast stadium was heavy as dignitaries, including Texas' Governor Rick Perry, Houston Mayor Annise Parker, and HFD Chief Terry Garrison, praised the lives and heroic efforts of the lost firefighters and those injured trying to save them. Family of each (continued on Page 6)



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## CALENDAR

- Future meeting dates: Monday at 7 PM on July 15, August 19, and September 16 at Prosperity Bank on Bellaire Blvd.
- SPAAMFAA Summer National Convention and Muster, Philadelphia, PA, July 31—August 3, 2013
- Houston Fire Museum's Casino Night at St. Arnold's Brewery, August 25
- Houston Fire Museum's Fire Festival, October 19

## UPFRONT

Well, another quarter has passed, and as the saying goes: "better late than never." We apologize for the delay in issuing this Spring edition of *The Olde Fire Bell*.



four fallen HFD heroes. John Blumen-

We highlight both memorials and reunions in this edition, and the people that make them happen. Members attended the memorial services for

tritt shared with us a very touching story of another kind. Other noted events include participation at the Children's Brain Tumor Foundation and Texas Fallen Heroes LODD Memorial in Hitchcock. *The Olde Fire Bell* salutes the dedication and commitment of its members for their hard work and participation.

The influx of new members continues. We welcomed several new and/or returning members: Arden Ogle of Humble TX, and Edwin Knerr of Jersey Village, TX. We have a small biography of Joe Brantley

on Page 3. On behalf of the entire Texas Gulf Coast Chapter, *The Olde Fire Bell* wishes them the very best.

SPAAMFAA National is looking for a chapter to host the winter 2015 meeting. The Central Alabama chapter can no longer host it, and have deferred instead to 2017. If you know of possible alternate, please contact National.

Next edition will be loaded with information about several National and local-chapter musters. You won't want to miss it!

## CHAPTER MEETING SUMMARIES

**April:** Clinton Johnson presided over the sixteen-member meeting. Newsletter editor Steve Dalpe mentioned the Winter Newsletter had been issued. Bill Hanna was present at the meeting; he also attended the Braniff Shop workday. He has since joined SPAAMFAA National and is interested in joining our local Chapter. There were discussions about St. Patrick's Day Parade, Disaster Preparedness Day at Summerwood Church, and Braniff Shop Work Day. Bob Robertson introduced participation in a new event, Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation, held on April 27th at the Humble Civic Center. He and Tim Treadway will form a Flag archway with their trucks

**May:** Clinton Johnson discussed the events at the BBQ Cookoff at the Sam Houston Raceway, and the Disaster Preparedness Day

at the Summerwood Church of Latter Day Saints. Bob Robertson shared events at the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation at the Humble Civic Center. Clinton Johnson reminded the group that patches and tee shirts are still available. Charlie Womack purchased a 1971 Mack CF 600 from Gallatin. Mark Turvey received a request from the New Caney Fire Department to participate in their 50th Anniversary Parade. Mark also discussed a special upcoming event held June 29, 2013, the Texas Fallen Fire Fighters Cookoff.

**June:** Jim & Cheryl McGee reported on events at the New Caney Fire Department's 50th Anniversary Open House. Ken Paradowski lead a discussion about the Houston Fire Department's Memorial Service at Reliant honoring the four fallen firefighters. Bill & Kathy Wilcox are selling a quilt on eBay

for the benefit of the Chapter. There will be a BBQ benefit honoring Captain Dowling and other HFD firefighters on June 29, 2013 from 10 – 2 at the Sam Houston Race Park. There will be a Robert Yarbrough benefit on August 3, 2103 at the Town Center Park in Kingwood from 3 – 9 PM. Clinton reminded the group that The Spring Car Show meets every Saturday night on Cypresswood. Jim McGee mentioned the Houston Air Terminal Museum at Hobby Airport has outdoor events every 3rd Saturday. Tom McDonald provided the dates for two upcoming Fire-related events: July 9 -13th, The IFBA National Convention in Milwaukee WI; and September 20 – 23rd, The Fire Museum Network meeting in New York City. The SPAAMFAA Summer National will be held July 31—August 3, 2013.

*The Olde Fire Bell*

*The Olde Fire Bell* is the official quarterly publication of SPAAMFAA Texas Gulf Coast Chapter, issued in March, June, September, and December.

The mission of the newsletter is to highlight SPAAMFAA National initiatives, to spotlight events of the Texas Gulf Coast Chapter, to foster a spirit of friendliness and of cooperation among its members, and to increase public involvement in the preservation, restoration, and operation of equipment in fire service

*Acknowledgements*

*The Olde Fire Bell* is continuously seeking input from members and guests for future editions. The editor wishes to recognize the following contributors for making this issue possible:

Tom McDonald Ken Paradowski Mark Turvey  
Kathryn Peters John Blumentritt Kim Stellhorn

Please send information to the webmaster at GULFCOASTSPAAMFAA.ORG, or send to editor at the address on the newsletter back page



## TOOL BOX

### WELCOME JOE BRANTLEY

Joe and Sonya Brantley have been married to 53 years have 3 children, one that is Station 1 Captain, Galveston Fire Department. Joe is retired Fire Chief emeritus Union Carbide Texas City. He has been an instructor with Texas A&M fire school for 35 years. He was an original member of the American 76 Hose company. Presently, he serves as the PRO for Santa Fe Fire and Rescue. Joe is still active and drives either Ambulance and Engine 3, having maintained his EMT for 37 years. This past June, he celebrated 53 years of service as a fire fighter. We welcome Joe as one of the newest members to the Texas Gulf Coast Chapter of SPAAMFAA.

### CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION



Bob Robertson and Tim Treadway attended the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation motorcycle ride on April 28, held at the Humble Civic Center. Tim's '51 Mack ladder and Bob '64 ALF ladder made impressive ladder arch with Texas flag. Everyone was very appreciative. They have been invited to do again next year. Bob says they are definitely planning on it.

### FIRE FIGHTER QUILT ON EBAY

If you fantasized about hulky, muscular firefighters, this was your dream quilt. New, handcrafted, colorful, warm, one of a kind, and interesting! It was offered on eBay titled "Beautiful Firefighter Quilt SPAAM-FAA Fundraiser" and expired July 8th. It had only one bidder at \$99. Yes, only one bidder, and all you others out there are surely going to be sorry someday when its worth thousands. Many thanks to Kathy, Velma, and Sheryl that spent so much time on this fundraiser



### COMMUNITY SERVICE

Continuing in the spirit of community service, Kim & Cindy Stellhorn and Engine-8 attend Santa Fe Independent School District school fair on Saturday April 27th. As always, the truck was a big hit!



### NATIONAL NEWS

Greetings from the summer national meeting; Board meeting minutes will be available soon. We did learn that the Central Alabama chapter advised that they are unable to host the winter '15 meeting. Their bid to host was accepted several years ago. They did request to host the winter '17 meeting; that has been approved by the board. In light of these events, we are now looking for a host chapter for winter '15. If any chapter is interested, please contact me. Bill Davis Trustee Central Region-South Chapters, Convention/Muster Coordination.

### HFM ST. ARNOLD'S FUNDRAISER



The Houston Fire Museum's 'Casino Night' will be held on August 25, 2013, from 4—7 PM at the St. Arnold Brewery, located at 2000 Lyons Avenue, Houston, Texas. Established in 1982, The HFM has been serving the eight-county region to educate the community on fire safety and prevention education. This is one of the major fundraisers for HFM and proceeds from the event will support continuation of these Educational and Outreach Programs.

### MARY AUSTIN VFD TEE SHIRTS

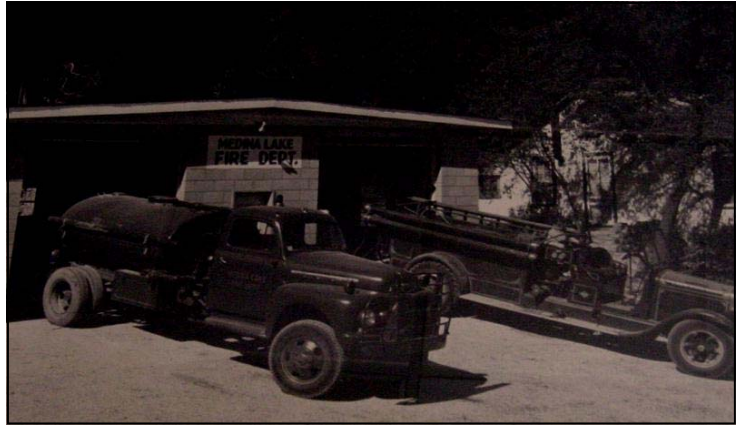
The Facebook Page Mary Austin Volunteer Hose Company is a site for information about Kim And Cindy's 1975 Harrisburg Mack Fire Truck. They have designed tee shirts in honor of their truck and it's rich history in Harrisburg, PA. The shirts are available short sleeve in Blue x-Large for \$12.50 each plus shipping. Get one while supplies last!



## MEDINA LAKE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPT

BY JOHN BLUMENTRITT

For many members of the Medina Lake VFD and its supporters, it was a dream come true. Courtesy John Blumentritt, their very first truck was on display during their Saturday, April 27th, barbecue Fundraiser.



The MLVFD was formed in October 1961. A group of concerned citizens met at the North Medina Lake Methodist Church to establish a volunteer fire department. By April 1962, the first fire truck was purchased. Records indicate that on July 13, 1962, the department responded to its first fire. In August 1962, they began constructing their first station. Tradition was begun in September 1962 - the first of many fundraising BBQ's were held. By October of 1962 a second fire truck was purchased, and the finishing touches on the building were completed. In 1964 the department responded to 34 fires.

MLVFD was the third owner of this 1929 ALF. In 1929, it was sent from the Elmira factory to Luling, Texas, where it served until 1954. It was sold to the Kirby, Texas, fire department, where it was used until 1962. MLVFD used it from 1962 until 1977. In total, the truck protected communities from fires for 48 years before retirement.

MLVFD added a water storage tank onto the back of the truck and discarded a lot of the hose, since there were no fire hydrants in the lake area. A heavy duty brush guard was welded to the front. Other than those changes, the fire engine as it exists today has all of its original parts, including suction hose, a wooden ladder, and a wooden steering wheel currently held together with duct tape. Sound familiar!

In 1977, the truck was auctioned off in San Antonio, where it was purchased by a San Angelo businessman for advertising purposes. Later, he offered it for sale to a couple of San Angelo business people. They asked their teenaged son if he would be interested. "My dad operated multiple businesses, including buying and selling vehicles. It was not at all odd for him to teach me the trade by allowing me to participate in buying and selling. I had bought four vehicles before I was



## MLVFD (CONT)

BY JOHN BLUMENTRITT



16," explains John.

That's how John Blumentritt, now professor at Angelo State University and retired USAF pilot, came to be the proud owner of an antique fire engine when he was 16 years old. John had to secure a small loan to finance this purchase and got a job at a grocery store to pay it off. Although he had planned to restore the truck, a career in the Air Force delayed those plans, so for many years the '29 ALF sat in a storage unit in San Angelo. But now John has some time on his hands, and he has begun a piece-wise restoration and has been busy collecting the fire engine's history.

John has been meticulous about authentically restoring the vehi-

cle. "I checked the Medina Lake VFD website today to determine the date of their annual BBQ," commented John. "Imagine my surprise when I saw a photo of my fire truck on their website. This is a photo I have not seen before. I zoomed in on the seat but can't really tell much about the style. Let's stick with the original plan on refurbishing the seat as it was in 1929." Since this photo discovery, explains John, "I had an expert review the photos and refurbish the seat to its original grandeur. I also chromed the handle on the seat."

Volunteers from Medina Lake VFD, on 16 April, helped move the truck from San Angelo to Medina Lake for their annual BBQ and fundraiser. A group spent three, 10-hour days getting the truck ready, to include starting the engine, for the BBQ. It ran when it was parked in the warehouse not too far back, so everyone had expectation to have it running on April 27.

"There were reporters at the event, and they were enthralled with the fact that I bought the truck as a teenager. I tried to bridge the conversation back to the real stories, which were the history of the fire truck and the people of Medina Lake. We wanted anyone who ever rode on this engine, to fight fires, or in a parade, to come to the barbecue Saturday and enjoy the truck once again." For John, it's the mission of saving this important piece of local history. "This day is about a fire truck returning home, to visit a waiting and patient community, after 33-years. The story is in the eyes of the people who used to operate this vehicle and save lives."

A lady visited my truck while holding a framed photo. The photo showed her and her sister as children on the truck. Her father used to pick them up from Sunday school with the fire truck in the 1960s. She became teary-eyed as we started the big Buick Six-Cylinder engine and sounded the old siren. The sights, sound, and smell brought back many memories of her childhood.

That's what is all about!

## HONORING HFD FALLEN HEROES

BY TOM McDONALD

members of those killed, as well as their fellow surviving crew members, recalled the humanity and individuality of each of their souls. The fire chief and IAFF representative presented survivors of each of those killed with official recognition of their loved one's sacrifice.

The head of Houston's Roman Catholic Archdiocese Daniel Cardinal DiNardo gave both the opening and closing prayers. The service ended with pipe and drum corps from across North America joining HFD's renowned corps for the playing of *Amazing Grace*.

## Photographs

- Right: Pipe and drum corps from across North America lead the mile-long walking procession that escorted the fire trucks on which the deceased members rode to their last alarm

- Bottom Right: Investigators used heavy equipment to inspect the remains of the motel's lobby and restaurant building that claimed four of Houston's finest on May 31.

- Below: Firefighters from across North America attended the memorial service on less than 5 days' notice including these two gentlemen from Calgary, Alberta.

There will be a benefit concert Sunday, July 28 from 3-10 PM at Discovery Green next to the GRBCC in Downtown Houston. The four firefighters most seriously injured from the tragic May 31 fire will be the beneficiaries (Capts. Dowling & Livesay, FFs Yarbrough, and Santos). Tickets may be obtained at [www.firehelpingfire.org](http://www.firehelpingfire.org) and are \$20 each before the event. Kids 12 and under are free.



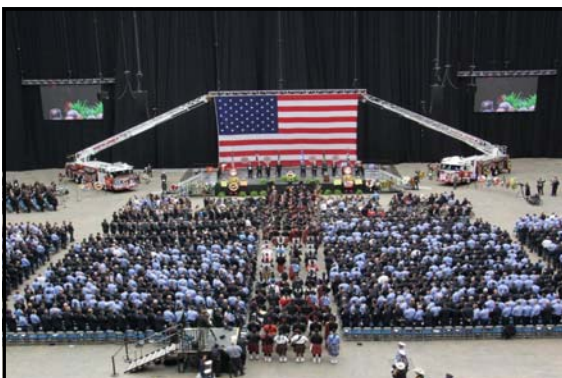


# FALLEN HEROES PHOTO TRIBUTE

PHOTOS BY KEN PARADOWSKI



Honor guards from multiple depts. lead the procession of Firefighters under the US Flag supported by HFD Tower 6 and Community VFD Tower 2. Engine 51 was decorated and driven in the procession to honor the memory of Captain Matthew Renaud and Engineer/Operator Robert Bebee both of whom were members of HFD Station 51. Engine 68 was decorated and driven in the procession to honor the memory of Firefighters Robert Garner and Anne Sullivan both of whom were members of HFD Station 68 A-shift. HFD Fire Chief Terry Garrison presented the US flag to family members of fallen firefighters. Pipe and Drum Corps from Depts across the nation assembled to play Amazing Grace. Large US flag hanging as the backdrop behind the stage was supported by the aerial ladders of HFD Ladder 51 and HFD Ladder 68. Crews from HFD Stations 51 and 68 salute as the Honor Guard rings Signal 7-1 (return to quarters) on the ceremonial bell.





## HITCHCOCK LODD BENEFIT

PHOTOS BY KIM STELLHORN AND MARK TURVEY

On Saturday, June 15, 2013, Texas Gulf Coast members were on hand at The Texas Fallen Heroes Memorial Ride & Cook-Off in Hitchcock, Texas. This event is one of the official benefit fundraisers for the Texas Line of Duty Death Task Force. The purpose of the event is to increase awareness to the Task Force and to raise funds to help support the departments and families of the trucks, several had left before I departed."



Mark Turvey "As in past years, Tim Rogers from the Baytown Fire Department did a great job of coordinating things. Kim & Cindy Stellhorn took home a trophy! I didn't get to count all



TGCC members and friends assisted with a variety of activities, and especially to coordinate and compete in the Fire Muster. Set up was by 12:30 PM, and show time was 1 PM—3:30 PM with awards at 4 PM. Categories in the event included and winners were (where applicable): Best Pumper—Hitchcock; Best Rescue Best Command (no entry); Best Aerial Ladder—Marathon; Best Brush Truck—Hitchcock; Best Ambulance (no entry); Best Antique prior to 1960 (no entry); Best Antique after 1960—Mary Austin Vol. Hose Company 1975 Mack, owned by Kim and Cindy Stellhorn of Sante Fe.

"The LODD Task Force benefit muster went well," noted

According to Kim Stellhorn, "There was less apparatus at the muster this year with nothing older than 1975. Our vehicle was the only apparatus in the 1960-1980 classification. All other apparatus were local departments and less than 6-7 years old. The weather was great as being "HOT and Humid" with several attendees having to be treated and transported by EMS. Hands down we got the trophy again this year."

The Texas Gulf Coast Chapter of SPAAMFAA wishes to recognize the Texas Line of Duty Death Task Force for their charitable works. Many thanks to all the participants, and see you all again this time next year.



*FINAL*

MASTER JUDGING SCORE SHEET		RANK
Keep this sheet covered with your cover sheet so the participants can't see your comments.		
ENTRY #	A	NOTES BEST PUMPER - HITCHCOCK E114
ENTRY #	B	NOTES BEST AERIAL - MARATHON TOWER
ENTRY #	C	NOTES BEST RESCUE - SEABROOK E104
ENTRY #	E	NOTES BEST BRUSH TRK - HITCHCOCK BOOSTER
ENTRY #	G	NOTES BEST ANTIQUE 1960-1985 - MARY AUSTIN VOL HOSE CO. 1975 MACK
ENTRY #		NOTES
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ENTRY #		NOTES





Application for Membership

TEXAS GULF COAST CHAPTER  
Society for the Preservation and Appreciation of Antique Motor Fire  
Apparatus in America  
(SPAAMFAA)

Please mail this application with \$20 dues made payable to:

Texas Gulf Coast Chapter of SPAAMFAA

PO Box 697

Bellaire TX 77402

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Street or Box No. \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Nine Digit Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Business: \_\_\_\_\_ Pager: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? Web page \_\_\_\_\_ Friend \_\_\_\_\_ Publication \_\_\_\_\_ Muster \_\_\_\_\_ Newsletter \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Interests: Collecting Fire Equipment \_\_\_\_\_ Photography \_\_\_\_\_ Attending Musters \_\_\_\_\_ Parades \_\_\_\_\_

Restoration Activities \_\_\_\_\_ Helmets/Gear \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Department or SPAAMFAA Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

If you own a piece of firefighting apparatus that is at least 25 years old, please provide the following information. Attach separate sheet if multiple vehicles. Ownership of apparatus is not required to join Texas Gulf Coast Chapter

Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Make: \_\_\_\_\_ Type: (Pumper, Aerial, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Mfg. Model: \_\_\_\_\_ Mfg. Serial #: \_\_\_\_\_

Pump Make: \_\_\_\_\_ Pump Size GPM: \_\_\_\_\_ Tank Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Owner and History of Rig: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership in Texas Gulf Coast Chapter is open to all upon application to the Board of Directors and payment of annual dues. Join today and share in the preservation and appreciation of fire fighting and antique fire apparatus.

All new members are also encouraged to join the National SPAAMFAA Chapter. National SPAAMFAA provides additional resources for restoration and insurance for all sponsored events. National Membership is mandatory for Officers of the Texas Gulf Coast Chapter

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*To stimulate and cultivate interest in the restoration, preservation,  
and operation of antique fire apparatus*

## TGCC HALL OF FLAME: BLUMENTRITT 1929 ALF



Member John  
Blumentritt of  
San Angelo  
stands with fam-  
ily friend next to  
Medina Lake  
VFD's first fire  
engine, a 1929  
American La-  
France pumper.  
See Page 4 for  
more details