

Trip Down Memory Lane - NYSP late 50's & early 60's - Big changes
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The first week of June 1958 I was transferred from the Thruway detail back to Troop B and assigned to the Port Henry Sub-station. This was a nine man station, plus two BCI members. When I arrived, Sgt. Wally Sjoblom was S/C, Sgt. Jack Snell & Tpr. Leon "Red" Robinson comprised the BCI unit, covering a large part of Essex County. June 1958 saw the biggest change in the State Police since its beginning. Due to the pressure brought by the Troopers wives thru the legislature, Gov. Rockefeller cut the hours from Approximately 120 hours a week to a 60 hour work week. This change drastically reduced our coverage as there was no increase in manpower. SP Superintendent, Francis McGarvey was quoted on the front page of the Albany Times Union " My men won't know what to do with all their time off". The scheduling changed from two nights off a week/ 1500 hours until 1200 the next day/ with a four day pass each month, to 5 twelve hour days and two days off a week. The shifts were 0800 to 2000 hours & 2000 to 0800 hours. To compensate for the eleven paid holidays, once each month you were assigned three days off and then rotated one day off as it progressed thru the week. When assigned to Night Patrol, you had to double up with a partner from Schroon Lake or Elizabethtown. Both were three man stations, Walt Lemza, Ken Armstrong and Del LaBarge @ Schroon Lake and Bob "Bottles" LaVigne and two other young troopers @ E'town. Night Patrol in Essex County especially in winter months, was usually uneventful and boring. Very little traffic, an occasional accident and few complaints. The night patrol covered the areas from the Washington/ Warren County lines north including the towns of Ticonderoga, Schroon Lake, Crown Point, Moriah, North Hudson, Westport, Elizabethtown and Lewis, a very large and sparsely populated area. There was no backup to assist you within miles, so you were essentially "on Your own." For the first couple of years after we went on the 60 hour work week the only night patrols covering Essex & Clinton County were one from Port Henry, one from Saranac Lake & one or two in Clinton County depending on the available manpower, very slim coverage! During the next couple of years, members had the option of choosing a 20 year retirement at 1/2 pay instead of the then 25 year. The trade-off was they had a mandatory retirement age of 55 for the uniform force and 60 for the BCI. I knew of only one person that did not elect to sign on to the 20 year retirement plan.

Jack Dwyer had been promoted to Inspector and Transferred to Troop K, Lieut. Jim "Chink" Smith was the Zone Commander, he was much easier to work for than Dwyer. I had only been been at Port Henry a short time when I became involved in a physical altercation with a young trouble maker on Main St. in the Village of Port Henry. The local Cop had called for assistance and I responded with my partner, Tpr. Bob Siek. When we arrived at the scene, a two car PDAA, the driver of one of the vehicles was giving the cop a hard time. We quieted things down when another uninvolved subject started to become boisterous and a crowd had assembled watching us. When I ordered the subject to get off the street and back on the curb, he pushed me and the fight was on. I knocked him to the ground and he got back up, we wrestled around on the pavement. I had instructed Siek to stay out of it as I wanted to handle him myself. He wound up a bit bloody and I had some bruises and a torn shirt before I got the cuffs on him and loaded him in the troop car. We arraigned him and he spent the night in jail. The next morning when we took him back before the judge, his father was present and made him apologize, he paid a fine and was released. When we arrived back at the station Sgt. Snell came in and in his usual loud voice asked who the Trooper was that got into a fight the night before in the Village, I thought I was in trouble. I told him it was me and to my surprise he commended me for taking "appropriate care of the problem". From that time on for my next six years at Port Henry he was my mentor, and as I look back, I believe

he was the reason that I stayed there until I was promoted. Most Troopers in those days were transferred on a regular basis.

At that time the Mines at Republic Steel in Mineville were in operation. The miners were tough, hard working, hard drinking men who were prone to bar fights and domestic violence. Much of our work involved intoxication related incidents, public intoxication, DWI, domestic problems, assaults and disorderly conduct. Essex County was a Troopers County, the Sheriff was a jailer only, with no road patrols. The Port Henry PD had two part time patrolman and the Ticonderoga Police Dept. had Village jurisdiction only with about six patrolman and the SP did 99% of the police work. One evening I was working alone and got assigned to a bar fight in Mineville. On my arrival, there were only two people in the bar, the owner and a man by the name of Art Hsrgett. Unknown to me at the time, he was a real trouble maker and a "trooper fighter". The bar tender wanted him arrested, I told him to get in the car, we were going to the Judges. He got in and I arraigned him without incident. I made the usual blotter entry at end of my tour, the next day I was told I was lucky as he was a tough guy and a known fighter. That incident and the fight I had in the Village gave me the reputation of a "tough guy". This was not true, however, it served me well for the rest of my assignment at Port Henry. During my time at Port Henry, I got married and resided in Port Henry Village and the Town of Crown Point. Much of the time there was only one patrol covering the Towns of Westport, Moriah, Crown Point and Ticonderoga. When there were two patrols, I covered the Crown Point and Ticonderoga area. International Paper at Ticonderoga & Republic Steel in Mineville were the main employers in Essex County.

I enjoyed working at Port Henry, there was enough work to keep it interesting, but not enough to get overwhelmed. Traffic arrests were few and far between. I tried to average 10 a month but there were no roads that would entice speeding. There was no radar, no seatbelt, tire, child seat or tire laws. Inspection was only for cars four years old, drivers licenses were only two categories, Operators & Chauffeurs, no unlawful stickers, or tinted windshield laws. DWI was 0.15, no breathalyzers or other means to show intoxication except personal observation. The only tests that you could conduct were blood tests and the blood had to be drawn by a Doctor, the violator had to be immediately arraigned and it always meant a trip to the County Jail. On many occasions we got them off the road, arrested them for public intoxication, gave them a ticket for something and took them to the County jail for the night. The Port Henry Parol area covered the Bridge on the Vt - NY line. The Vermont drinking age was 21 and at that time NY was 18. On Saturday nights the teenagers would flock to "The trading post" a large bar and dance hall less than 300 yards from the Vt. border across the Crown Point Bridge. We could usually get a few traffic arrests in that area. Most of the problems inside the bar was handled by the owner, Joe Montkovsky a giant of a Russian. When he called us all we had to do was load them in the police car as they had already been subdued. In addition to that enticement for the drinkers, Essex County Bars closed at 1-00 AM, the Warren County line was about 6 miles west of Ticonderoga and the bars were open to 3-00AM, so there was a swift migration from Essex to Warren County at mid-nights on the week-ends. This also caused some serious accidents and other problems as a large restaurant/bar, "Indian Kettles" was just over the county line. In those days long form informations were necessary on all traffic tickets and all out of state violators had to be arraigned immediately, if not, they would not answer the ticket and there were no reciprocity laws. Communications in that era was primitive, radios did not operate very well in mountainous areas, there were no computers and to get information on a person or vehicle sometimes took hours or even days. There were no cell phones and long distance calls had to be justified. Phone bills were scrutinized on a regular basis and if a called seemed too long or unjustified a memo of justification had to be submitted by the caller. All phone calls had to be operator assisted, the phone number of the local Doctor, James Glavin was # 1. Most Judges

held court in their homes which gave Troopers a lot of interaction with the Judges and their families. Robert Bradford an old Judge in Crown Point was in his late 80's and getting senile. When you brought a violator in, he would be writing out a receipt for \$20.00 while you were writing the information. He had a certificate from Pres. Eisenhower framed on his wall commending him for his over 50 years of law enforcement service. He was an Essex County Deputy Sheriff before the SP was organized /1917/ and related a story about arresting a man for Murder, transporting him to the County jail in a horse and buggy while his wife sat in the rear of the buggy with a shotgun !! He had a big garden and Three or four times each summer he would leave a box of vegetables from his garden at my home.

The uniform force at that time had the responsibility of investigating all pistol permit applicants and all fraudulent check cases. We also executed all Warrants from County & Family Court Judges. Posted properties and places of Public Assembly were inspected on a regular bases and reports submitted. Suspension/revocation orders issued by the State DMV were our responsibility to enforce. This caused many PR problems as there we no computers and interaction between insurance companies and the DMV orders were often flawed. Any lapse of insurance was a revokable offense and a "screw-up" of the paper work caused all kinds of problems with registration offenses. People got a little annoyed when a trooper shows up with a screw driver and takes the plates off their car/truck. I remember turning down a business man, the Essex County Democratic Chairman for a pistol permit. He came to the station to see Sgt. Snell and complain about me and the results of my investigation but Snell backed me up and sent him on his way. He operated an upscale restaurant in Westport and he and his wife lived in an overhead apartment. Several years later, on a cold winter night a man ran out of gas nearby, the operator went to his door and banged on it. He shot him thru the door with a shotgun. I guess I made the right decision on the permit application.

In May Of 1959 a young Trooper, Ronald Donahue, a native of Mineville, was shot and killed near the St. Regis Indian Reservation and his partner Tpr. Charlie O'Connell shot and severely wounded the male Indian responsible for his death. Tpr. Donahue and his family were well liked and respected in the Port Henry area and he left a young widow. There was an overwhelming sense of sadness and grief throughout the community and Troop B. His wake and funeral brought an incredible show of support from Troopers and other law enforcement personnel from far and wide. Superintendent McGarvey headed up the funeral detail, lining the detail up in front of the Port Henry station which was an impressive sight. The following year another local Trooper, JS "Jack" Kelley, was killed in a Troop car/train accident near Watertown. That death hit me hard as I worked with him two years before in Tupper Lake, rented an apartment from his father the first year I was married and worked with his brother T.J. "Joe" Kelley in Keeseville. Port Henry had more than its' share of grief.

In 1961, Gov. Rockefeller appointed Arthur J. Cornelius, a retired FBI agent, SAC of the Albany Office as Superintendent of the SP. Cornelius made some drastic changes both administratively and operational. He apparently did not approve of the "Old State Police" methods including their interactions with the public as he viewed as "heavy handed" and their personal lives as hard drinking rednecks. He reportedly said that the New State police were going to change their mantra from "wine, women and song" to "metrical, the old gal and sing along with Mitch". He drastically changed the entire report writing system, caused the slightest injury to prisoner or personnel complaint to be viewed as a very serious matter with swift and thorough investigations to be conducted by supervisory personnel and charges to be filed if there was a hint of wrong doings by any member. Everyone was walking on eggshells and many supervisors over reacted in their endeavor to CYA. To be honest, he was hated and feared by the rank and file. In my mind there were several miscarriages of justice in this over reaction causing transfers, reduction in rank and several people left the job. He replaced most

of the Troop Commanders with people of his choice. He made four new positions of Lieutenant Supervisor in each troop. One as BCI Troop Supervisor, replacing the rank of Inspector /later reclassified as BCI Captain/ and three positions as Troop uniform Lieut supervisors/later uniform Cpts/. He also reclassified all BCI Sgts. as Senior Investigators and all BCI Tprs. as Investigators. In 1962 he was able to hire hundreds of new Troopers. The training took place at several locations throughout the State and the new recruits had to be further "field trained" after graduation when they were assigned to a troop. They were assigned to a senior trooper, who worked with them full time and they were on the same work schedule for shifts and days off. The senior trooper had to submit periodic reports as to what areas of police work they were exposed to and how they were progressing with the field training. At the end of thirty days, the senior trooper had to submit a final report testifying as to whether or not the trooper in training was capable of working alone. I was assigned to train several recruits and although it was good to have company for a 12 hour tour, it was also a bit tiresome to show and train them in every aspect of the job, especially report writing. Needless to say, after 30 days they were all capable of working alone !! Many of the men I trained kept in touch with me after they left the area.

Cornelius was a progressive and able to get us pay raises that attracted and retained our members. He was a big advocate of training and started In-service training for troopers and non-coms. I attended the 1st Trooper in-service training, a two week course at SP Loudonville, there no academy for the next few years. He also published a State Police manual, two books, one covering field work and the other for administrative purposes. They were in-depth police manuals, he also issued a police manual for use by other departments. His biggest problem was that he tried to model the SP after the FBI, a mostly white collar investigative organization, whereas the SP was more hands on, dealing with much different types of violators, calling for a different and often times a more forceful response. The FBI never got their hands dirty and in the real sense of the word were not really "Cops". Whenever they made an arrest it was after getting permission from the Federal Prosecutor and with necessary & adequate assistance. Troopers on the other hand, often worked alone, made snap decisions and sometimes it became necessary to "roll around in the mud, the blood and the beer." Cornelius had never experienced those conditions and was not aware of the dangers experienced on a regular basis. His concern and over re-action of the least injury to a prisoner and the ensuing mandatory in-depth investigation did nothing to bolster our moral. He was a big advocate of firearms training and changed the training from the Army L course to the PPC /practical police course/. He changed the official issue firearm from a 6" 38 caliber revolver in a swivel holster to a 4" in a "quick draw" holster that tipped forward on the hip. This was uncomfortable in a vehicle as the butt of the weapon dug into your side. These new weapons at first were only issued to the recruits and the recruits were called "short guns". The shield numbers were also changed. The numbers ran numerically starting in troop A and continuing with Troop B etc., throughout the State. This did not sit well with the old timers, their shield numbers had been their personal ID for many years. My shield # changed from 120 to 409. He also issued photo ID cards that had to be on your person together with your shield and name plates that had to be worn on the outer uniform. These changes were not welcome but we had no choice and soon took them in stride.

About that time or shortly after, the Division went on a 42 1/2 hour work week with three shifts. We were also given the option to join social security, up to that time we were not covered by SS. If you opted to join, you had to pay retroactive to your date of employment EOD. That was not a lot of money then, a few hundred dollars was quite a bit.. I and a handful of members did not sign on, Therefore I did not pay into the system and had no coverage when I retired..I paid into it from my employment after retirement and now draw about 1/2 of what I would have.

The PBA existed but it had very little influence on the overall operations of the State Police. Promotions were pretty much controlled by Division Headquarters and the written test was only 20% of the overall mark with longevity and oral interviews making up 80%. A list was established and several promotions made until a lawsuit/ injunction against the list was filed by Tpr. John "Pete" Donahue. /The father of Sr. Inv. John Donahue/ . A compromise was made to stop further promotions off the list and to allow those members already promoted to maintain their rank. A new list was established using the written test to count as 80% of the overall mark, a much fairer system. There was a new list established and several groups of promotions were made starting April 20, 1964. I got promoted in the 1st group, sent to non-com school in Loudenville and was transferred to SP Chazy on May 1, 1964. My salary as a new Sgt. was \$8800. Wow

During my six year assignment at Port Henry, there were many changes in my life; I got married, had three of my four children and was promoted to Sgt. I'm not sure of all the men I worked with during that time, but I can remember thirty one: Sgts. Jack Snell and Walley Sjoblom, Cpls. Bob Bryant, Charlie Straight and Ed. Coletti, Tprs. Red Robinson, Ben Snow, Dan O'Halloran, Al Schaad, Jim Bradley, Paul Richter, Hugh Cunningham, Dave Clark, Steve Blydenburg, Roy Tollison, Jim McDonald, Paul Arey, Frank Smith, Larry O'tranto, John Fountain, Jim Gayton, Pete Wienerki, Bob Seik, Winiferd Granger, Stu Winsmen, Brian LaPlante, Joe Kelley, Dan Sacco, Harry Saunders, Jim Bobcock and Earl Besser. At least Nineteen are deceased. Several of these men married local girls.

I very much enjoyed my years in Port Henry/Crown Point, I made several local friends that I hunted and fished with; Fred White a local encon officer and I became a close friends, in later years he was in charge of all encon enforcement in the northern district at RayBrook when I was TC. We have been close friends for well over 50 years. To be cont....