

# HOUSTON history

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## **Houston Emergency Medical Services: 45 Years of Courage, Commitment & Compassion**



# Rx:Public History



*Debbie Z. Harwell, Editor*

ing back, it was laughable what we thought we were going to need..." While this issue is certainly not on the scale of assisting 250,000 evacuees, my early expectations of what would be required of our students to tell the 45-year history of Houston EMS pale in comparison to how it grew.

A year ago, the task seemed easy enough – two articles completed in a semester. It was a perfect project for our interns to combine traditional academic research with public history methodologies, and four students from my Houston History class in the Honors College at the University of Houston took on the job. Little did I know how much more would be involved and how invested we would become in the story, which now causes me to chuckle as I think about Dr. Persse's comments.

Few people realize that into the early 1970s private companies, often funeral homes that would rather take a dead person than a live one, still provided most ambulance services in the United States. They usually transported patients in hearses or station wagons, manned by untrained personnel, with little if any emergency equipment and certainly no defibrillators. Houston implemented its EMS program within the Houston Fire Department (HFD) in April 1971, and since then dramatic changes have occurred in training, equipment, technology, research, and protocols. With improved cardiac arrest survival rates as just one marker of its success, HFD EMS has become a national leader in emergency care.

The real story, however, is the people. The students conducted oral histories and attended patient reunions with the EMS staff members who saved patients' lives. With each successive interview, we grew more appreciative of the difficult task these city servants face. Although EMS personnel see things akin to injuries in a war zone, they are more drawn to telling stories about how it made them feel to have

someone simply say, "Thank you." In comforting the sick, saving a life, or holding the hand of someone who was dying, the interviewees felt they were the ones rewarded by their service, more so than the patient. I have never met a more humble group of people.

All of us at *Houston History* owe a debt of gratitude to the people at HFD who participated, particularly those who completed oral histories: EMS Asst. Chief David Almaguer, Bill Hausinger, Mike Ivy, Dr. David Persse, Dr. Kenneth Mattox, Tom McDonald, Frank Mettlach, Glen Morris, Otis Owens, Richard Sadler Jr., and interim Fire Chief Rodney West. A special thanks goes to Dr. Persse's assistant Diana Rodriguez whose help made this issue possible. Her enthusiasm for the work EMS does is infectious, and we all caught the fever.

When undertaking to write a history, you never know exactly where it will take you. Intern La'Nora Jefferson, a member of the UH Honors College who received her B.A. in history in August, continued to work on the project through the summer and fall to see it to completion. Back at home, La'Nora was with family visiting her one-year-old niece, Harmony, when the child's tracheotomy came out, and she began turning blue. As Harmony's mother, nurse, and other family members attempted to stabilize her, La'Nora called 9-1-1. Once everything had returned to normal amid laughter and tears, La'Nora thanked the EMTs and told them about this issue. Later she wrote to me, "I guarantee you that if we had not been doing all of this research on EMS, I would not have remained so calm while on the phone." We never know how a story might impact someone in unexpected ways.

The Culture High and Low story of the Turkey Day Classic between Jack Yates and Phillis Wheatley High Schools, the largest annual school football game in America, has also deeply touched those who worked on it. I have been fascinated by this story since I first heard it seven years ago. In my mind's eye I can see the throngs of people – 20,000 to 40,000 strong – dressed in their Sunday best, walking through Third Ward, cheering for their school, and converging at the stadium on the UH campus for the game. What a fabulous spectacle it must have been! Thanks go to Deloris Johnson (Yates Class of 1958) and Loretta Compton Williams (Wheatley Class of 1959) who arranged for fifteen alumni from the two schools to share their memories about this proud tradition that ended in 1966.

True to the principles established by Joe Pratt, this issue symbolizes what we strive to do at the Welcome Wilson Houston History Collaborative, to act as a training ground for students and public historians to preserve community history. The Houston EMS and Turkey Day Classic articles were completed by students who conducted twenty hours of interviews for the Houston History Archives and many more hours of research. I hope that you enjoy reading them as much as we enjoyed writing them.



## Houston Emergency Medical Services: 45 Years of Courage, Commitment & Compassion

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*Houston History* is published twice a year by the Welcome Wilson Houston History Collaborative in the Center for Public History at the University of Houston. We welcome manuscripts, interviews, photographic essays, and ideas for topical issues on the history and culture of the Houston region, broadly defined. Please send correspondence to *Houston History*, University of Houston, Center for Public History, 3623 Cullen Blvd., Room 320, Houston, TX 77204-3007 or email [HoustonHistory@uh.edu](mailto:HoustonHistory@uh.edu). Phone 713-743-3123.

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### COVER PHOTO:

*Houston firefighters, first responders, EMTs, paramedics, EMS supervisors, and medical director fight to save a cardiac arrest victim in downtown Houston. This photograph won first place in the photo contest held at the National Association of EMS Physicians Annual Meeting, Tucson, Arizona, January 2002.*

Photo courtesy of Diana J. Rodriguez, EMT - HFD/EMS.

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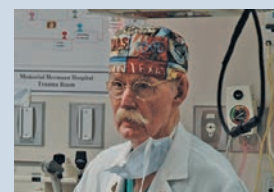
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# Pioneering Houston EMS: Answering the Call

*By La’Nora Jefferson, James Thornock, and Paulina De Paz*

In the wee hours of the morning, dispatcher Bill Hausinger’s voice crackled over the radio at Station 19. “Okay, I got a woman about to have a baby at 1818 Brackenridge,” he said, quickly dispatching Glen Morris and Otis Owens to the woman’s home. “You got it? You got it? Okay,” Hausinger confirmed before asking, “What? What?” and then replying with urgency, “Time is 0-0-30. All right. I’ll give you the time later! Just get to 1818 Brackenridge!” With that order, the call ended, marking the birth of Houston Emergency Medical Services (EMS) thirty minutes after midnight on April 10, 1971.<sup>1</sup>



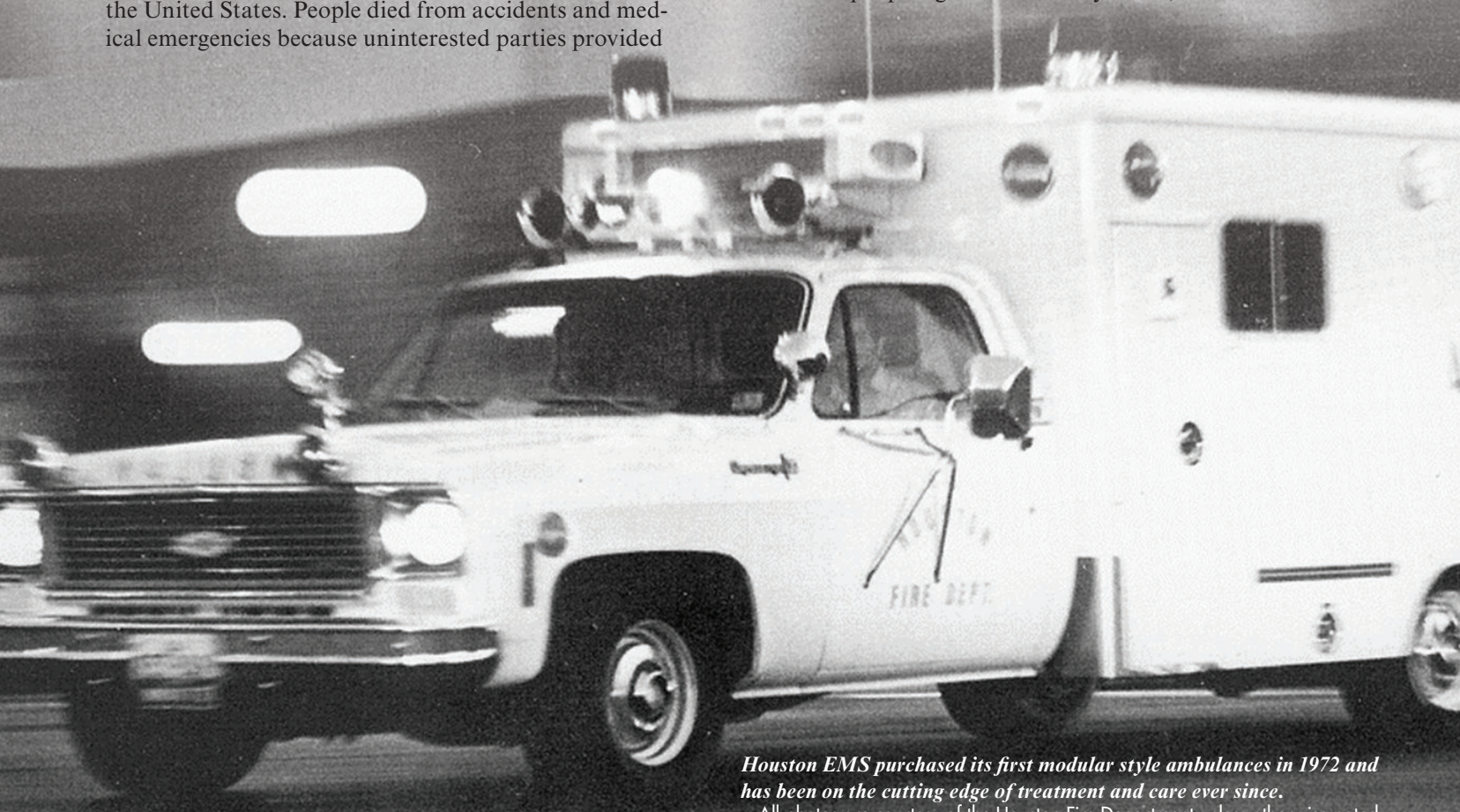
**H**ouston EMS personnel recall stories of an auto accident on a Houston roadway, most likely on Westheimer near its current intersection with Loop 610. Two ambulances arrived at the scene to find one person dead and another badly injured. The two men who worked for separate private companies, believed to be funeral homes, fought over who would take which victim. The winner emerged with the corpse and the loser took the injured.<sup>2</sup>

Less than fifty years ago, this scenario characterized emergency care in Houston and in many cities across the United States. People died from accidents and medical emergencies because uninterested parties provided

half-hearted emergency care in the field without proper training or equipment. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, consolidated emergency medical services, often run by local government agencies, emerged as a solution to the problem. With city leaders supporting the implementation of emergency care under the Houston Fire Department (HFD), Houston soon became a national leader in setting protocols and in quality of care, a distinction it continues to hold today.

## **“THE NEGLECTED DISEASE”**

In 1966 the Committee of Trauma and Committee on Shock in the Division of Medical Sciences of the National Academy of Sciences National Research Council (NAS) released a white paper, “Accidental Death and Disability: The Neglected Disease of Modern Society,” which drew attention to accidental death as a national health crisis. It reported, “In 1965, 52 million accidental injuries killed 107,000, temporarily disabled 10 million, and permanently impaired 400,000 American citizens at a cost of approximately \$18 billion.” Accidental injuries ranked as the fourth highest cause of U.S. fatalities overall and as the leading cause of death in people aged one to thirty-seven, with motor vehicle



*Houston EMS purchased its first modular style ambulances in 1972 and has been on the cutting edge of treatment and care ever since.*

*All photos are courtesy of the Houston Fire Department unless otherwise noted.*



accidents accounting for about forty-five percent of the deaths. Despite these statistics, the public had little awareness of this health threat, and only 0.3 percent of the dollars spent on medical research went to studying trauma care.<sup>3</sup>

The NAS suggested changes that included establishing a nationwide emergency phone number that everyone could easily remember, a national committee to address accident prevention, and improved ambulance and emergency medical services. Further, it addressed the government's role in responding to these issues, saying, "Adequate ambulance services are as much a municipal responsibility as firefighting and police services."<sup>4</sup> Eventually most government agencies, medical communities, and ambulance programs followed the NAS recommendations.



*Some fire stations had to add on to accommodate an ambulance.*

In Houston during the early 1960s ambulances were a shadow of the EMS vehicles seen today. Eighteen private companies provided emergency services, and morticians owned about half of the vans or station wagons converted for use as ambulances, which carried limited medical supplies. Drivers had minimal if any medical training and few incentives to transport live patients to hospitals given that their employers profited from deceased victims. People usually waited about an hour for an ambulance to arrive on the scene. Dr. Kenneth Mattox, a professor at Baylor College of Medicine and Chief of Staff and Surgeon-in-chief at Ben Taub Hospital, compares ambulances then to the way multiple tow trucks arrive at auto accidents today.<sup>5</sup>

Regardless of how many ambulances arrived, it did not guarantee everyone was transported. Writer, photographer, and veteran Ken Levin recalls an incident in 1961 when he heard a crash at Fannin and McGowen, just outside his office. As he made his way to the accident, his neighborhood policeman began attending the injured in the more severely damaged car. Levin assisted the other car's driver, a middle-aged African American woman, who appeared to be in shock. After the first ambulance departed, a second arrived intent on taking Levin. The policeman let the driver know the woman was the victim, at which time Levin says the driver blurted out, "Ain't no *niggers* ridin' in my ambulance." Levin adds, "I looked in disbelief, thinking, I'll . . . take her. But, again I watched in disbelief as . . . my neighborhood cop, slowly unhooked the flap on his big black holster, lifted the flap with his left hand and, with his right hand, pulled out a rather imposing pistol, pointed it at the

forehead of the ambulance driver, and said, 'One of you is going to Ben Taub in this ambulance!'" As the ambulance departed with the patient, Levin asked the officer if the woman would be alright, and he explained that he knew the driver and there would be no trouble.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to facing transportation issues, the sick and injured found little room available at local hospitals. Victims of car accidents occupied one in eight beds nationally, and non-emergency cases taxed overburdened hospital "accident rooms," precursors to emergency rooms, which lacked experienced staff. Mattox explains that the doctors assigned to accident areas of hospitals were usually new recruits or those who were being punished by supervisors.<sup>7</sup>

## ESTABLISHING HOUSTON EMS

The earliest medical treatise on trauma care based on scientific principles, the Edwin Smith Papyrus, dates to 1500 BCE; but battlefield medicine adopted by innovators like Jean Dominique Larrey (1766-1842), surgeon to the Napoleonic armies, and Major Jonathan Letterman (1824-1872), a surgeon who established an Ambulance Corps for the Union Army after Second Manassas, demonstrated the life-saving benefits of expeditiously transporting patients in the field. Many of the modern-day U.S. emergency care pioneers also had experience with military trauma care. A leader in the field, Seattle, Washington native Dr. Michael Copass served in the U.S. Army Medical Corps during the Vietnam War. Former EMS Assistant Chief Mike Ivy points out that Copass's research conclusively demonstrated that the only way to maximize someone's life expectancy in an emergency situation was to start physician-level care in the field before the patient reached a hospital.<sup>8</sup>

Houston doctors who also served in the military took notice of Copass's findings. Renowned heart surgeon Dr. Michael DeBakey, who helped develop the Mobile Army Surgery Hospital (MASH) program, led the way. His count-



*George Prazak and Mike Owin show off a new modular ambulance in 1973. Owin became one of the first EMS Supervisor, Paramedic Senior Captains with Mike Eckhardt and Cliff Krengle (1180).*

less hours of service in the battlefield prepared him for performing up to seventy trauma surgeries a day with his team at Houston's Ben Taub Hospital. After observing Copass start an ambulance program in Seattle, Dr. Ken Mattox, joined by Drs. William "Bill" Kolter, Peter B. Fisher, and James "Red" Duke, helped make the case for EMS as a city service and implementation of the program once adopted. Kolter saw firsthand the city's need for timely emergency care when his mother Jennie Katharine Kolter died tragically in a bombing at Poe Elementary School on September 15, 1959.<sup>9</sup>

Houston experienced exponential growth between 1950 and 1960, almost doubling in population to 938,219 and more than doubling in area to 328.1 square miles. Dr. Mattox observed that the survival rates of those who relied on the private ambulance system was approximately twenty-five percent at that time. From early 1969 through early 1971, citizens as well as the Harris County Medical Society, Baylor Medical School, and the Greater Houston Hospital Council began putting pressure on the city to improve its emergency services.<sup>10</sup> Seeing a political opportunity, Mayor Louie Welch, elected in 1963, worked with the Harris County Medical Society to develop an emergency care plan for Houston. A group of local doctors visited Baltimore, Maryland, and Miami, Florida, to observe different types of operations and meet with emergency room doctors there before making a recommendation.<sup>11</sup>

Involved from the beginning, Kolter indicates that he and Fisher designed a "system using communications already in place and an ambulance distribution system which could be altered when the need arose and required no additional facilities." In contrast to the level of emergency care then, they wanted responsible, "intelligent attendants" who would remain in the program.<sup>12</sup>

Although key players discussed whether to place the new emergency service under the police department or create a new entity, Houston City Council members passed ordinance 70-1518 to place emergency care under the Houston Fire Department on September 16, 1970, noting that the time it takes to transport a patient and the care received at the emergency scene could be essential to the health and life of the patient. The law outlined standards for manning ambulances, training, continuing education, vehicle inspec-

tions, and more. In addition, it stipulated that HFD could not refuse emergency ambulance assistance to the indigent for inability to pay.<sup>13</sup>

HFD was a logical choice since it already had a system in place to receive calls for fire emergencies. It had fire stations positioned throughout Houston that could house ambulances, an average response time to any location of three to five minutes, vehicle maintenance facilities, and personnel trained in crisis situations who were "devoted to helping people." HFD control of the ambulance program also guaranteed the highest quality of care for firefighters injured on



*Fire Chief C. R. "Jake" Cook.*

the job. In 1968 Welch appointed Chief C. R. "Jake" Cook to head HFD, and Cook selected District Chief L. O. "Whitey" Martin to lead the new ambulance division. Retired Senior Captain and Paramedic Tom McDonald called Martin the "right man at the right time for the job." For the first fifteen years of the program, Martin was out on the street responding to calls. McDonald

remembers frequently hearing his radio call number, "1100, I'll be responding."<sup>14</sup>

To ensure the protection of citizens in the communities surrounding Houston, the EMS organizers included training for private operators in Harris County with help from the Red Cross and state and city health departments. Martin worked extensively with local media to raise awareness for the ambulance program and later gave assistance to other cities starting their ambulance programs. Assistant Fire Chief Dennis Holder is credited with coining the term "Emergency Medical Services" (EMS) that came to mean "physician-supervised, pre-hospital ambulance services."<sup>15</sup>

Although some local doctors were willing to assist the new ambulance program, others argued against it. Fearful of paramedics or EMTs trying to "play doctor" in the field, they worried that the old adage "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing" would prove true. Retired paramedic and Junior Captain Richard Sadler remembers Bill Kolter and Peter Fischer helping to minimize resistance from doctors. Negativity also came from funeral homes, which stood to lose income; hospitals, which initially saw the government ambulance program as competition rather than cooperation; and even firefighters, many of whom wanted to focus on firefighting. The private ambulance services even formed a non-profit to plead its case for a city contract to provide ambulance service, promising to improve their services and keep costs low. Initially some fire chiefs argued that having EMS in HFD would occupy phone time and valuable space in fire stations, change the structure of the department, and redefine what it meant to be a firefighter. Success of the ambulance service depended upon a coordinated effort by different government and private entities to change attitudes, develop training, and implement the new city-wide EMS program. As Sadler explains, "Whenever the fire department started this ambulance program it wasn't just the fire department, it involved the whole city."<sup>16</sup>



*One of Houston's early EMTs takes care of a patient.*



## IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM

During the 1960s ninety-five percent of firefighters' training involved fire suppression. Firefighters already received the required first-aid training, but this new generation of responders needed more than that, such as cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). In 1969 just before Houston began its EMS program, the U.S. Department of Transportation developed a basic EMT course. Although some paramedic programs had already begun to give their personnel more advanced training, official curriculum for the EMT-paramedic level was not released until the early 1970s.<sup>17</sup>

The State of Texas certified the curriculum, and EMS enlisted Houston's most accomplished trauma surgeons to assist with training, including Drs. Ken Mattox and Red Duke. From the birth of Houston EMS in 1971 through 1983, the Ambulance Advisory Committee, which consisted of the fire chief, the city health director, and the chairman of the Harris County Medical Society Committee on Emergency Medical Services, established the formal policies of the paramedic program. In 1983 the Allied Health division provided paramedic training at a local medical school using the standard U.S. Department of Transportation curriculum. On September 1, 1989, the State of Texas Emergency Medical Services Act ordered all paramedic training in Texas be supervised and certified by the state Department of Health. Initially the former City of Houston License Department handled the licensing of ambulances, but the Houston Health Department soon assumed responsibility for oversight. It mandated the city follow federal recommendations for ambulance equipment and EMT training.<sup>18</sup>



*EMS Physician Director Dr. David Persse, EMS Assistant Chief Mike Ivy, former Houston mayor Louie Welch, and retired Asst. Chief Whitey Martin received a mayoral proclamation commemorating the thirtieth anniversary for Houston EMS.*

*Photo courtesy of Tom McDonald.*

When HFD initiated EMS, the program obtained twenty-one Dodge Tradesman cargo vans from other city departments that were converted to ambulances, each equipped with a small stretcher, a first aid kit and, in some cases, radiation monitors to address Cold War fears. Chief Martin chose 126 men, who volunteered and were ranked as pipemen and laddermen. They received 120 hours of EMT training over a three-week period. In retrospect, this offered little improvement in comparison to private services, but HFD EMS improved response times dramatically, averaging five



*Paramedics and other HFD members attend a patient at an accident. Motor vehicle accidents remain the most frequent reason people call 9-1-1.*

*Photo courtesy of David Almaguer.*



minutes to pick up the patient and twenty minutes to deliver them to the hospital. HFD EMS experienced its only line of duty death less than one month in, on May 3, 1971, when Ambulance 51, which was transporting a patient during morning rush hour, was struck by a passenger vehicle and overturned at Chimney Rock and Westheimer, killing twenty-six-year-old James Louis Walls. EMT Howard Cannon and the patient sustained minor injuries.<sup>19</sup>

The van ambulances soon proved inadequate, and in the fall of 1971, the department purchased twenty-two new modular vehicles, with the boxy look that characterizes ambulances today.<sup>20</sup> Over the years, ambulance equipment has evolved, and HFD has updated its vehicular fleet to respond to various types of emergencies in a variety of locations, including waterways, airports, and high rises.

Houston paramedic classes began between 1974 and 1975 at the Health Department in the Texas Medical Center. Richard Sadler, his son Richard Sadler III, and forty-eight others enrolled in one of the first HFD EMS paramedic training classes, which Sadler remembers being told no one would fail. Sadler chuckles as he reflects on what they learned, such as how to insert butterfly needles for IVs, which they practiced on one another, causing the “grown men” to react with everything from tears to laughter. In

his earlier training, they also practiced CPR on one another, or on carpet cut outs, because they did not yet have the Resusci-Anne mannequins. Although Sadler did not originally want to enter the program, once he began, he thoroughly enjoyed it, saying, “It was the greatest thing that happened in my life.”<sup>21</sup> This sentiment was echoed in all of the interviews conducted for this project, from those who are long retired and those still serving the city. (See “On Call by Choice” in this issue.)

When HFD completed its first paramedic training class, the State of Texas presented Chief Whitey Martin with state paramedic patches for the graduates. EMS Assistant Chief David Almaguer remembers Martin throwing them in the trash because Houston had its own patches, saying, “We’re the Houston Fire Department, we’re Houston paramedics, we’re better than just Texas.” To this day, Houston paramedics only wear the HFD paramedic patch.<sup>22</sup>



*Chief Whitey Martin rejected the State of Texas paramedic patches in favor of the HFD paramedic patch.*

*Photo courtesy of the Houston Fire Department.*



*Paramedic Tom McDonald (bottom left), EMS Supervisor Capt. Mike Eckhardt (top left), Mike Allen (performing CPR), and Paramedic George Beutell (right) care for a woman in cardiac arrest at a wedding on May 24, 1986. Below Beutell and Eckhardt are reunited with her and her family.*

*Photo courtesy of George Beutell.*



By the end of the twentieth century, emergency care had changed dramatically from the days when private ambulance services fought to take deceased victims to funeral homes rather than the living to hospitals. Houston’s EMS service grew in response to the needs of a burgeoning metropolis and as part of a national trend to reduce the unnecessary loss of life caused by poor emergency medical care.



The two men who answered Houston’s first EMS call, Glen Morris and Otis Owens, volunteered to enter the EMT program when it first began. They recall hoping that their station would not be the one to answer Houston’s first EMS call. They assumed that the first call would be a car accident and found it amusing that after their intensive training to treat major injuries, they were called instead to assist an expecting mother. The delivery was successful, and Owens and Morris, now retired, went on to deliver more than fifty babies over a ten-year period and to help save countless others during their rewarding careers.<sup>23</sup> Looking back, though, it seems fitting that the birth of Houston EMS in 1971 was marked not by responding to a trauma, as the new EMTs expected, but rather by bringing a new life into this world.

**La’Nora Jefferson** graduated in August 2016 with a degree in history from the Honors College at the University of Houston, where she also interned at *Houston History*.

**James Thornock** is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in history with a minor in philosophy at the University of Houston. A “full-time husband,” active Mormon, and former *Houston History* intern, he plans to teach.

**Paulina De Paz** is a junior at the University of Houston majoring in history and sociology. She is a former intern at *Houston History*.



# Houston Setting the Standard for Emergency Care

By La’Nora Jefferson, James Thornock, and Paulina De Paz

A year before the City of Houston implemented its ambulance program, a nonprofit volunteer ambulance service went to the Houston home of a five-year-old girl only to find her dead on arrival. Earlier in the day after giving the child cursory care for asthma, the staff at a local hospital sent her home, advising the family to take her to Ben Taub Hospital since they did not have insurance or money to pay for her care. The family asked friends for help but could not find transportation, private or public, to get to Ben Taub, and they did not know who else to call. Once the child’s grandmother finally located help, it was too late to save the little girl.<sup>1</sup>

When Houston began its ambulance program on April 10, 1971, it became a trailblazer in emergency medical services, responding to the 1966 recommendations of the Committee of Trauma and Committee on Shock in the Division of Medical Sciences of the National Academy of Sciences National Research Council (NAS). However, not all of the NAS suggestions could be implemented immediately in Houston or other cities, such as the nationwide 9-1-1 system. In addition, the Harris County Medical Society (HCMS) remained unhappy with the “negligible survival rate” for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest cases, which exceeded 1,000 annually in Houston in the early 1980s.<sup>2</sup> More had to be done; and today, Houston Fire Department Emergency Medical Services (HFD EMS) Assistant Chief David Almaguer points out, bringing cardiac arrest patients back to life is the hallmark of the department.<sup>3</sup>

In 1973 the federal government passed the Emergency Medical Service Systems Act that outlined fifteen essential components for EMS programs, but medical direction was not among them. Thus by the 1980s HCMS contended that Houston EMS lacked a key element that would enable the department to save more lives: “intensive accountable physician supervision.” Prior to this revelation, different specialists who served on an emergency care policy committee provided medical guidance. Emergency department physicians who rotated shifts at a local county hospital directed patient management following written medical protocols that they transmitted via radio. Few of those physicians had experience in prehospital care or emergency medicine.<sup>4</sup>

In 1983 members of the Harris County Medical Society, the Texas Medical Association, and numerous academic medical institutions helped enact a new state law that required all Texas paramedic programs to designate an “accountable physician director, who [is] not only familiar with the prehospital management of critical emergencies, but also responsible for the actual capabilities of each and every individual prehospital care provider.” Hence every certified EMT and paramedic in Texas operates directly under the physician director’s license for that city or county entity. This gives the physician director a degree of autonomy but also holds him or her “responsible for all medical aspects of prehospital patient care,” including the actions of the men and women in the field. Different states require different levels of accountability for physician directors, with Texas



Dr. Paul Pepe, right, was Houston’s first Physician Director for EMS. His protocols revolutionized emergency treatment in Houston. Paramedic Tom McDonald, now a retired Senior Captain, is standing at left.

Photo courtesy of Tom McDonald.



This patient is receiving Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) for severe difficulty breathing due to congestive heart failure (CHF), which causes fluid to back up in the lungs. The patient is also on a heart monitor that can transmit rhythms electronically to the receiving hospital before the patient arrives, which can expedite treatment.

Photo courtesy of Diana Rodriguez.

being the only state that holds them personally responsible for the actions of all EMTs and paramedics, necessitating physician directors have greater disciplinary and instructive powers. They approve the level of prehospital care on patients as well as monitor and establish compliance with field performance guidelines and training performance.<sup>5</sup>

Fortunately, Houston has always had well-qualified, experienced directors. The city's first physician director, Dr. Paul Pepe, came from Seattle, Washington, where he studied under Dr. Michael Copass, a pioneer in modern emergency medicine. Pepe served the City of Houston as physician director from 1983 until 1996. Former EMS Assistant Chief Michael Ivy said that Pepe was a "key individual to bringing the [Houston] EMS system into the advanced stages" and that he literally wrote the manual on care.<sup>6</sup>

Pepe stressed that medical care must begin in the field and led research that revolutionized cardiac care resuscitation, making the paramedic program significantly more effective. Pepe developed resuscitation protocols and constantly updated the Houston EMS procedures based on his research and by monitoring the effectiveness of the methods. Pepe emphasized proper training as well. Retired Captain Frank Mettlach explains that Pepe called paramedics out of service and worked with them until "two, three, four in the morning" to test on cardiac arrest resuscitation and certify the number of paramedics needed in a city the size of Houston.<sup>7</sup>

The key to taking care of cardiac arrest patients, according to Pepe's research, was early defibrillation, in which an electric shock is administered to restore the heart's natural rhythm. Mettlach recalls that early in his paramedic career, EMS used heavy defibrillators in a big orange box, like those created by Telecare for NASA.<sup>8</sup> Standard procedures re-

quired that paramedics ask for a radio channel to transmit vital signs and get permission from a physician to shock a patient, then go back to the vehicle to get the device, set the repeater, and, lastly, administer the shock. When Mettlach dealt with his first cardiac arrest patient, he set up the channel without permission in his haste to revive the patient, a doctor's wife. The doctor yelled at Mettlach to get away from his wife, but after shocking her twice, Mettlach and his fellow paramedics were able to restore her heart rhythm, stabilize her, and get her to the hospital. As the EMS team was leaving the hospital, the doctor apologized, admitting that Mettlach had saved his wife's life but, at the time, he believed Mettlach lacked the medical knowledge to properly treat her.<sup>9</sup>

When making presentations Pepe often said the department had no cardiac arrest resuscitations before his arrival, at which time Mettlach playfully cleared his throat, reminding him that Mettlach had saved two people, including the doctor's wife, before Houston had a physician director. Despite his early successes, Mettlach admits that he was just lucky and confirms that following Pepe's protocols enabled him to resuscitate about 200 more people during his twenty-nine-year tenure.<sup>10</sup>

Thanks to the efforts of Pepe and the department, Houston EMS moved to the forefront of emergency care research and development because it had the resources and a high volume of calls, giving the department a large data set from which to measure trends. "Your statistics are what you are," former Assistant Chief Ivy notes, in explaining why he monitored the department's data every week. In addition, he communicated what he learned from Pepe about the protocols in laymen's terms, saying, if he could "firemenize" them, "then they would work."<sup>11</sup>

*This 80-vehicle wreck on Beltway 8 at Main Street occurred on December 28, 2002, as a result of foggy conditions.*

*Photo courtesy of Tom McDonald.*





Houston's current physician director, Dr. David Persse, first served as a paramedic and paramedic instructor in Buffalo, New York, before attending medical school. On the day in 1993 that Persse interviewed with Pepe to become a fellow with Houston EMS, a mentally ill man walked into a police station and shot a police officer in the face. In less than an hour, EMS transported him to Ben Taub Hospital and he underwent surgery. The speedy response of EMS and its communication network with the trauma center and neurosurgeons impressed Persse. Although he had considered jobs in other cities, he saw "something unique about the way that they [were] doing things in Houston," and he wanted to be a part of that. Persse received a Physio-Control Fellowship from the National Association of EMS Physicians and became an assistant physician director of Houston EMS under Pepe in 1993. After completing the fellowship, he served as physician director of the Los Angeles County Paramedic Training Institute and Los Angeles County EMS. In the fall of 1996 after a national search in response to Pepe's resignation, Persse was selected to succeed him as EMS Physician Director. Grateful for the opportunity to return to Houston, Persse now has 3,800 EMTs and paramedics practicing under his license, and he continues to approach this position with passion and vigor.<sup>12</sup>

Another important focus of emergency medicine is public health. In May of 2004, then Mayor Bill White asked Persse to assume the role of Public Health Authority, making him the first person to serve in that position and EMS Physician Director simultaneously. In the public health role Persse is responsible for "medical aspects of clinical care quality management, disease control, and public health prepared-

ness." The law mandates that diseases be reported to the public health office, which includes the offices of surveillance and public health preparedness. Epidemiologists work with the Public Health Department, handling information on disease outbreaks, such as Ebola, flu, and Zika. Persse must be watchful of diseases and trends, such as the recent popularity of synthetic recreational drugs, in addition to educating HFD members, who are sometimes the first line of care for patients, and the community to help them understand the health risks.<sup>13</sup>

The Public Health Authority also handles disaster preparedness, which includes responding to flooding, natural disasters, chemical emergencies, terrorist attacks, and coordinating with neighboring communities. In 2001 Tropical Storm Allison produced the largest urban flood in U.S. history before that time. Allison displaced a quarter-million residents from 100,000 homes and shut down several hospitals in the Texas Medical Center for months. Houston EMS played a critical role in evacuating hospitals to facilities unaffected by the flood, including one set up in the Astro Arena by Brooke Army Medical Center of San Antonio, which was the first time a U.S. military hospital was deployed for civilian casualties in the continental United States. Persse served as Houston's incident commander, conducting meetings with representatives from all the hospitals. The lessons learned from this experience enabled city leaders like Mayor White and Dr. Persse to mount an organized response when 250,000 people displaced by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans evacuated to Houston in 2005 (See *Houston History*, Summer 2010).<sup>14</sup>

After Hurricane Katrina hit, HFD EMS served as a medical safety net for any emergency medical situations, attending first to elderly patients evacuated by plane to Ellington Air Force Base and then to people who arrived at the Astrodome by bus. The city and county opened the



Astrodome, Reliant Center and Hall, and the George R. Brown Convention Center to house people. The Public Health Department built a foundation to control disease there, while Harris Health, Baylor College of Medicine, and the University of Texas Medical Branch created facilities akin to mobile army surgical hospitals (MASH) at various sites accommodating evacuees. Of course EMS still had to respond to the needs of Houstonians, who continued to have their own medical emergencies. With the population of Houston increased by ten percent upon the survivors' arrival in Houston, the system and staff were stretched, but EMS placed extra units in service to successfully answer the call.<sup>15</sup>



*Sr. Capt. Isabel Sky-Eagle and Capt. Tony Harrison take part in one of the many HFD EMS tabletop exercises to plan how networks will work in an emergency.* Photo courtesy of Diana Rodriguez.

To address unplanned events, HFD, EMS, and Houston Emergency Management prepare and conduct emergency training exercises, performed at three levels: planning, tabletop, and functional. In the planning phase city leaders address worst case scenarios to stress the system in order to determine its strengths and weaknesses, understand what resources are available, and how they can respond. During the EMS tabletop exercises planners imagine what will and will not work in a hypothetical emergency situation. By helping EMS know its resources, the exercises show how people act and react, who takes on what roles, and if procedures are done correctly or at all. Lastly, HFD EMS conducts functional exercises to demonstrate how well it uses a certain set of resources. The department completes multiple functional drills until it reaches a full scale evaluation during which everything is put to the test, stressing the system to the maximum. As Persse points out, referring to U.S. General Dwight Eisenhower's strategic philosophy, "The plan is nothing, the planning is everything." Things may not go as planned in an emergency but without the planning the efforts will fail.<sup>16</sup>

Houston EMS can handle more than one might think. The region has approximately forty hospitals inside the city limits and forty-five outside. In the case of a mass emergency, Persse reports HFD can distribute about 250 patients without

asking hospitals if they can accommodate them; EMS only needs to communicate that ambulances are on their way. In the case of a natural disaster, each hospital will get a certain number of red tag patients in the most critical condition, less critical yellow tag patients, and green tag patients with minor ailments. The large number of area hospitals enables EMS to distribute patients in small numbers to each. Hospitals cannot reject patients during an emergency, but to avoid overwhelming them, EMS distributes patients in waves to give hospitals time to initiate their emergency plans.<sup>17</sup>

Although having a physician director has enabled Houston EMS to improve its patient care greatly over the last four decades, other variables also played a role in Houston setting the standard for emergency care, such as the department's recruitment, training, and technology.

As one of the first U.S. cities to implement emergency medical services, Houston also led the way in diversity among its EMTs and paramedics. When the city initially asked firefighters to volunteer, a large number of African American firefighters stepped forward, including Glen Morris and Otis Owens, who answered the first EMS call. African Americans faced adversity when first admitted to HFD in 1955 after the city annexed the predominately black community of Clinton Park and accepted its volunteer firefighters working out of what then became Station 46. Their inclusion in EMS offered a more positive atmosphere than in other careers. As retired paramedic Junior Captain Richard Sadler observed, "We all had the same blood," so color did not matter.<sup>18</sup>

While true within the department, Morris was warned that some patients may have a problem with him treating them. Nevertheless, he never experienced any major problems as a result of race; instead he recalled most of the negativity came from firefighters who wanted to be separate from EMTs. The department has seen a number of firsts in hiring. Linda Honeycutt became the first woman to join the Houston Fire Department, receiving her EMT training in 1975 and five months later joining the members at Station 9. In 1982 Arands L. Madison became the first African American female firefighter/EMT. Today HFD prides



*Captain Howard Shaw (left), Paramedic EMS Supervisor, started with HFD in 1971 and has forty-five years of service to date. His son, Delance Shaw (right), an EMS Supervisor, followed in his father's footsteps joining HFD in 1994.* Photo courtesy of Diana Rodriguez.





*Cardiac arrests take up to twelve HFD personnel to do CPR and advanced life support.* Photo courtesy of Diana Rodriguez.

itself on its efforts to increase diversity. The department is approximately 21 percent Hispanic, 17 percent African American, just over one percent Asian American, and three percent women.<sup>19</sup>

It remains a common myth that firefighters only fight fires and HFD is working to encourage Houston's diverse student population to consider careers in the department. In 2013 the Human Resources Department Client Relations Classified Recruiters and HFD created C.A.S.E.Y. Fire Ops, which stands for "cultivate, advise, support, empower youth," to encourage high school students to enter HFD careers. Currently twenty-four schools within the city limits take part. Participants in the one-day camp engage in simulations of the basic skills required of a Houston firefighter with "Intro to Firefighting and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)." They wear firefighter's turnout gear, receive hands-on experience in patient assessment, mechanical aids to breathing, obtaining vital signs, bandaging/splinting, spinal immobilization, adult CPR, use of automated external defibrillator (AED), and mass casualty/triage.<sup>20</sup> HFD also has summer programs that encourage young girls to become firefighters. For students who choose to enter the department, seven regional schools offer Basic Firefighter Certification and the Texas Health Services EMT Basic Certification, as all new firefighters are EMTs.

Today when people have an emergency they call 9-1-1. It's a number even preschoolers can recite, but that has not always been the case. Chief Almaguer remembers firefighters visiting his school and telling the children to dial the words "Cap a dad" if they needed assistance. This gave the students an easy way to remember the local number, 227-2323. Nevertheless, following the recommendation of the NAS, a simpler nationwide number for all emergencies, 9-1-1, was adopted, with Harris County implementing it in January of 1986. It incorporated every computerized feature available at the time. In 1988 the HFD yearbook reported, "9-1-1 is the first system of this nature in the state of Texas serving 2.8 million people." Operators answered residents' calls in their own jurisdiction. The citizen's telephone number and address appeared on a computer screen, enabling the

operator to respond quickly and route the call to the HFD dispatch center, which had staff members trained to use the "computer-assisted-dispatch (CAD) capability."<sup>21</sup>

The 9-1-1 system significantly reduced emergency response time. Early on dispatchers found locations manually on a Rolodex card file and then used a map to locate the station closest to the incident to determine who to send. With the computerized system, the dispatcher typed in the incident address and the computer indicated which station should answer the call. The system could be pre-programmed to determine who responded to what type of call. For example, a paramedic squad, medic unit, or a basic EMT ambulance could be deployed. The system also allowed for pre-arrival instructions.<sup>22</sup>

Under current protocol when a 9-1-1 call is received at the Houston Emergency Center (HEC), the operator begins with, "9-1-1. What is your emergency?" and connects the caller to the appropriate emergency department. Another operator asks additional questions to determine the measure of the emergency and send the appropriate help. For the callers it may be the worst day of their lives and the questions may seem unnecessary, but the answers to those questions enable the calltaker and the computer to locate the closest HFD unit to assist the patient. For example, a patient reporting a stomach ache will receive an ambulance. If no ambulance is available nearby, then the closest fire truck, fully staffed with EMTs, will respond. According to protocol, if the patient is unconscious a paramedic will be called immediately. Further, before EMS arrives on the scene, dispatchers can give callers instructions, such as how to administer CPR or assist in childbirth, to maximize positive outcomes. When the dispatcher lacks enough information to determine what kind of help or apparatus is needed, two of the closest EMTs are sent to the scene for extra evaluation before calling for more help. Following this tiered response helps HEC send the most specific personnel and equipment needed to conserve the department's resources in the event of simultaneous emergencies. This is critical given



*HFD Dispatch was located at Preston and Bagby before moving to the Houston Emergency Center (HEC) in 2003.*

Photo courtesy of the Houston Fire Department.





*The ETHAN project has reduced non-emergency transports, saving ambulances for serious emergencies and saving money for the city.*

Photo courtesy of the Houston Fire Department.

that less than half of the people who call for an ambulance actually need to be transported.<sup>23</sup>

In 2015 HFD received approximately 290,000 calls with 270,000 of those requiring a medical response rather than fire, Chief Almaguer reports. The increasing volume of calls creates a financial and operational burden for the fire department. This sharply contrasts with the 1970s, when they received 15,000 to 20,000 calls and were required to assist non-emergency patients.<sup>24</sup>

The department receives many calls that may not require transport by ambulance. In response the City of Houston has implemented a first-of-its-kind program, ETHAN, or Emergency Tele-Health + Navigation. The program uses video technology to allow patients to speak with a physician, reassuring patients that they are receiving the proper care. ETHAN physicians help EMTs evaluate the needs of people who dial 9-1-1 but do not necessarily have a medical emergency requiring a trip to the emergency room, now referred to as emergency department (ED). If a primary care physician or clinic can treat the patient, the ETHAN doctor makes the appointment on the spot and arranges city-paid transportation by cab, thereby conserving HFD and city resources. If the patient still wants to go to the ED, the ETHAN doctor has the authority to insist they go by cab or find another ride because they will not be transported via ambulance. During the first year, out of the 55,000-56,000 ETHAN contacts, 82 percent of them did not use the ambulance service.<sup>25</sup> By reducing the number of non-emergency transports, EMS ambulances get back in service faster. ETHAN also provides a follow-up home visit to ensure the patient is keeping up with doctor appointments, helping to maintain chronic illnesses and prevent future unnecessary 9-1-1 calls.<sup>26</sup>

Training the community about calling for help and critical bystander actions such as CPR, Chief Almaguer explains, also improves survival rates. The “Chain of Survival” for cardiac arrest includes the community on the first level, followed by EMS and hospitals. Even after a patient leaves the hospital, people need to be aware that prevention and follow-up care are also important to avoid a repeat incident and how to respond should that occur.<sup>27</sup>

HFD EMS is a leader in technology and innovation, in part because it continuously reviews its methods to provide the most effective treatment. Emergency medicine is difficult to research, and Persse points out that physicians conduct few studies on emergency medicine because emergencies cannot be observed in a controlled environment. As a result, mistakes have been made in the field, but two critical changes to protocol were made based on research done in Houston in the late 1980s and early 1990s. One lesson related to EMTs’ treatment of patients suffering from blood loss due to injury. Initially paramedics inserted two large IVs into the patient and pumped as much fluid into them as possible to raise their blood pressure. Dr. Kenneth Mattox and Dr. Bill Bickell began to ask, “If we are raising the pressure and they are bleeding internally, isn’t that causing them to bleed more?” The patient’s blood became diluted and actually began to flow too much, losing its ability to clot. EMTs/paramedics’ protocols directed a similar mistake with military anti-shock trousers (MAST), which were also used to get blood flowing through the body. The pants inflated, causing pressure that pushed the blood back to the brain and heart, but this was later linked to bleeding acceleration, dislodging of clots, and dilution of the blood’s clotting factors. According to Mettlach, the MAST study, led by Pepe, had “world implications” because it was the universal standard for care at the time.<sup>28</sup>

Continued research has enabled HFD EMS to be proficient in its technology, especially in the case of the End-tidal CO<sub>2</sub>, a device that measures the amount of carbon dioxide in the blood after exhaling. This device can be helpful in the study and treatment of COPD and asthma patients. It is also



*Military anti-shock trousers (MAST) were the standard for care to get blood flowing through the body until research done in Houston proved them to be detrimental to patients.*

Photo courtesy of David Almaguer.





*The South East Texas Regional Advisory Council's (SETRAC) mass casualty response bus or AMBUS will hold up to thirty patients. It is staged from a Houston Fire Department station and responds to twenty-four other counties as needed. It and several others throughout Texas were funded by grants.*

*Photo courtesy of Diana Rodriguez.*

useful when performing CPR. If EMTs and paramedics are doing CPR incorrectly, the measured numbers will decrease, indicating that the person administering CPR is tired and should switch with someone else. End-tidal CO<sub>2</sub>s were on ambulances in Houston before they were in intensive care units at hospitals. Houston EMS was the first to implement the technology, now commonly used by other ambulance programs and hospitals.<sup>29</sup>

Another area in which HFD EMS worked to improve its procedures is treatment of heart attack patients. Originally EMS rushed patients suffering from heart attacks to an ED, where a doctor called the cardiologist to prepare the catheterization lab to work on the patients. Now communication via radio is so fast that a person suffering from a heart attack gets sent directly to the cath lab to see a cardiologist upon arrival at the ED. Although lines of communication to help expedite treatment of heart attack patients began with only a few hospitals, it is now routine for heart attack patients to go straight to the cath lab in most Houston hospitals.<sup>30</sup> EMS uses the door to balloon time (D2B), which measures the time it takes to inflate the balloon used to re-establish blood flow after a patient arrives at the hospital, to help gauge its effectiveness with cardiac care. HFD EMS continually strives to lower its D2B time, which averages eighty-nine minutes, or one minute better than the national requirement.

Houston EMS became the nation's first emergency service equipped with a mobile stroke unit (MSU). The vision of Dr. Jim Grotta, a neurologist at Memorial Hermann Hospital at the Texas Medical Center and director of the Mobile Stroke Unit Consortium, the MSU was developed in conjunction with the University of Texas Medical School, Memorial Hermann, and regional stroke centers to reduce the time from onset to hospital treatment. Equipped with a portable CT scanner and operating out of the Medical Center, the specially equipped ambulance enables medical staff to determine, for example, if a patient has a bleed or a

blockage in the brain, so they know whether or not to administer clot-busting drugs, which would yield devastating consequences if the person had bleeding. Early evaluation can be critical to getting the most appropriate treatment in a timely manner to maximize the chances of recovery and quality of life after a stroke.<sup>31</sup>

The majority of Houstonians are well aware they live near one of the world's greatest medical centers, but perhaps fewer realize the critical component in an emergency will be the care they receive in the capable hands of HFD EMS before they ever reach the doors of the hospital emergency department. In the short forty-five years since HFD Emergency Medical Services came into being, the services, the technology, and the medical research it performs have revolutionized the quality of care Houstonians receive and offered a template for other cities to follow. What made Houston different from other EMS services? EMS Assistant Chief David Almaguer explains that throughout its history, the leadership in Houston set their sights higher than just being "a good ambulance service . . . they took on the role to be a leader." They took the time and effort to do research because they knew it would make a difference in thousands of people's lives, in Houston and in communities around the world who benefitted from the groundbreaking research and protocols developed in the Bayou City.<sup>32</sup>

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# *On Call by Choice: Life Stories of Houston EMS*

*By La’Nora Jefferson*

The Houston Fire Department Emergency Medical Services (HFD EMS) has pioneered emergency medical protocols, leading the way for departments across the country, but behind the history are the individuals who stand ready every day of the year to help Houstonians, no matter what their emergency or what time of the day or night. Rodney West, who became the interim Fire Chief in 2016, emphasizes, “The greatest resource of the Houston Fire Department are the people who work here. We have amazing people and a lot of them came for the same reason I did, because they wanted to help people.”<sup>1</sup>

Few of us outside the profession can truly comprehend the nature of the heroic work — our term, not theirs — that EMTs and paramedics perform on a daily basis. The Welcome Wilson Houston History Collaborative began recording oral histories with a group of HFD EMTs, paramedics, retirees, and department leaders in February 2016 to preserve the previously undocumented history of Houston EMS. Some accounts were heart wrenching, some comical, and others were stories of affirmation, but all were told with humility and gratitude for having had the chance to make a difference in even one person’s life.

*Firefighter Michael Vasquez, Capt. Karen Dupont, and HFD EMS members stand at the ready outside the Astrodome to receive evacuees from New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.*

*Photo courtesy of Diana Rodriguez.*





Being an EMT or paramedic has never been a regular eight-to-five job, and emergencies do not always occur during normal business hours. During HFD's early years the firefighters' schedule was 72 hours a week with a two shift system. In 1962 city leaders reduced their hours to 56 hours a week with a three shift system. In the late 1970s the division of responsibilities between firefighters and EMTs created a heavier workload for EMTs and paramedics, who frequently took three to five times as many calls, answering them back-to-back every other hour on average during a fourteen-hour shift while firefighters averaged two during the same period, leaving them time to relax and study for promotional exams. During this era, the city's rapid growth from annexation, the turnover rate of appointed fire chiefs, and the high volume of non-emergency calls made it difficult to moderate the work load, which grew from 46,000 calls in 1972 to approximately 60,000 in 1979. By 1991 firefighters, who were all trained at least as basic EMTs, shared responsibility for EMS calls, working 46.7 hours a week in four shifts, a schedule still in use today.<sup>2</sup>

Houston EMTs and paramedics spend a significant amount of time at their assigned stations, often more time than they spend at home. Thus, stations function as living quarters for EMTs and paramedics. Retired paramedic and Senior Captain Tom McDonald recalls that the first station where he worked in the 1980s "had a common dormitory." Only the captain had his own room. "Everybody else slept in another room, including the paramedics ... [who were] in a little corner with a little barricade and a red light that stayed on all night."<sup>3</sup>

Stations serve as a home away from home. Just like any family, they cook together, watch television, play games, exercise, and discuss sports or the trending topics of the day. They also show respect for each other's privacy and give space when desired. Retired firefighter and EMT Glen Morris explains that some people simply use time between

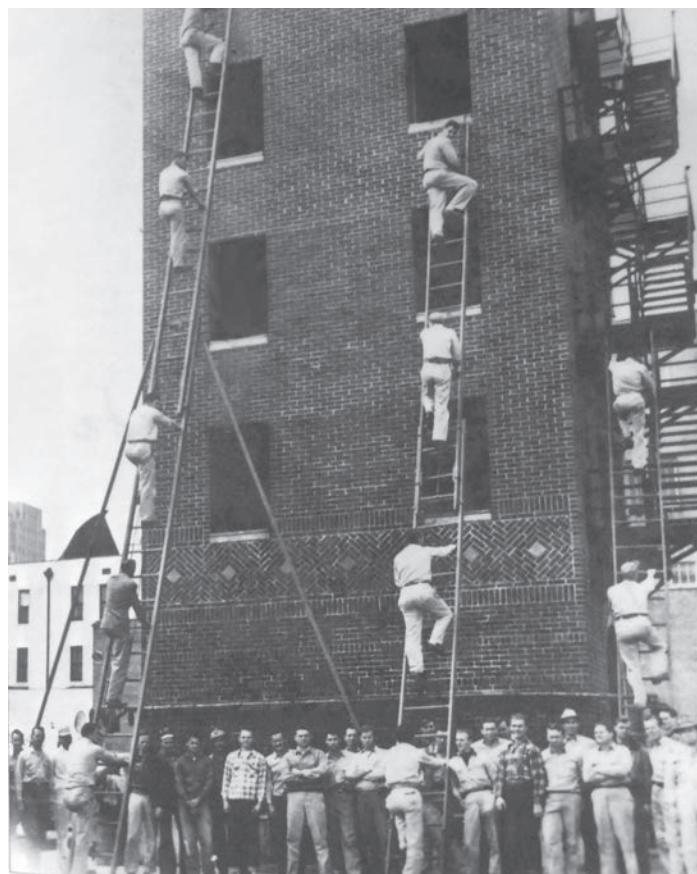
*Several people involved during the early days of EMS assembled in front of City Hall to celebrate the program's fortieth anniversary. Front row left to right are Senior Dispatcher Charlie Hall, Chief Whitey Martin's son HFD member Phillip Martin, Chief Martin's widow Doris Taylor Martin, and Bill Hausinger, dispatcher for the first HFD EMS call. Standing in back are Glen Morris, center, and Otis Owens, right, who answered the first call.*

*Photo courtesy of the Houston Fire Department.*



calls to relax, while others study for promotions or even use the time to finish school work.<sup>4</sup>

Every person in HFD EMS has unique stories to tell, from why they joined HFD to the many experiences they have had on the job, but they also share a common bond that unites them across the decades. For example, Bill Hausinger, Glen Morris, and Otis Owens were brought together when they answered Houston's first EMS call. Hausinger was destined to be a firefighter, following in his father and uncle's footsteps, who both served HFD for more than forty years. Hausinger went to his first fire at age five when he was visiting his father and fell asleep on the seat of the pumper, which was called into service. At age twenty, he joined HFD. Morris became interested in HFD when he saw a man jump out of the window of a downtown building and learned from a firefighter on the scene that they were in training. When Morris, a Navy veteran, discovered that HFD was hiring veterans, he joined the academy in 1968. Owens, on the other hand, remembers as a child that his uncle's house burned down, and he never believed that it was an accident. Nicknamed "Sherlock," Otis was always curious about fires. Responding to an HFD television ad attracting new firefighters with the promise to pay their tuition, he joined the department. After serving as a paramedic, Owens became a fire investigator for seventeen years, living up to his nickname. Morris and Owens were among the first to volunteer to be EMTs and in the first group of African Americans in HFD promoted to the rank of Chauffeur, now Engineer Operator.<sup>5</sup>



*Seeing men jump off this five-story drill tower (shown circa 1950) at the corner of Preston and Austin Streets motivated Glen Morris to inquire about joining the department.*





*A train carrying vinyl chloride and butadiene derailed causing this 1971 fire on Mykawa Road at Alameda Genoa. A subsequent explosion (boiling liquid vapor explosion or BLEVE) killed one firefighter and injured many of those present, some severely. It also separated HFD member Richard Sadler Jr. from his son and son-in-law, also firefighters, leaving him in despair until he learned they were safe. The fire resulted in formation of the HFD Haz Mat team.*  
 Photo by Othell O. Owensby courtesy of the Houston Fire Department.

Hausinger later dispatched Morris and Owens from Station 19 to respond to the city's first EMS call on April 10, 1971, at 12:30 a.m. to assist a woman in labor. The two men recall everyone trying to relax as the new EMS service went into effect at midnight, and even though they did not want to receive the first call, they knew they were well-trained and ready to deliver medical services if needed.<sup>6</sup>

That call was one of many answered by Hausinger, Morris, and Owens throughout their careers. Morris recalls once responding to a shooting at a wedding, where the guests insisted that EMS take the victim to the hospital even though the HFD members had pronounced him dead. Since they refused, some wedding guests put the man on a stretcher, forced the driver out of the ambulance, put the EMT in the back of the unit, and drove the man to the hospital with the sirens on. Morris and Owens, who served together for several years at Station 19, especially remember "Sweet Cake," a neighborhood character who called at least fifty times and went to the hospital so often that the staff recognized him. One time when he saw an ambulance coming, Sweet Cake fell out in front of the unit to be taken to the hospital. Owens and Morris often went out of their way to help people with non-emergencies, including giving them cab money to get to a doctor or hospital.<sup>7</sup>

Another man who frequently made non-emergency calls was "10 Speed." He often called to say he had chest pains and then laid down by the phone booth where he placed the call so that he could visit his sister in the hospital. Because

he called during different shifts with different firefighters on duty, the staff at Station 24, which responded, did not initially realize what he was doing. Hausinger also recalls an elderly lady who asked the department to bring a hose. When he asked her why, she explained that two dogs were stuck together and she thought the fire hose would help. Otis sums up their experiences with a warm smile, saying they "saw it all."<sup>8</sup>

Of course not all of the stories are amusing anecdotes, especially when EMS members' families are involved. Hausinger remembers when his son fell twenty feet down an elevator shaft and landed on an electrical box while doing construction work. Worried, Bill called dispatch, and they reassured him that the injury was a code one, meaning his son did not have major injuries. He updated his wife and daughter-in-law, but after speaking with them began to wonder if his fellow firefighters had lied to prevent him worrying. He added, "You're not gonna tell your own people how bad it is ... but we all know how bad it could be." After arriving at the hospital, his son came to him and said, "I'm okay, Daddy," with only a cut under his arm and a few missing teeth. Retelling the story still brings tears to Hausinger's eyes.<sup>9</sup>

At the urging of a family friend, Chief Dunn, Richard Sadler Jr. entered the fire department in 1950, beginning a legacy that his son, son-in-law, and grandson followed. When the ambulance program began, Chief C. R. "Jake" Cook insisted Sadler join. Reluctant at first, he now beams



when discussing the positive impact it had on his life. Sadler participated in one of the first EMT training classes and later the first paramedic class with his son Richard Sadler III. He shared a heart wrenching story about a time when he thought his son and son-in-law had lost their lives. They all responded to a rail car fire on October 19, 1971, on Mykawa Road, where two cars, one carrying vinyl chloride and the other butadiene, exploded. The burning cars separated Sadler from his family while he waited, praying and cursing, for what seemed an eternity to get to the other side. In that moment he made a promise to God, which he still keeps, because after crossing the track he saw the victim wore a Catholic medal and then knew his family, all Methodists, were safe. Truxton Joseph Hathaway Jr. sadly perished.<sup>10</sup>

Retired paramedic and Senior Captain Frank Mettlach had ambitions of teaching music but later realized that was not for him. He followed his brother-in-law's suggestion to join the EMS program in Brownsville, where they lived, but moved to Houston to become a career paramedic. Pointing out that it is impossible to cover the hundreds of stories he remembers, he said one night was particularly memorable because he had three calls after midnight to perform CPR. When he arrived at the first call two men were down, and he went to aid one of them who had been shot and intubated him. The police officer on the scene soon realized the other man, who was "playing dead," was the shooter and arrested him. Mettlach reflects on how lucky he was in choosing the victim and not the gunman, saying "I could've been killed there." The second CPR call was to a club off Navigation Boulevard where the patrons had a man stretched out on top of the bar inside and were already administering CPR. The only thing Mettlach remembers of the third incident is being unable to revive the unresponsive victim. He points out, "You never know when those calls come up if you can make that difference," adding that having a public trained to administer CPR until help arrives can make a critical difference in survival.<sup>11</sup>

While these incidents are memorable, others have a far deeper impact personally. Mettlach also discusses a woman in the process of moving to Houston when a group of men sexually assaulted and stabbed her, before stealing her belongings from her U-Haul and leaving her in a field.



*Frank Mettlach surveys the situation at a 1991 auto accident.*

Photo courtesy of Frank Mettlach.



*Then Paramedic David Almaguer waits to get released after being involved in an ambulance accident, circa 1993.*

Photo courtesy of David Almaguer.

Mettlach arrived on the scene at around three or four o'clock in the morning and found her severely injured. The woman asked, "Am I gonna die?" He answered, "No, I don't think so because you're still alive right now." Even though he was not sure she would live, he wanted to comfort and calm her, telling her what to expect once she arrived at Ben Taub Hospital. She sustained a tension pneumothorax, a head injury, and other wounds, but still survived. She later did her own reenactment and police caught her assailants, who were sentenced to life in prison. Mettlach continues to be impressed by her bravery.<sup>12</sup>

Reflecting on his time as a paramedic, Mettlach says, "I put my whole life into this ... It doesn't define who I am but it defines what I do and my strong feelings about treating



*Pat Kasper, at left, was called the paramedic's paramedic because he taught others the value of treating patients the way one would want their family members treated. He is joined by Richard Mann, now an Executive Assistant Chief.*

Photo courtesy of David Almaguer.



people right...Sometimes I was really tired, I was grouchy and I didn't do the right things, but for the most part I [did]."<sup>13</sup>

Assistant Chief for Houston EMS David Almaguer planned to become a ship's captain, but while attending Texas A&M University he was on the emergency care team and worked a summer job in the cardiac intensive care unit at Methodist Hospital with Dr. Michael DeBakey, who was instrumental in starting Houston's ambulance program. While Almaguer joined HFD to pay for college tuition, he eventually joined the paramedic program because they needed more people. He says he will always remember the first call he made with paramedic Pat Kasper, identified as "the paramedic's paramedic." They tended an elderly woman with the flu and viewed her illness as minor, but she felt apprehensive because it was the sickest she had ever been. Almaguer remembers that Kasper taught him how to care for people even when he did not view their situation as an emergency and helped him to realize, "[The] caring part was more important than the IV or the oxygen I gave her. All those things helped ... but what she really needed was just somebody to say, 'You're going to be okay, somebody is going to take care of you.'"<sup>14</sup>

This caring approach came down from Assistant Chief Dennis Holder, who served the department from 1957-1995. Today it is listed as the first guideline in the department's "Patient Care Guidelines and Standing Orders," issued by Dr. David Persse, HFD EMS Physician Director and Public Health Authority for the City of Houston. Called the "Holder Rule" and posted in the EMS offices, it directs personnel: "Treat patients and their families as if they are a member of your own family. (1) Consider that if this was your brother, mother, daughter, grandfather; what care you would want for them if you were not present; (2) Provide compassion, caring, friendly demeanor and reassuring tone/ words; (3) If tensions exist, strive to defuse them or find others (e.g. a supervisor) who can help; (4) Treat on-lookers and even interveners with respect; (5) Keep in mind that, as a firefighter, you provide a public service. Often, the greatest asset provided to the citizens you serve is your reassurance and caring."<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Persse began working as assistant physician director of Houston EMS in 1993 under Dr. Paul Pepe, Houston's first physician director. Persse briefly left Houston to serve as physician director of Los Angeles County Paramedic Training Institute and physician director of the Los Angeles County EMS before succeeding Pepe in 1996. Persse has been involved in many incidents in the field, including saving patients on the streets of downtown Houston and even once while he took a little time off to play hockey. One of the most noted events for the department, however, was aiding Hurricane Katrina evacuees arriving in Houston in 2005. He witnessed women, children, babies and even "young, strong, men" getting off of the buses in bad condition. While helping to care for Houston's "guest citizens," Persse sometimes slept at the Houston Emergency Center, going about three weeks without sleeping at home. He recalled walking onto the Dome floor the first time and seeing the sea of people, but "it wasn't loud—nobody was yelling, . . . it was just all of these people laid out on cots with what-

ever belongings they had left to them piled beside them, and families trying to group together and searching for other family members."<sup>16</sup> It was a deeply moving experience.

Diana Rodriguez, who is the administrative coordinator to Dr. Persse, had many notable experiences helping people arriving at the Astrodome who were covered in mud and embarrassed because they had not had a shower. She observed, "Their pride, everything was just right there—raw—and they were apologizing to *you*." People outside of EMS and the relief effort who heard the negative stories in the media would say to her, "Oh my God, you were dealing with those Katrina people." But she never had a negative experience, explaining, "Most of the people were full of gratitude. Some even managed to smile," especially after learning she was with HFD.<sup>17</sup>

A member of the Army Reserves and son of a minister, interim Fire Chief Rodney West learned about HFD's opportunities from a member of his church.

He was attracted to HFD, knowing he could excel and help people. He explains, "You're raised to help people and this was a way to get paid for something you liked doing anyway." In responding to emergencies, West explains, EMS personnel "experience the life of other people" because they go into patients' homes and neighborhoods, rather than seeing them in the sterile atmosphere of a hospital.

"You actually go to their environment and see how they're living with the emergency. You often can identify socioeconomic conditions that lead to people calling EMS." Harris County has a high number of uninsured residents who do not go to a doctor regularly and cannot properly take care of themselves, so they call EMS when medical care is needed. That said, West adds that some of the hardest things for him to deal with on the job were seeing abused children and delivering sad news to family members.<sup>18</sup>

Emergency personnel risk their lives simply going to a call; once there, they may be exposed to disease or added dangers at highway accidents, hazardous material incidents, disasters, or crimes scenes. Yet in the history of Houston EMS, the department has lost only one member while responding to an EMS call. James Louis Walls died on May 3, 1971, less than a month after the program started, when a passenger car struck the ambulance he was driving while transporting a patient to the hospital.<sup>19</sup>

Although EMS personnel can reflect on times when they made a difference in someone's life, they also experience things they would rather not remember. "There are the [stories] that stay with you that you don't want to stay [with you]. Those are the ones that come around a lot," Chief Almaguer observes. Apart from the physical demands of



*Named interim Fire Chief in 2016, Rodney West worked his way up through the ranks in the department, bringing a wealth of experiences to the job.* Photo courtesy of Alicia Breaux.



getting in an ambulance in under two minutes and working twenty-four hour shifts with multiple runs, the emotional rigor of the job also takes a toll, from the trauma and loss of life one may witness to the pressure of making split-second life-and-death decisions.<sup>20</sup>

The firefighters, EMTs, and paramedics cope with the physical and mental travail of their work in different ways. For example, Glen Morris played his guitar and says that many others played sports to clear their minds. Otis Owens read books but points out others studied or did electrical and carpentry repair work, saying the average firefighter had something he or she did on the side. Chief West stays optimistic by relying on his faith in God. He points out, “[My] dad was a pastor a long time, so [I know] a lot of things are not in my control,” adding “stress comes from feeling like you have to control certain things.” To cope with the demands of work, West practices what he calls “relational leadership,” based on creating relationships of understanding and trust between leaders and their coworkers.<sup>21</sup>

With firefighting perceived as “a macho profession,” West explains it can be problematic to admit one is struggling to handle the stress of the job. He was instrumental in obtaining a second staff psychologist for HFD, which also has a Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM) to offer support. HFD members receive help related to stresses from the job, the home, abuse, or the war front, as many in the department are war veterans. Firefighters have a high suicide rate because it becomes difficult to handle the bad experiences when they begin to reflect on them. Chief Almaguer, who is a member of the CISM team, points out that they focus on discussing traumatic experiences, which he says is the first step to dealing with them.<sup>22</sup>

Frank Mettlach spoke candidly about his experiences with job stress, confessing, “I’ve been what they call ‘burned out’ three times. I had to get some therapy to get back on track.” He believes that “long term paramedics need some



*Retired paramedic, Captain Frank Mettlach.*



*Retired Junior Captain Richard Sadler with Dr. David Persse. Sadler called being a paramedic one of the best things that ever happened in his life.*

*Photo courtesy of Diana Rodriguez.*

help. There’s so much they see and do and they get threatened. They see some things nobody should see. It’s like war a lot of times.” Nevertheless, he observes Houston EMS is “a good team” and adds, “[I] wouldn’t trade my life at EMS here for anything.”<sup>23</sup>

At the end of the day, everyone helps each other. Almaguer points out, “One of the advantages of having EMS in the fire service, is you have that family that you can go to.” Like any family not everyone gets along perfectly, but when it counts they serve each other professionally and personally.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the stress of the job, EMTs and paramedics report for work every day to serve the residents of Houston. The calls EMS responds to could be for a toothache or a baby who will not stop crying; it could be a shooting, anaphylactic shock, cardiac arrest, or a stroke when their actions save someone’s life. Why are so many willing to enter such a difficult profession? Frank Mettlach says of his experience, “You know, the adrenaline is there it’s... exciting and all, but why we really do it [is] to make a difference, and if you make a difference in five or six lives... isn’t that a goal in life?” Glen Morris reflects on his and Otis Owens’s experiences, saying, “It was worth it.” Otis adds, “It was tough but we enjoyed doing it... helping people, saved a lot of lives... a lot of lives.” Glen agrees, “That was the most rewarding thing, when someone said, ‘Y’all helped me when I needed it and I thank you for it.’”<sup>25</sup> A simple reward, but the only one needed.

Whatever the incident or how many lives they have saved, the people who work with Houston EMS do not think of themselves as heroes, just regular people trying to do the best job they can for others. And it is that humility that makes their daily sacrifices so meaningful.

La’Nora Jefferson graduated in August 2016 with a degree in history from the Honors College at the University of Houston, where she also interned at *Houston History*. Her dedication to completing the EMS project and this story in particular was invaluable.



# Lives Saved—Heroes Made

By Diana J. Rodriguez

When someone calls 9-1-1 in Houston, Houston Fire Department (HFD) EMTs and paramedics respond quickly – and there is hope.

Dr. Paul Pepe, who became Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Director in 1983, realized how much it boosted the morale of HFD members to see a patient they previously resuscitated and hear them say, “thank you!” When Dr. David Persse took over as EMS Director in 1996, he took this a few steps further. As a result, several times a month, reunions take place between survivors (or “saves”), HFD rescuers, and all who assisted them in saving a life. In Houston, all cardiac arrests are tracked, as cardiac arrest survival is an internationally recognized indicator of EMS agency performance. The survivors of all emergencies are a testament to the training and dedication of HFD members to their craft of saving lives.

Some cardiac arrest survivors and their families insist on reuniting with HFD heroes who answered their 9-1-1 call. Many express how grateful they are to the 9-1-1 calltakers who calmed them down and helped them perform CPR (cardio pulmonary resuscitation), when moments before they were frantic. They say that the moment they heard the sirens outside their door, they felt relieved that the finest

pre-hospital care was at their disposal. They recount a loved one not breathing, without a pulse, and eight to twelve EMTs and paramedics working feverishly to resuscitate their child, parent, spouse, or friend.

For over a decade, HFD EMS Patient Liaison Patricia Hilliard has tracked survivors when they are discharged from the hospital to follow-up and offer them a reunion. Scheduling these events involves coordinating with multiple firefighters’ 24-hour shifts, the HFD physician on-call, bystanders, and the 9-1-1 calltakers. Often HFD members are pleasantly surprised to hear the critical patient they did not expect to live has survived.

With the logistics arranged, the patient and family members meet each other at a designated fire station. Dr. Persse usually emcees the reunions and extends his appreciation to the survivor and family for coming to thank HFD. While reliving the worst day of their lives, patients and family members share lots of hugs and often tears of joy with their team of heroes. Each firefighter, calltaker or layperson who was a link in the Chain of Survival receives a printed commendation. Pictures are taken in front of the responding HFD apparatus and printed on the spot for each hero.

The local media often covers these heartwarming reunions.

For HFD members these sincere thanks from the families are rare, yet one of the most important rewards they will ever receive for a job well-done.

Even when a person is unable to survive a life threatening emergency, some families request a reunion to extend their deepest gratitude to the HFD team that “put their hands on my loved one.” What they witnessed still comforts them as they recall with amazing detail, the actions of HFD members. As one relative explained, “Everyone was trying so hard, but we know it was just her time.” Many times, family members describe how their loved one survived for a few more hours or days, giving them precious time to gather their family and hold their loved one’s hand, pray, or say goodbye. Those last moments that HFD gives them mean a great deal to these grieving families.

Although the countless reunions HFD EMS has hosted far surpass the space available in this magazine, the ones featured here illustrate that every call is different and every patient is different, but the gratitude of patients, their families, and HFD members for these opportunities to be reunited remains a constant.

Diana J. Rodriguez, EMT, is Administrative Coordinator for Dr. Persse. Serving HFD EMS for over twenty-four years, she is a civilian and unofficial EMS photographer who finds the reunions particularly rewarding.



Mrs. Anne Horton was resuscitated from a cardiac arrest. Having recovered, she noticed the fire station needed a new bar-b-que pit and made a donation to Medilife of Houston 501(c)(3) for one. She returns to the fire station annually to thank the men and women who saved her.

All photos courtesy of Diana Rodriguez, unless otherwise noted.





*This young lady, pictured above with her father, was struck by a drunk driver as she walked across the street with her mother. HFD worked feverishly to help her survive critical injuries. One year later, the family came to the fire station to thank the heroes that saved her life.*



*Fire Chief "Eddie" Corral, second from right, hosted a reunion dinner at Fire Station 51 in 2002 for all his rescuers, who had resuscitated him from a cardiac arrest a few months earlier. He served HFD for fifty years.*





*Thirty-five cardiac arrest survivors and rescuers attended a Survivor Luau in 2009.*



*The HFD 9-1-1 calltaker gave CPR instructions to Bob Diamond's wife who kept him alive until HFD arrived and took over CPR and advanced life support. The Diamonds used this photo for their holiday card last year.*





*Saving our own! HFD Capt. Darin Unruh went into cardiac arrest after being severely burned while fighting this house fire in 2011. HFD members rescued him and used cutting edge treatment to resuscitate him. Initially critical and in a coma for five weeks, he miraculously recovered.*

*Capt. Unruh returned to work and threw out a first pitch at Minute Maid Park, which hosts survivor reunions each year.*



*Photo courtesy of HFD.*



*Calltakers, dispatchers, first responders, EMTs, and paramedics from four different stations, and the on-call physician, worked to save eight-year-old Andrew Sprague, regaining a pulse before delivering him to the hospital. His family was told to expect the worst while he was in a coma at the hospital, but he miraculously beat the odds and showed his appreciation at his reunion in 2016.*





*A grateful mother hugs Dr. Jen Arnold from Texas Children's Hospital, which provides PediSTEPPs training free to HFD and ultimately helped save her toddler, who is shown in the photo at right.*



*In 2013 HFD members met the child and his family at a city hall celebration. The last time they saw him, he was not breathing. PediSTEPPs has trained hundreds of HFD members on pediatric high-risk scenarios in a specialized Simulation Center at Texas Children's Hospital with state-of-the-art equipment, including simulation theaters, a labor and delivery room, and debriefing rooms.*



*Jackie McKnight, a cardiac arrest survivor, met her rescuers — the 9-1-1 calltaker and firefighters — at “the breakfast klub” where she works. She said, “I love all HFD firefighters, and I am so grateful they saved my life!”*





*Jabari Telford months later.*

*Firefighters and the 9-1-1 calltaker get to meet a healthy baby Jabari. Just a few months prior, they did CPR and resuscitated him when he was delivered prematurely at home. He weighed just one pound at birth.*



*On July 20, 2004, Elizabeth Demaris collapsed at work while boarding passengers at Bush Intercontinental Airport. She received bystander CPR with help from Houston Police officer Edward Diaz. He called HFD and used the plane's automated external defibrillator (AED) to shock Ms. Demaris. At the reunion she expressed her thanks, hugging the HPD and HFD members who saved her.*



The sound of helicopter blades beating overhead draws one's eyes instinctively to the sky. Is there a traffic problem? Is it a police chase? Or is someone being rushed to the hospital? Spying the familiar red helicopter, whether the words Life Flight are visible on the exterior or not, the viewer immediately knows someone's life hangs in the balance. Thanks to the efforts of Dr. James "Red" Duke and Memorial Hermann Hospital, now Memorial Hermann, Houston became the second U.S. city to offer an air ambulance to transport critical civilian patients to the hospital. Life Flight has saved many lives, including that of my sister, Devanshi Patel, when she was involved in a terrible accident in September of 2011. An ambulance took her to the nearby West Houston Medical Center hospital, but it lacked level one trauma care facilities to stabilize her. Unresponsive and on the brink of death, she was flown to Memorial Hermann in the Texas Medical Center and resuscitated by the Life Flight nurse in the air.<sup>1</sup>

When Devanshi first came into the emergency room (ER) at Memorial Hermann she had little chance of survival. Her heart was out of alignment and both of her lungs had collapsed. The accident had also fractured her pelvis, scapula, six ribs, and her first and second cervical vertebrae, which put her at risk for paralysis. Duke began working on her immediately to ensure no further damage occurred. He stabilized her and moved her to the Shock and Trauma Intensive Care Unit (STICU). Fortunately she needed no surgery at that time. Today my sister works as a registered nurse on the trauma floor at Memorial Hermann Medical Center where Dr. Red Duke and the trauma team saved her life after being transported by Life Flight.

An outstanding surgeon, Duke saw the need for accessible medical services for severe cases and helped develop the helicopter service as the fastest way to care for and transport those patients, given their time and distance from the

# The Legendary Dr. James "Red" Duke

By Roshni Patel



*Dr. James "Red" Duke in 2007 filming one of many video programs he completed during his career.*

*Photo courtesy of David Almaguer.*

hospital's trauma care facility. Known for his affable manner, Duke dedicated his life to furthering medical science, educating the public, and personally caring for patients, all of which contributed to Houston's reputation as a world leader in medicine.

James Duke was born in Ennis, Texas, on November 16, 1928. He acquired the nickname "Red" in adolescence because of his curly red hair. He grew up among friends, with whom he stayed in touch most of his life, and learned to love the outdoors. After graduating from Hillsboro High School, Duke obtained his bachelor of science in economics at Texas A&M in 1950. He served in the U.S. Army for two years as a first lieutenant in the Sixty-seventh Medium Tank Battalion, Second Army Division in Bavaria, Germany. In 1952 he enrolled at Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary where he received his doctor of divinity degree. Although Duke originally intended to enter the ministry, his colleague Dr. Kenneth Mattox, professor at Baylor College of Medicine and Chief of Staff and Surgeon-in-chief at Ben Taub Hospital, explains, "He could not decide if he wanted to preach or be a doctor, as both appealed to him greatly." Duke became the pastor at the First Baptist Church in Vaughn, a small town in north Texas, but after delivering just a few sermons, a tornado destroyed the church. Dr. Drew Ware notes, "Whether this was testament to his ability to preach the gospel or simply God helping him decide what path to follow will forever remain a mystery."<sup>2</sup>

In 1954 Duke enrolled at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas and graduated six years later. He did his internship and residency at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas and was on duty November 22, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy and Governor John Connally were shot. Duke and Dr. Robert Shaw, the hospital's chief thoracic surgeon, attended to Gov. Connally. In this time before hospitals had ICUs, Duke stayed with



the governor for three days “continuing to resuscitate and care for him.” In a 2013 interview with CBS reporter Jeff Glor, Duke explained that the memory of that day, which he called a “hard painting,” was embedded in his mind: “[A]s I walked out [of] the room, I pulled my gloves off and threw them to a kick basin and those roses [Mrs. Kennedy received at the airport] were upside down in that kick basin and my gloves fell over them.” Glor asked, “You think about those roses?” To which Duke replied, “Mhmm...did this morning.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1970 Shaw asked Duke to help him start a surgical program at Nangarhar University in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, and Duke spent the next two years training the local physicians there. He returned to Texas in 1972 at the request of Dr. Stanley Dudrick, chairman of the new University of Texas Medical Branch at Houston. As a result of his experience in trauma care at both Parkland and in Afghanistan, Hermann Hospital soon named him director of its new trauma service. His surgical skills made a lasting impression on his colleagues, such as paramedic Frank Mettlach, who remembers a remarkable incident involving the victim of a car accident. Without being briefed on the patient’s injuries, Duke reportedly knew exactly what surgery was needed. Mettlach reports, “He didn’t even touch [the patient.] he just walked in the room. I don’t know if he could smell it or if



*Life Flight helicopters brought great changes to emergency response in Houston.*

Photo courtesy of the Houston Fire Department.

there was an aura around the patient or whatever,” adding, “I’ve seen him do amazing things.”<sup>4</sup>

Early in his career, Duke worked in conjunction with other doctors and officials in the Houston Fire Department (HFD) to get the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) department established in Houston. Assistant Chief David Almaguer recalls, “He was one of the doctors that realized how important it was to have an ambulance service that was reliable and took care of people even before they got to the hospital.” Duke assisted in early training so that the paramedics who served on the ambulances knew exactly what to do before a patient arrived at the emergency room. Almaguer goes on to say, “He didn’t want us just to be an ambulance service, he wanted us to be an extension of what the physicians needed and what they were doing.” His work, along with that of Dr. Mattox at Ben Taub Hospital and the local medical society, led to Houston EMS getting its first medical director in 1983.<sup>5</sup>

Duke respected the work of EMTs and paramedics in the field and, unlike some, was not one to disregard their paperwork regarding the status of patients arriving at the hospital. Almaguer, a paramedic at the time, observes that Duke was “rough and gruff” with the residents and doctors, but he never saw Duke mistreat the nurses and paramedics, even though the ER might be busy. Duke went out of his way to come down after surgery and, if the ambulance crews were still there, tell them what he found. “He was very good at teaching them about what was going on and why things happened,” Almaguer explains.<sup>6</sup>

In 1976 with the help of Houston philanthropist John S. Dunn, Hermann Hospital launched what became Life Flight, the second U.S. hospital-based air ambulance service following Flight for Life Colorado, which started in 1972. Duke was named Life Flight’s first medical director, enabling him to change emergency medical care for Houstonians. His goal of saving people in a timely manner instead of waiting for a critical patient to arrive at the hospital by ambulance, has proven to be a success.<sup>7</sup>

Life Flight flew its first mission on August 1, 1976. Originally the helicopter’s crew consisted of a military-trained pilot, a registered nurse who served as the leader,



*Tom Flanagan (foreground in red), now Chief Operating Officer at Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center, responded to calls for Life Flight early in his career. Prior to becoming COO he was responsible for emergency services, trauma service, and Life Flight for the twelve hospital Memorial Hermann system, helping to raise \$40 million to replace the aging fleet of air ambulances.*

Photo courtesy of Tom McDonald.



and a surgical resident who assisted the nurse and tended to the patient. Chief Almaguer remembers, “Dr. Duke was on every one of those flights,” in the beginning. Seeing him Almaguer would think, “Wow, that could happen all night, and then the next day.” Duke was so committed to Life Flight that he maintained a room at the hospital to make sure he was available.<sup>8</sup>

As the need for Life Flight grew, the hospital invested in more helicopters and crew members. Flight nurse Scott Ibster and CRNA Susan Martinez report, “There were approximately eighty flights in the first six months of operation, which rapidly increased to fifty flights per month. By the early 1980s the popularity of the helicopter for use in rapid transport was enormous. Hermann Life Flight began using Twin Star helicopters and developed two satellite bases in Beaumont and Galveston.” With the demand growing to 300 flights per month, Hermann placed helicopters at strategic points around the region within 120 miles of each other. In 1999 one helicopter was located at Hermann Hospital, one at Hooks Airport in Spring, and one in Galveston County at Clover Field Airport in Friendswood.<sup>9</sup>

Today Life Flight has a 150-mile radius and accommodates not only Houston and Harris County but also Southeast Texas and part of western Louisiana. They have twenty-one pilots, twenty-one flight nurses, eighteen paramedics/dispatchers, and eight mechanics. The Life Flight fleet, which is inspected daily, consists of six EC-145 twin-engine helicopters capable of transporting two patients. They are equipped with “Packed Red Blood cells, Liquid Plasma, ultrasound, hemostatic gauze, pelvic binders, the JETT tourniquet (created by Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center and UT Health Medical School physicians), and ISTAT (in-flight lab analysis).” This equipment and the option to deploy specialty teams, such as

pediatric or neonatal nurses, on the helicopter enables the staff to provide appropriate medical care in times of dire need. Reportedly the busiest air ambulance service in the country, Life Flight has completed well over 140,000 patient missions in its forty-year lifetime.<sup>10</sup>

Duke believed the helicopters offered an opportunity to save more lives, but others disagreed. Dr. Mattox was approached to bring helicopter ambulances to Ben Taub, but after looking at the information and statistics on transport timing, he declined. He cites both San Diego and Los Angeles as examples where experiments were conducted to see which form of transport, ambulance or helicopter, arrived at the hospital faster, and in both cities driving an ambulance proved to be the better alternative. Mattox believed this to be true even in Houston traffic, in part because the helicopter had to warm up for fifteen minutes before it could lift off and then fly to the destination where it must then have a place to land. He thought Duke was “a fool for establishing Life Flight.” Today Mattox still believes that for most situations within the city, no matter the severity, a traditional ambulance is the best method of transport to save a patient’s life.<sup>11</sup>

Dr. David Persse, EMS Physician Director and Public Health Authority for the City of Houston, believes that in some cases helicopters can be useful, such as when the person cannot be reached by ambulance in a timely manner because they are in a remote area. “One of the things I respect about Life Flight is that [the people involved] are critical thinkers,” says Dr. Persse. He agrees with Mattox that if an accident were to happen within a forty-mile radius, little time difference would be found between transport by ambulance and helicopter. Yet he also agrees with Duke on the wisdom of using helicopters when it comes to accessibility in certain circumstances. Dr. Persse cites as an example

*Life Flight transporting an accident victim to Memorial Hermann Hospital-Texas Medical Center.*

Photo courtesy of David Almaguer.







*Dr. David Persse, Public Health Authority and Physician Director for Houston EMS, and Dr. Duke worked together to modernize and coordinate response efforts of Life Flight, Memorial Hermann Hospital, and Houston EMS.* Photo courtesy of Diana Rodriguez.

a medical emergency on the northeast side of Houston by Lake Houston. A man had a heart attack there, and EMTs transported him to a nearby fire station where a helicopter was waiting to take him to the hospital. The flight time was seventeen minutes, a far shorter time than an ambulance could make the trip even at night when all the roads were clear. Houston EMS responders determine the need for Life Flight on a case-by-case basis.<sup>12</sup>

Life Flight has had one fatal crash, which occurred in 1999 as a result of manufacturing defects with the BK-117 helicopter in use at that time. The accident resulted in the loss of three crew member lives, pilot John Pittman, flight nurse Lynn Ethridge, and paramedic Mac Atteberry. Dr. Persse says he will never forget that moment and does not want to repeat it. Therefore he strictly insists that the call for Life Flight must be absolutely necessary.<sup>13</sup>

For many years, Dr. Duke appeared in regular television segments that made him famous for his advice and persona. His folksy television personality, familiar sign-off, and



*Committed to helping the public, Dr. Duke regularly appeared on TV to explain, discuss, and give expert medical advice to viewers on everyday issues. In this segment from Houston's ABC-KTRK Channel 13 he talks about the misconception surrounding potatoes and their overlooked health benefits.*

Photo courtesy of ABC- KTRK Channel 13, Houston.

youthful country mannerisms brought life and character to every episode. An Emmy-winning 1978 NBC *Lifeline Series* followed Dr. Duke for three weeks, showing the various types of trauma care he administered. The UT Health Science Center Houston asked him to film four segments of the *Texas Health Letter* in response to increased community awareness of health issues. This became a nationally syndicated show that began with reports on the local ABC station, KTRK Channel 13, educating audiences about everything from heartburn to kidney stones to trauma care. Another important TV appearance followed Tropical Storm Allison in June 2001, which flooded numerous hospitals in the Medical Center, removing them from service. Duke and Mattox, representing Houston's only level one trauma centers (Memorial Hermann and Ben Taub), appeared on television with EMS Director Persse to ask their fellow Houstonians not to drink on the Fourth of July. "July 4th is coming up, as you enjoy it with your family drink milk not beer," they told everyone. Having that airtime made an impact and no trauma cases came to the ERs that night.<sup>14</sup>

Duke and Mattox had come into the medical field about the same time from similar Baptist backgrounds and shared many interests. Although they differed in opinion on the role helicopters should play in emergency care, Mattox recalls, "We never saw each other as competitive. We saw each other as pacing one another, and then when we needed to, we'd make a statement."

Well-respected throughout the U.S. medical field, Red Duke was a lively and loveable person and an amazing doctor. His playful ways and larger-than-life personality left those around him bright and happy, especially my family at a very distressing time. When asked to describe Duke in one word, Chief Almaguer said, he was a "good-old-boy" who was always helpful and ready to teach others. Mattox called him a "character."<sup>15</sup>

Duke's impact on Houston's trauma care and medical advances should not be forgotten. He helped Memorial Hermann Hospital excel with his tenacious attitude towards furthering medicine and the standard of emergency care in Houston. His dedication to medicine and Life Flight remains memorable among those who worked with him at the Texas Medical Center or simply observed him on television. Dr. Red Duke passed away on August 26, 2015, at the age of eighty-six. The Memorial Hermann Texas Trauma Institute was renamed the Memorial Hermann Red Duke Trauma Institute in his honor on May 7, 2016. Craig Cordola, a senior executive for Memorial Hermann, remembered Dr. Duke as "a mentor, teacher, and friend to so many," saying the hospital is "privileged to work with the Duke family to continue his legacy." He is sorely missed in the hallways at Memorial Hermann and in the field of medicine.<sup>16</sup>

*"From the University of Texas  
Health Science Center in Houston,  
I'm Dr. Red Duke."<sup>17</sup>*

Roshni Patel is a senior at the University of Houston majoring in history with a minor in political science. She plans to pursue law after graduation.



# FIGHTING HOUSTON'S FIRES

By Thomas A. McDonald



*At the turn of the twentieth century the Houston Fire Department used horse-drawn steamers, like this one heading south in front of the Rice Hotel on Main Street at Texas Avenue in 1911. The steamer took water from a low pressure source and increased the pressure to improve the reach and effectiveness of the fire hose. Over the next decade, the department made the transition from horse-drawn to motorized vehicles.*

*All photos courtesy of the Houston Fire Department unless otherwise noted.*

**F**or 178 years, organized groups of firefighters have battled Houston fires, with the first volunteer bucket brigade established less than two years after the city's founding in 1836. In a town where wood was (and still is) the most abundant and convenient construction material, structure fires have always posed a serious concern.

The city's first major fire in 1859 destroyed all but one structure on a crowded downtown block of wooden buildings along Main Street between Franklin and Congress, ironically just a year after the first fire insurance policy was issued by a Houston company. The following year another major fire one block south resulted in brick structures not only replacing those that burned but also becoming the standard for new construction along the Main Street commercial corridor. It was not until 1894, though, when more than half of the all-wooden St. Joseph's Infirmary complex at Franklin and San Jacinto burned to the ground and two nuns died trying to move patients, that city leaders insisted on having a paid fire department to replace the volunteers. The career Houston Fire Department was established the following year. As the city grew, so did its fire department. Initially firefighters lived in the stations for fifteen straight days before having one day off – a cycle that kept repeating. By 1991 this had evolved into a four-shift, 46.7-hour workweek, a schedule still in use today. In 1895 the department was composed of forty-five white men. Today the number of firefighters is closer to 4,000 and includes men and women from many different ethnicities.

The largest fire (involving urban area) in the city's history consumed forty city blocks just northeast of downtown on a cold, windy night in February 1912. The Fifth Ward Conflagration started in a vacant saloon at Hardy and Opelousas, then spread southeast to Buffalo Bayou, claiming more than 100 homes, thirteen industrial plants, dozens of boxcars, a school, a church, and tens of thousands of bales of cotton awaiting rail transport. It even jumped the bayou where firefighters stopped it near the present-day intersection of Navigation and N. Sampson. Miraculously, no deaths or serious injuries occurred among firefighters or the residents displaced.

Houston's deadliest fire was reported shortly after midnight on September 7, 1943, at the Gulf Hotel on the corner of Preston and Louisiana, one of many "flop houses" downtown catering to traveling, working, or homeless men. As smoking was commonplace then, mattress fires occurred regularly, which was how the fire started. Someone quickly threw a bucket of water on a smoldering mattress, and the night manager stuck the still burning soggy sack of cotton in a broom closet at the base of the sole stairway to the hotel, which occupied the top two floors of a three-story, brick building. Not long after the lodgers had gone back to sleep, flames and smoke enveloped the open dorm areas of the hotel. Men who managed to wake before dying in their sleep raced to jump out windows, most to their deaths. When the smoke cleared, firefighters counted fifty-five bodies.

Throughout the department's history, seventy-one men



and women have made the supreme sacrifice to protect Houstonians from fire. That number, however, reflects just those whose deaths are attributable to specific incidents – fires, vehicular accidents, and heart attacks proximate to a stressful firefight or training drills. Yet, dozens of additional HFD firefighters' deaths are presently recognized as job-related by the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) due to illness – typically cancer – presumed to have been acquired from doing the work of their chosen profession. Such disease is the greatest latent risk posed to firefighters active or retired today.

The photos shown on these pages represent a brief visual history of the department, and the men and women who

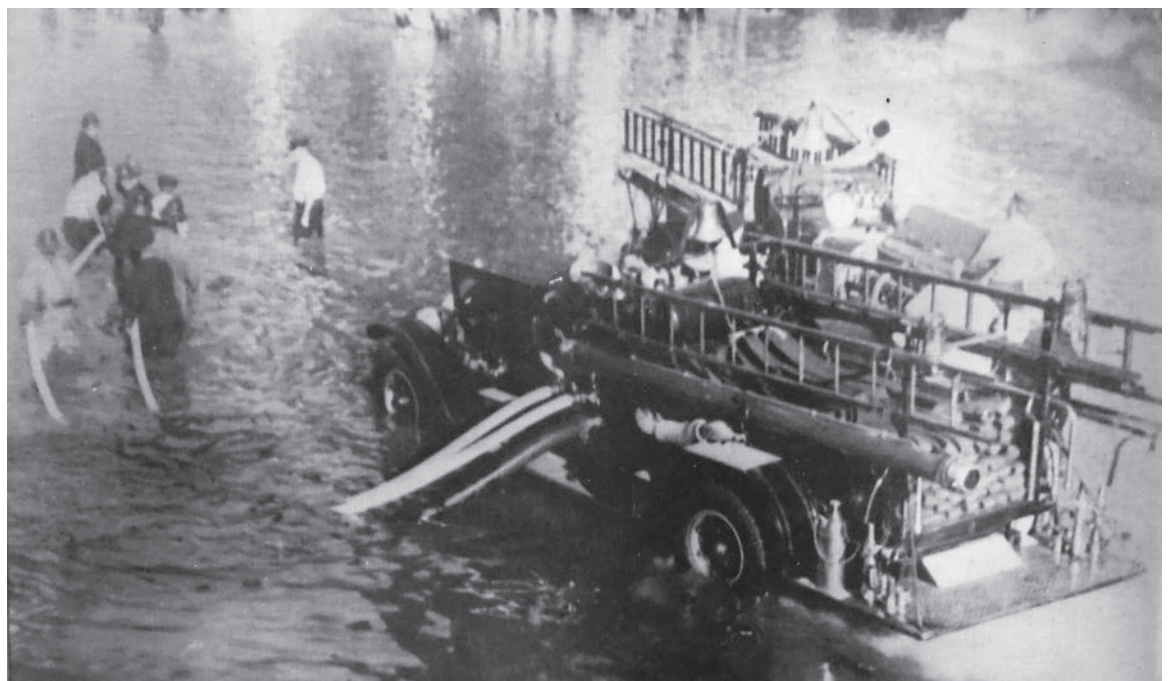
protect Houstonians every day. To learn more about the department's history, visit the Houston Fire Museum at 2403 Milam Street, housed in the original Station 7 built in 1898. [www.houstonfiremuseum.org](http://www.houstonfiremuseum.org).

**Tom McDonald** is president of the non-profit Houston Fire Museum, Inc., but spent twenty-six years as a member of the Houston Fire Department (1981-2008) fighting fires, as well as serving as a paramedic and dispatcher, retiring at the rank of Senior Captain. While on the job, he also served as HFD's last director of the museum (now staffed by the non-profit corporation) and, during his nearly three-decade affiliation with the museum, edited three books about the HFD. He took his first fire pictures at age fourteen.



National insurance underwriters in 1910 advised the city that a fire truck that could direct water into the upper floors of new tall buildings downtown was badly needed, so HFD ordered this vehicle, received about the time of this photo in 1912. It became HFD's only water tower, called such because the boom would elevate to vertical and extend to fifty feet above ground. Hoses then were connected at ground and piping carried water to the nozzle, which could be directed from the ground. By 1920 the truck was motorized and remained in use until the mid-1960s. Today it is the HFD's most unique truck and part of the Houston Fire Museum's collection.

Major floods in 1929 and 1935 plagued downtown Houston until the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers created the earthen Addicks and Barker Reservoirs to control water destined for Buffalo Bayou. HFD crews pumped floodwaters directly from downtown streets to fight fires during the 1935 flood.







*HFD's motorized water tower applies the highest stream out of at least five during a multiple-alarm fire downtown in the 1930s. When firefighters deem a structure unsafe to fight a fire from inside it, "master" streams from outside are used. The amount of water being applied on this blaze just by the visible exterior streams exceeds 1,500 gallons per minute.*

*The Woodway Square Apartments fire on July 31, 1979, was the first 7-alarm fire in department history, the largest modern-day conflagration to date. More than 300 units in the mostly wood-shingle-roofed complex were destroyed and led to a city ordinance restricting use of such materials.*



*Weary firefighters survey the aftermath after the five-story Waddell Furniture Building at Prairie and Fannin burned to the ground just before dawn on March 22, 1938, in what has been deemed one of the most spectacular fires in the city's history. Intense radiant heat from the inferno and collapse resulted in serious damage to at least sixteen other structures, including the adjacent Christ Church Cathedral.*





*Just days after the HFD's worst day in history – May 31, 2013 – a memorial service was held at Reliant Park for four firefighters killed during a roof collapse while fighting a fire at a motel on the Southwest Freeway near Hillcroft. The HFD's Pipe & Drum Corps leads the procession down Kirby Drive honoring Captain Matthew Renaud, Engineer Robert Bebee, Firefighter Robert Garner, and Firefighter Anne Sullivan. Garner and Sullivan's captain Bill Dowling was rescued from certain death but lost his legs and suffered severe brain trauma from lack of oxygen during the tragedy.*

*Photo courtesy of Tom McDonald.*

*The Pipe and Drum Corps wears the Houston, Texas Bluebonnet tartan and performs at award ceremonies, memorials, and parades in addition to funerals.*





*The city's most recent apartment complex conflagration occurred on March 25, 2014, on West Dallas and Montrose. Fortunately, no residents had moved in yet, but exposed wood-framing throughout much of the interconnected complex of 396 units allowed the blaze to spread rapidly and the entire project lay in ruins within hours. The crew of HFD Tower 18 received instant world-wide notoriety when uploaded videos taken from a nearby office showed them rescuing a construction foreman from a third-floor ledge just as a wall of flames approached him.*

*Photo courtesy of Tom McDonald.*

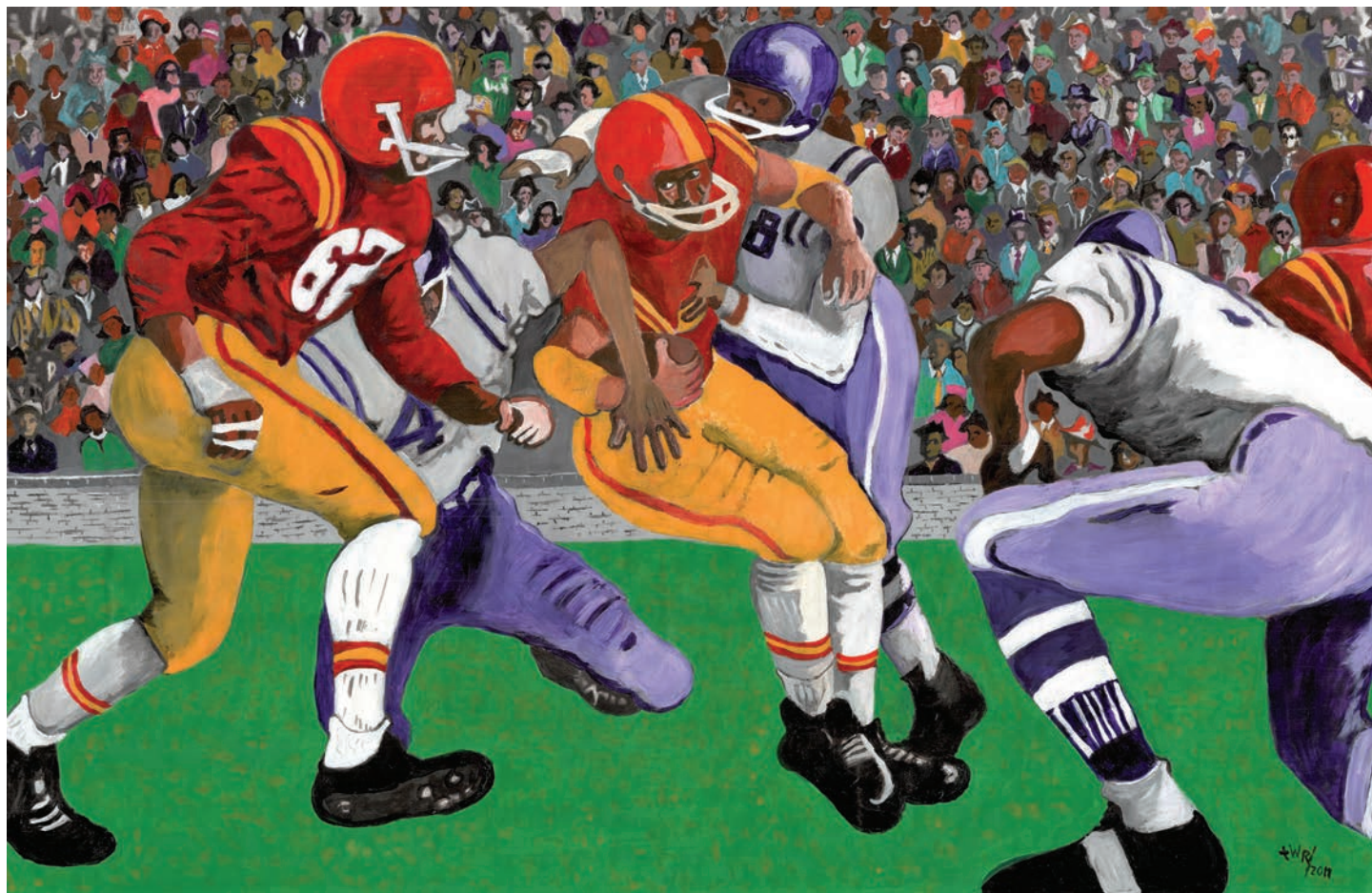


*The Houston Fire Museum is housed in the oldest firehouse still standing in the city. The first fire station built after HFD became a career city department in 1895, former Fire Station No. 7 answered fire calls from its Milam Street location from 1899 to 1969, going from horse-drawn rigs to trucks so tall the floor had to be dug out to fit them. City Council deservedly gave it a second life as the museum just over a decade after its fire doors closed. In continuous operation since the early 1980s, the museum was an HFD operation initially but since the 1990s, has been leased and operated by the non-profit organization Houston Fire Museum, Inc. (HFMI). In 2015 HFMI bought the property from the city and recently embarked on a million-dollar-plus preservation of the nationally, state, and city recognized historic structure.*



# The Turkey Day Classic, Houston's Biggest Football Rivalry

By Aman Washington and Justin Thompson



*Dr. Thurman W. Robins's painting Thanksgiving Turkey Day Classic commemorates the game's legacy. The Jack Yates Lions of Third Ward are in crimson and gold, and the Phillis Wheatley Wildcats of Fifth Ward are wearing purple and white. Photo courtesy of Dr. Thurman W. Robins.*

One of the largest and most diverse cities in the nation, Houston was once a place separated by race. Today when thinking about Houston's Third, Fourth, and Fifth Wards, where many African Americans settled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many people may overlook the contributions these wards made to the fabric of Houston's history—particularly as labels used to support gentrification come to mind, such as poverty, minorities, and a waste of valuable land. Although historically African Americans dealt with discriminatory laws and treatment, they made the best of what they were given, usually the worst of the worst, and made something beautiful of it. Such is the case with the Turkey Day Classic.

The annual Thanksgiving Turkey Day Classic football game is one of America's most interesting stories of community building and agency, but few people today know about it. At one time the talk of Houston, the annual football game between rivals Jack Yates High School of the Third Ward and Phillis Wheatley High School of the Fifth Ward

has a rich history that stems from the growth of predominantly Black neighborhoods during Reconstruction, the Great Migration, and the post-World War II era.

We had the pleasure of interviewing five graduates from Jack Yates High School and eight graduates of Phillis Wheatley High School to learn about the Turkey Day Classic era, their schools, and their communities. Deloris Johnson, a 1958 graduate of Yates, and Loretta Compton Williams, a 1959 graduate of Wheatley, orchestrated the interviews so that we could speak to people with various roles in the Classic. Yates Lions Samuel Taylor and Rev. Donald Dickson were former standout football players, Dr. Thurman Robins played in the band, Ms. Johnson was the captain of the J. D. Ryan Kadettes drum corps, named for Yates's first principal, and Thelma Robins Gould was the Kadettes' captain. Wheatley Wildcats Edwin Bay and Ralph Jones played on teams that competed in the Classic, Betty Taylor-Thompson was a cheerleader, and Algenita Davis was on the drill team. Willie Jordan,





*As the Turkey Day Classic gained popularity into the 1960s, the crowd became so dense with fans from both sides as well as unbiased spectators that some had to watch the game from the track surrounding the field. This game in 1957 ended with Yates taking the victory 12-6.*

*All photos courtesy of Yates and Wheatley High Schools unless otherwise noted.*

Ralph Buggs, Peggy Stratton-Sales, and Ms. Compton Williams were students who took part in the game's festivities.

When we met, both groups filled the room with a sense of family and pride. Each interview began with warm smiles and hugs and swiftly became walks down memory lane. The most prominent theme in the discussions was their overwhelming pride to have attended Jack Yates and Phillis Wheatley High Schools, to have grown up in Houston's Third and Fifth Wards, and to have participated in the great Turkey Day Classic.

## A HISTORY OF THE SCHOOLS

After slavery was abolished in Texas in 1865, many former slaves from areas surrounding Houston, other parts of Texas, and Louisiana migrated to Houston, many on foot, in search of opportunity. Many Blacks settled in what became known as Freedman's Town, one of the first independent Black communities in Houston, located in Fourth Ward.<sup>2</sup> Although African Americans were segregated and lacked the same opportunities as Whites, Fourth Ward quickly became the epicenter of Black prosperity. In 1893, Booker T. Washington High School opened there as Houston's first Black high school.

With the expansion of Jim Crow laws in the South at the

*“Oh! What a glorious time!  
What a magnificent happening  
for the community. The [Turkey  
Day] Classic was rich with  
pageantry, glamour, splendor,  
and entertainment.”*

– Thurman W. Robins, Ed. D.<sup>1</sup>

turn of the twentieth century, African Americans took part in the Great Migration to escape oppression, but not all went to the North, Midwest, or West Coast. Tens of thousands found their way to Houston between 1900 and 1930, increasing the city's Black population from 14,608 to 63,337. Third and Fifth Wards, in turn, developed their own thriving business districts. With this increase

in population, the school district opened Jack Yates High School in 1926 and Phillis Wheatley one year later.<sup>3</sup>

Segregation limited the ways Blacks and Whites could interact, including in sports. Consequently, Black schools established the Texas Interscholastic League for Colored Schools, later the Prairie View Interscholastic League, in the 1920s, which provided a format for the schools to play one another. Phillis Wheatley and Booker T. Washington played the first Turkey Day Game in 1927, and for a few years the three Black Houston high schools had set games on select holidays. Yates and Wheatley played on Armistice Day, Wheatley and Washington on Thanksgiving Day, then Washington and Yates on Christmas Day.<sup>4</sup>

This trend continued until 1940 when the league created districts and a playoff system to determine a state champion, effectively eliminating the Washington versus Yates Christmas Day game. Starting at that time,





*The Yates High School drill team the Ryan Kadettes was named for the school's first principal, J. D. Ryan. Deloris Johnson, far left, and Thelma Robins (now Gould), top right, participated in the interviews for this article.*



*Captains from Wheatley and Yates shaking hands at the coin toss of another legendary Turkey Day Game.*

the Thanksgiving Day game alternated between Yates, Washington, and Wheatley. Dr. Thurman Robins attributes the three schools' play style to the game's transcendent popularity, stating, "[The] teams employed a wide open offensive style of play with backs spinning, a wide variety of end runs and laterals, reverses, use of the forward pass."<sup>5</sup> Although many people attended the Thanksgiving game, nothing compared to the crowds who came out to watch the Yates and Wheatley matchup. Everyone could see the budding rivalry growing between the two schools so the Houston Independent School District (HISD) sought to capitalize. In 1946, after a brief period of rotating the game, HISD decided to make Yates and Wheatley the permanent Turkey Day Game competitors, intensifying the rivalry between the two schools.

The first game between the Jack Yates Lions and the Phillis Wheatley Wildcats was held in 1927 at Barr's Field

with about 1,000 people in attendance. The two young schools duked it out in front of the large crowd and Yates came away with the first victory, 20-6.<sup>6</sup> In 1948, two years after HISD designated their game the Thanksgiving Day rivalry, the schools played their third Turkey Day Game at the Public School Stadium (later Jeppesen and then Robertson Stadium in Third Ward) in front of nearly 17,500 fans, a huge crowd. Yates alumnus Samuel Taylor describes the crowd, saying, "The fans were so loud, [and] the stadium was so loud!"<sup>7</sup>

By its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s the Turkey Day Classic attracted over 20,000 people on a regular basis. The largest recorded crowds turned out in the early 1960s, with a whopping 40,000-plus fans attending in 1961, and 37,000 fans cheering on their teams in 1962. Only one other high school football game drew a crowd of that capacity, a one-time all-star game held in Chicago. People knew that to see the Turkey Day Game you had to get in line at the box office early. "Coming from Fifth Ward, you had to leave home early that morning if you wanted to get a seat in the classic," Dr. Robins recalls. He tells the story of Wheatley's basketball coach Jackie Carr taking his aunt, who came from out of town, to the game. After she insisted they go, Carr told her, "We'll have to leave early." Robins continues, "[B]y the time she got dressed and all it was after 12 o'clock ... [and] it was halftime before they got in the stadium. They didn't get a chance to see the game, much of the game, because they left too late," thus emphasizing the game's overwhelming popularity and the importance of punctuality to get a seat.<sup>8</sup>

## TRADITIONS

The Turkey Day Game evolved into Turkey Day Week for both schools, with numerous school events planned before the game. The early morning Thanksgiving Day breakfasts and parades before the game created some of the fondest





*The Wheatley Wildcat cheerleaders had a busy week leading up to the Turkey Day Game. Their preparations included ensuring every aspect of their uniform was in pristine condition. Betty Taylor (now Taylor-Thompson), one of the Wheatley interview participants, is center front.*

memories for people who lived during the Turkey Day Classic era. The breakfast included a feast, lots of cheering, and the crowning of Miss Alumna, while the parade included the school marching bands, floats, and fine convertible cars, among other things.

The week leading up to the Turkey Day Game for Phillis Wheatley and Jack Yates, as well as their surrounding communities, was nothing short of fantastic. Alumni from both schools traveled from afar to take part in the fun of another Turkey Day Classic. The entire week was filled with anticipation that culminated at each school's respective pep rallies, featuring hundreds of boisterous students yelling at fever pitch along with cheerleaders leading chants, and their bands providing tunes. Each team's head coach and captains gave speeches that ignited the crowd, fueling loyalty and pride that overflowed into game day.

At Wheatley High School starting in 1950, the school hosted a Thanksgiving Day Breakfast feast that continued until the schools stopped playing on the holiday. This breakfast began at 7:00 a.m., celebrated the crowning of Miss Alumna with guest appearances from famous alumni, and was featured on Houston's local radio station KCOH. Music from records added to the atmosphere, and "the aroma of freshly cooked eggs, grits, crispy bacon, and hot buttered biscuits filled the nostrils."<sup>9</sup> Intermittent cheers and yelling kept the atmosphere upbeat in between remarks from the principal, student body president, alumni president, and Miss Alumna herself. After the breakfast, enthusiasm and spirits of the students and alumni were heightened as many moved on to spectate or participate in the parade.<sup>10</sup>

Both schools had huge parades on Thanksgiving Day along streets lined with Black-owned businesses. Yates's parade traveled down Third Ward's Dowling Street, and Wheatley's parade navigated down Lyons Avenue in Fifth Ward. The Yates parade featured the marching band,



*Miss Yates, Aurelia Arceneaux, the Queen of Lionland, waves to the crowd of over 25,000 at Jeppesen Stadium.*

cheerleaders, the Ryan Kadettes drill team, the majorettes, beautiful floats, and Miss Yates and her court in fine cars. The Wheatley parade included the Wildcat marching band, their majorettes, the Purple and White Squadron drill team, stunning floats, and Miss Wheatley and her court. Notable faculty and staff, as well as outstanding members of the community and excited on-lookers, turned out for both schools. "The Yates Parade would go down Dowling. And everybody would get their outfits on. Wheatley would go down Lyons Avenue [in] convertible purple cars," Willie Johnson recalled.<sup>11</sup>

The Turkey Day Game became the highlight of each year, not only for the Black community, but for all of Houston. More than the average sporting event, it devel-





*Wheatley's drill team, The Purple and White Squadron, was named in honor of the school's colors.*

oped into a big social gathering. People saved all year to buy beautiful and handsome outfits for the game. Yates and Wheatley alumni alike remember that planning outfits started long before football season. It was so important that "...[the students] had been planning what they were going to wear from one year to the next and putting it in layaway," according to Thelma Robins Gould. Willie Johnson of Wheatley said, "They would save money the whole year to buy a big outfit."<sup>12</sup> It was equal to, if not better than, one's Sunday best. Some Yates graduates even remember their outfits for the Turkey Day Game being more important than their Easter outfits.

At halftime of every game, the two schools' marching bands, corps, majorettes, and drill teams went head to head in a battle of their own, mirroring the rivalry between the football teams. One of the highlights of this great halftime show was the crowning of Miss Yates and Miss Wheatley. Each school tried to outdo the other during the crowning with the best cars for the queen and her court. One of the most memorable halftime shows occurred during the 1958 Turkey Day Game. Miss Yates, Carolyn Wilkins (now

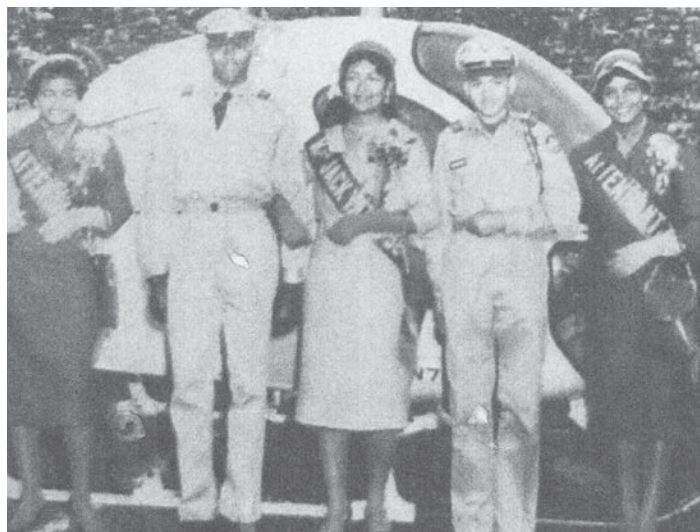
Wilkins-Greene), along with her two attendants made an unprecedented entrance, flying down in a helicopter. Dr. Wilkins-Greene describes the excitement upon landing, "I was kind of like Alice in Wonderland, it was quite a moment when we stepped out, even Wheatley's side erupted!" Willie Johnson typifies Wheatley's reaction, saying, "I would have to confess when Carolyn Wilkins from Yates came out in a helicopter, we threw in the flag. We threw in the white flag."<sup>14</sup> Needless to say Yates won that year's halftime competition and that exhibition still is and forever will be the talk of the town.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

These rivalries were so popular because they extended beyond the schools and into the communities. It cannot be overstated how very proud each of the respective communities were and how hard they worked to make their community and their school the best. Ralph Buggs, Wheatley Class of 1959 explains, "The other thing about the game, it wasn't a game between two teams. It was a game [between] the neighborhood[s]." This spirit was passed along to everyone and was especially taught in the classroom. Former Yates football players recall neighbors and other members of the community saying things like, "If y'all don't win today don't bother coming home." This game meant a lot to the community.<sup>15</sup>

Prior to the 1950s Houston was heavily segregated. The Yates group explains that Blacks could not cross Cullen Street that runs between the stadium where they played the game and the University of Houston. Many of the standard conveniences found at White football games were not afforded to Blacks, such as an ambulance waiting outside the stadium for precautionary measures. Nonetheless, Collins Funeral Home, owned by a parent of students at Jack Yates High School, provided an ambulance at the game.<sup>16</sup> Speaking to the unity of the neighborhood, Mr. Collins took it upon himself to be ready to take care of any injured players if needed.

The immense number of people who came to watch Yates play Wheatley generated a significant amount of revenue for HISD; however, the vast majority of the money went to



*In 1958 Carolyn Wilkins of Yates and her court made their entrance by helicopter. No entrance before or after that created such a stir.*



the White schools instead. The Yates and Wheatley game was so popular, in fact, that even White Houstonians came to watch the two Black schools play, but true to Jim Crow customs, the races were separated at the game. Thurman Robins remembers, “They had a reserved section for whites. At every game. And the reserved sections were some of the best seats in the house, like the fifty yard [line], for whites.”<sup>17</sup> The Black schools, including Yates and Wheatley, received secondhand jerseys, uniforms, football pads, and books, rarely seeing any revenue from these games. Even with these unfair circumstances that could be a setup for failure, students and athletes at Yates and Wheatley persevered and produced some of the best students and athletes (in the classroom and on the field) in Houston and the nation.

*“If you went to Yates you didn’t wear purple and white, and if you went to Wheatley you didn’t wear crimson and gold. Nor would you be caught in Fifth Ward wearing crimson and gold, and you dare not be in Third Ward and wear purple and white...”*

— Deloris Johnson<sup>13</sup>

The spirit of resilience and determination is one thing that can be taken from reading *Requiem for a Classic: Thanksgiving Turkey Day Classic* and from the interviews with graduates of both schools. The leadership at Yates and Wheatley insisted on academic excellence and failure was not an option. Thelma Robins Gould humbly declares, “I felt after coming from Jack Yates, I felt that I could compete anywhere I went.” This sentiment, which her classmates shared, was affirmed when Gould became one of the first African American exchange students to attend Muskingum University in New Concord, Ohio. No matter how tall the task or how great the obstacle, they felt they were equipped to get through it. Dr. Betty Taylor-Thompson speaks to the uniqueness of her studies, affirming, “There is no education like [the one] we got at Phillis Wheatley Senior High School.”<sup>18</sup>

The segregation of schools was not entirely a story of hard times and oppression. Houston’s Turkey Day Classic demonstrates the strength of the Black community and its ability to produce greatness despite segregation.

## END OF AN ERA

Two factors contributed to the demise of the Turkey Day Classic. The first occurred when Yates opened its new building in 1958 and HISD spitefully moved Wheatley’s Principal John E. Codwell to Yates to replace Principal William Holland. Following his twenty-one years at Yates, seventeen of them as principal, Holland was demoted to



*To the dismay of the Wheatley and Yates communities, Dr. John E. Codwell, was transferred from Wheatley to Yates in 1958.*



*Punished for his outspokenness, William S. Holland was demoted from principal at Yates to Ryan Middle School when the new Yates High School building opened in 1958.*

principal of Ryan Middle School due to his outspokenness for his students. This change severely impacted both the Third and Fifth Ward communities, creating an unstable leadership situation at Wheatley and causing unrest at Yates, as some students threatened to go on strike. Some hoisted signs after Codwell’s appointment that read, “No Holland, No School.” Rev. Donald Dickson, explained, “It killed the school spirit.”<sup>19</sup>

The second factor that ultimately brought an end to the tradition was the integration of public schools in the mid-1960s. After integration, the Prairie View Interscholastic League schools became part of the University Interscholastic League (UIL), which took over scheduling. The UIL required regular season games end before Thanksgiving, thereby eliminating the Classic.<sup>20</sup> Integration also brought changes to the neighborhoods as people and businesses moved to areas of town previously closed to them. Although Yates and Wheatley still play each other, the rivalry has never been the same.

In 1970 the University of Houston purchased Jeppesen Stadium and hosted many home games there before demolishing it in 2012 to make way for a new stadium.<sup>21</sup> As development and gentrification change the face of the area around the university, many residents of Houston’s Third Ward are watching the remnants and history of their once vibrant community disappear forever. Likewise, in Fifth Ward, the once thriving business district at Lyons and Jensen stands largely vacant, leaving only a memory of what once was. Although the two high schools have both moved from their original locations, the memories and stories of the great Turkey Day Classic games between the Jack Yates Lions and the Phillis Wheatley Wildcats will always be cherished by those who had the pleasure of being part of this great era.

**Aman Washington** is from Buffalo, New York, and a senior at the University of Houston majoring in history.

**Justin Thompson** is a native of the Third Ward and an intern at *Houston History* majoring in human resources development at UH.



# The Tatcho Mindiola Jr. Collection: A Narrative

By Lisa Cruces and Carlos L. Cantú

In May 2015 Houston native Dr. Tatcho Mindiola, Jr., the long-time Chicano activist, sociology professor, and director for the Center for Mexican American Studies, retired from the University of Houston (UH) after forty years of service. Months later he donated his papers, over sixty boxes, to the Hispanic Collections at the University of Houston Special Collections. The papers will provide invaluable resources to researchers of sociology, history, education development, community formation, ethnic studies, Chicana/o studies, black and brown relations, and the Mexican American community in Houston.

Anastacio “Tatcho” Mindiola, Jr., grew up in a northern Heights neighborhood, where he and his family endured and overcame numerous racial obstacles faced by many in Houston’s Mexican American community in the 1950s. After graduating from high school in 1957 and briefly attending South Texas Junior College, Mindiola enlisted in the military. During his deployment overseas his interest in higher education and American political affairs increased, and his interaction with college-educated servicemen reinforced his ambition to return to school. Upon completing his tour of duty, he used the G.I. Bill’s educational assistance to enroll in the business school at the University of Houston. Before graduating, however, Mindiola realized he did not care for a business career; he was more interested in the study of human social relationships and institutions. Mindiola graduated from the master’s program in sociology at UH in 1970 and continued his education at Brown University, pursuing a doctorate degree in sociology and working at the University of Houston while he completed his dissertation. By 1974, the starting point of the Tatcho Mindiola Collection, he began his long career as a college professor, building a reputation as a champion of the Mexican American community and expert on the scholarship of race relations in Houston.<sup>1</sup>

Mindiola, one of the first Mexican American professors hired at UH, entered the profession during a time of

social and political upheaval in the United States. Students of color throughout the country boycotted high schools, and college-aged students took over university buildings to protest and demand, among other concessions, the creation of ethnic studies programs, including Chicana/o Studies and the hiring of Mexican American professors. Students demanded courses that spoke to the concerns of Mexican American communities and to study relevant literature about people who looked like them.<sup>2</sup>

Mindiola began his career when the corpus of Mexican American scholarship was relatively small and Chicana/o Studies courses were first being introduced at UH. Guadalupe “Lupe” Quintanilla, the first director of the Mexican American Studies Program, had begun to develop courses and recruit Mexican American faculty in 1972. Mindiola built on Quintanilla’s efforts and expanded the number of courses UH offered, including The Mexican American Experience Through Film, Race Relations Through Film, Readings in Mexican American Studies, Chicano Social Issues, and Hispanics in Houston. Mindiola also worked with other Chicana/o and like-minded Anglo colleagues to produce sociological and historical works, such as “Chicanos and the Legislative Process: Reality and Illusion in the Politics of Change” (1982), “Voters and Non-Voters:

A Case Study of Mexican Americans in Houston” (1983), “Higher Educational Needs of Mexican Americans and Blacks in Texas” (1986), and “Chicano-Mexicano Relations” (1986). Sources related to the development of these university courses, from the 1970s to 2010, and the hard-to-find publications can be found in the Teaching and Research Series of the Mindiola Collection.<sup>3</sup>

Initially designated the Mexican American Studies Program, the Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS) at UH was formally established in 1972 by Dr. Quintanilla but truly expanded under Tatcho’s tenure, from 1980 to 2015. Years in the making, CMAS was the result of the 1960s and 1970s civil rights movement and



*Tatcho Mindiola Jr. and his siblings in the 1940s.*



students' demand for more representation at the university level. Correspondence, artwork, organizational records, and photographs in the Mindiola Collection as well as the UH Center for Mexican American Studies Records chronicle the Center's early years and significant accomplishments. These accolades include the creation of a visiting scholars program, a graduate fellowship program, and successful lobbying for line item appropriations. The Center also established the Academic Achievers program, intended to decrease high school dropout rates and increase admission to the University of Houston.

The Mindiola Collection also documents an infamous tenure dispute between Mindiola and the university through correspondence, litigation papers, and other documents. Late in the 1970s and shortly before Dr. Mindiola took over leadership of CMAS, he became involved in a battle for promotion and tenure, which eventually led to the filing of a discrimination lawsuit. After several years of legal back and forth, and multiple instances of steadfast refusal by University of Houston System President Ed Bishop to settle the matter out of court, Professor Mindiola was granted tenure with promotion to associate professor. The entire affair lasted from 1979 to 1985.<sup>4</sup>

In the midst of his struggles to obtain tenure, Mindiola persevered on another front, securing financial support for CMAS. Beginning in 1983, three years into his role as the director of the Center, Tatcho began lobbying the Texas State Legislature for a line item appropriation to sustain Chicano Studies at UH. Correspondence and other documentation within the collection reveal how the request underwent several challenges and at times wavering support from university leadership. Ultimately, with the help of two sympathetic state representatives, particularly Roman



*Photographs make up one of the many rich resources documenting Mindiola's career. Left to right are Professors Jorge Bustamante, Armando Gutierrez, and Tatcho Mindiola.*

Martinez, Tatcho successfully secured the appropriation in the 1987 legislative session.<sup>5</sup>

Inspired by his father's support of the civil rights movement and interest in local political affairs, Mindiola began his commitment to community activism in the late 1960s as he spent time on the UH campus and was exposed to the university's politicized climate. When he began teaching at UH in the mid-1970s, he served as chair of the Harris County La Raza Unida Party (LRUP), the Chicana/o-led third party, from 1974 to 1976. LRUP, established by members of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), emerged as part of the group's shift into Chicana/o political self-determination in Texas. MAYO, founded by college and barrio youth in 1967, led the forefront in educational and, later, political struggles in Texas. By 1970 MAYO redirected its strategy toward political power in Texas. By the time Mindiola chaired the Harris County LRUP, its political campaigns had spread to other parts of the Southwest and as far north as Wisconsin, Illinois, Nebraska, and Michigan. Mindiola collected many important items related to the Movimiento, including Chicana/o newsletters, photographs, correspondences with Chicano and Chicana leaders, political buttons, and pamphlets – these items and numerous LRUP institutional papers and related correspondence are available in the Community Service Series of the Mindiola Collection.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Mindiola's life has always been one of service and advocacy and this can be seen in the Community Service Series. Two national organizations prominently represented include the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), a nonprofit civil rights

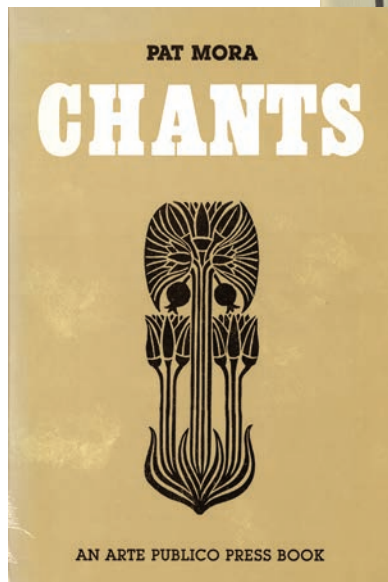
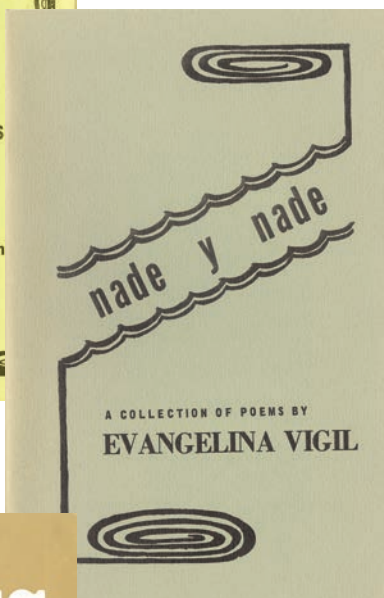
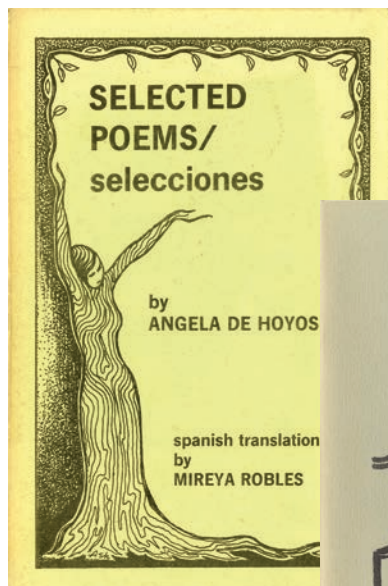
# MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES



University of Houston

*An early pamphlet advertising Mexican American Studies at UH.*





*Select texts authored by Latina authors found in the Mindiola Collection.*

All photos courtesy of Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.

organization formed in 1968 to protect the rights of Latinos in the United States, and the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS).

Involved in leadership roles with each organi-

zation throughout his career, Mindiola served as chair of NACCS for two terms, 1987-1988 and 1988-1989, and as a board member with MALDEF in the late 1990s. This series is rich with programs, correspondence, reports, and ephemera related to the activities of the organizations and Tatcho's contributions to them.

City, political, media, and business leaders consulted with Professor Mindiola because of his expertise on the Mexican American community and race relations in Houston. As part of his commitment to community service, the college professor pursued large-scale studies to better understand the concerns of the communities of color in Houston. From 1980 to 1985 Mindiola produced an in-depth homicide study

for the Houston Police Department, where he conducted research to examine the motivation of violence and the origins of Spanish-surnamed victims. In 1982 Mindiola conducted a year-long oral history project dealing with race relations at Houston's Maxwell House Coffee plant to find the sources of tension between Black, Brown, and White workers. From 1988 to 2003 Mindiola, with the help of his students, conducted exit poll surveys for Mexican Americans in Houston to analyze the Mexican American community and their political interests. And from 1981 to 1993 he produced several U.S. legislative studies to examine the role and productivity of the Mexican American Caucus, based on oral history interviews. The collection contains extensive sources for each of these studies, among others, in the Community Service Series. It includes raw data in the form of surveys, oral histories – some of which are already transcribed – and preliminary drafts of these studies.

Because Mindiola devoted much of his career to research and to the advancement of scholarship about people of color, his collection not only reflects this commitment but also includes an invaluable wealth of hard-to-find sources. He donated rare conference papers, limited-run studies and publications, short-run newsletters, ephemera, photographs, and edited drafts with marginalia. The collection includes countless demographic studies dealing with communities of color in the U.S., extensive memorabilia of famous singer Selena Quintanilla, and early drafts and research by Arnolde de León, former dean and now distinguished professor of history emeritus at Angelo State University. In addition, throughout his career Mindiola encouraged and supported the work of Chicanas and other women of color. This collection includes correspondence between prominent community leaders, like Maria Jimenez; academic colleagues, such as Angela Valenzuela; and rare copies of Chicana newsletters, pamphlets, and political flyers. This material, some of it previously available only at the UT-Benson Latin American Collection in Austin, Texas, and in out-of-state archives, can be found in the Community Service and Teaching and Research Series.

Professor Mindiola's life work continues. He remains active and engaged with the academy and greater Houston community. When asked how he feels about his collection finding a home and being saved for future scholars, Mindiola stated, "I'm flattered that my materials are being preserved and that they are contributing to the history and studies of Mexican American Studies. I remember a time when that was not the case."

"As an academic," Mindiola reflected, "I want the history of Mexican American Studies to be preserved."

**Lisa Cruces** is the archivist for the Hispanic Collection in Special Collections at the University of Houston Libraries.

**Carlos L. Cantú** recently received his Ph.D. in history at the University of Houston.

University of Houston Special Collections is located on the second floor of the M. D. Anderson Library. The reading room is open to the public 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information or to set up an appointment, visit <http://info.lib.uh.edu/p/visiting-special-collections>.



# News Updates & Books *by Barbara Eaves*

## NEWS

**The Heritage Society and Houston Arts and Media** merged effective October 1, 2016, and will move forward under The



Heritage Society banner. Both organizations have worked hard to promote and maintain interest in our area's history, with The Heritage Society dat-

ing to 1954 and HAM beginning in 2005. By combining operations such as administration, fundraising, and outreach, the updated organization will greatly expand capacity to create bigger and better educational history programs and to enhance the work that both organizations have been doing to preserve and celebrate the stories, places, and things that make up our local and regional identity. Alice Collette, THS executive director, says to expect exciting new things in the coming months, including an upgrade to the Houston history exhibit in The Heritage Society Museum. Former HAM director Mike Vance will join staff at THS to continue producing the award-winning documentaries, videos, and web content about the history of Texas and Houston.

**SPARK School Park Program** received \$5 million in donations from the Houston Endowment and Kinder Foundation, which will be used over the next three years to construct 30 SPARK parks in "park desert" areas of Houston-Harris County. Schools destined to receive SPARK parks during this initiative were chosen based on an evaluation conducted by The Trust for Public Land, which defined a "park desert" as more than one-half mile or a ten-minute walk from an existing park. The City of Houston pledged an additional \$450,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding for the project. Visit [www.sparkpark.org](http://www.sparkpark.org).



**THC Chairman John Nau III** oversaw the ground-breaking for a new visitors' center at San Felipe de Austin on October 20. The Friends of the Texas Historical Commission are raising funds to support the project at the site where founding father Stephen F. Austin established his first colony in 1823. Visit [www.visitsanfelipeaustin.com](http://www.visitsanfelipeaustin.com).

**The Holocaust Museum of Houston** is unveiling *Bittersweet Harvest: The Bracero Program, 1942-1964*, a bilingual traveling exhibition sponsored by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History with support of the Smithsonian Latino Center. The largest guest worker program in U.S. history, the Bracero program brought in millions of Mexican nationals as temporary workers to fill jobs in agricultural industries when the country entered World War II. To compliment this exhibit, Dr. Jesus Jesse

Esparza, Professor of History at Texas Southern University, in conjunction with the Holocaust Museum, is conducting interviews and collecting local Bracero and family stories. They will be on display at the Holocaust Museum alongside the *Bittersweet Harvest* exhibit. To participate contact Dr. Esparza at [esparzajj@tsu.edu](mailto:esparzajj@tsu.edu).

**LULAC60** is restoring the building where, in 1964, many of Houston's Latin American leaders, led by civil rights attorney John J. Herrera, met and planned the meeting they later had with President John F. Kennedy the night before he was assassinated. Plans, currently in the fundraising stage, call for the LULAC60 Clubhouse, at 3004 Bagby, to become a community center/museum of Mexican-American history. Contact LULAC president Ray Valdez at 206-650-1065 or visit LULAC Council 60 Clubhouse on Facebook.

**The Bayou Land Conservancy** welcomes **Jill Boullion** as its new executive director. A professional with over twenty years of experience in leading and motivating volunteers, Boullion comes to the Conservancy from Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition where, as executive director, she made great strides in developing parks, trails, and canoe access on 45 miles of that bayou.



**TSHA's Texas Talks**, a new interactive webinar series accessible via computer or mobile device, is sponsored by

the Texas State Historical Association. Presenters discuss various topics in Texas history — most offering live Q&A chats. Register for the free series at [www.TSHAonline.org/education/distance-learning](http://www.TSHAonline.org/education/distance-learning).

**The Handbook of Houston**, a joint project between the Houston History Alliance and the Texas State Historical Association and the first city-focused outgrowth of TSHA's *Handbook of Texas*, is now online. Visit [www.tsha.online.org/handbook/houston](http://www.tsha.online.org/handbook/houston). Writers are still needed to pen more short entries (400 to 800 words). Deadlines are generous (three months). Visit [www.houstonhistoryalliance.org](http://www.houstonhistoryalliance.org) or email Lindsay Scovil Dove at [lscovil@houstonhistoryalliance.org](mailto:lscovil@houstonhistoryalliance.org) to get started.

**"Serendipity in Action: Hana Ginzburg and the Crusade to save Armand Bayou, 1970-1973,"** appeared in the spring 2016 issue of *East Texas Historical Journal*. This well-written article includes Exxon, Friendswood Development Company, Rice University, and NASA in its narrative. The author, Alex J. Borger, is a Texas State University graduate student. Email [sfapress@sfasu.edu](mailto:sfapress@sfasu.edu) for a copy. Hana

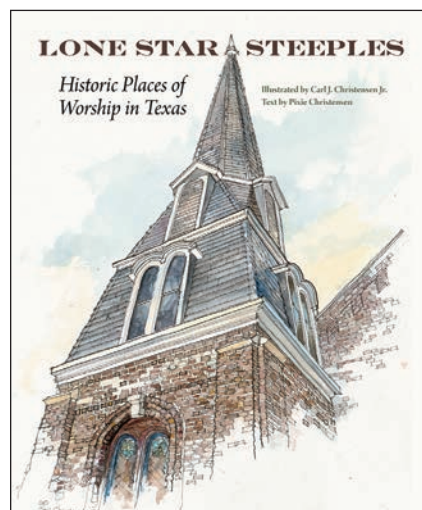


Ginzburg's Papers can be found in the Houston History Archives in Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.

**Happy birthdays to the Buffalo Bayou Partnership**, which turned thirty, and **Buffalo Bayou Park**, which turned one! Since 1986 BBP has been realizing impactful plans for the 10-mile stretch of Buffalo Bayou from Shepherd Drive to the Turning Basin. This year BBP completed development of Buffalo Bend Nature Park in the East End, finished construction of one of the bayou's most unique trails under a network of downtown streets; opened Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern, and moved its administrative offices to the historic Sunset Coffee Building. Visit [www.buffalobayou.org](http://www.buffalobayou.org).



## BOOKS



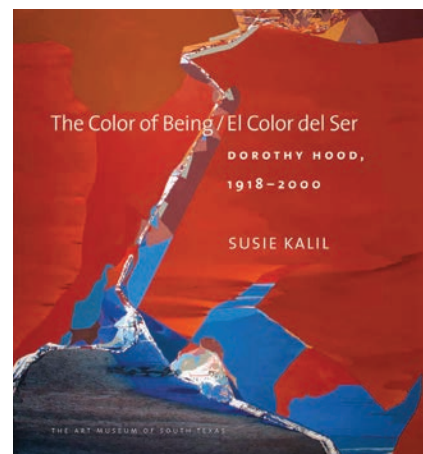
**Lone Star Steeples: Historic Places of Worship in Texas**, by Pixie Christensen, illustrated by Carl J. Christensen (Texas A&M University Press, \$35, cloth). The 65 historically significant structures in this book, exquisitely drawn, accompanied by written summaries and maps, have one thing in common: service as centers of cultural identity in

their communities. Some are stately brick and stone edifices in big cities; others are humble wood-frame chapels in villages. The Christensens demonstrate that Texas is home to a remarkable diversity of people, and that their places of worship reflect and celebrate that diversity.

*Field of Vision, 2000 by Bert Long.*

**Bert Long: The Artist's Journey**, by Thomas McEvelley (University of Texas Press, \$19.95, paper). Long, an African-American artist who grew up in Fifth Ward, trained as a chef but became an artist carving ice and creating decorative food presentations. His work first gained attention in the booming Houston art scene of the 1980s and 1990s and is now included in collections at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Contemporary Arts Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and more. Possibly his most visible work, *Field of Vision, 2000*, is the collection of eyes and pedestals of dyed concrete originally displayed at 3900 Lyons Avenue.

**The Color of Being / El Color del Ser: Dorothy Hood, 1918-2000**, by Susie Kalil (Texas AM University Press, \$45, cloth). Born and raised in Texas, Dorothy Hood won a scholarship to the Rhode Island School of Design, then worked as a model in New York to earn money for classes at the Art Students League. On a whim, she drove to Mexico City with friends in 1941 and stayed for over twenty years, a period of intense creativity. She married Bolivian composer Jose Maria Velasco Maidana and traveled with him all over the world. Back in Houston, Hood produced paintings that evoked the cosmos contained within the mind.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**December 10-11, 2016: Candlelight Tours** at the Heritage Society, 1100 Bagby; 3:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Saturday; 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Sunday. Visit [www.heritagesociety.org](http://www.heritagesociety.org) or call 713-655-1912.

**Thru January, 2017:** An exhibition covering nearly 300 years of Texas history, *Mapping Texas: From Frontier to the Lone Star State*, is on display at Houston's Museum of Natural Science. The exhibit contains more than forty rare maps

Photo courtesy of Cyndy Allard©.





# Thank you!



Alex Colvin, author of the article on Clayton House, and Barbara Richards, docent with the Clayton Library Friends, at the summer launch party hosted by the Clayton Library.

The Houston History team would like to thank the Clayton Library, Center for Genealogical Research and the Houston Public Library for providing the perfect venue for our summer launch party at the Clayton Carriage House. We also wish to express our gratitude to Sue Kaufman, Susan Clayton Garwood, Randy Pace, and the Clayton Library Friends. It

was a treat to have Barbara Richards offering tours of Clayton House to our guests during the event. Thank you especially to Carolyn Farb for the kind words in support of *Houston History's* continued endeavors and our summer collaboration. We sincerely appreciate all who attended in celebration of the many unique facets of Houston's history represented by our *Summer Sampler* issue.



from the collections of the Texas General Land Office, the Witte Museum, and Frank and Carol Holcomb of Houston, including three of Stephen F. Austin's most important documents. Visit [www.hmns.org](http://www.hmns.org).

**Thru January 7, 2017:** *You Are Here: The Maps of Houston and Texas*. This exhibit at the Heritage Society spans Spanish, Mexican, Republic and Texas times through the beginnings of Houston freeways. 1100 Bagby, open Tuesday thru Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Visit [www.heritage-society.org](http://www.heritage-society.org) or call 713-655-1912.

**February 27-March 1, 2017:** Preservation Texas Conference in Waco. Email [Preservation\\_Texas\\_Inc@mail.vresp.com](mailto:Preservation_Texas_Inc@mail.vresp.com).

**March 2-4, 2017:** Texas State Historical Association's 121st Annual meeting, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Downtown Houston. Visit <https://tshasecurepay.com/annual-meeting/>.

**April 8, 2017:** The 17th annual San Jacinto Symposium returns to the battle site that gave us Texas and more. In the morning, scholars discuss one of the most important battles in history; in the afternoon, they conduct guided tours of the actual battleground. \$50 covers speakers, lunch, parking, and exhibits. Optional tours are \$25. Visit [www.sanjacintobattlegroundconservancy.org](http://www.sanjacintobattlegroundconservancy.org) for details and reservations.

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# ENDNOTES

## PIONEERING HOUSTON EMS

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- 2 Kenneth Mattox, interview by Paulina De Paz, La'Nora Jefferson, Roshni Patel, and James Thornock, March 9, 2016, UH-OHH; David Persse, interview by James Thornock, March 3, 2016, UH-OHH.
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