

# MINNESOTA TROOPER

Volume 41 • Number 2 • June 2025

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## MINNESOTA TROOPER

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

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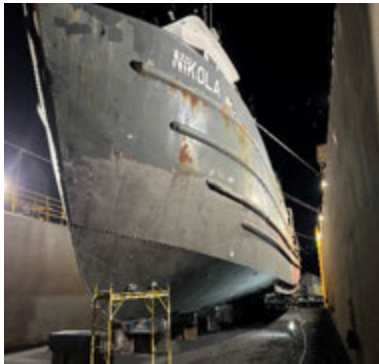
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Mike LeDoux • MSPTA President

# President's Report



## THE WEIGHT OF THE BADGE—AND WHY I'D CARRY IT AGAIN

This spring, I had the privilege of speaking to the 70th State Patrol Academy cadets at the training center in Arden Hills. As I stood in that classroom, I couldn't help but reflect—31 years ago, I sat in that very room, eager and uncertain, getting my first dose of what it meant to wear the Minnesota State Patrol badge.

That badge is more than metal and enamel. It carries the weight of responsibility, integrity, sacrifice, and service. And over the course of my career—from St. Paul to Duluth—I've had the privilege to carry it alongside the most dedicated professionals this state has to offer—state troopers, police officers, deputies, and other law enforcement officers who show up every day for strangers, often in their worst moments.

This profession has never been easy—and we all know it has changed. The demands have grown heavier, the scrutiny louder, and the pool of willing recruits smaller. In the next five years, more than 2,400 officers statewide—including over 140 troopers—will be eligible for retirement. Fewer applicants are stepping forward. The stakes are high.

That's why we must speak with unwavering pride about our profession. We must champion those called to serve and push back against the voices that seek to diminish, discredit, or devalue what we represent. For those who wear the badge, there is no higher calling than to place service before self—knowing the risks yet stepping forward without hesitation. That legacy endures—and it's up to us to protect it.

### Strength Through Action: A Legacy of Legislative Progress

Being entrusted to lead the Minnesota State Patrol Troopers Association during one of the most challenging chapters in our profession's history was an honor—and a

responsibility I never took lightly. These past few years tested our resolve, but they also revealed the enduring power of unity, persistence, and shared purpose. The gains we made didn't come easily—and none of them happened alone.

Since 2020, I've had the privilege of serving as President of the MSPTA, and since 2014, as a member of the Executive Council. I've worked alongside principled leaders who never lost sight of our mission. Together, we turned adversity into opportunity and delivered meaningful, lasting progress:

*"That badge is more than metal and enamel. It carries the weight of responsibility, integrity, sacrifice, and service."*

- **Recruitment Improvements:** Academy pay increased from 70% to 100% of base salary—a vital step in attracting quality candidates to our profession.
- **Compensation Fairness:** Bipartisan legislation now requires state law enforcement salary negotiations to reflect data from the Legislative Auditor's compensation studies, ensuring equitable pay over time (43A.17 Subd. 13 and 299D.03 Subd. 2a).
- **Workforce Flexibility:** Retired troopers can now return to covered employment without penalty, helping to ease staffing shortages while retaining valuable experience.
- **Pension Security and Tax Relief:**
  - \$10 million invested in the State Patrol Plan for unfunded liabilities for disabilities
  - Extension of the sunset date for supplemental funding from one year to three years at 100% funding
  - One-time 3% COLA for retirees frozen since 2014
  - 99% disability coverage for those permanently and totally disabled
  - Public pension tax subtraction passed in 2023, reducing taxable income for retirees and survivors

- **Federal Advocacy:** We've pushed for the repeal of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) and eliminated the pension fund payment requirement for the Public Safety Officer Tax Benefit—bringing fairness to our retirees and second-career officers.

These wins are the result of persistence, principle, and a unified voice. They show what's possible when we believe in our mission and act boldly on behalf of our members.

### Looking Ahead

As I prepare to close this chapter, I do so with pride in what we've accomplished—and deep respect for those who wear this badge. The future will bring new challenges, no doubt. I've learned that intelligence may come naturally, but true wisdom is earned—through time, trials, and life's humbling lessons.

I was also honored to serve as the elected representative on the MSRS Board of Directors for the State Patrol Retirement Plan. This role carried a fiduciary responsibility to safeguard our members' retirement security. I worked to uphold the financial integrity of our pension fund. One of the most fulfilling aspects of that role was educating troopers about the long-term value of contributing to the MSRS Roth 457 and encouraging smart planning for retirement. Helping members understand how to prepare for the future was as meaningful to me as any enforcement action I ever took.

I also took pride in helping members understand the Health Care Savings Plan (HCSP), a major step forward secured by our bargaining team for active members. One of the most meaningful contractual wins was removing the "death penalty" clause that stripped benefits from surviving spouses if a member passed before age 65. That change brought dignity and security to families during their hardest moments.

In law enforcement, we seldom see the tangible results of our work. But through legislation and contract negotiation, I can look back—at a statute enacted or a hard-fought provision secured—and know: the effort was worth it.

This is my final message to you as an active trooper. If given the chance, I would do it all over again. Without hesitation.

I believe in the future of the profession. I believe in the people rising through the ranks and see their promise. I encourage you to share your knowledge, mentor new recruits, and speak proudly of this calling. The strength of the Troopers Association and the profession depends on all of us—active, retired, and future members—remaining engaged, informed, and united. We can build a stronger foundation for those who will one day stand where we stand today.

We must safeguard our retirement system, defend the rights we've earned, and continue to live the professionalism, integrity, and resolve that define this uniform.

### Gratitude

To my wife, Melisa—thank you. Your quiet strength and unwavering love carried me through every challenge. You waited, worried, and supported me in silence more times than I can count. This career took a toll, but you helped carry the load. I am forever grateful. The truth is the steadfast support of our spouses and families

is not just helpful—it's essential. Though often unspoken, their sacrifices are as real—and as vital—as the work we do in the uniform.

To my partners, mentors, and the entire Executive Council—thank you for walking this road with me. You made every success possible. And to every member who entrusted me with this responsibility—thank you. It's been the honor of a lifetime.

Stay involved. Stay vocal. Stand proud. The weight of the badge is real—but so is the privilege. And if given the chance, I'd carry it all again.♦

*"We must safeguard our retirement system, defend the rights we've earned, and continue to live the professionalism, integrity, and resolve that define this uniform."*

## UNUM STAMUS—WE STAND AS ONE.

Mike #88



Colonel Christina Bogojevic

## Colonel's Message



# MINNESOTA STATE PATROL WELCOMES 42 NEW TROOPERS AMID SAFETY PUSH

The Minnesota State Patrol welcomed 42 new troopers on April 22, celebrating the graduation of its 70th Academy class—known as the "Committed 70th". The class was challenged on day one to be supportive, be a good partner, and encourage each other to return each Sunday.

They did just that, and graduated with the same 42 that started the academy. As I reflected on the ceremony, I was reminded that this challenge applies to every trooper.

Each day you sign on to serve—responding to unknowns, often dealing with imperfect situations, all with an expectation of perfection. You continually do this with the support and encouragement of partners, and the silent challenge to do it all again the next shift, because you are COMMITTED. As I told the 70th Academy, "committed" isn't just a label—It's a promise.

You each took the Minnesota State Patrol Oath to serve others, with the highest moral standards. You serve with our core values at the forefront. We welcome the 70th academy members and are committed to your success.

Their arrival comes at a critical time, as we enter the 100 deadliest days of the year—a period historically marked by a sharp rise in fatal crashes. As I write this we are currently down 20 percent from this time last year. That is over 20 families who did not receive the devastating news of losing a loved one in a traffic crash. While our agency carries out many roles, traffic safety remains our core mission, and your commitment to traffic safety has remained steady.

Troopers have conducted 107,966 traffic stops this year. However, we have seen a decline in high-risk behaviors, with DWI, excessive speed citations, and seat belt violations all down. We must remain vigilant addressing these dangerous behaviors throughout the remainder of 2025.

Troopers have also been instrumental in illegal street racing enforcement. We have seen nationwide, this dangerous trend continues. We have worked collaboratively across district lines and across enforcement agencies to disrupt illegal activities—including weapons violations, aggressive and reckless driving, DWI, and pursuits—ensuring those drivers are held accountable, and the motoring public remains safe. Remember to take time for yourself, and enjoy the beautiful Minnesota summer. ♦

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# REFLECTING ON LEADERSHIP & LEGACY

As you read this article, I have served as the Department of Public Safety commissioner for about two and a half years. Looking back, the time has gone by quickly and the many events, decisions, challenges and successes seem to blur together.

When I started all those weeks and months ago, my prayer for the future was to be blessed with the wisdom to lead, to be humble, to be thankful for the opportunity to serve and never to take this job for granted. I've witnessed these qualities in the best leaders I've had the privilege to work with over the decades.

What I also learned while here at DPS is that we've all worked, and continue to work, through many seasons of change.

At the time of this writing, we have just completed the graduation of the 70th Trooper Academy. This is a season of renewal and hope. This academy stood out for so many reasons, not the least of which is that it started and finished with 42 cadets—we lost no one.

For those of you who have been through this training, you know how rare that is. I'm told that last time it happened was more than four decades ago.

I had the honor of participating in the graduation, witnessing the pride our academy training staff, leadership team and new troopers took in this rarity. A trooper graduation is always an awesome event—a milestone in a life-changing commitment. This event, with the full completion of the class, gave everyone in attendance an added sense of the magnitude of this day. It also showed exactly how bright our future is.

It dawned on me during the ceremony—and I've often thought since—that the larger piece to be celebrated is that none of you—in fact, none of us—does any of this alone. We rely on our loved ones, on our experiences, our past colleagues and leaders. We rely on each other to make it to our finish lines.

It reminds me that this is a meaning for which we must all focus every day.

As I recognize and mark the setting of that season, we see on the horizon the end of the legislative session. This time can be challenging, with significant hours spent in session and even more working with legislators and their staff.

While success can be difficult to measure in this season, there is significant effort and influence put forth on our behalf by so many people who believe in our mission. More than that, they believe in you. Many of our legislators continually voice support for the State Patrol and for DPS. For that we are grateful.

Finally, we mark another season of potential change. We do not yet know the full scope of adjustments we may need to make as we work with our federal partners. What I do know is that no matter what those adjustments may be, the constant is the fuel each of us has for the work, for our fellow Minnesotans and for each other. I know we will resiliently work to support our DPS team in moments where decisions come at warp speed.

We will continue to bring wisdom, calm and consistency to this team of public servants and to serve our members and the public

to the highest standards. It is what we are called to do. Our lives, our training and our experience have proven that we are up to that task.

I spend significant time in that eternal search for wisdom, and this season seems to call for a large dose. I recently read a passage titled *The Power of a Mantra*, which resonated with me. The essence of the passage was that, as we go through life, we should have a word, a phrase, or a thought that enables a person to see clearly through life's distractions.

That brings me back to the 70th Academy graduation and listening to Colonel Bogojevic recite and explain the State Patrol core values: Respect. Integrity. Courage. Honor. Excellence.

These values are more than just words memorized by our cadets. I believe these values have distinct meaning to each graduating trooper and all who have served in the State Patrol. Just as I can resolutely say I believe that I can share that those values carry meaning for me as well.

Wisdom can be elusive. Humility can be momentary. Our work can be difficult. Still, as I tell my friends, colleagues and to those of you I have met, I love this job.

I continue to find meaning in this work. That meaning lies in service to you and to those we have pledged to protect. ♦

**You as troopers, current or former, will always be a source of pride.**

**THANK YOU ALL.**



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# DAYS ★ GONE ★ BY

## Remember when

Captain Steve Menglekoch

One thousand, two hundred and eight men applied for consideration for the 1961 Minnesota Highway Patrol Candidate School. The school, which ran from July 17 to September 22, 1961, graduated 23 eager patrolmen. The ten-week school was held at the Southern School of Agriculture in Waseca, Minnesota. Candidates at the time received \$200 per month. Qualified applicants had to meet the following criteria:

(A) Males, at least 5'10" and not more than 6'4" in height (stocking feet) and weighing 150 pounds or more

(B) A Minnesota resident for the past two years

(C) 21-35 years of age (requirement waived for veterans)

(D) Well-proportioned and good physical development

(E) High school graduate or equivalent

The total cost of the 1961 school was \$26,634.17. The estimated cost of the same school this year is over \$200,000.

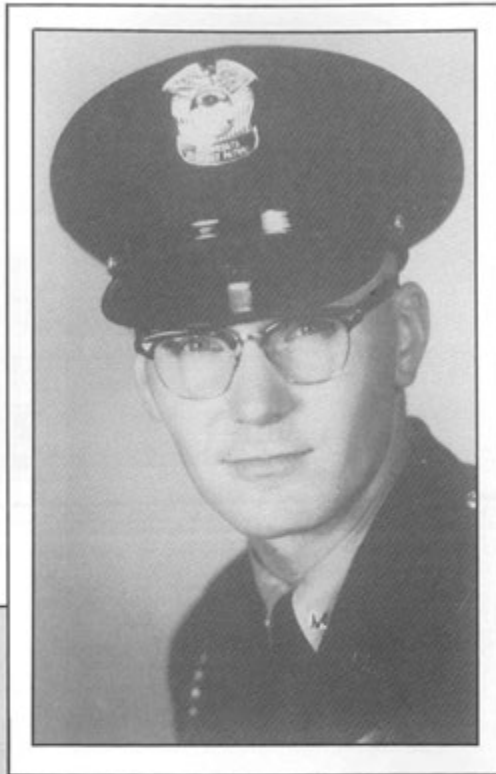
1961 saw numerous promotions, which included 14 sergeants, four captains, Major Jim Stevens and Assistant Chief Robert Newmann.

The 1961 salary range remained at \$385—\$506 plus \$3 per day subsistence. Salary increases were based on 4 percent per year until the maximum was reached (seven years to top).

The following excerpts are from the May 20, 1963, Highway Patrol Officer Manual.

#### IV. Unnecessary conversation and loitering

A. Members of the patrol shall not, while on duty or in uniform, loiter or waste time. This does not imply that members may be brusque or abrupt when engaged in casual conversation by other persons. However, such conversations must be restricted to a reasonable duration.



*This Remember When article is dedicated to the memory of Officer Glen Skalman, a 1961 rookie school graduate. Officer Skalman was wounded by gunfire on December 17, 1964, just north of Forest Lake, Minnesota. Ten days later, he passed away, leaving behind a wife and three children.*

#### V. Friendly card games

Members of the patrol may participate in friendly card games except:

A. During scheduled working hours

B. In or upon state-owned property (except that members staying overnight in a patrol facility are permitted to participate in friendly games among themselves)

C. In any public place while in uniform

#### VI. Exhibiting anger or vulgarity

Members of the patrol shall not exhibit anger, nor shall they in any way indicate ill feeling or desire for revenge while in uniform or in the performance of

duty, regardless of the provocation. The use of profane or vulgar language at any time while in the performance of duty is absolutely prohibited under any and all conditions. Members of the patrol must be polite and courteous at all times.

#### 3-203.4 Relations with the public

##### I. Attitude and conduct

A. *Every act impersonal*—Members of the patrol shall make every official act an

impersonal duty. Personal feelings shall not be allowed to affect a member's activity or overt attitude toward other people.

B. *Courteous but firm*—Members of the patrol shall be courteous and considerate, but firm and resolute in carrying out their duties. Discourtesy to any person, under any circumstances, is strictly forbidden.

C. *Interference*—Members of the patrol shall not interfere in the affairs or conduct of other persons except in the performance of duty.

D. *Acknowledgment and address of others*—Members of the patrol shall courteously acknowledge any salute, greeting

AUGUST 1988/55

## Remember when

or mark of respect that may be extended to them. All persons, except personal friends and acquaintances, shall be addressed or referred to by their proper title or as Mr., Mrs. and Miss, as the case may be.

E. *Requesting intervention*—Members of the patrol shall not request any person, except the immediate supervisor, to intervene or make representation in their behalf, to secure promotion or for any other purpose related to their position of employment which would gain them special advantage. Members may discuss such matters, with their supervisor's permission, with other supervisors or the chief.

This rule does not prohibit any member from engaging counsel or securing the intervention of any employee union or association on any matter involving the member's employment with the department.

F. *Seeking acclaim or special privileges*—Members of the patrol shall not, while in uniform or in the performance of duty, attempt to gain personal acclaim or special advantage. A member of the patrol shall neither, by reason of his badge, uniform or position, ask for nor accept privileges which are not ordinarily granted to other persons. This does not preclude the member from accepting discounts on materials or services that are purchased on behalf of the state.

G. *Soliciting*—Members of the patrol shall not, while in uniform, solicit subscriptions, sell tickets, collect donations, circulate petitions or engage in other similar activities without the specific written permission of the chief. No member shall furnish a testimonial or endorsement of any product or equipment used by the patrol without the written approval of the chief.

Following is the breakdown of what it cost to put on the patrol school in 1961.



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# REMEMBER & HONOR

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### REMEMBERING THOSE RETIRED PEACE OFFICERS WE HAVE LOST IN 2024

These retired officers were erroneously not included on the Memorial page in the January Trooper Magazine.

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SP 409



# 60<sup>TH</sup> PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION

From January 18-21, 24 members of the State Patrol, along with 15 different Minnesota agencies traveled to Washington D.C. for the 60th Presidential Inauguration. MSP members were posted outside the Walter E. Washington Convention where the Commander-In-Chief Ball was held. ♦



# MOORHEAD POLICE ATHLETICS AND ACTIVITIES LEAGUE AWARD



Trp. Matt Vatsaas (2900) received the Officer of the Year Award from the Moorhead Police Athletics and Activities League (PAL). Trp. Vatsaas volunteered over 32 hours mentoring youth with Moorhead PAL during 2024. This included motivating youth during the summer Crossfit training program and hosting breakout sessions during the mentoring portion of the program. He also participated in Safe City Nights and Shop with a Cop. Adding to the program's success, Trp. Vatsaas has recruited some of his partners to participate in PAL activities. Pictured (L-R): Moorhead Police Chief Shannon Monroe, Trp. Vatsaas, Moorhead Mayor Shelly Carlson ♦



**Larry Kallevig**  
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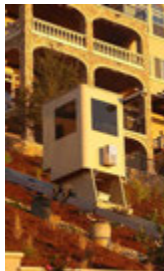


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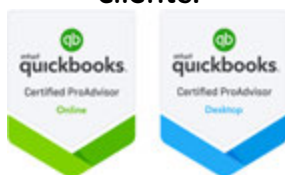
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# State Patrol Awards Ceremony

## Feb. 6, 2025

**Meritorious Citizenship Award:** This award is presented to individuals other than State Patrol employees who have assisted the Minnesota State Patrol in providing a significant service to the public.

**Daniel Baert, Steven Boser and Shelby Erdrich**

Sep. 7, 2023 – Shelby Erdrich and Daniel Baert arrived on the scene of a crash near the city of Pierz, where a van had struck a man operating a riding lawnmower, throwing him into a ditch. Shelby, a registered nurse, quickly assessed the victim and began chest compressions. Daniel then took over for a second round. Steven Boser, a first responder, soon arrived on the scene and opened the victim’s airway, while Shelby monitored his pulse. Thanks to their combined efforts, medics were able to get the victim to the hospital where he made nearly a full recovery.

**Christopher Kirk**

Jan. 15 – Christopher Kirk raced to the rescue after seeing a box truck crash through a guardrail in Rogers, plunging into the frozen Crow River below. Christopher rushed down the embankment to find the box truck’s cab destroyed. Inside, the driver’s feet were stuck in the seat belt and his upper body was submerged in the freezing water. Christopher quickly jumped into the icy river to free the driver and help the man to safety. Thanks to Christopher’s quick action, the driver sustained only minor injuries.

**Gary Bjorlin and Paul Sherwood**

Mar. 11 – Gary Bjorlin and Paul Sherwood were driving in separate vehicles when they came upon a fiery crash on Interstate 494 in Bloomington. A single vehicle had crashed into a pole and burst into flames. Without hesitation, both men stopped and tried to rescue the driver from the burning vehicle. They displayed extreme courage and selflessness in their attempt to save a life.

**Michael Coy, Tesfaye Deyasso, Dave Klepaıda, Lacie Kramer, Tessa Sand and Kadir Tolla**

Apr. 18 – An SUV veered off Interstate 94 in St. Paul, crashing into a light pole before becoming wedged against a guardrail. The impact blocked the driver’s side door, and the vehicle erupted into flames. Despite the danger, bystanders Michael Coy, Tesfaye Deyasso, Lacie Kramer, Tessa Sand, and Kadir Tolla stopped their vehicles and rushed to the fiery wreck, making several attempts to rescue the trapped driver. Just as the SUV was on the verge of being completely engulfed in flames, MnDOT FIRST driver Dave Klepaıda arrived, shattered a window, and helped pull the driver to safety.

**Bruce Kompelien**

May 14 – Bruce Kompelien witnessed a crash involving a semi and an SUV just southeast of Montevideo. The SUV started on fire with the seriously injured driver still inside. Bruce pulled the man out of the burning vehicle to



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safety. The driver later said that he would not have been able to get out without help and that Bruce saved his life.

## Jamaal Johnson

Jul. 26 – Jamaal Johnson was driving on Interstate 94 in Brooklyn Center when he saw a person lying in the traffic lane. Jamaal remembered he had recently passed a State Trooper conducting a traffic stop nearby. He pulled his semi over and alerted the trooper of the situation. An investigation revealed the individual had been involved in a crash and left the scene to avoid arrest. Jamaal's actions saved that injured person from being hit by traffic and allowed first responders to get them medical help.

**Minnesota State Patrol Commendation Award:** This award is presented to members of another law enforcement or emergency service agency who have assisted the State Patrol in providing a significant service. This year, all the Minnesota State Patrol's Commendation Awards were combined with Life Saving Awards.

**Life Saving Award:** This award is presented to members of the State Patrol who distinguish themselves by performing acts that prevent the death of another.

## Sgt. Steve Dean (Brainerd District)

Nov. 6, 2023 – Sgt. Steve Dean arrived at a Brainerd-area home to return personal belongings to a man he had assisted at a crash scene just two days earlier. As he knocked on the door, Sgt. Dean noticed the individual lying unresponsive on the floor. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, he immediately called for EMS and forced his way inside. There, he discovered the man in a pool of blood, struggling to breathe. Without hesitation, Sgt. Dean provided life-saving assistance, helping the man breathe until paramedics arrived about 35 minutes later.

## Trooper Jesse Roseberry (Mankato District)

**This presentation is combined with a Minnesota State Patrol Commendation for:**

### **Deputy Jase Guetter, Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office**

Jan. 1 – Trooper Jesse Roseberry responded to a shooting in Eagle Lake where a man suffered significant injuries to his right arm and substantial blood loss. Trooper Roseberry and Blue Earth Co. Deputy Jase Guetter worked together to apply two separate tourniquets and provide life-saving measures until EMS crews arrived. A trauma surgeon later credited the two tourniquets for helping the victim survive.

## Retired Trooper Darcy Gagnon (Brainerd District)

Mar. 14 – Trooper Darcy Gagnon responded to a medical emergency for a teenage boy who had shot himself in Nevis. Amid the chaotic scene, Trooper Gagnon maintained her professionalism and began to provide life-saving medical care. After medics arrived and the victim was stabilized, Trooper Gagnon assisted with setting up a landing zone for medical air transport, ensuring the boy received the medical care he needed.



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## Lt. Mike Gensmer, Trooper Jesse Einhorn, and Trooper Nick Brown (East Metro District)

This presentation is combined with a Minnesota State Patrol Commendation for:

### **Inver Grove Police Department members**

**Sgt. John Decker**

**Officer April Harrington**

**Officer Ashley Leschyshyn**

**Officer Jamar Meeks**

**Officer August Williams**

**Police Cadet Rheanna Deal**

### **Inver Grove Fire Department members**

**Captain John Patnaude**

**Lt. Neal St. Onge**

**Firefighter Adam Caneff**

**Firefighter Anthony LaForte**

Apr. 2 – Lt. Mike Gensmer, and Troopers Jesse Einhorn and Nick Brown responded to a call of a suicidal man who had crawled onto a sign over Highway 62 in Inver Grove Heights. The man had a rope around his neck and was threatening to harm himself. As officers from the Inver Grove Heights Police Department worked to remove him from the sign, Trooper Einhorn removed the rope from his neck. Once Inver Grove Heights Fire Department Captain John Patnaude attached a harness to the man, troopers, officers and firefighters worked together to pull him to safety. The seamless teamwork of all the agencies involved helped save this man's life.

## Trooper John Kubat (East Metro District)

Apr. 27 – Trooper John Kubat was dispatched to a freeway ramp in Pine Springs, where he found a man lying on the ground outside of an SUV, appearing to be in cardiac arrest. After detecting no pulse, Trooper Kubat applied his AED, delivering a life-saving shock, followed by chest compressions. The victim's heartbeat was restored, and he began to breathe on his own again.

## Chief Jeff Schroepfer

### (formerly Commercial Vehicle Section, currently City of Northfield Police Department)

May 9 – Former State Patrol Captain Jeff Schroepfer responded to a report of a man attempting to jump off the Mendota Bridge in Mendota Heights. Through calm and compassionate communication, Schroepfer established a rapport with the man, allowing officers to secure a rope around the man and pull him to safety. Schroepfer now serves as the city of Northfield's Police Chief.

## Trooper Brett Farniok (Detroit Lakes District)

May 11 – Trooper Brett Farniok arrived to assist with a medical call in Wadena, where he found a family member actively performing CPR on their unresponsive loved one. Trooper Farniok took over CPR and performed several rounds of chest compressions on the man. Meanwhile, a deputy applied an AED and administered a shock. Trooper Farniok continued chest compressions until medics arrived. The man survived.

## Trooper Ryan Moeser (Saint Cloud District)

May 20 – Trooper Ryan Moeser responded to a report on an unresponsive man at a home in Gilman. When he



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arrived, the man was not breathing, his face was blue and a woman was performing chest compressions. Trooper Moeser took over chest compressions while a deputy attached an AED. After multiple shocks were delivered, the team continued with rounds of chest compressions. Eventually, the man began to breathe on his own.

## **Trooper Zachary Caldwell and Trooper Justin Mathes (West Metro District)**

Jun. 8 – Troopers Zachary Caldwell and Justin Mathes responded to a serious injury crash in Coon Rapids where an SUV left the roadway and rolled multiple times, before coming to rest in a grassy median. When they arrived, the troopers discovered the driver didn't have a pulse and had been thrown from the SUV by the force of the crash. Trooper Mathes began chest compressions and Caldwell attached an AED. While providing life-saving care, Trooper Mathes noticed the man seemed to be impaired. After the man was stabilized and taken to the hospital, Trooper Mathes conducted a DWI investigation.

## **Trooper Gustavo Culbeaux and Officer Michael Mays (West Metro District)**

Jun. 16 – While responding to a fiery crash in Minneapolis, Trooper Gustavo Culbeaux and former Trooper Michael Mays helped extinguish the flames and remove an injured man from the vehicle. After realizing the man may be suffering from a drug overdose, Trooper Culbeaux administered two doses of Narcan. After the man was taken to the hospital, Mays conducted a DWI investigation. Mays now works as a Roseville police officer.

## **Trooper Trevor Dostal and Trooper Justin Turbes (East Metro District)**

Jun. 18 – Troopers Trevor Dostal and Justin Turbes responded to a medical call in Minneapolis involving an unresponsive driver who had pulled off to the side of the road. When they arrived, Trooper Dostal realized the man was not breathing and Trooper Turbes could not find a pulse. Together, they removed the man from the vehicle and began rendering life-saving aid. In addition to CPR, three shocks were administered from an AED. The man was taken to the hospital where he regained a pulse and began breathing on his own.

## **Trooper Tyler Lenz (Brainerd District)**

Aug. 2 – Trooper Tyler Lenz was the first to arrive at a reported shooting in Akeley, where a man had lost a significant amount of blood. Trooper Lenz rendered medical aid while talking to the victim to keep him conscious. When medics arrived, Trooper Lenz continued life-saving measures and helped stabilize the victim as he was being taken to the hospital.

## **Trooper Seth Kuhn (Brainerd District)**

Aug. 17 – While responding to a shooting north of Walker, Trooper Seth Kuhn located the gunshot wound on the victim and applied a tourniquet to slow the bleeding. Trooper Kuhn rode in the ambulance and continued to put pressure on the wound while EMS worked to stabilize the man on the way to the hospital. The victim was able to make a full recovery.

## **Trooper Sara Evans and Trooper Kelvin Harris (West Metro District)**

Aug. 25 – Troopers Sara Evans and Kevin Harris helped save a woman in crisis sitting atop an interstate overpass in



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Minneapolis. As Trooper Evans talked to the woman and offered positive reinforcement, Trooper Kelvin Harris positioned himself in a spot where he could take hold of the woman. Together, both troopers lowered her to safety and continued helping her until medics arrived.

- **Trooper Jacob Christopherson (Duluth District)**

Oct. 26 – Trooper Jacob Christopherson helped an ATV crash victim who suffered a serious arm injury in rural Pine County. Trooper Christopherson quickly applied a tourniquet to the man's upper arm, just above a makeshift tourniquet that bystanders had already placed. He then further stabilized the arm before the man was flown to the hospital. Trooper Christopherson's actions to prevent further blood loss likely saved this victim's life.

**Trooper James Noxon (East Metro District)**

**This presentation is combined with a Minnesota State Patrol Commendation for:**

**Apple Valley Police Department members****Officer Tyler Grieves****Officer Jordan Mack****Officer Nick Swanson**

Nov. 23 – When Trooper James Noxon arrived to a medical call in the city of Apple Valley, Officers Tyler Grieves, Jordan Mack and Nick Swanson were already performing CPR on the unresponsive victim. Trooper Noxon joined the officers, and together they continued CPR until EMS arrived to take the victim to the hospital. Thanks to their collaborative efforts, the individual survived.

**Chief's Commendation Award – Communications/911:** This award is presented to radio communications operators who provide vital life saving services that lead to the rescue of a person, provide outstanding performance during a special event, or provide a consistent, sustained high level of customer service.

**RCS Tim Jensen and RCO Don Hakes****(Statewide Communications – Southern Regional Communications Center [SRCC])****RCO Christina Nguyen and RCO Jordan Weidenhaft****(Statewide Communications – Regional Transportation Management Center [RTMC])**

Oct. 22 – RCS Tim Jensen dispatching for the Mankato and Marshall patrol districts and RCO Don Hakes dispatching for the Saint Cloud district, coordinated a response to stop a vehicle involved in multiple carjacking events across Minneapolis, Carver County and McLeod County. RCO Christina Nguyen and RCO Jordan Wiedenhaft coordinated MSP Flight assets and set up a common radio channel, ensuring seamless communication between all responding units. The team of dispatchers also worked with staff from OnStar to disable the stolen vehicle. Thanks to their exceptional teamwork, the armed murder suspect was apprehended outside of Willmar.

**RCO Tiffany Blodgett****(Statewide Communications – Regional Transportation Management Center [RTMC])**

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Oct. 26 – RCO Tiffany Blodgett answered a 911 call from a suicidal individual threatening to jump off a bridge. Throughout the call, RCO Blodgett remained calm, compassionate, and professional offering a sense of reassurance during a time of crisis. Her ability to remain composed under immense pressure, combined with her active listening skills, empathy and quick thinking was instrumental in de-escalating this volatile situation. Thanks to her efforts, responders were able to intervene and provide resources to the individual.

## **RCS Sheldon Carlsted**

### **(Statewide Communications – Regional Transportation Management Center [RTMC])**

RCS Sheldon Carlsted played a vital role in the success of the 2024 street racing details that were held every Friday and Saturday evening. Carlsted consistently delivered exceptional dispatching services, providing seamless support to the assigned teams. RCS Carlsted's positive radio presence and his commitment to provide outstanding service ensured a coordinated and unified response to make the streets safer.

**Meritorious Service Award:** This award is presented to employees for acts involving personal risk posing hazards which could lead to serious injury or loss of life to the employee.

## **Trooper Tyler Crabtree (Rochester District)**

Mar. 21 – Trooper Tyler Crabtree responded to the scene of a crash on Interstate 90 near Albert Lea involving a driver trapped in a pickup. As he arrived, he noticed flames coming from underneath a pickup. After several failed attempts to get inside, Trooper Crabtree broke a window and found an unconscious man still belted in the driver's seat with flames and heavy smoke surrounding the cab of the truck. Trooper Crabtree pulled the driver from the pickup and into the ditch where he started CPR. Additional first responders arrived and were able to restore the male's pulse. During the rescue, Trooper Crabtree suffered cuts to both hands and inhaled a large amount of smoke.

## **Sgt. Vang Yang (West Metro District)**

**This presentation is combined with a Meritorious Citizenship Award for:**

**Terrance Maynard                      Elliot Peterson                      Joseph Wold**

Sep. 9 – Sgt. Vang Yang responded to a crash on Interstate 35-W in Roseville, where a vehicle had run off the road, struck a light pole and was smoking. When he arrived on scene, Sgt. Yang found the driver unresponsive, with smoke quickly filling the passenger compartment. After unsuccessful attempts to get inside through the locked doors, citizens Terrance Maynard, Elliot Peterson and Joseph Wold assisted Sgt. Yang in breaking the driver's window, cutting the man's seat belt, and pulling him to safety just moments before flames took over the vehicle. Had it not been for the quick actions of Sgt. Yang, Terrance, Elliot, and Joseph, the driver likely would have died in the fire.

## **Trooper Zachary Gruver (Detroit Lakes District)**

Sep. 17 – Clay County Dispatch notified area law enforcement about a runaway SUV with a teenager behind the



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wheel. The vehicle's accelerator was stuck, and despite the teen's attempts to slow it down, the SUV was speeding at over 100 miles per hour. Trooper Zachary Gruver attempted to get in front of the runaway vehicle to deploy stop sticks, however, there was not enough time. Trooper Gruver then made the decision to pull ahead of the speeding SUV and use his squad car's brakes to slow the vehicle down. A Clay County Deputy called the teen driver and instructed him to hit the rear of Trooper Gruver's squad. Once the collision occurred, Trooper Gruver applied his brakes to safely bring both vehicles to a stop. Trooper Gruver placed himself in great personal danger to save the life of the young driver.

**Exceptional Service Award:** This award is presented to employees who have provided extraordinary service in the performance of their duties.

### **Lt. Mike Eck, Lt. Mike Gensmer, Lt. Pat Miles and Lt. Kevin Skalsky (East Metro District)**

A funeral for fallen Burnsville Police Officers Paul Elmstrand and Matthew Ruge, and firefighter-paramedic Adam Finseth, was held in Eden Prairie on February 28, 2024. As part of the planning, Lieutenants Mike Gensmer and Pat Miles were part of a team, requested by the Dakota County Chiefs of Police, to coordinate the funeral procession. The lieutenants were responsible for staffing 86 traffic posts to ensure the safe movement of the procession.

Another key member of the planning team was Lt. Kevin Skalsky, who served as the State Patrol liaison to the Minnesota Law Enforcement Memorial Association (LEMA). With his extensive Honor Guard knowledge, Skalsky ensured the fallen heroes were honored with dignity. He coordinated the movements of the State Patrol members, the agency's honor guard, and assisted the law enforcement procession after the funeral.

Tragically, just months later, the Minneapolis Police Department planned the funeral for fallen Officer Jamal Mitchell, held on June 11, 2024. Lt. Mike Eck staffed 68 traffic posts to ensure safety during the procession. Lt. Skalsky again led State Patrol movements, while Lt. Gensmer ensured the agency's participation remained professional and organized.

Each of these four lieutenants showed exceptional leadership, commitment and dedication to upholding the core values of the Minnesota State Patrol.

### **RCO Erin Madison and RCO Christina Nguyen**

#### **(Statewide Communications – Regional Transportation Management Center [RTMC])**

Jul. 13 – State Patrol Dispatch received a report of a woman on a highway overpass in Minneapolis threatening to jump into traffic below. Over the course of an hour, RCO's Erin Madison and Christina Nguyen worked together to manage the situation, coordinating resources from multiple law enforcement agencies and private companies. Their efforts directly led to the successful rescue of the woman.



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## **RCO Goncole Her**

### **(Statewide Communications – Regional Transportation Management Center [RTMC])**

Aug. 14 – RCO Goncole Her answered a 911 report of a gun-pointing incident. The caller stated a vehicle had cut in front of their vehicle, braked, fired a gun into the air and then pointed the weapon at them. Using the caller's vehicle description, RCO Her located the suspect vehicle on freeway cameras and followed its location. After it parked off the highway and the driver entered a nearby building, she sent its location to troopers along with a description of the driver. Because of Her's efforts, troopers took the suspect into custody without further incident.

## **Trooper Nick Kammerer (West Metro District)**

Trooper Nick Kammerer has made tackling street racing a top priority. As of October 2024, his efforts have led to more than 100 enforcement stops and 176 citations issued to street racers and spectators. In addition, Trooper Kammerer has been involved in investigations surrounding car meets, including incidents of vehicular assault, threats of violence and other crimes. Trooper Kammerer's work has made a significant impact on stopping this lawless and reckless behavior, and he's become a key player in the success of the Metro Street Racer Task Force.

## **Trooper Eric Ouellette (West Metro District)**

As a member of the Traffic Incident Management Team (TIM), Trooper Ouellette plays a key role in preventing secondary crashes and enhancing the safety of first responders at crash scenes. He collaborated with MnDOT on a pilot program that uses QR codes to help drivers quickly find the nearest exit, speeding up clearance. Trooper Ouellette has also taught several TIM courses, both internally and externally, sharing his expertise. A leader in TIM tactics, he encourages his partners to prioritize safety in every situation.

## **Angi DeSpiegelaere (West Metro District)**

Angi DeSpiegelaere serves as the district's DWI Coordinator. Her duties include publishing DWI data and submitting cases for charging. In the past year, Angi submitted just under 2,000 DWIs and 550 search warrants, consistently earning positive feedback from external partners for her concise and accurate filings. In addition, Angi processes the district's GovQA data requests. Since the program's implementation, Angi has fulfilled at least 6,000 data requests for the courts and public. Angi solves problems with a win-win approach, all while providing outstanding customer service day in and day out.

## **CVI Greg Lind (Commercial Vehicle Section)**

Commercial Vehicle Inspector Greg Lind is committed to helping others succeed. CVIs, troopers and partners in the commercial vehicle industry often seek out CVI Lind's guidance in enforcing commercial vehicle laws. CVI Lind generously shares his insights and best practices with others, always making himself available to answer questions and provide support when he teaches both locally and at district training. CVI Lind's commitment to his duties has built up his reputation as a trusted expert in his field.

## **RCO Christina Nguyen**

### **(Statewide Communications – Regional Transportation Management Center [RTMC])**



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RCO Christina Nguyen served on a workgroup assigned to meet the accreditation goals for statewide communications. RCO Nguyen applied her exceptional organizational and writing skills to play an integral role in meeting the 13 standards assigned to the workgroup.

## **Lt. Paul Stricker (Investigative Services Section)**

Since 2013, Lt. Paul Stricker has provided leadership to troopers assigned to enforce E-ZPass, inspiring them to be some of the most proactive troopers within the Minnesota State Patrol. Through his collaborative approach, he built strong relationships with MnDOT, ensuring the success of the E-ZPass program. In addition to Lt. Stricker's daily duties, he leads the planning, organizing and execution of VIP motorcades in the state. During a particularly busy political season, his dedication, teamwork and tireless efforts were on full display, highlighting his commitment to excellence.

## **Lt. Kali Kleinschmidt (Training and Development Section)**

In 2024, Lt. Kali Kleinschmidt demonstrated exceptional leadership and organizational skills by successfully managing multiple complex training initiatives that impacted every member of the agency, including both sworn and non-sworn personnel. While simultaneously supporting the 68<sup>th</sup> and 69<sup>th</sup> academies, Lt. Kleinschmidt planned and executed an agency-wide wellness seminar and Centralized In-Service Training. In addition, she meticulously prepared for the POST Board audit to ensure the Minnesota State Patrol was meeting the highest standards for law enforcement. Lt. Kleinschmidt's ability to embrace challenges combined with a solutions-oriented mindset exemplifies the agency's core values.

## **Technical Sgt. Dave Johnston (Training and Development Section)**

Technical Sgt. Dave Johnston has served as a full-time coordinator assigned to the Training and Development Section at Camp Ripley for two years. During this time, Sgt. Johnston has developed training plans to address the changing needs of the State Patrol. Sgt. Johnston has played a key role in introducing new equipment to troopers, including breaching tools and rifle plate carriers. He was also instrumental in the agency's transition to a new rifle light. Sgt. Johnson's passion for researching, developing and executing training plans has helped the Minnesota State Patrol quickly adapt to using new technology and safety strategies.

## **Eagle Squadron Award**

Each year, the Eagle Squadron Award is presented to the Minnesota State Patrol trooper who arrested the greatest number of impaired drivers the previous year.

## **Trooper Gustavo Culbeaux (West Metro District)**

Impaired driving enforcement continues to be job number one for every State Patrol trooper. Aggressive enforcement in this important area that saves countless lives and prevents injuries each year.

In 2024, Trooper Gustavo Culbeaux arrested **222** impaired drivers. In recognition of his efforts, he is presented with the Eagle Squadron Award for his tireless dedication to the Minnesota State Patrol's mission of protecting



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the public and preventing tragedies by removing impaired drivers from our roadways.

**Leadership Award:** This award is presented yearly to the employee who consistently exhibits outstanding leadership and excellence in public safety through their personal actions, guidance, direction and professional involvement.

## **Lt. Kevin Skalsky (East Metro District)**

Lt. Skalsky's remarkable career with the State Patrol began in 1997. Following a two-year assignment in the West Metro District, he transferred to the Aitkin station in the Brainerd District, where he worked until his promotion to the East Metro Lieutenant in 2012. It was here that he will complete his impactful career.

As a trooper, Lt. Skalsky routinely stopped over 2,000 vehicles each year. He became a recognized leader in DWI, seat belt, and speed enforcement, earning numerous traffic safety awards for his commitment to public safety. Upon transitioning to leadership, Lt. Skalsky's influence only grew. His exemplary work ethic, passion for excellence, and strong sense of integrity had a profound impact on everyone around him. Known for his approachability, knowledge, and passion he earned the respect of his colleagues and became a trusted mentor to many.

Since 2014, Lt. Skalsky served as the commander of the State Patrol Honor Guard. Under his leadership, the Honor Guard not only upheld the proud traditions of the State Patrol but also played an instrumental role during numerous line-of-duty funerals across the state. A particularly memorable moment came in 2015 when Lt. Skalsky was called to serve as the incident commander for the funeral of an Aitkin County investigator.

Lt. Skalsky's service also extended to the Mobile Response Team (MRT), and Chemical Agent Response Team (CART) lead operator. He helped teach MRT operations and tactics to law enforcement agencies across the state, as well as military reserve units looking to expand their response to civil unrest.

In February 2025, after more than 28 years of dedicated service to the State of Minnesota, Lt. Skalsky will be retiring. The Leadership Award is a fitting tribute to his decades of outstanding service and the profound impact he has made on his colleagues, the agency, and the communities he served.

**Civilian Employee of the Year:** This award is presented to the non-sworn employee who best demonstrates outstanding work performance, initiative, leadership and effective interpersonal relations.

## **CVI Sgt. Chris Hudson (Commercial Vehicle Section)**

Sgt. Hudson's dedication to public safety and service spans more than 23 years with the State of Minnesota. He began his career with the State Patrol Commercial Vehicle Section as an inspector and has advanced up to his current position as Chief School Bus Inspector. In this position, he oversees 14 school bus inspectors across the state and is responsible for monitoring the annual school bus inspections program.



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In 2024, Sgt. Hudson took on the challenge of developing a six-hour course designed to provide a deeper understanding of the school bus inspection process. The course guides people through the school bus inspection manual, offering invaluable insights into the critical steps involved.

Sgt. Hudson has consistently demonstrated his commitment to addressing the needs of the school bus industry without sacrificing safety. After hearing consistent concerns from the school bus industry about rising failure rates during inspections, Sgt. Hudson and his team developed a training program. The program has now been presented at multiple events across the state. As a result, the failure rate has dropped from 23.6 percent to 18.5 percent.

In addition to his technical expertise, he has also improved communication and collaboration within the school bus inspection team and developed templates with contact information for school districts and contractors in each region. He's also demonstrated his commitment to teamwork by driving buses for the Mobile Response Team and contributing to the DPS website redesign. Finally, as a Command Sergeant Major with the Minnesota National Guard, Sgt. Hudson brings over 30 years of military service to his role.

Sgt. Chris Hudson's unwavering dedication to ensuring a safer and more reliable transportation system for Minnesota's schoolchildren makes him the ideal recipient of the Civilian Employee of the Year Award.

**Trooper of the Year:** This award is presented to the Trooper who best demonstrates outstanding work performance, initiative, leadership and effective interpersonal relations.

### **Technical Sgt. Kyle Backer (Saint Cloud District)**

Sgt. Backer embodies all the qualities that define the Trooper of the Year. From the early days of his career as a trooper in the St. Cloud district, where he spent countless nights removing impaired drivers from the road, Sgt. Backer has consistently delivered outstanding performance. His work earned him numerous accolades, establishing him as a dedicated and driven trooper committed to the safety of Minnesota's roads.

As a natural leader, Sgt. Backer has consistently taken the initiative to drive positive change within the Minnesota State Patrol, earning recognition as the "most notable agent of change." His commitment to professional growth is evident in his certifications as a crash reconstructionist, forensic mapping specialist and CDR tool technician. These specialized skills, combined with his extensive experience have made Sgt. Backer a go-to expert for law enforcement agencies and traffic safety organizations, where he's helped build strong networks and valuable relationships.

His fellow troopers say he always delivers, calling him a "mentor, leader and a person they look to for feedback and assistance."

Over the past year, Sgt. Backer has worked on several notable cases, including:



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- A fatal crash investigation where a driver, speeding at nearly 150 miles per hour, rear-ended another vehicle. Sgt. Backer was able secure charges for third degree murder, two counts of criminal vehicular homicide, and two counts of criminal vehicular operation. This was achieved by using electronic video evidence and a significant amount of investigative networking.
- A serious injury car vs. pedestrian case, where he worked with other state agencies to help discover a larger issue of negligence by a local bar.
- A high-profile crash investigation that involved the tragic death of two boys and left a third critically injured. Sgt. Backer worked diligently to uncover the facts and secure electronic evidence in the case.

Sgt. Backer lives by the core values of respect, integrity, courage, honor, and excellence. He continues to show up every day prepared to make a difference and is, without question, the future of our agency.

The Minnesota State Patrol is honored to present Sgt. Kyle Backer with the Trooper of the Year award.





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# MINNESOTA OFFICERS UNITE IN D.C. TO ADVOCATE FOR KEY ISSUES

In March MSPTA President Mike LeDoux, Vice President Jason Theel and Sgt. Wade Erickson, joined nearly 30 members of the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association for a D.C. fly in event. It is aimed at advocating for issues critical to law enforcement across the state. Representatives from agencies throughout Minnesota—ranging from rural departments to urban police departments—came together with a unified voice to meet with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle.

During the visit, MPPOA members discussed key concerns affecting Minnesota law enforcement, including officer wellness, recruitment and

legislative priorities that directly impact daily operations, pensions and retirement.

What made this visit particularly unique, according to several congressional offices, was the sheer number of Minnesota law enforcement representatives who made the trip. Lawmakers noted that it's uncommon to see such a large statewide showing and that it underscored the seriousness and passion behind the issues being presented.

The MPPOA remains committed to advocating for the needs of Minnesota's law enforcement community and the safety of the communities they serve. This D.C. visit was a powerful reminder of what can be accomplished when officers stand united in purpose and speak with one voice. ♦





# 38<sup>th</sup> Annual MSPTA Trooper/Guest



# Golf Tournament

**LOCATION:** The Wilderness at Fortune Bay; 1450 Bois Forte Road, Tower, MN

**DATES:** Wednesday July 16<sup>th</sup> & Thursday July 17<sup>th</sup>

**TIME:** July 16<sup>th</sup> – 9:00 AM tee time (2 person best ball)

July 17<sup>th</sup> – 9:00 AM tee time (4 person scramble)

**COST:** \$300/person – Includes 2 rounds of golf, cart, use of range, 2 course lunches, banquet dinner on the 16<sup>th</sup>, hospitality room 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>.

-----  
**Trooper:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Active:** \_\_\_ **Retired:** \_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Trooper/Guest:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Active:** \_\_\_ **Retried:** \_\_\_ **Guest:** \_\_\_

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**Twosome you want to be paired with on day one:** \_\_\_\_\_  
-----

- Please mail registration form in by June 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Make checks payable to MSPTA Golf and mail to Kenny Dellwo, 1704 Riggs Road, St. Peter, MN 56058.
- After June 1<sup>st</sup> registration will be opened to any allied agencies that wish to participate.
- Maximum of 144 golfers.

Tournament is open to all active or retired troopers, supervisors, RCOs, CVIs, and their guests. All skill levels welcome. Don't miss your chance to play at this course which has earned both statewide and national recognition. While the registration fee is a cost increase from the past few years, I am confident those who attend will not be disappointed in this venue.

A block of rooms is being held at Fortune Bay Resort Casino. Rooms are under Minnesota State Patrol Troopers Association Golf Tournament. Call 218-753-6400 to make a reservation. Reservations can also be made at the RV Park at Fortune Bay for anyone wishing to bring their camper or RV.

Practice rounds will be available on Tuesday, July 15<sup>th</sup> for a discounted rate. Call The Wilderness at Fortune Bay clubhouse at 507-479-2739 and ask for the Play & Stay rate.

If you would like to purchase an additional banquet dinner for any guests that will be non-golfers, the cost will be \$52. Please either indicate on registration form or call/text/email me (952-220-7103 / [Kenneth.dellwo@gmail.com](mailto:Kenneth.dellwo@gmail.com)) if you will be bringing a non-golfing guest so that I can get an accurate head count.

For those who wish to participate it would be to your benefit to register as early as possible. I am expecting this tournament to fill up quickly as this is an incredible course to play and a very enjoyable place to stay. There is no travel required after arrival since the golf course, lodging, and casino are all located in the same area.



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# BUILDING COMMUNITY, ONE MOVIE AT A TIME

On January 14, 2025, the Minnesota State Patrol Troopers Association (MSPTA) brought joy and connection to a group of young students from the Valley Youth Center in Duluth by treating them to a special movie outing at a local theater.

The Valley Youth Center serves the western district of Duluth, focusing on mentoring and community engagement for underserved youth. Events like this are part of the MSPTA's ongoing efforts to support community-building initiatives across the state, especially in areas where positive connections can make a lasting impact.

This year's film, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, was selected almost unanimously by the students themselves—an energetic, fun-filled choice that brought

excitement and anticipation leading up to the big day. Troopers Mike LeDoux and Lori Young played key roles in coordinating and sponsoring the event, ensuring everything ran smoothly from start to finish.

To make the experience truly memorable, each student received popcorn and a soft drink, adding to the classic movie theater feel. As the lights dimmed and the film began, the kids' faces lit up with excitement—proof that sometimes, the simplest gestures can leave the greatest impressions.

The MSPTA is proud to support organizations like the Valley Youth Center and looks forward to continuing its mission of strengthening community ties through meaningful outreach. ♦





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## RAPIDDEPLOY AWARD

On February 19, members of the RTMC dispatch center were presented with a Superstar Award from RapidDeploy. RapidDeploy is a technology which enables seamless, cross-border collaboration during critical emergencies. The dispatchers used this technology along with their experience to rescue a man stranded on a small island near the U.S-Canadian border, presenting a complex cross-border water rescue mission.

The four award recipients are: Nicholas Selness, Jordan Weidenhaft, Justin Armstrong, J.P. Lundell. Pictured (L-R): Sheri Stevens, Major Travis Schaap, RCOs Justin Armstrong, Nick Selness, Jordan Weidenhaft, Catie Williams (RapidDeploy), Colonel Bogojevic, Director Tim Boyer, and Todd Komanetsky (RapidDeploy). Not pictured: J.P. Lundell ♦



## EASTER FUN BRINGS SMILES AT M HEALTH VISIT

Trooper Lisa Lorenzen

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 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 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 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 had oversized plastic Easter eggs with stickers for them to decorate. The hospital provided pastries and coffee for the parents.



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.

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. ♦

# MSPTA ATTENDS SPRING 2025 NATIONAL TROOPER COALITION CONFERENCE

Eric Maikkula SP 33

The spring 2025 National Trooper Coalition conference was held in Branson Missouri from 14-16 April. Members of the MSPTA in attendance were President Mike LeDoux, Vice President Jason Theel and East Metro Delegate Eric Maikkula.

The bi-annual conference provides a great opportunity for State Troopers from around the nation to come together to learn from each other, compare and contrast the working environment in various parts of the country and establish relationships that are invaluable in furthering the cause of benefitting State Troopers.

This spring's conference had several featured speakers:

- NFL Hall of Famer Randy White
- United States Army CSM (ret) Greg Birch
- Annette T. Hill, MC, LPC, NCC EMDR Certified Therapist
- Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey
- Colonel Michael A. Turner, Superintendent Missouri State Highway Patrol
- Diane Bernard, Concerns of Police Survivors

Monday night featured the NTC banquet dinner at Johnny Morris' Top of the Rock Ozark Heritage Preserve. The banquet dinner provided the valuable opportunity to socialize and build camaraderie with Troopers and guests in attendance. The venue was second to none.

**THANK YOU** to the Missouri State Highway Patrol Association for hosting such an outstanding conference! ♦





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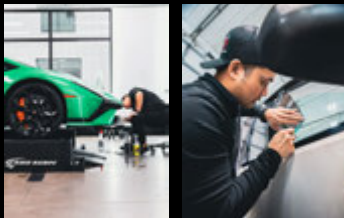
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# LESSONS FROM THE FRONTLINE: A RETIRED TROOPER'S GUIDE TO NAVIGATING SOCIAL SECURITY SPOUSAL BENEFITS POST-GPO/WEP REPEAL

By TJ The Desert Dweller  
Contributor

**A**fter decades of service and navigating retirement benefits, you'd think things might finally get easier. But if you're like me—a retired trooper now eligible for Social Security benefits after the repeal of the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO)—you've likely discovered that even in retirement, you still have to fight for what you've earned.

I'm sharing my story here in the hope that it helps other retirees avoid some of the headaches I faced while applying for Social Security spousal benefits under the new rules of the Fairness Act.

## **The Bureaucratic Two-Step**

I began the process in January by applying for benefits online. Despite clearly indicating that I was applying for spousal benefits under the Fairness Act, my application was denied because, according to Social Security, I didn't have enough work credits to qualify on my own. That's true—but irrelevant. I wasn't applying for my own benefit. I was applying for a spousal benefit.

I submitted an appeal by mail to the proper office in Kansas City. To this day, I don't know what happened to it. Lost in the shuffle? Filed in the trash? I'll never know.

Frustrated but not beaten, I filed a new online application on April 16—again emphasizing that I was applying as a spouse, not an individual worker. The next day, a Social Security agent left me a voicemail requesting a call-back to discuss the application. I returned the call within the hour and left a message. By that afternoon, I logged into MySocialSecurity and found—once again—that my application had been denied.

## **The Call That Made All the Difference**

Thankfully, the same agent called me back the next day. She was sharp, personable, and knew exactly what needed to be done. Thanks to her, we were finally able to complete the process. Based on this experience, here are some key takeaways that may save you time, frustration, and possibly even a few months of retroactive benefits:



# Prior Coverage

Thitiwadee/AdobeStock

## Five Lessons Retirees Need to Know:

### 1. You cannot apply for spousal benefits online.

Social Security's online system only allows you to apply for benefits tied to your own record. Spousal benefits involve two accounts—yours and your spouse's—and must be initiated by speaking to an agent by phone or in person.

### 2. Make it clear from the start: you're applying under the Fairness Act.

Highlight this when you first talk to a Social Security representative. Don't assume they'll know what you're referring to—be explicit.

### 3. Be ready to verify your marriage.

You'll need to prove your marital relationship. This can be done in one of three ways:

- By sending in a specific marriage verification form
- Having your spouse accompany you to the Social Security office

- Or—what worked for us—having your spouse speak to the agent over the phone to verbally affirm the information provided

### 4. Expect automatic Medicare deductions.

Once your benefit is approved, Medicare premiums will be deducted from your monthly Social Security check.

### 5. Hope for a competent agent—and don't be afraid to call back.

The quality of your experience will vary depending on who picks up the phone. Persistence is key. I was lucky to finally connect with someone who understood the process and could get it done.

## Final Word

To those still in the trenches of the application process: don't give up. If you served your community, wore the badge, and held the line, you've earned every cent coming your way. Navigating Social Security isn't easy, but armed with the right information—and a lot of patience—you can get through it. ♦

Share this with fellow retirees. Let's help each other get what we've rightfully earned.



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# STATE TROOPER AND TWO-TIME ALTRUISTIC ORGAN DONOR: 'MY LIFE HAS ONLY GOTTEN BETTER AFTER DONATION'

By In the Loop • January 8, 2025

**Kristie Sue Hathaway, a Minnesota State Patrol trooper, has given the gift of life — twice. In 2021, she donated a kidney to a stranger. Last year, she donated part of her liver. Learn about her experience.**

When Kristie Sue Hathaway learned an acquaintance had only a single kidney, she made a generous offer. "If you ever need a kidney, I'll give you one of mine," she told the man.

It was a spontaneous and sincere offer that Kristie Sue, a Minnesota State Patrol trooper, would make again a few years later when she learned about a family friend who needed a kidney. Their blood types weren't compatible, so couldn't donate to him. But Kristie Sue couldn't get the idea of donating out of her mind.

The acquaintance she'd offered her kidney to — a Mendota Heights police officer named Steve Hilyar — had become her husband, and she could see firsthand how it was possible to live well with one kidney. She began digging deeper into organ donation and soon discovered something that would

change a stranger's life. "I learned that you don't need to know the person to donate," Kristie Sue tells CBS News. "And I was like, 'I'll do that. I'm healthy, and if I ever came across someone that needed one, I'd give them a kidney, so why not?' I just felt like I needed to do it."

## **Becoming a nondirected living donor**

Kristie Sue reached out to Mayo Clinic to begin the process of becoming a nondirected living donor, which included tests to ensure she was healthy enough to donate and conversations about the risks of donation.

"The process at Mayo was amazing," Kristie Sue says. "I'm part of a Facebook group of donors, and for some of them the testing process takes almost a year. At Mayo, everything is done in two or three days. It's a well-oiled machine. It

builds your confidence as a patient to be so well taken care of."

After being approved to donate, Kristie Sue gave her care team a window of dates that she would be available for surgery. "Then, they found me someone to donate to and away we went," she says.



Kristie Sue resumed her active lifestyle soon after donating.

Surgery took place on Feb. 11, 2021. Kristie Sue recovered quickly, running three miles just 12 days later. "There are some misconceptions about living donation," Timucin Taner, M.D., Ph.D., division chair of Transplant Surgery at Mayo Clinic, tells CBS News. "People sometimes think they're not able to be active or have a normal life afterward. Those are all misconceptions. None of those are true." Kristie Sue agrees. After six weeks, she was back to running 20 miles a week.

Though she recovered well, Kristie Sue returned to Rochester frequently for six months for follow-up appointments with her care team. "It's a very intense process after surgery," she says. "I was checking in with people at Mayo all the time. I was kind of sad when the six months were over because I wasn't going to be seeing these amazingly sweet people who were part of one of the most positive things in my life." But Kristie Sue had a feeling she'd be back. And just over three years later, she was.

### Joining an exclusive club: Double donors

On May 23, 2024, Kristie Sue donated a portion of her liver to a stranger, making her part of a very small group of people who have donated two organs. A 2023 article in Clinical Transplantation put the number at just 101 people in the U.S. between 1981 and 2021.

*"I was kind of sad when the six months were over because I wasn't going to be seeing these amazingly sweet people who were part of one of the most positive things in my life."*

KRISTIE SUE HATHAWAY

"Donating is not for everyone," says Kristie Sue. "I think it's something that's placed on the hearts of people who do this. It's not a long, thought-out decision for most of us."

Abigail Marsh, Ph.D., a neuroscientist and psychologist at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., is hoping to discover what makes some people take risks and make sacrifices to help others. In October 2024, Kristie Sue flew to Washington to participate in one of Dr. Marsh's research studies.



Kristie Sue and her husband, Steve Hilyar, in Washington, D.C.

"To me, I'm just normal," Kristie Sue says. "I would like to know what is different about me that makes me make the decisions I do." For now, she describes her decision to donate as "a no-brainer." "You actually have made a measurable difference, and not just for the person getting it," Kristie Sue tells CBS News. "It's their whole family. They might have kids. They might have grandkids. You can't really put a price on somebody getting a few extra Christmases or a few extra birthdays or getting to attend a wedding that they wouldn't have otherwise been able to attend."

There are benefits to donors as well. Just ask Kristie Sue. "Making a significant sacrifice for someone else changes you," she says. "My life has only gotten better after donation." ♦

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# SOCIAL MEDIA: THE DO'S AND THE DON'T'S



Mark Schneider  
LELS General Counsel

Many of you have Facebook, X, Instagram or TikTok accounts. The use of social media has become a way of life and a convenient means of communicating with others. With the convenience and ease of communication comes the risk of others being able to access your messages, tweets, videos, memes and photos. While you may have activated privacy settings for your accounts, a friend or other authorized user may re-tweet, like, take a screen shot or forward your message to other non-intended recipients. Groups have been set up to search for all public safety employees, including troopers' presence on the internet and to publish private information about those troopers for others to see. Using secret screen names, aliases or first or middle names will not prevent people from identifying you. In addition, there are websites that are directed to law enforcement that are advertised as a private forum for police officers or troopers to state their opinion, give advice and make statements about their administrations; however, these sites can be accessed by others.

As we know, once information is put on the internet, it is available for all to see. As far as public employees are concerned publishing an email, meme, or other information on the

internet may *not* be protected by the First Amendment. Free speech rights of public employees are limited, especially when it comes to law enforcement.

With all that is happening in the State of Minnesota and across the country, the frequency and types of communication through social media have exploded. Individuals are giving their own opinion or thoughts regarding an issue, while re-tweeting, re-posting memes or liking others' entries. Whether an individual posts an original thought or forwards another person's statement does not offer any additional protection. Any re-tweet or re-post of another person's social media statement can result in discipline of a public safety employee.

Internal investigations and discipline surrounding social media posts of law enforcement are not unusual. Several, if not all, agencies have general policies concerning conduct unbecoming a trooper or prohibiting actions that will negatively reflect on an agency, department or office. Many agencies also have specific social media policies that address what is and is not appropriate content when an employee posts on social media. For instance, it is not appropriate for a trooper to be in his/her

uniform while posting; sit in his/her squad car while making a video; or speak poorly about his/her administration, or politics. Any social media post a trooper makes concerning discipline or actions taken against that trooper by his/her employer may be used against that trooper in any subsequent disciplinary proceeding or arbitration hearing. Statements made on the internet are no different than statements made elsewhere and may be admissible as substantive evidence to support discipline, or as an admission against interest made by a trooper in any subsequent administrative/arbitration proceeding.

When posting to social media, any post should only include positive information and comments. You should avoid any reference to politics, protests, current events or judicial proceedings. Before posting any material to a social media site or on the internet — **think about it**. Do not post in the heat of the moment. Ask yourself—how would this comment look on the front page of the newspaper or as an exhibit at a disciplinary hearing. Let it sit overnight or after you have reviewed your intended post with a friend or colleague.

In addition, it is important that all public safety employees protect their identity. Do not disclose your occupation,

education, degree, employer, or any other information that could link you to law enforcement, the Minnesota State Patrol or other agency.

All of us are well aware of the increasing concerns with Brady/Giglio issues. Any social media or internet post that could be interpreted as biased or discriminatory may trigger a Brady designation requiring disclosure by the prosecuting attorney. This, in turn, may lead to further scrutiny by your employer and added justification for discipline. Similarly, depending on the nature of the posts and their content, the POST Board may initiate a review of the circumstances to determine whether a standard of conduct has been violated that would result in action against your peace officer license.

All of you are working in a very difficult and challenging climate. You are all subject to further scrutiny with cell phone video, internet access and social media. Do not make your lives more complicated with posts, tweets, re-tweets, TikTok video, X or Snap Chat photos or entries that could come back to harm your reputation, standing with your employer or continued employment as a trooper. ♦

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# MAX ENGEL SP 159: A LIFE OF SERVICE AND SURVIVAL FROM SUBMARINES TO STATE PATROL

**M**ax Engel is alive and well, living the dream in Southern California.



When Max graduated from Cass Lake High School in 1953, he joined the Navy and volunteered for submarine duty. In 1957, the movie “Run Silent, Run Deep” was filmed on his World War II submarine, the USS Redfish, with Clark Gable and Burt Lancaster on board. It was great but the boat numbers were painted over for the movie.

Max was accepted for nuclear submarine training but that upset his plans to join the Highway Patrol. He would have had to re-enlist for six years and then be assigned to the nuclear submarine Thresher, which later sunk with all hands on board.

The Patrol had already tested in 1957 when he got home. But when they tested again in 1961, Max applied and was accepted into the second class. He was given badge number 159. His first assignment was the Roseau/Baudette station. Capt. Fredeen said he wanted him to go up there and settle in between Dick Florhaug and Bob Stotts as his partners.

Below are a few of Max’s stories from his career with the Patrol:

Max’s first fatal was a plane crash that killed two men. The pilot was intoxicated, and the owner/passenger was still

holding an open bottle of liquor. The Roseau County Sheriff’s Office had no deputies, and he was picking up a prisoner in International Falls so his sister/secretary called Max at home and asked him to respond to the crash site.

Later, Max transferred to the Crookston station. After the first week there he was shot at 21 times. He was chasing two juvenile runaways in a stolen car from Iowa. Crookston Police started the chase, but the juveniles put five bullets through their radiator and one through the middle of the windshield. Max stopped and picked up the Crookston officer and they chased the juveniles into Warren, where a game warden put a bullet through their windshield, and they drove into the ditch. Max was



## CLASS OF 1961



Front row from left: Phil Hodap, Stan Rotegard, Richard Lueck, Bert Johnson, Jerry Kittridge, Don Dahl, Jack Murray. Back row from left: Myron J. Lofgren, Thomas S Solberg, Maurice R. Messer, Eugene Erickson, William Jensen, Tom Nuessa, gerald Peterson, Francis G. Richardson, Anton Robert Zfnoc, Thomas Kosec, Dean Johnson, Douglas Pterespn, Wilbur, Crist, Donald Carpenter, Martin W. Berg, Robert Max Engel, Gary Ginder, Richard Holt, Douglas Jensen, DuWayne Obeloh, Glan Skalman.

speechless to learn neither the sheriff nor the police chief filed charges against those two because this had never happened in Crookston before, and they didn't know what to do! From then on Max did his own charging.

South of Crookston, Max was driving past a large barn where a big party was going on after dark. There in the driveway were two crop-dusting airplanes with their engines running, so he turned around up the road and here they came straight at him with their landing lights on. He was sure both of their propellers were going to clip his whip antenna as they barely cleared his squad. The local fertilizer company was having a party for its customers, and they were uncooperative, so he went to Crookston airport and chatted with a pilot whose wife was feeding him coffee. He denied being there, so Max contacted the Feds, and he joined them for their next meeting. As they were leaving, the pilot told Max he couldn't admit anything because he had a \$200,000 spraying contract pending.

On a quiet, sunny Sunday afternoon Crookston Police asked Max to assist their officer on a house call. When Max pulled up, the officer came outside. He was white as a sheet, so Max asked him if it was a gas leak. The officer replied: "She stabbed them all." Max rushed inside and found the mother on the hallway floor gasping, with a kitchen knife stuck in her throat. That was her last breath. All the shades were pulled in this old two-story house, so Max went looking for others. He found all three of her children side by side on the floor bleeding from numerous stab wounds and not saying a word but watching Max with their eyes in perfect unison.

He loaded two of the children into his squad and took them to the hospital, allowing the mother and the worst child to ride in the ambulance. He attended the mother's funeral at the request of the children. Their soldier father had just been

ordered to Vietnam and was turned around as soon as he arrived. The stress was just too much for the mother.

His most serious injury crash occurred at the University of Minnesota entry on the north edge of Crookston after he responded to a car/fuel semi accident during a snow whiteout. Crookston Police had set up a roadblock for him, but a semi hauling farm tractors purposely ran the roadblock and crashed into a car behind Max. That car came crashing into him, then the semi hit Max and knocked him into the back of the fuel semi and then the speeding semi's trailer wheels hit Max, resulting in a total of four hits. He had three husky men in his squad, and they were well padded, but he received a blow to his lower back resulting in a cracked vertebrae and his squad was totaled.

On another sunny Sunday afternoon in Crookston, then Sgt. Louis Gelen was just connecting the fifth wheel to Max's back bumper to certify his speedometer when he was dispatched to a serious crash north of Crookston. He quickly disconnected and headed north. It was a broadside with one car upside down and four people inside. This was long before fire departments responded to crashes, so Max crawled in the back window and found the mother dead and the little girl with her head pinned between the roof and the top of the front seat with her little dead brother on top of her. Others removed the injured and unconscious father while Max struggled with the girl's head. A farmer rushed home and came back with a hack saw, so he sawed away until the seat came loose and then he handed the little girl out before carrying the little boy up the embankment. The girl and father survived, and Max told the doctor he sawed so hard he thought he was having a heart attack. The doctor explained to Max how they control their emotions, so Max practiced it throughout his career. That evening, Max was in the Crookston Police station inventorying the



### Trooper receives commendation

Jay Fairbanks, Commander and Bert Woodford, Post Law and Order Chairman of Spencer-Ross Post 134 of the American Legion presented a Certificate of Commendation to State Trooper, Cpl. Max Engel. The Law and Order Chairman recommended Trooper Engel for the American Legion Award for his efficient and life saving actions at a two-vehicle accident on May 28, 1982 on Hwy. 371 south of Walker. One of the people in the accident wrote: "There are times when life is held by a very thin thread. In this case, that thread was a Minnesota State Trooper. Because of his actions eight people are alive today." Trooper Engel's commendation in part reads . . . "for dedication to the profession above and beyond the call of duty." The American Legion, Spencer-Ross Post 134 said they were proud to present this award to Trooper Engel with their thanks for a job well done.

Canadian mother's purse, which ironically was so organized it appeared she had a premonition of death. Each family member's ID and general information were rolled and sealed with a rubber band.

At that same time, the police phone rang, and the 70-year-old, chain-smoking dispatcher answered it. For an unknown reason, Max picked it up on another phone and heard a young woman reporting a very bad accident north of Mentor on a county road. Max recognized the voice and with her tone he knew it was bad when she asked him how fast he could get there.

It was a bad crash. A carload of drinking juveniles hit a family head on. Max loaded two boys from the rear seat into his squad (one had glass slivers in his eyes) and delivered them to Crookston Hospital. A while later, the ambulance arrived with the mother and father and left the dead child at the scene.

In the emergency room the doctor had shifted his attention from the boys to the unconscious father while Max turned to the hysterical mother to calm her down. She kept exclaiming about her family and then she suddenly stopped and grabbed Max's shirt, pulling herself right up to his face. He saw gray forming right below her eyes and the whites of her eyes were the whitest he had ever seen. He called to the doctor. He rushed over, said "We're losing her," and she was gone. As this was happening Max kept thinking she should be holding her husband and not him. She didn't even know him. But

that say included two double fatales in one day, both involving a mother and child.

Back then, there was no police training so Max drove back out to that scene and wondered if he should interject himself into their investigation. But he had to do his own 10-54 report first. On Monday he returned to the second 10-54 scene and there it was – all freshly blacktopped by the county as scheduled.

Max was standing in Crookston Police station talking with their dispatcher when their two-night officers in their new 396-cubic-inch Chevrolet called in they were chasing a Pontiac south on Highway 75 and asking for Patrol assistance. Max jumped in his Plymouth with its new 440-cubic-inch replacement engine and headed south, but he didn't see them, so he punched it and was advised they were already 12 miles south of Crookston. Crookston Police didn't chase cars, so how did they get that far out? The 440 usually tops out about 144 mph, so how did they reach 160? Sometimes Max would see their

purple lights, and sometimes not. Suddenly he was right on top of them with the violator and he blew right by and turned around just north of Halstad. His replacement engine was great. The younger officer was not about to let the speeding suspect get away now that they had a 396 under the hood. The older officer was still in shock from riding at 130 mph.

Max asked them what they charged the suspect with, and they said speeding. He asked them why not "failure to stop?" They didn't think they could because they didn't have their red (purple) lights on all the time, so he asked them why they turned them off. They both said it was because the Patrol doesn't always have theirs on when chasing cars. Max explained the Patrol didn't turn on their red lights while overtaking a car because they had stay behind and pace them, then the red lights would go on. All that work for a \$100 speeding ticket. But Max was proud of them anyway.

The mayor and policeman in Fertile looked kindly on Max, as did some city fathers, and they decided Max should become Minnesota's first Fertile Highway Patrolman. Max was advised to go to the Mahnommen airport and meet the Patrol plane with Major Stevens in it. Mahnommen was not only out of his station but out of the district. Max picked up Stevens and the Patrol pilot and Stevens told him to take them to State Sen. Norman Larson's junk yard. Stevens went inside with a bundle of files and while they sat outside, the Patrol pilot asked Max if he knew why Stevens was there. Max had no idea why he was there. The pilot said the Fertile mayor and a

local delegation went to Chief Harbinson and requested Max be transferred to Fertile, but Harbinson denied their request, saying Fertile was too far away from most of the station activity. Undaunted, the delegation went to Larson's junk yard and the rest is history. By the time the pilot told Max, Stevens was on his way, huffing and puffing as he climbed into Max's squad. "You're moving to Fertile."

Stevens then told Max he went inside, and Larson told him to not even put his files down. He promised the people in Fertile that Max was moving to Fertile. Larson told Stevens to remind Chief Harbinson that, "I'm the head of the State Finance Committee and I control your funds." And that was it. Max was lodged at the Fertile Motel for three months (room and board) waiting for his new home to be available.

Fertile was a great town and everything was going great, although Harbinson was having fits because Polk County bought sheriff monitors for Patrol station cars and patrol monitors for the sheriff's cars. It worked wonders but Harbinson ordered them removed. They did, but they quietly returned after a while. Now Harbinson was furious and sent Stevens up to see Capt. Fredeen with the demand to take them out or have the patrolmen suspended. So out they came, including Fredeen's. Max contacted his new friend Norman Larson, and he told Harbinson to give back the monitors. Harbinson did but with a memo saying the Patrol must keep a monthly log showing any use and why. Max kept a very articulate log, including all the need after 2 a.m. when our Patrol dispatchers were off the air, and there was no one to talk to at crash scenes. About six weeks later, Harbinson cancelled his order, and life was back to normal. Max believes Norman Larson may have received a copy of a log.

Thinking he would be working Polk County the rest of his career, an uprising in Cass Lake changed all of that when the American Indian Movement moved onto the Leech Lake Reservation and the stress level was extreme. The Governor ordered the Patrol to respond, so groups formed in Bemidji, Grand Rapids, and the Mille Lacs area. However, Troopers were not to enter the reservation except for Max, since he was from there. Troopers assigned to reservation stations were to continue regular patrols while the three special squads were to wait outside the boundaries as backup. Max said the state was clueless about Indian politics, which can get very bloody. The local people knew Max, but his station partners didn't know who he was when he arrived.

Politicians had been pouring millions of dollars into the reservations so AIM decided to take over the reservation and reap that windfall, but the local tribe resisted, and the Governor

backed the locals. The tension was like being underwater and everyone had at least one gun and knew which tree to hide behind. After a few skirmishes between the two Indian factions, AIM pulled out and went to South Dakota where they shot and killed two FBI agents.

Even though we had Native American Troopers, Major Stevens asked Max to move back to Cass Lake because he "knew how to live with these people." So, Max became the expert for the Patrol, and they even gave him a phone number directly to the Governor's Office if there was trouble. Max's stepfather was a bartender at the city municipal and clerked at the Post Office. His mother was office manager of the Chippewa National Forest and Max was a graduate of Cass Lake High School (1953), so he fit in like an old shoe.

Roger Eck, who was the captain at that time in Grand Rapids, said Max was well respected within the Reservation. Bob Karbowski, aka Bena Bob, was a Cass County Deputy at the time and worked with Max over the years. He said that Max was very intelligent and he enjoyed working with him. Bob didn't retire from the sheriff's office until he was 82. He, like Max, also had a very interesting career.



A local policeman and Max were jumped by about eight locals one night after they made a traffic stop for a previous assault, open bottle, and littering. Unfortunately, it was in front of their house, and they started screaming for their family and the fight was on. The policeman had one on the ground so someone in the crowd reached out and grabbed his gun. Max drew his at the same time and then they both realized he had mistakenly grabbed the officer's gloves, which were tucked into the top of his holster.

The fight continued so Max put his revolver back in his holster, but didn't have time to put the strap over it and someone grabbed it from his holster and handed it to the driver, who stuck it into Max's stomach and pulled the trigger just as his girlfriend screamed at him to put the gun down. Fortunately, Max jammed his hand onto his gun and the hammer penetrated the webbing between his thumb and forefinger. It cut him open, but Max retrieved his gun. Then, the policeman maced somebody and Max, too, so he was partly blinded and thinking he had to kill somebody because the policeman and he were not going to die alone on that street.

Suddenly, out of a house came "Snooks" Lovelace, a gorilla of a man. He was screaming at the crowd to get back into their house, and they did. Snooks took Max into his house so he could wash his face and hands. Snooks really was a gorilla with the same mentality, but he liked Max and previously sold him some fish that might have been illegally obtained. When he came to Max's house with the fish discreetly wrapped in a newspaper with its tail hanging out, he said Max should not tell anyone where he got it. That's the kind of guy he was.

While southbound from Cass Lake, a broadside collision took place ahead of Max. Both cars landed in a couple's front yard with a small gas-fueled fire coming from the bottom car. The vehicle on top contained gas cans and outboard motors. Max sprayed chemical, but it kept reigniting on the hot engine, so Max had the homeowner pour water on it while he opened a woman's airway. Max received credit for saving eight lives. The ninth person was already dead. Max had a lot of help arriving, with four ambulances from three towns and the top-of-the-line Cass Lake Fire Department. Max received awards from numerous organizations, including Governor Perpich.

Max's life took a big turn after he investigated a six-fatality crash just west of Cass Lake involving three drunks in an old pickup with one headlight and an automobile with a husband, wife, daughter and her two children. The pickup hit the car head on while passing three cars at fast speed in a no-passing zone. It knocked the car backwards 80 feet before flying over the car. It was a chaotic scene with every drunk in Cass Lake

coming to the scene or to the hospitals in Cass Lake and Bemidji. In both locations, police were called to keep drunks out of the emergency rooms. The problem started when the firemen removed the dead and injured and laid them on the shoulder of the road. When Max arrived at the scene, they pointed to the first in line who was a dead pickup passenger and told him he was the driver, so that's the way Max called it in his fatality report.

The next day, Max was advised a TV crew from the Twin Cities would soon arrive, so he set up in Dot's Café and then the roof fell in. The fire chief joined Max just as he saw the TV crew pulling in. The chief says, "We told you the wrong guy was driving. The driver is alive" So Max made the announcement on TV minutes later. Days later, a shyster lawyer (PG) arrived and forever changed his life. He claimed to represent the driver in a lawsuit and criminal charges and during a preliminary court hearing he claimed Max screwed up the investigation, but the firemen and ambulance crews contradicted him.

Days later, the lawyer asked Max to change his testimony back to the dead man being the driver and the real driver being an injured victim so he could sue for more money because he hadn't been paid. The Cass County Attorney told Max to file six murder charges against the pickup driver, so he did.

The shyster lawyer was then back in the picture, defending these four and parading them before a TV crew. The County Attorney cleared Max but put him before a grand jury so the lawyer couldn't file charges. He received support from many sources, including former MSP Assistant Chief Jerry Kittridge, who was on the POST Board. As for the pickup driver, the county attorney dropped the six murder charges for a guilty plea to one vehicular homicide. He served nine months in the county jail with Huber privileges. All thanks to his unpaid attorney. The privileges were soon revoked for fighting with a Cass Lake policeman. As for the county attorney, he resigned and joined a law firm in St. Cloud.

Later one night, Max was home eating a bowl of cereal when a car slowly drove by his house and parked up against the garage door of his parents' home. Max could see four images, so he went on high alert when they turned around and slowly drove past him again. This time they stopped about 50 feet from his house and turned off their lights. He heard what sounded like a large container thumping and he immediately thought they were going to set his house on fire. The Native American deputy he worked with had his house torched twice with the second fire destroying it. Plus, the police chief's door had a bullet hole through it in on another occasion.

Max put on his gun belt and jacket and stepped outside. He saw a figure hunched down behind his pickup, so he fired one shot in the air. The person dropped the bucket and ran for their car. He realized someone was crouched down to his left behind his patrol car, so he fired another shot in the air and he took off to their car. He heard someone to his right behind a small metal storage shed so he fired a third shot in the air and away he went so he fired a fourth shot in the air for effect and a guy ran right past him.

Thinking they were the deputy's arsonist Max turned his squad around and went after them while notifying Brainerd

dispatch. Fortunately, there were officers at a nearby café and response was quick. One of the guys in the back seat had a knife under a blanket but he left it there when he got out. That's when Max learned they were stealing gas from his pickup. He thought they were arsonists and there to burn his house down. Max was suspended for seven days for swearing at them. As for the gas thieves, they were down to three after two of them got into an argument and the train ran over one. Max gave the other a ride home afterwards and broke up a fight between him and his girlfriend. ♦

**AND AS MAX WOULD SAY, "LIFE GOES ON."**

Richard C. Smith - Retired  
State Patrol Archives Curator



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