



# The 1950s

The 1950s was a decade of changing technology – new devices helped preserve impaired driving evidence; use of the motorcycle faded away in favor of cruisers; aircraft were used more than the occasional manhunt; and the radar speed measuring device made its debut.

Patrolman Kenneth M. Fitzgivens began the decade with a courageous act of heroism. On January 28, 1950, he was just beginning his patrol from the Middletown Post, where he was assigned, when he saw flames coming from a crash scene. It seemed he got there at the very beginning of the crash, according to the account in the *Flying Wheel* (January-March 1951).

“Upon arriving at the scene of the accident, he found two cars were involved and three persons were lying on the roadway with their clothes on fire. He immediately dragged them aside and extinguished the flames. He then pulled two others from the burning machines.

“All victims were cut and bruised, but Mercy Hospital in Cincinnati advised their condition was better than fair on arrival.

“The Cincinnati Post gave credit to Patrolman Fitzgivens and stated that a

State Highway Patrolman who quickly observed the flames of the two wrecked automobiles was credited with saving the lives of the four (sic) accident victims.”

Fitzgivens, stationed at the Troy Post at the time of the article, was awarded the 1950 O.W. Merrell Meritorious Service Award, which is the highest award for valor given by the Patrol. Fitzgivens, who served in World War II in the U.S. Navy, had just graduated with the 28th Academy Class on September 6, 1949 – a mere four months before the crash.

Another crash happened later in 1950 involving two trains, but the results were much more tragic. Patrol officers worked to help clean up the wreckage and carnage of a troop train crash in Coshocton County.

When 33 young men died in a train wreck in 1950 near West Lafayette, it was a macabre scene.

According to the Tuscarawas County Convention & Visitors Bureau Web site, on September 11, 1950, a troop train sat on the westbound tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad a half mile east of West Lafayette. The train experienced problems

**Inspections were a dreaded and regular occurrence, but were stopped in the 1950s because of the time it took to complete them.**





**It takes a cool head to handle traffic control, especially on a busy road.**

from its departure and a faulty steam line stopped the engine's operation all together.

Aboard the PX5444 West train was the 109th Field Artillery, Pennsylvania National Guard, on their way from Wilkes-Barre, Penn., to Camp Atterbury, Ind., for more military training before heading overseas to Korea. "It was most likely their first time away from home," retired Lt. Colonel Floyd C. Moon said in a 2006 interview.

On the same track, behind the troop train and 40 minutes behind schedule because of it, was the "Spirit of St. Louis," a Pennsylvania Railroad passenger train.

As the "Spirit of St. Louis" neared the stalled troop train, the signal was "approach," which indicated the engineer could proceed but should be prepared to stop at the next signal. The "Spirit of St. Louis" did not stop at the next signal and crashed into the troop train going 48 miles per hour. It was 4:42 a.m.

The last car of the troop train split in two and one passenger car ended up on top of another. The engine of the "Spirit of St. Louis" was thrown over the embankment and into the nearby field.

On October 4, 1950, The U.S. Interstate Commerce Commission ruled that the incident was caused, "by failure to operate the following train in accordance with signal indications." The crash killed 33 GI's and severely injured hundreds more.

Moon was one of several patrolmen to respond to the

scene of the wreck. "Bodies were strewn along the railroad tracks. Many were ground into the cinders and mangled," Moon said. Anyone with a vehicle took the injured to hospitals nearby, and the dead centered in a huge tent erected near the crash site.

Sergeants Fred Van Allen and Homer Bluemlein completed body identifications on-site, and Paul Kinsey (later a major in the Patrol) and Moon facilitated other facets of the investigation. District "D" coordinated traffic in the area, Moon said. After working with passengers for two days to identify body parts, all but four soldiers were identified.

Moon said that identifying the bodies and portions of bodies was a difficult task. "Many of the men had just joined the guard service and, because of their inexperience, had turned over jewelry and pocketbooks to their superiors for safe-keeping, leaving nothing on their person," Moon said. "I was fearful that the remaining four bodies would be thrown together without proper I.D. That's exactly what had happened upon returning the next day."

Moon said it took time to get prints developed and processed in Washington, D.C., but it was necessary to find three of the four unidentified soldiers' identities. Another source says it was dental records that led authorities to be able to identify the dead soldiers.

Civil defense still was a prominent issue throughout the country, and the Patrol's preparedness responsibilities continued. In 1950, officers participated when an "attack" drill occurred in Marion. On September 17, 16 Ohio National Guard bombers and fighters flew over



**So important were inspections, that engines were painted for looks, resulting in decreased performance as the paint burned off during later patrols.**

Marion's industrial west side, simulating a nuclear attack. More than 1,500 people aided in the exercise, including city and county officials, 40 uniformed Highway Patrolmen, 150 Auxiliary members and several radio operators, using all five radio trailers. These radio trailers, or communication trailers, were small trailers, towed by motor vehicle, which served as a communications center wherever the Patrol needed it.

A new law regulating the processing and sale of horse meat led the Patrol into another area of unusual service in 1951. Sgt. Joseph V. Seryak, a graduate of the Seventh Academy Class who distinguished himself as a top investigator in several earlier cases, was assigned (at the request of the Ohio Attorney General) to investigate the activities of the Kay Brand Packing Company of Findlay. His subsequent investigation, involving workers and companies as far away as North Dakota and Texas, uncovered a \$1 million illegal horse meat operation which for two years had sold nearly 30,000 pounds of horse meat for human consumption (as beef and pork) per week. Seryak's lengthy and detailed investigation earned him the first O. W. Merrell Meritorious Service Award ever issued for investigative work.

It was around this time that the "10 for 1" program dissipated. The thought behind the program was to decrease the number of crashes through prevention by issuing warnings or arrests before crashes happened. but the program imposed quotas, however, and often officers issued warn-

ings or arrests when they normally would not.

A short time later, law enforcement took to the skies as aircraft came in to regular use. Aircraft had been used since the first Beechcraft Bonanza 35 Model V-tail was purchased in 1948, but it was used mostly for air searches, transportation, and disaster relief. On July 4, 1952, Patrolmen William D. Braucher and Sgt. John "Chiefy" H. Gorham observed traffic conditions from the air and spotted a semi-truck driving recklessly on Route 224 in Mahoning County. They reported its position by radio to Sergeant William E. Timberlake, patrolling below, who subsequently stopped the vehicle. Braucher then landed the plane to confirm and file the charges. It was then that Patrol leadership saw the benefits of using its aircraft – now a Cessna 170 and a newer Bonanza - for various enforcement-related uses and the role of Patrol Aviation changed forever.

Adding to the enforcement of speed limits was a new technological device adopted by the Patrol. Several radar speed measuring devices were unveiled, and Patrolmen conducted highly visible demonstrations to familiarize judges and prosecutors with the new concept. The unit itself consisted of a "field box," about the size of two ordinary shoe boxes, which was mounted on a carriage on the cruiser's right rear fender and connected to a "speed meter" which registered the speed of passing vehicles. Long cables attached the unit to the cruiser's battery. A radar team generally set up on the side of the highway, placing "radar speed control" signs up the highway in an effort to





Fires burn as chaos reigns at the Ohio State Penitentiary. Riots in 1952 brought more than 300 patrolmen to the prison to take back control.

*This article is just part of an interview with Retired Captain Jay Devoll in March 2008. His experience with the Division (1949-1979) encompassed some of the most tumultuous times in Patrol history. In this excerpt, he recalls violent outbreaks at the old Ohio Penitentiary in 1952, more commonly known as the Pen Riot or Halloween Riot.*

“I was out on patrol, when I got a radio call that said go home and pack a bag and be ready to stay for a few days. It also advised us to stop by and pick up another officer (from Cambridge) and a submachine gun. We had one submachine gun in each district at that time. Halloween is when the (1952 Ohio) Pen riot started, and I was there ‘til December 23. We were 12 (hours on) and 12 (off).

“We stayed at a dorm at the Ohio Pen. The main room we were in was 12 feet by 12 feet and there were eight doors on the room – that was so we could get out quick. They moved us every two hours, from the dorm to the cell block, to the power house. You just kept moving every two hours so that you kept alert and didn’t go to sleep and the prisoners wouldn’t know the difference and wouldn’t get acquainted with you.

“First riot hold up they wanted to get a platoon,

they wanted 30 (Patrolmen) to go in. Everyone else that went in did, one at a time. They didn’t have enough people but they sent them in to guard the fire trucks and things like that – there were a lot of fires going on. But we went inside in a platoon and formed a line across the yard so that we had them all corralled in one place. The warden at that time broke that one up. (former Patrol Major Inspector Ralph W. “Red”) Alvis – he had a big, and I mean big, black bodyguard, who was an inmate, and he walked out, walked right through that whole mob, and got up on the steps and got a bullhorn and he said, ‘All you people know me and you know that I mean what I say. You’ve got 10 minutes to get back in your cells or you’re going to suffer the consequences.’ And away they went! That was the end of the first one, but that was while they got things cleaned up and back in order.”

avoid the speed trap stigma. Because the patrol car was not mobile when using a radar unit, the officer radioed descriptions of violators' vehicles to an "interceptor officer" waiting further down the road.

Not just speeders, but those driving under the influence also were more likely to be caught and punished. Early in 1952, the Patrol purchased intoximeters and trained officers in their use. The intoximeter consisted of a glass mouthpiece, a balloon, and three glass tubes. One tube held a sponge that changed color to indicate alcohol in the sample. Sealed tubes preserved evidence, in case there were doubts about an arrest. These became vital in the conviction of perpetrators driving while intoxicated.

That same year, an uprising at the Ohio Penitentiary required nearly 300 patrolmen to gain control of rioting inmates. Administrators tried to avoid a violent ending, but there was a sudden surge of throwing heavy, dangerous items at the officers, and lawmen responded by shooting warning shots, then into the group of rioters. In the end, one prisoner was killed and four others wounded.

One patrolman, the late Lt. Carl Whipple, who helped

control things at the prison after the riot, wrote of his experiences. "Inmates rioted, knocked all the locks off the E Block and got access to the drug supply," Whipple's notes state. "(former Patrol Maj. Insp. Ralph "Red" W.) Alvis was warden at the time. I was a field sergeant at Wilmington at the time and was assigned to the detail, which lasted about three months (After the rioting was over).

"D.D. Stark was in charge of the detail. We were confining the prisoners to the E (Block) until the damage they did could be repaired. The prisoners were coming down the catwalk as far as possible until they found out we would shoot if need be. They stayed off the catwalk pretty well after some shots were fired.

"We had a dining area away from the prisoners with the exception of some trusty's (sic) who served the food, which was not too bad. The coffee was strong and hot in the aluminum cups. Sleeping facilities were on cots, which were not too bad and were quiet if the card games broke up.

"Red Alvis was the commander of Sixth Academy at Findlay, Ohio, which I attended, and was my favorite one

## Waverly Post 66

The opening of an atomic facility in Waverly in 1952 concerned village leaders that the population would increase at incredible rates due to a sudden influx of construction and plant workers. Mainly, they thought the swell of new residents would cause rural and state roads to become terrible to navigate.

Local leaders asked the Patrol to assist with area traffic control due to the coming nuclear power plant nearby in Pike County. According to Colonel George Mingle, who said in an article in August-December 1952 edition of the *Flying Wheel*, the Patrol would set up a temporary post, with plans eventually to seek a permanent home in the Pike County area, but that never transpired.

In a 20th Anniversary publication (1953), a map of posts shows that there was a post in Waverly. By the time the 25th Patrol Anniversary publication (1958) came about, all Patrol presence in Pike County came from the Portsmouth Post. As of 2008, Post 66 in Waverly was a satellite office.

According to information in both the Patrol's



**Mobile trailers served well as temporary posts; shown above is Waverly Post 66, a short-lived station south of Chillicothe.**

History Department and on the Web site of the city of Waverly, the construction of the power plant drew many workers during the mid-1950s; the population of the area went from 1,750 to 8,000 people. When the plant went on-line in 1956, the city population settled down to 3,300 residents in 1960. Patrol retirees state that the Waverly post closed at that time.

of the brass. I think the Patrol lost a d\_\_\_ good man when he left for the warden's job."

That same year, the driver license examination changed - the Patrol decided to hire examiners from outside of the Division so patrolmen could concentrate more on law enforcement. Examiners trained at Hartman Farms. The first group convened in the summer of 1952 and had 18 students, all of whom had applied to be patrolmen but did not meet the standards. Work included studying motor vehicle laws and how to spot "ringers" who took exams for other people. Road practice involved driving an obstacle course and learning how to get a vehicle back in control if a testing student lost control of the vehicle.

That first group came up with a series of special "poor eyesight glasses" that simulated astigmatism, nearsightedness, and tunnel vision and run the obstacle course.

The following year, the state formed the Ohio Department of Highway Safety with the passage of Amended House Bill 243 (the vote was in May, effective date in October). The Patrol and Bureau of Motor Vehicles were included in the new administration branch, making the

Division one of only two subdivisions under ODHS. This proved to be advantageous in that state funding only would have to be split between two agencies.

The first director named for the new ODHS was Urie C. Felty, a Camp Perry man who made major-inspector before retiring to take the highway safety director position. Felty was the first officer to take a regular retirement.

A complete restructuring of Patrol operations took place about the time ODHS formed. The plan, which went into effect August 1, 1953, called for nine districts and the addition of a dozen new posts, including a general headquarters. It took about 30 days to set up new district headquarters in Bucyrus, Jackson and Midway (near the Shelby-Miami County line). Midway headquarters was temporary, and a permanent building was slated for Troy, but Piqua finally was chosen and the headquarters facility completed in November 1955.

A large number of standard, one-story, brick and concrete post buildings were built over a period of years - the first of which opened in Dayton in March 1952, then Winterville (Steubenville). The idea was to build two posts a

Authorities decided not to locate a permanent post in Waverly; since the population decreased substantially from the peak of 8,000; a permanent Patrol post was no longer needed.

In the Flying Wheel, Colonel Mingle explained how the new post would operate: "The State Highway Patrol has opened a new post in Waverly to serve the area surrounding the government atomic energy plant to be built in Pike County.

"The new post will be established in the State Park on the south edge of Waverly. A patrol emergency trailer will be used for the headquarters until a permanent building is constructed.

"The post will be under the direct supervision of the district headquarters at Wilmington, commanded by Lt. (Howard "Bill") Sowers.

"In charge of the Waverly Post will be Sgt. Max Lambert, now stationed at the Wilmington District Headquarters. Assisting him will be Sgt. Lawrence L. Russell, now assigned to Cambridge.

Colonel Mingle said other personnel assigned to the post would be stationed at Portsmouth and Chillicothe until adequate post facilities could be

established in the State Park.

"The emergency trailers operated by the Patrol have full radio communications.

"The Patrol considered establishing the post in Pike County immediately after the government announced the atomic plant would be constructed.

"The decision to establish the post is in line with Governor Frank J. Lausche's announcement that the state would cooperate in every way possible in the Federal project.

Colonel Mingle held several conferences with the Governor prior to making the announcement. In making the announcement, Colonel Mingle said, "The new post will have two-fold purpose. It will aid the thousands of out-of-town state workers who will be in the area and who are not familiar with Ohio laws and will give added service to Ohioans living in Pike County.

"The Patrol is establishing the post in advance of actual work on the plant in order to be prepared for any problems that may arise.

"The post's assignment will be to concentrate on problems in the immediate area surrounding the site of the plant."



**Students and instructors in the Buckeye Boys State program learn about Ohio's government organization and structure. The Patrol, Patrol Auxiliary, and American Legion all take part in these sessions.**

year, and Colonel George Mingle's plan continued for the next 20 years at that pace.

One of those new posts opened in Waverly. A communications trailer was set up at a state park at the south edge of Waverly, thus was born Post 66, also known as the Piketon Post. A \$1 billion dollar atomic plant was built at that time near Waverly and the Patrol thought that a Division-owned, permanent post would go there. While the facility was being built, the town's population elevated to 8,000 people, made up mostly of construction workers. But after the plant was finished, the population in Waverly sank to 3,000. There wasn't as much traffic trouble as town leaders once thought there would be, so, in 1956, the temporary trailer post closed and no plans were made to build a new one.

Despite not building in Waverly, the Patrol was not only building other posts throughout the state, but also permanent weigh stations. The first erected were at Hessville (near Fremont) and at the intersection of State Routes 40 and 42 in Madison County. The weigh stations had radios and were operated by civilians, often 24 hours a day during peak times. These civilians were trained through the Academy in the ways of a dispatcher and wore uniforms on the job, accordingly.

A new General Headquarters opened in February 1954, when the Patrol moved into the Old Blind School at 660 East Main Street in Columbus. There was a main structure, built in the 19th century and two dormitories built in the

1930s. There was less than up-to-date electrical wiring, and because it was a Blind School dormitory, each room was wired for only one 40-watt light bulb.

Advances in investigation were prevalent during this time, especially with the addition of the first polygraph, obtained by the Patrol in 1956. This device held the promise of enhanced detection and prosecution of criminals. Cpl. William C. George was the first to be trained and certified as an operator of the device. The Bureau of Motor Vehicles' mechanized operator's license files also went into operation in 1956. As the first automated history and conviction resource available to Ohio officers, the file would quickly evolve into a very important officer safety tool. In addition (and more in line with its intended purpose), repeat offenders now could be identified quickly.

One of the more extensive manhunts ever taken on by the Division began on June 21, 1956, when truck driver Alfred "Buck" Wilson went on a wild spree of killing and terror. Wilson, despondent over his wife having left him, shot three people, then kidnapped a 16-year-old girl who he later killed.

After several days of searching, involving reports of sightings in Trumbull and Portage counties, a report placed Wilson at the Ravenna Arsenal grounds. County officials requested National Guard assistance, but when informed 30 Patrol units were on the way, they withdrew their request. By the next morning, almost 200 units were on the scene (121 Patrol officers, 73 Auxiliaries, and a Patrol



**Patrol and Patrol Auxiliary work closely together to aid the public in whatever way possible.**

plane). Under the direction of Capt. Floyd C. Moon and Lt. William B. Umpleby, they began a sweep of a one square mile area containing homes, woods, and farm fields. They started at dawn, with units forming a line along the entire width of the area and searching every building, treetop, and shrub. As one section of the line lagged behind, the plane would hold other sections back, then the entire line would proceed again in unison. The search took nearly four hours and was not successful, but did establish a pattern for future hunts. Patrol units from Massillon and Cambridge districts, along with all sheriff deputies, were relieved, leaving the original detachment of 30 patrolmen.

On July 2, the emergency headquarters set up by the Patrol received a report that Wilson was seen getting into a yellow car in Leavittsburg. Cpl. Joseph J. Szabo, and Ptls. Russ H. Duffy and Floyd M. Smith spotted the car, recognized it as belonging to Wilson's brother-in-law (James Lawson) and proceeded to Lawson's home.

Upon arrival at the Lawson home, the officers found that Wilson had already escaped through a back door. They immediately began pursuit. While searching through the underbrush, Ptl. Duffy spotted Wilson in a tree with a Luger in his hand, watching Ptl. Smith. After several attempts to get Wilson's attention, Duffy's account from the September 1956 issue of the Flying Wheel describes what happened next.

"I said again, 'Wilson, throw that gun down or I'll blow your brains out.' I don't recall Wilson saying any-

thing, but he raised his Luger and started to turn. I fired four times in succession. I don't recall hearing a shot from Wilson's gun, but I heard the shotgun Smith was carrying.

"Wilson twisted and turned both ways in the tree and then fell through the branches to the ground. He landed face down. He lay that way until the ambulance arrived," Duffy continued. Authorities took Wilson to St. Joseph's Hospital, where he died at 7:05 p.m. on July 2, 1956, about five hours after he had been shot.

Still expanding its services, the Patrol invested in a 15-foot boat and trailer (purchased around 1950) for rescue and emergency situations. It was the state's boat, but used almost exclusively in the Baybridge area for emergency and rescue situations. Water patrol slowly faded away in the 1960s, when counties and municipalities took over patrolling water in their areas.

Highways built throughout the nation after U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's signing of the Federal Highway Act (1956) increased the mobility and speed of citizens and their motor vehicles. But Ohio already was working to create a system that allowed quick transportation for passengers and goods across the state.

Ground broke on the first section of the Ohio Turnpike on October 27, 1952. Two years later, the first 22-mile stretch of the new road opened. Masses of people went to the dedication ceremony – a snowy, cold Wednesday in December – and more than 1,000 people joined the caravan behind a snow plow and a Patrol cruiser on the new



highway, just to say they were one of the first to drive on the Ohio Turnpike.

Both ends of the Turnpike connect to Indiana and Pennsylvania toll roads. Legislative action passed in 1954 to approve Turnpike regulations and the authorization for the Patrol to add enough officers to police the road.

On October 1, 1955, the 241-mile highway opened. Hundreds again flocked to be among the first to drive the newly built thoroughfare. Opening day traffic totaled 44,000 vehicles. With the new Turnpike came a new Patrol district – number 10. Commanded by Lt. John L. Bishop, the 10th District headquartered in Berea and contained three posts in Swanton, Castalia and Hiram.

That was a monumental year. Since 1951, the cap on the number of patrolmen authorized by the state was 650. Mainly due to district restructuring, the state decided that the new cap be set at 700 in 1955. In 1956, an additional 59 officers – contracted by the Ohio Turnpike Commission, was granted.

In late 1955, a 40-hour work week became law, allowing for compensatory time off for holidays. This change also eliminated “reserve time,” the name for the policy that stated Patrolmen must remain at home and “on-call”

during off-duty time. To make up the hours lost with the new law, the Division hired civilian dispatchers so sworn officers could focus on law enforcement. All of the first civilian dispatchers were men, many were Auxiliary officers.

Midway into the decade, the Patrol also saw another first – the Division’s first black patrolman.

In 1955, Louis Sharp graduated with the 44th Academy Class. Sharp was the first African-American to graduate from the Academy. Along with Sharp, another black man attended classes in 1955, but resigned before graduating, for the same reason Sanford Roan was believed to have left 15 years earlier, according to Sharp’s recollection.

“It was a good job. I enjoyed helping people,” Sharp said in a 2008 interview. “It just wasn’t really for me. I had a family to take care of. I had a degree, you see, and could make better money elsewhere.”

That same year, the Division phased out the use of motorcycles, mainly because of the high number of officer-involved crashes. Men patrolled with cruisers equipped with state-of-the-art communication equipment instead.

In 1957, Colonel Mingle retired to take a job as city manager in Portsmouth. Mingle was succeeded by Fred

*This is an excerpt of an archived article originally written by Patrolman John D. Cowan, who served with Patrolman Robert E. Karsmizki at the Bay Bridge Post, now the Sandusky Post. Karsmizki was shot and killed in 1957 by a fleeing fugitive.*

*The entire article appeared on May 13, 1999, in the Mansfield News Journal, reprinted with permission from author John D. Cowan & Associates, Inc., Copyright, 1999, all rights reserved.*

“We knew him as “Kars.”

“A big, solid, quiet man who exemplified the men who wore the uniform of the Ohio Highway Patrol – you could count on him.

“Kars, a member of what has become known as ‘The Greatest Generation,’ grew up during The Great Depression, and, when World War II came, flew B-29 bombers helping to defeat Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo in their quest to rule the world.

“Kars applied to the Ohio Highway Patrol



**An escaped killer took the life of Ptl. Robert E. Karsmizki in 1957, after a car chase in Crawford County.**

Moritz, the first non-sworn superintendent of the Patrol. Moritz was the first hired employee of the Division; he assisted O.W. Merrell in setting up the new Patrol in 1933. Moritz also served as an instructor for the First Academy Class at Camp Perry and as assistant superintendent for 24 years before his appointment as leader of the Division.

Superintendent Moritz rebuilt the General Headquarters' communications system. In 1956, a storm toppled a 224-foot radio tower on the north side of Columbus, terminating statewide communications. Moritz relocated the communication center to General Headquarters, linking the remote-control microwave system to a new tower and transmitter in New Albany. This move allowed all communication to be housed in one place, increasing efficiency.

The second murder of a Patrol officer happened in 1957. A felon on the run for another crime shot and killed Patrolman Robert E. Karsmizki. The criminal allegedly killed his wife's parents and stole a car to escape capture. Karsmizki saw the car and pursued. He chased the suspect through a roadblock, when the criminal lost control of his vehicle and crashed. Karsmizki found him laying face down behind the wrecked car. As the Patrolman leaned in to turn him over, the suspect rolled over, revealing a



**Drivers license examinations, including the visual test, continued to be administered by the Patrol in the 1950s.**

Training Academy at a time when only 50 men were chosen from more than 1,000 carefully screened applicants. Kars was commissioned an Ohio Highway trooper on Sept. 10, 1947.

"It wasn't money, glory or notoriety that inspired a man to fly bombers in harm's way or to serve with the Patrol. At the time of his murder, Kars was making \$385 a month for duty exceeding 12 hours per day, six days a week. In those days troopers carried their own liability insurance to drive a patrol car. What, then was the attraction? Duty, honor, country. And to serve with the best.

"Late on the night of March 30, 1957, Kars was finishing up his duty and heading to his Bucyrus home and his wife, Mary. A broadcast of a car stolen at gunpoint shook him to full alert. Not long afterward, Kars spotted the car.

"Kars began pursuit at close to 100 mph. Other law enforcement agencies reacted. Another trooper and his auxiliary joined in the chase now headed from Bucyrus to Galion.

"Galion police set up a road block. In short order the stolen car ran the blockade followed by Karsmizki and the second patrol car. It went out of control, rolled over a number of times and came to rest on its wheels, throwing the driver (the lone occupant) out.

"Kars stopped and left his car with rifle in hand. He gave his rifle to the patrol auxiliary officer and told them to cover him. Then, drawing his service revolver, he approached the ejected driver, who was lying face down, left arm extended, right arm under his body. Kars bent over him just as the driver rolled onto his side and fired a .22 caliber pistol.

"The bullet penetrated Kars' heart, but he managed to fire off five rounds before he fell back dead. The driver then began firing wildly. He was shot dead immediately.

"The investigation would show that the driver had earlier killed two people.

"Just before midnight, March 30, 1957, Trooper (sic) Robert Eugene Karsmizki died at age 35. A hero had left us."



**Two men cautiously peer out of a door from the Ohio State Penitentiary. In 1952, what seemed like a small incident in a cafeteria spawned a riot that left one inmate dead and four others wounded.**

## **The “Halloween Riot”**

*By Colonel George Mingle*

*Article published in The Police Chief, July 1953*

Within minutes after the Ohio Penitentiary was hit by a major mutiny of prisoners last October, the people of the state lost 50 percent of the services of the State Highway Patrol. Should there be a second outbreak, the public would find the bulk of its state patrolmen on their regular assignments and serving the public in a normal manner.

Also, with very little assistance, the guards within the walls of the state institution at Columbus, would probably have the situation in hand. Furthermore, the guards would be only slightly more in number than those who were unable to cope with the mutiny that struck in 1952.

The Ohio Highway Patrol did not end its tour of duty at the Ohio Penitentiary by simply standing guard until the prison was secured and ring leaders charged in court. The Patrol, through the cooperation

of the Warden, took definite steps to make certain that any further uprisings could be handled by regular penitentiary personnel.

In addition, training for patrolmen has been revamped to incorporate the valuable information learned at the prison.

At that moment, while the prison's two mess halls were filled with approximately 1,600 “working company” convicts, a spark was set off by a minor incident (tapping of cups on a table) resulted in the destruction of one-half million dollars in state property, the expenditure of thousands of man-hours by police agencies, the death of one inmate, the wounding of four inmates, the wounding of a highway patrolman, assaults against prison guards, personal assaults by inmates against inmates, and a state of general tension among citizens of the surrounding area and the state.

The guards on duty in the mess-hall attempted to quiet their companies; several guards attempted to form their companies into ranks to march back to the cellblocks, but were unable to do so. The pound-

ing increased to general bedlam. The warden (former Major-Inspector Ralph "Red" W. Alvis), standing a hundred yards away in the prison yard, walked to the mess hall, stood on a table and attempted to quiet the disorder, with a small measure of success.

At this point the second mess-hall, a hundred feet distant, broke into disorder also. The warden made his way to the second hall and was met with a scene of complete disorder, inmates throwing trays, food, table utensils and breaking up equipment. They refused to listen to him. He made his way to the office and alerted police and the National Guard in accordance with a pre-arranged plan.

Many of the wiser inmates sought places of refuge and some returned to their cells and asked to be locked in. Others went to open areas, sat down and remained quiet. Gangs of convicts led by the ring leaders overpowered cellblock and dormitory guards and broke hundreds of locks from the four-man cells. Two thousand six hundred fifty-one inmates were loose at the height of the rioting, but no hostages were held.

Review of the developments of this mutiny and the ensuing assaults and destruction gave little if any evidence of planning by the participants.

Upon the warden's alert to surrounding police agencies, the State Patrol, Columbus Police, Franklin County Sheriff and numerous police from surrounding suburban cities, villages and counties dispatched all available men to the scene at once. It was fortunate that the mutiny occurred on Halloween, for the Columbus Police had assigned all available officers and auxiliaries to duty and they were made available at once for assignment at the penitentiary.

Fires were set in numerous buildings inside the institution by gangs of convicts, which necessitated the employment of municipal fire equipment, for the institution equipment was not adequate. Municipal fire equipment, dispatched inside the walls, had to be protected by police. The result was that as the first police arrived for duty they had to be assigned to protect fire equipment. As a result concerted police action was not possible in the early stages of the development, when it might have been most effective.

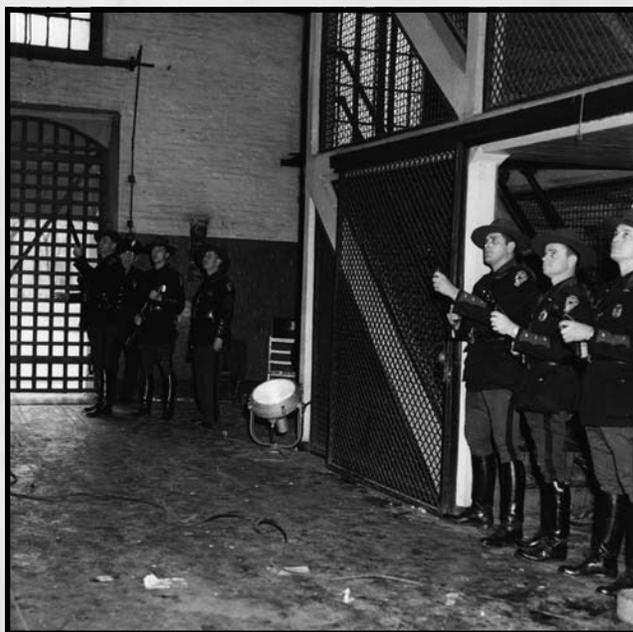
By the time sufficient police were on the scene for a roundup of inmates, many fires had been put

down, several buildings were burning out of control, and convicts were scattered throughout the whole area of more than 19 acres.

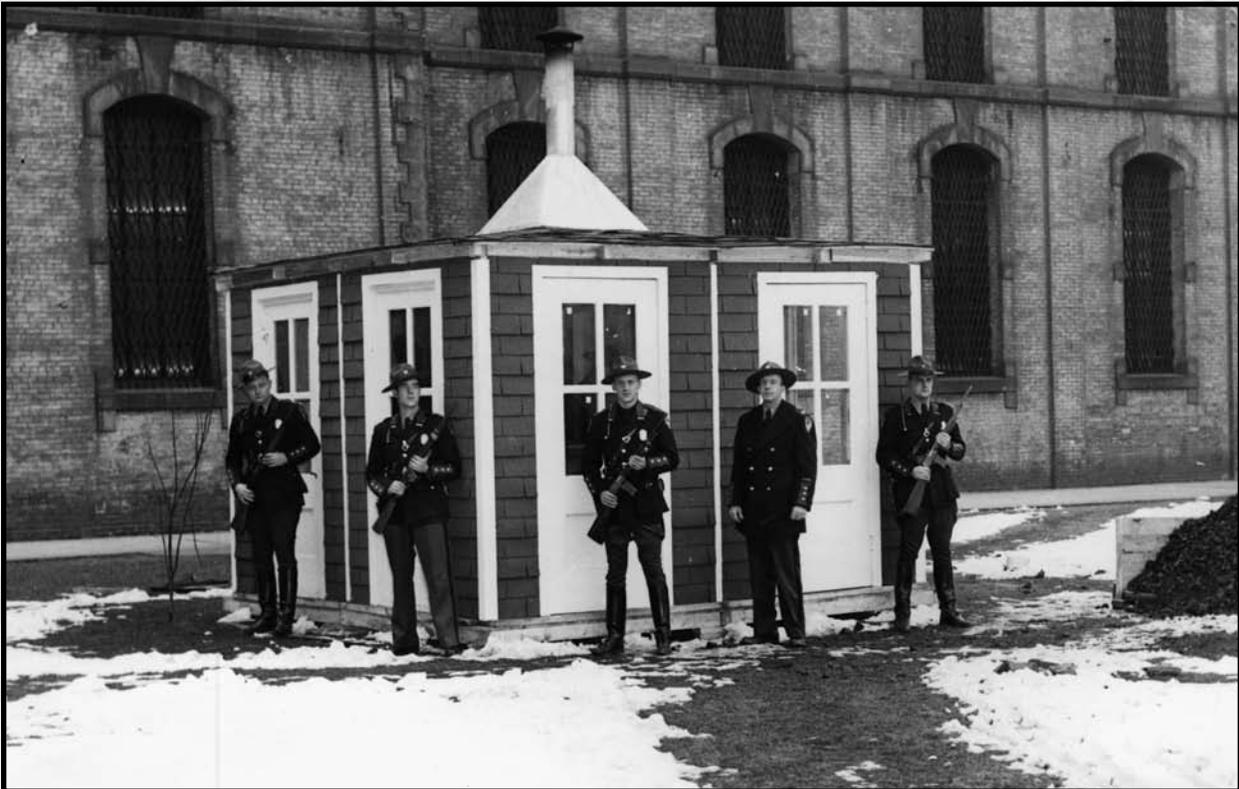
No attempts were made to climb the walls. Guard towers on the walls were manned by rifle-equipped guards throughout the disturbance. Guards inside the walls were armed only with clubs. The convicts were driven into the prison yard, and as sufficient police arrived, a cordon was thrown around the active members of the mob for the purpose of driving them back into the cellblocks C, H, I and K, which are housed in a single large building. The cellblocks were cleared by a detail of police, and the inmates were forced into the building, searched for weapons and sent up into the cellblocks. These four blocks housed 1600 inmates. The locks on 90 percent of their cell doors had been destroyed by sledge hammer crews during the first hours of the rioting. Dormitory prisoners returned to their places more or less voluntarily.

Cellblocks A and B, housing 800 prisoners, were secured with less difficulty. The locks were intact in this building.

At approximately 10:00 p.m. all convicts except for a few stragglers were in their dormitories and cell



**Patrolmen seek to calm rioting in 1952 at the Ohio State Penitentiary. It took 300 patrolmen to quell the skirmish; Patrolmen remained at the prison for three months as a precautionary measure.**



**Patrolmen guard the area housing equipment and ammunition during the 1952 riots at the Ohio State Penitentiary.**

blocks. A particular problem was faced in cellblocks G, H, I and K because locks were destroyed on cell doors and at the head of each “range” or passageway. These blocks are six levels in height, and are “caged” or enclosed in steel mesh from top to the second level. This caging or mesh is for the purpose of preventing an inmate or guard from falling or being thrown off the stair steps or passageways.

At the head of each passageway from the cells to the stairways is normally a “rushgate,” a steel mesh door which can be locked. These rushgates had all been torn off by the rioters. Similar gates at the point where the double stairways empty onto the ground level had also been broken off. All four cellblocks emptied onto the ground floor in the center of the building into an open space approximately 20 by 40 feet. A detail of State Patrolmen was assigned to this point to keep the inmates in the cell blocks.

With the inmates back in their cellblocks and

dormitories, all municipal and county officers were withdrawn, leaving a detail of 270 State Patrolmen to provide the armed force to prevent or meet any recurrence. A unit of the Ohio National Guard took up positions in support.

Some useful lessons were learned during the course of the riot and the follow-up period.

Daily conferences between the warden, state patrol officers, and the National Guard commander served to eliminate conflicts in authority, responsibility and operating plans. The whole operation was marked by excellent cooperation and coordination.

When we as police administrators, make plans for operations in the event of a national emergency we may be overlooking an important point if we fail to consider the possibility of subversive-instigated uprisings in such institutions at a time when we are least able to cope with them.

gun in his hand. He fired twice and hit Karsmizki in the chest. Immediately, Patrolman Murray C. Youtz and Crawford County Patrol Auxiliary Captain Roy Scott, who were also on the scene, shot and killed the suspect.

John Cowan, a fellow patrolman with “Kars” and a pilot for a time with the Patrol, talked of Karsmizki in a 2002 interview.

“He was a very dependable, strong, capable guy. You could count on him. If there was trouble, you’d want him standing right by you, he was that kind of a guy. We all thought that we were privileged to have known the guy.”

Superintendent Moritz appointed two new majors to be in charge of “services” and “line operations” in late 1957. Moritz established the Superintendent’s Citation of Merit, still given to an officer who participates or assists in any action or performance of a distinguishing nature. The O.W. Merrell Award, the Division’s highest honor for valor, is chosen from those who receive Superintendent’s Citation of Merit Awards.

It was about this time, as well, that the dreaded semi-annual inspections disappeared. These inspections examined in great detail vehicles and equipment connected with the post, from the shine on patrolmen’s shoes to how clean and in good repair the post vehicles were. Patrolmen even took time to paint the engines of the cruisers, even though they ran poorly until the paint burned off. Because of the time involved in preparing for such functions, the inspections were phased out.

It was 1957 when Superintendent Moritz and his staff began looking into developing a fairer and more reliable evaluation system for new recruits, as well as one which could act as a guidance and training tool. The job was assigned to Sgt. Robert M. Chiamonte who, working with Sherwood Peres, Ph.D., of The Ohio State University, developed the Diagnostic Forced Choice Evaluation System. Designed to eliminate favoritism and the “halo effect” (in which one or two acts overshadow the remainder of an officer’s activity), the system was completed in 1958 and became the basis of many similar rating systems in the United States and Canada.

Civil defense returned as a top priority for Patrol planners in 1959 when heightened Cold War tensions prompted the federal government to place greater emphasis on attack preparedness. In addition to taking charge of a variety of defense related equipment (such as an emergency generator at the headquarters tower, radiological measuring devices, etc.), the division took on the responsibility of preparing Civil Defense Manuals for the evacuation of

major target areas in the state. Included in the plan were evacuation routes, check points, staging areas, and auxiliary assignments. Mostly farmers residing at crossroads volunteered to assist in civil defense-related evacuations in the event of an emergency. The entire project took months to complete, but the complexities of the system and constant changes to it resulted in the abandonment of the manuals around 1961.

Unfortunately, Moritz’ leadership of the Patrol was short; he succumbed to cancer on July 18, 1959. Major Scott B. Radcliffe, a Camp Perry graduate, was named the fourth superintendent.



**The Cold War prompted the need for organized plans to mobilize Patrol and Patrol Auxiliary units at a moment’s notice.**