

HISTORICAL MEMORIAL CENTER

Pennsylvania State Police

Oral History Interview of:

SERGEANT JOHN HAMBORSKY

January 17, 2007

INTERVIEWER:

This is the Pennsylvania State Police Oral History Project. The date is 17 January 2007. My name is Corporal Bob Mertz (ph), PSP retired and I am interviewing Sergeant John Hamborsky. The interview is being conducted at Sergeant Hamborsky's home in Uniontown, PA.

Sergeant Hamborsky, do I have permission to videotape this interview?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Welcome, Sergeant Hamborsky. Sergeant, to begin the interview if you would give me some of your general biographical data; place of birth, your family structure, where you worked before you came into State Police. Just basically what your life was like before entering the State Police.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Okay. I was born and raised in Lambert, Pennsylvania in 1939. My family consisted of my mom and dad and I had two sisters and two brothers. Currently -- myself and my younger sister, we're the only surviving members of the immediate family. I...

INTERVIEWER:

Go ahead.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

...was in the service in 1961 and '62 and when I got out of the service, I worked for Thrift Plan (ph) Finance at that time. Well, of course there were several name changes. At the time that I entered the State Police, I was working for them over in Waynesburg and it was Signal (ph) Finance at that time.

INTERVIEWER:

Now this is a question that the answer is never the same, no matter who we interview. But what made you want to become a trooper?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Well, that probably goes back a good ways. I would say probably when I was around ten years old, family -- we had a cousin, Joe Vilzeck (ph). He was a Pennsylvania State Trooper back in the 40s and I can remember one time in particular when he had come into Lambert. This was probably a Sunday afternoon. All the men from the town, from the patch as they called it back then was down at the Union Supply having their normal card game. You know, their nickel-dime poker game and I was down in that area with a cousin and we were playing down at the (inaudible). But I can remember them hollering that the gray car was coming into Lambert. Well, by the time he got down there, the money was gone and there was a big heavy game of pinochle going on. Well, of course even in my young mind I knew that he knew that they were actually gambling and everything went along fine. Of course when he

was leaving, when he got back in the car, he told him. He said okay, boys. I'm leaving. You can get back to your regular game. And I -- it just stuck in my mind the respect and everything that the guys there that was doing the gambling, you know, had for him and then of course over the years whenever I see a State Trooper as I was growing up, I was always fascinated by the respect and everything that was shown to them in regards to who the people were. And also there was another fellow, Lawrence Orsling (ph). I worked for my uncle at his service station down in Buffington. This was in the late 50s and Larry had got out of the service and he had enlisted with the State Police and he used to quite often not bug me but always tell me that I should look at something like that when I was 21. Well, that was in mind. I went into the service in 1961. I was discharged in 1962, August of '62 and at that time, I did apply for the State Police. I got a letter at -- I think it was probably in December that my application was received too late for consideration for the next class. So my fiancé and I -- I had a job with the finance company at that time, so we just went ahead and figured well, that was just something going to be in the past and we made our plans to get married in May of 1963. Well, May 25 was our wedding date and I believe it was the 17th of May I got a call from Jasper Augustine. Yeah. I think he was a sergeant at Uniontown Barracks at

the time -- wanted to talk to me. So I went out to the barracks and he had told me at that time that I was being considered for the September '63 class. Unfortunately at that time there was no way that we could cancel our wedding plans and everything, so I signed a paper stating that, you know, I was relinquishing my request to, you know, be hired with, you know, the Pennsylvania State Police and I just, you know, let it go at that. August of that year there was an article in the paper that they were accepting married people, married men for the September '63 class. But again, it was too late for any kind of change. So I basically forgot about trying to become a State Trooper until I think it was October of '66 when there was an article in the paper that they had just passed a bill authorizing an increase of 1200 for the State Police. So I applied -- it was Election Day in November of '66. I went to Troop B Headquarters and this is something that always stuck out in my mind. When I walked in down there -- there was three of us down there to apply for the State Police and Henry Poiser (ph) -- he was a First Sergeant at the time. He came out and the other two guys were just in regular street clothes. Well, he looked at them and he looked at me. I was in a suit and tie and he had told them that -- he said when you learn to dress like this gentleman here, come back and see me. And at

that time then I went in and -- I think it was Lieutenant Snyder (ph) at that time. He took my application for the State Police.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. When you say he took your application, what did the process consist of at that time?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Basically at that time, he just -- you went in. You filled out a short form and there was a discussion, you know, talk -- you know, there was a lot of small talk, you know, back and forth and then he told me that I would, you know, receive notification when the test was going to be administered and where. Now the only other thing out of that, I don't think that I was probably out of the barracks and into my car pulling out when he was on the phone, you know, calling my wife already to see if she had any objections to me applying for the State Police. As soon as I got home, that's when I think she told me. She said she got a call from Lieutenant Snyder about me applying for the State Police. Well, of courses she knew that I was because she knew where I was at and we had talked about it, you know, about the decision to go on to -- you know, try to get back onto the State Police.

INTERVIEWER:

How old were you at that time?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Twenty-six.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you need any letters of recommendation or anybody to speak on your behalf at that time?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. I will say this. The first time, yes. There was a senator that was speaking on my behalf. The second time around, I just figured that if I'm going to make it, I'm going to make it on my own. I used nobody other than the recommendations that we had to put on the application when it was going before -- the background investigation was going to be conducted.

INTERVIEWER:

Was it unusual that -- or wasn't it the usual protocol to get in the State Police back in those days, someone had to sponsor you? I'm kind of comparing it to like an appointment to West Point or had that time period passed?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I think there was a transition period between 1963 and '67 when this went about. In '63, yes. There was a sponsorship and -- but in '67, no.

INTERVIEWER:

The background investigation, do you remember who conducted the background investigation?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yeah. It was the -- Trooper Sincavich. Charlie Sincavich from the Waynesburg station.

INTERVIEWER:

That's kind of ironic because didn't he end up working for you at that station or did he -- didn't he?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

No?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. He was going out of there by the time I got down there as station commander.

INTERVIEWER:

So then politics played no role in the hiring process at that time?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. When you were notified that you were hired, how much time did you have to report for training between notification and the time you had to report to training? If you remember.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

It was probably about a month because the normal procedure for the company that I worked for, the finance company that I worked for, if they found out that you were job-hunting or looking for employment elsewhere, you were more or less dismissed as soon as they found out. And when Charlie went down to the headquarters in Pittsburg on the investigation, that evening I think I was down in West Virginia. When I got back, there was a note on my desk at the office there in Waynesburg to call my supervisor irregardless of what time. And so I called. It was a man by the name of Art Parshall (ph). I called him. I think it was around seven o'clock at night and he proceeded to let me know that there was a trooper down there doing a background investigation on me for the State Police. And I told him yes that, you know, I had passed the test and I was in the final stages of the investigation and I had also told him at that time -- I said well, I said I guess what -- you'll be down tomorrow morning, you know, to discharge me and, you know, well, let me know what time. I said we'll at least go out for coffee, you know, before it happens. He sort of laughed and he said no. He said we're not -- as a matter of fact, I entered the Academy on a Thursday which was April 13 and I worked for them until that Monday. That Monday. That -- 13, what -- 10th I

think of April was my last day working for them. But they just kept me on right up until the end.

INTERVIEWER:

Well, apparently you were well-liked and did a great job for them because their -- as you stated, their policy was to terminate anyone that was looking for another job.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. I was fortunate and I was happy and it was the same thing -- matter of fact, they did try to entice me with a promotion to an auditor job if I would stay with the company. But my desire was the State Police and that's what I took. The big difference there was I think our starting salary back then was \$6290. My yearly salary with that finance company at that time was approximately 10.

INTERVIEWER:

So you took quite a bit of a pay cut?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. I think -- well, you know, I don't know now. I don't know what the base salary is now, but I think back then most of the men coming on the job, it wasn't the money factor. It was I think the desire to be a State Trooper. Now I don't know whether it's that same desire with all of them or if it's a money factor that is bringing some of them on the job now.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. So you left the finance company and you ended up in Hershey for a three-month training period? Was that what it was or...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yeah. It was 12 weeks at that time and I think it was a pretty hectic 12 weeks because everything was jammed together. It wasn't a situation where you could sort of lay back and coast along. You either had it or you didn't have it. I think we were even -- our daily courses plus I think we were also -- had a two-hour course after, you know, our dinner, evening meal from like six to eight o'clock.

INTERVIEWER:

So they -- did they have an increase in the overall compliment of the State Police at that particular time? Is that why the training course was shortened from I think it was six months to...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Six to the twelve weeks. Yes. They had increased compliment I think 1200 men and they only had I think two years or three years to put that many men, you know, on the force at that time. So they were going through I think what -- every 12 weeks. I know we had 120 in our class and probably graduated 109 or 110.

INTERVIEWER:

Tell me -- tell us a little bit about your cadet training experience.

Typical day. What was it like?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

A typical day was up at 6:00 -- I believe it was 6:00 or 5:30. But anyway we went out for our morning run and then we was back. Then we had breakfast or the people that didn't go on the run, they were pulling the KP and then after breakfast, it was stable time...

INTERVIEWER:

What was...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

...and then...

INTERVIEWER:

...stable time? What...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Stable time was going down to the stable and cleaning out the stalls, graining the horses and also giving them some, you know, hay and water. If the weather was nice, we'd put them out in the corral on the outside, the holding pen and also involved grooving them, which was brushing them down, cleaning the dock and (inaudible), cleaning the hooves. It was an experience.

INTERVIEWER:

Which was the better detail, the inside detail cleaning the stalls, or the outside detail grooming the horses?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Well, you didn't have to worry about the horses biting you if you were cleaning out the stalls. But they -- it wasn't too bad either way. I can remember one experience up there with the horses. They were doing some kind of documentary for the State Police and they were down in the stables and we were -- this was the evening. We were taking the horses to the -- you know, water and getting them back and everything and we had one horse down there. I don't know if you can remember him or not. Adonis. He was a mean sucker and O'Rourke (ph), Trooper O'Rourke told me to take him down to get him water and we of course had to go down past where all the lights were set up and everything for this filming and I told him, I said that horse doesn't like me and it's not going to listen to me. You know, take him anyway. Well, to make a short story out of it, there was quite a bit of damage done to the lights when we went by because when he lashed out at another horse, they both kicked back and they knocked all the lights down that was set up for the filming.

INTERVIEWER:

What -- that Trooper O'Rourke, who was -- was it his responsibility to run the stables and...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yeah. He was one -- down with the stables. I can't think of the -- there was a Corporal down there at the time, too. I can't think of his name, but usually O'Rourke was down there most of the time with us on stable duty.

INTERVIEWER:

You said the size of your class was approximately 120 and how many did you -- how many dropped out before graduation?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I think one didn't show up. I think we actually started with 119 and I can remember one dropping out within a day or two. It was a newly-married man and just I guess his wife couldn't hack it with him, you know, being away and so he dropped out, and unfortunately we had one that was arrested. He was involved in a hit-and-run when he was home on his weekend off and then the rest of them were just -- they were dismissed because they couldn't keep up with the training or, you know, keep their grades up.

INTERVIEWER:

During your training, were you allowed out in the evenings or on the weekends?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. There was no evening -- like I say, we were -- a two-hour training session every night, Monday through Friday. So that gave us -- you know, there was no time because once you finished that, you had your lessons to do and everything to prepare for the next day and if you were going to write any letters home or whatever and of course you were in bed, lights out by ten o'clock. Weekends, there were a few that we were allowed to maybe go downtown to do laundry or go get a haircut. But in that 12-week period, they were very short. We were divided up into three platoons. One platoon usually stayed on that weekend and other two was given the weekend off to go home, which that weekend off would consist of I think from twelve o'clock on a Saturday until midnight on a Sunday night.

INTERVIEWER:

So if a person lived in Erie say, you wouldn't have much time after driving to and from to spend at home. Would you?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. Not too much time would be spent at home. Time on the road and of course back then, the turnpike wasn't like it is today. Traffic was quite heavy and they had the single-lane tunnels and you had to worry about going back on Sunday whether or not you were going to get tied up in any type of accident out there.

INTERVIEWER:

So what time did you have to be back by on Sunday evening?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Midnight.

INTERVIEWER:

And if you weren't?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

You had problems. Most of the time everybody was back. There was a -- several times I think that there were accidents on the turnpike that some people got back late, but fortunately the troopers out there, they would get one of the troopers at the scene and they would radio in and call the Academy that so and so was involved and, you know, there was a traffic backlog.

INTERVIEWER:

What was the toughest part of the training for you, individual (inaudible)?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I want to say probably at that time the physical aspect of it. I didn't have too much problem with any of the courses, any of the subjects. But I was a fairly heavy smoker and that morning run, it really got to you.

INTERVIEWER:

How far did you run in the morning?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I think at the end...

INTERVIEWER:

Approximately.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

...there -- I think at the end, we were what, approximately five mile...

INTERVIEWER:

What was your favorite part of the training would you say? If there was a favorite part.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Probably the favorite part of the training was graduation. But the training itself, it wasn't that bad. It -- being in the service -- you know, there was no actual harassment like you get when you're in the military when you're going through training. The thing was we were told, you know, we were men. We were there for a job and we knew what we had to do and we did it.

INTERVIEWER:

You -- do you remember who your roommate was?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yeah. James Hawk (ph).

INTERVIEWER:

Have you -- did you follow up after graduation as to whatever happened to...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Jim ended up in I think Greensburg Troop, but other than a couple times, our paths really never crossed after that because I was out on the turnpike and...

INTERVIEWER:

Your uniforms at that time as a cadet, what did they consist of?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

They were just like a blue pair of trousers and shirt. Of course with that and the black shoes and the black tie and we had a nametag, with nothing -- you know, nothing that was State Police or we -- until -- well, we were given uniforms, you know, later on in the training and the only time we wore that uniform -- well, we -- no. We went out -- we used to go out in our cadet uniforms with troopers from Troop H Harrisburg. We used to go out on patrol.

INTERVIEWER:

You wore a cadet uniform or...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

We wore the cadet uniform.

INTERVIEWER:

So you were out on patrol with a uniformed trooper. It was just more or less observation?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Is that all you were...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Um-hum.

INTERVIEWER:

...doing?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Towards the end then when we got out uniforms, then we were wearing the uniform.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you have any kind of inspection...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...while you were in training?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. Every Saturday we had an inspection.

INTERVIEWER:

What'd that consist of?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Might as well say white-glove inspection. It consisted of, you know, your complete room; your bed, your closet, everything, your desk. Also

your personal hygiene, your uniform and everything that you had on that day.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you have to stand inspection in uniform at that...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...time? In your room or were...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

We used to have inspections outside, too.

INTERVIEWER:

Your graduation ceremony, where was it held?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

It was held at the Academy in the gym.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you remember who your graduation speaker was?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. Can't say that I...

INTERVIEWER:

So upon graduation, your rank went from cadet to trooper?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

In 1929, they issued a mandate for each cadet to memorize and recite the Call of Honor at graduation. Are you still able to recite the Call of Honor?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I don't think so. There -- I probably remember most of it, but really -- and understand anyway the Call of Honor that we learned and the Call of Honor now is I think somewhat different.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Okay. So you graduated. Let's talk a little bit now about what your life was like -- is there anything you'd like to add about your cadet training before we go on to...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. I think it was good for the period of time and everything. The instructors were well versed. You know, several of the instructors later became -- I remember one, he was our platoon leader. That was John Angel (ph), and when I came to Troop B, he was here in Troop B. He came I think as a sergeant and he ended up -- I think he was at the troop as a captain at the time.

INTERVIEWER:

So you ended up working for him in the troop you were assigned to?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

One -- I've got one other question about the -- is there any one instructor that impressed you in Hershey at the Academy above any others?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

As far as appearance, yeah. I remember Trooper Lynch (ph). He was very -- I don't know. He was your epitome I think of what a trooper should look like at all times; his demeanor, his dress and everything about him and -- I mean, I'm not taking away from the other ones that was up there, but he just stood out a little bit, sort of head-and-shoulders above the rest.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you recall what his rank was when he retired from the State Police?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I believe he was a Major. I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Okay. So you're out in a troop. Where were you assigned initially after graduation from Hershey?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I assigned to the turnpike, Troop T, Gibsonia station.

INTERVIEWER:

How long were you at Gibsonia?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I was at Gibsonia from '67 to '72. October '72 I got promoted to Corporal and transferred to Troop T, Highspire.

INTERVIEWER:

Was that by choice or was that the only position open?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

That was the only position open at the time. I think here they made two promotions and it was the last promotion. I was number two on the list and then that was it. The test came up after that. But that was when you were promoted -- Corporal was troop -- within the troop. It wasn't statewide at that time.

INTERVIEWER:

I see. So Troop T, the turnpike, theoretically you could be in Gibsonia in the western part of the state and for a promotion end up -- what was the furthest station east?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

The Pocono on the northeast extension.

INTERVIEWER:

That's quite a drive.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes, it would be.

INTERVIEWER:

Where did you live at the time?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I was living here in New Salem at the time when I got promoted and of course at that time the turnpike had rooms, you know, at the stations. So I had a room at Newville and I stayed at Newville during the week and, you know, worked at Highspire, then on my days off, traveled back home.

INTERVIEWER:

What was duty like in Highspire? Was that -- what was your duty -- it consist of?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Worked communications. We had our communications room there. Usually there was a corporal on duty and we usually had three civilians manning the radios plus during the dayshift their civilian supervisor would be there also. We were basically there for any type of police response, you know, requirement and also we took care of the teletype, any NCIC inquiries, registration inquiries.

INTERVIEWER:

NCIC, what is...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

National Crime Information Center. That -- I think that was something that was just starting up at that time. This is back in '72.

INTERVIEWER:

Was that the system what -- that was interfaced with the FBI?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

The FBI. Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

So the communications at Highspire basically -- you were talking to cars on the road in Gibsonia and the Poconos?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

So you had communications for the whole length of the turnpike?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yeah. They were -- it was broken down into three districts and -- no. I'm sorry. I take that back. There was five districts. Several of the operators handled several districts, like the northeast extension and the east section was handled by one operator and...

INTERVIEWER:

So if a phone call came in from a citizen that there was a problem, say an accident on the turnpike, would you receive that call or would the local station receive the call in the area the person called from?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

It would just depend on which phone number that they used. If they called from one of the plazas or something of this nature it would come

into Harrisburg on a, you know, toll-free number and then they would reassign it.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. So from Highspire, where did you go then?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Okay. In -- I stayed at Highspire until, let's see, '73. September -- August of '73, I transferred to Everett Barracks on the turnpike and it's -
- it was midway home then.

INTERVIEWER:

So you were trying to work your way back home?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yeah. As the openings came about, yes.

INTERVIEWER:

All right. And how long were you at Everett?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I was at Everett from '73 until February 1 of 1977.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. As a corporal?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

As a corporal. And then February 2, '77, I was promoted to sergeant and transferred to Troop B Washington.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. So you were at Troop B Headquarters. How long were you there?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I was there until August of 1983. I was the Traffic Sergeant down there from 1979 until '83 and in '83 I was transferred to Waynesburg as the Station Commander.

INTERVIEWER:

And during your career in the State Police, are there any -- was there any one Commissioner that you served under that had a particularly strong impact on your career?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. Basically the Commissioners down -- you know, all through the period of time that I was on there, I mean they were -- all of them were different so to speak, you know, and they had their own philosophies and their own procedures. But I really can't say anything really bad about any of them. You know, I mean, they set the guidelines and as a good trooper, we followed them.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Going back to just after graduation, did you have a coach assigned to you?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

After graduation, yes. My first coach was Richard Corsum (ph). He was a trooper in Gibsonia. I had him for a short period of time and then he left. He was on the State Police Fiscal (ph) Team. And then my second coach was Ed Vogler (ph).

INTERVIEWER:

Were you required to serve a probationary period back then?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. It was 18 months.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you remember what your starting salary was?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yeah. Six thousand three hundred and ninety dollars a year.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you get any automatic pay raises or meal allowances or uniform allowances?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. At that time, that was it. It was a straight salary. But I think right around that time is when the legislature passed the law giving us the right to arbitration. Was that 1969? Somewhere around there. So basically after that the benefits improved somewhat. You know, just increased, became more lucrative.

INTERVIEWER:

So there was no overtime? If you were assigned an accident an hour before your designated quitting time, you worked on your time?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

You worked on your own time. I can remember one time the first steel haulers' strike, we had a shooting incident at five until 7:00. Our quitting time was seven o'clock. Well, I think I quit that night around ten o'clock. There was no overtime, no nothing. You just -- you followed through with your report and so forth.

INTERVIEWER:

It doesn't sound like there were too many perks, but were there any that came with the job at that time?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I think the main perk at that time and what it continued to be was the fact that -- the pride of being, you know, a State Trooper and the respect that was shown to you, you know, at various places and so forth as far as perks. And of course, you know, there would be times certain places like out on the turnpike the Howard Johnson's used to give us half price for our meals which, you know, was -- I guess would be considered a perk at that time.

INTERVIEWER:

Being stationed on the turnpike, did you travel the turnpike free?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yeah. We had a turnpike pass that we were able to use going to and from work and at that time, we was able to use the pass period. If we were off-duty or whatever and traveled on the turnpike, we used the -- you know, the card.

INTERVIEWER:

So if you were in a troop such as Troop B which -- off the turnpike, were you granted privileges to travel the turnpike for free if you worked out in the county?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I believe there was a system set up at that time that the -- off-the-turnpike troopers could use it also and there was a code where you pulled up to the interchange. You sort of flashed your lights and if you were an off-turnpike, you showed your identification and you signed a card.

INTERVIEWER:

Would you say that's probably because you were considered on-duty 24 hours a day and if you happened to come across something while you were traveling the turnpike, you would have to take some kind of police action if it was serious?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. I think so because like you say, we were 24 hours a day, seven days a week, you know, on duty. We had -- consider what -- duty time

and then off-duty time, but you were still required to act if you saw something that required action.

INTERVIEWER:

On your off-duty time, were you permitted to carry a firearm?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

And did you most times?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I probably carried a firearm most of the time. I would say probably the only time that I didn't carry a firearm off-duty is when I'd be going to church. You know, that's...

INTERVIEWER:

While at the State Police, were you permitted to work at other employment on your off-duty time to supplement your 62 or \$6,300 income?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Back then, no. I think the right to outside employment wasn't gained until after arbitration and then it couldn't be a conflict of interest.

INTERVIEWER:

By that you mean...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yeah. You couldn't go -- do any type of law-enforcement work, investigative work, anything of that nature or I think as it was termed anything that would be degrading to the image of the State Police.

INTERVIEWER:

So I would imagine a bartender would be out of the question.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Definitely.

INTERVIEWER:

You said that sleeping accommodations were available for you on the turnpike. What about out in the troop? The county troops.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I'm thinking that that was done away with when the arbitration award was granted. I think prior to that, I believe there were, you know, sleeping accommodations available. I'm not saying at all the places, but I know in most troop headquarters, there was bedrooms and...

INTERVIEWER:

Did you have any annual -- how much annual leave or sick leave was available for use at that time?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Sick leave was 15 days a year and annual leave started out -- what was it, a day and a quarter a month or -- but you worked up to -- I think it was like ten days your first year on the job or two years, then after

that it was 15 days and then with longevity, it increased, you know, over the time -- with arbitration awards or contract awards it increased with longevity.

INTERVIEWER:

Was that accumulative? Could you accumulate that time? If you didn't use say 15 days, could you carry it over to next year?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I think it was what -- 45 days, you could accumulate annual leave and 90 days accumulative sick leave over a period of time and then I believe there was changes to that or there are changes to that now. But I believe that's what it was. Your last year on the job, I think you could -- vacation time would -- if you didn't take any of it, you could carry like 60 days or -- and -- you know, that you would get paid for.

INTERVIEWER:

So between 1967 and up to say 1972 or '73, the benefits after the arbitration award became quite more lucrative. Would you agree with that?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

After the arbitration award -- or from the arbitration award, what if you remember did you gain as far as overtime or working on your own time, sick leave, whatever?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Um-hum. Well, through the arbitration awards, through the contract agreements, we were -- let's see. Insurance-wise, we benefited from it the -- insurance-wise, our health insurance. Also, you know, life insurance. We got the overtime and also call time. We got, you know...

INTERVIEWER:

What was call time?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

That was if -- you basically weren't working, but if you were home or something, you were on standby. If something was needed, you were called out. So, you know, then you would get paid -- what was it, a quarter -- I can't recall now. Quarter time or -- you know, for the hours that you were on call time.

INTERVIEWER:

So the days of working hours -- hour after hour on your own time had come to an end?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

And you were given hospitalization which you didn't have prior to the arbitration award?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. We had it, but we paid for it.

INTERVIEWER:

I see.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

And then of course, you know, during that we picked up the additional -
- like your dental care and prescription, also your eye.

INTERVIEWER:

So it was quite a beneficial award?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. Yes. I mean, this wasn't all granted at one time, but it was just, you know, over a period of time with each contract that, you know, came up and -- whether we went into arbitration or had an agreement, you know, with the -- through the FOP with the Commonwealth.

INTERVIEWER:

How did your work schedule impact on your family life?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Basically it was pretty hard to make some long-term plans because you didn't know, you know, back then what your schedule was going to be from week to week. You had a fairly rough idea, but of course if

something changed -- I can remember -- to give you an example, the first Christmas that I worked on the job, I was scheduled to work Christmas and was going to be off for New Year's. However, I think the state experienced a very heavy fatality rate over Christmas, so the Commissioner decreed that nobody would be off over New Year's and so we all worked New Year's that year.

INTERVIEWER:

And so 1972, what did your family consist of then? Did you have small kids at home?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

1972, my family consisted of my wife and three children. The oldest was eight years old and then I had one four and one three.

INTERVIEWER:

So if you planned a vacation to take the family somewhere and something significant happened in the state, a possibility you could -- you would have to cancel all your vacation plans and go to work?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

You didn't cancel them. If something of that nature came up, they were canceled for you.

INTERVIEWER:

They canceled them? I see. Okay. While you were on patrol, what kind of firearm were you issued?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Originally we carried the 38 Police Special, the six-inch barrel.

INTERVIEWER:

And that was made by...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Colt.

INTERVIEWER:

...Colt? Do you recall how many transitions you've made from 1967 to 1995 with regards to firearms?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. We went from the 38 Special, the Colt to the Ruger 357 and then we went from that to the -- was it 40 -- was it a 40-millimeter? Semi-automatic.

INTERVIEWER:

So in 28 years, three transitions?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. Each one was a big improvement.

INTERVIEWER:

Would you say that was because of the type of crime and the type of weapons that the bad guys on the street were carrying? You kind of had to -- the Department had to upgrade?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Is that one of the reasons?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I think it was one of the reasons and then also I think the main reason probably was the improvement in weapons at that time and the availability of them to, you know, be upgraded.

INTERVIEWER:

I see. What about the cars? What were the cars like over that 28-year period?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

We went from Plymouths, then Fords. I can remember the old Plymouths, the '66 Plymouths when I first came out. After they got some mileage on them, they were pretty rough. They were pretty ragged. And the -- back then, the Fords weren't much better. The -- probably some of the best patrol cars that we had was the Dodges. That 440 engine in them, they were a good workhorse, especially out on the turnpike.

INTERVIEWER:

Did the cars have air conditioning in them?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

When did we get air conditioning? I know the turnpike was one of the first troops to get air conditioning and I think that was probably around

1970. I still recall sitting out there working radar on a hot summer day with your blouse on and everything and opening up the car door when trucks were going by to get a little bit of air. But it got pretty hot at times.

INTERVIEWER:

A blouse. You mentioned a...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

The blouse.

INTERVIEWER:

...blouse. Now what -- was that more or less a coat?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

It was a coat. It was like a suit coat.

INTERVIEWER:

And you had to wear that in the summer?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Well, there was a switchover right around that time. We went to a long-sleeve shirt, but you figure you still wore that in, what, April and through that period of time you had some warm weather or when you switched over in the fall, you know, Indian summer. But the long-sleeved starch shirt at that time wasn't too much better, you know.

INTERVIEWER:

So sitting stationary in a car with no air conditioning running radar for five or six or seven hours got pretty warm?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

A little.

INTERVIEWER:

Did you have one-man patrols or two-man patrols at that time? Do you recall?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

It was one-man, your dayshift, afternoon shift and two-man patrols the midnight shift.

INTERVIEWER:

Midnight to...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Well, usually about there the midnight shift was eleven o'clock at night to 7:00 in the morning.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Were motorcycles used at all do you know? Do you recall?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. Not back then. Motorcycles didn't come into use again until when? I can't recall a date, but I know they did come back into use here on the parkway on this end and -- what was it, Schuylkill Expressway or

whatever it was up in -- up around Philadelphia was the first two places that they came back. Now I can remember all the Indian Motorcycles that they had stored up at the Academy when I went through the Academy. They were used for the rodeo.

INTERVIEWER:

I see. And the rodeo was a -- an exhibition of sorts?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. That was something that would still be nice to see being put on. I can remember graduating and I was able to take the family after I graduated to Uniontown here to the high school stadium when they put the rodeo on that year. It was in the western part of the state. The rodeo was something that was really something to see. I mean, you had just your average trooper, you know, riding those horses, those motorcycles, you know, doing the tricks and everything on them. I think if that is something that could be revived now, that would be something really nice for, you know, the State Police to put on again.

INTERVIEWER:

So you would say it was a great public relations...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...exhibition?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you recall why it ended and when it ended?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

It ended, what, in maybe the early 70s. I can't remember exactly when, but the biggest part of the thing I think was put on through the Civic Association. There was a lot of donations made from outside sources, you know, to fund the rodeo and I think it probably came down -- had something to do with when the arbitration was granted us.

INTERVIEWER:

You don't recall then which...

(Hearing Resumes)

INTERVIEWER:

This is the Pennsylvania State Police Oral History Project. The date is 17 January 2007. My name is Corporal Bob Mertz, PSP retired and I am interviewing Sergeant John Hamborsky. The interview is being conducted at Sergeant Hamborsky's home in Uniontown. Welcome, Sergeant Hamborsky. Okay. Sergeant Hamborsky, what was the communication system like between patrol cars in the station when you first come on the job?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

It was a little hard. I'm trying to think. Back then I think our communication system out on the turnpike was a little different than what the county units had, the stations and the cars. We had our system set up through the Turnpike Commission. Motorola and Oletin (ph) Radio System was strictly for the turnpike. I mean, at that time there was no communications between our stations, our cars and any of the county stations or cars. Everything was strictly, you know, through turnpike communications.

INTERVIEWER:

When you left the turnpike and come out to -- into the troops out in the county, what was the communication system like then?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Okay. When I came out in '77, the system was improved. The communication between the stations and the cars were okay. You could go from station to station within the troop. You couldn't go, you know, from Troop B to Troop A, but you could, you know, talk -- from say Waynesburg station, you can contact Uniontown station. There was a different channel, you know, that you switched to. Each station had their own channel.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. By the time you were ready to retire, had the system improved greatly by then or...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...what was...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

There was a big -- there was continual, gradual, you know, improvements over the system. I think they -- I'm trying to think. Well, no. They still hadn't gotten the video cameras or anything up at that time back in '95, but the system itself, you know, there was a big improvement with the type of radio that we had.

INTERVIEWER:

The reporting system for conducting accident and criminal investigations, what was that like?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

The reporting system, accidents -- I would say at one time, the State Police had a very good accident report and this is only my opinion, but then PennDOT got involved in it and it seemed like the accidents -- investigations were being done more to benefit the insurance agencies and also statistics were the Department of Transportation rather than make it easier on the trooper to do an actual investigation.

INTERVIEWER:

Were the accident investigations lengthy?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. I think a simple accident was a, what, two or three-page accident report at that time.

INTERVIEWER:

How about criminal investigations?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Again, the criminal report, the initial crime report was expanded also. There was quite a bit of additional information that was put in, but I think a lot of that was block-checking for different stats, so forth. But it still had increased where before the initial crime report was a front-page

form. Then after that was a narrative type of report, where at the end there when I left, it was more block-checking.

INTERVIEWER:

Were the reports -- were they required to be typed or could they be printed? Hand printed.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

They could be block printed or typed.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you recall -- some departments have a taping system where the reports are taped and transcribed onto the report by a clerical unit.

State Police ever have anything like that? Do you recall?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. There was a project here in Troop B where the criminal investigation unit members could put their report on tape and the tape would be transported to Troop Headquarters where the clerical unit down there would type up the initial crime report and then send it back to the station involved for the officer to review it, sign it and then, you know, submit it.

INTERVIEWER:

Wouldn't that be quite a bit of work for the clerical unit at headquarters?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes, especially in a troop like Washington, Troop B where it was a heavy workload and yes, there would be times that reports would be backlogged. Tapes would be, you know, backed up to be typed because the clerical unit had their other work that they also had to do and I think they usually had one or two of the employees there that would be, you know, doing nothing but typing these tapes.

INTERVIEWER:

Did that -- that system went by the wayside at some point?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. It sort of just died a slow death, so to speak. The tape recorders started wearing out and the tapes wearing out and then with the advent of the new reports when they came out, there was a, you know, change and the workload just necessitated that it be disbanded.

INTERVIEWER:

And percentage-wise, what -- in a trooper's daily schedule, what percentage of his time would you say in your estimation was spent in -- on reports? Given an eight-hour shift, 100 percent, what percentage?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

On any given day, at least 50 percent. Follow up on supplemental reports or reports that he had to do, you know, there on the scene.

INTERVIEWER:

Could he do those reports on the road in his car or did he have to do those reports in the -- at the station?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

The system was initially set up for everything to be done in the car. Your assignment reports, your accident reports and also the initial crime reports, the original -- but then some of the reports would be long and drawn-out. It would require additional station time to, you know, complete them.

INTERVIEWER:

Would that be something such as a fatal accident...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Fatal accident...

INTERVIEWER:

...or...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

...homicide or some kind of major crime investigation.

INTERVIEWER:

Were there any formal inspections routinely conducted in the troop and if so, by whom?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. We had -- basically it was set up for a troop drill once a month where the platoons would be formed either at Troop Headquarters or at

one of the stations and we'd have inspection and some close-order (ph) drill, so to speak, some marching and also if there was some type of class to be conducted. This at one time was adhered to pretty close and I think then too because of other commitments, the troop drill basically at times was disbanded either because of vacations in the summer or inclement weather in the winter.

INTERVIEWER:

Were there any kind of station inspections that were routinely performed by say a commissioned officer?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. We had what was called line inspections. You had a staff inspection by the Staff Lieutenant, a patrol inspection by Patrol Lieutenant, also the Crime Lieutenant. They had a set schedule that they had to inspect their part of the station, files and so forth. I think it was at least several times a year depending on how many stations there were in the troop.

INTERVIEWER:

Another thing I wanted to bring up, stations -- most stations now have a Lieutenant, but I think at Waynesburg where you were stationed in Troop B, you were the Station Commander with a rank of Sergeant. Is that not right?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Why was that?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Well, back then there was a troop compliment set up that you needed so many troopers. I think at that time you had to have at least 32 members on a station to be eligible or to require a Lieutenant to be in charge. And then when I was at Waynesburg, I think we had about 24, so that didn't call for a Lieutenant to be in charge.

INTERVIEWER:

So you were the Station Commander there?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

For how long?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Just several months shy of ten years. I went there in August of '83 and I left there in I believe it was March of '93. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER:

Did -- as a Station Commander, did you ever have to stand in as an acting Lieutenant, so to speak?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

What kind of annual update training was required, if any?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

There was annual updates on both Crimes Code and Vehicle Code changes. Also we had annual updates on First Aid training, CPR, plus also there at the end we had, what, semi-annual training on firearms.

INTERVIEWER:

Do you recall who the instructor was for most of that training, Sergeant?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

Who would that have been?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I think Corporal Mertz.

INTERVIEWER:

When you were promoted and transferred, did you have to take a promotional test, and if you did, for which ranks?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

The promotional test was taken for all ranks. I think back when I first went on the job, I think you had to have four years even as a trooper before you could take the Corporal test and then there was a yearend grade for anything after that before you could be promoted. You could

take the test before that, but you had to have a yearend grade before you could be promoted. Now I don't believe that is the case. I'm not sure.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. If you wanted a transfer, how did you go about requesting that? If you wanted to transfer from one station to another.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

There was a transfer card that you submitted. It was either for inner-troop or intra-troop. Again back then when I first came on the job, I think it was a five-year requirement to stay in your troop before you could transfer out as a trooper. Corporal at that time was not a position that you could transfer from troop to troop. When you made Corporal, you basically stayed in the troop that you were in and then if you got promoted Sergeant, Sergeant of course, Lieutenant was statewide. Corporal was just troop-wide.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. What was the discipline system like in the State Police?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Originally to be truthful, I think the discipline system was a little lax and it was more or less at the discretion of each troop commander. I mean, you could have a trooper disciplined several different ways for the same type of violation. But over the years, the system was improved

where it was all consolidated under our Troop Headquarters where they set up a set of guidelines for investigations on so-called violations either of the Departmental regulations or of criminal violations and then the punishments was netted out in a more uniformed manner.

INTERVIEWER:

So the Department has a disciplinary officer of sorts...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes.

INTERVIEWER:

...for -- what types of special-duty assignments were there and how did one get picked for special duty?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Well, basically you had to have the expertise in the position that you were applying for or have the seniority to be able to apply for it, you know, to get the training. And I would say that for the biggest part of it, most of it was on a system where the right person was, you know, eventually given the job that they had applied for. You may have had some that sort of came in through the backdoor.

INTERVIEWER:

Did seniority play any role in that system?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Originally it played a big role. You know, it was probably one of the biggest things. You could have a, you know, 15, 20-year trooper apply for a position that he's going to get over a five or six-year trooper who at times may be more qualified.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. Okay. What were some of the policies or the duties or working conditions that -- in your opinion that elicited the most complaints among troopers?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Probably the shift -- the schedules. You know, and basically, you know, you had to have so many people out on the road, so many troopers out and if you had court or something, you had to change your schedule where you didn't like to, but, you know, sometimes you had to split their days off or call them back on a dayshift instead of an afternoon shift. There were just different things and basically I think our schedule was more at the whim of the job requirements rather than of the benefit of the trooper itself where they had a normal, you know, schedule to take account on day in and day out. That's especially true of the troopers out on the road, on patrol.

INTERVIEWER:

Obviously you couldn't make everybody happy with the schedule. Was there a system that you -- that was in place that you could use to try to accommodate everybody?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Well, the only system that you had there was you -- you know, you tried to accommodate everybody. If they had a special request, you had a calendar that they would mark in for their special request and I'd say probably 99 percent of the time, you was able to fulfill that request and still be able to maintain your patrol function.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. During your career, how about telling us about some of the assignments or incidents you've had that stand out in your mind as being particularly significant?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Probably the first one in my career would've been 1972, the Norristown incident where we had the labor unions up there, probably close to 30,000 people marching. I forget. I don't even know what the reason was for it, but we were mobilized and I think we had maybe close to 2,000 troopers that were sent up there for that march and what I recall, you know, about it mainly was we were hit at the same time with the remnants of Hurricane Angus. We're standing out there on the street as these people were marching. It was on a Saturday and the one

thing that stuck out in my mind there was irregardless of what happened there, if that march -- if they wanted to, they could have probably chopped us up with nothing flat. But again it showed what the respect was for the State Police because there was even remarks made by the marchers as they was going by that they were sorry that we had to be out in that weather, you know, stand and babysitting them. But it was -- I think -- I'm not sure but maybe even to this day, that was probably the largest call-out of the Pennsylvania State Police for any one major incident.

INTERVIEWER:

Was there any violence involved in that?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

There may have been a few maybe small Disorderly Conduct arrests, but there was nothing major. I think weather had helped dampen their spirits and the fact that I think all the bars in that area were shut down the day before. Plus I still think one of the biggest things was the respect that the State Police commanded at that time, too.

INTERVIEWER:

Logistically, how did the Department accommodate that many men in one area?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

The biggest part of us were driven in by car, by patrol car to the Academy and at the Academy we were loaded onto buses and transferred from the Academy at Hershey down to Norristown by busses and they had hotel/motel accommodations, everything, you know, available for us for that march.

INTERVIEWER:

How long did that last, that incident?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

That was just -- that was one day. We got up there on a Friday evening. I think it was Friday evening and the march was Saturday and then we -- I can't recall if we stayed up there that night or not, but I do know that the next day when we got back to the Academy, we were relieved to go back to our home stations and the hurricane, Agnes, was hitting us full force at the time. I can remember coming across -- getting on the turnpike at Exit 19, Harrisburg East Shore, crossing the Susquehanna Bridge and looking down and maybe a foot was the only difference between the bottom of the bridge and the top of the water. That's how high the Susquehanna River was at that time. I think we were the last car to make it across the turnpike. They shut down the central part of it because of flooding and we -- going through the Newville area and you couldn't see the road. There was anywhere

from six to twelve inches of water covering the turnpike. We were sort of lucky that we made it through at the time.

INTERVIEWER:

Are there any other incidents that you remember of any significance?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Well, the Johnstown Flood of '77, I just came into the troop in February and then the flood occurred, you know, that early summer. In my career, my lifetime, that was probably the most devastating thing that I had ever witnessed when you went up there and seen what damage was caused by the flood, the loss of life and I was the officer in charge up there for ten days, the midnight -- or the nightshift, from six o'clock at night to 6:00 in the morning and being responsible for patrolling the area for any signs of looters or, you know, anything that was going on, helping wherever we could help. And that was a very sobering period of time.

INTERVIEWER:

How many men were dispatched to that incident? Do you recall?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Probably right at the start, there was probably several hundred that was up there and then as the days wore on then, you know, it was decreased and then it was just as necessary to when it wound down completely.

INTERVIEWER:

What was the fatality count up there?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I really can't recall what it was, but...

INTERVIEWER:

And what year was that?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

That was 1977.

INTERVIEWER:

Anything else that you were involved in that stands out in your mind?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Other than the normal day-to-day activities of the troop, the only other thing was probably the Camp Hill riots. That was in 1989. That was another thing. We were mobilized. We got up there. We entered the prison after dark and I guess the best way to describe that is if you ever seen a war movie or was ever involved with -- fortunately I never was, but that would probably be the closest thing to it. The fires going on and the helicopters overhead with the flood lights, and also you got a good lesson in the pecking order of prisoners. We were originally assigned to perimeter duty that first night. You could see the stronger, bigger prisoners going around and taking jackets off of the weaker ones inside the compound where you had no way to enforce anything, but

they were taking the jacket to clothe their-self. Second night up there, I think we were -- well, we were on the inside and the thing that I can remember there, we had these paper blankets that the Army used to have, OD green and we were passing them out because the prisoners were sleeping on the ground. And this one area we figure we had about 500 of them. In the morning when we took a head count, there was over 1500 of them under those blankets, but it was -- that was really a very heavy destruction of property when they rioted up there, especially -- it was like a two-part deal there. The first one and then it was sort of settled and then they got heavy the second night when -- that's when we were all mobilized to call up. To my knowledge, that was the second largest mobilization of the State Police. I think we had, what, maybe around 1200 people up there.

INTERVIEWER:

How long did it take to -- what was the time period to contain that situation? Do you recall?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I think there were still troopers maybe in 1991 or 1992. They were there for a good while after that before they finally reverted everything back to Department of Corrections.

INTERVIEWER:

Those people that were there left there then and were

-- had detached from their inspection stations. Is that correct?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. I -- there may have been some, but I think they were just assigned from their stations to pull, you know, duty there for maybe one or two shifts of whatever and then back to their station. I don't think there was anybody there that was there for the complete, you know, duration.

INTERVIEWER:

So that would mean that the Harrisburg Troop pretty much covered that?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Harrisburg, probably Lancaster Troop, just the local troops up in there area, you know, covered that detail.

INTERVIEWER:

How about some of the more humorous incidents you experienced?
Do you recall any that stand out?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Probably some, but I would rather not relay on them because maybe down the line, I probably would embarrass some people if I have to mention their names. One thing in particular I can remember moving into a new barracks and one of the officers there decided to burn all the cardboard that the new furniture and stuff came in. But when he

decided to burn it, he put it on the corner of the new parking lot and set the parking lot on fire.

INTERVIEWER:

Any others that might come to mind pretty funny?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No, not really.

INTERVIEWER:

How about serious incidents that you remember?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

We had -- some that I could basically remember that were, you know, kind of serious was when I was down in Washington. We had -- I don't know if you recall the Castner (ph) brothers robbing the banks down there. The many midnight hunts for them. Frankie Sabotitch (ph) using the dynamite on the railroad and the -- I believe he shot at a few of the troopers from Belle Vernon and to my recollection, well, Frankie is no longer here. He fell to his death the last year trying to escape from Allegheny County jail. And then we had Russell Shotz (ph). He escaped from the Huntington Prison and was down in the Cokeburg area. We hunted for him well over a week before he was finally captured, living off the woods, off the land so to speak.

INTERVIEWER:

In your mind, what are some of the most noteworthy changes that occurred on the State Police during your career?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Well, some of the best changes was the improvement in the communication system. Also improvement in the equipment that we had, upgrading of our weapons, improved training in the weapons and also in your laws.

INTERVIEWER:

How about the cars or the radios or communications? Were there big changes there?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes, especially in the communications and I understand now that there's still bigger changes since I've retired with the -- I think going to a different type of frequency and of course the cars now -- I don't know whether the cars -- I don't know what type of mileage they put on them now, but I do know when I first came on the job, you know, 50,000 miles and we had a new car. Now those cars are -- well, of course they're built better, the -- they're lasting, you know, 100,000 miles or more. They may be close to 200,000, some of them.

INTERVIEWER:

When you say you understand now, you have a son on the job. Do you want to talk a little bit about how you feel about that and if you were --

what you felt like when you presented him with his diploma at Hershey on graduation?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Well, I was very proud of that. Probably -- you know, it's one of those old sayings, you know, you're so filled with pride that your chest is going to burst. But it -- I was very proud and happy that he chose to become a State Trooper. It -- also then -- I enjoyed that very much. I was very proud. Also then when he was promoted, I was up at the Academy when he was promoted to Corporal. So it's nice and it's nice over the years to see names in the ranks of the troopers that you recognize as being fellow-troopers when I was on the job, you know, and seeing that, you know, they're following in their fathers' footsteps.

INTERVIEWER:

Does it give you a feeling -- with your son being on the job, does it give you a feeling of like you're still a little part of the job because you can talk to him about the job and the changes and...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Well, you know, I think he's the same as probably your son, other sons when they talk to their fathers. I don't think that there's too much actual job talk being done. I mean, in generalities, but I don't think that they discuss the job or investigations any more so than what we did when we were on the job. It's just that it's nice to be able to talk to somebody

and he understand because basically we were all loners. I think that's one of the big requirements to being a State Trooper, especially back when we went on. You know, you had to be loner because most of the time, you were sent out there in the car on your own.

INTERVIEWER:

But at the very least, you realize the changes that have occurred over the years, even since you've retired to date by your son being on the job.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Oh, yes.

INTERVIEWER:

And would you say they were pretty significant changes or...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

I would say that they were. You know, I still receive The Communicator and when you read in there the different changes that -- you know, that have transpired, one that sticks in my mind is the availability of the way they fingerprint and everything at this time. It's completely different than what we had to go through when we were fingerprinting a person and how they were able -- able now to follow up kind of fast on, you know, any identification on, you know, the fingerprints. I can't remember or I can't recall what they call that system now, but...

INTERVIEWER:

You mentioned that you were on a Cadet Interview Board or you had something to do with formulation of it going back a little bit. What did...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Um-hum.

INTERVIEWER:

...that involve?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

When the Department was drawing up guidelines for interviews for, you know, potential cadets, I was involved in the process where they were formulating different type of procedures and questions. I did this for several years and then I also was on the Cadet Interview Boards I think for maybe five or six years where we would, you know, spend the week in Greensburg or wherever. A three-member board, three-member panel would consist of a person from the Civil Service Commission, a State Trooper of various ranks or whatever and also -- we also had -- well, someone from -- I forget what they would call it, but it was basically a civilian, whether they were a minority or not, but they would sit on the board and we would interview the potential applicants and score them and this had a lot to do with the selection process as to whether or not they were eventually hired, you know, as a cadet and then trooper.

INTERVIEWER:

This question that I'm going to ask you -- is there anything you would've done differently in your career with the State Police or...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. I can truthfully say that I always wanted to be a State Trooper and the desire was there. I was able to raise my family in a comfortable -- maybe not a rich setting, but in a comfortable setting, able to educate my four children and -- no. If I had to do it over again, I would be the first one in line to become a State Trooper again.

INTERVIEWER:

That was my next question (inaudible). Okay. When you retired, you retired as what? What was your rank?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Sergeant.

INTERVIEWER:

And what was -- how old were you then?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

At 55 and a half.

INTERVIEWER:

What type of retirement benefits did you get when you left the State Police?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Well, basically, you know, we took our health insurance, our prescription insurance, dental insurance. I think really the only thing that we lost when I went into retirement was our eye care, but everything else -- you know, basically we was able to keep, you know, up until this time -- well, of course now being on Medicare and I still have the backup insurance, you know, from the State, from the Commonwealth.

INTERVIEWER:

Have you had any involvement with the State Police since your retirement, other than your son being on the job?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No.

INTERVIEWER:

How about the Retirees' Association? Any association, the...

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

Yes. I belong to the Retirees' Association.

INTERVIEWER:

Okay. In closing, Sergeant Hamborsky, is there anything else you would like to add?

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

No. Just again I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to be interviewed for this procedure. It's something that I think that will do real good

down the road to people when they come to the Academy, to the museum to be able to I guess hear the different stories of different troopers. I do know that when I was on, you know, active duty same as you, I think we had a very close working relationship and camaraderie with all the other fellows. I don't know what it is now, but back then I think we looked out for each other and our families. We -- if a trooper was down and out or something, we always tried to help and I -- the old saying that we're the best, I believe that we are. One of the best and I just hope we continue to be that way because once a trooper, always a trooper.

INTERVIEWER:

That was my next question. You're ahead of me here. That's kind of like the old Marine. Once a Marine, always a Marine.

SERGEANT HAMBORSKY:

That's right.

INTERVIEWER:

Once a trooper, always a trooper.