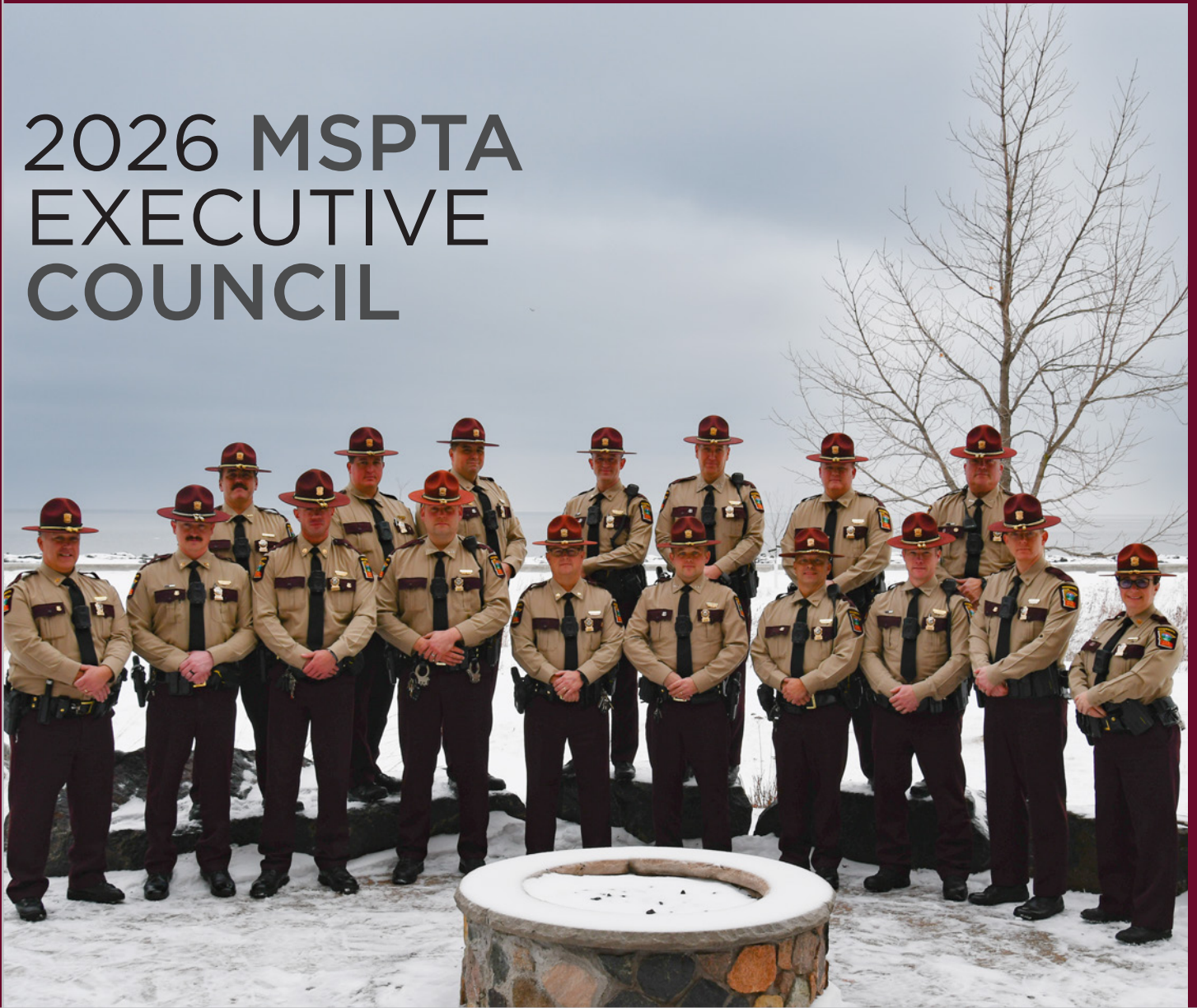


MINNESOTA TROOPER

Volume 42 • Number 1 • February 2026

2026 MSPTA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL





Plan confidently. Retire comfortably. Live intentionally.

Take control of your retirement and legacy with comprehensive financial planning from someone who understands your unique priorities. Dan Athmann has more than nine years of experience as a financial advisor and 25 years of experience serving with the Burnsville Police Department. Charlie Athmann has six years of experience as a licensed investment associate at RBC Wealth Management.

Dan and Charlie's approach is simple: They focus on you. They believe financial success starts with education and strategy. By helping you understand your options and develop a personalized plan, they guide you toward achieving your goals. Whether you want to plan for retirement, manage investments or protect what matters most, they aim to be dependable partners every step of the way.

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- Retirement income planning and goal tracking
- Transparent advice with your values and goals in mind

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- Options for lump-sum, partial or lifetime distributions
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Investment strategy

- Tax-efficient investment plans tailored to your goals
- Aligning portfolios to your time horizon and risk tolerance
- Diversifying across asset classes to help protect and manage wealth
- Ongoing portfolio monitoring and strategic rebalancing

Estate planning

- Legacy preservation through personalized estate strategies
- Coordinating with attorneys on wills, trusts and beneficiary designations

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MINNESOTA TROOPER

Minnesota Trooper is published three times annually by the Minnesota State Patrol Troopers Association.

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- Quarterly District Association Meetings
- Hardship fund for members who experience a unique hardship such as a natural disaster, illness, or loss of home due to a fire
- Membership into the Minnesota Police & Peace Officers Association and the LELS Legal Defense Fund
- Membership into the National Trooper Coalition
- A voice on the State Patrol Equipment and Safety Committee

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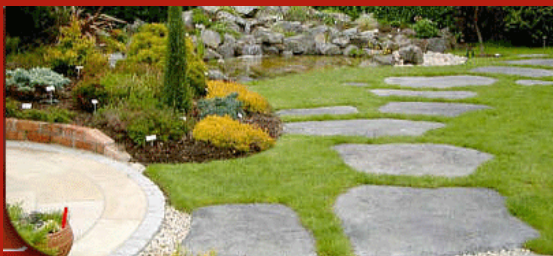
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Jason Theel • MSPTA President

President's Report



WINTER'S GRIP: STAY SAFE AND BE PREPARED

As I write this article for the Troopers magazine, winter is in full effect. Temperatures below zero and the wind chill is nasty. Please stay safe and make sure all your winter gear is in your squad and you have lots of flares.

CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE: STANDING FIRM FOR FAIR COMPENSATION

As this article goes to print, the Minnesota State Patrol Troopers Association is preparing to enter mediation with Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) on **January 8th and 9th**. These mediation sessions are a critical next step in our ongoing contract negotiations and represent an important opportunity to address long-standing compensation concerns that directly impact recruitment, retention, and morale within the State Patrol.

MMB has offered wage increases of **0.5 and 0.5 percent in each of the next two years**. This proposal falls far short of what is reasonable or acceptable for the dedicated professionals who serve the people of Minnesota every day. At a time when the cost of living continues to rise and law enforcement agencies across the region compete aggressively for qualified people, such minimal increases fail to recognize the demands, risks, and responsibilities of our work.

Compounding this concern is the reality highlighted in the **Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA)** compensation study, which places the Minnesota State Patrol **second from the bottom** among comparable law enforcement agencies. This ranking confirms what troopers have experienced for years—our compensation has not kept pace with similar agencies, despite increasing expectations and responsibilities.

Importantly, this issue has already been acknowledged by the Legislature. **A bill passed several years ago clearly**

stated that State Patrol compensation should be brought to the average of the comparable agencies identified in the OLA study. Despite that legislative direction, we remain well below that benchmark today (7.6% at the top). The current offer from MMB not only ignores the findings of the OLA study but also disregards the intent of that bill.

“As we head into mediation, the Association remains committed to advocating for solutions...”

In addition to contract negotiations, the **Troopers Union continues to work diligently on behalf of its members to advance legislation that would remove wage negotiations from MMB’s control and ensure State Patrol troopers are compensated at the average of the OLA comparison group.** This proposed legislation reflects compensation models already established

in law in several other states, including **California, Washington, Texas, Montana, and Colorado**, where state patrol or highway patrol pay is set using objective, comparative standards rather than traditional bargaining alone.

As we head into mediation, the Association remains committed to advocating for solutions—both at the bargaining table and in the Legislature—that recognize the value of our work and provide long-term stability for the Minnesota State Patrol. Fair compensation is not just about wages; it is about honoring commitments, strengthening recruitment and retention, and ensuring the public continues to receive the highest level of professional law enforcement service.

We will continue to keep our members informed as mediation progresses. Your unity and support remain critical as we work toward an agreement and legislative outcomes that respect the vital role troopers play in keeping Minnesota safe. ♦

Jason SP 100

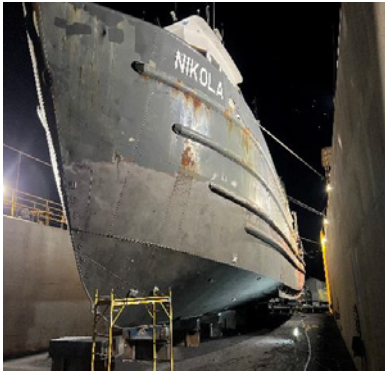


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Colonel Christina Bogojevic

Colonel's Message



REFLECTING ON 2025: PROGRESS IN TRAFFIC SAFETY

As we close out 2025, I want to take a moment to reflect on the year and the work of the Minnesota State Patrol. At the heart of our mission is traffic safety, and this year we made meaningful progress in reducing fatal crashes on Minnesota roads. Collectively, we stopped over 360,000 vehicles this year. The work done has directly impacted the decrease in fatal crashes. There were 370 traffic fatalities in 2025. That's a significant decrease from the 475 lives lost in 2024. While any reduction is encouraging, it does not lessen the human toll these crashes continue to take. Every fatal crash represents a person who did not make it home and a family forever changed. That is why this important work continues, with the shared goal of preventing every fatal crash we can.

A vital part of keeping Minnesota roads safe comes from our Commercial Vehicles Section, whose consistent and focused efforts this year included conducting more than 54,000 inspections and identifying more than 76,000 violations. Their work directly removes unsafe vehicles and drivers off the road. Much of it happens behind the scenes, but the impact on crash prevention and public safety is significant

and reflects the dedication and professionalism that define the Minnesota State Patrol.

This year personnel responded courageously to horrific events that shook communities and the State of Minnesota. There were targeted shootings of lawmakers and the Annunciation Church shooting in Minneapolis. Troopers and communication staff performed with exceptional professionalism, quickly coordinating under pressure, while treating victims, families and communities with care and compassion. Their actions are a testament to the high standards that guide this agency every day.

As we move into 2026, I am proud of the work done, the lives protected and the resilience displayed across the Minnesota State Patrol. To our retired members reading this: your service laid the foundation for this work. It is your legacy that continues to inspire those serving today.

Together, past and present, we carry forward the values, professionalism and commitment that have long shaped this organization. ♦

“As we move into 2026, I am proud of the work done, the lives protected and the resilience displayed across the Minnesota State Patrol”



A CALLING BEYOND CONCRETE, LANES, AND STRIPES

We hear it all the time. Some of us say it regularly when it comes to a basic tenet of your work: The job is to keep Minnesota's roadways safe.

As the year wrapped up and holiday travel grew more treacherous, I thought about that quite a bit. While our troopers' work often begins on the highways, it extends far beyond them. Your calling is not defined by concrete, lanes and stripes — it is defined by the responsibility you carry to keep people safe.

All anyone needs to do is take a breath and reflect on your work this past year to see that your commitment served as a testament to that and as a beacon for your colleagues in law enforcement to follow.

Through key campaigns such as distracted driving enforcement events, DWI enforcement initiatives and holiday impaired driving campaigns, or just your everyday work, each time you stopped a driver and each time you took a dangerous motorist off the road, you potentially saved lives.

When the call came for you to partner with other agencies, you answered loud and clear. This was true in all corners of the state, but perhaps the most notable example came when you assisted your partners in Minneapolis. You helped during the July 4th holiday, which had been contentious in recent years. You worked to help reduce summer violence in the state's largest city with their Safe Summer Nights initiative.

You found yourselves on the cutting edge of educating and enforcing new laws, including addressing questions about cannabis-related impaired driving — because impairment is impairment. You also helped navigate lane-splitting and filtering laws for motorcyclists.

“When the call came for you to partner with other agencies, you answered loud and clear. This was true in all corners of the state, but perhaps the most notable example came when you assisted your partners in Minneapolis.”

Your work and the support for it was highlighted as we welcomed 42 new troopers to your professional family. This, by the way, was historic as every cadet completed the training and graduated.

No account of 2025 would be complete without acknowledging your help in the manhunt for the man who targeted and killed State House Speaker Emerita Melissa Hortman and her husband, Mark, and who also injured Senator John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette.

Finally, there was the work of our State Patrol in responding to the August shootings at the Annunciation Church and School in Minneapolis. I will never forget the image of a trooper consoling a community member in the immediate aftermath. Much like the idea of you protecting the roadways, that image signifies so much more.

Whether it was that trooper in that moment or the many others working across the state, you serve with commitment and compassion for the people you work to keep safe.

It can be quite overwhelming to reflect on.

It is also impossible to reflect on this past year without acknowledging the loss of partners along the way. We remember them, honor their lives and service and recognize the work they carried out alongside us. Their dedication and presence continue to be felt and their contributions remain a lasting part of this organization and its mission.

Looking back also gives us a chance to look to the future. Undoubtedly, 2026 will bring new challenges and opportunities.

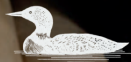
I know this, and history proves it: You will be there to answer the call. You will be there to help keep safe more than our roadways. You will be there to help protect the people who rely on us.

I stand proud and confident at your side and thank you for all you have done and what you are prepared to do. ♦

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KEEPING MINNESOTA MOVING SAFELY: THE ROLE OF COMMERCIAL VEHICLE ENFORCEMENT

Every day, thousands of commercial vehicles travel Minnesota's roadways delivering goods, transporting passengers, and supporting our economy. Ensuring both those vehicles and their drivers are operating safely is the mission of the Minnesota State Patrol's Commercial Vehicle District. While much of our work happens behind the scenes, our impact directly supports the State Patrol's shared vision: eliminating vehicle crashes through highly professional service and evolving best practices.

PREVENTING CRASHES BEFORE THEY HAPPEN

One of the core functions of our district is conducting commercial vehicle safety inspections on large trucks and buses. These inspections ensure drivers are properly licensed,

qualified, and compliant with hours-of-service requirements, while also confirming their vehicles are mechanically sound and safe for operation.

Our personnel perform detailed inspections of critical components such as brakes, tires, steering systems, suspension, frames, lighting, and more! By identifying safety violations before a crash occurs, our work plays a direct role in preventing serious and often life-changing incidents on Minnesota roadways.

When crashes do occur, our personnel provide invaluable support through post-crash inspections. These comprehensive examinations, which include vehicle systems, driver records, and logbooks, can help investigating troopers determine whether mechanical issues or regulatory violations were contributing



factors. This collaborative effort strengthens investigations and reinforces a culture of accountability and safety.

EDUCATION AS ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement is only one part of the equation. Our district is deeply committed to education and outreach, conducting hundreds of safety presentations each year across the state. These presentations reach drivers, carriers, schools, community groups, and industry partners, promoting safer driving behaviors and compliance with regulations.

Our personnel also represent the Patrol at industry association meetings, participate in podcasts, and deliver specialized size and weight training to other law enforcement agencies. These efforts build partnerships, improve consistency in enforcement, and extend the State Patrol's influence well beyond the scale house or inspection site.

PROTECTING MINNESOTA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Commercial Vehicle Enforcement also plays a key role in enforcing Minnesota's size and weight laws. Overweight or improperly loaded vehicles accelerate wear and damage to our roads and bridges, creating safety hazards and increasing costs for taxpayers.

By enforcing these regulations, our work helps preserve critical infrastructure, ensure fair competition within the trucking industry, and support the safe and efficient movement of traffic statewide.

REPRESENTING MINNESOTA ON THE NATIONAL STAGE

Our district proudly represents Minnesota at national and

international events through the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA). This includes participation in conferences, training events, and prestigious competitions such as the North American Inspector Championship (NAIC).

At NAIC, the top inspectors from the United States, Canada, and Mexico compete to determine the world's best commercial vehicle inspector. Minnesota's participation showcases our professionalism, expertise, and commitment to excellence while allowing our participants to bring back best practices and innovative ideas that benefit the entire agency.

A DIVISION BUILT ON EXPERTISE, COLLABORATION, AND PURPOSE

The Commercial Vehicle District is for people who enjoy technical challenges, continuous learning, and meaningful collaboration. Our personnel develop specialized knowledge that supports fellow troopers, allied agencies, and the public, often serving as subject-matter experts in complex investigations and enforcement scenarios.

As the State Patrol continues to evolve, our district remains committed to recruiting motivated, curious, and driven people who want to make a lasting impact on roadway safety. Whether through inspections, education, infrastructure protection, or national leadership, **our district offers a unique and rewarding career path within the Minnesota State Patrol.**

Together, we are protecting lives, strengthening partnerships, and keeping Minnesota's roadways safe... one inspection at a time. ♦

REMEMBER & HONOR

Minnesota
Retired Peace
Officers Association



REMEMBERING THOSE RETIRED PEACE OFFICERS WE LOST IN 2025



**GREGORY DRAKE
TURNER**

February 9, 2025
Age 71
DNR 1980 - 2005
K 510



**DAVID LEE
MADOR**

February 24, 2025
Age 76
DNR 1975 - 1999
K 419



**HARVEY GABRIEL
GENADEK**

February 11, 2025
Age 87
MSP 1968 - 1992
SP 341



**LYNN LAWRENCE
OSTERMAN**

March 15, 2025
Age 84
MSP 1966 -1996
SP 238



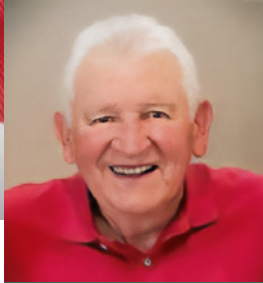
**DAVID MARK
KALINOFF**

May 25, 2025
Age 51
MSP 1999 - 2017
SP 475



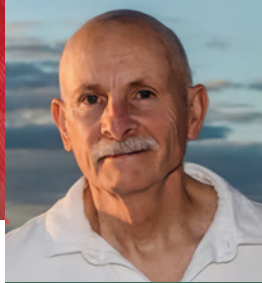
RONALD L. SPITTSLOESSER

March 18, 2025
Age 81
MSP 1970 - 1996
SP 421



RALPH EUGENE CHURCH

June 19, 2025
Age 91
MSP 1952 - 1982
SP 101



JOHN ROBERT MOTT

May 9, 2025
Age 78
MSP 1977 - 2002
SP 176



WALLACE DELBERT KARL

Died 2023, Memorial 2025
Age 91
MSP 1962 - 1986
SP 327



THOMAS RICHARD KOSEC

July 28, 2025
Age 88
MSP 1961 - 1991
SP 318



DARRYL HENRY PETERSON

August 28, 2025
Age 77
MSP 1979 - 2001
SP 288



DEAN LOWELL GALLUP

August 5, 2025
Age 90
MSP 1957 - 1990
SP 236



RUSSELL DAVID FONDIE

October 4, 2025
Age 74
DNR 1978 - 2004
K 241



CONRAD OLAF URKE

August 19, 2025
Age 93
MSP 1962 - 1988
SP 335



HOWARD "BUD" NORDINE

October 12, 2025
Age 97
MSP 1957-1983
SP 277



NATHANIEL "NAT" MILLER

October 17, 2025
Age 96
MSP 1958 - 1984
SP 130



DAVID ORVILLE RASMUSSEN

November 3, 2025
Age 76
DNR 1975 - 2000
K 112



GARY C. LACY

November 6, 2025
Age 87
MSP 1964 - 1994
SP 5



PAUL W. WOJAHN

December 14, 2025
Age 104
DNR 1958 - 1983
K 403



2025 SGT. RODNEY H. BOND NATIONAL HONOR GUARD CONFERENCE

TRAINING, CAMARADERIE, AND HONORING THE FALLEN

This year's Delaware Honor Guard Conference, which is held every 2 years, took place from September 28th thru October 3rd at the Biden Environmental Center in Lewes, Delaware. Tech Sergeant Tony Mazzone SP47 and myself, along with individuals from multiple state Honor Guards, came together for a week of training. The conference was more than just training- it was about camaraderie, and sharing ideas. The event was a chance for dedicated individuals to hone their skills, share their knowledge and just plain and simple, use it if it helps honor the fallen.

The conference started off with a brief history of the bi-annual event and staff introduction that would be assisting in the training events: casket/urn guard, color guard, casket carry, rifle volley and the flag fold. The training was broken down into five stations and during check in you received a badge that had a number 1-5 on the back. Your number would be your group for the week, plus it required you to talk to others from different state agencies.



Outside of the training, the Delaware State Police staff organized several events throughout the week. From the first night to the last was filled with a VIP escort to the Delaware State Police Museum, dinner at a closed popular restaurant, and a trip to Washington DC to visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the National Law Enforcement Museum and Memorial. The last night is a silent/live auction with

an auctioneer that helps raise money for the next HG Conference. A majority of the items were donated by the agencies that attended the event and best of all, anything that you did bid on and won, was tax deductible.

The Delaware Honor Guard Conference is more than just a training event; it's a way to honor those who have served and to ensure that their memory is preserved with dignity and respect. It was a great week for everyone involved! ♦

39th Annual MSPTA



Trooper/ Guest Golf Tournament



LOCATION: Madden's on Gull Lake Resort and Golf Course

DATES: July 22nd- 23rd, 2026

TIMES: July 22nd - 9:00am tee time (2 person best ball)

July 23rd- 9:00am tee time (4 person scramble)

COST: \$250 / person- Includes 2 rounds, use of range, 2 course lunches, banquet dinner on July 22nd, and hospitality room on the 21st and 22nd.

REGISTRATION: Due by June 1st, 2026. Information is below. Any questions, please contact MSPTA Secretary Kelly Phillips @ Kellymspta@gmail.com or 612-559-9706.

- Golf registration payments can be done online through the **NEW MSPTA website coming soon**. If you need to pay via cash or check, please contact Secretary Kelly Phillips. Check MSPTA.com after Feb 1st, 2026 for the live registration link.
- Hotel reservations can be made through the MSPTA website as well or by calling Madden's Resort at 218-829-2811.
- After June 1st, 2026 registration will be open to any allied agencies that wish to participate.
- Maximum of 144 golfers. Online registration will close when that number is reached.
- A driving range will be available Monday through Friday 12pm to 6pm.

- Are you bringing a non-golfer to the dinner banquet? You will need to purchase an additional banquet dinner ticket for them, the cost will be \$50/ person. Please indicate on your registration form if there will be additional banquet tickets and any food restrictions for you or your guest(s). An accurate headcount is needed by June 1st, 2026.
- **Additional information for Golfer Rules from Madden's:**
 - Golf clubs are available to rent if needed.
 - Dress code required for ALL golfers:
 - Collared shirts are required for all golfers.
 - Soft spikes are required on the course.
 - Shorts, slacks, or skirts must be worn (no cut-offs, sweatpants, or swimwear).
 - Hats should be worn with the bill facing forward.
- Tons of family friendly things to do while at the resort! Four pools, three sand beaches, tennis, croquet, water inflatables on the lake, non-motorized marine rentals, fishing, and more!
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JOHN HARBINSON



“MR. STATE PATROL”

John Harbinson was at the 1954 State Patrol Academy held at Camp Ripley. He was issued badge No. 186 and assigned to the Mankato station.

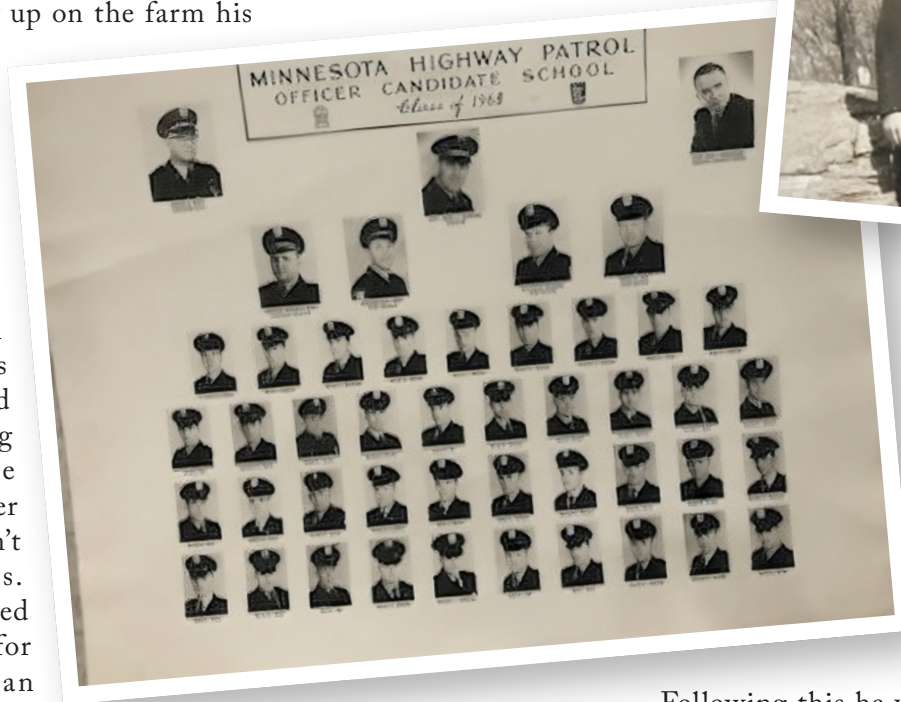
John was born in Minneapolis in 1925. When he was 6, his family moved to Forest City, where he and his eight younger siblings grew up on the farm his family inherited. He

was proud to enlist and serve on troop landing crafts in the U.S. Navy from 1944-1946. After his service, he graduated from St. Cloud State College with a degree in social sciences and business administration. He did some practice teaching and sales work at the B.F. Goodrich Rubber Company, but he didn't care about those jobs. John had been interested in law enforcement for some time. He had an uncle who was a member of the Oregon Highway Patrol, and when he heard there was an opening in Minnesota, he took the necessary tests and was appointed to the Minnesota Highway Patrol in March 1951.

John's first Patrol assignment was mainly in Mankato, from 1952-1957. However, in 1952 due to a serious car crash near St. Cloud, John took a medical absence, followed by an assignment in Rochester before returning to Mankato. At that time, he was the sixth Patrolman serving the Mankato area and officer in charge of the station.

The 1952 accident turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Not only did Harbinson learn the hard way of the

importance of driver safety, but he also met a beautiful nurse, who would become his bride of 66 years.



John was promoted to sergeant and assigned to Brainerd, serving the area from June 1957 through 1960. He led a special enforcement squad addressing high-accident areas in the northern part of the state.

Following this he was assigned back to Mankato from 1960-1963.

John served as captain in Rochester from 1963-1966, succeeding Major Neil Deemer. John was reported to have finished No. 1 in the examinations for captain. He had three sergeants and 33 patrol officers under his supervision. He served as vice-president of the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association and was a member of the American Legion.

In May 1966, Captain John Harbinson was appointed to head the Minnesota Highway Patrol, replacing Leo M. Smith, who had been chief for six years and resigned due to poor health. Harbinson's salary was \$11,500 a year. Asked his reaction to the appointment, he commented,

“This is a real challenge and one I look forward to.” The Patrol included 378 men at the time, and their principal job was to police the state’s “trunk” highway and freeway networks. John served as chief until 1973.

He strengthened the Patrol by purchasing helicopters to help with traffic and crime control. By making the Patrol’s jurisdiction statewide, Harbinson allowed the Patrol to help local law enforcement and made the organization truly statewide

Harbinson started recruiting Black officers, for the first time, to the State Patrol. As chief, he presided over the Patrol being moved from the Highway Department to Public Safety. Under his leadership, the number of troopers was increased, and the jurisdiction of the Patrol was extended from just patrolling the highways to statewide jurisdiction. During the turbulent 1960s, when Harbinson was chief, the Patrol was involved in responding to civil disturbances such as assisting the Minneapolis Police during race-related riots and powerline disputes involving farmers in central Minnesota. As chief he emphasized aggressive enforcement of traffic laws, and some troopers complained that

he wanted ticket quotas. Harbinson said that was not the case. When a state legislator was arrested for drunk driving, the legislator had the Trooper call Harbinson in the middle of the night to ask for the legislator to be released as a special favor. Harbinson then asked the trooper if the representative had been driving drunk, and the trooper said he had been. Harbinson told the Trooper to keep him in jail and to never call again on something like this.

In 1973, State Capitol sources allegedly indicated that a conflict arose between the Public Safety Commissioner W.R. Hoaglund and Harbinson over Harbinson’s Assistant Chief Horace Henry, who Hoagland had wanted to fire. Hoagland wanted Harbinson’s support in demoting Henry,

but sources said Harbinson thought Henry should be able to stay on a short time longer so he could qualify for a higher retirement pension. Hoagland ended up firing Henry and Harbinson over their differences of opinion on the Henry matter. Both men apparently were offered other posts if they decided to stay with the Patrol. Harbinson took the position of Internal Affairs major and held that role until 1979, when he was promoted to assistant chief. He held that position until he retired in 1985. John believed in the three “Es” of the safety program: education, engineering, and enforcement.

Harbinson held every position, at one time, in the Patrol: Sergeant, captain, major, assistant chief, and chief. He was considered “Mr. State Patrol” because he had served the Patrol for so long and in so many positions.

Chief Harbinson’s work made the State Patrol more professional, increased its law enforcement role, and made it more efficient.



After his retirement, John worked as a registered lobbyist to gain support for Minnesota seat belt laws. He served as executive director of the Minnesota Seat Belt Coalition and was the state coordinator for Operation Buckle Down.

John was a family man. He enjoyed nothing more than spending time with his 11 grandkids. He and Marlene had four children in five years, with a fifth child following three years later. The early

years were busy, each new assignment requiring a move until 1966 when the family settled in St. Paul.

A few of the “Patrol names” that were fondly mentioned around the house were: Dick Leuck, Chet O’Toole, Leo Foley, Jim Stevens, and Jack Murray.

John was a steak and potatoes, green bean, and root beer float kind of a guy. He had a deep Catholic faith and enjoyed

volunteering for Meals on Wheels. He loved spending time at his cabin in Alexandria. He lived a healthy, full life until the age of 93.

MORE REFLECTIONS ON JOHN

My first contact with John Harbinson was when he interviewed me when I applied for the Highway Patrol. It was obvious to me he took his job seriously. The next time I had contact with him he was one of the instructors at rookie school in 1957. I was once again impressed with his dedication to the Highway Patrol. The next time I had contact with John was when he called me on a violator contact when he was chief of the State Patrol. Kieth Pearson and I were working at the traffic corner of U.S. Highway 59. I was the chase car. The speeding violator was a Northwest Airlines Pilot. The passenger was a MnDOT engineer. When stopped, the passenger got out of the vehicle with the driver and made it known to me who he was. After the driver received the citation, the passenger made some remarks about contacting someone higher up.

Chief Harbinson called me, described the incident, and asked me if he threatened me with my job. When I stated he did, there was a short pause on the phone and then Harbinson said, "I'll take care of it." I never heard a word about it again. The next time I saw John was when he was named assistant chief. With the Knowledge that he had, he was a great mentor to me and obviously dedicated member of the Minnesota State Patrol. I learned a lot from him.
Roger D. Ledding#270 Class of 1960

John Harbinson was part of my entire career, starting in the 1960s with my application for a position with the Highway Patrol. John was captain of the Rochester, 2100, District. He assigned sergeants (now lieutenants) to perform a thorough look into my past. Most of our relationship back then was with me as a distant subordinate. While John moved up to be our chief, I too, after a dozen years started to move up the ladder, thereby reducing the distance between me and John. We grew closer when I was promoted to captain in charge of headquarters administration, fleet,

and equipment. John advised me to take an opening as district commander of the East Metro, 2400, District. Major Dick Luek, an institution as legal and legislative affairs director, retired and I was promoted to major to fill that position. That turned out to be my favorite assignment in the Patrol. This position also put my office right next to John's, who by this time was back in headquarters. He had served his time as Patrol chief and was replaced by Jim Crawford. After a number of years, Jim Crawford retired, and Roger Ledding was named chief. John Harbinson as he liked to say, was recycled as assistant chief. John and I became quite close during the years as we worked on many legislative matters. I didn't have a clue on how to successfully



work within the politics of the Legislature. John had years of experience in that regard and was a valuable mentor to me. We became close friends personally as well as professionally. We had coffee together every day we were in the office. We got to know each other's families through these discussions. John was very proud of his very successful children. John got me more interested in investing, even introducing me to a financial friend of his. We often played golf with MnDOT commissioners and others. John Harbinson meant a lot to me and when he retired, I was challenged to step into his position. Our years of work together and friendship were invaluable to me as I took on the

difficult job of assistant chief.

Glenn E. Gramse #70 Class of 1965

I don't know why, but the way he spoke, and his demeanor made it seem, to me anyway, that he was a member of the Kennedy family. But I don't think he had any East Coast roots. ♦

John Harbinson passed away August 10, 2019.

Contributions by Mary Pat FitzPatrick and Thomas Harbinson

**Richard C. Smith - Retired
State Patrol Archives Curator.**

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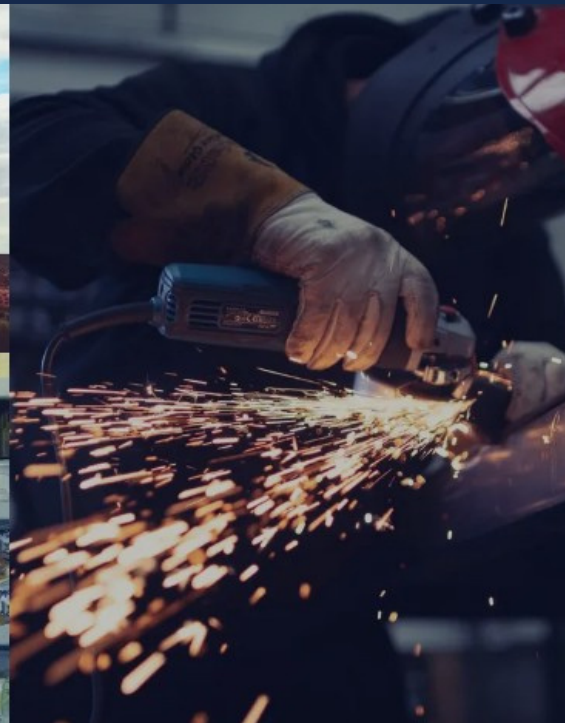
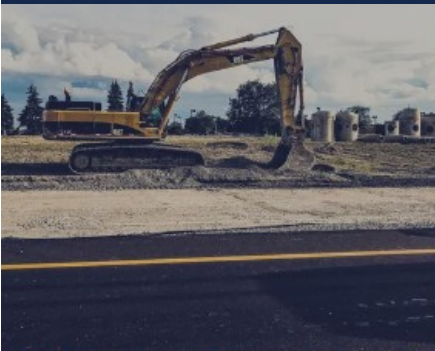
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ROBERT S. TITUS



SP29

Robert S. Titus was born in 1898 and grew up in the Bemidji area. In 1920, he got a job working in the railroad roundhouse. He married Grace Agnes Billings on Oct. 28, 1921. Their first child, Leo R. Titus, was born and died in 1922. Another son was born in 1925, and he was named Leo Edwin. Leo later in life moved to Redondo, California. A daughter, Mary Louise, was born in 1927.

Robert was in the retail oil business for several years before joining the Bemidji Police Department. He had ridden motorcycle for more than 10 years and was hired as a motorcycle patrolman for the City of Bemidji.

When the Highway Patrol Department was formed in 1929, it was advertising for men to join, and Robert sent a letter dated Aug. 27, 1929, to Earl Brown asking to obtain a position with the new department.

of oxford grey. Robert was assigned to work the Brainerd area and was given badge #29.

The third Highway Patrol school was held at Camp Ripley in 1933. Upon that school's graduation, 39 officers from the first two schools were relieved of duty and replaced by officers from the third school. In 1935, tenure of office was passed and provided officers certain rights before they could be suspended, demoted, or dismissed. The Minnesota Highway Patrol Troopers Association was formed in 1936.

Among the officers who lost their jobs was Robert Titus. People who were unfamiliar with the politics going on at the time wrote dozens of letters to Gov. Olson, DOT Commissioner Elsberg, and Chief John Arnoldy, expressing their displeasure over the firing of Robert Titus, who was well liked in the Brainerd area.

On July 13, 1933, Chief Arnoldy wrote the following to DOT Commissioner Elsberg:

Your memo of July 12 regarding Representative Syreen's recommendations of Patrolmen Titus and Ed Cummings received.



Robert Titus was in the first class of the new Highway Patrol. The four men who had gone to Pennsylvania and Massachusetts were instructors for the first school, which was two weeks of hard Labor. Classes were held covering laws, pistol practice, first aid, and motorcycle riding. Courtesy was stressed.

The salary was \$120 per month.

The working schedule was 12 hours a day, seven days per week, and one day off per month. The original uniform consisted of breeches and a blouse





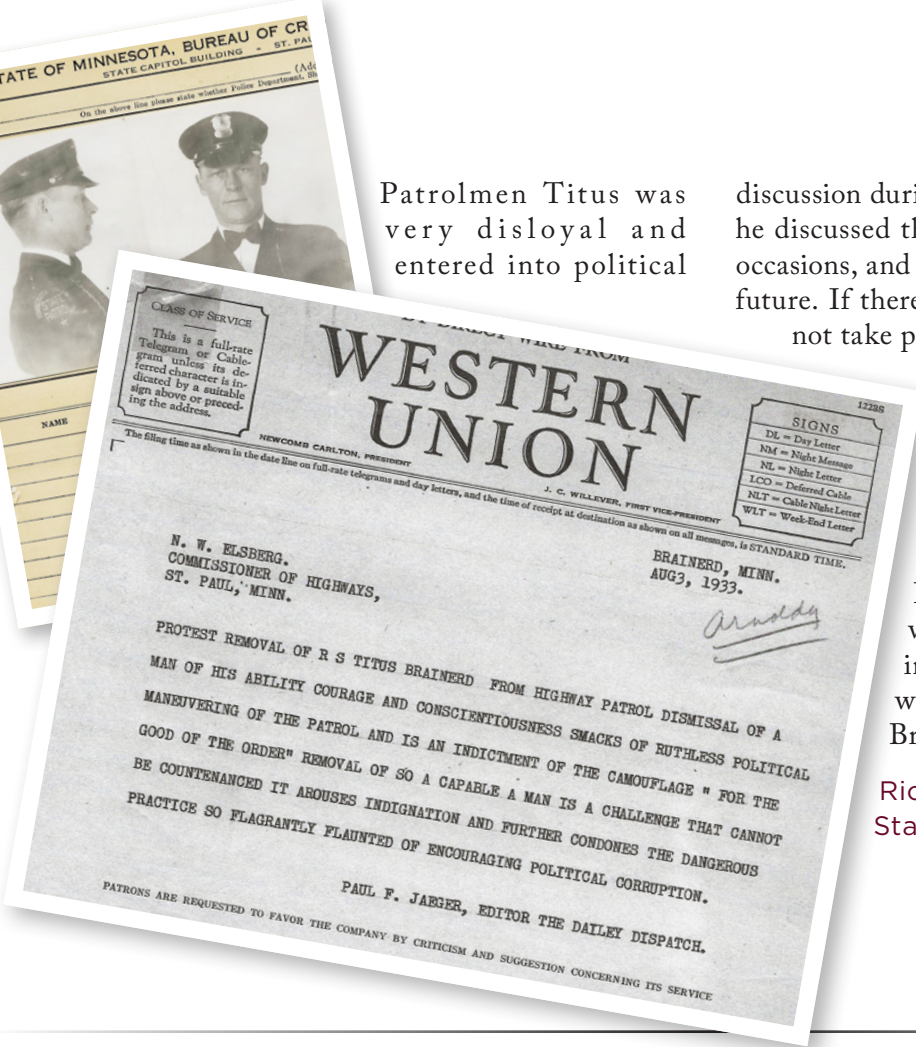
Patrolmen Titus was very disloyal and entered into political

discussion during the last campaign. I am informed that he discussed the Governor's personal actions on several occasions, and I have slated him for discharge in the near future. If there is any particular reason why this should not take place, please let me know.

As far as Cummings is concerned, I have nothing at present to his discredit.

Robert Titus never rejoined the Highway Patrol. The Crow Wing County Historical Society records show he joined the Brainerd Police Department sometime in 1935. He was promoted to captain in 1950 and retired in 1963. He passed away Aug. 27, 1966 and was buried in the Evergreen Cemetery in Brainerd (Block 44, Lot 35).

Richard C. Smith - Retired State Patrol Archives Curator. ♦



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UNIFIED VOICE FOR TROOPERS IN SCOTTSDALE



In October 2025, MSPTA President Jason Theel, 2400 Delegate Eric Maikkula, and 2000 Delegate Wade Erickson attended the National Troopers Coalition (NTC) in Scottsdale, Arizona. The NTC is a prominent national law enforcement organization that represents and advocates for the interests of state troopers and highway patrol officers across the United States. The organization serves as a unified voice for its members, lobbying at both state and federal levels to enhance the working conditions, benefits, and overall professionalism of state-level law enforcement. They are active in lobbying at the U.S. Congress and the White House on legislation impacting law enforcement. This includes advocating for fair retirement benefits (such as the repeal of the Windfall Elimination Provision/Government Pension Offset), increased penalties for crimes against officers, and funding for essential equipment and hiring.

Representing over 42,000 members across 43 states, the NTC stands as the largest national association dedicated exclusively to state-level law enforcement.

Each state had the opportunity to present about the status of their agency. It came as no surprise; we are all facing a lot of the same issues. Part of the discussion focused on

how to secure better salaries, pensions, fringe benefits, rehire programs and equipment for members to ensure Troopers can perform their duties safely and effectively. The different routes taken to reach the same end result were very interesting.

Continued collaboration with other state agencies broadens the department's reach and serves as a significant asset in achieving meaningful advancements for the Minnesota State Patrol. ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION, YOU CAN VISIT THE NATIONAL TROOPERS COALITION WEBSITE AT NATIONALTROOPERS.ORG

Trooper Wade Erickson, SP #333





Mike Asleson sits for an interview reflecting on 48 years of service to DPS.

SERVING MINNESOTA, THEN AND NOW

MIKE ASLESON'S 48 YEARS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Laura Perkins, Public Information Officer, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension

The year is 1977. Gas is 65 cents a gallon. Jimmy Carter is president. The Bee Gees are ruling the airwaves. And an 18-year-old named Mike Asleson is stepping into the State Patrol Academy, about to become the youngest trooper Minnesota has ever hired.

THE START OF A STORY THAT WOULD SPAN NEARLY 50 YEARS OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Mike began his career in public safety when he was young — really young. At just 16 years old, he joined the New Ulm Police Department as a civilian dispatcher. Two years later, he became one of 21 cadets at the Minnesota State Patrol Academy in Arden Hills. By 19, he was the youngest trooper to hit the road. His first stop: the Minneapolis

Station, where he would spend the next eight years working “dog watch” overnight shifts, responding to crashes and taking impaired drivers off the road.

“I heard my gun come out of its holster. Clink, clink, clink on the pavement of I 35-W”

It was there that Mike faced what he calls “the fight of my life” — a roadside struggle with a violent offender that nearly cost him his life and his weapon.

“I heard my gun come out of its holster. Clink, clink, clink on the pavement of I 35-W” he recalls.

With no portable radio, Mike’s only hope was to reach his squad car and call for help. The brawl continued, and the man got Mike’s gun and pressed it to his forehead. In those seconds that felt like hours, Mike got on the radio

before grabbing the barrel, fighting to keep it from firing until help could reach him.

Every instinct told him to keep going — and he did. Mike fought on, eventually regaining control of the gun just as



Mike in uniform

backup arrived. He survived that night, bruised but alive. What came next changed his life in another way: the hospital employee who admitted him after the incident would later become his wife. Forty-four years later, Mike and Gayleen are still married with three children and two grandchildren.

BUT MIKE DIDN'T JUST SERVE — HE LED

Over the next three decades, he rose through the ranks of the Minnesota State Patrol, serving as lieutenant, captain and finally as a major overseeing operations statewide. Along the way, he helped modernize technology, improve radio systems and helped lead hundreds of troopers across 11 patrol districts.

He also spent time at the legislature advancing key DWI laws, including Minnesota's .08 law and felony DWI statute. His fingerprints can still be found on the DWI laws we see today, laws that were literally drafted on a napkin at a south Minneapolis diner with colleagues from the DWI Task Force.

"I was always treated fairly," Mike says of his 35 years with the State Patrol. "I had great partners, mentors and leaders. I couldn't have asked for better."

EVEN AFTER 35 YEARS, MIKE'S IMPACT ON PUBLIC SAFETY WAS JUST GETTING STARTED

When Mike retired from the State Patrol in 2012, he wasn't quite ready to hang up his well-worn maroon hat.

A temporary, two-year position at the BCA turned into a second career and a new way to serve.

At the BCA, Mike joined the eCharging project team, helping law enforcement agencies transition from paper DWI forms to a fully digital system. What began as a pilot quickly became one of Minnesota's most significant public safety innovations.



Mike giving a presentation

When Mike joined the team, about 800 DWI cases a month were processed through eCharging. Today, that number tops 2,000 — and for over 110 straight months,



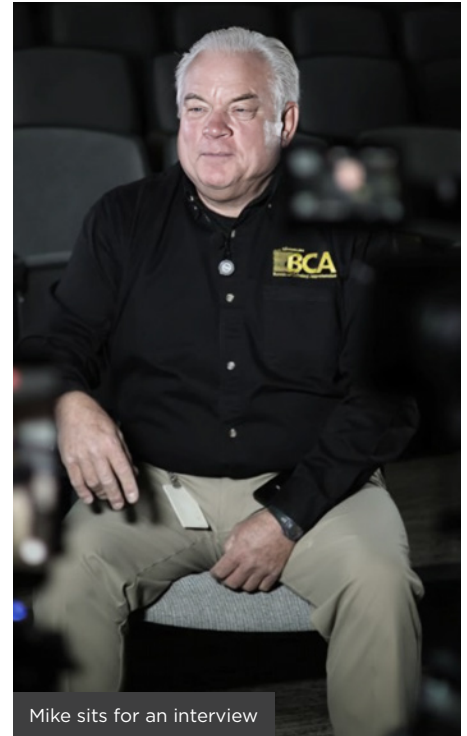
Mike and his wife, Gayleen, on their wedding day



Mike at academy graduation



Mike in uniform as a trooper later in his career



Mike sits for an interview

99.9 percent of DWI cases have been submitted electronically with virtually no paper statewide.

Mike personally trained more than 12,000 law enforcement officers on the system, traveling across Minnesota to ensure troopers, deputies and officers were confident using the technology. His approachable, down-to-earth style made him a favorite among agencies, many of whom he now calls friends.

“Mike likely trained every cop reading this message,” reflected Office of Traffic Safety Law Enforcement Liaison Scott McConkey in a recent newsletter. “He brought both professionalism and humor to his work — sending late-night notes that made us laugh on the hardest days. That was life with Mike: giving it all you’ve got, while never forgetting to laugh.”

LOOKING BACK, MIKE CALLS HIS TIME AT DPS 'A GIFT'

“I was so fortunate to have jobs I loved and got paid to do,” he says with a laugh. “I had amazing supervisors who

“I was always treated fairly... I had great partners, mentors and leaders. I couldn't have asked for better.”

gave me trust, freedom and support. And I got to work alongside the most dedicated people in public safety.”

From his first dispatch call in New Ulm to his last eCharging class with the BCA, Mike’s career tells the story of service, innovation and leadership. But what matters most to him isn’t the technology or the titles — it’s the

people and his family.

“I could never thank my wife and kids enough,” he says. “They made sacrifices so I could serve. This career was possible because of them.”

WHEN YOU ADD IT ALL UP, THE NUMBERS TELL A STORY OF THEIR OWN

Forty-eight years. Seven governors. Fourteen DPS commissioners. Ten State Patrol colonels. Thousands of officers trained, and countless Minnesotans made safer — all because Mike Asleson showed up, led with compassion and left every place he served better than he found it. ♦

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TROOPERS PRESENT CHECK TO DULUTH CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Thursday December 4th Sergeant Jon Carlson and Trooper Aaron Gomez presented the Duluth Children's Museum with a check for \$200.



BEARS THAT CARE CASTS A SPELL AT MHEALTH

Another visit to MHealth for Bears That Care! This year for Halloween, we decided to do a Harry Potter theme setup. There was a photo booth station where kids could take props and take pictures. We also had the sorting hat. It talked and picked a house for the kids. The kids were excited when it picked the house they wanted. Dispatcher Armstrong even dressed up as Hagrid, which kids loved! As usual we had goody bags including the new

redesigned State Patrol coloring book. Our time coincided with doctor visits to rooms so we did not have as many visitors as the spring. We still had a great time with those who stopped by!

Thank you to everyone who has supported Bears That Care this year!! Don't forget to visit www.bearsthatcaremn.org to donate. ♦



Pictured: RCO Justin Armstrong, RCO Kelly Griffin, Trp. Emery Forsythe, Trp. Kyle Oswald, Trp. Eric Olson, Trp. Catherine Barrie-Medellin, Trp. Michael Perbix, Trp. Lisa Lorenzen, RCO Shannon Scherz, and RCO Abigail Jaskowiak.

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MSP FLIGHT SECTION: AERIAL SUPPORT ENHANCING SAFETY ACROSS MINNESOTA



Two suspects running from a stolen vehicle

Two occupants exit the white sedan and begin running through densely wooded backyards. Using the aircraft's infrared (IR) camera and map overlay software, the flight crew tracks the suspects' movements and directs ground units to their locations. Both suspects—two juvenile offenders—are taken into custody without incident due to the coordination and aerial support provided by the Flight Section.

A number of exciting updates are underway within the Flight Section. Since 2023, the unit has welcomed seven new pilots,

Use your imagination and jump into the backseat of Trooper 4 to experience a typical call for members of the Minnesota State Patrol Flight Section.

It's a crisp October morning around 10 a.m., and the Flight Section is supporting the Minneapolis Auto Theft Detail. A call comes in reporting a white sedan, confirmed stolen, sitting occupied in a suburban neighborhood. The aircrew arrives overhead and begins monitoring the vehicle. Moments later, a blue SUV pulls alongside the sedan. An individual runs across the street, jumps into the white sedan, and a brief vehicle chase begins between the two cars—without any squad cars actively pursuing at the time.

From above, the aircrew relays real-time updates as the white sedan crashes into a yard, causing property damage, yet continues driving along sidewalks and through yards. The vehicle eventually comes to rest in front of a residence. The blue SUV flees the area and is not located again.

six of whom have already completed training for patrol operations in at least one aircraft. Training is a critical component of safe and effective aviation operations and is both intensive and ongoing. After earning their initial helicopter or airplane certifications, pilots must complete extensive mission-specific training. This includes patrol operations, transports, Special Response Team (SRT) missions, and Minnesota Air Rescue Team (MART) operations.

Continued on page 34




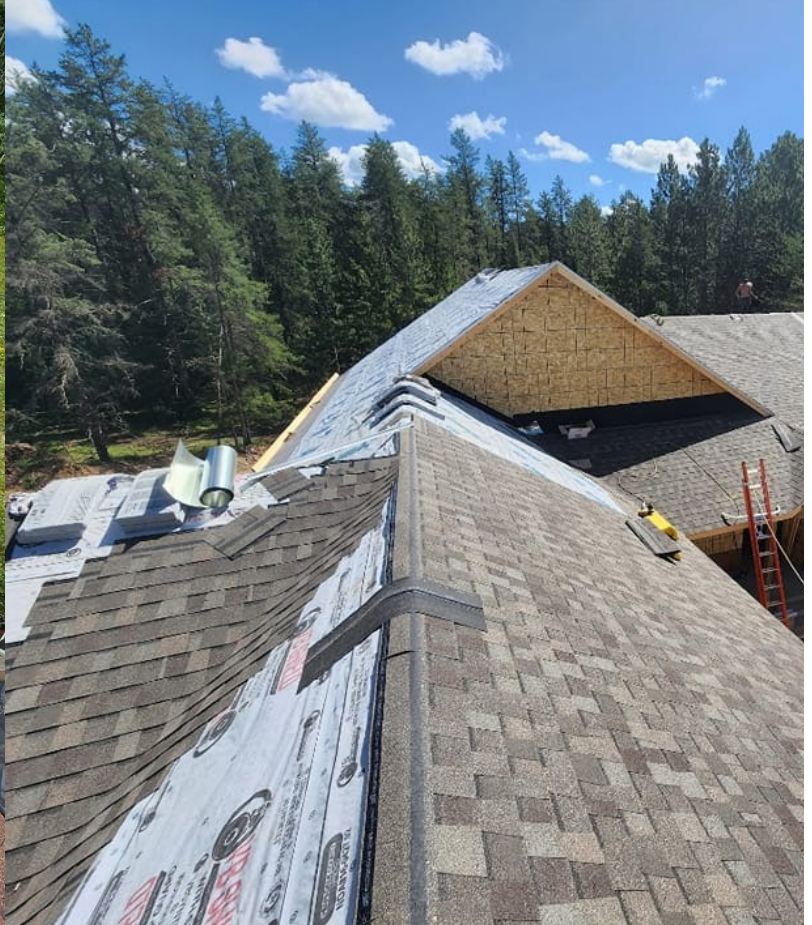
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Continued from page 32

Each of the twelve pilots assigned to the Flight Section are required to qualify in all mission aircraft, including the Bell 407, Cirrus SR22, and Bell 429. By the end of January 2026, only one of the seven newly assigned pilots will have completed full qualification in all three aircraft—approximately two and a half years after entering the unit. Once gaining some operational knowledge in the Bell 429 the pilot will then move on to advanced rescue training. This includes low level hover work, rappel, short haul rescue techniques as well as hoist operations. Each of these training segments builds on the others and continuously challenges the physical piloting skills as well as the decision-making skills of the pilot. It will be about 5 years after joining the flight section that a pilot can then start supporting rescue missions as the pilot in command. This extensive training timeline is essential to maintaining operational flexibility and ensuring the Flight Section can respond to requests for assistance statewide, regardless of aircraft type or mission requirements.

Over the past several years, the Flight Section has become an increasingly vital force multiplier for the State Patrol and allied agencies as vehicle pursuits across the region have increased. With the ability to deploy rapidly and maintain an aerial perspective, aircrews provide real-time intelligence that ground units cannot obtain alone. By monitoring suspect movements, coordinating containment strategies, and relaying tactical information, the Flight Section allows ground units to reduce speeds, disengage, and mitigate risk to all. This aerial overwatch significantly lowers the risk of collisions, injuries, and property damage—enhancing safety for officers, suspects, and the public who are sharing the roadways.

The Flight Section's impact extends well beyond pursuit mitigation. It includes coordinated operations and post-pursuit assistance, and Aircrews have helped allied agencies recover discarded evidence and remove numerous illegal firearms from the streets. By tracking fleeing suspects, guiding ground units to evidence locations, and maintaining visual contact until arrests are made, the Flight Section contributes directly to safer communities and stronger criminal cases.

As pursuit activity continues to increase and assists in search and find missions, the Flight Section remains a critical asset—quietly overhead, highly trained, and committed



to protecting both those who serve and the communities they protect.

In May 2025, the Flight Section welcomed the Bell 429 helicopter into the fleet—marking a significant advancement in rescue capabilities. With the addition of a hoist and a second engine, the Flight Section can now conduct nighttime rescue operations, a capability previously unavailable, in addition to daytime rescues and patrol response.

The Bell 429 provides the Flight Section with a highly capable, multipurpose platform for modern patrol and hoist rescue missions. Its dual-engine performance enhances safety margins during confined-area and over-water operations, allowing aircrews to operate with increased safety margins. The Bell 429 can rapidly reach victims and conduct hoist rescues efficiently and safely, further strengthening the State Patrol's ability to respond to complex rescue missions across Minnesota.

Through advanced aircraft, rigorous training, and seamless coordination with ground units and allied agencies, the MSP flight section continues to enhance public safety across Minnesota. Whether tracking fleeing suspects, supporting complex pursuits, or conducting life-saving rescue missions, the Flight section provides critical capabilities that cannot be replicated from the ground. As demands on law enforcement aviation continue to grow, the professionalism, skill, and dedication of MSP aircrews ensure they remain ready to answer the call—anywhere, anytime. ♦

CWO 3 Angela Burdick
CWO 3 Brett Stricker



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Rosemount, MN 55068

2026 ANNUAL FLORIDA LE CONNECTION!!

GREETINGS TO ALL FROM WARM AND SUNNY FLORIDA!

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL FLORIDA LE CONNECTION!!

Retired and Active Law Enforcement Officers from all jurisdictions (primarily Minnesota) will gather to discuss issues related to retirement: state and federal legislation impacting us, pension, taxes, medical insurance, and other topics of joint interest. Join us to chat about issues of the day or reminisce of the days gone by. Past gatherings have been enjoyable for all.

WHEN:

March 12, 2026;
1130-1330 hrs.

WHERE

Golden Corral Buffet & Grill
1451 S Tamiami Trl
Punta Gorda, FL 33950
941-639-1600
<https://www.goldencorral.com>
Private Dining Room

COST:

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AGENDA:

1130-1200 Meet & Greet
1200-1300 Buffet Lunch
1300-1330 Discussion

Please RSVP by February 26th, 2026 so we have an accurate head count.

BRENT RICHTER

Retired MSP Trooper
612-384-7263
brc196@gmail.com

TIM SHANLEY

Retired BCA Agent
612-655-1358
ferty09tim@gmail.com

MARTY EARLEY

Retired Bloomington Officer
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SEAN GORMLEY

Retired Corcoran PD Chief & Director LELS
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MIKE HAMM

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MSPTA PRESENTS \$500 DONATION TO SECOND HARVEST NORTHLAND

Sergeant Jon Carlson and Trooper Eric Fischer handed Shaye Moris, President/CEO of Second Harvest Northland a \$500 donation from the MSPTA.



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LOBBY VISIT BRINGS BIG SMILES

When the coordinator from M Health told me that she was going to change our plans for our visit on April 8. I was a bit apprehensive and didn't know what to expect. She had told me that we were going to just be in the lobby instead of going from room to room like we've done in the past for many many years. I was worried that we were not going to have many kids stop by and that we would just sit there for an hour with no one stopping by. It was quite the opposite.

We had so many more kids stop by then when we would just go from room to room. We tried to make it as interactive as possible with the short notice of the change. We had Easter themed temporary tattoos. There was an inflatable bunny with rings to toss on the ears. Some troopers even



challenged kids to beat them at the ring toss, and if the trooper lost, they would have to put on a temporary tattoo that the kid picked out. We also had an Easter egg decorating station. We just had oversized plastic Easter eggs with stickers for them to decorate. The hospital provided some pastries and coffee for the parents.

We had a great turnout of troopers and dispatchers. The dispatchers dressed up as characters from Dr. Seuss. We are already thinking of ideas for the next visit around Halloween.



Pictured: Trp. Catherine Barrie-Medellin, Trp. Troy Utes, Trp. Lisa Lorenzen, RCO Justin Armstrong, Trp. Nick Brown, RCS Sheldon Carlsted, RCO Kelly Griffin, RCO Shannon Scherz, RCO Abigail Jaskowiak, Trp. Emery Forsythe, Trp. Eric Olson, Trp. Tyler Milless.

Lisa Lorenzen



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M. J. Platt

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