

Feature Interview:

Colonel Donald J. Thibodeaux

There's a cartoon in Don Thibodeaux's scrapbook that just jumps out at you. It shows a dour-looking executioner with his axe weighing away heavy on his shoulder as he waits for his next subject to step up to the wooden chopping block. The subject looks understandably outcast and shaken. The executioner remarks, "Now don't take this personal or anything." And the subject pleads, "But colonel . . ."

Perhaps the cartoon is a little unfair in characterizing the administration of one of the most controversial superintendents in state police history. And it is unfortunate that so many remember Thibodeaux's techniques rather than his results. But few can deny, even those who lost their heads to the basket, that the state police Donald Thibodeaux left to the citizens of Louisiana in 1976 was a decided improvement over the one he took over in 1972.

By the time he left, those outside the organization saw a more polished, proud, seemingly omnipresent, professional cadre of men. Those inside, those who survived, were fortunate to have been part of a revolution in state police, a

revolution carried out pursuant to Thibodeaux's plan and vision.

It wasn't, however, as some would have you believe, a revolution against people. It was a revolution *against* politics, and parochialism, and kingdoms. It was a revolution against what had happened to the Louisiana State Police over the years. The organization had stagnated. Benign neglect had taken its toll.

Welfare Kids

Thibodeaux had always known that he would excel at something in life. He knew it from childhood. He says, he "was driven."

Thibodeaux's father died when Donald was 3. His mother struggled with 3 jobs to keep Don and his two sisters fed and clothed. In the years before and during World War II, times were tough all over south Louisiana. They seemed to be especially tough to Don Thibodeaux.

He recalls attending Catholic schools as a child and at the start of each session, the Sisters would ask all those who were "welfare kids" to step to the front of the room. Having done so, the Sisters could then determine who would owe money for the next term (welfare children attended free).

Thibodeaux clearly remembers the embarrassment and humiliation he felt while standing at the front of the class as a child. That feeling would stay with him into adulthood, but he would transfer the hurt into drive, the pain into compassion.

After high school, a stint in the Army and a brief time in college, he joined the ranks of state police in September of 1959. Even though it would prove to be a serendipitous choice, he admittedly joined, like so many other guys at the time, because he "needed a job."

It was then that he came under the direct influence of the man he calls his mentor in life,

his hero, Malcolm Millet. He says that he learned much about life and people from Millet. Many of those lessons he would carry with him through his career.

And in those early years he also learned much about the in's and out's of state police. Much of what he learned in that regard, he didn't like.

He didn't like the way that politicians made promotions in the organization, despite the fact that he attributes his first two to the same politics. He didn't like the way that administrators simply ignored what he considered to be constructive input from field level personnel. He didn't like the way that state police had grown into a gruesomely top-heavy organization of 300 troopers and 300 supervisors.

But he knew if he could better himself, he could better this organization he was learning to love. When he went to Northwestern University for a year in 1969 he mixed with 55 other middle- and upper-level police administrators from around the country. He did more listening than talking and he learned quickly. He came back energized. He

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Thibodeaux's father died when Donald was three; but his upbringing would provide him with an intense drive to succeed.

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came back with a mission. And, within three years, his spirit of ambition crystallized into a plan of action.

When Edwin Edwards was inaugurated for his first time as governor in 1972, Don Thibodeaux was standing directly behind him. Thibodeaux was the youngest superintendent of state police in the country.

When Edwards made the appointment, he promised Thibodeaux that he would not interfere in the administration of the agency but he wanted one thing in return: the best state police organization in the country at the end of four years. Edwards lived up to his end of the bargain. So did Thibodeaux.

The Executioner's Axe

When Thibodeaux took over in 1972, he knew that he had to work quickly. He had to get the politically disagreeable things done in the first year, and he set about the business at hand.

He surrounded himself with a team of independent, innovative young command officers. Together they worked on a reorganization plan. He visited each field office and met every trooper. He formed a coalition with the troopers and promised better pay, better equipment, and better facilities. But more importantly he promised to return pride to the organization. He promised to do that by making the troopers professionals in their own right. It was a message most longed to hear.

Old command officers who did not believe in the "new professionalism" Thibodeaux was bringing on board were given a choice, either leave voluntarily or be forced to leave. Virtually everyone left voluntarily. That process of excising and purging the supervisory ranks caused Thibodeaux more anguish than any other reorganization task. Today he readily admits that many of the officers forced into retirement "were good men with big hearts." But he knew at the time that they had to go.

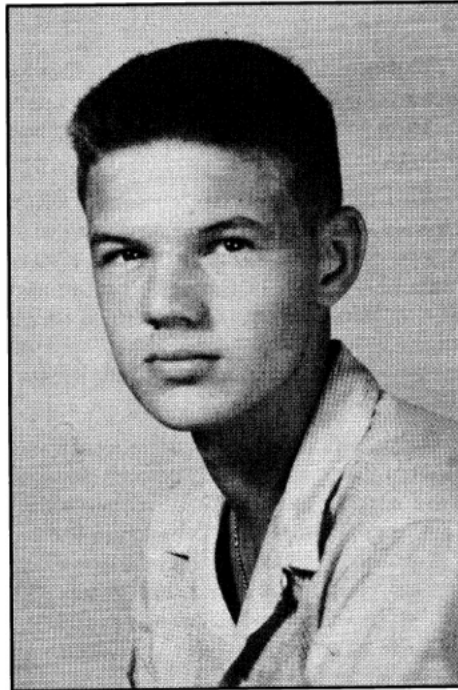
Soon he began, little by little, to eliminate the external influence of politics on internal matters. And he taught and encouraged troopers in the subtle manner of using external politics to enhance the collective good of the state police. Individual agendas and goals became subordinate to those of the organization as a whole. He targeted

incompetence, indifference and ineptitude where he found it.

The number of changes was matched only by the speed with which they came.

He supported and strengthened the Troopers' Association. He used it, either directly or indirectly, to build legislative support for his programs.

During his first four years, Thibodeaux created an enhanced Regional organizational structure, reduced the span-of-control, assigned every officer a personal



After Thibodeaux left the Catholic elementary school system, he attended Crowley High School. It was there that he would first come under the influence of Malcolm Millet who helped coach football.

vehicle, closed and consolidated troops, won the right for troopers to enforce the laws throughout the state (including within municipalities), raised the pay of officers, increased the size of the organization by 200 officers, reduced the state's traffic accident fatality rate to the lowest ever, created an internal investigative section, reduced the headquarters commissioned staff, initiated an employee-based merit promotional system and a fleet accident review procedure.

His job wasn't always easy. He fought intransigence on a daily basis. But as he continued his work he found one foe of

prior administrations absent—the internal foe. Because he had successfully forged a coalition with those under his command, he could free himself to fight the external threats to progress and professionalism.

Introductory Epilogue

In retrospect, it's phenomenal that Donald Thibodeaux was so successful in his endeavors at state police. After all, he wasn't just fighting the system, he was changing the system.

Though his accomplishments have been widely recognized and applauded, he is by no means universally admired for his tenure at state police. It should surprise no one that his loudest critics are those who got bloodied in organizational skirmishes with him. But even those who characterize his management style as ruthless, recognize that when it came to leadership, he had no equal. And perhaps, above all other qualities, it was essentially Thibodeaux's leadership which ultimately made the difference.

Someone once said, "Leadership is action, not position." Read what Don Thibodeaux has to say, and you be the judge.

INTERVIEW

I noticed on a report you completed shortly after you joined state police, that you listed your nationality as "Acadian French." From that, I have to assume that you're proud of your heritage.

Well, I'm really proud of being cajun. I went to Catholic school as a young boy. I didn't understand why I couldn't speak French, I wondered what I had to hide. Was there something wrong with my French background, why didn't they want me talking about being cajun? I kind of grew up with the notion that it was something that I was supposed to hide. But later it became clear that they wanted us to learn English and not speak French. It wasn't so much of a cultural thing as it was an educational thing. They wanted to teach us the language. In fact, I couldn't speak English until I was six years old. But I've always been French Acadian and I'm very proud of that.

You stayed in Catholic school until entering Crowley, didn't you?

That's right, I transferred to Crowley

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when I started the seventh grade. I finished school there. I wanted to go to college after graduation, but I didn't really have the money, so a buddy and I one day decided it was time to do something so we joined the paratroopers. We just went down and joined the 11th Airborne. That was in 1955. I spent 28 months in Germany and got out in 1958.

When I came back to Crowley, I'd saved enough money to go to college. I wasn't married yet and stayed with my

There was nothing in my upbringing that influenced me in joining State Police, . . .

mother until the money for school ran out. I just figured I'd go back to school when I earned enough money to return. It was then that my brother-in-law told me about State Police. Quite frankley, I had no inkling about joining State Police.

And you found out they were hiring?

Yeah, Senator Bill Cleveland was our Senator then and he was good friends with my uncle. So my brother-in-law and I talked to my uncle and my uncle talked to Bill Cleveland and I got the test scheduled. I went and took it and made a good grade, a 92 I think.

So I was hired with Bill's help, but I just considered it a job, just a job. There was nothing in my upbringing that influenced me in joining State Police, I really didn't get interested in it until I was hired. And I credit Malcolm Millet with getting me interested. He was a sergeant in charge of my substation here in Crowley. Because of him, I began to grow and develop; and I just figured, it's time for me to do something with my life. I patterned myself after him.

Was Millet your mentor?

Oh sure. I knew him back in high school when he helped coach, but I really learned to appreciate him when I joined State Police.

Do you remember your first day of work?

No, not really.

Do you remember anything significant



A 28 month stint in the 11th Airborne in Germany would provide Thibodeaux with enough money to start college when he returned to Crowley in 1958.

about it?

I was assigned straight out of school to the sub-station. It was small. I remember writing a ticket, my first ticket. I was nervous as a cat. I walked up to the car and it was a lady. I just stood there and could hardly speak. I was a mess of nerves, and couldn't remember everything they taught me at school.

Charlie Vanderstein and Joe Castille broke me in. They were assigned to the sub-station when I got there. I worked with them for four or five months and then we started working alone in separate units.

How tough was it working right here in your own backyard?

It was convenient but you know, it's hard to police your own town, especially when it's a small town like this one. Heck, I just finished partying myself. I was pretty wild. And there I was with all my buddies still hanging around the joints where we would go to pick up drunk drivers and everything else. It's a thing you have to go through. One of the bad things about policing your own town is running into old buddies, especially at that age. Most of them were still there from high school or service or whatever and they were scattered throughout the area. It sure makes it tough. But that didn't stop me from doing what I had

to do. I wrote up as many of my friends as I did anybody else.

What year did you come on?

In 1959. I stayed at the sub-station until 1969. That's when I went to Northwestern (University's Traffic Institute in Evanston, Illinois).

What was your motivation for going to Northwestern?

Quite honestly, a sense of guilt, I guess. You see, I had made sergeant and lieutenant strictly as a result of my politics, because of the political connections I had. I had always made a good grade on my promotional exams, but that didn't matter in those days. If you didn't have politics you could make any grade on the test and you still wouldn't make it.

I remember a fellow named Richard Broussard, a trooper, retired a trooper, and he would whip all of us on the test every time. He was a fine gentleman, everyone knew he should be a sergeant but Richard never would play politics. And when I saw that he had been on before I came on, and I played the game and made rank before he did, it just bothered me. When I saw that I said, hey, I'm going to play the game. It's like that old drive I told you about, the drive to succeed. But I knew that to get ahead

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you had to play the game.

It was a necessity, right?

Yeah, that's the way it was, I mean that was life. I made Sergeant that way through Bill Cleveland and when the lieutenant position came up, that's when Edwin (Edwards) was a senator and he helped. But it was Judge Edmund Reggie who I really attribute my lieutenant's promotion to. They are the two who got together when McKeithen was in office. And they spoke to McKeithen about promoting me to Lieutenant.

I made it right there in the sub-station. I was the troop clerk. I knew I wasn't prepared to be a lieutenant. I wasn't prepared to supervise older guys. I was a young guy and there I was supervising older guys, guys who'd been on the job a lot longer than me. As troop clerk, I didn't have to directly supervise, just oversee the paperwork, their reports and stuff. But I guess I realized at that time how ill-prepared I was to supervise as I would have to eventually do.

That's when the idea of Northwestern came up. I wanted to get some kind of schooling, so I sent my application in and it came back that I'd been accepted. I went up in 1969.

Did you ever feel the resentment of others for the way you made sergeant and lieutenant?

I think so. I tried to get along with the older guys as best I could but I know there was resentment.

I didn't feel bad about it after I had returned from Northwestern, because then I felt qualified, like I deserved it. But before that I felt a little like I didn't really deserve the promotions. I never did try and push my rank on others, I wasn't that kind of person.

Politics and police work just don't mix. If you let politics get involved you have those kind of things that happen. It's not fair to the older people who might be better educated, better trained, with

*I realized at that time
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more time, more experience and everything, but they happen. Experience and everything. You know if you make rank under those circumstances, you know that it's not worth a damn.

What kind of influence did the Northwestern experience have on you?

It was probably the biggest thing that ever happened in my life. I didn't have any supervisory knowledge or skills

before going. I did not even know what supervisory responsibilities were. Even though I always tested well, the questions on supervisory tests were always real general. I didn't know technique, I didn't understand concepts. Northwestern helped me in that regard.

But Northwestern probably did more to help me understand what management was all about, to understand the relationships. Actually, I probably learned more by having been a supervisor first and not understanding what the hell was going on. But by the time I got to Northwestern, I had seen all the problems now being discussed in management classes, things like discipline and such. As a troop clerk, even though you aren't doing the managing or commanding, you are able to see what's happening around the troop all day, like the way the captain is trying to handle a complaint or discipline an officer. By having seen all that, I had a better insight into what was being told to me in school.

For the first time in my life, I began to understand the basics of organization and structure, and all the abstract concepts.

Was there anything you learned about our organization from associating with officers from around the country?

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"The class of '59." Thibodeaux, like so many others, joined state police because he needed a job.

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Yeah, I was embarrassed as hell for our organization. We obviously were very behind the times.

Take our span of control for example. We had a span of one to one, one supervisor for every worker in the organization. There were like 600 troopers and 300 supervisors. That just embarrassed the hell out of me.

After I took over as Superintendent, which wasn't but a couple of years after I came back from Northwestern, I looked at all of this more in depth. Take some of the parish people for example. In Richland, I think you had 2 lieutenants and no troopers. They were both parish men and because they knew some politician, they each made lieutenant. That was just ridiculous. In Tangipahoa Parish, you had like 7 sergeants and 1 trooper in the sub-station over there. That's the kind of things I was confronted with when I came back and started looking at our organization.

As soon as I started talking with people at Northwestern who came from well organized agencies, they would tell me, Hey, ya'll have got a real problem back in Louisiana.

Now when you returned from Northwestern, where were you assigned?

I made Captain in Baton Rouge under Colonel Bertholot and I did that strictly on merit, no politics whatsoever. I was assigned to the Traffic Records and Analysis Section. That assignment gave me the chance to put some of my Northwestern training to good use.

And you were assigned to Baton Rouge when Edwards won his first gubernatorial election. How did you come to be appointed to the top job?

Rodney LeBlanc, he was a sergeant working under me at the time and he suggested that with Northwestern behind me and my association with the people in Crowley, I should take a shot at the Superintendent's job. One of the first people I talked to was Millet, because if he had any intensions about trying for the job, then I wasn't about to try. But he told me that he wasn't interested in moving to Baton Rouge and he encouraged me to go for it.

So the three of us, myself, Rodney, and Millet spoke to Edwin's brother, Nolan, about the appointment. Nolan was an assistant district attorney at the

time and he knew me well. He just took the bull by the horns and did what was necessary. He knew my background and

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everything and he spoke to Edwin on my behalf. And between my friends in Crowley and Sheriff Arceneaux it just happened.

When you started the process of trying for the top job, did you have a realistic expectation of getting the appointment?

Not really. They had all these other Lieutenant Colonels hanging around Baton Rouge trying for the same thing. And here I was, this upstart Captain



Many attribute Thibodeaux's success to his personable, hands-on management style. He frequently visited the troops, and is shown here with Troop D commander Homer Jones (left) and then-Major Malcolm Millet, discussing enforcement problems associated with the new national 55 mph speed law.

trying against them. I didn't honestly think that it would all come together.

And when you were finally appointed, as I recall, you were the youngest superintendent in the country weren't you?

Yeah. In the history of State Police and in the country, I was 34 years old. I had been on the job about 14 or 15 years at that point.

Did that cause you any apprehension knowing that you didn't have your 20 years yet?

It sure did. I knew that every super-

intendent before me had had their time in before taking the job. I thought about that every day. I gave up the security of retirement and just went in and tackled it. I knew what I wanted to do, I knew that I'd be controversial.

Knowing that, one of the first things I tried to do was reconcile the two elements of the job. There was the professional element and then there was the political element. You had both and you couldn't ignore either. I'd seen a lot of people fail because they did not recognize that you had these two competing interests and that one system couldn't run the other. It takes a real balancing of those interests to be successful. You have to keep your objectivity about the two. And it was my failure in balancing those interests that led to my retirement. That's what caused my demise really. It was just a

conflict between me and the Governor, nothing bad, and he was certainly within his right to do it. But I told him that his intentions put me in a bad position, that I had found myself torn between my loyalty to my troopers and my loyalty to him. And because I didn't want to cross him and I certainly didn't want to cross state police, I took a walk.

But there was certainly a lot of compromise that occurred before that, you had been successful in using politics to your advantage before your falling out with the governor.

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When a tornado hit Thibodeaux's hometown of Crowley, several tactical teams were mobilized to assist local officials.

Yeah, but this wasn't that kind of compromise, this was a direct conflict whereas the others had been indirect. Before that I had always been able to meander between the two elements, to sneak around and take care of the politics first. If I wanted to do something in the organization, I would always line up my politics first.

Take for example, the personnel problems I had to confront. There were a lot of captains that I had to get rid of, they needed to retire, but they all had their local politicians taking care of them. So what I'd do is I'd spend all one night calling the politicians in a local troop area and tell them, this captain has got to go. I'd tell the senators and representatives why it had to be done and what I wanted to accomplish. I always liked to strike while the iron was hot. I'd tell the politicians that this was just something that was going to happen and I really didn't want to get the governor involved and I'd be glad to take the heat.

And inevitably, I'd get them on my side. Then the next day, I'd call the captain and give him the bad news. Of course, when we finished on the phone, he'd call all his local people looking for help, but

it was too late since I'd already laid the groundwork for the move. I'd just tell the commander this is the way it's going to be and if you won't leave voluntarily, I'll have to force you out, you just don't fit into our system. And many of these

We started restructuring right away by moving out as many of the ones who didn't fit into the new system.

people we forced to leave were really good people, they were just brought up in different times. They didn't fit our new image.

Some of these captains were the same ones who promoted people because of their politics and not their abilities and I was determined to see those things changed. I was hell-bent on moving our organization from a political one to a professional one. And I was wise enough to know that I better get it done in the first year of the governor's term or I'd never succeed. Had I tried to do all this right before an election, I'd have never gotten it done. I reorganized the entire

agency in the first year. We got rid of about 100 people that first year.

Were those mostly ranking positions?

Yeah. We started restructuring right away by moving out as many of the ones who didn't fit into the new system. And I really didn't do this alone. I could not have accomplished it by myself. The moves were made after consulting with my staff and deciding what would be best for the organization. We were trying to get the supervisory/subordinate ratio straight, and since we were top-heavy, that's where we had to begin. I wanted to get the ratio to 1 to 4 and even that was a little too liberal, but we could live with it.

Within that structure, I then went about resolving the lieutenants and sergeant disparity. So what I did was if I had ten lieutenants and one trooper in any location, I'd tell them that there could only be four lieutenants. Nobody would be busted but some of the lieutenants would simply have to work as sergeants, they'd have to work the road or whatever until through attrition we solved the problem of too many supervisors.

My goal was to have four lieutenants at every troop and 8 sergeants. But I had a ton of sergeants because many of the parish people were sergeants. So what I told them was, you can either come to the troop every day and work as a supervisor or stay in the parish as a trooper. That's about the time I started the senior trooper program to compensate those people. That way the sergeants were able to save some of their self-esteem. Many of these people were damn good workers. The system just couldn't have them holding supervisory rank with no one to supervise.

By this time, everybody knew I meant business. We were going to straighten things out. I think a couple of people tried to use the governor against me but the governor backed me all the way. I've got to hand it to him, he really stuck by me. Some of them even went through the first lady trying to prevent me from doing what was necessary. But the governor wouldn't get involved. He had told me when I got the appointment that he wanted the best state police organization in the country in four years, and that's what I tried to give him.

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Did some try to undermine your efforts?

Sure, they'd go to the governor or whoever and the governor would tell them to go to Hell that he wasn't going to interfere. And after a while the troops started to get the message, if you mess with politics too much you won't get

. . . they'd go to the governor or whoever and the governor would tell them to go to hell that he wasn't going to interfere.

promoted. Period. I just about got to the point where no one would call a senator or representative to ask for help. I wouldn't forbid it mind you. I'd just say o.k., put the letter from the politician in the guy's file and when he would come up before the Merit Board for a promotion, everybody would see the letter. And I would tell them, don't blame me if the board sees the letter as being negative. So I used the political leverage they tried to use negatively against them. But I think that those old politics may have crept back into the system a little since I left.

To make it work, you have to stay on top of the political thing every day and you have to have that close relation-

ship with the governor. That's the only way you can have the authority, be it vested or not vested, formal or informal. You've got to have the hammer man. You don't necessarily have to use it, but you have to have it.

On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being excellent or the most positive, rank the following as you found them when you took over as superintendent. Morale.

Oh, I would say about a 5.

How about equipment?

Hell, about a 3.

Pay?

About a 3.

Discipline?

About a 7 or 8.

Public confidence in state police?

6 or 7.

Physical facilities?

6 or 7.

What were your immediate priorities when you took over? What were the first things you wanted to do?

Getting the field to understand that I didn't want them to run to their damn politicians trying to put pressure on my ass. I visited every troop in the state and that's the first thing I told them, don't mess with politics. I'm here, I'm the man

and I've got more politics than any of ya'll do. Don't forget it. That was the underlying message that I sent out.

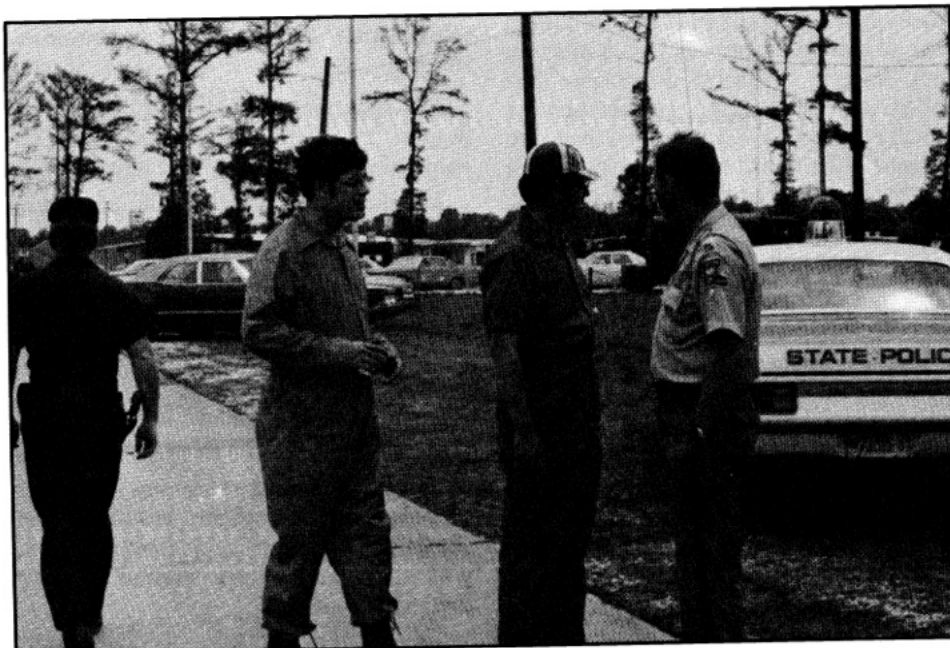
What else were you immediately concerned about?

About the self actualization on the part of every Trooper. That was the second message I had. I would tell them that each one had the right to influence my decision, but individually or collectively, none will dictate what I would do.

Along those same lines, I wanted to try and build up the collective authority of the Troopers' Association, my idea being that when I left, if there wasn't a superintendent with as much political stroke as I had had, or someone who was weaker, the Association would be strong enough to keep the politics to a minimum. Helping the Association develop into a strong entity was a primary objective of mine.

I wanted to make sure there was some mechanism for input. I was going to run everything, but I wanted everybody else's ideas as well. I remember I called a meeting right before I took over and brought together a number of lieutenants and captains, nobody above the rank of

I wanted to try and build up the collective authority of the Trooper's Association . . .



Paul Hayes (second from left), a Deputy Commissioner of Administration, was a frequent visitor to state disaster scenes providing immediate equipment and logistical support. Thibodeaux is third from left.

captain. We even had some sergeants and troopers. I wanted 15 or 20 of the most professional people in the organization and we sat around and talked things out, not as ranking officers, but as policemen.

This session, I mapped out my strategy and set the format for the next four years. We all agreed on it that this was the plan, this was the way things were going to be done. Some changes were necessary and we were going to see the process through.

I also knew that some of my captains were going to be the biggest obstacle to change. So after getting started, I told the captains that if a trooper came to them with an idea, or the association came to them with an idea, they had to listen. I told them he doesn't have to

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go along with the idea, but he's got to listen. That was my philosophy. The way we made it work was simple. Let's say that having expressed an idea, the captain rejected, a good idea, the troop association affiliate gets together with the association as a whole and sells them on the idea. Then the association can come to see me with the idea. I tried to teach the troops how to build coalitions to get things done. And no captain wanted an idea, a good idea, to get to me after he had rejected it. That process helped forge a productive relationship between my office and the field. And in the process, it got the commanders on board too. They saw I meant business.

So one of your chief goals in the reorganization was to involve everyone?

I think deep inside everybody knew that our structure was all screwed up, and our personnel management system, the system in itself was all screwed up. I found no input from the bottom of the organization whatsoever; no participatory management. My problem with not permitting input came from my days as a trooper.

I remember how outraged I'd get when a lieutenant would call me in and say this ticket was fixed for this politician or whatever. I was at a troop meeting and the major was there and I remember asking why we had to keep fixing these tickets for these politicians. And I recall the major just came unglued and talked

Headquarters probably caused me my biggest problem.

about how the system worked. I said to myself, bullshit. There I was this lowly trooper expressing a problem, looking for help with a solution and I get this kind of answer. He had an obligation to go further with the issue and try to resolve it but he never did. I knew we had to provide some means, some mechanism for addressing problems.

But I wanted to provide the means to channel input for discussion, not to dictate policy but for the sake of discussion. That's one thing I held to throughout my administration, the Association was encouraged to provide input, put policy was a management prerogative.



In 1973, a nationwide job action by the trucking industry threatened to shut down traffic on Interstate highways. Here Thibodeaux and Governor Edwards pledged that troopers will keep the roads open by physically removing trucks if necessary.

What would you say was the key to your success in getting things turned around at state police?

Very simple, I took care of the troopers, professional-wise, pay-wise, the whole works, the whole gamut of it all. When things started to improve around state police, the troopers would talk to their local politicians and tell them how things had improved and how we were moving into new directions. The politicians, of course, would then be more inclined to help when I went to the legislature to ask for money or people or whatever. It was a round robin thing. The troopers blew my horn to the politicians and the politicians would hear from constituents how much more professional the troopers were, and then they (the politicians) would be inclined to help me. And that made it easier for me to do things for the troopers and so forth. And it's simple as hell if you sit down and just figure it out before you do it. You don't have any conflict; you're allowing the masses to control the whole system.

So, even though they were getting involved in politics, it wasn't on a personal basis, it was on a conceptual level, what's best for the organization,

not what's best for the individual trooper. And I would let them sell this concept to the politicians and they in turn would approve my requests for more assistance.

When you came in you really did some things to the organization—you created some sections, you pared some down and eliminated others—what was your most controversial change?

Headquarters probably caused me my biggest problem. Everything was so damned centralized. So that when I tried

I was calling everybody in the state. I would call the troops every night and talk to the dog shift.

to rearrange things there was all kinds of resistance. Everybody stood to lose something in the process, esteem, stature, you name it. Nobody wanted to have their status affected.

After I started getting my people

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involved (Jim) Champagne, (Rodney) LeBlanc, and those people, people who thought like me, we began to implement some changes. I still remember some of the rank fighting me on decentralization. But they were all gone within a year. When any of them would screw up, which was inevitable, I would just ask them. Will you leave or do you want me to document this? I don't think I had one person fight me on the personnel changes.

Now my work was cut out for me, that's for sure. Take the investigative people for example. They were all sergeants, but they weren't supervising anybody. It was my position that if we needed to give them extra money, let's do what was necessary like getting them hazardous duty pay or whatever, but let's just don't promote people to pay them

I had plans of closing both H and K when I was there, but I just couldn't get all the politics straight.

more. I don't believe in making somebody a sergeant based on technical expertise. If a person happened to be a technician then let's take him out of the rank structure and treat him differently. Let's not destroy our rank structure to accommodate the few.

Some have characterized your management style as fast and furious. Is that accurate?

Yeah, fast and furious but always aimed at an objective that I had. Always within the realms of that objective.

Then you were fairly confident and sure of yourself in terms of where you wanted to take the organization?

I stayed up until 2:00 every morning thinking about where I wanted to go and planning how to get there.

That's interesting that you mentioned that, because at your going away party, several of your key staff members said they'd miss the phone calls in the middle of the night. What were they talking about?

Oh yeah, I would call people all evening long, up until 1:00 or so in the morning.

What were you doing up at 1:00 in the

morning, dealing with state police business?

I was calling everybody in the state. I would call the troops every night and talk to the dog shift. I would call all over the place and just ask what's going on. You find out a lot of stuff just talking to a desk sergeant or a shift lieutenant in the field. When you finally get that trooper who's working the desk in Shreveport by himself, you can find out a lot about the state of affairs.

Did that benefit you well in terms of running the organization?

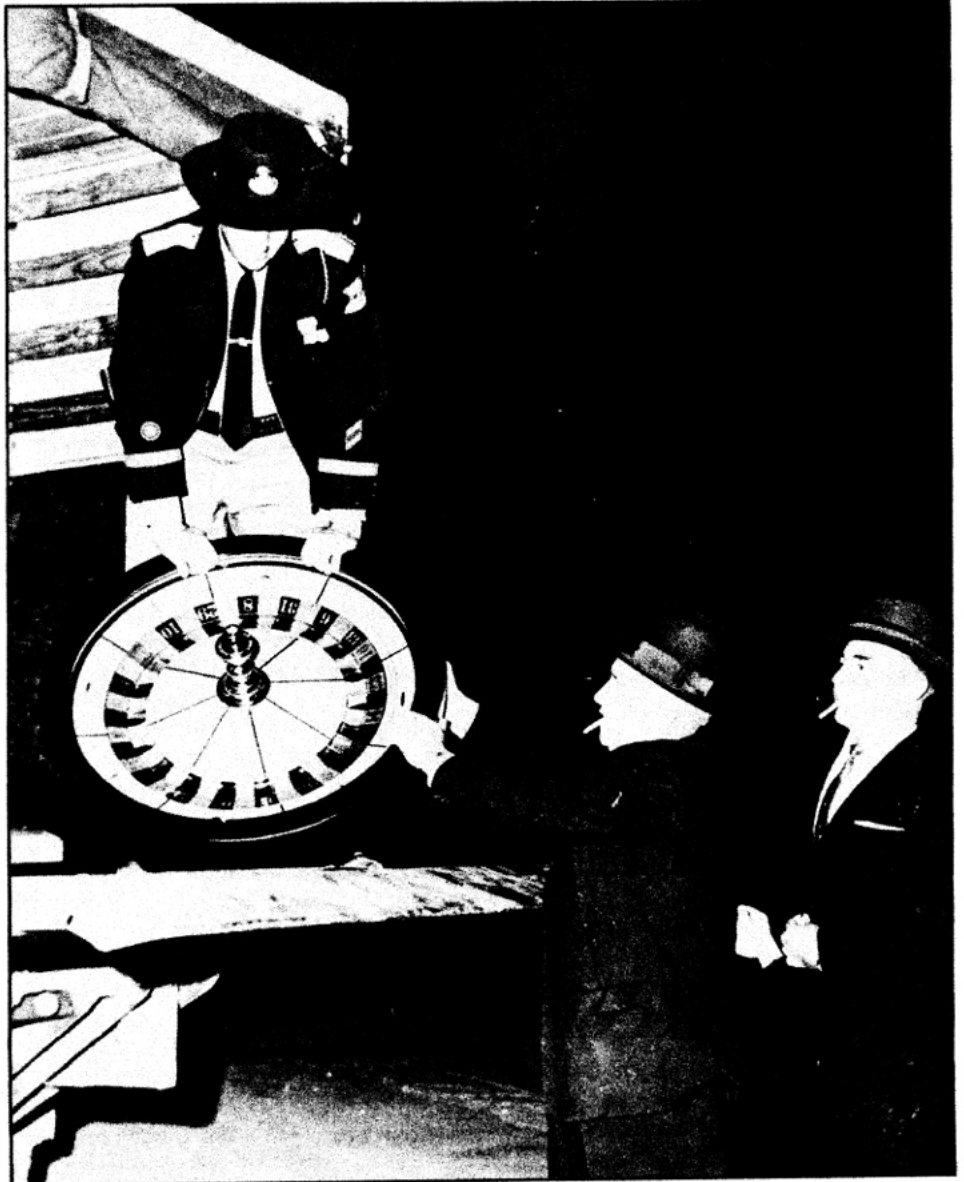
Very much so. I'd get a good feel for the local troop situation. If I call somebody tonight and talk to him and

call back tomorrow night and talk to somebody else, I could pretty well find out what was going on around that troop—the disenchantments, who was goofing off, who was working hard, that sort of thing. It's actually kind of funny, because nobody could figure out where I was getting my information. I had a good network established.

You were a direct benefactor of one of the smaller troops having been first assigned to the sub-station in Crowley. Once you took over, didn't you realize that those operations were organizational dinosaurs?

Oh absolutely, they were then and they

continued



Periodic and infrequent gambling raids by state police had characterized most prior administrations. Thibodeaux shocked and offended sheriffs around the state in 1973 by telling them to clean up their own parishes or "state police would do it for them."

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In 1975, Thibodeaux and the Troopers' Association successfully passed legislation including troopers in state supplemental pay. It would later be called "hazardous duty" pay. Left to right, Edwards, Thibodeaux, and LSTA President Donald Breaux.

are today. I closed Troop C during my administration and we had a lot of money in those days. I also wanted to close Troops K and H because they didn't belong. They were just stuck out there for political reasons. General Wade had done away with M and N before I took over and I closed C in Franklin, it was right between Raceland and Lafayette, a little old biddy area. The area had no population, no business, no real need for a troop. Look at Troop H in Leesville, they really don't need a troop there. I notice there's a sub-station there now or something, and I don't know why that was done, but that's nothing but pure politics at work. I had plans of closing both H and K when I was there, but I just couldn't get all the politics straight. If I'd had another 4 years, I probably could have gotten it done, but it took all the politics I had just to close C.

Troops end up being little power bases for politicians and troopers. The captain, the lieutenant, even the sergeants have their own little kingdom and let's admit it, everybody wants their own little kingdom. But when these guys see their kingdoms being busted up and realize they'll have to travel further just to get to work, that gives them incentive to play hardball.

But those troops should never have been organized to begin with. You have

to be a S.O.B. like me to try and break them up. You just can't be a nice guy about it.

Where did your idea for setting up the regions come from?

Wanting to get politics off my back.

Was that a primary reason for doing it?

Well, actually yes. I had visited the Virginia State Police on my Northwestern field trip and they had a regional set-up. I had a long talk with some of the men, some of the majors there and as it turns out, when you have majors out in the field between the superintendent and the politicians, the majors can absorb a lot of the political flack before it reaches headquarters. With majors in the regions, I wouldn't have to deal with sheriffs everyday. You create a level of professionalization between the superintendent and other entities. Local sheriffs or chiefs first have to go through the major to get to me, and those kind of conflicts don't come up until they're a serious issue and at that point, the superintendent can step in and help resolve the problem. You become a mediator, a problem solver. The chief or the sheriff sees the major as being the S.O.B. and they see the superintendent as being the hero.

Now that doesn't mean that I'd always go along with either one or the other.

It just means that I act as the great compromiser, the problem solver.

That's one reason. The second reason, there are so many things that you can do in 3 areas of the state that you can't do in 11 areas like helicopter patrol, stock patrol, detectives, and narcotics officers. You can't have those functions in every troop but you can have them in the regions.

One of the chief criticisms of the regional concept has been the lack of coordination among regions. They sometimes seem to work at odds and without organization-wide goals, and on more than one occasion, have failed to share investigative information.

That's a breakdown in the operation not the organization. If that's occurring, then the reporting system has broken down. The whole damn thing requires communications, reporting among the regions. I demanded that my 3 narcotics supervisors (one from each region) meet every damn week to discuss what each was working on. I had the 3 majors meet every week to talk about what was going on.

You'll notice that the three region headquarters locations were Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Alexandria. That was intentional. I wanted them all logistically close to each other so that on any given day at any given time I could have any major in my office within an hour and a half. I ran into problems when I tried to set up Alexandria as the northern region headquarters, because the existing major didn't want to move down from Shreveport. He said that Shreveport was the biggest city in the region and that's where the region headquarters belonged, but I didn't buy that. The most important thing was the ease of communications, availability for coordination and meetings, and Alexandria provided that, Shreveport didn't.

So that criticism about lack of communication isn't a criticism of the concept, it's just evidence of a breakdown in the system. It's a symptom that something is wrong. (Retired Lieutenant Colonel) Jim Champagne understood that concept probably better than anyone. Jim understood a lot about how our organization fit together and worked.

I had him in charge of Information and Control at the time, where he was my sounding board, where we developed and

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implemented so many changes. That section included our Staff Inspections Unit, Public Information Unit, Research Unit and Internal Affairs Unit. We later moved I/A out and put it directly under the superintendent, but those other functions are the lifeblood of the organization. That's what drove it. And when majors had questions in the field they wouldn't call me or (Lieutenant Colonel) Horton, they'd call Jim. He served that role well.

I understand that arrangement has changed now, all those functions are splintered and I think that's unfortunate.

You've mentioned Champagne, who else did you consider essential in making your redesigned organization work?

I had Champagne and Rodney LeBlanc in Baton Rouge and three damn good majors in the regions, that's who made things click. I had Bo Garrison in Region I, Mac Millet in Region II and Hollingsworth in Region III. Two of them went on to become superintendent, but any one of them could have been superintendent really. Kermit Richard helped me out quite a bit too.

(Lieutenant) Colonel Horton was my internal PR man. When I needed things done internally, he was the one I'd have handle it. He was kind of like my Lieutenant Governor.

Didn't you create the first Internal Affairs Section in State Police?

Yeah. Before that, everything had been investigated by the local major. It was a half-assed system. So much of what we had done before was half-assed and the same with this. And when I organized an official misconduct section, the very first thing that happened was that the media loved it. It put me on first base with the press. They saw that as a message that we meant business when it came to

discipline.

I put Kordeck in charge of it; he was a good commander but he'd never have made a good troop commander, just too damn blunt about everything. But he was a damn good investigator, objective as hell and he was the right choice for this job. He may have had his own prejudices like all of us, but he never let them get in the way of doing his job. I had the media convinced that my internal affairs unit was so objective and independent that they could investigate me and render an objective report. From a discipline standpoint, the unit was essential, from



Thibodeaux firmly believed in mutual information exchanges between and among law enforcement agencies. Several groups of Saudi Arabian command officers visited Louisiana. Here they inspect state police equipment.

the media standpoint, the organization of the unit worked to our advantage. Our stock went up.

You had a fairly good honeymoon with the media during your administration despite the fact that you had to get rid of some local commanders, some fairly popular commanders, how was that received?

Same thing I've already said. The politics were accepted on my part because of the professionalism I was creating in the organization. The press just couldn't criticize us when they saw how things were improving.

Getting rid of the politics in the ranks was my toughest job. I think you still have to allow your captains and higher to play some local politics just so they'll be accepted in a local area, be a part of

the community. He's got to be accepted if he's going to do you a good job. And I'd let the local community politicians get involved in who their commander should be as well. I call up this guy and ask who he thought would be good and so forth. I didn't always go along with them, but they had the chance to talk it over with me. Now on the other hand, if I find out that a lieutenant has been running to the locals and politicking for the job, then he's in deep trouble. I'd turn that around. I was the politician, I was the one with the power and the authority—for the good of the organi-

zation—to see that competent selections were made. So, if I found out a lieutenant had been calling around trying to lay his groundwork, when I called asking for input, from the locals, I'd never mention that lieutenant's name as one of the options. That's just the way it had to be.

Do you remember what your budget was in the first few years of your administration?

Quite honestly, no. But I do know

that much of what I owe our success to as an organization is the relationship I had with the Commissioner of Administration, Charles Roemer (father of outgoing Governor Roemer). Roemer and his head of purchasing, Paul Hayes, were fundamental in getting our reorganization efforts off the ground by providing what we needed. My relationship with Roemer goes back to an incident with Clyde Vidrine in which Clyde was going to provide protection for houses of prostitution throughout the state, and to make a long story short, I ended up with Roemer's complete confidence. He's a fine man.

How did you succeed in getting state police included in receiving supplemental pay?

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The Troopers' Association. I got the affiliates to do some grass-roots work, go out and speak to civic groups, talk to local officials, engender support for the concept. And after the groundwork was laid, I personally called each and every senator and representative and asked for their help. I'd already cleared everything with Roemer and Edwards, so it went off like clockwork. You know some people will throw out an idea and do no groundwork whatsoever, lay no foundation. And once the balloon's out there, somebody pops it. But if you do things up front and establish some support before releasing the balloon, you'll be more successful.

When you first took over state police, I think there were something like 5 people assigned to intelligence operations and by the time you left, there were more like 50. What happened so quickly?

That's when we started getting heavy on organized crime investigations. If we still had that section, state police would know every dope pusher by name, every member of organized crime in the state. And that's to help not only us but the locals as well, the police departments and the sheriff's offices. There's no central system out there to collect and collate that data and pass it around. The section wasn't used to investigate, I relied on our

The high morale came from involvement. I wanted the men involved in what was happening to the organization. I wanted them to be part of the system . . .

detectives to do almost all of the investigations, but my intelligence section's chief responsibility was to compile raw intelligence data.

Prior to 1972, Louisiana had never been accepted into the national law enforcement intelligence organization. But by the time I left we were in. That's how far we moved in a short period of time. That was a real accomplishment.

The only thing I didn't do that I should have done with Intelligence was move it to Baton Rouge. But everybody assigned

there lived in New Orleans and we just didn't have time for such a drastic organizational move. We lost some of our command over the section because it wasn't centralized at headquarters.

Who came up with the idea for the car-perman program?

Basically, I did. I had been successful at getting the troopers all this new gear like shotguns, and first aid kits, and riot gear, and then we had the problem of how they were going to haul all that stuff back and forth to work, and where was it going to be when we needed it and those kind of considerations. So, I saw the opportunity to sell the administration on assigning everybody a vehicle so that we would be ready at a moment's notice to deploy anywhere in the state. I also sold the selective enforcement angle, with that many marked cars on the roads every day.

I said, I could live with it if he could and that's what we got. I made the program as liberal as possible and we had some trouble but not a lot. Like we had one guy who carried his whole family to the drive-in theatre in the unit and let his kids climb all over the top of the unit and stuff. That just shows you how stupid some people are. That trooper got some time off, but you're always going to have idiots like that no matter how good the program.

Every superintendent, both before you and after you, has been successful, to a certain degree in creating new programs, getting rid of bad programs, restructuring and things like that. A lot of people who worked for you say that morale was never higher than it was during your administration. Was that a goal in and of itself or was that just a satisfying outcome?

The high morale came from involve-



History in the making—LSP's first female officer, Cindy K. Bell, is introduced to the media at a press conference at the state capitol. She left state police within 4 years.

When I first went to talk to Roemer about it, he seemed real interested. I explained that troopers would be able to use the vehicle off-duty but that family members couldn't ride in the car with him. And Roemer stopped me and asked why family members would be excluded—the public would still have the law enforcement presence regardless of who was in the vehicle. And obviously,

I wanted the men involved in what was happening to the organization. I wanted them to be part of the system so they would feel the same excitement that I felt when I saw things improve. I wanted an ultimatum from the men on a daily basis; I wanted them to force me into a corner where I had to continue to do what I had been doing. I don't

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know how else to express it. I didn't want just an O.K. boss, we'll follow you because you're the leader. I wanted a commitment from them along the lines of don't you dare change boss, or we'll turn on your ass. I needed that. I needed to be challenged. That's how the organization grew and matured.

I refused to surround myself with yes-men. I remember in commanders meetings asking for comments and problems and there was always one or two who never had anything to say and I'd have to jack them up and they'd be fine for a couple of meetings. Nothing would aggravate me more than a commander who wouldn't take me on, for something he believed in. Hell, I didn't want these guys scared of me, I begged for constructive criticism. Fortunately, I had some strong people on the command level. They're the ones who saved my ass; I didn't save my own ass because I was too crazy.

But I know I wouldn't have lasted much longer. I was at such a level, constantly creating and refining, I was reaching for perfection, in every element of the organization and I know that it would not have been sustained. Things were too intense. And I knew that when I left, the organization would need time to react to the revolution that it had been through. It couldn't have stood four more turbulent years. That's why I felt so comfortable leaving Public Safety and State Police to Millet and Garrison. I knew they would let things run for a while. The course had been set. They would maintain it. After the hurricane there has to be a calm.

Where did the idea for the merit board come from?

I implemented that in an effort to try and remove some of the external politics from promotions. I would seldom interfere with the process. Occasionally, there might be a person who was on the list who wasn't deserving, either because he'd been trying to play hard ball politics or he just wasn't qualified, or whatever. And I'd tell the board anybody on the list except that person. Otherwise I don't get involved.

Do you think it was in error to have the board decide on captain's promotions (which was later changed)?

I think the board is great for lieutenant and below but not for captains. Captains

are really part of command. They are part of the superintendent's direct staff, his special staff. And I think those promotions should be at the superintendent's prerogative.

That's also why I don't think that it's appropriate for anybody above the rank of sergeant to be an active, voting member of the Troopers' Association. Lieutenants and above can be associate members. I mean lieutenants are the captain's staff. How can you run a troop when you and all your lieutenants belong to this association.

Didn't your administration consider the possibility of entering into a collective bargaining agreement with the association?

No. All we did was draft a letter, a letter of doctrine or policy, specifying that the Troopers' Association would be the sole entity authorized to bargain with us. And we knew that the Association had no desire to enter into collective bargaining. We did that because Victor Bussie and the AFL-CIO were heavy lobbying troopers trying to get them on board, to be the bargaining agent. And

The fact that the association got that commission created says a lot about the stroke of the organization. What the hell do they need a union for?

I was dead set against it. I really didn't know how the governor felt about it but I had made up my mind I was going to fight this to the end if necessary. There were some troopers who wanted the representation.

I was prepared to go to the media if necessary, but when I spoke with Edwards about it, he told me he didn't support it either. I'm still opposed to a unionized state police.

How do you feel about the collective bargaining issue?

I don't agree with it. Look how much the State Police has accomplished without an agreement. Are they going to tell me it can't continue, or be done again? I was no magician, I just worked hard. The troopers didn't get anything given to them, they worked for it, and as long

as they stay together and the association represents the bulk of the organization, it can continue to work. The new State Police Commission can insure that things continue to improve. The association has to make sure, keep the heat on, insure that the commission members are interested in the welfare of troopers. Don't let people get appointed just because they want to sit on some state commission. It's too important. The commission has got to work on behalf of the trooper out there in the street, not the superintendent, the guy who wears the uniform. They've got to be dedicated and independent. They can't be pro-management or pro-labor, if anything, they have to be pro-trooper.

The fact that the association got that commission created says a lot about the stroke of the organization. What the hell do they need a union for? They created a new system in a down budget year with a public that is decidedly anti-growth when it comes to expanded government. No superintendent in his right mind is going to refuse to work with the association. Hell, between their lobbying power and the use of the media, they'd bury a superintendent in a week if he tried to screw the men over.

One of the things I read while doing research for this interview was a series of articles alleging the use of a ticket quota system in state police. Remember that? Was there a quota system?

You damn right there was a quota, if you used the word quota in the truest sense of the word. Look at it this way. If you have a trooper working in an area of the state and he's writing one ticket a month and you have another trooper working in another area of the state, same traffic volume and everything else, and he writes thirty times as many tickets, don't you think, as a manager, we should look at the low producer? You can call it what you want, but you have to have some means to determine how an employee is spending his time. What is he doing for eight hours? You've got to have some gauge to check people by, an average. You can't afford to let lazy people sit on their butt while everybody else is working hard.

How was it that we got involved in security at the Superdome during your administration?

Corruption. A service contract had

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been let for various services at the dome and no body knew a damn thing about security. It became a public scandal with allegations of kickbacks, and pay-offs and all that crap. So in an effort to restore public confidence, Roemer asked me to send a team in to keep an eye on things.

I put (retired lieutenant) John Rigol in there. The best man in the world to take care of that kind of a job. He was a thinker, had ideas, bright. His mind was always on the move I put him on a project and he might come up with 10 propositions for me. I might not take but two of them, but they were always solid. He was a good research-oriented man, like Ben Pressburg. Those were conscientious workers, damn good assets to an organization.

Something you mentioned a while ago reminds me of a recurring issue. Does it work to the detriment of other agencies in Public Safety to have the Superintendent over them? Does that cast the others in the roll of stepchildren?

Yeah, it does and that's the way it should be. The others are basically paper agencies. They don't deal with life or death. State Police is the impact agency in Public Safety. The others are important per se, they've got their own functions and everything, but they don't deal with the humanitarian part like state police. They don't have the type of direct contact that state police has.

Look at Drivers' License. You bump into those people every four years. Their role in Public Safety is really more mechanical than personal. You bump into troopers everyday. They are the most visible of state services. That's why I think the Director of Public Safety should come from State Police. We already require the head of state police to be selected from the ranks.

Should we be removed from the Department of Corrections?

Absolutely, I hate it. If I were at Public Safety, I'd work 24 hours a day just to get the two separated. We have nothing in common. Not a thing. I understand that the administrative services aren't even combined. I mean, what the hell.

The number of cabinet level agencies is limited by the state constitution. My idea was always to try and move Culture, Recreation and Tourism into the Lieutenant Governor's office. But as soon as

the head of that agency found out about the move, she put a stop to it. It would have affected her position and standing.

What was the most difficult thing you had to do in State Police as superintendent?

Taking disciplinary action. Like one commander, and I don't want to give his name, but he was a big hearted guy. But that was his problem, his heart was too big. He couldn't do what a captain had to do. He was a perfect gentleman and he thought he was doing right, but I had to get rid of him because he wasn't going to fit in. That was tough. If I had to generalize, I would say taking disciplinary action. It was hard for me to force some of these people to retire or take 10 days off knowing full well they needed the money. But that comes with the territory.

What was your proudest moment in state police?

I can't narrow it down to a moment, but I can isolate it as being when I realized that I had finally accomplished everything I had set out to do. Like about the beginning of my fourth year when

It was hard for me to force some of these people to retire or take 10 days off knowing full well they needed the money. But that comes with the territory.

I knew I had it, when I knew I had organized it, that the troopers were satisfied with themselves and the organization, and when I knew that I had instilled in them the same things I believed in and they accepted it.

Did you miss state police right away when you left?

Immediately. I began to wonder if I had made a wise choice or not.

Things were already lined up for the next 4 years. I was to be the first appointment made by Edwards in his second administration. And after I made the announcement, the Governor was dumbfounded, wouldn't even name anybody else until I went to speak with him. He just didn't believe I would leave. But one thing I've got to give him, he

asked who he should appoint and I gave him my recommendations—Millet, Garrison, and so forth—and before I could get back to my office, he'd made the announcement of the appointments on each and every recommendation. I know my leaving hurt his feelings. And he and I both knew what the problem was.

I couldn't give in on one little issue. He was going to appoint the executive director of the Civil Service Commission and it was probably going to be an individual I knew would be harmful to the classified service. The Governor told me that he had an obligation to do it. I understood that. But the guy would have been a disaster for state police, just when we were striving for perfection. The Governor sure as hell didn't seem to want to give in, and neither would I.

Of course, this is the first time I'd publicly acknowledged what happened. The media speculated that the sheriffs had run me out, but that wasn't even close.

So, what did you do after you left?

First, I went to work for the Superintendent of Education as a consultant and helped him get some things reorganized, but I wasn't an educator so I just helped him pull some things together. I left there and spent about six months reorganizing the Lafayette Police Department. While in Lafayette, a local attorney approached me and asked if I'd be interested in helping set up the New Orleans Cotton and Commodity Exchange. So I did that until it was up and running. By then, I was just tired of traveling and wanted to come home to Crowley.

I came back here and set me up a little warehouse business, just something on the side to supplement my retirement. I've since put my share of that in a trust for my kids.

You left out something. When did you serve in the legislature?

From 1983 to about 1988. I think those dates are right. Somewhere along in there. It was an unexpired term and a full four year term.

What was your motivation for getting into the state house?

I always wanted to see what that side was like.

And what was your impression?

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I enjoyed the legislative process itself, but, and this is going to sound funny, I didn't like the politics too much. I'm just not the kind of person that can tell a constituent that I'm going to do one thing and then turn around and do another. I didn't do well in that system.

Does much of that go on?

Oh yeah, you've got to do that to survive. Any politician has to tell people what they want to hear.

What was the main thing you learned from your experience in the legislature?

That the majority of the Legislators really try hard. The greater majority of them really do try hard at representing their constituents. They try to accommodate the people back home as best they can. A lot of people look at the session and see all the social activities and lunches and such and assume that this isn't hard work. They're wrong. When you consider the fact that you're running better than over 1,000 bills a session through there, it takes energy and effort.

What kind of changes in our qualifications should our commission be looking at in terms of command level promotions?

Well, I think we're on the right track for entry level requiring some college. I believe if the state police wants to continue to grow and develop, the commission should start considering the importance of education in upper level promotions.

Like a four year degree for promotion to captain, for example?

That's right. Something along those lines. You know I had tried to get the minimum entry level raised when I was at state police, but I could never sell Civil Service on the idea. And while we're talking about that, my concept for senior trooper or master trooper was that the step wouldn't be automatic. I had proposed a general law enforcement knowledge examination. Nothing technical, nothing supervisory, but just something to test the basic skill level of troopers moving up. It would have instilled some pride in that rank; it wouldn't just arbitrarily be given because you've stayed long enough.

You were one of the first superintendent's to heavily emphasize education and training, you obviously believe in its importance to a police

organization.

If I had to go back and take over as superintendent today, first thing I would look at would be the amount of money being spent on education, because I know it's not enough. When's the last time we sent anyone to Northwestern? How many graduates do we still have in state police, 2, 4, 5? We've got to do better than that all the way around.

Who are we training to take the organization over in five years, or ten years? What kind of training are they getting? I'd rather do without two additional positions in the organization and use the money to make somebody a better administrator. You have got to have employees who have been exposed to a diversity of law enforcement agencies and administrators. That's how we learn, from others. That diversity of contact mixed with a good balance of academics is what it's all about. It becomes a perpetual thing. You educate and re-educate. The younger supervisors learn from the older ones. We've stopped doing that to a great extent.

We're giving lots of technical training, but what good is a technician if you don't have people to manage him. Who knows organization? In the whole state police,

*. . . Malcolm Millet.
He's the most honest person
I've ever met.*

who can sit down and draw an organizational chart? Not just draw lines, but understand the relationships between the blocks. It concerns me greatly.

What about mandatory retirement at 55 of commissioned officers?

Absolutely, troopers should not be allowed to work past 55 years of age. I couldn't get out there and fight a drunk today and I'm 54. We're just asking for trouble if we permit troopers to work past that age.

What makes being a trooper special and different from all other endeavors?

The *esprit de corps*, that bond of devotion and camaraderie that exists between troopers, all working toward a common goal. If you look at the job, it's more demanding than either the job

of a deputy or a municipal officer, maybe less demanding in some of the physical aspects, but intellectually, it's out front. And troopers know that.

I neglected to ask earlier, how was it that we came to end up with our current royal blue uniform?

Well, years ago, it was common for a new administration to change the state police uniform. If you look over the years, we've had all kinds of variations. And typically, it was the governor's wife or the colonel's wife who picked everything out. And that used to be a big deal. But I saw this as an area where I could immediately get everybody in the organization involved in something that was going to affect everybody.

I told troopers that I was going to permit them to select the uniform and they could pick any color they wanted—blue, green, pink,—hell, I didn't care, but I held back on one thing, the hat. There would be no compromise on the hat. I required the "Smokey the Bear" hat to be our headgear. I believed that then and I believe that today. Deputies should wear cowboy hats, city police should wear caps and we should wear campaign hats. But the troops had the rest of the latitude, and this showed them right up front, at the beginning of my administration, that involvement and input were important.

So, a bunch of companies sent all kinds of prototypes to the troops and the troops would have troop meetings and talk about what they liked and what they didn't like. And by the time all that had been done, the region majors and the region LSTA representatives came into Baton Rouge and made the final decision, and I think it was a damn good decision.

Has there been any significant change in the uniform since ya'll put it together?

Probably the most significant thing is the rank. You know we tried to deemphasize the rank structure on the uniform. Why does a sergeant need these great big, bright stripes on his arm? Not for the men who work for him, they know who the supervisor is. I guess whoever made that choice was heavily influenced by the rank and that was different from me. My strength as a superintendent was never at the command level, my strength was at the trooper level. I related to them, I went to them for suggestions, I drew my strength from their support. I wanted

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everybody in the organization to know that nobody was more important than that uniformed trooper working the road.

Who's your personal hero?

I guess for being just a pure, caring human being, for his sincerity and for pushing his capability to its limit, I'd say Malcolm Millet. He's the most honest person I've ever met.

In closing things out, I think everyone recognizes the role that the Association played in your revitalization of state police. Any parting observations or concerns about the association's future?

I think that the Association is losing their camaraderie. The association, with one another, transcends the professional and social part. The first clue I saw to that problem was the way that members were treating retirees. One day at a meeting, I was damn near tears because I was so upset.

It seems to be, and I could be wrong, but it seems to me that troopers have become greedy. They've become self-serving. Now don't tell me what the

purpose of the organization is. Hell, I helped make it what it is today. What I mean is that troopers have become self-serving to the exclusion of the department. They've lost sight. If it weren't for state police, there wouldn't even be a Troopers Association. They need to be concerned as much about the direction of the department as they are the direction of their organization.

Maybe I'm being too critical, and I hope that I'm wrong. I know retirees got

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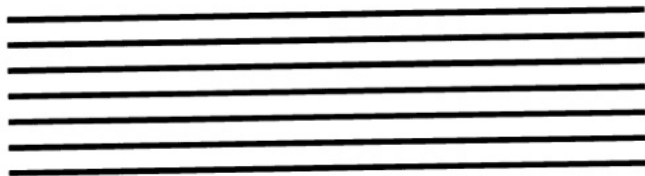
a cost of living increase, but what I'm talking about is more than just the matter of money. It's a matter of respect. Look at some of the early presidents—Donald Breaux, J.C. Willie, Bruce LaFargue—those guys cared about their fellow officers, they cared about state police and they cared about those who had come

before. That's what's important.

The Association is good for the state police, if everybody can just work together.

Any closing advice for the next superintendent?

That's hard to do, because it sounds like I'm bragging and I don't want to come off that way. Everybody has their different ideas about how to run an organization, but if I had to offer some ideas it would be these. I would hope that the new superintendent knows and understands organizations. I would hope that he involves the working trooper in running the agency, participative management. He doesn't give anything up, he's still the boss, and he's got everything to gain. He can't forget the working guy who makes the organization effective or ineffective. If he involves groups of people he will see that groups will tend to reach consensus for the good of an organization. If left to individuals, concepts will be torn apart, programs will never be made to work, but as a group, great things can be accomplished.



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