

MINNESOTA TROOPER

Volume 41 • Number 3 • October 2025



REP.
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LEGISLATOR
OF THE YEAR | PG 37



MIKE LEDOUX
RETIRES | PG 50



SEN. JEFF HOWE:
MPPOA SENATOR
OF THE YEAR | PG 36

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MINNESOTA TROOPER

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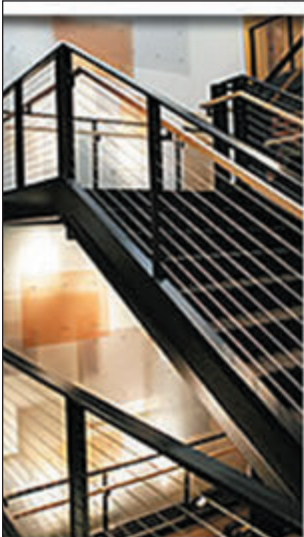
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Jason Theel • MSPTA President

President's Report



STRENGTH, UNITY, AND PROGRESS FOR EVERY TROOPER

HAPPY FALL EVERYONE,

As I sit here writing my first Presidents magazine article I can't help but think of how proud I am of being a State Trooper. I would like to start off with a huge thank you to our past President and Vice President that just retired this year. Mike LeDoux and Dan Beasley both left MSPTA in floor room show status and I Pledge to keep that going. Bylaws in our contract state that the Vice President will assume the role as Presidency until the next election cycle. As a board we will stay fiscally responsible, work together with command staff and fight for what is right for our troopers. We have a positive relationship with CHQ and that is the way it should be. We work better together than apart.

As I write this article for the magazine we have locked in a date with MMB for our first round of negotiations. We have been working without a contract since July 1st. Our negotiations team has done a lot of research and preparation for these rounds of meetings. We will fight for fair wages and some language updates. This year will be a tough year for negotiations but with new data from the OLA study they will clearly see that we are underpaid. We are 6.55% below average. A State Trooper's job has changed over the

years, from Troopers in Minneapolis patrolling the streets to working at the State Fair and many other duties that we get assigned, we all take pride in wearing that uniform. It seems like we work at minimums a lot of the time and hopefully with the extra funding for recruitment we can fix this. I feel the frustration as a road trooper, it seems

like this is the first place that gets pulled from to do all the extra duties, and the shifts get long when you are constantly at minimums.

In-service has kicked off and is going well. The Troopers that run the training are very dedicated and bring some of the very best training any law enforcement officer could

have nationwide. They all put in long hours at Camp Ripley to make sure the trooper is trained and ready for all scenarios that they will face on Minnesota roadways. Please take time to thank them when you are up at Camp Ripley for their dedication, it is second to none.

Please stay safe this fall and if you have any questions reach out to me or one of the board members, we are here to help you and serve you. ♦

Jason SP 100

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Colonel Christina Bogojevic

Colonel's Message



TROOPERS' DEDICATION SAVES LIVES

As we close out another Minnesota summer, I want to take a moment to reflect on the extraordinary work you've done, the challenges we've faced and the progress we're making together in our mission to keep Minnesotans safe.

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.

“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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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE
PROUD SUPPORTER
DANIEL RIGNEY



CALM IS CONTAGIOUS. SO IS HUMANITY.

Many people are readying for or on their way to work. Maybe they're watching the morning news or listening to talk radio on their way out the door.

Me? It was the usual routine of listening to my squad car radio as I drove into the office. I am always curious about what is happening — an old habit from more than 30 years of being in law enforcement.

Some of your colleagues were doing their jobs up to that moment, ensuring the state's roadways were safe for the morning rush hour.

A REGULAR DAY. UNTIL IT WASN'T.

The radio squawked out calls about an active shooter in south Minneapolis. A school. Multiple casualties. I was on my way to work hoping for a relatively uneventful day. I reactively went into the cop frame of mind. What was my role in serving the mission? I let our DPS leaders know the few facts I could glean. I prepped to support the first responders and those they were helping. And I listened.

Usually, when I hear radio transmissions from law enforcement, I hear calm, cool direction and updates. This call had that. Relatively speaking.

IT ALSO HAD EMOTION.

I heard terror from those responding, rushing not away from the horror but into it. I heard the genuine and unbelievable concern for those who needed help. The responders who were first on the scene, some of them our own State Patrol troopers, ran into the unknown. Their training took over, the very reason they signed up to be a responder driving them to whatever may be waiting for them.

Anyone who has been with me in tense situations or has heard me discuss leadership in our work has heard me say it: calm is contagious. If people see us calmly addressing a situation, they feel like things will be under control. That calm spreads, much like a force field around everyone supporting those who most need it.

On the radios that horrific morning, I heard bravery. I heard courage, urgency and compassion.

In the hours and days that followed, we witnessed that and so much more.

You and your fellow troopers showed a side of you to the world, to the millions whose gazes were fixed on Minneapolis. You showed them humanity.

Many of you might think what responders did on Aug. 27 was nothing more than just doing their jobs. That your State Patrol family was merely doing a trooper's work. You'd get no argument from me. You would be right.

Please take a moment, however, to read portions of this column again. Recognize the listed traits. Know that not everyone possesses them.

Calm. Bravery. Courage. Urgency. Compassion. Humanity.

Demonstrating these traits is nothing more than troopers doing their jobs. They are traits you exhibit on a regular basis. These are a trooper's traits. ♦

THANK YOU.

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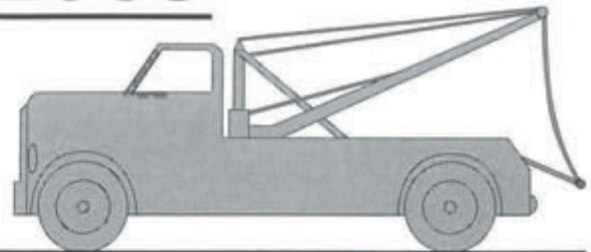
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DAYS ★ GONE ★ BY

Thrown for a Loss



Editor's note: The following ICR, written January 12 by Trooper I Ronald J. Buersken of Albany shortly after the end of the Minnesota Vikings' football season, was submitted by Lieutenant Roger A. Anhorn, District 2600.

Citations JF 1395, 1396 and 1397. The Vikings' season ended. Three team members set out for winter break en route to Chicago where they then part company and continue to their respective states of residence. Lo and behold they discover an hour and a half later they are going the wrong way on I-94.

The members enter a huddle just east of Osakis, and a closer analysis of the game plan (otherwise known as Minnesota state map) indicates that indeed, it would appear they are now 120

miles further away from the goalpost located in Chicago.

The decision is made to turn around and go back. Even though they just passed an exit ramp at the 119 yard line and are only one and a half miles from the Osakis exit at the 115 yardstick, they decide to flank to the left and execute a rush through the median. This decision is based on a fake premise that brand-new, four-wheel-drive Nissan Pathfinders equipped with radar detectors have a distinct field advantage here in northern Todd County.

Upon executing move, all three proceed into median and get immediately stuck a mere 4-5 feet into opposition territory. The defense had secretly put big-time snow in their path and all three were sacked.

The defense was summoned to

location by chuckling CB'ers in 18-wheelers. All three were issued respective citation penalties and informed that here in Todd County the median is not part of the playing field. All three were towed out by Randy's Towing and were of good humor indicating they truly are "good losers." Vikings 0, MSP 3.

LIGHTEN UP.

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THE OATH OF A MINNESOTA STATE TROOPER

I, _____, do solemnly swear,

To support the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution and laws of the State of Minnesota, and that I will faithfully and impartially discharge the duties of State Patrol Trooper employed and designated under and pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 299D, and all acts amendatory thereto;

To serve the State of Minnesota and the United States of America honestly and faithfully and at all times fulfill my oath as State Patrol Trooper;

To be loyal to my supervisors and fellow Troopers and obey and enforce the law without fear, favor or discrimination as to class, color, race or creed;

To help those in danger or distress and, if necessity arise, lay down my life rather than swerve from the path of duty; and To conduct myself at all times in accordance with the highest moral standards and never commit any act that will reflect discredit on the Minnesota State Patrol or any member thereof.

All this I solemnly swear to the best of my knowledge and ability, so help me, God.

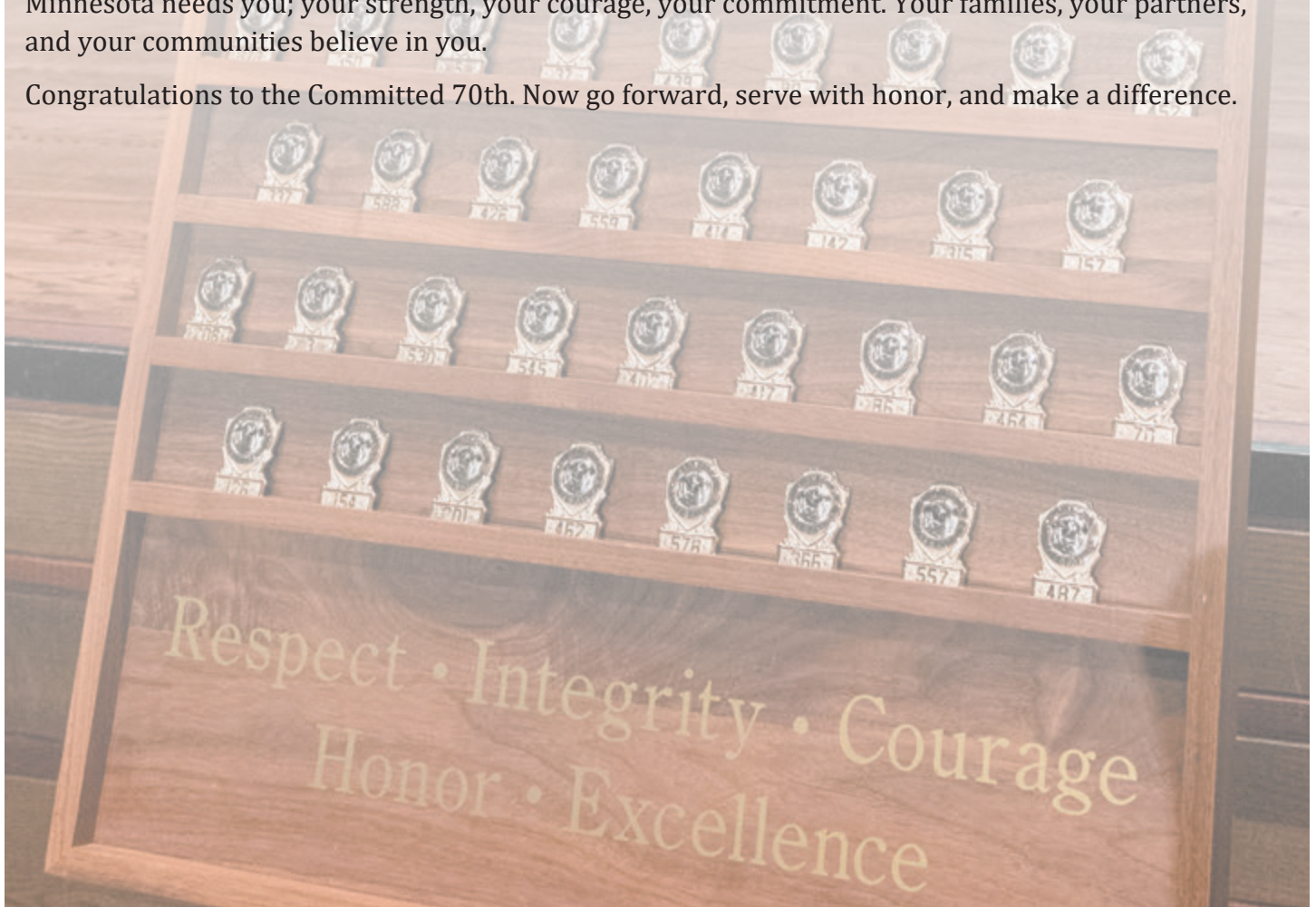
Commencement Address by:

COLONEL CHRISTINA BOGOJEVIC



Good morning, and welcome to the graduation of the 70th Academy. A special thank you to our distinguished guests, Commissioner, Governor, General Manke, and legislative members, thank you. To the families in the audience—thank you. Thank you for the support given to these graduating cadets. Thank you for pushing them out of the door on Sunday nights. Thank you for managing everything at home, so that they were able to focus on the training each week. Back in January, I had the opportunity to meet many of you on family orientation day. The room was filled with emotion. I could feel the apprehension of saying goodbye to your loved ones. Saying goodbye to mothers, fathers, sons and daughters. I could also feel the pride you had in your loved ones. The pride knowing that each of these 42 graduates were answering a call to serve others. Saying goodbye, or see you soon, knowing that they were entering something larger than themselves. Graduates, take a breath, smile, and be proud. Be proud of the dedication, discipline, and resilience it took to complete these past 14 weeks. Look around you—at your classmates, your partners. Together, you’ve faced challenges, grown stronger, and achieved something remarkable. On day one we discussed the importance of being a team, working together, and ensuring that you were supportive and encouraging for each other to return each Sunday night. You have been committed to each other, and that is so commendable. You have also committed to yourself. Some may have been pushed to limits you didn’t realize were possible. You did

this through stress, exhaustion, and possibly some self-doubt. In the end, this made you better. We have discussed ethics, and the expectations of the agency, and more importantly the expectations of those we serve. Perfection may be unattainable, yet we strive to be the best, and to bring our best self every day. This is done in the face of fear, and sometimes through tragedy, because those we serve expect that of a state trooper. This expectation is what makes this profession a calling, not just a job. You each have endured a long journey of applications, backgrounds, classroom and physical training to get to this point. The work is not done. As you move into the next phase of field training, know that this will not be easy, but the academy has prepared you for success. There are 615 troopers in the field that will encourage you, and challenge you, and support you. You each bring a diverse background, including military, EMT, law enforcement or dispatch experience, family business, customer service and manufacturing to name a few. Some of you have personal reasons for joining the Minnesota State Patrol. Whether it's a personal story of losing a loved one, the ability to give back to your community, or following in a family member's footsteps. Use these diverse work and personal experiences to push forward, to shape the future of the Minnesota State Patrol. As you leave here today, wear your badge with pride. Carry these values in every interaction, every decision, every moment you serve. You are no longer just individuals—you are Minnesota State Troopers. The road ahead will challenge you. In 2024, we saw a significant rise in fatal crashes across our state. It's a painful reminder of why this work matters, and your role is clear. Behind every statistic is a family forever changed. It will be your responsibility to respond, to protect, to prevent and to care. Minnesota needs you; your strength, your courage, your commitment. Your families, your partners, and your communities believe in you. Congratulations to the Committed 70th. Now go forward, serve with honor, and make a difference.





Academic Achievement Award:
Cadet Dylan Gaspard



Chief's Achievement Award:
Cadet Touhoua Lee



70th Academy Class

TROOPER ELI GRUBBS

Command staff, academy staff, troopers, fellow cadets, and family and friends, thank you for being here this morning to be a part of this ceremony. This day marks a milestone for those of us on this stage, and for many of you in the audience. Today is a day that we have dreamt about, pined for, and strived for. It is a day that in January, felt very far away, and sometimes, seemed a day that was unlikely to ever come. But here it is and here we are. To have the opportunity to speak to you all on this stage, wearing this uniform, and with all these fine men and women here with me, is truly an honor I will never forget.

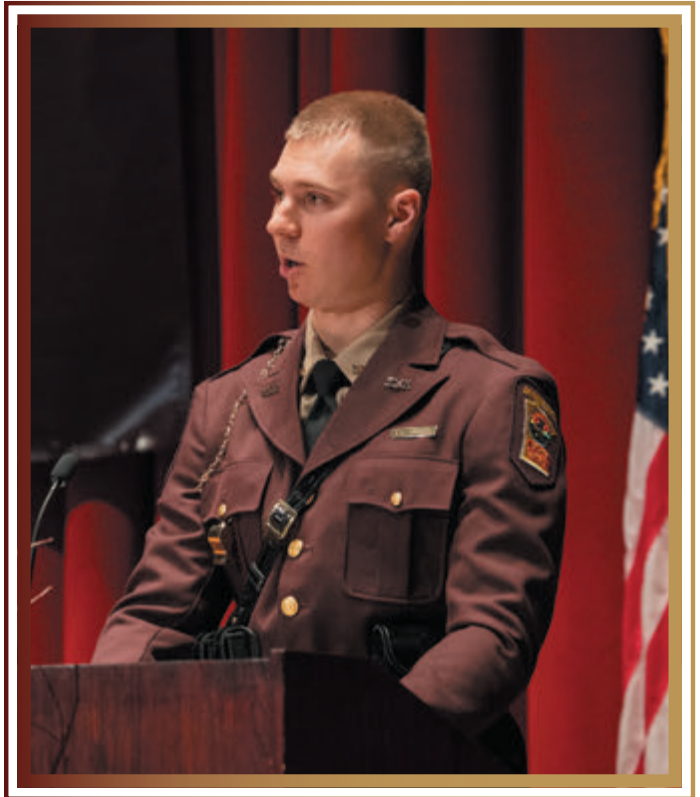
For twenty-one of the individuals up here today, this journey began last year when we started the State Patrol's Law Enforcement Training Opportunity Program, better known as LETO. We became students for twenty-two weeks, and we formed a tight group. January rolled around, and we were

joined by twenty-one more cadets who came on through the Patrol's traditional hiring process. LETO and traditional met for the first time on a snowy day at Camp Ripley. During orientation, we had our loved ones by our sides for the last time that week. We listened to Troopers' advice on how to deal with the stresses we would face in the coming weeks, as well as the stresses that our families would deal with in our absence. Our goodbyes were sudden and tearful. Before we knew it, the academy was underway.

We were awoken early the next morning. I remember hearing the banging on our bedroom doors, and reading the clock before I moved to get up. Four-thirty-four. The ensuing chaos was a blur. If you ask several cadets their version of events from that first morning, you are sure to hear several different accounts. We can remember the laps in and around the billet. The wall sits. Counting off over and over, and never seeming to get it right. And forgetting to turn off the lights to our billet, time and time again.

We were quickly thrust into a routine and schedule that seemed impossible to conform to. Staff, you pushed us tirelessly to be prepared and on time. I remember fumbling with the buttons of my shirt sleeves, trying desperately to get on-line fully dressed for the day. And I remember how this was one of the first lessons in teamwork we received: put your partner before yourself. Before squaring yourself away, make sure your partner's shirt is bloused, check that they have the right socks on, that their pen is in their pocket, and that before PT, their sweatpants are on and facing the right direction.

We surely were a sight to behold. Imagine a hall lined with cadets, in varying states of dress, all standing stark still, sweating profusely, and hearts pounding. Some had shaving cream coving their face, some had their ties hanging only by a button, some had only one boot, some only one sock. But with time we improved. We became efficient, and our attention to detail increased. We were promised by staff that everything in the Academy was by design, and as these changes occurred within ourselves, that promise began to make sense.



The first phase of training at the Academy is commitment phase. Even before starting the academy, we all knew it was common for cadets to wash out or quit, especially within the first several weeks. And while we all wished the best for each other, we fully expected to lose some of our classmates. But no one left, no one quit, and everyone rose to the occasion when they needed to. We were told that we were an anomaly. One night, after a day during which we had not performed our best, we stood at attention in the hallway of our billet. Staff let us know that we had fallen short of their expectations, and one of them told us, “You don’t have anything going for you, except that you keep coming back.” Well, Trooper Jepson, they don’t call us the Committed 70th for nothing.

As the class progressed through the training phases, we earned more privileges and responsibilities. Our skill sets expanded, and our comradery grew. The “Eb and flow” of our success and failure became steadier each week, until we had more success than failure. Our commitment to ourselves, each other, and our goal of becoming Troopers kept us coming back, but it was the support and instruction we received along the way that earned us our campaign hats.

On behalf of The Committed 70th, thank you to everyone who had a hand in getting us to this stage. Academy staff, we all felt the weight of what was about to come when you marched into the hanger on orientation day. You were the epitome of our goal, and at the same time, you appeared as the biggest hurdle we would encounter. You lived up to our expectations and our fears, but you were also our mentors, and you demonstrated the State Patrol’s core values of respect, integrity, courage, honor, and excellence in everything you did. You were all the quintessential Trooper.

Chefs, you were always ready with a smile, and for many of us, looking forward to the next meal was the motivation we needed to get through the day. Your warmth and kindness were daily reminders of life outside of the Academy. Thank you.

YMCA coaches, you pushed us every day during PT, and you showed us that despite our exhaustion, we always have another gear. While instructors trained us on technique and theory, you prepared our bodies and minds for the tasks ahead. Thank you.

Academy instructors, without you, our field trainings officers would be riding with forty-two very unprepared troopers next week. Like us, you sacrificed time with your family to be at the academy. I know I speak for all of us when I say that we are very thankful for that sacrifice. You taught us how to perform the necessities of a Trooper’s duties, and showed us what it means to be a good partner. Because of you, we are now forty-two prepared cadets.

To everyone who held down the fort while their cadet was away, I don’t know who had it harder, you or us. I do know that without you, none of us would have made it here. Missing you was the cause of our heartache, and the source of our deepest motivation. Every week we were sad to say goodbye, and excited to make you proud. Thank you.

Cadets, congratulations on passing the longest running integrity test we’ve been given. On orientation day Captain Barthel asked us to raise our hand if we were going to make it to graduation, and when we all raised our hands, he said it was our first integrity test and that we had all better graduate. Throughout the academy some of you dealt with illness and injuries, one of you got engaged, one of you welcomed a new baby to your family, and we all dearly missed our loved ones. In spite of these things, you chose to keep coming back. Thank you for your integrity, your dedication, your comradery, and above all, for your willingness to join such a noble profession.

Now, as we prepare to hit the road, our focus shifts from succeeding in the academy to succeeding on patrol. We are excited and proud to serve our families, communities, and state, always striving for and upholding the values of respect, integrity, courage, honor, and excellence. Thank you.

COMMITTED



Minnesota State Patrol Core Values



RESPECT
INTEGRITY
COURAGE
HONOR
EXCELLENCE



70th ACADEMY



Mission Statement

Protect and serve all people in the state through assistance, education, and enforcement; provide support to allied agencies; and provide for the safe, efficient movement of traffic on Minnesota's roadways.





Trooper Jacob Angell

BADGE SP414 | MARSHALL DISTRICT 2300

I was born and raised in Red Wing, MN. I attended college at North Dakota State University in Fargo, ND. I obtained my Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and double minored in Emergency Management – Homeland Security and Psychology. I worked for the Cass County Sheriff's Office as a Correctional Officer and a Community Service Officer for the West Fargo Police Department. My hobbies include baking, biking, attending country music concerts, spending time with family, and going on walks with my dog Charlie. I joined a Curling Club while attending NDSU and I was able to participate in the USA Curling College National Championship. Trooper Cody Kisor advised me to join the Minnesota State Patrol.



Trooper Dominick Baillif

BADGE SP557 | WEST METRO DISTRICT 4500

I was born in Centerville MN, and I moved to Baxter MN, just in time to start kindergarten. I went to college at Central Lakes College and graduated with an AAS Degree in Criminal Justice. I was a community service officer at Brainerd Police Department for just over 2 years. Some of my hobbies are I enjoy going to the gym, going out dirt biking, playing hockey, going out on the lake, and being with family and friends. I recently started getting into horseback riding and I enjoy working on trucks. My father has been a State Trooper my whole life and he is my inspiration in joining the State Patrol.



Trooper Trisha Bauman

BADGE SP141 | DULUTH DISTRICT 2700

I was born in Duluth, Minnesota, and raised in the Duluth/Hermantown area. Prior to the academy, I attended the College of Saint Scholastica where I studied education and psychology. I worked as a personal care assistant for a child with an intellectual disability; I grew my patience and learned the importance of adaptability. My hobbies almost exclusively revolve around activities with my dog, Gilly, taking her on hikes on the many trails the North Shore has to offer. I learned the Minnesota State Patrol was hiring from Trooper Young, who helped oversee the internship, encouraged me to apply to the LETO program. I saw the work ethic of the Troopers and appreciated how they emulate the core values and work to ensure safe roadways.



Trooper Daniel Berggren

BADGE SP142 | THIEF RIVER FALLS DISTRICT 3200

I am from Roseau, MN. I was the Sergeant at the Roseau Police Department with approximately 19 years of law enforcement experience. I enjoy hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and following my kids' sport teams. My first job was the Chief of Police of my hometown. I was inexperienced in this role and a local State Patrol Trooper helped me in getting my squad's radar to work. Two State Troopers, Trooper Alex Anderson and Trooper Nicholas Robertson, both talked with me about the benefits of the Patrol verses a small police department. The State Patrol was always a dream of mine and the opportunity presented itself. I wanted to improve my professional skills and show my kids that everything is achievable if you work for it.

Trooper Christopher Cholwek

BADGE SP402 | DULUTH DISTRICT 2700

I am from Washburn, Wisconsin, but I have lived in Duluth, Minnesota since 2019. I served 6 years in the Wisconsin Army National Guard. In 2019-2020 I deployed to Afghanistan with the 829th Engineer Company. I attended the University of Minnesota-Duluth where I earned my Bachelor's Degree in Criminology and a double Major in Sociology. My hobbies include hunting, fishing, camping, and spending time with family. In 2021, I was ice fishing on Chequamegon Bay in my hometown. A gentleman put his snowmobile through the ice and I was involved in rescuing him. This experience was when I realized I wanted to be a first responder. I interned with Lt. Hanson and Trooper Young who encouraged me to apply as I wanted to be continue my public service in the community I live and work in.



Trooper Austin Dawley

BADGE SP3 | DULUTH DISTRICT 2700

I was born in Iowa City, Iowa and moved to Minnesota in 2009, to Millville MN. I was enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and served as a Military Police Officer, assigned to a Special Reaction Team, Sniper. I also assisted with training for our Police Department as a Non-Lethal Weapons Instructor. Some of my hobbies include hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and small hobby farming. I always knew I wanted to do law enforcement after the military which brought me to do a ride-along with a Trooper in the Rochester District. I decided the Patrol was a good fit for me as it demonstrates high standards and how it mirrors the military. The training opportunities MSP provides was a huge reason for me pursuing the State Patrol.



Trooper Tyler Evenson

BADGE SP426 | VIRGINIA DISTRICT 3100

I grew up in Mantorville, but I currently live in Moorhead with my Fiance. I was a Police Officer for the City of Zumbrota for just over 3 years. My hobbies include hiking, checking out various State Parks and watching movies with my Fiance. Something nobody would know about me is I had the opportunity to be the TZD coordinator for the Zumbrota Police Department. I would need to credit many of the Trooper's in the 2170 Station. They had been trying to convince me for quite some time to join the MSP. I believe the State Patrol's mission and I have a great respect for the Troopers. That's when I knew that MSP was an organization, I wanted to be a part of.



Trooper Roger Fabian-Gonzalez

BADGE SP631 | WEST METRO DISTRICT 4500

I was born and raised in California spent most of my life there until I decided to relocate in 2021 to Minnesota. Prior to the academy while I was still living in California I worked as a traveling security guard. I was sent to all regions of California from the dry hot deserts in the Mojave to the Redwood Forest in Crescent. When I moved to Minnesota I worked as a Public Safety Officer for the University of St. Thomas where I worked my way up to a Sergeant. I joined the United States Marine Corp Reserves in February 2023 and I am currently stationed at Fort Snelling. My hobbies are running, hiking, and working out. I wanted to join the State Patrol because of the military structure it operates in and training they provide.





Trooper Dylan Gaspard

BADGE SP37 | WEST METRO DISTRICT 4500

I was Born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, but I grew up in Ramsey, Minnesota. Straight out of high school, I joined the United States Air Force in which I was active duty for four years. I was stationed in Minot AFB, North Dakota as a Facilities Maintenance Technician falling under the Missile and Space Facilities. After serving, I attended the University of St. Thomas, earning a Major in Criminal Justice. I enjoy playing volleyball and baseball/softball. When found out about the LETO program, I signed up for a ride along in the 2560 station. I really enjoyed the ride along, provided by Trooper Bowen and I was drawn to the high standards and professionalism. I joined MSP because I believe it is the best agency to be a law enforcement officer.



Trooper Lance Gilson

BADGE SP90 | EAST METRO DISTRICT 4400

I live in Scandia, MN, grew up in Cushing, MN, 15 miles from Camp Ripley. I was a Commercial Vehicles Investigation (CVI) for the MN state Patrol. My Hobbies are Hunting, Fishing, Spending time with my kids and family. As a kid I collected coins, but lost the collection in a house fire. I was recruited by Sergeant Nelson, who I had worked with while I was at CVI. I chose the Patrol because of the many different job opportunities that are available, the freedoms that we have in our daily work and ability to move around the state.



Trooper Evan Ginter

BADGE SP86 | WEST METRO DISTRICT 4500

I am from Lindstrom Minnesota. I attended Bethel University and earned a degree in Bio Kinetics, with an emphasis in Exercise Science. I enjoy hunting, fishing, playing tennis, disc golf, and watching sports. Something that people might not know about me is that I was born in a minivan while my parents were driving to the hospital. I wanted to join the MSP when I found a video Online that highlighted the LETO program. I'm Minnesota born and raised. I love this state, the people in it and all that it has to offer. Working for the Minnesota State Patrol gives me the opportunity to give back to the community. I would love to be able to move North and live on a lake towards the end of my career and into my retirement.



Trooper Michael Graves

BADGE SP559 | DULUTH DISTRICT 2700

I am from Superior, Wisconsin. Prior to the academy, I spent time teaching English abroad for five years. One year in Beijing and four years in a smaller city called Panjin near the North Korean Border. After that I came back to the US and wanted to start a career in law enforcement, so I applied at the Douglas County Sheriff's Office as a Jailer. My hobbies include scale modeling WWII Armor models as well as Science-Fiction models. I also enjoy spending time building and working on computers. I also spent 5 years living in China, despite not knowing the language at all. I attended Fond Du Lac Tribal and Community College where I did a lot of independent research and determined that the State Patrol was the right career for me due to their commitment to education from both a learning and teaching perspective.

Trooper Eli Grubbs

BADGE SP366 | VIRGINIA DISTRICT 3100

I am from Pine City, Minnesota. Prior to the academy, I worked for Welia Health as an EMT for their ambulance service. I graduated from Metropolitan State University in 2021 with a Bachelor's Degree in Screenwriting and Liberal Arts with an emphasis in professional writing. I love spending time with my wife and kids. I also enjoy canoing, skiing, hunting, and reading. The day after I proposed to my wife, I had a collapsed lung incident. Fortunately it was not a heart issue, but my wife still jokes, "That saying "yes" took my breath away and almost made my heart stop." After I graduated college, I considered a career in law enforcement when I found out about MSPs outstanding training program. The core values of the agency is what motivated me work with people who share those values.



Trooper Alec Hatlestad

BADGE SP5 | EAST METRO DISTRICT 4400

I am from Hutchinson, MN. After I graduated from Minnesota North College Vermilion Campus with my AAS Degree, I attended a 17-week long Park Ranger Law Enforcement Academy in Ely. I worked at Meeker County Jail as a corrections officer and boat and water safety officer. I enjoy hunting, fishing, spearing for Northern Pike, hiking and reading. I can also perform a loon call with just my hands, and get loons to respond back to me. My Dad works for the State as a Conservation Officer, and pointed me in the direction of the State Patrol. I have a great respect for the Minnesota State Patrol, I appreciate the strong work ethic it provides and want to help the traveling community stay safe on Minnesota roads.



Trooper Tyler Horn

BADGE SP530 | WEST METRO DISTRICT 4500

I am from Shoreview, Minnesota. Prior to the academy, I graduated from the University of Minnesota with History and Law Majors. I worked in technology sales for 10 years where my career brought me to Denver Colorado for 5 years. My hobbies include golfing, fishing, hunting, skiing, and traveling. I also officiate college soccer and high school basketball. As a side hobby, I am attempting to get better at home brewing Kombucha. I found out about the State Patrol through a Facebook post back in 2017, prior to moving to Colorado. What motivated me to join the MSP is the commitment to protecting the motoring public, the professionalism, high standards, and a strong desire to take impaired drivers off of MN roads.



Trooper Andrew Kolar

BADGE SP154 | WEST METRO DISTRICT 4500

I am from Maple Grove, Minnesota. Prior to the academy, I was a marketing student at the University of Minnesota. Many of my hobbies involve being outdoors and doing things such as biking, hiking and camping, fishing, skiing, and recently I have gotten into Pickleball. I have played the euphonium since elementary school and still enjoy playing it today as a way to relax and clear my mind. In 2022, I went on a ride-along in the Princeton area and Trooper Allie was very passionate and excited to share all she could about the State Patrol. I have always felt a need to serve others and to serve in the military or in law enforcement. The State Patrol is regarded as highly professional, well trained, and respected career that I wanted to be a part of.





Trooper Brent Kondziolka

BADGE SP70 | THIEF RIVER FALLS DISTRICT 3200

I lived in Orland Park, IL until the age of 18. Prior to the academy, I was employed as a Package Delivery Driver for United Parcel Service. I also was a Bailiff at the Beltrami County Sheriff's Department. My hobbies include: spending time with my family, working out, fishing and hunting. I have the ability to call in turkeys with just my mouth. After earning my Bachelors of Science degree from Bemidji State University in Environmental Studies, I had always dreamed of working in the law enforcement. I spent most of my life playing sports and enjoyed how each individual can have a certain niche on their team and was truly valued. Within the State Patrol, a team atmosphere exists where every member is appreciated and is an instrumental part of the its success.



Trooper Hsa Lar

BADGE SP206 | MARSHALL DISTRICT 2300

I was born in Burma (Myanmar), I came to United States when I was around 11 years-old and I currently live in Marshall Minnesota with my family. Prior to the academy, I worked as a correctional officer at Nobles County jail. Some of my hobbies are fishing, hunting, soccer, video games, and lifting. I came from a refugee camp in Thailand where I lived for about 8 years. I found out about State Patrol through Sgt. Willers, when he came into my class one morning and gave a presentation about State Patrol. Growing up, I didn't have a country because it was taken away from me. For that reason, I want to serve the community as a State Patrol officer and give back to this country.



Trooper Nathan Larson

BADGE SP208 | WEST METRO DISTRICT 4500

I was born and raised in Duluth, MN. Prior to the academy, I attended school at Fond Du Lac Tribal & Community College, where I received a degree in Criminal Justice and attended the skills program. I also worked as a Loss Prevention Officer for Super One Foods. My hobbies include playing Men's league hockey, golf and hunting. Something people might not know about me is that my 13U Little League team was Minnesota State Champions and I had the opportunity to play in a Little League World Series Regional in Kalamazoo, MI. Captain Lemon was a professor at my school, where he told me more about the organization and encouraged me to go on a few ride along's. This experience made me admire the MSP professionalism and dedication. That is when I decided that I wanted to join the Minnesota State Patrol.



Trooper Touhoua Lee

BADGE SP480 | MARSHALL DISTRICT 2300

I grew up in Walnut Grove, MN, but currently live in Slayton, MN with my wife. Prior to the academy, I worked for Murray County Sheriff's Office and part-time at Johnson's Auto Body Shop. I enjoy fishing, ice fishing, water fowl hunting, and camping. I am the oldest grand kid out of 47 grand kids. I did a ride along with Trooper Samdal to experience and understand the MSP core values. Something about Minnesota State Patrol that really interest me is that offer multiple training opportunities, retirement benefits, medical benefits, and the mobility opportunities. I value how they emphasize the importance of mental health and how they treat their employees, you are not just another "cop" to help cover shifts. Minnesota State Patrol have great structure all around and that is what I seek for in my law enforcement career.

Trooper Joseph Lemon

BADGE SP452 | MARSHALL DISTRICT 2300

I am from Duluth, MN. For the last 9-10 years I was bar tending and managing for my dad at his two bars in Duluth and Superior, WI. My hobbies include playing video games, lifting weights at the gym, spending time with friends or family, and hunting. Something people might not know about me is that I lived in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. I found out about the LETO program from my uncle Chip, Captain in the State Patrol. I chose the Patrol because of my ride along experience with my cousin Chris who is also a Trooper in the East Metro. Watching him work his shift motivated me as this profession is something I wanted to be a part of.



Trooper Cecelia Lhotka

BADGE SP551 | MARSHALL DISTRICT 2300

I currently live outside of Darwin MN, before that my family and I have moved around a bit since for more space (I am one of ten children). Prior to the academy I worked at Opal Foods and earned my degree in Law Enforcement. Hobbies I enjoy doing are reading, painting and going to the gym. I can paint a near exact copy of a picture after studying it for a few minutes. My favorite painting to paint is Starry Night. I believe that this is the best way I am able to help people with the skill set that I have and what my personality is suited to. I have also talked to some troopers who love what they do with a passion.



Trooper Mirna Lopez-Chavez

BADGE SP54 | ST. CLOUD DISTRICT 2600

I am from Guatemala, Central America and moved to United States at the age of 8, currently living in Willmar MN. Prior to the academy, I worked at a local Walmart Super Market for over 9 years and continue to serve in the Air Force as a Passenger Service Representative. My hobbies are spending time with my family, playing soccer, hiking and any sports that my children put me into. At the age of 11, my mom had to leave the United States; therefore, I grew up with my uncles. I found out about the State Patrol from former Willmar Police Chief Felt. I was drawn to the State Patrol because of their professionalism. I want to change the negative perspective people may toward Law Enforcement officers and educate my community that law enforcement is there to protect, serve.



Trooper Myles Mason

BADGE SP157 | VIRGINIA DISTRICT 3100

I am from International Falls, MN. I graduated from Bemidji State University with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology. I also attended Alexandria Tech's Law Enforcement Skills program. During college I was working as a Bailiff for the Beltrami County Sheriff's Office. I like to play golf and hockey. I also like to hunt at my family's hunting shack, fish, and spend time at my family's lake cabin. I was adopted at birth and was originally born in Fergus Falls, MN. I learned about the State Patrol and did an internship with District 3100. I liked the idea of the large Patrol region, as well as the opportunities the State Patrol offers and the respect and professionalism they have.





Trooper Bryan McKerley

BADGE SP462 | EAST METRO DISTRICT 4400

I am from a small town in South Carolina named Blacksburg. I have been in the manufacturing field for 9 years before the academy and my most current position was Sr. Maintenance Tech at a company called Spantek. I earned my degree of Mechatronic Engineering. My hobbies are hanging out with my family and friends and defiantly playing with my children any chance I get. I wanted to join law enforcement for the last seven years, but growing up in the south, in a small town, some of the local agencies didn't seem as reputable. When I discovered the training Minnesota requires, I felt like it offered the high standers and core values I was looking for and wanted to be a part of.



Trooper Cole Neubauer

BADGE SP315 | EAST METRO DISTRICT 4400

I was born in St. Paul, MN and currently live in Rosemount, MN. I worked as a Police Officer with the Northfield Police Department for 2 years and I am currently in the Navy Reserves as an Intelligence Specialist. I enjoy going on hikes, being active with my rescue dog, and recently got in a routine of going to the gym. I have been to Bahrain twice and hope to go to Molesworth, United Kingdom within the next two years with my new unit. I was researching the MSP and started making connections with Troopers in the 2160 and 2410 stations who convinced me to apply. I joined the MSP to engage with my community and help make MN roads safe.



Trooper Kyle Olson

BADGE SP545 | THIEF RIVER FALLS DISTRICT 3200

I grow up in Brooklyn Park, MN and now live in Crookston, MN. I started my Law Enforcement career with the Robbinsdale PD as a CSO for 4 years and the moved to Williston ND and was a Sheriff's Deputy for the Williams County S.O for 2 years. I then moved back to MN and became a Sheriff's Deputy in Polk County MN for the last 11 years. My hobbies are watching my kids play hockey and dance. I also like to build Lego's. I like to play volleyball in the fall and curling in the winter. I found out that the State Patrol was hiring by working TZD and working with Troopers in the Polk County area. I always wanted to work for the State Patrol ever since I started working in Law enforcement.



Trooper Peyton Riley

BADGE SP578 | THIEF RIVER FALLS DISTRICT 3200

I was born in Morris, MN and moved to Olivia, MN. I worked in Scheels Loss Prevention for 2.5 years in Fargo, ND. I was also attending North Dakota State University earning my Bachelors of Science Degree in Criminal Justice and completed my Police and Training Skills from Alexandria Technical Community College. I worked at the Clay County Jail as a correctional officer for 5 months. My hobbies include skiing, video games, movies and spending time with my girlfriend. I researched law enforcement jobs and found that State Patrol opportunity which motivated me to participate in 2 ride alongs in Moorhead with Trooper Bauer. It was then when I knew this was career worth pursuing. I want to give something back to my community and live the core values of MSP.

Trooper Quinn Robertson

BADGE SP337 | VIRGINIA DISTRICT 3100

I am from Riverside, Illinois. Prior to the academy, I graduated from Michigan State University in May of 2024 where I earned my Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice, with a Minor in Youth and Society. I also worked as a Community Service Officer for the Riverside (IL) Police Department. My hobbies include fishing, hunting waterfowl, and weight lifting. One thing most people don't know about me is that I had a twin brother that passed away shortly after we were born. I get a lot of my motivation to keep pushing through each challenge because of this. When I found out about the LETO program, I decided to apply because I was impressed with the high standards, professionalism, and respect it has. Law enforcement has always been my top career choice and I am very excited to be a Trooper.



Trooper Jake Savat

BADGE SP136 | WEST METRO DISTRICT 4500

I am from Winona MN, but I now live in Plainview MN with my wife and family. Prior to the academy, I worked in dispatch for State Patrol for the last 7 years at the SRCC in Rochester. I also worked for about 4 years as a firefighter for the city of Eden Prairie. My hobbies include hanging out with my family, hunting, fishing, playing golf, and watching my kids play sports. People might not know, I once got stuck upside down on a roller coaster for 4 hours until they could fix the issue. I found out the Patrol was hiring through many of the 2100 Troopers and Command staff. Based on everything I have experienced of over the last 7 years, I know this is an incredible agency. I have always wanted to be in Law Enforcement and because of the LETO program, I was able to finally make the goal a reality.



Trooper Deacon Schlichting

BADGE SP487 | MARSHALL DISTRICT 2300

I am from West Concord, MN. Prior to the academy, I attended the University of Wyoming where I earned my B.A. in Criminal Justice. I also did construction, mainly concrete flat work. In my free time I like to shoot my bow, build custom long-range rifles, hunt and fish. Something no one else would know about me is that my dad played in the NFL. I found out the patrol was hiring from Trooper Fay who told me about the LETO process during a ride along I had with him. I have always wanted to work in law enforcement because whenever I have needed help, officers have been there for me and instilled trust in me. I wanted an opportunity to be there for someone else and instill the same trust I have in them. I chose the State Patrol because of their professionalism, training, specialties and freedom.



Trooper Sasha Schmidt

BADGE SP318 | THIEF RIVER FALLS DISTRICT 3200

I am originally from Frazee, MN, but currently live in Alexandria, MN with my husband, Shawn and our two dogs, Amos and Merle. Prior to the academy, I work for the Douglas County Sheriff's Office. I worked in as a correctional officer for 2 years and then worked in our dispatch center for 3 years. After earning my Associates in Applied Science Degree in Law Enforcement at Alexandria Technical and Community College, I worked for Glenwood Police Department as a police officer. I have many hobbies ranging from crocheting, backpacking, hunting and fishing. Minnesota State Patrol was always my original plan while attending ATCC. While in Glenwood, my partners that worked for Minnesota State Patrol were my resources, my confidants, and my family, which proved that MSP is where I belonged.





Trooper Mason Schwerzler

BADGE SP126 | EAST METRO DISTRICT 4400

I am from Stillwater, MN. Prior to the academy, I was working construction in the pavement marking business. I also am a First Lieutenant in the 191st Military Police Company for the North Dakota Army National Guard. My hobbies include spending my time outdoors. I have a passion for going for runs, fishing, playing with my dog, spending time on the lake. I was mobilized this summer by request of the Wisconsin National Guard to provide security for the Republican National Convention 2024. My experience in the military has helped create the strong leader I am today. The state patrol has always been my desired organization because of the professionalism, military bearing and various challenges it offers.



Trooper Cain Sims

BADGE SP588 | EAST METRO DISTRICT 4400

I grew up in North Mankato MN, but I currently live outside of Saint Peter MN in Os-hawa township. I served in the Marine Corps 3rd Law Enforcement Battalion located in Okinawa, Japan. After getting out of the military, I worked as a school custodian and at Scheels in the firearms department while earning an Associates Degree in Communi-cations. My hobbies include spending time with my wife and 9-month-old son, lifting weights, building and shooting rifles as well as learning about the history of WWII and the Vietnam war. Trooper Veaux who is a close friend of mine and encouraged me to apply. His high regard for MSP combined with MN State Patrol being a great place for personal and professional development is why I want to become a MN State Trooper.



Trooper Bryan Smallwood

BADGE SP596 | MARSHALL DISTRICT 2300

I was born in Deadwood South Dakota, moved to southwest Minnesota in 3rd grade and have been living in Tracy Minnesota for the past 12 years. I went to college for welding and robotics, but I have been in the ethanol indus-try for the past 12 years. I enjoy lifting weights and riding my motorcycle and spend time with my wife and daughter. I am a really big Fallout nerd. I collect tons of Fallout memorabilia from the franchise. I am drawn to the high stan-dards of the MN State Patrol as I think it is the best law enforcement agen-cy in the state. The LETO program was also the main reason I wanted to ap-ply, because I saw it as a more viable option for someone with my experience.



Trooper Marc Sombke

BADGE SP417 | WEST METRO DISTRICT 4500

I'm from Mapleton, Mn which is south of Mankato, Mn. I currently live in Shakopee. After high school, I attend South Central College for Culinary Arts and Hospitality Diploma. I was a Certificated Flight Instructor (CFI, MEI, AGI, IGI). Prior to that, I was employed with Air Transport International and Aviation Charter. My hobbies include flying with friends and family on weekends. I also ride motorcycles, collect cards, play Dungeon and Dragons and cook for my family. I found out about the LETO program back in 2019. I always admired MSP Troopers since my youth. I was encouraged to pursue MSP by applying to the LETO from a few MSP Troopers at my local gym. My long-term goal would be joining the Flight Section and be part of Minnesota Air Rescue Team (MART).

Trooper Dylan Swanson

BADGE SP439 | WEST METRO DISTRICT 4500

I am from Marshall MN. Prior to the academy, I used to work for the DNR parks and trail division at Camden State Park. After college, I thought it was time to use my Criminal Justice Degree. I was offered a job at the Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office as a Correctional Officer. My hobbies include playing baseball with friends during the summer, going on walks with my girlfriend whenever possible and playing video games. I would play different video gaming tournaments whenever possible to try and win prizes. The reason why I want to join the Patrol is because I was motivated by the professionalism. One goal I have is finding impaired drivers on the MN roadway and hold them accountable for their actions. This will allow me to serve my community and help make travel safe each day on the MN roadways.



Trooper Nhiakou Vang

BADGE SP350 | WEST METRO DISTRICT 4500

I was born in Omaha, Nebraska, but moved to Coon Rapids, Minnesota in 2005. Prior to the academy, I was a stretch therapist for about a year. I enjoy many outdoor activities such as, hiking, fishing. I also like video games and photography. With my video gaming experience, I enjoy recording my game play and commentary. Initially, I was hesitant to pursue a career in Law Enforcement, because of common stereotypes from the Hmong community, but once my older brother was a sworn Deputy by the Anoka County Sheriffs, my perspective changed. His experiences drove me to search for a job in Law Enforcement job where I researched more about MSP. I was invigorated with their mission, core values, and the professional training they receive and that is when I decided the Minnesota State Patrol was the right path for me.



Trooper Gavin Wagner

BADGE SP464 | WEST METRO DISTRICT 4500

I am from Savage, MN. Prior to the academy, I attended college and worked in a variety of management positions at a prominent swim lesson chain in the Twin Cities. Some hobbies I enjoy are hiking, camping and swimming. I have also lived in a tent at a Boy Scout camp for the past 7 summers passing along my knowledge and love for the outdoors to the next generation. I was attracted to Law Enforcement because of my family history and Sgt. Lund from the 2510 beat through the Law Enforcement Memorial Scholarship Foundation. He strongly encouraged me to follow through with the process of applying to the State Patrol. Following 2020, I heard about the increase in traffic fatalities and noticed a change in driving behavior, which piqued my interest in traffic safety and made the State Patrol a great fit for me.



Trooper Travis Winter

BADGE SP201 | THIEF RIVER FALLS DISTRICT 3200

I was raised in the small town of Lester Prairie, MN and after college in Bemidji, MN I moved to the city of Aitkin, MN. I started with the Aitkin Police Department in 2004, then switched to the Aitkin County Sheriff's Office and I worked to the end of 2024. I have many hobbies and really enjoy spending time in the outdoors. I enjoy to hunt water fowl, deer, grouse, pheasants and fishing. I spend a lot of time watching my children sports as I have five of them and they are all in at least two sports. Something people might not know about me is that I had learned how to play the Alto and Tenor Saxophone. I also taught myself how to play the Trombone. The Troopers of District 2800 motivated me to become a Trooper. I want to make a difference in the community and make the roads safer for travel.





Trooper Madison Zavala

BADGE SP533 | ROCHESTER DISTRICT 2100

I am originally from Madelia Minnesota. However, I currently reside in Rochester Minnesota. Prior to the academy, I worked at an autism clinic named Momentum Behavior Services. My workload consisted on direct therapeutic sessions with clients aging from 3-21 and implemented behavior intervention plans. My hobbies consist of lake days with family, painting, and traveling. Something no one else know about me, would be that I am a strong believer in my Christian faith. I have always been interested in the Minnesota State Patrol which is how I worked my way around finding their web page and reading more information. The Minnesota State Patrol has been an agency that I have always respected and noticed others surrounding me did as well. I believe the State Patrol will allow me to make a difference in people's lives and in my community.



Trooper Chad Ziemer

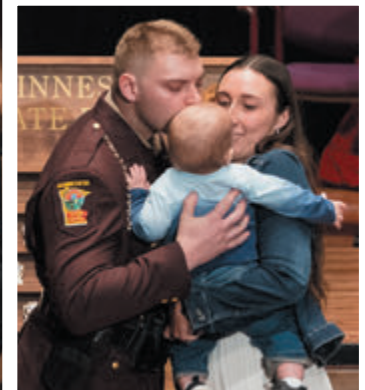
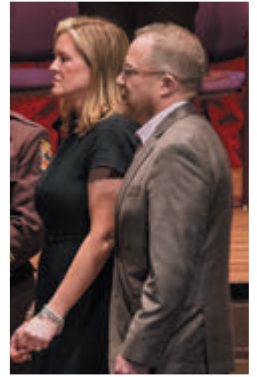
BADGE SP373 | EAST METRO DISTRICT 4400

I am from Circle Pines, MN. Prior to the academy, I worked as a Community Service Officer for the Centennial Lakes Police Department. I also worked part-time as a security guard for Living Word Christian Center in Brooklyn Park. I enjoy reading, hiking, playing board and card games, and spending time with my family. I started playing piano at age 5, and then picked up the trumpet at age 10. In college, I was a music major with an emphasis in trumpet performance. I heard about the State Patrol from my neighbor who was a local police officer for 24 years. He recommended State Patrol for its training and opportunities. I wanted to serve as a law enforcement officer, but the geographical freedom and traffic-specific role of a State Trooper is what drew me to the State Patrol.

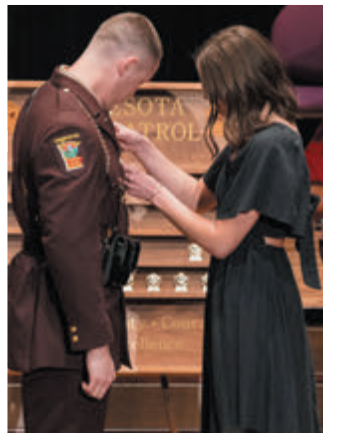




National Anthem by Cadet Chad Ziemer







400 KIDS, 1 INCREDIBLE SUMMER AT LEGIONVILLE

Another successful year at Legionville Camp has come to a close! Thanks to the continued support from the Minnesota State Patrol Troopers' Association, approximately 400 kids were able to attend one of the six sessions this summer. The Minnesota State Patrol's Public Information Officers, K-9 Unit, and helicopter team were present at every session, making a lasting impact on the campers.

Last year, your generous donation of \$5,000 helped us purchase vital recreational equipment, including:

- Two Spalding Beast basketball backboards
- Two canoes
- Two paddle boards
- Basketballs, footballs, volleyballs, and kickballs

These items were well-used and greatly appreciated by both the Legionville staff and, most importantly, the kids. Your contribution truly enhanced the camp experience,

pedestrian safety, promote healthy outdoor activity and the Minnesota State Patrol.

This year, we are once again requesting a donation of \$5,000 to ensure we can continue to provide quality equipment and a wide variety of outdoor activities for the campers. Unfortunately, AAA, which had been a long-time supporter of Legionville Camp, will not be contributing funding this year. As a result, your support is more important than ever.

Thank you for considering our request and for your continued commitment to supporting youth safety and education. Please let us know if you need any additional information or documentation regarding the camp or how the funds will be used.

Sgt. Troy H. Christianson #569
Minnesota State Patrol
Troy.christianson@state.mn.us ♦



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REMEMBERING SPEAKER MELISSA HORTMAN: ADVOCATE FOR TROOPERS

On June 14, 2025, former Speaker Mellissa Hortman, her husband Mark, and their golden retriever Gilbert, were shot and killed at their home by a man impersonating a police officer. Another lawmaker, Senator John Hoffman, and his wife Yvette were shot earlier that night by the same man. The suspect in the shooting was 57-year-old Vance Luther Boelter. He was arrested on June 15 after a large-scale manhunt.

I first met Melissa Hortman when she was elected Speaker of the Minnesota House in 2018. As MSPTA President, I was able to meet many state leaders, including governors, house speakers, senate presidents, majority and minority leaders, and committee chairs. It is essential for the MSPTA to maintain constructive relationships with these political leaders to effectively advance legislation benefiting the Troopers and the State Patrol.

During the 2019-2020 Legislative Session, MSPTA Leadership shifted strategy to pursue legislative action for pay increases rather than the normal bargaining process. Collective bargaining with Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) had proven to be ineffective due to lack of progress on key compensation issues. Speaker Hortman's backing secured these raises, directly benefiting Troopers.

Several notable moments I experienced with Speaker Hortman demonstrated her personable nature. On one occasion, she appeared preoccupied during a meeting and shared that she was apprehensive about an upcoming medical procedure: a colonoscopy. Drawing from my own experience, I reassured her that the process was less challenging than commonly perceived, which she later confirmed. In another instance, following a particularly demanding session with colleagues, Speaker Hortman remarked that managing responsibilities felt akin to overseeing 134 children. I concurred with that sentiment, reflecting on similar experiences in my role and



representing 600 Troopers! These exchanges highlighted her ability to approach stressful situations with humor and relatability.

In summary, Speaker Hortman was highly regarded for her dedication to law enforcement. Peace officers across Minnesota will miss her support. The State Patrol and the MSPTA truly benefited from her steadfast advocacy. And all Minnesotans were well-served by her wishes to put their needs above party politics. Thank you, Speaker Hortman, for your service and sacrifice.

Joe Dellwo Retired SP446
Former MSPTA President

SENATOR JEFF HOWE: A CHAMPION FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

HONORED AS MPPOA SENATOR OF THE YEAR

At its June convention, the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association (MPPOA) named Senator Jeff Howe as Senator of the Year—a recognition of his unwavering commitment to public safety and steadfast support of Minnesota’s law enforcement community.

A RELENTLESS ADVOCATE FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

Senator Howe’s dedication to service runs deep. A veteran of both the United States Navy and the Minnesota National Guard, he retired as a lieutenant colonel. Locally, he served as a Rockville firefighter and city council member before his election to the Legislature. This lifelong commitment has given him a profound understanding of the risks and sacrifices faced by those who protect others.

Throughout his legislative career, Senator Howe has consistently championed Minnesota’s law enforcement professionals, ensuring they have the respect, recognition, and resources necessary to serve their communities safely and effectively.

A STATESMAN, PATRIOT, AND FRIEND

A TRIBUTE FROM THE MINNESOTA TROOPERS ASSOCIATION

With Gratitude

*With gratitude in our hearts, we thank you today—
For standing beside us as we serve and protect each day.
Your steadfast support gives us strength and resolve,
To meet every challenge, to adapt and evolve.
You understand the risks we willingly bear,
To safeguard our communities with duty and care.
Your tireless work to champion our cause
Lifts us up, earns respect, and strengthens just laws.
In times when true allies are seldom in sight,
Your support stands firm—honest, steady, and right.
A beacon of trust, in darkness or day,
You remind us that honor must always lead the way.
With every shift, in all that we do,
We’re reminded again how much we owe you,
For standing with us when the path was rough,
A patriot, a leader, steady and tough,
So, Senator Howe, we thank you once more,
For your enduring support and all you stand for.
May your example continue to lead and inspire—
To serve with honor, with courage, and aim ever higher.*

With deepest respect and appreciation,

*On behalf of the dedicated law enforcement
officers you have stood beside.*



REP. JEFF WITTE: A CHAMPION FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

HONORED AS MPPOA HOUSE LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR

At its 2025 convention, the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association (MPPOA) named Representative Jeff Witte (R-Lakeville) as the House Legislator of the Year—a recognition of his deep commitment to law enforcement and public safety.

A LIFELONG COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC SAFETY

Rep. Witte's dedication to service runs deep. A retired Burnsville police officer with nearly 30 years on the force, his career included roles as a patrol officer, School Resource Officer, Community Service Officer, and Sergeant. He also led the department's Crisis Negotiation Team for 18 years. These experiences continue to inform his work in the Minnesota House, where he serves on the Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee.

Throughout his time in the Legislature, Witte has championed bipartisan initiatives that support Minnesota's law enforcement professionals, from returning School Resource Officers to schools, strengthening officer training programs, to providing support for those injured in the line of duty. He also sponsored legislation honoring Burnsville's fallen officers and first

responders by naming a local bridge in their memory, ensuring their service is permanently recognized.

A STATESMAN, PATRIOT, AND ADVOCATE

"I'm incredibly honored to receive this recognition from MPPOA," Witte said. "This award means so much because it comes from the people I've stood shoulder to shoulder with—the men and women who know what it's like to answer the call, no matter the hour or the danger. My mission at the Capitol is to make sure our officers have the support, respect, and resources they deserve."

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE LISA DEMUTH (R-COLD SPRING) PRAISED WITTE'S DEDICATION:

"Jeff doesn't just talk about public safety—he lives it. MPPOA made an excellent choice in honoring him, and I know he'll continue working tirelessly for the officers and families he serves."



"Every Lift Is Important"

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GARY PEPPER

SGT. PEPPER • PEP • PEPPER



Gary was in the 24th training school, which was held April 1 through July 19, 1972 at the Highway Training Center in Arden Hills. Seventeen men graduated. The pushers for the class were Dick Holt, Millard Helgeson, and Butch Kramer. Mike Lofgren gave the opening day speech. Capt. Rudd was the Training Center Captain and Diane Lindstrom was the administrative assistant. Gary was issued badge 127. He was assigned to the 4550 Station in Golden Valley. He was better known during his time on the Patrol as Peper, Sgt. Peper, or simply Pep.

Gary grew up in the Red Wing area. His parents were Harriet and Floyd Peper. He was in the Army from 1960 to 1963, serving in Korea, Fort Hood, Texas, and the last nine months at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii, where he oversaw radar maintenance at Wheeler Air Force Base. In 1970 he graduated from Mankato State with a bachelor's degree in Russian. He had joined the Mankato Police Reserves. Gary tended bar at Rathskeller while he was in school in Mankato. It was there he met a young Trooper, Lee Jacobson, who planted the seed that led Gary to eventually join the State Patrol.

Gary's first assignment was the 4550 Station in Golden Valley. In 1980, he was selected to attend the nine-month school with the Northwestern Traffic Institute. He was promoted to sergeant in 1982. Later, he was promoted to lieutenant and applied for transfer to District 2900, Detroit Lakes. Capt. Foley wrote about his departure from 2500: "It is with a great deal of ambivalence that I view your departure from District 2500. While on one hand I applaud your promotion and all the good things this promises, I, on the other hand, regret your loss. Your hard work, your loyalty, your dedication, and your friendly approach are all qualities that will make you sorely missed."

Gary worked in Detroit Lakes for about two years and then applied for a captain's position in St. Paul. Upon his departure, Capt. Jack Murray wrote, "I want you to know I truly enjoyed your time in 2900 and would welcome you

back if the opportunity ever presented itself. Your efforts and influence did a great deal to pull the district operation together in addition to raising the image of supervision. The news of you leaving is just getting out in the Detroit Lakes and surrounding law enforcement communities. As a result, I am hearing that you will definitely be missed. The respect, friendship, and cooperation you have established in the short period of time you were in the area is fantastic. Good Luck! Jack.



Gary supervised Capitol security and governor's protection detail for some period from 1983 to 1984. He found this job to be very political, which didn't suit the man he was. As a result, he requested to be reassigned back to District 2500, which he was, in June 1984.

He retired in October 1997. After retirement he was a "snowbird," spending his winters in Venice, Fla., until 2022, when his "home away from home" was destroyed during Hurricane Ian.

Gary and Tamelyn initially met in 1977, shortly after he bought his house in Bloomington. Tamelyn's family lived on the same block as his new home. Tamelyn moved to California, and although they kept in touch for several years, their connection eventually faded when she moved to France. Many years later, Tamelyn was preparing to move back to the United States. She reached out to Gary, and they met for dinner. That evening marked the rekindling of a friendship, and the rest is history. They were married and spent their honeymoon in Paris, Nice, and Rome. In 2024, they spent 15 days on a river cruise from Amsterdam to Budapest.

I met Peper at the Rathskeller bar in Mankato when he was bartending there. When he saw me sit down, he told one of the guys at the bar that he was going to kick me out because he thought I was underage. The guy said, "No, no! He's a State Trooper." I was 23 at the time, but I looked younger. Gary and I became fast friends after that and remained close throughout our lives. I was stationed out of Albert Lea but would come up to the Cities on weekends. We'd go out

to Eddie Webster's on the 494 Strip, where he was known by nearly everyone. In fact, nearly everywhere we went someone knew him.

Three things I thought I would never see were Peper stop chewing his fingernails, quit smoking, or get married. After Tamelyn came into his life, he did all three. Gary was like a brother to me. He was the best man at my wedding, and I was the best man at his. He is sorely missed.

— *Lee Jacobson, Class of 1967*



In Rookie School, Gary was always one of the first to complete the mile run. He knew if he was one of the first to complete the run, he would have time for a cigarette while he waited at the finish line for us slower runners to finish. I drove to Chicago with Gary and during the trip he smoked five packs of cigarettes. During the power line protests we were all put up in hotels around Alexandria. Although Gary had a reputation as a man about town, he was much more apt to have a soda and play pinball machines in the evenings while the rest of us were having something a bit stronger and embellishing our stories about the events of the day.

When Gary was the administrative lieutenant, he would always come in early to get his morning tasks completed so at 8:30 a.m. he could religiously walk down the hill to Byerly's for breakfast (always a bagel with cream cheese) and visit with the same four businessmen he had randomly made friends with over the years. Gary could make friends out of strangers simply by being seated near him.

I received a call from Gary one day after we had both been retired several years. Gary was well into his 70s and advised me he quit chewing his nails and quit smoking. Two habits he was well known for. I found it hard to believe but when he said he had also got married after all those years as a confirmed bachelor I didn't believe him, but he convinced me he had, and it was obvious he had finally found the love of his life.

— *Steve Mengelkoch, Class of 1973*

The best part of being a State Patrol Trooper for me was undoubtedly the great people I got to work with through

the years. The camaraderie shared and friendships made throughout my almost 28 years of serving in this great organization have given me a mass of great memories and experiences with a great many people. I would just like to share a few of these memories with the reader about one of those people, Lt. Gary Peper, may he rest in peace.

I first made acquaintance with Gary when I transferred as a young Trooper into the 4550 Station, the downtown Minneapolis freeway station in MSP District 2500. Lt. Peper was the admin lieutenant in D-2500, and as such, he had a very busy job keeping all the troopers in

the district equipped with everything they needed to do the job in the busiest area of the state. Squad cars were always getting damaged, as was a lot of other assigned equipment. It didn't take me long to realize that Lt. Peper was a whiz at getting things done and knowing his job inside and out. He never failed to amaze me at how he could pull a rabbit out of his hat and come up with the needed equipment item, no matter how obscure or specialized it was.

Somehow, I picked up the nickname "Slippery" (I think the originator of this was Lt. Steve Mengelkoch). Lt. Peper had his own derivative of this nickname. Whenever I appeared, he always greeted me with a hearty, "Slipster!"

In a relatively short time, I found myself in the position of station sergeant of the 4550 Station. This gave me the opportunity to work with Lt. Peper more closely. I enjoyed working with Gary very much and I learned a lot from him about how the administrative world in the MSP worked. I also discovered that we had similar interests, which included world history, collecting firearms, military memorabilia, and antiques of all kinds.

Gary and I spent many days going to estate sales, auctions, and flea markets all over the state in search of treasures. One day, Gary called me and said he had run across a deal, and he wanted to know if I wanted to go "halves" in purchasing a 55-gallon drum full of rifle parts for M1 Garand U.S. military rifles. The parts were preserved in cosmoline, a very heavy, thick grease used to prevent metal parts from rusting.

I took him up on the offer, and we were then partners in this extensive clean-up operation. I remember working in Gary's basement, steaming the dents out of the wooden forearms and stocks. We were able to assemble over thirty M1 Garands from those parts out of that 55-gallon drum. We were using gasoline to scrub the cosmoline off the metal parts, and if you know Gary, you know that he was never long without a cigarette. With all those gas fumes, I thought we were going to blow up more than once.

Talking about Gary's fondness for cigarettes, he became famous for a quote he made while at our annual physical fitness testing. While the facilitator was describing the process for the long-distance run, Gary said something to the effect of, "As long as he can stop for a ciggy break." It definitely got a laugh from all in attendance.

There were many good times with Gary. He was always a gracious and friendly guy to be around. We liked to go down to a steakhouse in Inver Grove Heights. No matter who was working there, Gary knew them all by name.

Gary also had a deep interest in the history of the MSP. He had a collection of squad car equipment, door decals, old red lights, and all kinds of stuff he managed to collect throughout his career. He was always willing to share displays and with the restoring of old State Patrol squads and such.

These are just some of the memories I have of a good friend from my time on the MN State Patrol. I will miss you, Gary!

— *Dick Wittenberg, class of 1984*

Gary and I were in the same 1972 rookie school and were both assigned to 2500/4550 upon graduation. He



was five or six years older than me and the old man of the class. He was a good reliable partner and ended up as a dear friend. I was a lieutenant in 2900 when Jack Murray selected him as his second lieutenant upon the retirement of Larry Greenquist in 1983. Gary was a fine fit in the district and a steady addition at my wife Linda's dinner table. Those two played countless hours of Yahtzee. He worked in 2900 about two years before he went back to the metro to take over Capitol security as an acting captain. After a stint there he went back to 2500 as a lieutenant about the time I took over 2500 in 1985. He graciously allowed me to rent a room from him after my transfer per diem ran out and before I got my family moved to the metro. It was

very interesting living with an avowed bachelor who was well known along the 494 Strip. He told me that he stopped a speeder who dropped the name of a Trooper in the hopes of avoiding a ticket. The trooper's name was Peper, he said. Gary pointed to his name tag and asked the guy if he spelled it like this before citing him.

— *Richard Steffen, class of 1972*

The only guy that looked like a movie star on the State Patrol. Gary wore many hats: 2500 admin lieutenant, field lieutenant, captain at the Capitol. A man of many talents. He always had a smile and time to have coffee where he would tell tall tales of the old days. He sometimes offered advice, but not very often. If he shared it, it was usually good advice. Gary was one of the few. He will be missed"

— *John Nagel, class of 1961*

What has always resonated with me regarding Gary was his acceptance of, and in his own Peper style, mentoring of a young female lieutenant.

That may not seem a big deal today, but in 1995 it was. There weren't many women serving on the Minnesota State Patrol and female supervisors were scarce. You could count them on one hand even if you didn't have five fingers.

I arrived at 2500 West Metro quite green, with that feeling of being out of place, the geography daunting, the supervisory job then, without much preparation, leadership training or assigned guidance.

Capt. Mengelkoch saw something, and offered me an opportunity with his team, which included Lts. Fraser, Graham, Hilligoss, Maskel, and Peper. This was an electric mix, to say the least. Gary had the most seniority, was old school and gruff, and had a bark complemented by many cigarette breaks and interesting verbiage. He had a reputation that turned into legacy!

Gary at the time was our administrative lieutenant. He treated me as he did the others, coached me on squad maintenance, where to get the lowest price oil changes (even if it was 60 miles from my home), doled out supplies with lectures, gave me a nickname (don't ask), and hollered at me from across the room. He contributed rough advice and became an institution of knowledge, some of it pertaining to after-work hours. I laughed with and sometimes at him, came to appreciate his style, and will forever remember his unique guidance at a time when I often felt I was navigating quicksand.

Gary, however, cliché it sounds, treated me as he did the other lieutenants in the West Metro. I first slightly feared him, learned to appreciate him, and will always thank him for his inclusion when most needed.

That team of lieutenants working for Capt. Mengelkoch, during those Peper years, will always be memorable and remembered in the best of ways!

Gary was a kind man, original, blended with diverse delivery style and fabled characteristics! Not a man to ever be forgotten.

— Lori Hodapp, class of 1984

Gary Peper worked the 2500 my entire career. I met him several times at Pete's Garage, also known as the 4450 Station gathering place, morning, afternoons and nights. Peper always had a cigarette while BSing with the east metro troops, before he went into his office in Golden Valley. I think he enjoyed hanging out with Mott, Adrian, Forester, and the rest of the morning cars. My favorite Peper experience is when 100 Troopers and lieutenants were randomly selected to perform a physical agility standard that was being considered back in the early 1990s. We had to do sit-ups, push-ups, pull-ups, standing jump, 300-yard dash, 1.5-mile run, and an obstacle course. We were all told we had to participate in each task. The 1.5-mile run was the second-to-last event we had to do this day.

We were all standing around just south of Chickamauga Road as the Training Trooper was explaining what we are about to do. It is a 1.5-mile run/walk. You are to run along the path next to Infantry Road all the way to the front gate, turn around and run back. Peper, standing next to me, looks all the way to the front gate and states, "Hold it. You want me to run all the way to that gate and back?" The Training Trooper said yes. Peper, in true Peper form said, "OK. I am not running. In fact, that looks like a seven-heater walk." Peper proceeded to light up his first cigarette and we started. I am laughing halfway to the front gate. I meet Peper after I turn and head back and I start laughing again as I see him lighting up another cigarette from the one he has in his mouth. We all had to wait for Peper to finish. He never went faster than a nice walk pace. Peper finally crossed the finish line taking his last drag off the cigarette in his mouth and says: "Yep, seven heaters." True Peper fashion.

— Curt Thermes, class of 1986

Gary had a remarkable ability to connect with people. He could (and did) talk with anyone. It had been said that "he never met a stranger."

Gary spent his last 19 years with the love of his life, Tamelyn Peper.

Gary succumbed to complications from a traumatic brain injury and cancer treatment at the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis on Dec. 15, 2024.

Richard C. Smith – Retired
State Patrol Archives Curator.



JOHN MOTT



“IF YOU’RE IN A FIX, CALL 176”

John was in the 1977 class at the State Patrol Academy in Arden Hills and issued badge 176. He worked the 4450 Station in St. Paul and the 2160 Station in Rochester for most of his career. Toward the end, he worked on the Arrive Alive Program in high schools throughout southern Minnesota. He married Mary (Missy) Foss on June 4, 1976. Missy was from Altoona, Wis. They had three children: Stephanie, Jill, and John.

THE FOLLOWING IS FROM JOHN’S SON, JOHN (JB) MOTT:

John was born in Tomahawk, Wis., and served in the U.S. Army after high school from 1965-1968 with a tour in Vietnam. Afterward, he graduated from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, and worked in physical education until September of 1977, when he accepted his dream job as a State Trooper with the Minnesota State Patrol, where he worked for 25 years. He literally wrote the MSP Radar Manual for speed enforcement.

Throughout his life, my dad has worn many hats. He was a son, a brother, a cousin. A soldier, a husband, a son-in-law. He was a Minnesota State Trooper. A father, a coach, and a grandpa. He’s been described to me by multiple friends and past coworkers as a “legend.” He was a role model, and he was a friend to many. It was clear during his celebration of life that he had a positive impact on many people. But for me, the most important was that he was a best friend.

When I was a little kid, I remember waking up, getting out of bed and walking into my dad’s room to wake him up. He was working overnights during those early days and my mom worked during the day. I would walk up to his bed and tickle his mustache. He’d jokingly try to bite my finger to make me laugh and then would jump out of bed for the day, on little sleep.

As young as I can remember, when my dad and I would take road trips, he’d set up a radar unit in the station wagon, or the

minivan, or whatever vehicle we had, and we’d play a game of “guess the speed.” The person with the closest over/under to zero based on a visual observation would win. Let’s just say he was usually only a digit or two off after a several hour trip.

My dad ended his career in the “Arrive Alive” program, helping youth make better decisions about drinking and driving. Friends and family remember his catch phrase based on his badge number: “When you’re in a fix, call 176.”



My dad was my role model. Many of my friends and I looked up to him. His demeanor and his command presence made many of my friends scared. But once they got to know him, they understood how thoughtful and compassionate he really was.

Seeing my dad as I got older was the sole reason I went into policing myself. During law enforcement classes in college, it was very common for me to be asked, “Are you JR’s son?” My response was always, “well that depends.” Most of the time that’d get a laugh. Most people would be upset living in their father’s shadow, but my father’s shadow was something I tried to live up to. His reputation spoke for itself, and I wanted to live up to what the name “Mott” meant to

many in the law enforcement community. He pinned the badge on my uniform in October of 2009 when I was sworn in as a Burnsville Police Officer. During my first court appearance in Apple Valley, Judge Mike Meyer reviewed the list and out loud said “Officer John Mott, can you please stand up?” Now this was in front of the entire courtroom. So, I stood up and replied, “Here, your honor.” Judge Meyer replied, “I have to deal with another Mott?” Half the room laughed out loud as they knew my dad, while the others had no idea what he was talking about.

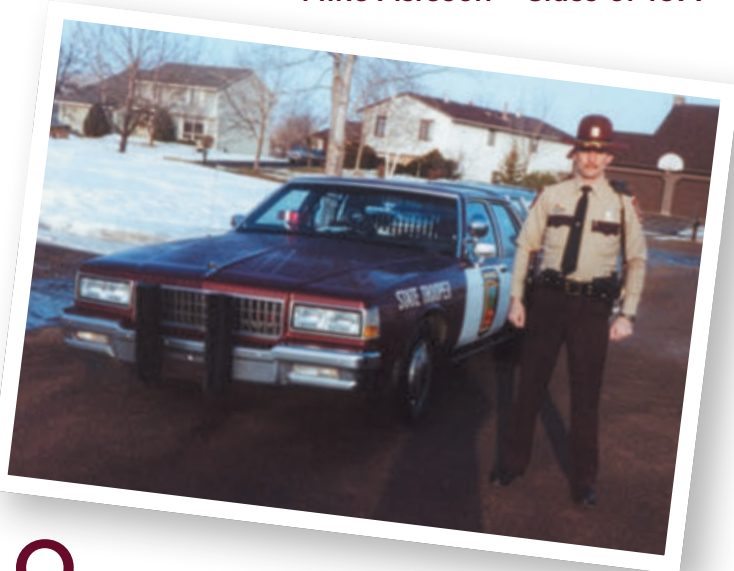
But this was only part of the legacy my dad left behind in the law enforcement community. And it was an honor to have his name on a uniform. My dad once went on a ride-along with me when I was working dogwatch for Burnsville PD. At that time, I was a member of the Burnsville SWAT team, had plenty



of experience and he thought I was ready for him to ride.

Minnesota plates with some seized Alaska license plates. I always thought John was a very lucky man that Phil Hodapp never found about the use of those plates. The pushers of our class were Dennis Landborg, Don Kramer, and David Stout.

— Mike Asleson - Class of 1977



We were driving northbound on I-35W heading to back up some partners on a fight call. I was in an unmarked squad at the time, and we had a vehicle pass us in the inside lane. My dad glared at me and said, “What are you doing?” I told him we were backing up our partners and I didn’t care about some speeders on the freeway. He said, “Just flip your lights on and watch them slam on their brakes.” I humored my dad, flipped my lights on and watched as the brake lights immediately went on. I looked over at my dad and watched his eyes roll back in his head. And he mumbled, “Ah, I just love it.” Even in retirement his passion for speed enforcement never waned.

After retirement, he pursued his love of travel during his employment with “Semester at Sea” as the conduct officer on long voyages or the pianist in the piano lounge for the shorter trips. But he’d probably tell you the best thing about retirement was his grandkids. My dad instantly became a softy. The tough and stern side of him was overshadowed by the love he had for his granddaughters, Sophia and Piper. He would often get on me for being hard on my two daughters. I always found this funny because I raised my daughters the way he raised his kids – tough, but fair. I have never seen such a tough person show such delicate and compassionate love as my dad had for his two granddaughters.

My father was the best dad a kid could ask for and he was the best friend a person could ask for. He set the bar for what it means to be an amazing human being. The world would be a better place with more people like him in it. He’ll be missed forever.

MORE REFLECTIONS ON JOHN

Forty-eight years ago, I walked into the MSP Academy and met the infamous John Mott. Very few people I know have generated so much laughter. What a character! I recall when John asked during class whether he could take a radar set into his personal vehicle on his days off, and whether “we” could put wig-wag headlights and grill lights in our personal vehicles. I thought, “Oh man, some supervisor is going to have a few headaches with this guy.”

Little did we know then that Training Staff Sgt. Swanson would be the District Captain and have to deal with John after he installed a bike rack on an unmarked car and replaced the

One of my favorite stories about John Mott was the blackbird head that was taped to his repeater antenna. John was having issues with blackbirds around his pool area. He shot one with his BB gun and taped the head to his antenna to show the blackbirds it wasn’t a good idea to hang out around his pool.

— Jeff Westrum - Class of 1989

Troopers who guarded Gov. Quie’s farm were invited to the Governor’s Mansion by Al and Gretchen Quie. It was a Christmas reception, and I mentioned to Mrs. Quie that John was an outstanding pianist. She asked John to play, and he played for the rest of the reception. He was wonderful.

— Kent Matthews- Class of 1977

Johns favorite saying was, “Fish on!” His second-favorite saying was, “If you’re in a fix, call 176/” He was also a veteran and served in Vietnam. He suffered a wound in RVN that affected him for the rest of his life. Being a vet myself, we shared many RNV stories as well as stories about incidents we had on the job as Troopers.

— John Dennig - Class of 1976

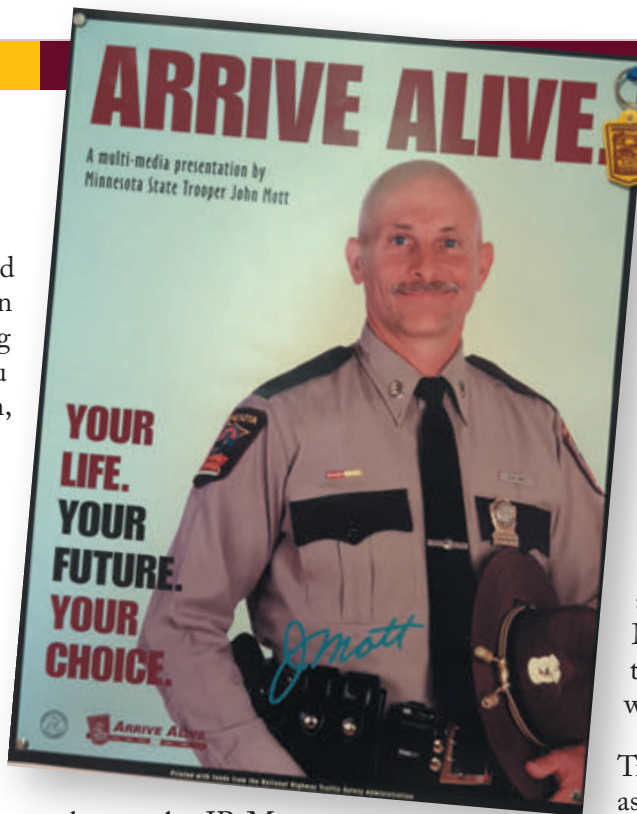
I worked my entire career out of 2400 and was fortunate enough to have learned a lot of the job from JR, who was a true mentor to me. I looked up to him as “the guy.” Everything about

him commanded respect. Even when he was joking and giving you that famous grin, you still looked at him as if he was always on a pedestal. JR never asked for that kind of praise or expected to be looked up to, you just did. Every officer or deputy in the area knew who JR Mott was. Every one of those officers also has personally seen or heard a Mott story.

JR trained several on how to do the job. Management may not have had the same perspective as him. But who is kidding who? Management would more times than not just drop their heads and know there is a Mott way of doing something and the preferred General Order way of doing it. JR may have had several polices changed to clarify that JR's may not be the politically correct way to do the task. Don't think for a second that Mott's way was not correct, it just may not have been politically correct.

A simple example is when JR had a female pulled over and brought her back to his office for some one-on-one education. For the younger folks, that means sitting in the front passenger seat with the instructor in the driver's seat providing a lecture. Mott strongly believed in providing a very stern, one-sided lecture. He was talking and you were listening. There was no debating, this was a sit-down and being educated the Mott way on public safety when it came to traffic law. Some may have not liked being told they were wrong in no subtle terms. This female did not like the lecture and exited the classroom (Mott's squad car) and slammed the passenger door shut. Now, this student did not show respect for a State Patrol squad car or the instructor who just explained her driving faults. JR immediately got out of his car and met her before she cleared the front of the squad to get back to her car. JR informed her she was going to return to that passenger door and open and close it nicely five times. She did.

We all wanted to be able to be like JR and do that exact same thing. Not one of us had the courage that JR did so we



never did. JR is and always will be my mentor. In my garage is a poster of JR. It is right in front of my parking spot. I see JR every time I leave and come home.

— Curt Thermes - Class of 1986

I knew who Trooper Mott was while I was growing up in Apple Valley. He was a legend and well known in the community. At the age of 14, I took an interest in becoming a Minnesota State Trooper. My father, who was a police officer, arranged for me to go on a ride-along with Trooper Mott in 1987. I was 17 years old.

Trooper Mott (JR) picked me up in Apple Valley and asked me two questions: Are you going to join the military? How many pounds are in one ton? JR was intimidating and was "spit and polished." He was a character, to say the least. I spent the next four hours riding with JR on the 4450 beat. While the ride-along was nearly 40 years ago, I remember it well. I remember several of the stops, including one where he made the driver unhook illegal lights on the side of Highway 13. Additionally, I remember his unique sense of humor. As a kid, I didn't know if I should laugh at his comments.

That ride-along proved to be the most significant moment in my life. JR was one of the most inspirational people I have met. It solidified my goals of becoming a Minnesota State Trooper. Prior to this decision, I was failing in most of my school classes and headed down the wrong road. I will never forget how JR made me feel and inspired me to work hard and stay focused. Ultimately, I turned my life around and eventually became a Trooper.

We kept in touch periodically after JR retired, and I am forever indebted to him for his impact on my life path and career trajectory. More importantly, it has become obvious how many people he touched and made significant impacts on throughout his life. Everyone who knew JR has a story or many stories to tell about him. While those stories may seem unbelievable to those who did not know JR, those who knew him were surprised at all the amazing stories and knew those stories to be accurate!

Those of us who knew him are grateful for the time we spent with him and the memories he helped create! Thank you, JR. RIP.

— Chris Erickson - Class of 1999

Mr. Mott was an excellent partner. He was always there for you if you needed help. He was always happy-go-lucky. He made the job fun with his humor and helped people relax at any event. We would stop and have coffee with the locals in Faribault with the deputies and local officers and we would all be in a happier frame of mind when we left because of John Mott.

I have always had a problem with weight, so sometimes the buttons on my uniforms were tight. John would always mention that to me at coffee or whatever. One morning, we stopped in Faribault. John came in with a pair of goggles on and he sat straight across from me. Everyone there asked him why he was wearing them. He said, "If Denny's shirt is going to let go, I don't want to lose an eye." That was how Mr. Mott made things fun. And believe me – we picked on him as well. What more can I say? He was a great partner, and I enjoyed working with him.

— *Dennis Schmidke - Class of 1969*

Our Chief at the time brought with him an educational program that he assigned to me to implement for our high schools throughout Minnesota. I recruited John and Tom Nelson to run the new program. John covered the high schools in southern Minnesota and Tom worked the north. Watching John presenting in a packed high school auditorium full of whispering and feet-shuffling students was awesome. When John started his pitch, the attention he received from the students was unbelievable. He had a gift!

My favorite story about John was when he would park on a down ramp. He would fall asleep and be called in as a slumper. So, he put Velcro on the back of his ball cap and Velcro on the headrest of his seat. That would stick his head to the back of the headrest. Ingenious.

John's years dealing with Parkinson's and his exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam had taken a toll on his quality of life. Here are some of his son's remarks at John's funeral:

As his battle with Parkinson's progressed, his mental and physical capabilities diminished but one thing stayed the same: Our connection was like nothing else. I received a Facetime from my mom telling me Dad wasn't doing so great. She'd ask me to say something to him because he wouldn't respond to her, so I would first ask who's in the room? Once



I was given the "all-clear" I'd say things that I can't repeat. Most of the time I would get a smile, and then a laugh and his eyes would open.

During his last days we knew the end was near. Like he was always there for me, I wanted to be there for him and didn't want to leave his side. I slept next to him for nearly eight days, rarely leaving him. I just couldn't do it. The only reason I left him was to be with my kids for an activity and maybe sneak in a change of clothes. In true John Mott fashion, the joke was on me. Because on May 9, I said goodbye and left for Sophia's dance recital. When my sister Jill, my daughter Piper, my wife Cassie, and I were all watching Sophia dancing in her recital, he decided that it was time to let go.

My mom saw it was about 6:30, the dance was starting, and she told him the kids and grandkids are all together. They all are watching the dance and they're all happy and smiling. At that moment, my dad let out his last breath, had a tear from each eye, and said goodbye to this world

When John would stop by my office, he always brightened my day. He had such a positive attitude about life, and he enjoyed educating our youth. He was not just an educator, but also a salesman. John knew how to get our message through to those teenagers. He always had a smile on his face. Sometimes I would wonder: What the hell is he up to? Or what did he do now that I need to fix? He was a character! I think of him often and about all the work he did with our youth. He was one in a million! John passed away May 9, 2025.

"If you are in a fix, call 176"

Richard C. Smith - Retired
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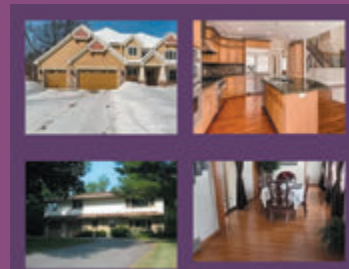
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MSPTA PRESIDENT MIKE LEDOUX RETIRES AFTER DISTINGUISHED CAREER

After more than three decades of dedicated service, Duluth Station Sergeant and Minnesota State Patrol Troopers Association (MSPTA) President Mike LeDoux is officially retiring. Family, friends, and fellow law enforcement officers from across the state gathered to celebrate his exceptional career and commitment to public safety.

SGT. LEDOUX'S INSPIRATION TO PURSUE LAW ENFORCEMENT RUNS DEEP IN HIS ROOTS.



"I come from a law enforcement family, which I'm proud of," LeDoux shared. "Starting with my great-grandfather in 1923 with the

"Mike says it very well. It's a purpose-driven life. It's a profession, a career — a calling..."

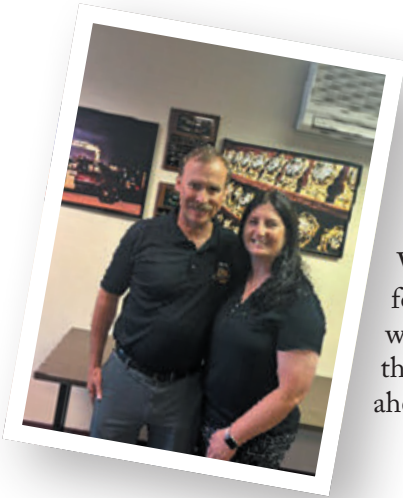
Duluth Police Department, followed by my grandfather and my mother's brother. Then I became a trooper. I was fortunate enough to transfer from the metro to Duluth in 1997 and get to practice law enforcement in the town I grew up in."

Over the course of his 30+ years in the Northland, Sgt. LeDoux conducted more than 40,000 traffic stops and made over 1,000 DUI arrests. Remarkably, he hasn't missed a single day of work or called in sick since 1998 — a testament to his commitment and work ethic.

LT. COLONEL JEREMY GEIGER OF THE MINNESOTA STATE PATROL PRAISED LEDOUX AS A ROLE MODEL FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF TROOPERS.

"Mike says it very well. It's a purpose-driven life. It's a profession, a career — a calling," Geiger said. "If you come to work every single day with that drive and passion, you'll





come out of it on the other side with a great perspective on life and a positive attitude.”

While LeDoux looks forward to retirement, his wife Melissa jokes that there’s one immediate task ahead.

“I just want to reclaim my dining room table,” she said with a laugh. “It’s been missing for many years, packed full of paperwork from him being the president of the union too. I know it’s there — I just want to clean it off and have a little less clutter in the house.”

As Mike LeDoux transitions into this new chapter, his legacy of service, leadership, and unwavering dedication leaves a lasting impact on the Minnesota State Patrol and the community he served.

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YOUR SUPERVISOR CALLS YOU INTO THEIR OFFICE... NOW WHAT?



Mark J. Schneider
General Counsel
Law Enforcement Labor Services, Inc.

The workday begins like any other day, but while on your way to your squad, your supervisor stops you outside of their office and tells you that they want to talk to you about what happened the day before during a traffic stop. Your supervisor says don't worry about it, "I just want to get information about the incident to figure out what happened". You sit down with the supervisor, answer their questions and head out to your squad and finish your shift. When you arrive back at the office, you are handed a letter informing you that you are suspended for three (3) days due to your conduct during the traffic stop. It is only then that you reach out to your delegate to discuss the situation.

Given the chain of command and the need to obey orders or directives from supervisors, it puts the trooper in a difficult position when you are told to report to their office. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that you are entitled to union representation when being questioned by a supervisor or investigator regarding an incident that may lead to discipline. *NLRB v. Weingarten, Inc.*, 420 U.S. 251 (1975). *Weingarten* rights are grounded in your right to engage in concerted activity and to ensure the opportunity for union/legal representation prior to submitting to a statement or interview. It is important and appropriate that

you ask your supervisor when you are confronted with the above situation whether you can have union representation or whether review of the incident may lead to discipline and that you want union representation.

In addition, *Minn. Stat. §626.89*, the Peace Officer Discipline Procedures Act (PODPA), requires that prior to an employer obtaining a trooper's formal statement, the employer or investigating agency must provide a summary of the allegations against the trooper. In fact, you are not required to give a formal statement unless and until a written complaint signed by the complainant has been filed with the employer or investigating agency and you have been provided a summary of those allegations.

A trend is happening where agencies are scheduling interviews of officers with the pre-text that they are not asking for a "formal statement" that would trigger PODPA rights. PODPA defines "formal statement" as:

The questioning of an officer in the course of obtaining a recorded, stenographic or signed statement to be used as evidence in a disciplinary proceeding against the officer.

Minn. Stat. §626.89, subd.1(b).

PODPA also provides that the officer can ask for an attorney or union representative at any time before or during the interview. When a request is made, the interview must stop, and the officer must be given a “reasonable opportunity” to obtain union representation and/or an attorney. Minn. Stat. §626.89, subd. 9.

Even if the employer claims PODPA does not apply, it is important to review the employer’s policies to determine if those policies/general orders require protections greater than or different from PODPA. For instance, a policy may require that all interviews of employees that may lead to discipline must be recorded. The recording requirement would then trigger PODPA protections.

When you are notified of an interview, it is imperative that you contact your delegate to make certain your rights as a licensed peace officer are honored by your employer. Prior to your statement, the delegate will ensure that your *Weingarten* rights and the rights under PODPA are honored so that the interview and process is fair and reasonable.

Prior to your interview/statement, you will be provided a *Garrity* Advisory. See *Garrity v. N.J.*, 385 U.S. 493 (1967). The importance of the *Garrity* Advisory is to notify you that since you are being ordered and compelled to appear for the interview and provide complete and truthful information, that information may be used for evidence of misconduct concerning the particular investigation. The information you provide and any information obtained as a result of your interview, may not be used against you in any criminal proceedings.

In addition, prior to the interview, you will be provided a *Tennesen* Warning notifying you that information you provide during your interview may, at some point, be disclosed to third parties depending on the outcome of the investigation and whether any discipline is issued. The *Tennesen* Warning will describe circumstances when the information may be available to third parties and what third parties may have access to that information under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. See *Minn. Stat. 13.04, subd.2* (*Tennesen* warning required when public employer asks/requires individual to supply private or confidential data about themselves).

Depending on the outcome of the investigation, if discipline is issued, your grievance rights under the Collective Bargaining Agreement must be followed and honored by your employer. Any discipline must be supported by “just cause”. The just cause analysis includes a review of the facts and information you provide at your interview; in addition to any other investigatory materials collected by the employer. Therefore, it is important that you have union and legal representation as soon as you are notified that you are the subject of an internal affairs investigation. If a supervisor asks for you to come to their office to talk about an incident, you should ask if a union representative should be with you and whether the matter may lead to discipline. If this is the case, you are entitled to union/legal representation and your employer is obligated to honor that request. Your rights are important and must be protected to make sure the process is reasonable and fair.

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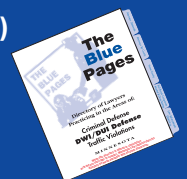
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MN STATE PATROL HONOR GUARD

The MN State Patrol Honor Guard was formed in 2008 as a team of trained professionals that provides honors to law enforcement personal that make the ultimate sacrifice. Over the course of the teams 17 years as a part of the agency, 58 troopers have been members of the team. Currently the team is made up of 27 troopers and four lieutenants. Prior to the official organization of the team, members of the agency would work together on their own to pay respect to our fallen officers.

Once troopers join the team, they are sent to the weeklong Law Enforcement Memorial Association (LEMA) Honor Guard Camp to learn the basics. They are taught the significance of the honors provided to fallen officers and how to perform each of the honors. The team then trains twice a year together honing their skills to perfection. Every other year, two members are sent to the Delaware State Police Honor Guard Conference. This conference is an enhanced level of training among honor guard members from other state agencies from across the country. The planning process and ways to foster a strong team are the focal point of the conference, along with sharing new techniques amongst teams.

The Honor Guard is equipped with three sets of flags (US, MN, and MSP), eight M1 Garand rifles, and two ceremonial wooden badges with interchangeable badge numbers.

The team performs a variety of ceremonial duties for members of the agency. They are equipped and prepared to provide full

honors to troopers that make the ultimate sacrifice including a casket team, flag fold, rifle party, casket/urn guard, color guard, & door guards to name a few.

The team also attends the funeral of any retiree when the family requests their presence. The team also works along with allied agencies, such as LEMA, to provide these honors to our partner agencies. They also participate in events such as sporting events, LEMA Day, the TZD Conference, and other MSP Events (Retired Trooper Day, graduation, State Patrol Day at the MN State Fair, & Retiree funerals). Members are also sent as representatives of the agency to Line of Duty Deaths of other state law enforcement agencies across the country. The team averages between 40-50 events each year.

The State Patrol Honor Guard team is an experience group of men and women that strive to meet excellence in every detail they attend whether that be a color posting at the TZD Conference or folding the flag of a fallen partner. The purpose of the team is to provide the utmost respect and honor to the men and women that have made it possible for us to continue to provide these honors. The best we can do is the least we can do.





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