

## **President's Report**

**By Master Trooper Eric Haskin**

### **Making a Positive Contribution**

In the last issue of **The Kansas Trooper** magazine we published a very touching letter of appreciation from the mother of an Ohio Trooper, killed in the line of duty last May. As is our custom, we sent a donation to the memorial established in memory of the young officer who lost his life serving the citizens of his home state.

In her letter, Ms. Carrion related what had motivated her son to pursue a career as a law enforcement officer. It was no surprise to me to learn he had sought a career with the state highway patrol so he could serve the citizens of his state and assist people in need.

I have always found it interesting talking to young officers and hearing the same comments about how they came to be a Trooper. There seems to be a deep sense of altruism inherent in the men and women drawn to law enforcement as a profession. There is usually a strong desire in these people to make a positive contribution to society.

It is also interesting to watch those officers as their careers progress and see the youthful idealism that they brought to the job tarnished by years of struggling with the realities of inadequate pay and a public that frequently cares little about their efforts, or is downright hostile to them. A career in law enforcement guarantees you will frequently see people at their absolute worst. We don't get called to share in people's good fortune. We are the ones who respond to the tragic times in their lives. In spite of the fact that everyone who enters the profession understands this from the beginning, it can still make one lose sight of what originally brought him or her to the job. As veteran officers work toward retirement, they may never again have the quixotic ideals that brought them to a life of public service. It is interesting to not most Troopers, as they approach retirement, still have that desire to serve; and when they reflect back on their careers, most feel a strong sense of accomplishment.

I hope we can continue to draw people of outstanding character and discipline to our agency. Many factors are making it increasingly difficult to bring sufficient applicants to the Kansas Highway Patrol. This trend must be reversed soon or the damage done to the agency will take years to repair.

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## **Editor's Report by Patti Van Slyke**

As a newcomer to this quarterly periodical game, I find the greatest challenge lies in attempting to think three months down the road, trying to solicit content that will be meaningful THEN, not necessarily NOW. Not an easy task, but I'm working on it!

The legislative session has only just begun. My crystal ball is still cloudy on the issue of trooper pay and benefits. We all know the need, we all know the difficulties in recruiting and retaining good candidates. And I wish I could say I have an inside track on how this will all shake out over the next three months. But I can't. I DO know that the KSTA presence in the process is significant and effective. Your association is there, in the capitol, every day, meeting with legislators and staff, carrying your concerns to those in the best position to address them.

I've had cause to ponder the impact of the Highway Patrol on my life recently. (Aside from those youthful speeding indiscretions....) On January 2, I received a call from the Stormont Vail Emergency Room here in Topeka. A good friend had been in a serious accident on I70, just east of town, and was asking for me. With my heart in my throat, I took off for the hospital. There in the E.R., I found my friend, very battered, very upset, deeply shaken...being comforted by one of your own, Master Trooper Dan Smith, K-181. He was so kind to her, gently eliciting a full report from her, then clearly and calmly explaining what was to happen next. My friend was at fault, but Master Trooper Smith was careful not to add insult to injury. He attempted to help her understand what she needed to do when she was safely recovering, and he was very good in explaining everything to me.

When I told him I was the editor for your magazine and that I wanted his name and number, he nearly died. Clearly, he had no desire to be promoted as a poster boy in this matter, and his humility made him even

more heroic in our eyes. But I think the way a trooper performs his everyday job is the greatest tribute to the badge. Dan Smith was so kind, so professional and so thorough, my friend had to laugh (through badly bruised lips and broken teeth) that even though the trooper had given her a ticket, she thought she loved him.

Well, my friend is recuperating, even if her vehicle never will. And both she and I will long remember the compassionate professionalism of Dan Smith. It made me proud to be associated in my limited way with the KSTA and the outstanding men and women in its ranks. So thank you to Master Trooper Dan Smith, and to all of you who go through your days, serving all of us in difficult, often thankless, too often tragic circumstances. I am grateful you are out there.

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### **Executive Director's Report (Steve Kearney)**

At the time this column was submitted, we were about one third of the way through the 2001 Legislative Session. While the accompanying photos are from our legislative hospitality event, most of my days are spent sitting in committee, collaring those lawmakers sympathetic to our causes and concerns.

With recent revelations regarding the shortfall in the state's revenue – to the tune of \$58 million – every interest in the state is going to be scrabbling to get baseline budget dollars, let alone any increases.

This is not to say we are going to be passive on the very real and critical issue of salary increases for state troopers. If we are to have any hope of retaining our best and of attracting high caliber recruits, we are going to have to address pay inequities. Otherwise, we will continue to see our ranks depleted by attrition, retirement and lack of quality candidates.

In the summer issue of *The Kansas Trooper*, look for a more detailed summary of legislative activity from this session. And as always, if you have ideas or concerns, please stay involved in KSTA!

With sadness we note the passing of Retired Major Walt Dunn, 90, on Jan. 25 in McAllen, Tex. He was one of the original troopers of the KHP in 1939. In our last issue, we included a handwritten letter from Walt in which he recounted the origin of our logo. Walt was buried in Abbeyville, Kan. On Feb. 3 with a KHP honor guard. Memorial contributions can be made to the Shriner's Hospitals for Children, c/o Elliott Mortuary, 1219 N. Main, Hutchinson, KS 67501.