

President's Message



TFC Louis A. Copponi, President

To paraphrase someone much wiser than me, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." That pretty much sums up 2006.

The men and women of the New Hampshire Troopers Association saw the reelection of Governor John Lynch, a staunch ally of law enforcement. Governor Lynch led a strong showing among the state's Democrats. Troopers were gladdened by the reelection of Executive Councilor Debra Pignatelli, and the wins posted by Councilors Beverly Hollingworth and John Shea. Troopers know Councilors Pignatelli and Hollingworth. Councilor Shea is a newcomer. All have professed support for us in our efforts to serve the state. In the New Hampshire State Senate, we watched our supporters Senators Lou D'Allesandro and Bob Clegg win in strong fashion. Good for them. Just like New Hampshire's Troopers, they took on tough opponents and won. Many elected officials pledge support to law enforcement and public safety, but these men and women have demonstrated it. They have earned our respect and support. I don't doubt that our efforts to keep New Hampshire the best place to live in this country will be matched by these other public servants.

But this bright future was tempered

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by the memory of Manchester Police Officer Michael Briggs' murder just a few weeks earlier. As fate would have it, I was working my midnight patrol that night. In the early morning hours of last October 16, Officer Briggs and his partner responded to a disturbance in the center city. They contacted two individuals believed involved. One produced a handgun and fired. Officer Briggs was fatally wounded. The shooter fled. Manchester Police broadcast the information within minutes of the shooting. I immediately responded along with the other midnight patrol Troopers from Troops A and B (all eight of us for three counties, five cities, and six major highways, but that's another story). Under the command of B Troop Sergeant Greg Ferry, Troopers joined the search. Some manned perimeter posts and some actively searched alleys, doorways, and buildings. Sgt. Ferry and Trooper Mark Hall had their canines on the scene to supplement Manchester's sole K-9 team. The State Police helicopter was dispatched providing even more support. Lieutenants John LeLacheur and Robert Quinn, the commanders of Troops B and A arrived later. Additionally, the State Police Special Weapons and Tactics team arrived to support Manchester's Special Reaction Team. While our efforts during these first few hours did not locate the shooter, I was nonetheless proud of the conduct of the officers and Troopers working together. Just hours after Mike's shooting, we received word Boston Police had the suspect in custody. He had run, but he couldn't hide.

During the days after Mike's murder, Troopers worked city patrols to

assist our fellow cops. Manchester's detectives worked round-the-clock on the investigation. And then came the services. The State Police arrived in force to Manchester to attend. Some Troopers worked city patrols. And several of us worked with Manchester officers on the ceremonies to honor our fallen brother.

A police officer's funeral is a tremendous undertaking, one I hope to never get good at. But one at which I will do my very best. For it is an honor and a privilege to serve an officer's family.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention some of those who deserve our thanks for their efforts. Mr. Bob Werner of the Werner Auto Dealerships and his wife Lisa who helped us put together and promote a car raffle to benefit Mike's family. Deb Noyes of the National Concerns of Police Survivors who brought the "personal side" to the support effort. The Hundred Club of New Hampshire continued their unheralded, but not unnoticed, financial support. Senators D'Allesandro and Clegg led the legislative delegation attending the services and offering their condolences. Senator D'Allesandro later sponsored new legislation, modeled after the US Department of Justice program, to create a state death benefit for police officers and firefighters killed in the line of duty. And Governor John Lynch, whose orders to the State Police in the hours after the tragedy were simple, do whatever it takes. To me, it doesn't take a village, it takes a leader.

And so we close the books on 2006. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. □