

An Interview with a Trooper's Trooper: MALCOLM MILLET

When I arrived to interview Malcolm Millet on a recent warm and stormy Louisiana afternoon, a brightly decorated Christmas tree stood near the far wall of the den. It was the middle of February and Christmas was just a memory for most people, but the tree served as a daily reminder to Millet that his god-daughter was still serving in the Middle East. She had been there since early fall, and he promised her that the tree would stay up until she came home.

But the tree, at least in this case, is symbolic of more than just a seasonal holiday. For Malcolm Millet, the tree represents his total devotion to family, an abiding devotion which has sustained him throughout a long and superlative career with state police. For Millet, commitment to family is what life is all about, influencing all decisions both personal and professional.

Millet reared his six children, the youngest now a junior in high school, in Crowley. His grandparents had settled in this southwest prairie of Louisiana more than a hundred years ago. His grandfather, like many in the area, took advantage of the fertile, flat land and prospered by farming and milling rice.

Over time the area would prove to be a fertile environment for politics and its practitioners as well. In the fall of 1971, Crowley native Edwin Edwards led the field of 17 candidates for governor. In the December runoff, he edged out J. Bennett Johnston for the job. It was the best of times for the prairie town named after an Irish railroadman, an Irish ton stuck smack in the middle of French Louisiana.

The influence of Crowley would be apparent throughout Edwards' administration. Donald J. Thibodeaux was



heralded as one of the brightest stars of the EWE team. At 34 he was perhaps the youngest superintendent to ever be appointed to head the Louisiana State Police. But before he sought the appointment, he went to Captain Malcolm Millet to insure that Millet would not be seeking the job. And Millet, who probably could have asked for and received the appointment, deferred to Thibodeaux—he wanted to stay in Crowley with his family.

Millet had joined state police in 1953. Within 11 years, he was a troop commander. It was Thibodeaux who would later promote Millet to region inspector (the rank of major) and finally convince him to join the headquarters command structure as deputy superintendent in early 1976.

Thibodeaux knows it's a cliché, but he echoes the sentiments of many in describing Millet. "He's a trooper's trooper. We all considered him a giant of a man. Back when I was in high school, we called him Millet of the mounties," Thibodeaux recalls. Millet was a trooper

and often helped coach the high school football team when Thibodeaux was still a teenager.

"He was kind of an idol before I got on the job, but it was after I became a trooper that I really appreciated the kind of person he was," Thibodeaux says. "He's probably the most honest individual I ever met."

Thibodeaux recommended his old football coach for the top job when he retired. "His administration would be a stabilizing force after a whirlwind term with me. We had done a lot of stuff, made a lot of changes, and it was time to let things settle down. Millet was the man to watch over that process."

And Millet in fact provided that quiet stability. Former Colonel Bo Garrison served as deputy superintendent under Millet. He confirms the impressions of stability.

"Millet was hard to get flustered. He was reserved in his thoughts but he was very determined. Any decision that Mac Millet made was going to be in the best interests of public safety and the troopers. He was completely dedicated to the good of the department."

"Sometimes people would be in meetings and (misinterpret) his quietness as disinterest or whatever, but he was very astute and knew what he wanted and what was going on all the time," Garrison says.

"He was very reserved, very cautious in his decisions. He weighed all facts before making a decision, but I don't know a decision that he made that was wrong."

One of the clearest impressions left by Millet on Garrison was the insulation that Millet provided from the ever

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present politicians. "He was as non-political as he could be, and coming from a very political area of that state, that must have been tough. The one thing that would (disturb) him the most was political interference in running the department. He took a lot of politicians to task over a promotion they wanted but he didn't think should be made. The department was probably as non-political as it would ever be," Garrison says.

Retired Chief of Staff Jim Champagne worked for Millet as his primary staff command officer the entire time that Millet was at headquarters. He recalls the human qualities of Millet.

"I remember his intense care and concern for others. He had a genuine concern for every employee in the department. I think he managed in a very compassionate way, he was a very warm individual and that came through in the way he conducted business."

"At a time that we really needed it, Mac Millet was deliberate in his actions and would carefully study the issues before selecting a course of action. He wanted to understand the consequences of each option. His time in Baton Rouge brought state police much needed stability," Champagne says.

In the spring of 1980, the first Republican governor since reconstruction was set to take office in Louisiana. Malcolm Millet knew that his work had been done. After 27 years of serving Louisiana citizens, he knew that it was time to return home to his family.

While he had been in Baton Rouge he had shuttled between his Crowley home and his temporary residence in the Capitol city. But he still had kids at home and some in college. He knew where he needed to be and more importantly, where he wanted to be.

He and his wife of 33 years, Josie, have not retired to lives of quiet seclusion. With their daughter still in high school and the other five children scattered between Houston and New Orleans, family commitments sustain their spirit. On any given day either might be out running the roads in and around Crowley. For Millet, retirement was only a stopping off point. He now serves as Chief Criminal Deputy for Sheriff Ken Goss in Acadia Parish.

Millet was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease last fall and his daily dose of medication minimizes the effects of the disease. Otherwise, he's as big and gentle a man today as he was when he joined state police nearly three decades ago.

In recounting his tenure with the Louisiana State Police, he speaks candidly and fondly of a department he truly believed in, a department he's very proud to have served in.



THE EARLY YEARS

TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR UPBRINGING, COLONEL.

I was born and raised right here in Crowley. I went to school in Crowley, finished from Crowley High School. My father was from St. Mary Parish around Baldwin and my mother was from Crowley. Her parents were originally from Vermillion Parish. Her grandfather and great grandfather were in the rice business. All my family are from right around here in the Crowley area.

WEREN'T YOU IN THE SERVICE?

Yes, I entered the service through the National Guard. I joined the National Guard when I was in high school. Our coach in high school got a group of us together one year. We were all into athletics, and he convinced a group of us to go to summer camp and compete in softball, and boxing and stuff like that. That was right after the war, about 1946. After high school, I went on into active duty through the National Guard.

I served stateside at Fort Benning, Fort Bragg and Fort Reilly, Kansas.

AND AFTER THE SERVICE?

I came back to Crowley. In 1953, that's when I joined the state police.

WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO JOIN STATE POLICE?

Well, I guess that's a good question. I guess, in a way, it goes way back to when I was growing up. One of our former sheriffs in Acadia Parish, Sheriff Walter Larcade lived a block away from us. I don't know, I guess I always looked



A young Millet, at nearly 6'3" and 225 pounds, signs on with State Police.

up to him. He was a certain, special type of individual. I respected what he did. I can remember when I was about 18, talking to him about going in the State Police. Of course he told me that I was too young, I wasn't old enough yet. I think my association with him had some bearing on my decision, being around him for a couple of years, growing up and seeing him pass our house everyday in the police car and things like that.

AND YOU FINALLY MADE THE MOVE?

That's right.

WHAT DID JOINING THE STATE POLICE IN 1953 INVOLVE?

Well, I went in just prior to Civil Service. It was strictly a political type thing. A Senator at that time over here had lived next door to an uncle of mine who had a drug store here. The guy asked my uncle if he thought I would be interested in a job with the State Police. He called me and asked me if I was and I said sure. I got together with the Senator and he gave me a handwritten note to bring to Baton Rouge to Colonel (Francis) Grevemberg.

I took a test right there in the Colonel's office given by the Colonel's secretary. I was notified shortly thereafter to report to the Academy.

HOW LONG WAS THE ACADEMY THEN?

If I remember right, I think about ten

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weeks. Captain Middleton was the commandant at the time and David Keyser, Sr., was a Sergeant. He was the assistant commandant. The class was composed of about half troopers and half cadets.

SO YOU HAD SOME CADETS IN THE CLASS WHO HAD ACTUALLY BEEN WORKING AS TROOPERS OUT ON THE ROAD WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF AN ACADEMY?

That's right. They had already been hired and had been out working in the field.

BUT IT WAS ALL NEW TO YOU?

It was very new. Two of the people that were in school with me, we all wound up majors at almost the same time. "Poche" Didier, who would later be a popular sheriff in Avoyelles Parish, was also in my class. I sat behind him in class. We got to know each other pretty well. Captain Clarence Bates was in there too. He died a few years ago from cancer.

We had about 30 people in a class at that time. The classroom was upstairs (at the main headquarters building) near where Personnel is today. The showers were right down the hall.

SO THROUGH THE GOOD FORTUNE OF POLITICAL PATRONAGE YOU FOUND YOURSELF A STATE TROOPER. DID YOU HAVE ANY GOALS IN MIND AT THE TIME? DID YOU SAY TO YOURSELF, SOMEDAY I WANT TO RUN THIS ORGANIZATION, OR I WANT TO BE A TROOP COMMANDER?

Well, no, not really. I was just glad to have a job. I think, if I remember right, we were getting paid while we were in the academy about \$150 a month. I remember the day we got out of the academy, the pay went up to \$175. It was fifty cents a day for our field expenses at that time.

After graduation, I was assigned back over here at Troop I. In those days everything was controlled by politics. It was all political. Tom Burbank (who would later become superintendent) was the Major Inspector of the Region; he lived in Rayne. Simone was the Troop I Captain.

The first detail I worked the week I got back was at the Elizabeth papermill strike, over near Oakdale. It was a long, terrible strike. I think I did maybe four or five tours at Elizabeth. In fact, me,

In those days, everything was controlled by politics.

Don Smith, a Lieutenant out of Lake Charles, Roy Bowers out of Dequincy and L.J. Smith from Troop K were the last four people on that detail, as I recall.

WHAT WAS STATE POLICE LIKE IN 1953?

Well, in most respects, it wasn't anything like today, like the state police I know today. You had a lot of very hard working men in the department at the time and I don't want to take anything away from them. But the department was very political. Fortunately, not long after I came on, we were placed under the protection of Civil Service. That solved some of the problems.

But all the guys I came on with, we all, including me, had our political crutches, the politicians who had helped us get on. I can't say anything adverse about them, they were all good people, politics was just the way the game was played. Everything we did, everybody we came into contact with, everything was pulled into the political realm. Civil

Service helped. It didn't solve all the problems; politics still influenced many things, but the influence was less and everybody had new rules to play by.

DO YOU RECALL YOUR FIRST DAY AT THE TROOP?

Yes, I was assigned to work with Solomon Hunter. He was a Sergeant at that time. I remember distinctly, we almost didn't get back to the troop that day because of a tremendous rainstorm and high water covering the road. We went to the extreme west end of the troop area down around Mermentau and Esterwood and we had a heck of a time getting back to Lafayette because of the water. Of course, the only main road through the area at the time was U.S. 90. That's where all the traffic was.

WAS THAT AN OMEN? LIVING AND WORKING IN THIS AREA FOR 28 YEARS HAS EXPOSED YOU TO SOME PRETTY VIOLENT WEATHER.

Every year we had problems of one kind or another. Sometimes it made for long days. But working extra hours was the rule rather than the exception. You worked over lots of times and there was no such thing as K-time (compensatory time) or overtime. You just put your time in and forgot about it. There was none of this "I want four hours of K-time

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An Englishman in French Louisiana: Millet at an accident scene in Acadia Parish, circa 1955.

because I had to work extra" business. You got nothing, just that simple. We worked 6 days a week. You looked forward to that one day off.

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THIS "NEW" EXPERIENCE? DID YOU LIKE WHAT YOU'D GOTTEN YOURSELF INTO?

Oh yeah, I enjoyed it. I guess in a way when I look back it's something I wanted to do. I'm not saying that there was something telling me that this is what you needed to do or this is what you should do. Nobody else in my family had ever been in law enforcement. I kind of stick out like a sore thumb when it comes to law enforcement.

YOU SPENT FOUR YEARS AT THE TROOP BEFORE YOU WERE PROMOTED TO SERGEANT?

That's correct. I was promoted to Sergeant in 1957 right there at Troop I. And about that time we created a substation in Acadia Parish. They put me there and gave me two troopers to work the area.

This wasn't a separate troop now, just a substation of Troop I. Prior to that, I had been a parish man. Sergeant Charlie Johnson, Jude Johnson's father, had previously been a parish man in Acadia.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION OF THE "PARISH MAN" ARRANGEMENT WHERE A TROOPER IS ASSIGNED ON A DAILY BASIS TO ONE PARISH, USUALLY THE ONE HE LIVES IN?

I think it makes good sense, good police sense. And back at that time, a parish man put in his eight hours plus. Because he never had to drive into the troop, and he lived in the area he worked, he was always on call. Depending on what shift he was working, if he worked the day shift and got an accident at 7:00 that night, they called him from headquarters and he had to work it. If they called at 2:00 in the morning, he had to go. Everything that needed handling, everything that state police was responsible for was done by the parish man. If a trailer needed stamping, or whatever, it was the parish man's job. I guess that was the down side of the job. But it worked (works) well.

I think that's the only way state police can cover some areas like up in north Louisiana, Troops E and F. They both

STATE. AS A NATIVE OF THIS AREA, DO YOU THINK THAT'S A VALID CLAIM?



Sergeant Millet (left) and Trooper Joe Castille pause for a moment near Mermentau.

have such large areas to cover. Some of those parishes are quite a distance from the troop headquarters. Even though Crowley was only about 20 miles from Troop I, it wasn't easy getting to the troop. There was no Interstate highway. You had to drive through Lafayette. Sometimes it might take you 45 minutes. I don't think there's any doubt that the parish man really earned his pay, and he provided necessary services for the public in the process. I'm not sure how they're doing it today. I would think that some of the larger troop areas would still have to utilize parish men.

BACK IN THE LATE FIFTIES AND EARLY SIXTIES, LOUISIANA KIND OF GOT A BAD REPUTATION, WHETHER DESERVED OR NOT, ON THE LARGE NUMBER OF FATALITIES WE HAD. FROM WHAT I'VE READ, THERE SEEMS TO BE A LOT OF FINGER POINTING AT THE CULTURE OF SOUTH LOUISIANA, AND THE PREVALENCE OF ALCOHOL AT EVERY CONCEIVABLE FUNCTION. SOME SAY THAT THE SOUTH LOUISIANA LIFESTYLE CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROBLEM AND THERE WAS A TENDENCY TO LET SOME THINGS LIKE STRICT ENFORCEMENT SLIDE IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE

I think in a lot of respects, it's probably true. The culture of this area is a little different than say the northern parishes. I can remember in the old troop, being on the 3 to 11 shift or the 4 to midnight shift depending on what I worked. I can remember spending my whole shift on Saturday and Sunday on the Breaux Bridge Highway, LA 94, between Lafayette and Breaux Bridge. The road has got clubs and joints lined up from one end to the other, and sometimes it got so bad that you patrolled out there with your red lights on or your bulleye (single, door-mounted red light) on. If you had an accident out there, you almost took your life in your hands working the thing.

I think it goes back to "let the good times roll." The French saying for it (laissez les bons temps rouler), I can't really say it but that's what it means, "Let the good times roll."

HOW DO YOU SURVIVE HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF FRENCH-SPEAKING ACADIANA WITHOUT KNOWING HOW TO SPEAK FRENCH?

I don't know, but I did. I've got old stories about Phil Perodin. I don't know if you remember Phil, he was a Lieutenant at Troop I. When he first came

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He got out to talk to the gentleman and the old guy started speaking French

to work, he had just come out of the service, had been in the service for 10 years, I guess, and he was assigned to work with me. The first day after he was out of the Academy, we went to check an accident. He got out to talk to the gentleman and the old guy started speaking French. When Phil got back in

to go after the bookies and such. But word got around gambling was a no-no and that curtailed quite a bit of the problems. Just the fact that word got around that people were being arrested and charged was enough to discourage some activity.

I remember there were a number of local neighborhood type bars where people would go to drink and dance and stuff. And generally there would also be a card game, nothing big time. These were places where people tended to congregate, and playing cards was just part of what they did. It was a cultural thing,

CHANGING DIRECTIONS FOR A MOMENT, YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK PRIOR TO AND AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MOTOR VEHICLE INSPECTION PROGRAM. DO YOU SEE THE PROGRAM AS BEING VALUABLE IN TERMS OF HIGHWAY SAFETY?

Absolutely. One of the big things we would do prior to the inspection program would be our "light details." On Saturday night, for example, you'd get 8 or 10 troopers and assign them to an area and for three or four hours, they would enforce the lighting equipment laws. Cars with only one headlight, or no lights, maybe no tail lights, we would cite those people, because those kinds of violations cause accidents. It was a big problem with so many gravel roads and such. So the inspection program, once it was implemented, straightened out many of those equipment problems.

EVERY TWO OR THREE YEARS, ONE LEGISLATOR OR ANOTHER WILL INTRODUCE LEGISLATION SEEKING TO ABOLISH THE PROGRAM. DO YOU THINK IT'S WORTH KEEPING?

Certainly. I know that there have been pros and cons all throughout the years, ever since the program went into effect, but I feel it's a program that's useful as it relates to people keeping their vehicles in running order. Maybe just as important now you have the other guidelines

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When the Motor Vehicle Inspection program began, there were about 1.3 million registered vehicles which had to be inspected. Today more than 3 million must be inspected.

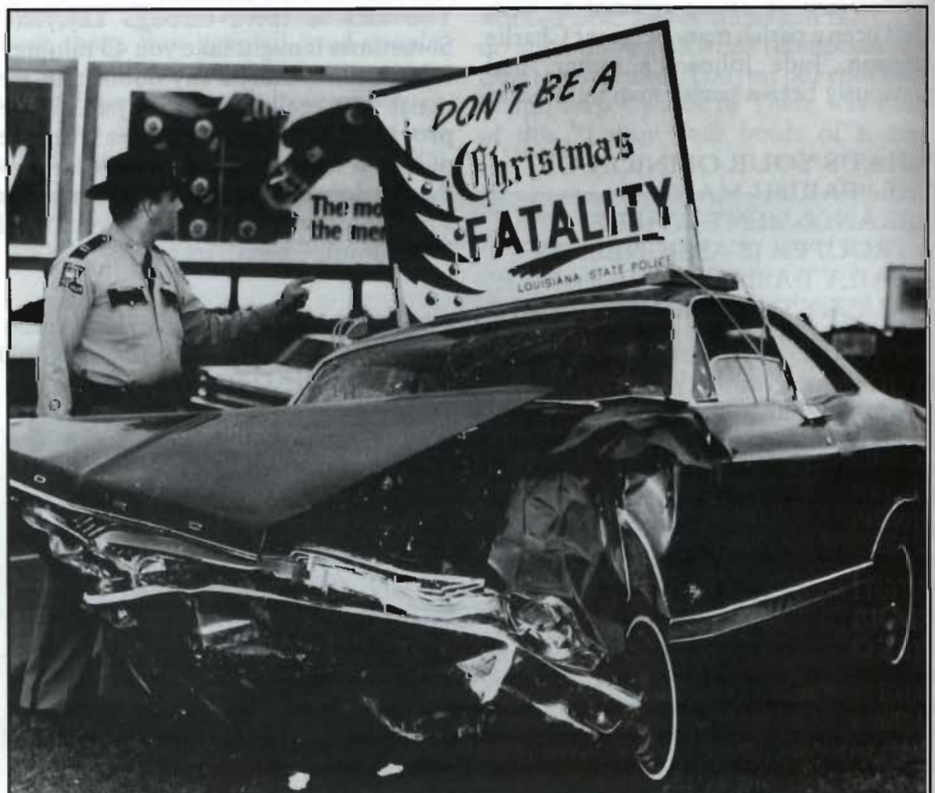
the car, I asked him, what did he say and he told me, I don't know. I said, you mean someone with a Cajun French name like Perodin doesn't know how to speak French? We were in hell of a shape, but we survived.

HOW PREVALENT WAS GAMBLING OVER IN SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA?

I think it was pretty prevalent, really. Of course, when Colonel Grevemberg was appointed, he made that a real priority in terms of enforcement.

HOW SUCCESSFUL WERE HIS ERADICATION EFFORTS OVER HERE?

I think to a large degree, he was successful. We had a tremendous number of small card games and what would happen, the house was raking a little money out of the pot which is, of course, illegal. We didn't really fool with a lot of those type activities, because we had



The early sixties were considered some of the bloodiest years on Louisiana's highways. Here, Captain Millet is captured in a holiday promotional shot.

in the program that relate to pollution. We have to face up to the problems driving causes, like ozone and so forth. For the sake of the environment and because of safety concerns, we have to keep the program.

I think as long as you have the program, you will always have people who are hard nosed about wanting to get rid of it. I always look back at an incident that we had at the troop here in Crowley. Ed Gossen was our Motor Vehicle Inspection officer at the time. Ed was a good man, a dedicated man. He had come on as a pilot originally, but when they did away with fixed wing aircraft, he became an MVI officer.

Well, one day I got a call from a legislator from Crowley; he's no longer living. This particular legislator had been an original co-author of the MVI bill. Together with Willie Arceneaux from Rayne, they had put through the legislation creating the program. I got a call from the legislator just raising hell about Ed. He wanted to know why Ed was so hard nosed about adhering to the rules and I told him, "You're the one who created the program and the rules, what do you want Ed to do? If somebody gets killed out there because Ed overlooks something, what would we say?" I think it's been a useful program and will continue to be even though some would disagree with me.

LET'S GET BACK TO THE WEATHER FOR A MOMENT. YOU LIVE IN AN AREA PARTICULARLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO HURRICANES AND TROPICAL STORMS. YOU MADE IT THROUGH A FEW OF OUR BIGGEST—AUDREY, HILDA AND BETSY. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER MOST VIVIDLY ABOUT THOSE LADIES?

Well, one of the most important things in my career happened during Audrey. It was on June 27th in 1957. I had been married 27 days. I wound up in 13 feet of water upside down in my patrol car.

At the height of the storm, we got a report that we had a tremendous problem west of Crowley. There were utility poles all over the highway and things knocked down, poles, wires, you name it. Anyway, I was out in that area, and a car, it's strange what one remembers, but I remember it was a 54 two-tone green Plymouth, came across this bridge in the

middle of the highway. There was water running over the top of the highway and as I approached the bridge, I saw this other car coming in my lane of traffic. So I pulled a little to the right and my tires dropped off the pavement onto the shoulder, what shoulder there was. When the wheels went off the pavement, the back end of the car started fishtailing. I tried to straighten up, but I hit the bridge railing headon. I hit the pipe rail and the car just did a swan dive off into the water. The car hit on the roof and floated down.

HOW DID YOU GET OUT?

I wound up sitting underneath the back seat on the inside roof of the car. I sat there just watching the water come in here and come in there, through nooks and crannies, seeping in and so forth. Luckily I wasn't knocked out.

The first thing that came to my mind was an article that I had read one or two weeks before in the New Orleans paper Sunday Magazine section. It had ten rules to follow if you ever found yourself trapped in a car underwater. The only rule I could remember at the time was not to panic. So I sat there inside the car on the roof and I asked myself very calmly, how am I going to get out of here?

I sat there just watching the water come in here and come in there, through nooks and crannies . . .

I decided to go ahead and let the water in and equalize the pressure and then attempt to get out. So I was swimming around the front and opened the window up, or down, or whatever, I opened it and the water just rushed in. I just floated up with the water as it filled the inside of the car and when it stopped gushing, I pulled myself through the window and came on up, got to high ground. I guess it's kind of like the old saying, "The good Lord takes care of you sometimes when you're dumb." The only thing I forgot to do was take off my gunbelt, my hip boots and my raincoat. But I got to high ground anyway.

You know there's another old saying that when you have a near-death experience your whole life passes before your eyes? Well, I can tell you the only thing

that flashed in front of my eyes was, "How the hell am I going to get out of here." That was my first real experience and I guess that was the scariest thing that ever happened to me.

PERHAPS WE'RE MORE ACCLIMATED TODAY TO THE DANGERS OF HURRICANES WHEN THEY APPROACH, WHAT WITH SATELLITE PHOTOS AND CNN AND CABLE WEATHER AND SUCH, WE ARE INUNDATED WITH INFORMATION. WERE THINGS A LITTLE MORE FRIGHTENING IN THE FIFTIES AND SIXTIES BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T KNOW QUITE WHAT TO EXPECT?

Well, you really didn't know because, as you say, you just didn't get all that information. Lord, you had 600 plus people killed down in Cameron. They knew something was coming, something very bad, but they just had no real way of knowing what was in store for them, the high tide, the winds.

IT'S BEEN MORE THAN 30 YEARS SINCE AUDREY AND THERE'S AN ENTIRE GENERATION OF RESIDENTS IN SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA. ARE THEY AT RISK? DO THEY KNOW WHAT THEY'RE UP AGAINST?

Well, with the new technology that you have now, the weather forecasters, satellites, and all these kinds of things, I don't really see anybody having to get trapped like they did in Audrey. I think sufficient warnings are there, but people have to heed those warnings. That's the big thing. I can remember down on Pecan Island, which was in my troop area at the time, before the ferry shut down, the parish people tried to get some of the elderly residents off the island. They just wouldn't budge. In some cases, we had to force people, we actually had to bring some people out ourselves for their own safety.

Like in Hurricane Hilda in '64. I remember I was working the day that one came ashore. I was in the CP (command post) in Abbeville with General Bob Leblanc, who was with the National Guard and Vermillion Parish Civil Defense. We were working in a command post set up in the basement of the post office in Abbeville. It was

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a real good set up. Well, I got a call that they were having some problems in the command post at Erath, some personnel problems and such and they wanted me to

come over there right at the height of the storm.

Just as I got to the turnoff to Erath, I ran into Richard Broussard, a trooper who lived

in Abbeville and we pulled up next to each other and spoke to each other through cracks in our window about yea big. It was just outside of Erath, east of Abbeville. As we

On June 28, 1957 Hurricane Audrey slammed into the coast of Southwest Louisiana. Nearly 600 lives were lost, primarily because people failed to evacuate the coast in time to escape the rapidly rising waters. Offshore waves were reported as high as 50 feet and waves striking the area at Cameron were reported to be 18-20 feet above sea level. Winds were clocked in the 105 mile-per-hour range.

The accounts below are Associated Press stories which ran on the wire from Lake Charles on the day Audrey struck and the following day:

June 28, 1957

LAKE CHARLES—Hurricane Audrey's deadly sweep through the defenseless coastlands of Louisiana left a 100-mile trail of dead, injured and missing today. The full extent of the tragedy may not be known for days.

Captain Allen Marshall, whose tug was aground at Cameron, a town that was almost drowned on the Louisiana coast, said 87 persons were dead and 100 to 300 missing at Cameron.

A Lake Charles Weather Bureau official told his superiors in Washington that 200 to 300 were dead around Cameron and Creole.

Earlier, Deputy Sheriff D.P. Vincent had estimated that the fatalities at Cameron might reach between 3,000 to 4,000. However, the Washington, D.C. Weather Bureau classed the report as "improbable."

Bureau officials pointed out that the population of Cameron is less than 1,000 and that there was a likelihood that the number of persons drowned might have been confused with number of homes flooded.

The Red Cross in Lake Charles, which is 30 miles north of Cameron, reported 35 dead or missing, but did not make clear exactly what area this figure covered.

Major Tragedy

It was known that 118 persons were killed and more than 100 injured in Texas and Louisiana before reports of a major tragedy began to filter in from the half-drowned Louisiana coast.

As the hurricane crushed through the low-lying countryside along the Texas-Louisiana border, it tore down communications and power lines. Today, 24 hours after the storm struck, it was impossible to telephone many places in the storm area.

But reports radioed in from the coast told of Cameron, a town of 950, vanishing in the storm, except for its courthouse, and of survivors waiting on rafts to be picked up by rescue boats rushing down from Lake Charles and touched points along the coast.

"There was so much rain and the wind was blowing waves over my boat," Captain Marshall said. "I could hardly see land. Then in a slack, I looked out and saw the courthouse with nothing between it and me. The town had been demolished.

Stores Demolished

"The water went up over the streets of the town. I could see just piles of lumber where stores and cafes had stood. Everything was down."

His tug was anchored in the Calcasieu River. Cameron apparently was leveled by a storm wave from the Gulf of Mexico (Tidal waves are cast up only by earthquakes.)

Marshall said Sheriff O.B. Carter told him that 87 persons were killed, 100 to 300 persons are missing and more than 300 persons are seriously injured or sick.

June 29, 1957

LAKE CHARLES, June 29 (AP)—Civil defense officials tonight revised their estimates of the dead in Southwest Louisiana to 275, a ghastly total which may change upward from minute to minute as receding tidal waters uncover more bodies.

Major General Raymond Hufft, state civil defense director who accompanied emissaries of President Eisenhower to stricken Cameron Parish, made the latest estimate.

With most of the living victims of Hurricane Audrey and her dreadful follower, a 20-foot tidal wave, now air-lifted to safety, federal and state officials planned the futures of hundreds of residents of the fishing town of Cameron. Tentatively drafted were plans for a tent city adjacent to wrecked homes.

Meanwhile, most of the Gulf Coast dead — estimated at from 150 to 275 — were bequeathed for a second night to swollen marshes and bayous that have held them in jealous embrace since Thursday's storm and tidal wave.

President Eisenhower viewed Louisiana's plight as a "calamitous situation."

**. . . we tried to get survivors.
Several people were
decapitated.**

sat there talking, the water tower adjacent to the city hall, where the CP was located, fell down. It fell right on top of city hall, just crushed it. I guess we were about the first people there. We tried to get survivors. Several people were decapitated. Seven were killed I think. The tank had been filled with 700,000 gallons of water in anticipation of the storm and when that tower came down with all the weight of that water, it was just terrible.

THERE'S A WHOLE GENERATION OF TROOPERS OUT THERE WHO HAVE HEARD OF TROOPS N, M & O, AND DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE THEY WERE, WHERE THEY CAME FROM AND WHY WE DON'T HAVE THEM ANYMORE. TELL US ABOUT THE LOST TROOPS?

Well, I guess in retrospect, they were political creations. I guess that's the only way to put it. Of course Troop N was headquartered here in Crowley. I was the troop commander. We took in Acadia and Vermillion Parishes. It was a two parish troop. We had approximately 35 people working at the troop.

Troop O was headquartered in Delhi in north Louisiana; Clarence May was the troop commander up there. That was cut out of part of Troop F. I'm not sure what parishes were part of the troop, and then there was Troop M in Des Allemands southwest of New Orleans. Waguespack was the troop commander down there and I don't know what parishes were included there either.

All three troops were created at about the same time. M and N came first and O closely followed.

IT SOUNDS AS IF THE PREVALENT POLITICAL ATTITUDE WAS, IF YOU CAN HAVE A TROOP HEADQUARTERS, THEN I CAN TOO. WOULD THAT BE CORRECT?

That was it. It was pure politics.

continued



Millet was the first (and only) troop commander for Troop N, Crowley. The facility was originally opened as a substation of Troop I, Crowley.

WAS IT THE SAME POLITICS IN REVERSE WHICH HAD THEM ELIMINATED?

Well, no, not really. I really don't think politics had anything to do with them being closed. In fact, if anything, it was politics which was trying to keep them open.

The politics which had created the troops began to lose control when General Wade took over Public Safety. The troops were reconsidered back into their original jurisdictions, Troop N went back into I, M back to C, and O back into F. But I remember, it wasn't easily accomplished, not without a fight.

I know in the Troop N area, the people in Vermillion and Acadia Parishes felt that the men in Troop N had done a real good job, that they were very successful. The citizens put up a real strong media fight to keep the troop. I remember General Wade coming down to Crowley to have a meeting at city hall. We had a turnout of several thousand people that gathered inside and outside. I will always remember the statement that was made, "Troop N wasn't being closed, it was just being assigned a new mission." I still haven't understood the true meaning of that yet. But it didn't take long for the mission to come about because in two days, I think it was on midnight of such and such date it was consolidated into Troop I and I was designated the commander.

SO YOU ACTUALLY MOVED FROM A TWO-PARISH COMMAND TO A MULTI-PARISH COMMAND?

That's right. And sometime after that, we took in more area in an additional consolidation with some of Troop C. There were some further additions here and there and some realignments. Anyway, when all was said and done, I wound up with a troop of about 90 men. I had about 14

Lieutenants and about 22 Sergeants and then all the troopers. I had a supervisor for everything that moved. Almost a one-on-one type situation. It was ridiculous, really. But when the consolidation process started, you had to take the officers and do something with them. Of course, attrition over a period of time took care of a lot of it. It took a while for it to work out but attrition took care of most of it.

Roland Copolla had been the troop commander prior to consolidation and he went to headquarters.

WERE YOU SURPRISED A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO WHEN AFTER YEARS OF FIGHTING, TROOPS H & K CLOSED?

Not really, because if you look back over the years, it was something that had been talked about for eons. Every time we looked at the number of troops and their areas of coverage, every time you looked at those things, someone would suggest closing H and K. So they're being closed really didn't surprise me.

But I have to say that it seemed to me that it made good sense to have Troop H, particularly with all the activity up around Fort Polk with the military and all. I don't know how many people are working in those respective parishes in that troop area, but the area takes in the recreational area around Toledo Bend and there would seem to be good justification for having a troop

there. Maybe things are working out with it closed. I hope so.

You know people look at an organizational chart and wonder why it never stays the same. Well, it can't. An organization isn't static, it's fluid, always changing. Organizational-wise you've got to keep up and move and adjust with the times and the demands. You can't set up a table of organization and say, "Well, this is it, this is the way things are going to be from now on," because something will occur which will impact that organizational arrangement. You're going to get run over by a truck somewhere down the line. At the same time, I don't believe in change for the sake of change. I don't think it's proper to take the approach, "Well we've had this method of organization for a year, let's change it." I don't think that's good either.

THE TIMES, THEY ARE A CHANGING

DID YOU WORK IN BOGALUSA DURING THE RACIAL STRIFE OF 1965?

I was in and out of Bogalusa. I was a captain at the time and I was utilized as a supervisor for some of the state police response over there.

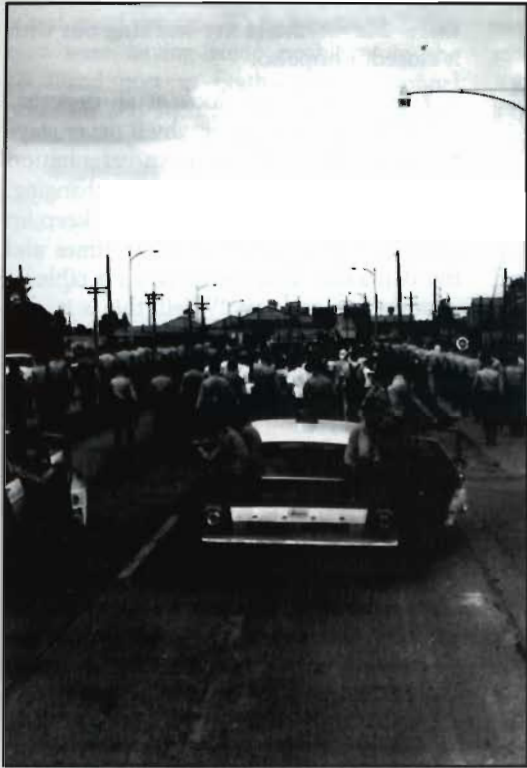
DID YOU FEEL THAT MAYBE STATE POLICE WAS KIND OF IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TWO EXTREMES, BETWEEN THE WHITE SEGREGATIONISTS ON THE ONE SIDE AND THE BLACK ACTIVISTS ON THE OTHER?

Well, there was no other way to look at it. We were there to curtail any violence and keep the peace. It was a matter of keeping both sides from getting to the throats of the other. In doing so you got involved in some things yourself that caused problems. In trying to protect the rights of one group, you always create problems with the other.

WOULD YOU SAY THAT WE WERE ABLE TO MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL LEVEL OF DECORUM?

I think, over all, our people in Bogalusa and elsewhere during that time did what they had to do and handled themselves professionally. There were very, very few

continued



Marches and demonstrations became almost daily occurrences in Bogalusa in the mid-sixties. Here troopers keep a vigilant watch over a CORE group.

instances in which any discredit was brought upon state police. But it wasn't easy.

Like the march from Bogalusa to Baton Rouge and the rally at the capitol, you could feel the tension. But our people did a commendable job. In fact, I've got a letter over there on the wall from (then governor) John McKeithen, commending us.

Once the Bogalusa to Baton Rouge march reached the capitol steps, the KKK sought equal time to voice their opposition to the Civil Rights movement. A close cordon of troopers and national guardsmen separated the two groups.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE CAPITOL WHERE THE MARCH ENDED?

It was a ticklish situation. The (Ku Klux) Klan wanted to have their say on the steps of the capitol at the same time that the (civil rights) marchers wanted to be up there. And of course, we knew the problems that would cause. General (Tom) Burbank was our superintendent at the time and he met with the Klan leaders and convinced them to hold off until the marchers had finished their business. And as it turned out, as soon as the Bogalusa marchers were finished and were marching down the steps on one side, the Klan was marching up the other. We had troopers everywhere, watching all this as it happened.

WERE THERE ANY SERIOUS CONFRONTATIONS, ANY REAL PROBLEMS?

Not really, but my own troopers kept me running. I remember one incident in particular. The troopers had a complete perimeter around the capitol grounds, many on var-

ious levels of the capitol building and such. But I was in charge of the roadway in front of where the old Civil Service building used to be across the street from the capitol. We were fronted on that street. My people were set out all along the road there all the way down to Spanish Town Road down on the extreme south end of the capitol grounds. I heard an explosion down there, so I took off, fearing the worst, naturally.

When I got there, one of the troopers, I think out of Troop C, but I'm not positive, had fooled around with a teargas grenade somehow and the pin fell out. Unbeknownst to him, he set it down and of course the thing exploded between his legs. What a sight. We had to undress him right out there on the street. He got burned pretty good in the crotch area and everything. We hauled him back across the lake to the Lady of the Lake (Hospital which was at that time) behind the capitol.

It seems that right after that I heard what I thought to be a shotgun blast way down at the other end. Well, I took off again in the other direction. I jumped a couple of sets of hedges and found a

continued



trooper, I think he was from Troop E, and somehow he'd accidentally fired his shotgun. The leaves were still falling from the top of the tree he shot into. Those were hectic days.

Somehow he'd accidentally fired his shotgun. The leaves were still falling from the top of the tree he shot into.



Millet on the sixties demonstrations: No trouble, but my own troopers kept me running.

DID YOU FEEL A SENSE OF RELIEF WHEN IT WAS ALL OVER, THAT WE HAD BEEN SPARED A VIOLENT CONFRONTATION?

Yea, nobody really got hurt to any degree. Our biggest problem on the march was that deal at Satsuma (on U.S. 190 east of Baton Rouge). The Klan wanted to march at the same time as the Civil Rights activists and they had a right to. We couldn't deny them the right to march. So the decision was made to permit the Klan to march in the opposite direction. Well, as they came alongside each other, somebody gave a command, right face or left face, whatever it was, and all hell broke loose. Everybody started swinging. It was a mess trying to protect everybody. I guess in retrospect, nobody was hurt very badly, and maybe more importantly, nobody got killed.

Then there was the time that James Farmer, the black activist, was scooted out of Plaquemine in a casket. He was with CORE (the Congress of Racial Equality) I think. I could be wrong about that. Anyway, there had been protests and confrontations across the river from Baton Rouge for weeks and we were over there trying to maintain peace. Well, Farmer was to be arrested and transported to the local jail, but a crowd had gathered at the jail and we just knew we wouldn't be able to protect him from

the locals. There was some antagonism between the officers and some of the citizens. We were really concerned for his personal safety. Although I didn't see it, Farmer was supposedly put into a casket and smuggled out of town in a hearse.

HOW DID YOUR TROOPERS HANDLE THE HARRASSMENT?

It takes a special kind of person to work those details, I'll tell you that. You have to be even-tempered, you have to be able to remain calm in the face of adversity. You've got to be able to make quick decisions under fire. I would ask my men, can you look somebody in the face and not do anything if they spit in your face or throw urine on you. These things were common back then. It takes a real special person to be cool and collected and not start something that

would be hard to finish. I think, overall, the majority of our people were able to work effectively under the most intense pressure of situations in the sixties.

ANOTHER KIND OF DETAIL THAT TESTED YOUR TROOPS' PATIENCE AND TOLERANCE, WAS LOUISIANA'S ANSWER TO WOODSTOCK, THE ABORTED "CELEBRATION OF LIFE FESTIVAL" IN 1972. TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT IT.

I was still the Troop Commander at Troop I at the time. Major Aubrey Delatte and I worked that event together.

It was a wild affair. I don't think there's any other way to describe it. Where it was held west of Baton Rouge in a very rural area, it was almost impossible to get there. The narrow roads caused real traffic problems. There were cars and people everywhere. There were 50 or 60 thousand kids there at one time. They were running around with no clothes on, taking drugs, selling drugs, swimming in the Atchafalya River which ran next to the site. I don't know how many actually drowned, but several did, I know. A lot of those people came from all over the country and they had no idea that the Atchafalya wasn't the kind of river you swim in.

WHAT WAS THE MISSION OF YOUR MEN?

To just try and keep things orderly, to try and keep things from getting out of control. There was no way we could handle all the drugs being sold and taken. It was a real mess. If that was a celebration of life, then it was some life, I'll tell you that. Later, when I was a major, they wanted to have another celebration and we put that to rest.

NOW THAT YOU'VE BROUGHT UP THE ISSUE OF DRUGS, LET'S TALK ABOUT THAT FOR A MOMENT. WAS IT ABOUT THAT TIME THAT LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES BEGAN TO FOCUS SOME ATTENTION ON THE PROBLEMS OF DRUGS?

Yes, that's right. You see, at the festival, there were people from all over

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The Celebration of Life opened up rural Louisiana to the "counter culture."

knew what was going on, but I certainly didn't. For the trooper out there on the road putting in his time, drugs were the furthest thing from his mind.

I don't think any of us could have predicted what was going on or where it was going to end up. I still can't really believe it today.

WHAT'S THE ANSWER TO IT, IS THERE ONE?

I guess the best answer that I can think of right now is just grab hold of these young kids and educate them. The department I'm with now has a real good program going involving 4th, 5th and 6th graders. You have to get them at that stage or they'll be lost. You have to get their attention and keep it and be honest with them. More than anything else, education is the key.

You know we can make arrest after arrest after arrest and it doesn't seem to do any good. It's the same faces over and over and everybody becomes a victim. Of course, we can't stop making the arrests but you

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the country. They came from everywhere. I guess we had been sheltered to some extent, we weren't as familiar with drugs and the problems yet. I suppose it's fair to say that if we weren't in the dark, we were surely in the shadows. But when these people came here, it really heightened our awareness. It opened our eyes.

ABOUT EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO, THE DRUG CZAR ISSUED A REPORT IDENTIFYING THE DRUG HOT SPOTS IN THE COUNTRY INsofar AS TRAFFICKING IS CONCERNED. LOS ANGELES, SOUTH FLORIDA, HOUSTON, SAN DIEGO ALL WERE MENTIONED, BUT NOT LOUISIANA. WE WERE SURPRISED, WERE YOU?

I think that we are just as vulnerable as any other location, maybe more so. The size of our coast, the interstate highways, our closeness to South America, I think all those things influence the potential for smuggling which occurs here. We know for a fact, that the coast is used all the time from when I was in Baton Rouge and cases we've worked on here at the sheriff's office.

HAVING BEEN A POLICEMAN ALL YOUR LIFE, COULD YOU EVER HAVE ENVISIONED THE CURRENT EXTENT OF THE DRUG PROBLEM?

When I was growing up, I never heard the words marijuana or cocaine. Those were foreign to me. In fact, when I first came into law enforcement, those were foreign. During my first years as a trooper none of the guys on the road knew anything about drugs. Maybe some of those troopers at headquarters in Baton Rouge, like Johnny DeArmond,



Millet: I guess we had been sheltered to some extent. We just weren't prepared for the drug problem.

see kids involved at younger and younger ages. We have to continue to make arrests and seize property and work with the producing countries, but our only real hope, if there is one, is education.

***Our only real hope, if there is one,
is education.***



Millet (far left) attended State Police Camp-Win-A-Friend dedication ceremonies in Livingston Parish. On stage (l to r), former U.S. Representative Henson Moore, former Governor Edwards, Colonel Thibodeaux, retired Lieutenant John Rigol and Livingston Parish Sheriff Odom Graves.

THE ASSOCIATION AND ON TO BATON ROUGE

THE TROOPERS ASSOCIATION WAS ORGANIZED AND CHARTERED IN 1969. FROM WHERE YOU WERE AT THE TIME, WHAT WAS THE FEELING IN THE FIELD IN YOUR PART OF THE COUNTRY?

At the time that they were organizing it, we really weren't aware of why they were doing it, or what they were, at least not in our area. It was a movement that was kind of centered around Troop L (in Covington). People over here were apathetic, I suppose, but as a troop commander at the time, I can tell you it concerned me a little. I had some reservations.

People looked at the association as being the forerunner of a union and plenty of people were against that. But as the years went by we saw what the association was and what its purpose was and came to feel more comfortable about it.

I guess during Crip's (Colonel Donald Thibodeaux's) administration the association really gained momentum. I think he integrated it successfully into the mainstream

of the organization. When he took over in 1972, he got the association involved and used them to benefit not only the association, but the department as well.

WHEN YOU WERE SUPERINTENDENT, WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DID YOU HAVE WITH THE ASSOCIATION?

As far as I'm aware, I had a good relationship with the Association. I think I worked well with the people that were involved at the time, Steve Campbell, Perry Smith, Gary White, Pete Peters. I think I had a good relationship with all of them. I certainly tried hard to.

I recall the time when I was the Assistant Superintendent under Thibodeaux. There was talk about a union and a formal agreement and such so we got in touch with the IACP (International Association of Chiefs of Police) and one of their staff members came down and helped us draft a document, a binding agreement between the department and the association.

They turned it down though. I think they didn't like it because it considered everybody above the rank of sergeant to be management and only sergeants and below would have been covered by the agreement.

I think overall the association has been good for the Department. I would hope that it never turns into what I would feel would be a true union type organization, I just don't think it would be good for the department or the individuals in the association. That's my personal feeling.

I'm not against unions as a philosophy, just in the case of troopers. I think the unions have been good in a lot of respects for the working man and at the same time they have created some problems that have been detrimental to the working man. I look back to my first year on the job when we policed the strike at

continued



Millet: I'm not against unions as a philosophy, just in case of troopers.

Elizabeth. That thing went on for about two years and when all was said and done the National Labor Relations Board threw the whole thing out.

As I understand it, those people went on a strike because they wanted a raise and the old man that owned the plant from Florida gave them one. But he also fired five or six of the individuals that he identified as troublemakers. Well, the rest of the plant went out on strike and demanded that the fired workers be given their jobs back. The owner said he'd close the plant before he did that. They stayed on strike for two years. Those families didn't have any income other than what the union was giving them. And at the same time, they were staying in homes owned by the plant over there. Nothing fancy but nice substantial homes, they had a commissary, hospital and they lost all this. So in some respects, the union has brought some things to the forefront and at the same time, they have caused some other problems that have been hard for individuals to digest.

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT HOW IT WAS THAT YOU AND DONALD THIBODEAUX CAME TO KNOW EACH OTHER AND HOW YOU BOTH ENDED UP RUNNING STATE POLICE.

Years and years ago, I used to help them up there at Crowley High School when I was off duty. They had only two coaches at the time and I used to spend some off-duty time helping them coach football, boxing, some track, and such. Crip used to be out for football and I kind of coached him in football. I've known him since he was a kid.

AND THE NICKNAME CRIP?

Well, if you watch Donald, he kind of walks with a little two-step, so I've always called him Crip.

Anyway, Donald came into State Police about 1959 or 60, I'm not sure which. After he came out of the Academy, he went into Troop I and a short while after that he was assigned to my substation here in Crowley. When Troop N was formed, Don became my troop clerk and until he was accepted to attend the Traffic Institute in Evanston, Illinois. When he returned, he was assigned to headquarters.

About the time that Edwin (Edwards)

was elected governor in 1971, Crip came to me and asked if I was interested in trying to get the job of superintendent. I told him no. I wasn't interested in going to Baton Rouge at that time. He said, well he was interested and so I told him, well jump on it. Well, later he and I visited with Edwards' brother Nolan and it took off from there and he was appointed. Of course, Edwin knew both of us for a number of years. My aunt was Edwin's secretary.

I've told Donald before he was the best Superintendent we've ever had. As far as getting things done and not backing down on anything, he was the best. He knew the right direction for us to move. And of course, I know it wasn't easy sometimes when you deal with people at that level. Everything you do has some political ramification, everything affects

I've told Donald before he was the best Superintendent we've ever had.

somebody. I think he moved the Department in the right direction and very quickly. It goes without saying that he had a lot of help from Edwin as it relates to resources to get it done. Anytime you want to do something like that, you have to have the resources to get it done. But you also have to have the leadership to be able to follow through with it. I think that's where he came in.

But Donald kept enticing me to come to Baton Rouge and work with him. I just didn't want to pack up and move and all that kind of thing. All my kids were young, Josie was here. I guess I'm more closely devoted to my family than anything else. He called me one day from Baton Rouge in the latter part of 1975 and was insistent about me moving to headquarters. And I told him that I didn't want to leave Josie in a jam with all those six kids or was it five at the time? Anyway, he finally convinced me how important it was to him to be there and be part of the team. I had been a major in the region at the time and he just insisted. So I agreed.

FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, HAVING BEEN BOTH AN INSIDER AND AN OUTSIDER, DO YOU PREFER THE REGIONAL CONCEPT WHEREIN A MAJOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR INVESTIGATIVE AND TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS OVER A LARGE AREA, SAY A THIRD OF THE STATE?

Ronnie, I'm a very big believer in the regional concept. My feelings on the issue are quite strong. Let's take Region II for instance. I can look back before the regional concept came in when I was a Troop Commander and we would be contacted by a sheriff in our troop area. Maybe he needed some help or assistance on something that related to drugs or some other type of investigation.

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Millet addresses a group of Saudi Arabian police officers visiting Louisiana in 1978.

Well, then we would have to call headquarters in Baton Rouge and they would send someone from Baton Rouge, and always someone who wasn't familiar with the area, or the sheriff, or the chief of police or whomever. The person from HQ would not know anybody on a first name, personal basis. Whereas in the regional concept, the major and his assistant in charge of investigations, the captain knew all the sheriffs and all the chiefs and knew the area well. In a region arrangement, you know what's going on in your area, you're familiar with the problems, and the political groups. You're in a better position to deal with people and investigations. A relationship is built up over time and that relationship can be productive. But if you send in a stranger from Baton Rouge, you've got a lot of catching up to do.

SO YOU SEE THE STRENGTH OF THE REGIONAL CONCEPT AS BEING ONE OF RELATIONSHIPS AND LIAISON?

That's right. Knowing someone can go a long way in getting things done. I'm a great believer in the concept and was very disappointed several years ago when we went back to a centralized concept. I'm glad to see it back like it was.

WAS THIBODEAUX REALLY THE FIRST TO ORGANIZE THE STATE ALONG REGIONAL LINES?

Basically. Before, you had a Regional Commander who was a Major, but he didn't even have an office. He worked out of his car. If he had a meeting, he would go to a troop or somewhere. He was a major in name only. It was an organizational arrangement, rather than a practical or operational arrangement.

He had the authority to do certain limited things, but if somebody needed to contact him, they didn't know where to contact him other than to try and get him on the radio or by calling around to the different troops. Obviously, it wasn't a very efficient way of doing business.

COLONEL THIBODEAUX BROUGHT YOU OVER AS A DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT AND YOU LATER WERE APPOINTED AS SUPERINTENDENT. DID YOU HAVE ANY RELUCTANCE IN YOUR MIND ABOUT COMING IN BEHIND COLONEL THIBODEAUX, WHO HAD DONE SO MUCH, SO QUICKLY?

Well, I had no problem with that, other than Crip's shoes were big shoes to fill. He had done a lot very quickly and he was quite popular. But the way he did business, he was just a very good leader. There was just a certain way he had about doing things. I remember when he first took over the department, he set up a weekend meeting at a camp on the Mermentau River. He brought in certain people, certain key people from around the state. He considered them as being the nucleus of the department as it related to getting things done.

We talked about everything, looked over the organizational charts, went through everything discussing the best ways to get things accomplished, on how best to sell issues and concepts. The region arrangement, the car-per-man program, new equipment, we talked about all those things. He made it exciting.

YOU KNOW OUR CAR-PER-MAN PROGRAM HAS BEEN ONE OF OUR GREATEST ASSETS IN TERMS OF RECRUITING PEOPLE AND MOST SAY THE PROGRAM HAS ACTUALLY SAVED THE STATE MONEY OVER THE YEARS. BUT ITS USE HAS BEEN CUT BACK HERE, CHIPPED AWAY A LITTLE THERE. DO YOU THINK IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE TO EVENTUALLY LOSE THE PROGRAM?

I think it would be, Ronnie. I know a program like that costs money, but I think it's money well spent. If the original concept of the program is maintained, it'll

Ultimately, I believe, it's the troopers who will influence what happens to the program.

continue to prove itself a worthy program. If the troopers follow the guidelines, take care of the vehicles, and are attentive to



Millet knew it was time to go home. He is shown here (l) at his retirement reception with East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff Elmer Litchfield.

the public's perception of the car's usage, it'll survive.

But I think the individual trooper has to realize that he's part of that program. He's got certain responsibilities that he can't just fly by somebody that has a problem on the side of the road or fly by an accident that has occurred in front of him or maybe fail to give chase to something that is happening in front of him. I think he has to keep that in mind, because once the public turns against the off-duty usage, the Legislature won't be far behind. Ultimately, I believe, it's the troopers who will influence what happens to the program.

HOW DO YOU SEE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LEGISLATURE OUT HERE IN THE RURAL AREAS AWAY FROM BATON ROUGE?

I think, overall, State Police has a good reputation with the Legislature. I know all through my time with state police you always had some legislators who had an adverse outlook on state police for some reasons, but I think most legislators hold the troopers in high regard, so long as the agency programs satisfy them (the legislators). If they don't, they will put the screws to you, but that's just the way the game's played.

If legislators see that programs are operating like they are supposed to and not costing the state too much money, the appropriations will be provided. I

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think it's the responsibility of the powers that be within a department to be able to show them that any particular program is needed and why it is needed and how it's going to affect the people. Overall, I think the outlook is a respectable outlook toward the Department.

YOU WERE IN BATON ROUGE DURING THE REORGANIZATION OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT AND THE REORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY. SINCE YOU WERE THERE, WE'VE HAD A FURTHER REORGANIZATION. PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONS ARE ONE AGENCY. DO YOU AGREE WITH THAT CONCEPT?

I was there for reorganization and I got beat up pretty bad before the committee several times. I tried to be a bureaucrat. I guess I was trying to safeguard things, functions, that we had. I was trying to protect our overall operations. I tried to tell the committee that we could only reduce personnel by so much without impairing the efficiency of the agency. Well, the committee wasn't satisfied, saying I wasn't cooperating. The chairman went to the governor and complained and he called me and we talked.

I told Governor Edwards that certain operations and functions had been conducted by the agency for years and we couldn't change things overnight. Programs were in place and operating and we just couldn't slice X number of people here and X number there. It's just not that easy.

So Edwin told me to just try and work with them the best I could. And I can honestly say that nobody was trying to work with them any more than I was. I just thought the committee was having a hard time understanding the problem. They called me a bureaucrat, but they were just as big bureaucrats as I was. And the paperwork just about killed me. Tons and tons of paperwork and forms and reports.

After I left, the legislature was considering combining Public Safety with Corrections and all the former superintendents and directors got together — me, Thibodeaux, Burbank, Berthelot — and we all testified against the move. We told the committee that the two just did not belong together. They were at

opposite ends of the spectrum. It seems to me that it would have been easier to take one of the smaller departments with about 12 people and a two or three million dollar budget and put it in the governor's office or the lieutenant governor's office. That would have retained the 20 department maximum required by the constitution.

When (Governor Buddy) Roemer took office he asked for opinions from around the state about how government should operate. I sent my opinion to him and I never did hear anything from him. I wrote him a letter and related that he needed to seriously consider undoing the unjust consolidation of those two departments. I included a copy of a study from Maryland which supported my position. I never did receive an answer so I don't know where that suggestion went. Evidently someone on his staff saw my name on it and threw it in the trash can. Apparently whoever that was and I didn't see eye to eye.

AS A CHIEF DEPUTY FOR A SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT NOW, HOW DO YOU READ THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE POLICE AND THE SHERIFFS AROUND THE STATE?

I think the department has a good relationship with local people. I know in our area down here, Colonel Flores' return to the region concept has done much to promote that relationship. I think we have good rapport.

I think anytime you have departments like state police, sheriffs, and other local agencies, you'll have disagreements on various things. But I think that when you have people who are capable of communicating with each other, and who know each other, the majority of those disagreements can be worked out to everyone's satisfaction. I realize that it's hard to satisfy everybody, but I think as long as you can sit down and talk on a daily basis, or two or three times a week, or at least feel comfortable about talking through a difficult situation, then a resolution will be forthcoming.

DID YOU SUPPORT THE CONCEPT LAST FALL OF THE STATE POLICE COMMISSION CREATING A SEPARATE CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM?

I had some reservations, but that's just because I had some questions as to how

things were going to operate. I would be concerned if I knew that the commission would be empowered to appoint the superintendent. That would concern me greatly.

Otherwise, I believe as I said, I came in prior to civil service protection when it was strictly all political. I saw state police prosper and grow while under civil service and I saw a diminution of the politics. I am hopeful that the new commission will carry on the policy prohibiting the undue influence of politics. It's easy to criticize civil service and complain about the paperwork problems in getting jobs approved, or getting people promoted or people fired. But the true value of a system like that is the protection it provides employees. I knew that if we had to terminate someone for not properly performing his job, we had better have everything documented, all the "i's" dotted and "t's" crossed. And, frankly, that's the way it should be, otherwise the politicians can begin to drive an agency and that shouldn't happen. If the new system provides that kind of protection, then I'm certainly in favor of it.

IF A YOUNG MAN CAME TO YOU JUST OUT OF COLLEGE, HE HAD A DEGREE AND TOLD YOU THAT HE WAS ENTERTAINING THE THOUGHT OF JOINING STATE POLICE, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE HIM?

I would tell him to consider the choice carefully. He should think about what he'd be getting involved in, the type of work he'd be doing, the fact that he might have to relocate, that sort of thing. I would want him to think about the pay and the responsibility involved. I would ask, is your makeup such that you could do the kind of work required? Above all else, I'd try and find out if that's what he really wanted to do. I would ask him are you sure you want to be a police officer, a state trooper?

LOOKING BACK OVER YOUR 28 YEARS WITH STATE POLICE, WHAT MAKES YOU MOST PROUD?

I think just being a member of the Department more than anything else. Being able to serve the people. You know most people look at police as the deterrent to crime and things like that.

continued



It does disturb me that you walk in and see Governor Treen's name on the commemorative plaque.

I've always looked at it as being a service to the people. We're service oriented, helping people. Even in arresting an individual, someone is benefiting from that arrest. If you put a drunk in jail, you're perhaps preventing him from killing himself or someone else. That's service to the public. But I think the bottom line has got to be I was pleased to be of service to the people I lived with, worked with and saw everyday. The thing that makes you proud is the thing which prompted you to join state police in the first place, the desire to serve.

It does disturb me that you walk in and see Governor Treen's name on the commemorative plaque.

On a more practical level, it makes me feel good to see the training academy facility sitting there, to know that I was able to secure the 17 million dollars to get it finished. I'm proud of that too. It does disturb me however, that you walk in and see Governor Treen's name on the commemorative plaque. The money for that facility was approved and the construction took place during Governor Edwards' term of office. The region headquarters in Lafayette, it's the same thing there too. I just don't think that it was appropriate for one administration to assume personal credit for a project which wasn't of their making.

But I'm very proud of the facility and proud of the contributions I made in getting it completed.

ANY REGRETS?

No, not at all. I came much further than I ever thought I would. I had no idea, when I went into the department where I would wind up. You always have a secret idea in the back of your head that one day you might run things, but you never think about it much and you never know until it happens. Like Crip says, being in the right place at the right time has as much to do with it as anything else.

AND IT HAPPENED TO YOU?

Yeah. I'm proud of that and the rest of my years as well. I love State Police and I love the people that continue to work there. Many old friends have gone elsewhere. Some have passed away and some are still there, like Mary Lou (Williams, the Colonel's assistant). She's been around state police a long time, but you can still call her today and she'll go out of her way to help you. She's like so many good people there. That's what state police is all about. □

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