

## I Remember When...

By Trooper Dee Wolslegel (ret.)

*Dee Wolslegel was a trooper for 29 1/2 years, retiring in July 1989. He went back to work for the Patrol two months later as a VIN inspector. He had been a trooper for only nine days when he was struck Dec. 29, 1960, on I-5 at the North Fork of the Stillaguamish River Bridge.*



The bridge was icy. We were investigating an accident in the southbound lanes. It was early morning, still dark. There was a car on the bridge, in the inside (southbound) lane with extensive front-end damage. We were on foot in front of that car.

A female driver northbound, when she came onto the bridge, applied her brakes. The lanes were separated by a low curb. The skid caused her vehicle to cross over the curbing into the southbound lanes. She hit both of us when we were on foot. I was hit by her right front fender. Wittenberg was hit dead center at the hood ornament. I don't remember seeing her coming.

I wound up in the northbound lanes, Wittenberg on the hood of her car. I believe he was dead when she hit him. My left leg was fractured between the knee and ankle, my pelvis was broken and I had some internal injuries and a concussion. I went on administrative leave, and went back to limited duty working radio in Mount Vernon. I had a full leg cast for 11 1/2 months. I went back to active Patrol duty in August 1962.

When you get those injuries you don't know what's going to happen down the line. It made me awfully gun shy. The only other thing we could have done would have been to stay in the car.

I was riding with Wittenberg to learn the beat. They gave us about four days off after graduation, and I had been on the beat only four days. My orders said I would be working Stevens Pass because I was single at the time. Then the powers that be said, "We weren't going to put you there. That would be too dangerous." So they had me working out of Everett.

The rest of my career was relatively uneventful. It made me real cautious when it was dark and icy and I had to get out of the car. I always felt safer going up on the passenger side. I did that for years.

I was a bomb technician my last five years, telling people how to recognize different things that they shouldn't pick up this or that. So I had to go to the Academy. I reiterated the Stillaguamish bridge situation to one of the classes. Glenda Thomas was in that class.

Glenda Thomas was a rookie trooper when she was crushed and killed between two vehicles on the Seattle freeway during the 1985 Memorial Day weekend.