



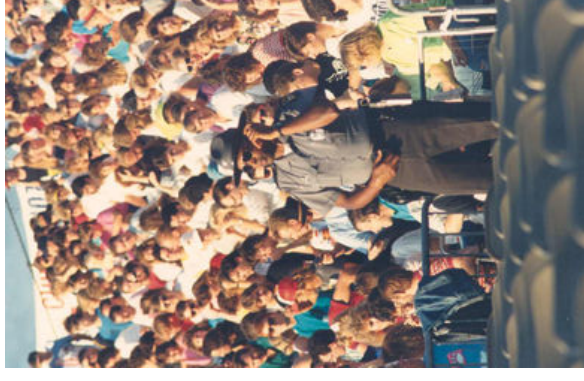
*History of Minorities in the Patrol*

BY MICHELE VAUGHAN, HISTORIAN, OHIO STATE HIGHWAY PATROL

Today, there are Academy cadets from all walks of life. Each has a unique background and experience to bring to the position of Trooper. However, the group of cadets at the Ohio State Highway Patrol training grounds in 1955 was decidedly different; only two African-American cadets trained alongside their white colleagues.

That class - the Academy's 44th Cadet Class - was the first class to accept African-Americans. Since then, many individuals from minority groups have joined the Division and served proudly in nearly all ranks.

The Black Press, the NAACP and the Urban League worked relentlessly in the 1950s to bring about Louis B. Sharp's commission in 1955, thus breaking the color barrier to the Patrol, according to information researched by Major Peyton L. Watts, himself an African-American who serves as Commander of the Academy today.



Sharp was the first African-American cadet to complete the entire 13-week training period. The other African-American cadet who joined with Sharp was not able to withstand the intense instruction and left after two weeks, despite Sharp's encouragement to continue.

After receiving his commission, Sharp was escorted to the Statehouse in Columbus, where then Governor Frank Lausche hugged Sharp and wished him a successful career. Lausche originally requested the Patrol screen for African-American applicants. Sharp was, at that point, one minority member in a sea of nearly 700 employees.

After serving at the Findlay Post for nine months, Sharp moved on to other employment – at the time, a better paying job to support his family. But Sharp's efforts laid the groundwork for others, and 10 years later, Gilbert H. Jones signed up with the 69th Academy Cadet Class in 1965. He received his commission the following year.

Jones' career was history in the making. With every promotion, he became the first African-American to serve in that rank, including lieutenant colonel – second in command of the Division. At the time, Lieutenant Colonel Jones was one of only two African-American state officers in the nation to serve in that rank. In 1997, Lieutenant Colonel Jones also became the first African-American to retire from the Highway Patrol.

Since that time, members of minority groups continue to increase in number within the Division. As of February 2007, there were 232 sworn officers who count themselves as members of a minority group, according to Ohio Department of Public Safety Human Resources. This group accounts for about 15 percent of the Division's sworn personnel.





Of course, requirements to join the Division have changed since 1955. Applicants must be a U.S. citizen, an Ohio resident (although, that can be waived), have a high school diploma or G.E.D., have a valid Ohio driver's license and be 21-34 years old.

For more information on how you can apply to become a Trooper with the Ohio State Highway Patrol, please contact your local Post, or go to the Division's website at <http://www.dps.state.oh.us/OSHPRecruit/eRecruit.aspx>

On November 4, 1955, 26 officers of the 44th Academy Class graduated. Among them was one Louis D. Sharp, who earned the distinction of being the first African-American Ohio highway patrolman. A graduate of Columbus East High School, and later Florida A & M where he was a star football player, Sharp was one of two African-Americans to start the class (the other quit when he was offered a better paying job in private industry.) After leaving the Patrol, Sharp was elected mayor of Urbancrest, a community in southern Franklin County.