

## **We're from Inspection. We're here to help.**

If one were to ask the average person what makes the New York State Police different from other police agencies, most would probably say that troopers wear gray uniforms and most other cops wear blue. Some might have noticed that troopers don't wear badges. A few might know that the selection process is a little more difficult. Or the training is a little longer and a little tougher than most - a six month long, live-in academy - followed by a year of probation, much of it riding with field training officers who are constantly evaluating the recruit's progress.

While all of the foregoing are true, it's probably the state police's rules, regulations and policies that make the biggest difference. There are strict protocols for just about any situation a trooper might encounter. But these procedures only work if the bosses can insure that they are followed. That's where inspections come into play.

For some of you, the word "Inspection" brings back memories of "Junk on the Bunk" or standing at attention while the C.O. inspects your weapon and asks you to recite your Fifth General Order. While there is some of this - actually quite a bit of this - during the six month Basic School, that's not what I'm referring to. Think IG's Inspection.

Inspections in the state police came in three flavors: Zone Inspections, Troop Inspections and Division Inspections. Zone inspections were carried out by the zone commander - who was in those days a lieutenant - and by each of the three zone sergeants. Troop Inspections were carried out by each of the three uniform captains and by the troop BCI officers.

Both the Zone and Troop Inspections were pretty much the same. Most stations were scheduled to be inspected by either zone or troop once during any given month. Some inspectors preferred to have the station commander or a station sergeant present during the inspection to show them around and therefore made an appointment to ensure the sergeant would be there. Other inspectors felt it was easier to inspect the station when there were no supervisors present and would show up

unannounced. This was particularly true if the inspecting member was assigned to work nights and had to find something to do at three o'clock in the morning. Either way, the inspection didn't come as a big surprise to the station commander. He knew that at some point during the month his station was going to be inspected and he knew who was going to do the inspection.

Early in my career I witnessed something that I later kept in mind when my station was scheduled to be the target of an inspection. I was a young trooper assigned to SP Middletown. At that time Middletown was the last outpost of Troop K, not the Troop Headquarters of Troop F. On those Sunday Mornings when he was assigned to work nights, Captain Dwyer, who lived in Orange County, would arrange to swing through Middletown at about 5:45 a.m. as his last station visit of the tour. You could set your watch by it. I think it may have had something to do with the bakery in Middletown, which made a particularly good Danish, opening at 5:30 a.m. My night patrol partner and I had stopped at the station to split up for the remainder of the tour. While we were there the deskman, Corporal Harry Hayes, stood up on a chair and unscrewed one of the hallway light bulbs until it went out. When I looked at him with a puzzled expression he said "Kid, the captain is going to walk through that door any minute. He will have driven here all the way from Hawthorne and will have to justify the trip. How hard do I want him to look? I'm just making it easy for him to find something." Sure enough, the captain walked in the door a little while later, looked around, pointed at the dark bulb and said "Corporal Hayes, that light bulb needs to be replaced", then disappeared into the BCI offices with his Sunday Times, his Danish and his coffee. By the time he came out, the lightbulb had miraculously come to life.

The lesson I took with me was "The inspector will have come all the way from somewhere to find something to write up and he isn't going to leave until he finds it. Even if it is theoretically possible, you don't want to have everything absolutely perfect when he arrives. Don't make him have to dig too deep."

Although inspecting members used a division form, a checklist, to ensure they were thorough, it wasn't really feasible for any given inspector to inspect everything in depth. Not surprisingly,

different inspecting members tended to hone in on different areas. Knowing your inspectors had definite advantages.

Every inspection included inspections of several cars and several members, again using division issued checklists. Since all uniform equipment was issued and could be surveyed for new stuff when necessary, and since dry cleaning was provided, there wasn't much excuse for having a dirty or unserviceable uniform and, in reality, it didn't happen much. Occasionally it would be discovered that a trooper had some other trooper's handcuffs. This usually happened as a result of two active guys riding together on the A line - which was the only time troopers rode together - and bringing multiple prisoners to the jail and getting the wrong cuffs back from the jailors. The more arrests a trooper made, the more likely it was this might happen. Since we encouraged such activity, it didn't seem productive to gig our best troopers for this heinous violation. When I was the inspector, I just tried to get it straightened out and sent the troopers on their way with nothing more said. Or written.

Cars could be a nightmare. Some stations seemed to have great cars. SP Highland comes to mind. Others, not so good. SP Ellenville comes to mind. Some of this could be attributed to the nature of the roads the troopers patrolled, some to the station culture regarding vehicle maintenance and some, probably, to the relationship the troopers had with their local carwash.

Inspections of the BCI side of the house occurred a little less frequently than the uniform side. That's 'cause there was only a BCI captain and, depending on the troop, one or two BCI lieutenants to do the inspecting. Each one usually inspected one unit a month. In some ways, the BCI inspections were a little easier than uniform inspections for the inspecting officer.

Since the station commander, a uniform position, was responsible for overseeing the upkeep of the barracks, for overseeing mutually used things such as the blotter; radio, teletype and fingerprinting logs and for maintaining adequate inventories of all sorts of supplies, the BCI inspections didn't cover those things. On the other hand, the Bureau usually had much more evidence in their evidence locker, had more pending investigations requiring periodic supplemental reports and had more arrest

reports awaiting final disposition than did the uniform side of the house. Reviewing all of these was a pain.

As with the uniform side, the BCI inspections included inspecting a few investigators and a few cars. Since the bureau guys wore suits and ties, personnel inspections were pretty much limited to ensuring that no one had lost their badge, ID, gun or handcuffs and that their manuals were up to date. The bureau cars tending to be better maintained than the uniform cars since they were individually assigned and because they didn't spend as much time plying the back roads of the county. Sometimes there was a little more equipment in the trunk to be inspected. All state police cars had a compartmentalized wooden box in the trunk containing flares, a first aid kit, a fire extinguisher, fifty feet of rope, a wrecking bar, an axe, a large sealed beam flashlight, a hundred foot steel tape measure and tire chains. Many bureau guys also carried a fingerprint dusting kit and a kit to bag and tag evidence. Sometimes during the BCI inspections it was discovered that the trunk also contained golf clubs, running and/or racquetball gear or fishing tackle. Perhaps all three. These additional items were procured by the individual investigators at no cost to the division, undoubtedly in case the investigator was unexpectedly thrust into a situation where he had to conduct a discrete yet credible surveillance. Where did we find such dedicated guys? (E.C.: I never bought that that was a new, experimental, plastic walkie talkie with an extendable antenna. I had seen the Ron Popeil Pocket Fisherman ads. Nice try.)

Division Inspections were a whole different ball of wax. (For those not familiar with the Division of State Police, which is a division of the Executive Branch of the New York State Government, "division" does not refer to some portion of the state police. It's the whole thing. The term Division Headquarters, often shortened to just "Division", is THE headquarters. You know, the place where hundreds do the work of dozens.)

Every few years a troop commander would get a call from the Chief Inspector advising him that in a month or so a division inspection team was going to descend on his troop, en mass. The team typically consisted of a Deputy Chief Inspector, two Staff Inspectors and many inspectors' aides in

the form of captains, lieutenants, zone sergeants, senior investigators and maybe a first sergeant, all drawn from other troops on a temporary basis. The madness usually went on for about three weeks. Prior to the arrival of the inspection team, the troop commander received "work papers" from Albany calling for the gathering of all sorts of information which was to be given to the inspection team when they arrived. Some of the information gathered might include: productivity statistics, copies of all troop orders issued, overtime records, names and addresses of all the district attorneys and judges, etc.

When I was a station commander, I likened preparing for a division inspection to juggling. You didn't want to get everything in perfect shape, or as close thereto as you could, too soon, 'cause you could only keep all the balls in the air for so long before you ran out of steam and everything came crashing down. And it wasn't like you were juggling with balls, more like trying to juggle with a chain saw, a crystal vase, a bowling ball and a bowl of Jello all at the same time. Nevertheless, I don't recall any real horror stories from my early experiences.

Then came the *Surprise Inspection*. I never did learn whose idea the *Surprise Division Inspection* was or why they thought it was a good idea. As far as I know, they only tried it once. Unfortunately I was the Zone Commander of the place where they gave it their best shot.

SP Ferndale was a truly unique place. With a compliment of about fifty troopers, twenty investigators, three sergeants and two senior investigators, Ferndale was the largest station in the state. (SP Liverpool, just north of Syracuse, had more troopers, but it was actually two different operations under one roof. It consisted of a county patrol and an interstate patrol, each with their own chain of command, etc.)

During the summer, approximately half the population of New York City moved from the city to the Sullivan County Catskills, AKA the Jewish Alps. Sullivan County contained at least a half dozen giant hotels, dozens of kids' summer camps and probably several hundred bungalow colonies and rooming houses.

At Ferndale, there was a constant influx of new troopers and new investigators arriving as those who had served their time were granted their requested transfers. The newcomers were long on enthusiasm but short on experience. Some newcomers couldn't hack it. In the summer it took two troopers on the desk (later one trooper and one civilian dispatcher) just to man the twelve incoming phone lines, the walk-in traffic and the radio and teletype. On a good tour we put out six or seven patrols, a radar detail, a scales team plus maybe eight or ten investigators and a sergeant. It was a crazy, crazy place.

One day Major Peter P. Gromacki, our troop commander and a state police legend, advised that he would be hosting a little get-together for his officers and non-coms at troop headquarters so he could give us a little pep talk. I think perhaps the invitation was worded a little stronger than that, but you get the picture. I went directly from my house to troop headquarters on the appointed day. One of my sergeants, Jim Wood, stopped at Ferndale, picked up a car and met me at troop headquarters. The meeting was held in the classroom at troop. At some point the Middletown deskman caught my attention through the window into the hallway and pantomimed that he had a phone call for me. I slipped out of the classroom and took the call.

It was from Bob Berry, the deskman at Ferndale. "Lieut, I don't know what's going on, but the barracks is crawling with Inspectors from Division and they're tearing this place to pieces. I just thought you'd like to know."

I had to attend an officers' meeting after the pep talk, so I couldn't break lose. I got Jim Wood's attention and signaled for him to come out. I related what Bob Berry had told me and told Jim to get up to Ferndale and see if he could get a handle on what was going on. I would break loose as soon as I could. Jim was a rock solid NCO and capable of handling anything, so I was a little surprised to see the color kind of drain out of his face when I gave him the info. It turned out Jim knew something I didn't.

In addition to the tourism business, Sullivan County was the home to a large poultry business, both for egg production and for the raising and processing of Kosher Chickens. (I don't know how the raising of a Kosher Chicken differs from the way Frank Purdue does it; maybe they play Klezmer music in the background during the chickens' formative years.) As a result of this industry there were always tractor trailers filled with chicken plying Route 17, the major four lane highway passing through the county. (The chickens were carried in plastic cages not unlike milk crates which were stacked on flatbed trailers and covered with tarps.) I don't recall whether the chickens were coming or going - or maybe they just got sent on R&R from time to time. In any event, it was not unusual to see a broken crate or a chicken which had somehow fallen off a truck along Route 17.

Apparently one of the night patrols had come across such a chicken as they were returning from patrol and offered to give it a lift to the barracks. The chicken was apparently quite content to sit on a filing cabinet in the squad room until the assembled shift change decided that the chicken bore a resemblance to a member whose nickname was "Cluck-Cluck". A small sign, "Cluck-Ccluck", was made and hung around the chicken's neck, which, reportedly, the chicken was quite comfortable with. "Cluck-Cluck" the chicken was then placed on top of "Cluck-Cluck" the trooper's locker since the trooper was due in for work in a couple of hours. The chicken had been in the locker room when Sergeant Wood passed through on his way to Troop Headquarters and to the best of Sergeant Wood's knowledge, it was still there.

Jim called Trooper Berry. After verifying Bob Berry's news that the station was under some sort of siege by Division Inspection, Jim issued one order "Get the chicken out of the locker room!"

Bob replied "I'm all alone, what do you want me to do, ask one of the inspectors to take the desk so I can go downstairs and take care of the chicken?" Jim reiterated his order, hung up and ran for his car.

Back at Ferndale, Investigator Red Whelan was the first bureau guy to arrive for the B Line. When he walked into the front desk area to review the blotter, Bob grabbed him. "Red, you've got to do a favor for me."

Red, who was about to ask why there seemed to be several inspectors out in the back parking lot, something which was highly unusual, replied "Sure Bob, what do you need?"

"In the locker room there's this chicken....."

Red cut him off. "I don't want to know anything about a chicken...."

In the end, Red went down to the locker room and grabbed the chicken, which was just settling in to his new home. Up to that point the chicken had been a sweetheart. It turned into a raving banshee. Red ran to the rear door with the chicken and looked out into the rear parking lot. There were three inspectors working over the fleet of uniform troop cars. He waited until they all had their heads under the hood or in the trunk, stuffed the chicken under his suit jacket, ran across the parking lot and threw it over the guide rail and down a small embankment, out of sight of the inspectors. Red's activity caught the attention of the inspectors and they looked over just in time to see him standing at the edge of the parking lot flicking feathers off the lining of his suit jacket. He had pulled it off.

About that time Trooper Charlie Martin returned to the barracks for some reason. Charlie was assigned to the radar detail. Radar cars were pretty much the same no matter where you went. They spent their life idling along four-lane highways. The engine heat would bake the valve cover gaskets until they became brittle and the engine oil would leak out onto the exhaust manifolds, causing smoke to swirl out from under the hood. Repeated trips back and forth through the grass median would loosen up the exhaust system and maybe crack a manifold, so the cars tended to be a little loud. There were usually several six packs worth of empty Pepsi cans on the right front floor.



The Ferndale barracks was a one hundred eleven foot long, one story building with a dormitory, a locker room, storage rooms and several garage bays downstairs. The barracks was too close to the road to allow for parking in front of the building, but there were parking lots at both ends of the building and a giant parking lot in the rear, one story lower than the main floor. The parking lot in the rear could be accessed from either end, so it was possible to actually drive around the building through the rear lot.

Charlie came rolling into the rear parking lot with the exhaust grumbling, smoke swirling out of the hood and a half a yard of sod hanging off the rear bumper. He saw several heads pop up from under hoods and trunks. At that distance he wasn't sure who they were, but in those days Staff Inspectors wore uniforms and, like all commissioned officers of that era, wore bus driver hats instead of Stetsons. Charlie knew this couldn't be good, so he nailed the gas, intending to continue right around the barracks and out the south end of the parking lot. He was doing pretty good 'til he rounded the BCI end of the building and Inspector Lecakes leaped onto his hood. He was captured. The resulting inspection of Charlie's radar car went the way one might expect.

When I arrived back at Ferndale, Inspector Lecakes was just starting in on the inspection of his next car and driver, Juan Morales, a probationary trooper who had just been cut loose from his senior man. I could commiserate with Juan. The first time I was the subject of an inspection after graduating from the basic school was when I was assigned to Troop C and then Captain Lecakes pulled my night patrol partner and me over at 3 a.m. and proceeded to conduct a full inspection along side the highway.

Inspector N. G. "Smiling Nick" Lecakes was another state police legend. If you want to see what he looked like, look up "straight arrow" in the dictionary; his picture will be right next to the definition. Nick had two younger brothers on the job, one of whom I had worked with when we were both troopers in Middletown and one who worked in an adjoining station when I was a trooper. Nick was much older and much more formidable.

At one point in the vehicle inspection Inspector Lecakes asked Trooper Morales to get the tire tread depth gauge out of the glove compartment so he could measure the tread depth on one of the tires. For those of you who are not familiar with a tire tread depth gauge , it is a cylindrical stainless steel tube about two inches long which has one moving part and looks something like a small hypodermic syringe.

Apparently the tire tread depth gauge had not been discussed in Trooper Morales's academy class, or else he was snoozing when it was, 'cause Juan had no idea what the inspector was talking about. The inspector had, however, given Juan an important clue. Whatever it was, it was in the glove compartment. Juan opened the glove compartment and began rummaging around until he found something he didn't recognize. Low and behold, it was the tire tread depth gauge, although Juan didn't know that. Juan held it out in his hand. Apparently "Smiling Nick" gave Juan his characteristic closed jaw, bared teeth grin, 'cause Juan figured "Well, I guess that ain't it", threw it back in the glove compartment and continued rummaging. Following a discussion in which Juan was finally allowed to say something other than "Yes, sir" or "No, sir", Juan created a doubt in Inspector Lecakes mind as to whether the subject of the tire tread depth gauge had been covered in his basic school.

The only way to resolve this conundrum was to question another member of Juan's class. As luck would have it, Frankie Costa, a classmate, was not only working, but was close by. Trooper Costa was instructed to return to the station forthwith. When he got there, Inspector Lecakes issued Frankie a slightly different order: "Measure the tread depth of the right front tire." By now I was watching this evolution with some interest. Frankie, like Juan, didn't know what a tire tread depth gauge was. Either it had not been covered in their academy or he and Juan had been shooting craps in the back row of the classroom when it was. Frankie, however, was a problem solver. He reached into the trunk and pulled out the 100' steel tape. Inspector Lecakes stopped Frankie at that point and let them both off the hook, stating that he would take up this felony with the Director of Training.

I later asked Frankie just what it was that he intended to do with that 100' steel tape. He told me he knew the spare tire in the trunk was brand new. He was going to measure the circumference of the new tire, then divide it by Pi, then by two. Then he was going to do the same thing with the right front tire. The difference would give him how much tread had been used on the front tire. He was going to wing it from there. I figured if he had gotten remotely close to doing that, Inspector Lecakes would have fired off into orbit long before Frankie got to the winging it part.

After lunch I was informed that this new inspection format was to include inspection of the zone operation. Because Ferndale was a zone headquarters, the zone secretary, the three zone sergeants and I occupied three offices in the barracks.

When Troop F stood up in 1968, I was a trooper in the Middletown Barracks Patrol. Since then I had been somewhat like Troop F's utility infielder. I went to Ellenville as a sergeant, Ferndale as the station commander, Kingston as a zone sergeant, then served a tour as the Zone Three commander before being shipped down to Zone One. (Before leaving the troop seven years later, I would go back to Zone Three for another tour as zone commander, then back to Troop Headquarters as a BCI lieutenant.)

But I'd only been the Zone Commander of Zone One for a month or two. If the inspectors were going to ask me trivia questions about Troop F geography I could probably dazzle them, but my knowledge of the day to day operations in Zone One was a little rusty since I had last been stationed there five years earlier.

The inquisition commenced in my office just before shift change. I sat at my desk and the Deputy Chief Inspector and an inspector sat before me and peppered me with questions. Having decided that the Ferndale automotive fleet was a target rich area, the two other inspectors waited by the gas pump for the remaining patrols to return so they could complete their carnage.

Fortunately for me, Zone Sergeant Les Vincent arrived for the C Tour just as the inquisition began. Les had been a zone sergeant since the rank was established fifteen years earlier, all of it at Ferndale. Les assumed a position of "at ease" in my open doorway, standing behind the inspectors. As the inspectors asked me questions, Les would very subtly nod yes or no or would direct my attention to various file cabinets with his eyes. It was kind of like he was Edgar Bergin and I was a remote control Charlie McCarthy. It worked.

During the course of the inquisition, I happened to glance out my window into the North Parking Lot. It was shift change. One of my best troopers, Dave Goggin, was walking away from the station in full pack carrying his briefcase. About five minutes later another trooper came walking towards the station. I later found out that Dave, upon arriving for duty and find the station under siege, and knowing that the troop car he and the other trooper shared was not a good candidate for inspection, had radioed the B Line trooper and had him call the station. He told the trooper not to return to the station; Dave would meet him at the McDonald's up the street. The car never was inspected. Thankfully the inspectors didn't have the same view out the window that I did.

Satisfied that at least the zone operation was up to snuff, the Deputy Chief Inspector took me on a tour to show me how screwed up the station operation was. The Deputy Chief was actually an OK guy, but he suffered from germaphobia, probably not a good affliction for a guy whose job it was to poke around things. He took me into the station sergeants' office and showed me that there were coffee stains on the inside of the scrap basket. He was serious. He ran his finger around the inside of the basket to show me how bad it really was. He tried to continue his speech but was unable to ignore his grimy finger. He finally went in search of a sink where he could wash up. I figured that if he had been tall enough to have seen what the top of Cluck-Cluck's locker looked like about now, we would probably be carrying him out of the barracks on a stretcher.

I don't recall the fallout, if any, which followed the inspection. Possibly higher ranking folks at Division Headquarters who had once worked at Ferndale convinced the inspectors that just being assigned there was punishment enough.

I think I may have gone through one or two more division inspections while I was in Troop F, but compared to the Ferndale debacle they were so bland they didn't leave a lasting impression.

In 1987 I received an offer I couldn't refuse. "You will accept promotion to BCI captain or, since you now have twenty years on, you will retire." (I had turned down captain multiple times because I was hooked on being out in the field in the busiest troop in the state.) I was to be the Detail Commander of the statewide Violent Felony Warrant Squad.

What's a "Detail" you ask. The New York State Police is divided into eleven troops. One covers the Thruway and the others are geographical areas composed of two to ten counties. Details, on the other hand, are special units that are usually statewide in scope and not part of any one troop. Examples include the Governor's Security Detail, Aviation, the Community Narcotics Enforcement Team and the Violent Felony Warrant Squad. Some details are commanded by captains, others by majors.

The Violent Felony Warrant Squad, or VFW, was composed of fifty or sixty investigators who did nothing but look for bad guys, many of them bad guys who had kind of fallen off the radar as time went on. The detail was broken down into ten squads which were spread across the state. Most of the squads were housed either in a troop headquarters or other division facilities, although one of the squads worked out of the district attorney's office in Rochester and another out of the 50th Precinct in New York City. The Detail Commander (me), the administrative senior investigator and the Troop K and New York City Squads worked out of VFW Headquarters near Pleasantville, in Westchester County.

We were headquartered in an old tenant farmer's house on the grounds of a former estate. Pace University had built a giant campus on most of the former grounds. The New York State Department of Transportation had retained the main house of the estate as a regional headquarters. Next door was the tenant farmer's house. When the condition of the house deteriorated to the point where the mice refused to live there anymore, the D.O.T. let the state police use it free of charge. It was in pretty poor shape, but actually it fit right in with our somewhat clandestine operation. None of the Pace

students would have guessed that there was an elite crime fighting unit next door. Then again, I don't think anybody in the state police would have guessed we were an elite crime fighting unit either.

About a month or two after I arrived, the Chief Inspector called. In looking through their records, Inspection had discovered that neither the VFW or SP Manhatten (forerunner of Troop NYC) had ever been inspected. Since we weren't all that far apart, Inspection was going to send down a small team to do both at the same time.

The thought of a regular division inspection didn't worry me all that much. After all, I had survived the Cluck-Cluck Caper relatively unscathed. Besides, most of the big bugaboos of BCI inspections didn't apply to our operation. The VFW didn't investigate crime scenes, so we had no evidence. Prisoners were immediately turned over to whatever barracks or police agency wanted them, hence no PFDs - arrest reports pending final disposition. I maintained the confidential funds personally and knew they were up to snuff. Jim Perrino, my administrative senior investigator (sort of the BCI equivalent of a Troop First Sergeant), was super competent, anal retentive and a worrier. When Jim did something, every "i" was dotted and every "t" crossed. This left the updating of pending cases, which were, in our case, warrants. The guys worked the warrants hard. They constantly ran new rap sheets on targets, called informants, checked old addresses - and they documented it all; we were good there. True, the headquarters building was in poor condition, but free is good. How badly could we get beaten up for that?

The best news of all was that the inspector who was going to do the inspection of our administrative operation was Jim Patterson. Jim, yet another state police legend, was intelligent, experienced and, best of all, a realist. When he and I were fellow zone commanders in Troop F, one of the captains went on a rant about some perceived problem. Jim's assessment of the situation was "Sir, I think there's less to this than meets the eye." Jim didn't sweat the small stuff.

During the inspection things were ticking along so smoothly I didn't even pay much attention to the details. I knew we were in good shape and, besides, I just got there; I could always blame everything

on my predecessor. The Friday before Inspector Patterson was to interview Jim Perrino and me about the administrative operation, Jim came into my office in a panic.

"Captain, we're in big trouble. I was just talking to the senior down at SP Manhattan and Inspector Patterson asked to see their film inventory."

"And?"

"The Inspectors are coming here Monday."

"And?"

"We don't have a film inventory!"

The state police take a lot of pictures - crime scenes, accidents, mug shots. When I came on the job the state police were still using the Graflex Speed Graphic camera. It had a bellows which extended out the front of the camera and looked like something Jimmy Olson might have used at the Daily Planet. Mug shots were taken with a similar camera which sat on a massive wooden tripod and looked like something Mathew Brady used at the Battle of Gettysburg. The only thing missing was the black drape to stick your head under and the tray of flash powder. Both of these cameras used 4" x 5" cut film which was inserted into the back of the camera in a film holder. You pulled out the slide, took the picture and put the slide back in place, then removed the film holder, flipped it over and repeated the process. Two pictures to a film holder, which was then sent to Troop ID to be developed. Use as many film holders as you need.

In the 1970s we switched to a twin reflex camera which took regular rolls of film. Since it was often necessary to get the photographs developed as quickly as possible, it was not unusual for rolls of film to be sent to Troop ID with only a few exposures used. The remaining film was wasted. We went

through a lot of film, so it was necessary to keep close track of what you had, what you had used and what would soon be needed.

The VFW was different. We didn't do crime scenes, we didn't investigate plane crashes or fatal accidents, we turned our prisoners over to the demanding agency for processing. Other than an occasional bent troop car fender or an injury to prisoner, we didn't take pictures.

"Jim, how much film do we have?"

"Three rolls!"

I gave serious thought to chalking the "no film inventory" dereliction up to the Corporal Harry Hayes "give 'em an easy pinch" philosophy, but it seemed likely that, given the entire weekend to worry about it, Jim would sign himself into the state hospital by Sunday afternoon. I went with Plan B which, I admit, was only marginally better.

"Jim, why don't you take the three rolls of film home. When they ask to see our film inventory, tell them we don't have any film."

"That would be stealing!"

"Jim, you don't have to steal the film. You can bring it back on Tuesday. Then we'll start a film inventory."

I could tell Jim didn't like the idea, but he went with it.



Monday rolled around. Inspector Patterson came into my office with his checklist and started ticking off items as he went down the list. Jim and I fielded the questions. Then it came: "Can I see your film inventory?"

Jim had a look on his face which I can only imagine was like that of those who watched the *Hindenburg* burst into flame. He snapped "WE DON'T HAVE ANY FILM!", then whipped his stare from Inspector Patterson's face to mine. I almost fell off the chair laughing. Inspector Patterson (and those of you who know him can picture this) said slowly and with an absolute deadpan expression as he wrote out Jim's reply on the form. "OK..... 'Don't....have....a....film.....inventory.'" Nothing more was said.

Apparently not having a film inventory was not a career-ender. Seven months later I was advised that I would be promoted to major and sent to Troop K as the troop commander. With the exception of having to put up with Reverend Al for several months, being the troop commander was a kick. As Mel Brooks said "It's good to be the King." The average length of service of our troopers was much less than in most troops, perhaps as little as half the division average. But what the troopers lacked in experience they more than made up for in enthusiasm. Guided by excellent NCOs and some truly outstanding zone commanders, they did great stuff.

Therefore, when I got the call from the Chief Inspector two years later that it was our turn in the barrel, I wasn't all that worried. "What will be will be." When the work papers arrived I called in all the troop officers and handed them out. I also instructed the officers to have their station commanders and senior investigators to go out and inspect each other's stations. Not formally and with no reports. Unless there was some systemic problem which needed to be addressed troop wide, just fix whatever needs fixing. One of the captains didn't like the idea. "How will we know what they found? How will we be able to hold them accountable? Who can we blame?" My theory was that as long as it got fixed, I didn't care.

The inspection went exceedingly well, unfortunately too well. A month or so after the inspection I got a call from the Superintendent. "I've just finished reviewing the Troop K inspection report and I'm very pleased with the results. You'll be happy to know you're being promoted." I wasn't happy to be promoted; there was no place to go but the Big House, Division Headquarters. I liked the field. "Gee, sir, if I'm doing such a great job, couldn't I stay here?" Apparently that wasn't what the boss wanted to hear. That was the end of the conversation.

Maybe I should have unscrewed a few light bulbs before the inspection.....