

I Remember When...

By Lt. George Amans (ret.)

Lt. Amans was in the 9th trooper cadet class, and was commissioned August 16, 1937.

I transferred to Spokane by choice in 1942, and was there until 1946. I was assigned the "hot" East beat to the Idaho line. Those were the days when Idaho had Sunday beer and lots of slot machines, plus the stateline village with all the many road house taverns and dance joints.



Hundreds of Washingtonians would start their trek Friday. Late Sunday night, they all came back at once on the Appleway four-lane and the old Trent two-lane.

For a while we had two patrol units on the night shift. Later on it was reduced to one because of shortages. It even came down to one man, and the shift ended at midnight, when everything began to happen.

This lasted for only a few months.

Our patrol cars statewide were 1939 and '40 Ford panel paddy wagons. I had three different ones, all with more than 300,000 miles, the popular '39-'40 flathead Mercury 90 horsepower engine with a top speed of 82 mph.

Our old tired patrol cars had two-way AM radios with telescope side-mounted antenna that would extend up to 32 feet. About 12 feet was patrolling height.

Parked, we could listen to many Washington and California stations clearly, and some summer months could hear stations in Eastern and Southern states.

The last good car I had before retirement was a 1964 Dodge sedan with a Chrysler 383 engine that shifted out of second at 85 mph, then up to 140 with ease.

The East beat was unique and always "hot" with lots of everything. Many drivers in stolen cars would try to beat us to the state line, thinking they would be free and safe.

Several were arrested and booked on a federal charge, driving a stolen car across state lines. Speeders often were charged in both states when the Idaho patrols were handy.

Many stolen cars came into Washington from Idaho, Montana and farther east. In the four years I had 33 stolen cars with the drivers.

Because of the several Army boot training camps, there often were AWOLs loose, and the government paid a \$100 reward for their apprehension.

One summer Saturday night, three AWOLs started their spree in Idaho with three stolen cars and there were several chases in a six-hour period. Two cars were wrecked in Idaho and the third in Washington and eluded two of our night-shift patrols. That car was found wrecked near Liberty Lake but with no occupants.

I started the 7 a.m. Sunday patrol east and drove toward the area. Before reaching the lake I saw, in a field, a clump of brush and two heads popped up to take a look.

Stopping and leaning over the hood with the .44 drawn, I yelled, "All of you come out, you're covered." All three immediately came out with hands up. It was permissible with our department to file the apprehension claim. I received a check for \$300.

On one particular hot Spokane summer Monday, we all received a radio call to report immediately to the district office for an equipment inspection.

Patrolman Joe Knight was quite a prankster. He worked the north end of the Spokane area, which had a lot of dusty gravel side roads. Our old wagons were known for sucking up dust through the wood floorboards in the rear panel area.

Joe's car was the third wagon to be opened by the sergeant to be viewed by Capt. Morgan. The wood seat bench and floor were covered with a good inch of dust.

"What's this, Joe?" the captain asked. Joe looked, paused, and then said, "What do you know? -- frost."