# The 1970s

Turmoil continued early on with campus riots and the kidnapping of a patrolman. Technology continued to advance at an amazing pace midway through the decade, with the advent of moving radar, mobile radio extension systems, and a communication link between Ohio law enforcement radios and various state agency computer records. Progress also came as women joined the sworn ranks and an African-American patrolman was promoted – both Patrol firsts during the 1970s.

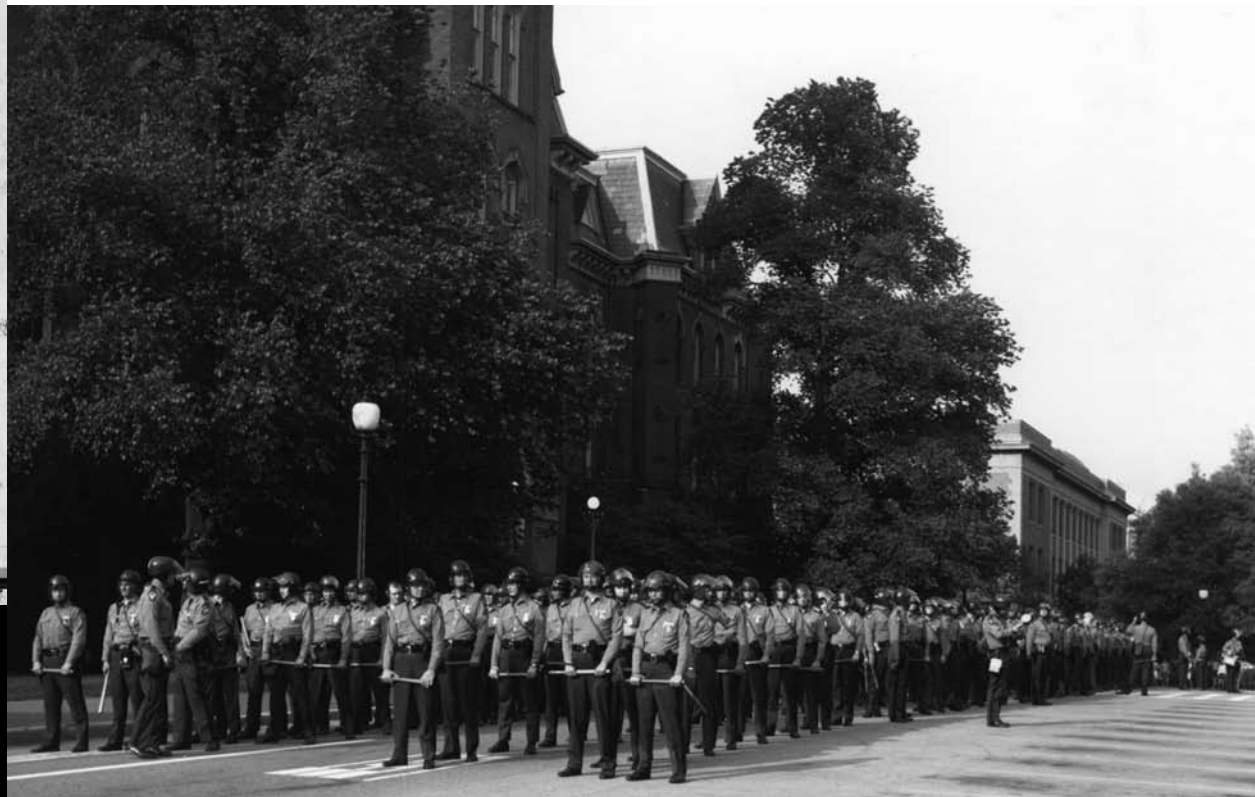
Societal shifts and U.S. military involvement in Vietnam resulted in continued uprisings on college campuses. In 1970, riots at The Ohio State University (OSU) began with a strike rally, after which groups of people broke away to close the university's entrances. At 3:00 p.m., April 29, university officials asked the Highway Patrol to open the gate at 11th and Neil avenues, which students closed to block traffic. Students throwing rocks and bricks attacked 10 unarmed plainclothes officers, who were attempting to open the gates. A uniformed contingent arrived shortly thereafter, without riot equipment available, and fought hand-to-hand to assist the plainclothes officers. Shortly after, riot-equipped Columbus Police officers responded and eventually the crowd dispersed.

"Well, you have 20,000 students rampaging up and down the Oval, there isn't much you can do about it," Colonel Robert M. Chiaramonte (superintendent from 1965-1975) said in a 2002 interview. "It's like the 400-pound gorilla, but we can herd them around. They were not very pleasant situations, but we had good cooperation from the administration...and our relationship with Dr. (Novice Gail) Fawcett (OSU's ninth president) was excellent."

But students were not done just yet. Later in the afternoon, a large crowd gathered at the Oval, near the campus center. Strike leaders had left, saying the violence was uncontrollable and out of their hands. Chiaramonte said the president's home on campus had to be guarded. "We had to put a platoon around his house just to keep it from being invaded."

Chiaramonte recalled that students actually did come to the Fawcett's home once before and the professors were concerned. "It was invaded at one time,"

**Riot gear in place, patrolmen and local law enforcement prepare for violence during the 1970 campus riot at The Ohio State University.**



**The Ace Award for achievement in auto larceny enforcement was introduced by Colonel Robert M. Chiaramonte in 1972.**

he said, "by some burly people coming in, saying this is just as much my place as it is yours and scared him half to death. His mother-in-law was there, very ill, so that added to some of the side problems."

Skirmishes continued throughout the evening, with crowds being dispersed or moved by police and tear gas, then regrouping.

After a week of tension and on-and-off violence, officials announced the university would be closed until further notice. The university reopened May 19, but the scene was still very tense. The following day the governor ordered in 5,000 National Guardsmen when rioting students and non-students smashed windows and looted stores, causing extensive property damage and loss among merchants in the area. Violence continued into the night. The following day, attitudes began to change. It was apparent that many "strikers" were tiring of daily demonstrations and rallies, and others were dismayed by the criminal actions of students and non-students looting businesses.

When asked if the impetus of the riots was students protesting U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, Chiaramonte replied, "I suppose; I didn't ask them. Our job is to not to get involved in the discussions, just don't tear up the place, that's all."

Also, the Patrol helped maintain a presence of control at Kent State University, where protests and rioting took place. On May 4, 1970, patrolmen were sent to the university's campus to help calm down rioters who were throwing heavy debris (rocks, bricks, etc.) at National Guardsmen and setting fire to the ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) building to protest U.S. military advances in Cambodia at the time.

It still is not understood how it began, but National Guardsmen opened fire on protesting students and there were four killed as a result. Although the Patrol was not at the shooting site at the time the tragedy occurred, the Division swept in afterward to maintain calm and prevent further incidents.

The following year, the Patrol's job turned to saving one of its own when, on May 8, 1971, Ptl. Jack C. Whitt of Portsmouth, was kidnapped as he responded to a reckless driver report in northern Pike County.

Whitt still lives in Portsmouth. He remembers every moment of that day.

"It all resulted from a call from the (Pike County) Sheriff's Office...that this man was driving in kind of a remote area. He had been threatening people with a shotgun," Whitt said in a 2008 interview. "I knew the guy. He was pretty well known in police circles. His name was Ike Hefner."

Whitt said he sat at an intersection in the area, waiting for the Plymouth that Hefner was driving to come by, when he spotted him coming around a curve on State Route 335. "Well, he stops and backs up out of my view, around the corner," Whitt said. "He was known to run and

**Cadets look on as training takes place in the newly built Patrol Training Academy on 17th Avenue in Columbus. The facility, a permanent home for the Division, included a large gymnasium, cafeteria, and dormitory.**

so I figured that's what he was going to do."

At that point, Whitt sped around the curve and parked the nose of his cruiser in front of the nose of the abandoned Plymouth. "I didn't see him in the area, so I opened up the door to get out and he came up behind me with a shotgun and pointed it at me. I lunged on the floorboard and I got my revolver out, but he was standing right over me, with the shotgun in my face."

Then Hefner ordered Whitt to throw out his gun. Whitt said Hefner fired it once into the woods to see if it was loaded, then told Whitt to get back into the seat because, "we're going for a ride."

"I'm thinkin' I've got to do something," Whitt said. Evidently, Hefner drank quite a bit that day and fought with his father-in-law before he got to Whitt. Hefner ordered Whitt to drive to the home of Heffner's father-in-law At the house, Hefner's father-in-law tried to fire his own shotgun at Hefner, so they left the property and continued driving.

Unknown to Whitt and Hefner, Ptl. Wayne E. Nibert was on the trail of the cruiser. He went in to serve as backup and found out from witnesses at the kidnap scene what had happened.

Meanwhile, Whitt still tried to figure out how to escape his situation. "He's got my revolver pointed at my head," Whitt said. "He said, 'I'm going to have to kill you.' I tried to talk to him, to tell him he wasn't in a lot of trouble yet." Whitt said he even tried to calm Hefner by suggesting they talk over the situation over some beer.

But Whitt's attempt did not fool Hefner. He told Whitt to turn off of the road onto a smaller road, unfamiliar to Whitt. By then, hostage alerts were issued and several law enforcement agencies were speeding to the area.

"He saw the sheriff's deputy stopped on the road, waving me down and said, 'If you stop, I'm going to shoot you first.'," Whitt said. "I told him I wasn't going to stop." After passing the sheriff, Hefner ordered Whitt to turn onto Hay Hollow Road. He had his hand on the door latch, planning to jump out while the car drove on, but Hefner told him to put both hands on the wheel and continued to

hold the revolver to Whitt's head.

"I've always heard that the hand is quicker than the eye, so I said, let's prove it," Whitt said. He waited for Hefner to turn his head again to the rear of the car to look for police vehicles and then Whitt "snapped around and grabbed his hand and the gun, put them between his legs and stepped down on him." The cruiser veered left and crashed on the side of the road. As soon as that happened, Ptl. Nibert came up to the car and pointed his revolver in Hefner's face. "He said to him, 'You are a dead S.O.B.'," Whitt said. "And that was it. I thank the Lord for saving me that day."

The Division awarded both Nibert and Whitt the Superintendent's Citation of Merit later that year for their outstanding efforts.

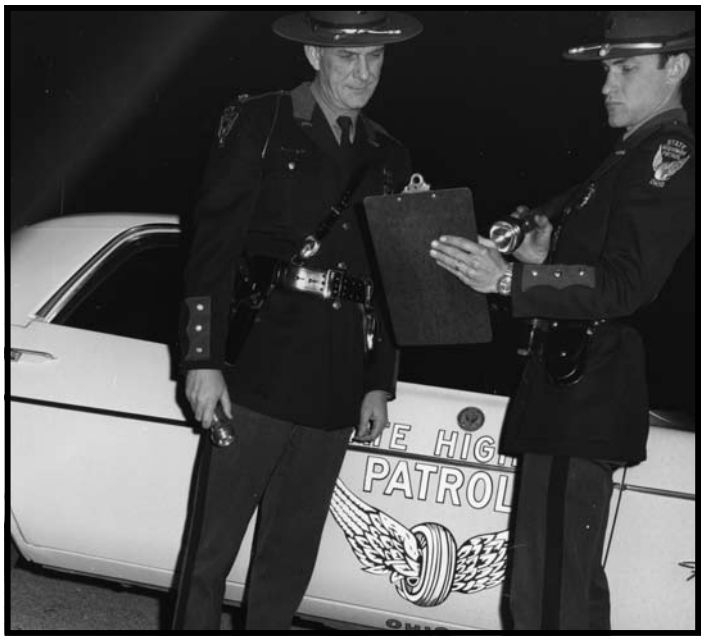
Whitt stayed on with the Patrol for another five years at Circleville and Athens. He resigned to take a job closer to home, at United States Enrichment Corporation's (USEC) American Centrifuge (Atomic) Plant in Waverly. He retired from there in 1990 and, as of 2008, was a preacher and played gospel music for nursing home residents.

Also that year, the Certificate of Recognition, instituted by Colonel Chiaramonte, honored officers who show an exemplary performance of regular duty. The first to receive the honor was Ptl. Robert A. Hilston, who used cardiopulmonary resuscitation to save the life of a crash victim.

Chiaramonte introduced several morale-building programs, including the Superintendent's Letter – a regular news bulletin that provided a direct link to information about policy decisions made by Patrol administrators and their reasons. He also developed the suggestion box, a process through which officers could send in suggestions (even ones that might not sit well with administrators) and bypass the chain of command all together. Chiaramonte also held monthly meetings with representatives from those in the field, as well as top leadership from each district; and he started a ride-along program that enabled staff officers to ride in cruisers with patrolmen.

"I can't put my finger on it, but I know that you have to have programs and you have to develop things, and you have to make things interesting for them," Chiaramonte said. "You also have to have a feeling for the people...I tried to apply that in many ways by stopping on the road when there were (Patrol) cars stopped and that sort of thing. Let them ventilate, tell me what's wrong with things, and tell me what I ought to be doing. It was fun."

State legislators showed confidence in the Patrol with the passage of House Bill 600, allowing the governor to




**Lt. Colonel Clifford Reich works the field alongside an unidentified patrolman in the early 1970s. The ride-along program enabled staff officers to ride in cruisers with patrolmen.**

call upon the Division to aid local lawmen in civil disturbances, if a local mayor or sheriff asked for such help. Another piece of legislation that became effective law on March 3, 1972, authorized the Division to take action if necessary off the highway system.

A couple of weeks after House Bill 600 became effective, retirees' benefits improved with the passage of House Bill 910 on March 23, 1972. Included was a clause allowing officers to retire after 20 years of service time and begin receiving a pension at age 52. Survivors' benefits improved, too. Monthly payments for widows went up almost 50 percent, and there would no longer be a limit on the number of children eligible for consideration.

On May 20, 1971, the Attorney General's office requested a Patrol investigation of conditions and alleged wrong-doings at Lima State Hospital. Patrol officers began the investigation the next day, and by the end of nine weeks, more than 20 Patrol officers were involved. They investigated a total of 115 incidents of abuse and neglect, resulting in 40 grand jury indictments.

Space concerns were becoming more prevalent with so many organizations drawn to training at the Patrol Academy. Basic peace officer classes were extended from 160 hours to 400 hours. When combined with Patrol Academy classes, in-service training, Youth Week (later known as Junior Cadet Week), during which kids selected from

**The first patrolmen to win the Blue Max Award were Ptl. John E. Spitler and Ptl. Richard P. Wells, both from the Piqua Post. Pictured above is Spitler, with the special license plate given to Blue Max Award winners.**

Buckeye Boys and Girls attended mock training classes for a week, adequate room for training and lodging was a concern for management. According to the February – March 1971 issue of the Flying Wheel, from 1966 to 1971, there were 266 agencies that sent 3,474 men to the Academy for training – that's not counting more than 800 Patrol cadets who graduated classes during that period of time. The Patrol received a federal grant in 1971 for expanding the Academy and, in February of 1972, a new wing with a 100-person dormitory was completed.

Patrolmen benefited from improvements in equipment, as electronic advancements became more prevalent in mainstream law enforcement. The introduction of the MR-7 moving radar in 1972 made it possible to calculate accurately a vehicle's speed while traveling the opposite direction. No longer did patrolmen need to be stationary to assess the speed of a car.

That same year, to encourage use of LEADS equipment in Patrol cars, and to stop the increasing auto theft problem, Colonel Chiaramonte thought up the idea (in the middle of the night, according to him) of the Blue Max Award Program. Once a year, the Blue Max Award honors the officer who recovers the most stolen vehicles with on-the-spot apprehension of suspects in a year. In the 1970s, this required officers not only to work diligently in the area of auto larceny enforcement, but to enter information into LEADS; this entry also notified law enforcement officers whether the car was stolen or if the offender was wanted or under warrant.

In the beginning of the Blue Max Award, each patrolman received a lightning bolt decal to put on his cruiser. The first Patrolmen to receive this honor were Ptl. John E. Spitler and Ptl. Richard P. Wells. Later, to encourage all patrolmen to participate, Capt. Dwight M. Carey designed another auto larceny enforcement award. The Ace Award honors officers who recover five vehicles or more with on-the-spot apprehensions in one year. These recipients receive five bolt decals. The first ACE Award – 1973 - went to Sgt. John J. Clifford.

A later addition to the Blue Max program was the Superintendent's Certificate of Proficiency, which is given to officers recovering 10 or more stolen vehicles without apprehensions of suspects. The first such recipient was Ptl. David H. Plunkett, Toledo, in August 1974.

Another growing problem on Ohio's highways was impaired driving. Senate Bill 14, passed in December 1971, lowered the legal blood-alcohol level from .15 BAC to .10 BAC. This change came as the Patrol finished its first year of a large campaign against driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Designed to remove impaired drivers from Ohio roadways, the result was a 46.5 percent increase in impaired driving arrests by Patrol officers that year.

More progress took place in 1973: Patrolman Gilbert H. Jones was the first African-American to move up in rank; in fact all of his promotions were history in the making. He earned the promotion to sergeant in 1973, and eventually moved his way up to Lieutenant Colonel in 1994. Through mid-2008, his was the highest position filled by an African-American in the Patrol.

"I've never considered this a job. This has just been an enjoyable experience. I get up every day ready to go to work," Jones said in an interview with the Columbus Dispatch upon his retirement in 1997 after 32 years on the force. "It's time to go do something else."

Women made another landmark move in the Division with the promotion of Dispatcher Judy Gahm, London. Gahm moved up to the rank of communications technician, and was the first female to hold that rank.

The Patrol upgraded communications that year through the purchase of 46 four-frequency, low-band base stations. These stations eventually became more prevalent around the state, and allowed districts and posts to use primary frequencies that were different than adjoining districts.

This was beneficial in that it reduced the problem of overloading frequencies due to increases in radio traffic all over the state and country. Communication abilities were enhanced further with the arrival of the Mobile Radio Extension System (MRE). The Division purchased the MREs in 1973 and officers could then contact their posts and other Patrol facilities. The MRE was worn on the officer's belt, providing instant communication and creating a whole new sense of safety for the officer because communication with the local post was only a button click away.

Another technological advance that year was the installation of radio scanner receivers in all Patrol posts and citizens band (CB) radios in 48 posts. This helped with quick reports from citizens with CB radios in their vehicles.

The Division enhanced LEADS in 1971, and added a new system called the Automated Law Enforcement Communications System (ALECS), which enabled officers to access a regional network for instant data exchange from anywhere in Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri and Iowa. The system was put into place in early 1973.

Also in the same year, the Patrol put fuel transfer units into cruisers. These proved successful, because in the first year of the program 6,687 gallons of gasoline transferred from the Division to citizens' cars to allow motorists to get to a nearby service station. Motorists also received an envelope and could voluntarily send back the money by mail to compensate for the fuel used from a Patrol vehicle. During the first year of the program, reimbursements more than covered the cost for the fuel dispensed.

Fuel prices were precisely why commercial vehicle drivers all over the nation blocked different portions of highways throughout the country and Ohio. The blockades began in December 1973, and either used slow-speed tactics, during which drivers slowed traffic to a crawl by driving side-by-side on multi-lane highways; or stationary blockades in which they stopped rigs in traffic lanes and highway shoulders.

Patrol officers got help with breaking up the blockades from the Ohio National Guard. Colonel Chiaramonte recalled the truck blockades in a 2002 interview: "The truck strike was kind of a nice adventure for a lot of our people," he said. "Oh, they were on the Turnpike, they tied it up and we got a tank retriever with the (Ohio) National Guard. And this one truck was crosswise, he blocked all the traffic so this tank retriever, which could pull this building, probably, if it had to, hooked onto that thing and dragged it out of the way. And I could tell – I was in a helicopter watching it – and I looked down and I could see somebody jumping up and down, and I figured, well, that's the driver that owns the truck."

"It broke that up. We had the same situation on (U.S.) 40 and we had another situation clear up by Toledo. We would fly from one place to another and see what we could do about it," Chiaramonte continued. "We had to keep the roads open, that was important for the people, and we did it. Made a lot of truckers mad, but they got over it. Truckers used to be our best friends out on the road. They'd many a time, you know, if I was out there at night, I'd be

**Students protest the Vietnam War, but the demonstration got out of hand in April 1970, requiring the riot control skills of the Patrol, the Ohio National Guard, and other local law enforcement.**

# OSU Riot, April 29, 1970

***Below are comments from a 2008 interview with former Capt. Jay Devoll regarding his memories of the riots at The Ohio State University (OSU) in 1970. Devoll worked with the Patrol from 1949-1979.***

"As I remember... (former Colonel Adam) Reiss was a major. We were in the administration building at OSU and got the call that said they closed the 11th Avenue gate to Ohio State. There's an iron gate up there. The demonstrators at that time weren't rioting, but the demonstrators had closed (the gate). Reiss says come on, we'll open it – there were 15 of us in plain clothes. And we went down there and opened that gate.

"Now fortunately, I wasn't one of them that had to go to the hospital. But 11 out of 15 had to be treated in the hospital that day. They were throwing bricks and stones and things like that. Plus there was a bus of uniformed men – Patrolmen - up at the north end of the campus somewhere, near St. John's Arena. Of course, when it all broke loose with us down there, that's when things really started at Ohio State. The uniformed Patrolmen came down and got off the bus, got into formation and marched in a wedge to open the gates (to get to us), and bricks came flying. Hey, our people didn't even have a helmet back then. We didn't know what a helmet was. There were a lot of the uniformed men who got hurt. It was one of those things, that, from then on, it was a riot for several days, until Kent State (University). It was about the war, just a continuation of what was going on all over the country. But Kent State ended it as far as Ohio's concerned. When they had the Kent State shootings, which ended everything – that ended the riots statewide.

"During the uproar, I had one hand on my gun and the other hand, I'm trying to defend myself with it. There were three guys really hanging on, trying to attack me, whatever you want to call it. Sgt. Norman Kanagy came to my rescue. He knocked two of them off and I grabbed the other one. We had plastic hand-

cuffs. There was a trailer or something there, close by, and we handcuffed those guys to the trunk of that trailer there and left them. I don't know whatever happened to them (chuckle).

"I was very fortunate I didn't have to go to the hospital. Reiss got hit in the head with a brick. I always said that the most beautiful thing I ever saw was Columbus PD (Police Department) D Platoon – they had a platoon of Columbus police officers known as their riot people. They came marching up Neil Avenue and, boy, everyone got out of their way. That cleared it out (chuckle)."

Though the Vietnam War had a profound effect on the demonstrations, it was not the spark that set the fire at The Ohio State University. Prior to the violence of April 29, 1970, the so-called "Ad-Hoc Committee for Student Rights" presented university officials with a list of demands, among them: dismissal of certain administrators; termination of the R.O.T.C. program; amnesty for students involved in earlier demonstrations; loosening of speech restrictions; and an end to university ties to the military. Officials rejected all 11 demands, stating they "reflected only the concerns of self-appointed groups . . ." A student strike was called for Wednesday, April 29, 1970.

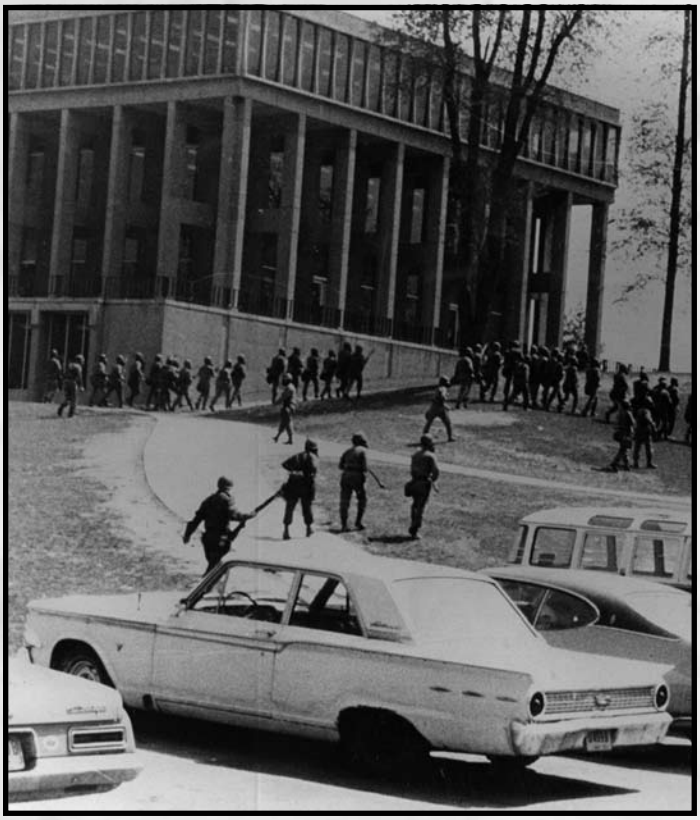
Events of the day: The riots at OSU began with a strike rally, after which groups of strikers broke away and began moving toward campus with the intent of closing the entrances. At 3:00 p.m., university officials requested that the Highway Patrol open the gate at 11th and Neil Avenues which students had closed to block traffic. Ten unarmed plainclothes officers attempted to open the gates and were immediately attacked by rioters. A uniformed contingent arrived shortly after and was showered by rocks and bricks. Patrolmen had no riot equipment available because none had been purchased at that time, so they fought hand-to-hand to reach and assist the plainclothes officers. Shortly after, riot-equipped Columbus Police officers responded and eventually the crowd was dispersed. Later in the afternoon, a large crowd congregated at the Oval, near the center of campus. Strike leaders had since dropped out of the picture, saying the violence was uncontrollable and out of their hands.

Skirmishes continued throughout the evening, with crowds being dispersed or moved by police and tear gas, then regrouping.

After a week of tension and on-and-off violence, officials announced the university would be closed until further notice.

The university reopened May 19, but was still very tense. The following day, 5,000 National Guardsmen were ordered in when rioting students and non-students smashed windows and looted stores, causing extensive property damage and loss among merchants in the area. Violence continued into the night. The following day, attitudes began to change. It was apparent that many "strikers" were tiring of daily demonstrations and rallies, and many more were shocked and dismayed by the criminal actions of students and non-students looting businesses.

**Lt. Gerald J. Forbes helps stop the bleeding from Ptl. David L. Wolfel's head. Wolfel's injury was caused by protesters throwing debris.**



**Ohio National Guard and Ohio State Highway Patrol units move towards protesting students at Kent State University in May 1970. Patrolmen were called in to back up the Guard's efforts to subdue riots on campus.**

## Patrol helps maintain calm at Kent State

*The following account of the Kent State University shootings, a profound historic national event is portrayed through the eyes of Ohio State Highway Patrolman Sheldon Senek (who later became Lieutenant Colonel). Senek was involved immediately after the campus incident occurred. In writing this piece, Senek made sure to thank the patrolmen who served alongside him.*

May 4, 1970, is etched in memory like the fateful day of September 11, 2001. The late 1960s and early 1970s were tumultuous times for those of us serving in the Ohio State Highway Patrol. It seemed like every week we were placed on some type of civil disturbance alert wondering when we were going to receive the Code Red (drop what you are doing and respond immediately). In the days prior to May 4, things were heating up in the City of Kent and Kent State University Campus. Disturbances, confrontations, demonstrations, and property damage were frequently occurring. I was a Patrolman stationed at the Warren Patrol Post. We (patrolmen at Warren) knew it would be just a matter of time before uncontrolled violence erupted at the Kent State University Campus. All of us were mentally preparing to respond.

At that time while serving in the Patrol, I was also a member of the 107th Armored Calvary National Guard Unit based out of Ravenna, Ohio. Area National Guard members were also placed on alert as well as serving security duties on campus. I informed my Post Commander George Schuster about my potential call up with the National Guard. After making the conflict known through the chain of command, the decision was made for my temporary release from Guard duty by the Ohio Adjutant General. The thinking was that my service with the Patrol during this critical time would be a better asset then being called up for National Guard duty. With that issue settled, it freed me up if called to respond with my fellow patrolmen.

No one knew when or where we would be called to respond, but we had strong feelings among the patrolmen that it was inevitable. It happened! May 4, we received a Code Red and responded to Kent State University. I was riding with then Sgt. Dave Furiate. Dave is a tall muscular fellow and one to have in front of you if there's a physical conflict. In short, after arriving we learned that the National Guard (members of the 107th Armored Calvary) fired their weapons on the students. There was chaos on campus and we were going to form in a platoon formation. I did not know the extent of how many students were shot or killed. I remember we armed ourselves with shotguns and removed our ties. Dave Furiate was assigned the point position in the platoon. I was position right behind Dave. The point guy is a critical position that all riot formations use to form on. There was some sense of comfort with Dave in the point position. But I kept thinking if Dave went down, I might have to assume the point position. Obviously, my anxiety along with everyone else was extremely high.

We were briefed that the platoon would be marching across the Commons; an open area with buildings nearby. Some of the buildings had large bed sheets hanging out of the windows displaying red painted obscene verbiage. Some civilian persons were running around wearing colored arm bands. It was noisy, National Guard presence, people milling around, and just plain chaos. Major Don Manley, who I understand was a Marine before joining the Patrol, commanded our platoon. He placed us in platoon formation, brought us to attention, and then began to bark out a cadence count. Major Manley counted cadence in a loud, clear authoritative voice. We smartly in unison and tight formation started our march. Many thoughts crossed my mind especially the possibility of shooting a student. That prospect did not sit well - mentally distracting me. I envisioned this massive out of control mob converging on our platoon. What would I do? How would I react? My conscience whirled with random thoughts, but I managed to keep my mind focused on my training.

About halfway across the Commons I could hear loud noises that sounded like many people screaming. Our platoon formation particularly with Dave directly in front of me partially obstructed my frontal vision. But peripherally I could see people running and moving about. With the adrenalin at its peak, I believed the nightmare of being attacked by a mob was about to play out. To my surprise, instead, people were running and moving away from us. Our presence, this group of Ohio State Highway Patrolmen, created a psychological impact that essentially left us unchallenged. At that moment I think it registered that we now controlled the campus. We marched to the top of the Commons and formed a skirmish line. There we stood what seemed like several hours at parade rest awaiting further orders.

Later, I learned members of the 107th Armored Calvary Guard Unit were the ones who fired at the students. Four students were killed and nine were injured. By fate or luck, the decision by the Ohio Adjutant General may have saved me from being one of the Guardsmen involved in the shooting.

The Kent State University shootings had profound impact on us. The incident had state and national implications and inundated the news. In the days and months to follow, many agencies and thousands of hours of investigation were devoted to determine what set off such a tragic event. My fellow patrolmen and I spent numerous days afterwards serving as campus security. The Ohio State Highway Patrolmen working security were treated well and were given respect by those remaining on campus. I'm grateful on that day, May 4, 1970, that I was serving with the Patrol and not the National Guard. I'm equally grateful that none of us had to use deadly force. Thirty-eight years later Kent State University officials still hold an annual memorial for this historic event. I'm extremely proud of the Ohio State Highway Patrol and how we professionally dealt with this incident.

**Students protesting against U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia.**

the only one there...and there wasn't any way you could call for help. We never had back-up, but a truck driver...is a lot of help in an accident and they always help. We got along with them well. It was their boss and my boss that had these problems, not the two of us. I might weigh them the next day and it wouldn't matter."

After the blockades broke up, other truck drivers called for a nationwide truck shutdown. This resulted not only in traffic disruption, but in violence, as those protesting tried to stop other truck drivers trying to continue operating. Sometimes tactics included: blocking fuel pumps, forcing trucks off the freeway with other vehicles; directing drivers into truck stops and forcing them to stay there; and shooting at or throwing rocks at trucks moving on the highway. Also, vandalism at truck stops was common, and someone damaged two Patrol weigh stations with gunshots. Patrol officers worked almost 4,000 hours of overtime breaking roadblocks, escorting trucks, and investigating incidents. Even though most actions related to the protests were over before Christmas 1973, many officers did not return to normal duty until 1974.

Personnel and the public celebrated the Division's 40th Anniversary in 1973, and posts hosted open houses throughout the state. Festivities ended that year with a ball at the Neil House Hotel.

Celebrations turned to near tragedy in Junction City, Ohio. On January 7, 1974, two inmates of the Junction City Treatment Center took three female hostages at knifepoint and demanded an escape car. Major Adam G. Reiss (who later became colonel) led 28 men to the scene, and after several tense hours, patrolmen stormed the barricaded room and rescued the hostages unharmed. During the assault, law enforcement killed one of the inmates and injured the other as they attacked Patrol officers. Four days later, Colonel Chiaramonte awarded Superintendent's Citations of Merit to the 29 officers involved. This was the largest number of citations awarded for one incident in the history of the Division.

**Patrolmen stand ready in case of trouble during the truck strike incidents that began in December 1973. Long lines of trucks blocked major interstates throughout Ohio and the rest of the nation in protest of rising fuel costs.**

Ohioans faced natural disaster in the form of tornadoes on April 3, 1974. The hardest hit by the storms was Xenia. Half the town was destroyed, and residents were forced to cope with 29 killed and 150 injured people. The Patrol's mobile command vehicle, along with 30 officers, helped Wilmington District patrolmen with disaster assistance and traffic control. It took more than two weeks just to get things back to normal at the district headquarters.

"As is well known, a tornado devastated a major portion of Xenia on April 3 of this year. It tore through our millions of dollars worth of damage and leaving hundreds homeless, including five patrol families," said a letter from Xenia's Post in the April-June 1974 edition of *The Flying Wheel*.

"Within minutes after the winds stopped, all available Xenia units were on duty and help began pouring in from our neighboring posts. The next day assistance for our five families came in with food, clothing, and the necessary items for existence.

"We at the Xenia Post would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude for everyone's help in our time of need with special thanks to the men and their wives of the London and Springfield Posts. They did an outstanding job."

Colonel Chiaramonte's time as superintendent drew to a close when he retired on April 5, 1975. Though not required to do so by law, Colonel Chiaramonte chose to honor the mandatory retirement age of 55 years imposed on Patrol officers of all other ranks.

Colonel Chiaramonte's successor was Lt. Colonel Frank R. Blackstone, Chiaramonte's assistant superintendent. Blackstone was a graduate of the "Fighting 19th" Academy Class, and served at Lima and Findlay before transferring to General Headquarters in 1949. While assigned to headquarters, Colonel Blackstone progressed through the ranks in the Procurement and Auditing Section, and later served as commander of the Bureau of Technical Services.

Also in 1975 came the news of Louise Buechner's retirement. Buechner, known to everyone in the Division as

**Radio Technician Ernie L. Helton was one of the members of the original technician teams.**

"Miss B," retired as secretary to the superintendent. Miss B not only served with the Patrol for 41 years and with the state for 45 years, but she worked as secretary to all seven Patrol superintendents, starting with Colonel Black in 1934.

That same year, 21 inmates from the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility decided to take advantage of security officials being distracted while picketing over a labor dispute. They tried to coordinate a mass break-out on May 18. Three inmates escaped over the fence and into the woods nearby, but lawmen captured the other 18 before getting past the outer gates. The next morning, Scioto County Sheriff deputies shot and killed one fugitive; Patrol officers from Columbus and Wilmington districts found and arrested the other two.

A request that had never been asked before of the Patrol occurred on August 13, 1975, when the mayor of Elyria asked Governor James A. Rhodes to have the Patrol assist local authorities. Just before Patrol's involvement, local police shot and killed a burglary suspect while he tried to flee. Two nights of rioting after the incident led to the request for police protection for the city of Elyria. Governor Rhodes signed the proclamation, and 105 Patrol officers were on the scene shortly thereafter, marking the first time a governor used the emergency authority of the Patrol granted in House Bill 600 (1972) to aid a local government in maintaining law and order.

Officers remained in the city until 3:00 a.m., August 16, when law enforcement officials declared the situation normal. A total of 4,644 man-hours, involving 148 officers were involved in the action.

One of Colonel Blackstone's main concerns was the energy shortage. This crisis, which affected the entire country and world, trickled down to the Division in decreased fuel supplies and increased costs. Measures such as longer periods of stationary patrol and avoiding running cruiser engines whenever possible were a couple of ways that the Patrol demonstrated energy-saving efforts in the early 1970s.

In 1975, budget crunches created problems for the Patrol. There also was the newly enacted permanent 55 mph speed limit and strict enforcement mandated. To aid in both challenges and still keep fatality rates low (they were the lowest in 15 years at that time), officers donated more than 42,000 hours of overtime, directly saving $324,000.

Leaders decided to separate licensed radio technicians from the more general position of communications officer. The technicians, removed from desk duty, spent their time maintaining and installing radio equipment. Administrators hired dispatchers to spend time communicating with patrolmen in the field. This led to the establishment of "tech teams" at districts; each district had five trained radio technicians.

Budget concerns also prompted Colonel Blackstone

**Women began signing up to become troopers in 1977 after rules were changed according to federal mandates. Previously, females only held positions such as secretary and dispatcher.**

to avoid holding Academy classes. No graduations commenced for 20 months after the 99th Academy Class' ceremony on February 7, 1975. This made Colonel Blackstone the only superintendent through mid-2008 not to have an Academy Class in training during his tenure.

Nevertheless, Colonel Blackstone opened up the application process to begin forming the 100th class. This time, though, requirements changed. Recruiters based weight limits proportionally on height and not just a flat limit to accommodate new applicants, namely women. Colonel Blackstone also added physical agility tests to ensure applicants were ready for the demands of the position.

In July 1976, Colonel Blackstone retired, and Lieutenant Colonel Adam G. Reiss was chosen for the position of superintendent. Colonel Reiss, who graduated with the Academy's 28th Class in 1947, focused highly on public information and education.

Because of these strengths, Colonel Reiss implemented the Junior Trooper program. This began in 1977 and taught safety concepts to children ages six to 12 years; through the years the curriculum reached thousands of youths throughout the state.

Not only did the Division research and test bulletproof vests for nine months in 1976, but the Patrol purchased 1,300 vests, or "soft body armor," costing $63,575. This project, initiated by Colonel Blackstone, resulted later in the mandate for each trooper to wear the vests for on-duty protection. Also in 1976, officers could carry service revolvers on the left or right side of their bodies – something never attempted before. Ohio was the first state law enforcement agency to allow testing of gun shooting standards with left hands. All 35 who enrolled in 1976 qualified for the modification.

In 1976, two women entered the Academy's 100th Class training – Dianne Harris and Carol E. Ossman. Ossman did not finish the training, but Harris earned her commission upon graduation on February 4, 1977, as the first female trooper in Ohio, thus opening the door to women in all aspects of Patrol duty.

Harris went to the Turnpike, where she was assigned

**Carol Ossman (left) and Dianne Harris (second from left) get some breakfast before another vigorous training day with the 100th Academy Class.**

## History of Women in the OSHP

There was a time when women only could join the Ohio State Highway Patrol in support and clerical positions. From its creation in 1933 until 1976, the Patrol did not accept female applicants for sworn officer positions.

But since that time, women have held positions in almost every rank in the Division, thanks to legal changes, changes in Patrol policies and attitudes, and the perseverance of numerous women.

And it all started with one woman.

After federal civil rights laws were amended in the early 1970s and the Patrol worked to comply with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Conciliation Agreement, the Patrol accepted women – for the first time – to join its 100th Cadet Class.

The Division lowered the height requirement for officers from 5'9" to 5'8" to allow more women to apply, and recruitment officials compiled a pool of interested females. In 1976, the Patrol contacted 43 of the nearly 100 women in the pool to see if they were interested in applying for a job. There were 23 who kept their appointments, of which 15 passed written

at the Castalia Post. She stayed with the Patrol for a few months, but left for a job with another law enforcement agency.

As a result of the inclusion of women in the force, the moniker of officers changed to "trooper," to replace the former "patrolman." Badges changed to reflect this difference; it was the first time the design of the badge changed in the history of the Patrol.

Up until that time, the Patrol maintained an all-male force. In 1933, Colonel Black rejected the first female applicant, but as women began moving into less traditional roles in society, the Division changed its policy and conformed to the more modern rules of accepting women into the sworn ranks.

Graduates of the 100th Academy Class did not have to wait to experience on-the-job challenges. A strong blizzard on January 28, 1977, brought a cold wave that sent temperatures well below zero. Winds of 35 to 45 miles per hour (gusts to 60 mph) blew snow into drifts several feet high. Visibility for drivers was at a minimum. The storm shut down Ohio for three days, closing schools, airports and businesses, and isolating whole communities, including grocery stores, factories, and government offices. Although the drifts stranded hundreds and many state highways were blocked, efforts by the Patrol, Ohio National Guard, police, fire crews, and heroic citizens resulted in keeping the death toll at 20 people.

During the following three days, officers worked longer hours, investigated more crashes, and assisted more motorists than any comparable period in nearly a decade. Troopers rescued thousands of stranded motorists and snowbound residents using plows, snowmobiles, and four-wheel drive vehicles. In one case, a trooper and a paramedic were able to reach an expectant mother in advanced labor only by snowmobile, then carried her on a stretcher one-quarter mile to a waiting ambulance.

After the blizzard, the Patrol realized how important the CB radio communications were for the public, especially in situations that did not allow for easy telephone access. To remind citizens about the ability to call in emer-

exams. Out of those, only two remained interested after passing physical and background checks.

Of the two women who made it through to enter Academy training, only one of them stuck it out and graduated with the 100th Class. That woman's name was Dianne Harris.

When Dianne L. Harris applied to join the Ohio State Highway Patrol in 1976, she said she had no intention of breaking ground for the feminist movement, nor did she want to make any kind of statement. She said she simply worked hard to make the Patrol her career: "Somebody had to be first. It just happened to be me. I focused on being a Trooper. I tried to do my very best."

Asked what she chose to join the Patrol, Harris said, "I think it was more like the Academy chose me. I have the utmost respect for the organization and the training that I got here. I had some of my best and worst experiences in the short time I was with the Patrol."

Another change was made once women began entering the Division. The officer's badge, which previously stated "Patrolman," now read "Trooper."

Many women who followed in Harris' footsteps demonstrated that they are capable of performing the role of a Trooper as well as their male colleagues. By 1981, the Patrol had 14 female Troopers, and by the early 1990s, women were moving up the ranks. By 2008 women made up almost 10 percent of the Patrol's sworn officer force and served in a wide variety of positions including canine handlers and plain-clothes investigators, as well as post commanders and other command assignments. In fact, Lisa Taylor, the Patrol's first female to earn the rank of major in 2004, became a member of the Division's senior staff and commander of the Office of Finance and Logistic Services.

"I'm really impressed with what other females are doing in this organization and I really applaud them all," Harris said of modern day female troopers.

Thanks to Dianne Harris and others like her, women have become integral to the continued success of one of Ohio's most prestigious and honored organizations – the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

# We Survived the Blizzard of ’78...

***The following article, “Blizzard isn’t enough to stop the Patrol,” appeared in the January – March 1978 issue of* The Flying Wheel.**

“In the last few days of January, 1978, Ohio suffered a blizzard of monumental proportions, the worst winter storm in the history of the state.

From Thursday, January 26, through Saturday, January 28, Ohio was at a standstill – its industry, its commerce and many of its life-sustaining services such as the generation of electricity.

The Governor declared a state of emergency and summoned federal assistance while Ohio State Highway Patrol personnel worked around the clock to rescue stranded motorists on the highways and evacuate victims trapped in their homes with heat, water, and food.

Post facilities throughout the state were used as shelters for evacuees who had nowhere to go for safety.

During this three-to-four-day period of intense emergency, there were many acts of courage and bravery by all involved. There were also some very funny moments which were badly needed to break the tension.

We thank the troops, dispatchers, and everyone who helped so unselfishly during this period. Here are a few of their stories:

- Tpr. L.R. Meredith, unable to get to the Mount Vernon Post, remained in Fredericktown and set up disaster services. He coordinated rescue teams, relayed insulin to a diabetic, and made arrangements for power trucks to get through to restore power to the town.

- Ernie Leikala, a truck driver stranded at the West Jefferson Post, answered phones, made coffee, assumed KP duty, and used his semi to pull out patrol units stuck in the snow. He said he never had so much fun and promised to stop back.

- Tpr. T.J. Wertman, Mt. Vernon, worked with highway crews for five hours Thursday night, mostly out in the extreme cold, in a successful attempt to evacuate an appendicitis victim.

- Tpr. Barry M. Elder, Walbridge, after being stranded in his cruiser and a heatless weigh station on I-75 with five other people for over 24 hours, joined with the Bowling Green police and assisted 61 hours before he finally went to sleep.

- Sgt. R.C. Born and Tpr. M.C. Bixler, Walbridge, set up a “command post” at a residence in Perrysburg when the officers couldn’t get to the post. Stranded over 36 hours with the Tennison

family on Fremont Pike. Sgt. Born evacuation Mr. Tennison, who had pneumonia, to a hospital as soon as the road was made passable.

As we look back, not all happenings during the blizzard were deadly serious. Some were very funny:

- On the morning of the blizzard, Tpr. T.J. Wertman's doors were frozen shut on his Patrol car. After working for a considerable amount of time trying to get the key into the locks, he gave up and let the car sit. During the day he went back to his home with Sgt. R. Knight Jr., also of Mt. Vernon, determined to get into the car. Sgt. Knight walked up to the car and opened the left rear door which had been unlocked all the time.

- Tpr. William G. Manning, Delaware, became stranded in a snowdrift on the night of January 26th. Unable to get out or summon assistance, he says he was required to spend the night with a farmer and his daughter...Bill refused to give any more details about this story.

And at Marion they had a potpourri of humorous occasions:

- Sgt. W.D. Snyder, after being stranded in his patrol car for nearly an hour at the height of the blizzard, was rescued by a large wrecker which relayed him the nearly 300 feet from his patrol car to the post.

- One female resident of Marion County, after being stranded without heat for two days, was finally reached by rescuing officers. She asked if they could return in about two hours as her husband was asleep.

- Tpr. H.K. Scott, while spending a 15-hour day rescuing and taking milk to residents of Caledonia who had been stranded for three days, insulted a gentleman. When Tpr. Scott arrived, the man was consuming a steak dinner and he became highly insulted when he discovered the officer brought him regular milk instead of two percent which he was accustomed to drinking.

- A nearby mobile home park was evacuated due to sub-zero temperatures and the loss of power to the entire area. During the evacuation, a local radio station suggested that if some of the park residents would turn on their porch lights, it would aid rescuers in locating their homes.

**During the 1970s, personnel re-emphasized the portion of the job that entails aiding motorists. Here, a patrolman is shown giving gasoline to a stranded vehicle so they can continue to the nearest filling station.**

gencies on a CB radio, marked Patrol cars sported license plates that read, "CBCH9," indicating that calls could be received on channel 9.

Two important programs of the time – SMASH (Selective Management of Accident Site Highways) and Operation CARE (Combined Accident Reduction Effort) – contributed to significant reductions in highway deaths. SMASH, funded with a $1 million federal grant awarded in early 1977, helped bring down fatalities 10 percent. Operation CARE, a four-state effort, ensured the maximum number of marked patrol cars on interstates during holiday travel times.

A new group formed to replace Patrol anti-sniper teams from years past. COMMAND (Contingency of Men Managing and Negotiating Difficult Situations) officers trained in special sessions that transformed them into a highly-skilled tactical unit. Members of COMMAND were assigned throughout the state so they were available to respond quickly to any emergency. Commanding the team were Captain David L. Furiate and Lieutenant Verlin G. Archer.

Before the COMMAND Team, there was the Anti-Sniper Team. According to former Lieutenant Colonel Shel Senek, who was a member of the Anti-Sniper Team, members not only helped in criminal situations, but to prevent harm coming to dignitaries. He said that President Richard Nixon came through Ohio in the longest distance motorcade in Ohio history – from Cleveland to Youngstown. The Anti-Sniper Team, led by Commander Sgt. Russ Miller, was part of the motorcade.

The COMMAND Team first responded to an incident on June 2, 1977, in Boardman. Local police requested perimeter assistance because of a man, who, after boarding himself up in a municipal garage, took a Boardman Police Department officer hostage. After two hours of unsuccessful negotiation, local police requested a sharpshooter because the suspect became even more unstable. The Division ordered Trooper John P. Isoldi of COMMAND into position. In one shot, Trooper Isoldi shot the suspect in the head, killing him instantly, and freeing the hostage.

The storms in 1977 were only a warm-up. The Blizzard of '78 was the worst storm ever in the state at the time. On January 26, 1978, a Thursday, the snow started and everything closed and stayed that way until the next Monday. The worsening storm, with winds up to 70 mph and deep snow already on the ground, caused extremely dangerous situations for Ohioans. Again, the Division and Ohio National Guard responded, and thousands of volunteers rode snowmobiles and drove four-wheel drive vehicles to deliver medicine and transport doctors and

**A trooper stops a motorist and takes a look at his papers. Motorists are required by law to carry in the vehicle proof of both operator's driving license and vehicle registration.**

**Inspection of troopers and cadets at the Training Academy.**

nurses. Unfortunately, despite Patrol and other emergency personnel efforts, that storm was one of the country's deadliest in history, in terms of the number of people who died – 54 total.

During the storm and its aftermath it was obvious to leadership that Patrol cruisers were not designed to travel in such extreme conditions, so the Division purchased 20 four-wheel drive Ford Broncos equipped with snow blades.

Not quite two weeks after the 1978 blizzard, troopers responded to a coal truck strike, escorting drivers and investigating criminal activity related to the strike. For five weeks, Division officers stayed in the Jackson and Cambridge districts.

Troopers received a boost in the summer of 1978. The General Assembly unanimously passed legislation allowing up to 1,000 hours of paid leave (without the use of sick leave) to officers injured in the line of duty. Two months later, Governor Rhodes approved hazardous duty pay to compensate everyone for the dangerous duties faced daily by Patrol personnel.

A few other things changed in the late 1970s: driver examinations no longer used the parallel parking test, but added a maneuverability test with cones; examiners developed an updated motorcycle test; the Division and the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission developed a new driver examination for the deaf; hypnotism was one of many tools used for investigations; the Patrol ordered 10-minute stationary patrols every half an hour to conserve fuel; and each post had mandatory training on ways to drive to save fuel.

A tool investigators had developed during the 1970s finally saw practical use in December 1978 when Lieutenants Douglas C. Wells and Richard F. Wilcox used hypnosis in a hit-skip case. They used the technique to interview three witnesses to a fatal crash involving a pedestrian. Hypnotic interview allows the brain to relax and be able to express all that it has seen because it records all that it sees, retaining information even though the subject might not be able to consciously recall it. Under hypnosis, the witnesses were able to provide a few leads to the case that were not otherwise available.

Beginning a new decade, Captain Jack B. Walsh replaced Reiss as Colonel after Reiss retired on July 18, 1979. Next to Colonel Lynn Black, Colonel Walsh was the youngest officer ever appointed superintendent of the Division – Walsh was 43. His administrative focus was directed at the world-wide energy crisis. Three months prior, Governor Rhodes set a petroleum fuel conservation standard of five percent for state government. This resulted in troopers turning off their cruiser engines for 10 minutes per hour, during stationary patrol. Fuel conservation doubled – to 10 percent - as a result.

The Patrol took on other gas-saving ideas. Begun under Colonel Reiss, the Division began including smaller, more fuel-efficient cruisers. Also there was the "autotherm," a manufactured device that allows a vehicle to recycle warm air, keeping the car warm and comfortable for 30 minutes after the engine is shut off. This saved gas and kept officers comfortable.

Also, a computerized motor cost reporting system developed in 1980 enabled administrators to monitor expenses and keep them at their lowest levels possible.

Throughout all the nine years that the Patrol focused heavily on saving energy, nearly 9.5 million gallons of gasoline were saved; a savings of millions of dollars. Energy conservation efforts continued in Patrol policy even after the 1970s.

In the 1980s, Colonel Walsh and Division personnel were kept busy trying to find a way to decrease rising rural fatalities numbers, while continuing energy-saving projects.