



THE BANNER

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COMING EVENTS!

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Las Vegas Annual
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The Way it Was and Should be

By First Sergeant Mike Metrokin, Retired

A temporary police chief in Fort Yukon once illustrated for me how those who follow the Alaska State Troopers credo — Loyalty, Integrity, Courage — can differentiate themselves from those who don't.

In the mid-1980s I was a First Sergeant and working as a rural unit supervisor in Fairbanks E Detachment. The span of control for the job was far-reaching and at times difficult to manage, but not impossible. It was important to have Troopers assigned to remote outposts who could work with little or no direct supervision.

Trooper Dan Hickman was such a man and I was told as much when making a post inspection at Fort Yukon. I had always respected Dan and knew his father, Corporal Dan Hickman, when I was first assigned to Fairbanks in the late 1970s. Young Trooper Dan Hickman had already won my respect with his family, his faith and his work ethic.

On that trip I was introduced to the new Fort Yukon Police Chief, Robert Arnold, who was working there while on a year's leave of absence from a police department in Kentucky. I still remember what he said about Dan Hickman. Chief Arnold said he had always wanted to spend time in Alaska and, since coming, he was impressed by both our state and by Trooper Dan Hickman, who epitomized for him what a police officer should be.

Where he came from, the chief told me, officers responding to a serious car crash rushed to be the first on the scene. They weren't necessarily motivated by a desire to help those involved. The first to arrive would always become the "note taker." If there was a civil court action you could then sell your notes to lawyers involved in the suit.

A second example he mentioned to illustrate the difference was that if you were investigating a burglary at a men's clothing store, it was quite likely that a sport jacket or shoes your size were added to the list of stolen goods.

Chief Arnold was obviously disgusted by such behavior and found the honesty and integrity of Alaska officers like Trooper Dan Hickman very encouraging, a credit to the police profession.

Such problems are obviously not universal, but we do many things differently here; and for that we can be proud.

Editors note:

Mike Metrokin was born in Kodiak and raised in Kodiak. He joined the Alaska State Troopers in 1971, attending the 19th Academy at Sitka. During his career he worked in Anchorage Patrol, Sitka Post, Valdez Post, Cordova Post, Glennallen and Fairbanks. Mike ended his career in Fairbanks as a First Sgt. supervising both rural and patrol units, retiring in 1990. He's lives in Anacortes, Washington.



ALASKA STATE TROOPERS CHRISTMAS PARTY

*Ready for hungry
friends!*



ALASKA STATE TROOPERS CHRISTMAS PARTY



Refreshing bites!



Enough for everyone!



*Andrea Jacobson, Gordon Homme,
Gerry Shanahan, Fran Elmore.*



ALASKA STATE TROOPERS CHRISTMAS PARTY



ALASKA STATE TROOPERS CHRISTMAS PARTY



*So many sweets! So little
time!*

Laura, Erika, Sally



ALASKA STATE TROOPERS CHRISTMAS PARTY



Pete Heddell and Marium Clare



Shirley Gifford and Steve Bear



ALASKA STATE TROOPERS CHRISTMAS PARTY



*Mark Stella and
Dep Com William Comer*

ALASKA STATE TROOPERS MEMORIAM



In Memoriam...

EUGENE L. "OB" O'BRIEN, age 91, AST Lieutenant, retired, passed away in Centralia, Washington in early October 2016. OB was a logger, carpenter, police officer, Alaska State Trooper, bush pilot, a hunter and fisherman, a skipper, harmonica player and a Alaska Pioneer, teller of tall tails and a man's man. During his AST career he served in Juneau, Ketchikan, Fairbanks and Anchorage. After serving in the Bremerton, Washington Police Department OB joined the Alaska Territorial Police in June of 1955 graduating from Academy Class Two. OB had a reputation as a top notch, no nonsense investigator, which from time to time rubbed politicians and the powers to be the wrong way as he was unbending in enforcing the law.

Some of OB's assignments included closing down the floating fish traps that were outlawed shortly after statehood in 1959. (See the story in North Country Troopers) OB was an accomplished pilot and instructor and was designated Division pilot in 1971. OB was statewide search and rescue coordinator and led the search for Alaska Congressman Nick Begich and US House Majority Leader Hale Boggs in 1972.

After retirement from AST in 1975 OB and his beloved wife Dorothy "Dot" operated a luxurious charter boat called the Monte Cristo out of Ketchikan. In 1985 OB and Dot retired to Winlock, Washington where they spent the remaining years.

OB was a World War Two Vet serving in both the Atlantic and Pacific. He was a landing craft coxswain and participated in the invasion of Iwo Jima and other Pacific battles.

Dot and OB were married nearly 54 years and she passed away in 2000. They raised 3 sons with 2 still living today along with 5 grandchildren and 14 great grand children. OB was a life member of FOAST and always attended the annual law enforcement reunions at the Korhonen's in Chehalis, Washington.

ALASKA STATE TROOPERS MEMORIAM

MARILYNN HEDDELL, age 74 passed away at home in Anchorage on November 18, 2016 due to natural causes post treatment of tonsil cancer. Marilyn was the wife of AST First Sgt retired Pete Heddell. Marilyn was a long time employee of the State of Alaska beginning in Judicial Services and later became the evidence custodian for the Department of Public Safety Crime Lab. She retired in 1967 and Pete and her became owners of Honey Charters and Captain Cook Books and Gifts in Whittier, Alaska. They operated these very successful businesses until retirement in 2011.

Marilynn was a very accomplished mariner holding a current USCG 100-ton master license of inland waters. She was also the author of two books "Journey of Dreams" and "Oscar—King of the Harbor". Marilyn was active in Whittier serving as the original organizer of the Whittier Chamber of Commerce, and co-founder of the Whittier Prince William Sound Museum. She was Whittier's representative to the Prince William Sound Economic Development Council and to the Regional Citizens Advisory Council. Pete and Marilyn were the recipients of the Spirit of Alaska Award from the Alaska Travel Industry.

Marilynn is survived by her husband Gordon "Pete" Heddell and a large extended family. There will no formal service but a private gathering on May 6, 2017 in Whittier to scatter her cremated remains in Prince William Sound.

BETTY LOU WALDEN, age 91, officer Fish and Wildlife Protection retired, passed away on October 4, 2016 at her home in Soldotna. Betty was one of the first female officers hired by Fish and Wildlife Protection. Her supervisor Sgt Al Thompson was quoted as saying "when Betty came on board she increased productivity by 50%. William Kaufman a friend of Betty and her husband Ron said Betty always had a great smile and sold every ticket she ever wrote.

Betty and her husband Ron came to Alaska in 1973 seeking adventure. She was hired by F & W P and retired in 1986. She is survived by husband Ron who has written several books available at the FOAST Museum.



ALASKA STATE TROOPERS MEMORIAM

RICHARD "DICK" HEMMEN, Officer Fish and Wildlife Protection retired, passed away of a heart attack in early November, 2016. He is survived by wife Rita "Tammie" and two daughters and two grand children. The following is "Some Words on Dick Hemmen" by *Steve Reynolds*.

"It's hard to get used to old friends kicking off. Dick Hemmen comes to mind with his recent passing. I have several memories of Dick, though one jumps up as the earliest of these: The time he and Al Thompson went through the ice at Tangle Lakes along the Denali-Paxson Highway in the winter of '69-'70.

In those days the Denali Highway was open to heavy-duty caribou hunting—the limit being five. Every military and civilian hunter was up there from Fairbanks and Anchorage and points in between. Most were road hunters and the rest had snow machines. Lots of violations of shooting from the machines and harassing the caribou, driving them to foot and road hunters lined up along the road which divided the Maclaren Refuge and the open-to-hunting area. Many of the gut piles were frozen solid right in the road creating a traffic hazard. We needed to be capturing these snow machiners but didn't have any issued machines yet.

This was shortly before all the oil money, so we, still with the Department of Fish and Game at that point, had no equipment other than airplanes (a Super Cub and the Cessna 180 assigned to the northern region having to be shared with the biologists, and the weather was too sloppy anyway and the days too short that time of year requiring us to work the hunt from the ground with our station wagons). Dick and I split the hunting area—he, being stationed at Delta Junction, patrolled from Paxson to the Maclaren River and I from there to Cantwell; however, most of the action was in his area so we camped at the Tangle Lakes "Lodge," he and I and Al Thompson (the only officer the Regional Office was willing to assign to help us—Al being a new boy in "training"). The little cabin we shared had a wall heater in it, but the snow you kicked off your boots at night was still there in the morning.

If you knew Dick, you remember that he was a non-stop storyteller and loved the humor he found in most of his escapades. I often wonder how he later told the story of this patrol with any humor.

He, being the dedicated man that he was, brought his own personal snow machine to this hunt and talked Al into bringing his. After an all-day patrol, they were taking a shortcut back to camp in the black of night, cutting across one of the frozen Tangle Lakes and breaking through the ice with both machines. Al was in the lead and began swimming for shore as best he could, dressed in his winter gear. Almost winded, he touched the lake bottom with his hand and stood up. Back behind him Dick was standing there shouting, "Wait for me—wait for me!" The windshields of both machines were sticking up out of the water. Luckily, they had broken through in shallow water, and luckier still, they were close to the road and flagged down a hunter who brought them back to camp. There were big doings to retrieve the machines from the lake the next day, and Dick's machine required a new engine before it was all over, as I recall, with no help or compensation from the State.

Later, after we had moved over to the Department of Public Safety in '72, when Hemmen replaced me at McGrath, he and I worked together for a season on the Yukon-Kuskokwim commercial fisheries, staying in the old net shed in Bethel for weeks on end. I never mentioned the Tangle Lakes episode and his calling out to his trainee, Al Thompson, "Wait for me, wait for me." I wasn't sure he'd see the humor in it.

Fine fellow and a responsible, valued officer."



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One of the most important purposes of the Fraternal Order of Alaska State Troopers is "to gather, receive, retain and disseminate historical information on Alaska Law Enforcement". Unfortunately in some cases stories are so lengthy that distribution via the BANNER is not cost effective. To offset costly postage fees these types of historical reports will be archived and made available via the internet by accessing our website: www.alaskatroopermuseum.com.

Iconic author and FOAST member Tom Brennan has just completed a story on "The Fireman Who Burned Ketchikan". This well researched story tells the tale of the fireman-arsonist who literally almost burned Ketchikan to the ground in the late fifties. The Alaska State Police, State Fire Marshal's Office, and the FBI were all involved to bring the suspect to justice. As indicated above, the story can be found online as our first BANNER ARCHIVE- DEC 2016 at www.alaskatroopermuseum.com.



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