

An Open Letter To Colonel Glover.

It has been a while since there was a letter from the men, but this one is different because it is not from the same men. The group of men writing this letter is not a group of guys that just want to complain, or have a grudge to settle. The men writing this letter are truly concerned about the image of the patrol and its relationship with the public. We work tirelessly to maintain the image of the Patrol while we are on the road dealing with the public. We are tired of the same problems plaguing the Highway Patrol, and we think that we may have a solution to that problem. We simply want to point out a few things that we think need to be addressed.

There is an old saying that perception is reality. The perception of the Highway Patrol over the last couple of years is that of dog-kicking, women-chasing, law-breaking, sex crazed egomaniacs. This perception has been created in association with the media with our repeated appearances in the news for our various missteps. If you don't think this is so, just take a minute and read the GOLO comments on WRAL. Even though the 10 or so media stories represent less than 1% of the Troopers on the Highway Patrol, when these stories repeatedly appear in our media outlets, it becomes the perception of the public that every Trooper is like this. We represent the other 99%. If you look back, all of our media problems started with Charles Jones kicking his dog, yet his wife Angie still walks around the Training Center like we owe them something. If you look, she is one of the leaks to the media. She will do anything to try and make her husband look better. Another problem is that the command staff of the Highway Patrol and the Public Information Office needs to be more assertive when we are questioned by the media. We don't always have to give a statement, but when we do, be authoritative about it. Stop talking to the public using Law Enforcement terms. Don't talk about preventable and non-preventable collisions. Talk about how many wrecks were our fault, and how many were not. A perfect example of this is Trooper Goodnight's incident in Greensboro. That was truly a tragedy for everyone involved, even more so for the family that lost their loved ones. However, tell the whole truth and let the media know that we did not cause that accident. The speed of Trooper Goodnight most likely increased the severity of the accident, but that accident would not have happened if she had not turned in front of him. But we do not say that. We roll over and allow the media to run us in the ground. The only reason we can see for this to happen, is that the command staff does not want to make waves because of their political job dependence. Why haven't you, Colonel Glover, come out and made a statement to the media defending us Troopers. Stand up for the organization you say love. You don't have anything to lose, you already can retire. Stand up for the rest of us. Let the public know we are honest hard working men and women, and that when we find one that is not, we deal with them. Another example - why has someone not gone to the legislature and asked them to repeal the stop form law?? We are still documenting stops to study alleged (proven not so) previous racial profiling passed by a man that has spent time in federal prison.

Since Colonel Clay left, the Highway Patrol has steadily begun to spiral back down into the me-centered politically driven animal that used to be. This of course was started by Colonel Wilson, with the splintered, awkward command that he led. These politics are evident in the promotions that are made and decisions that are made. It becomes very obvious that the intentions of the command staff are not always to support the Trooper working the road. Why are all the unmarked cars being sent back to the Archdale building instead of being kept on the road where they can be used for enforcement? A Prime example – Heidi Weisman being selected for the DEA Task Force slot. How does a DMV transfer with no discernible time working the road, no interdiction experience (required we thought by application), and no obvious specialized talents get selected over well qualified Troopers that have worked hard to qualify for that position. We cannot think of a worse possible choice for that position to represent the Highway Patrol to other agencies and the DEA. They don't even want her there, and would prefer an empty slot. We put a Trooper at the Training center who is specialized in nothing and tell him he will be over DT. Devon Stephens should be no where near anything involving Training. Another example – Captain Castelloe gets transferred to C&L when Lt. Witherspoon has been there for years and is surely capable of doing that job. Succession planning only occurs when it is convenient for the Highway Patrol and it is not contrary to the political agenda. Our interdiction team has been neutered by knee-jerk reactions to the media, replacing our working dogs with puppy dogs, and removing everyone from the chain of command that knows anything about interdiction. How, by the way is Captain Castelloe still employed when he admitted to lying on the stand? Last we checked, the Highway Patrol fires people for lying. Just ask Captain Castelloe with all the Troopers that he lined up. Examples like this make everyone else wonder what thought processes went into making these decisions. Well, the obvious answer is none. It was done because someone was being taken care of, not because they earned it.

Let's move on to the core of our problem as an organization. Our organization is failing us because we are moving away from our para-military values and orientation. Even though the world may be moving into the liberal, touchy, feely mindset, the criminals on the road are not. We cannot afford to do this either. However, we are and in doing so, losing the core values that have made the Highway Patrol what it has been since 1929. Those values are discipline, honesty, and integrity. This starts in the recruiting process. The last five years have seen our recruiting practices take a nose dive. Have we stopped recruiting the military? There was an airshow at Cherry Point a month ago, with 300,000 people there. Where were the Highway Patrol recruiters? The South Carolina Highway Patrol thought it was a good enough recruiting ground that they were there. Instead, we emphasize recruiting at colleges and minority events. The race or education of our Troopers is irrelevant. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to

do our job. You do however have to have a little intestinal fortitude to work by yourself at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning and take that drunk to jail that does not want to go with you. They don't teach you that in college and it is irrelevant what your skin color is, if you have IT. Lately, we don't seem to be imparting this to our cadets when they are in Basic School, either. You can't put somebody that has been an Admin supervisor like Aaron Back who is not in shape himself in charge of our cadets. We need somebody who believes in strong discipline leading our cadets, not a yes man. Believe it or not we can not change a person's morals but we can instill discipline into them and that starts in Patrol School. We have seen the recruits that we are bringing in and the results that we are getting -- and it is disturbing. These college graduates are weak and undisciplined, and the college atmosphere mindset at the Training Academy does not cut it. We have to face reality - the road gets more dangerous, and we continue to make Basic School easier. These recruits have never had a job or any responsibility and surely do not show any respect to authority. We are regularly producing Probationary Troopers that cannot protect themselves, much less protect the public. We have problem indicators in the backgrounds, polygraphs of applicants, or behavior, yet the Training Academy pushes them into the field and the supervisors let them continue. We fire everyone else, why can't we fire someone that cannot do the job to begin with? It has become the standard with these new era recruits that they work the road for a couple of years and they are "burned out" and move on to Motor Carrier or some type of desk job. Where have the men gone that wanted to be a Trooper for 10-15 years, or their whole career? They are not being recruited.

A more damaging problem is our promotional process. The Highway Patrol is not promoting leaders. They are promoting test takers. The majority knows nothing about being a leader or what it takes to be a leader, and that CANNOT be taught. The best supervisors, i.e. leaders, are men who were good Troopers. Our process does not promote these men. Why do we not have peer review for our supervisors. Ask the Troopers that they worked with if they would work for them. That will tell you how good of a supervisor you are going to have. Just look in the field, we have lots of Sergeants but very few leaders. We need leadership like Tommy Cheek back. We have ranks for a reason. Let's get back to First Sergeants being feared by the men in their district, not drinking buddies with their men. But you have to promote real leaders for that to happen. Let's stop 7 year Troopers from hanging out with Captains and Majors on and off duty thinking it will get them something. Last time we checked that was against policy. That includes golf tournaments where Troopers play on teams with the brass drinking and laughing like idiots. It is embarrassing and everybody sees it.

This promotional process leads directly to the main problem that the Highway Patrol has right now -- weak leadership at the District level. We have seen time and time again the differences that a strong leader at the First Sergeant position can make. The First Sergeant may not be liked by everyone, but a strong leader in that position is where we will save the Highway Patrol

and its reputation. The backbone of the Highway Patrol has always been the First Sergeant in the District supporting hard working Troopers. And that also means that the Captains and Lieutenants keep their paws out of the District's business. Tell the First Sergeants generally what is expected and let them do their job. The Captains and Lieutenants had their chance to run a district. They got promoted, so let it go. We need to revamp the promotional process and quit paying Dr Putney and her assistants to run our business. Use some common sense and develop some leaders in our organization that do not have to worry about politics to be promoted or to have a decent duty station.

The Patrol needs to redistribute its funding, also. The organization has become very top heavy. We have gone from 2 Majors and 10 or so Captains 10 years ago to what, 6 majors, 2 Lt Colonels, and 22 Captains????? Really, is all that brass necessary? We have not gained that many Troopers in that time to justify all that extra supervision. Not to mention the salaries of all the civilians over at TSU. We spend money encrypting our mobile computers that have no valuable information and it makes them run slower. It is no wonder we can't spend money on things that Troopers need -- namely rifles, push bars on our cars, tasers, cameras, and better lighting packages on our cars. Very sad. How about spending a little money to get our own firing range to train our Troopers so that we do not have to beg, borrow, and steal every time we need to train? We are supposed to be the premier agency in NC and one of the best in the nation but do not have our own range --- even we are starting to see reasons that this may no longer be the case. If we keep going in the same direction we will be a stepping stone for other departments. A pretty car and nice uniform can only get you so far. Being disciplined and professional go a lot farther.

We need someone that will not sell their soul to be our next Colonel, someone who truly has the best interests of the Highway Patrol in mind, and is willing to make progressive changes to benefit the Patrol. We are paying the price today for the arrogance and decisions that the command staff has made over the last 15 years. They have not taken the best interests of the Patrol to heart, instead worrying about themselves and promoting themselves. We need to stop firing Troopers for non-firing offenses and then litigating their jobs back. What happened to the days when you screwed up and then when you got punished, you had to report to a new duty station several hours away the next day? The Highway Patrol is the only thing that can save the image and reputation of the Highway Patrol. The command staff has to take charge of that. We don't need to make knee-jerk decisions like getting rid of the domicile policy or putting all the Troopers back on the traditional schedule. Domicile policies, working different schedules, and off duty employment did not cause our problems. These are the rumors that we are hearing. These would not change anything, except make morale even worse. Our problems are a reflection of what society is today, and we are content with hiring these problems and not training our men and women. We need to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps and get our

act together. We need someone in charge that wants to do that above anything. We need someone to convince those that have their time in to go to the house. If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.

Governor, when you read this, take this as a suggestion: Major Jennifer Harris is probably the most level headed, capable member of the command staff, and she is a progressive thinker. We would suggest that you strongly consider her whenever the Colonel's position becomes available. Not only would it look good for her to be the first female Colonel, but she is deserving and has the ability to do the job. We need a drastic change in our style of leadership and we need it soon.

We hope some of these suggestions will be taken to heart and implemented. We felt this was the best way to air these suggestions, because our advisory boards at the Troop level and State level do not seem to be working. Maybe this will promote some discussion in the meeting the week after the 4th of July, with the Governor and all the Officers and First Sergeants in the Patrol. These are the things that need to be discussed. Like we said before, we are not the same group as the old "Letter from the Men". We don't have an axe to grind, we want to improve our organization and get it back to same respectable standard that we used to enjoy. We are going to call this one, a "Letter from the Patrolmen", because we support the values that made the Patrol what it is, back when they were Patrolmen, not Troopers.

Signed

The Patrolmen