

# **Narratives for SCHP Trooper of the Year & Telecommunications Operator of the Year 2015**

## **Trooper of the Year**

**\*\*\* S/Tpr. G.M. Colbert was named overall South Carolina Trooper of the Year \*\*\***

### **Troop One, Post D**

**S/Tpr. G.M. Colbert, Cpl. J.C. Elliott, S/Tpr. K.E. Bradacs, S/Tpr. B.N. Trotter**

Due to extraordinary circumstances that occurred due to the 1,000 Year Flood, Troop One has four well-deserving nominees today.

On October 4, 2015, Cpl. J.C. Elliott and S/Tpr. K.E. Bradacs worked nightshift in Richland County when the rain began that eventually led to the 1,000 year flood. As the need for first responders began to grow, these two troopers, without being asked, stayed on duty to assist in whatever way they could. At about 7:30 a.m. Sunday morning, Cpl. Elliott and S/Tpr. Bradacs responded to Decker Boulevard in Northeast Columbia to assist the Columbia Fire Department with a rescue of several citizens who were stranded on top of their vehicle in the direct path of rushing water from a broken dam.

Initially, a fireman and Cpl. Elliott tried to reach the stranded man by foot when the fireman lost his footing and was swept away by the current of the water. Cpl. Elliott attempted to hold onto and stabilize the fireman when he was also swept away.

Cpl. Elliott and the fireman were caught in bushes that allowed them to grab onto trees until help arrived. After being rescued, Cpl. Elliott and S/Tpr. Bradacs continued to assist the Fire Department with the rescue of the stranded man. S/Tpr. Bradacs had taken the initiative earlier in the day to purchase personal flotation devices and rope in preparation for assisting with water rescues. At one point, S/Tpr. Bradacs was in the water up to her neck (with campaign hat still on) helping to save the stranded man. Eventually, a rope line was set and Cpl Elliott and S/Tpr. Bradacs were able to assist the Fire Department with the successful rescue of three motorists. Unfortunately, one of the motorists they were trying to assist drowned in the flood.

Also, at about the same time in another part of Richland County, S/Tpr. G.M. Colbert responded to I-20 westbound at the 68-mile marker, where several occupied vehicles were partially submerged amid rapidly flowing and still rising waters. Senior Tpr. Colbert immediately called for the assistance of S/Tpr. B.N. Trotter. There were three motorists, including a 2-year-old child, stranded on the opposite side of the interstate on top of a truck when S/Tpr. Colbert and S/Tpr. Trotter arrived.

Without hesitation or regard for his own personal safety, S/Tpr. Colbert removed all sensitive items from his duty belt and uniform, jumped over the barrier wall and then plunged into the rushing waters in an attempt to rescue the victims. He was able to get the first victim, a two year

old child, remove her from the vehicle and carry her over his head to safety. One by one, he rescued all three victims, taking them to the barrier wall where S/Tpr. Trotter took them on to safety. All three people were from out of state and lost their vehicle in the flood. S/Tpr. Colbert and S/Tpr. Trotter ensured they got to a local hotel and waited until they were safely checked in.

These four troopers' courage and determination that day no doubt saved lives.

**Troop Two: Post A**  
**Cpl. Chad M. Edwards**

On June 28, 2015, Cpl. C.M. Edwards responded to a collision on I-26 in Laurens County to assist L/Cpl. B.C. Aga. After arriving on the scene, Cpl. Edwards learned that the at-fault driver, who possibly had a firearm, had stopped a truck that was passing by and forced the motorist to drive him away from the collision scene.

Later, while patrolling on I-26, Cpl. Edwards received information from Telecommunications that the suspect was seen at the Citgo gas station on SC 72 at I-26 in the process of committing an armed robbery. As Cpl. Edwards exited I-26, he observed a man matching the description of the driver involved in the hit-and-run collision.

Cpl. Edwards and a lieutenant from the Laurens County Sheriff's Office approached the subject and instructed him to get on the ground. The suspect ignored the instructions and struck Lt. Shelton in the left temple with a full 24 oz. beer can, and then began to walk away from the officers. The subject was apprehended and handcuffed by Lt. Shelton.

After the threat had diminished, further investigation revealed this was a very dangerous individual who, impaired by illegal drugs, had driven into the rear of another vehicle while traveling on I-26, which initiated the chain of events.

After the collision, the violator threatened the other driver with a knife and then left the scene by demanding another vehicle drive him to the Citgo station. After arriving at the Citgo station, the armed violator robbed the gas station, then went into the store parking lot and attempted to carjack two separate motorists. The combination of these crimes resulted in numerous charges from the Laurens County Sheriff's Office and the Highway Patrol.

Cpl. Edward's actions on this day resulted in the apprehension of a very violent criminal that not only posed a threat to law enforcement, but also to the general public.

**Troop Three: Post D**  
**L/Cpl. Ronnie D. Manley**

On August 27, 2015, L/Cpl. R.D. Manley conducted a traffic stop at the 28 mile marker eastbound on Interstate 26 in Spartanburg County. L/Cpl. Manley approached the vehicle and recognized that the driver was acting erratically and was crying during his initial contact. The driver made several statements to L/Cpl. Manley in reference to a breakup and that he had "broken all his stuff."

L/Cpl. Manley returned to his patrol vehicle to check with Telecommunications to determine if there were any open calls pertaining to this subject. When L/Cpl. Manley returned to the vehicle, he observed the driver attempting to cut his wrist with a pocket knife. L/Cpl. Manley grabbed the driver's arm causing the knife to fall to the ground. L/Cpl. Manley then handcuffed the driver and called for backup.

The Spartanburg County EMS responded to the scene and transported the subject to Spartanburg Regional Hospital. L/Cpl. Manley's swift reaction during this incident helped protect the driver and get him the help he needed.

L/Cpl. Manley is a very reliable, hardworking Trooper. Having retired in 2012, L/Cpl Manley rejoined the South Carolina Highway Patrol to continue a career that is engrained in him. He primarily patrols the interstates of Spartanburg but can be relied upon to answer calls for service where he is needed to include the investigation of time consuming hit-and-run collisions. He and his wife, Robin, have four daughters, whose soccer matches he coached and officiated for six years.

**Troop Four: Post A**  
**S/Tpr. Paul M. Wilkins**

On April 11, 2015, S/Tpr. P.M. Wilkins investigated a Felony DUI that involved a one-vehicle collision on SC 18 at Corinth Road in which two passengers sustained great bodily injury. Although the driver did not appear to have consumed alcohol, S/Tpr. Wilkins was able to determine that the driver was under the influence of marijuana and Xanax. The defendant in that case recently pled guilty to a sentence of 15 years, suspended to 5 years in prison with five years of probation.

S/Tpr. Wilkins' actions stood out again on May 8. He had been dispatched to a hit-and-run collision on Marietta Road in Cherokee County. Upon his arrival, he observed a pickup truck with damage to the front of the vehicle. S/Tpr. Wilkins was provided a vehicle description of the hit-and-run vehicle. After investigating the collision scene, he patrolled the surrounding area to try to locate the vehicle. While in the area, he was flagged down and provided with a lead. Just a few miles away from the collision scene, S/Tpr. Wilkins found the hit-and-run vehicle with the driver still behind the wheel. The driver was arrested for DUI 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense and Leaving the Scene.

These are just two examples of S/Tpr. Wilkins' diligence and determination, but his every day work ethic is also commendable. For example, S/Tpr. Wilkins apprehended 43 impaired drivers (3.5/month) last year. Even with his outstanding work ethic, S/Tpr. Wilkins still balances his career and family life, raising two young children with his wife.

**Troop Five: Post C**  
**L/Cpl. Ian A. Scott**

L/Cpl. I.A. Scott is always willing to assist his fellow troopers in Post C and has proved to be a mentor for the younger troopers in the post. L/Cpl. Scott is consistent in his enforcement duties and led Post C in the number of collisions investigated during 2015. He always demonstrates a calm demeanor in stressful situations and relies on his training to handle the various scenarios that arise on a daily basis.

On December 24, 2015, L/Cpl. Scott responded to a vehicle parked in the roadway with a driver asleep behind the wheel on US 52 at US 521. After L/Cpl. Scott knocked on the window several times, the driver woke up and rolled the window down. L/Cpl. Scott noticed a strong odor of marijuana and alcohol coming from the vehicle and driver.

The driver grabbed his seatbelt and attempted to put it on when L/Cpl. Scott noticed a .40 caliber handgun beside the seatbelt latch. The subject grabbed the pistol from the seat and L/Cpl. Scott swiftly reached in to control the subject's hand and prevent him from pointing the pistol at the window while giving loud verbal commands to put the weapon down. L/Cpl. Scott gained control of the weapon and threw it on top of the subject's vehicle.

The subject then put his vehicle in drive and began to flee. The pursuit eventually ended when the subject exited the vehicle and ran on foot. L/Cpl. Scott did not pursue on foot but secured the proper warrants for the subject. The U.S. Marshal's Service, along with Williamsburg County Sheriff's Department, also had warrants for the subject, who was apprehended quickly.

L/Cpl. Scott's actions prevented a dangerous situation from escalating into a deadly one.

**Troop Six: Post B**  
**Trooper Travis L. Clemens**

On July 8, 2015, Trooper T.L. Clemens attempted to stop a Chevrolet Tahoe for speeding and suspicion of DUI. The vehicle failed to stop and Tpr. Clemens initiated a vehicle pursuit. After several minutes of pursuing the suspect's vehicle, the driver leaned out the window and fired a shot from a handgun at Tpr. Clemens. The driver then made a quick left turn and stopped his vehicle in the middle of the roadway. The in-car video shows Tpr. Clemens exiting his patrol vehicle with his weapon drawn, and giving verbal commands for the driver to exit with his hands up. A female passenger exited the passenger side of the vehicle and the driver sped away. Tpr. Clemens radioed and warned the responding officers that the driver was armed, had fired a shot at him and that he was detaining the passenger.

Tpr. Clemens gave the direction of travel of the suspect vehicle to the responding officers and to Telecommunications. Despite the dangerous, life-threatening situation, Tpr. Clemens remained calm the entire time, which allowed him to think clearly and relay important information to the responding officers. After a few minutes, a Dorchester County Sheriff's deputy spotted the vehicle trying to flee the area and notified troopers of his location. Tpr. Clemens left the detained passenger with other law enforcement officers and joined in the pursuit with the Dorchester County deputies.

The suspect's vehicle later struck a tree and was completely disabled from the extensive damage. Tpr. Clemens and the deputies approached the vehicle with their weapons drawn as the suspect attempted to exit the vehicle with the weapon in his hand. After several seconds and more loud verbal commands, the suspect raised the weapon at the officers. Deputies fired several shots, striking and killing the suspect. It was later determined that the suspect was wanted in connection with a shooting that occurred earlier that night in Dorchester County.

**Troop Seven: Post B**  
**Trooper Freddie D. Rice**

In his short career, Tpr. F.D. Rice has proved -- in multiple ways -- to be an asset to this agency and to the citizens of South Carolina.

On a daily basis, Tpr. Rice comes to work with a positive mindset and has a strong work ethic -- whether its traffic enforcement/education, collision investigation, or administrative duties. He has an excellent working relationship with both co-workers and supervisors. He also has strong ties to the community, helping to better develop a positive relationship with the citizens. Tpr. Rice is a deacon at his local church and an active member of the Bolentown Volunteer Fire Department.

On October 25, at approximately 4:15 a.m., Trooper Rice was patrolling I-26 in Orangeburg County. He observed a vehicle failing to maintain its lane and initiated a traffic stop for suspicion of DUI. As he approached the vehicle to make contact with the female driver, she failed to respond to his commands. He soon realized that something was not right.

He observed the woman was suffering from a self-inflicted injury to her wrist that had caused excessive blood loss. To make the situation more difficult, the driver had locked herself in the vehicle with a protective dog.

Tpr. Rice called for EMS and requested a back-up unit. After S/Tpr. Williams arrived to assist, Trooper Tpr. Rice broke the driver's side window and made entry into the vehicle to render aid. The officers were able to secure the scene, as well as the dog, and render aid until EMS arrived on scene. The driver was transported to the hospital in Orangeburg. Her injuries were so severe that she was admitted into ICU for treatment. Arrangements were made for the care of her dog until a family member could be contacted.

For several days after the incident, Tpr. Rice maintained contact with the family and the hospital, displaying compassion and concern for the woman's well-being. There is little doubt that Tpr. Rice's actions saved the woman's life.

**Troop Eight: Upstate Interdiction**  
**L/Cpl. David Harrison**

L/Cpl. David Harrison is assigned to the Upstate Interdiction Team as an Interdiction/K9 Officer, L/Cpl. Harrison excels in curtailing drug trafficking and other criminal activity on the highways. L/Cpl. Harrison is well-respected throughout the interdiction community and continues to

sharpen his skills by networking with other local, state, and federal agents and by staying up-to-date on the latest trafficking trends throughout the nation.

He uses his K-9 partner, Titus, to assist with his interdiction efforts. He stays current on the ever-changing state and federal laws regarding the use of canines and search and seizures. He made numerous narcotics and U.S. Currency seizures in 2015. L/Cpl. Harrison's dedication to law enforcement goes well beyond interdiction.

In November 2015, L/Cpl. David Harrison made a traffic stop on I-85. After being issued a warning, the driver began crying and explained to L/Cpl. Harrison that he was having personal family issues that had distracted him while driving thus creating a safety hazard for others on the highway. Lance Corporal Harrison took the time to talk with the driver and this allowed the driver to calm down so he could continue on his travels safely.

The driver later sent a letter to the SCHP thanking Lance Corporal Harrison for potentially saving his life and possibly the lives of others had he continued driving in his current state of mind.

**Troop Nine: MAIT Midlands Region**  
**Lance Corporal Bryan C. Ridgeway**

L/Cpl. B.C. Ridgeway was called to investigate a collision on February 27, 2015 when a state Department of Transportation worker was struck and killed while performing his duties. The DOT worker was repairing a damaged roadway when a vehicle ignored warning devices, drove into the temporary construction zone, struck and killed the worker. After the collision, the driver exited his vehicle, made several disparaging remarks and fled the scene on foot, leaving his disabled vehicle at the scene.

L/Cpl. Ridgeway, along with other MAIT, members immediately responded to the scene and assisted other Troopers with the investigation. L/Cpl. Ridgeway quickly assessed the situation and a person of interest was identified. He also identified incriminating evidence, which could have been easily overlooked. L/Cpl. Ridgeway worked tirelessly on the investigation and within 24 hours, the person of interest was located and subsequently arrested and charged with Leaving the Scene of a Collision involving Death.

Also in February of 2015, L/Cpl. Ridgeway along with other MAIT members responded to a fatal collision involving a car and a school bus. On the surface, it appeared that the school bus had failed to yield the right of way from a stop sign, which resulted in the collision. Evidence at the scene and experience suggested to L/Cpl. Ridgeway that the car may have been speeding. However, the dynamics of the collision were such that traditional methods of speed calculations were underreporting the car's speed significantly.

L/Cpl. Ridgeway began researching other methods to determine the car's speed, ultimately finding one that wasn't familiar to him or anyone else on MAIT. Being unfamiliar with the

method he found, he reached out to two leading experts in the field who assisted him with calculating a more accurate speed of the car involved in the collision. Armed with this information, he was ultimately able to show that if the car had been traveling at the posted speed limit, the collision would not have occurred.

Finally, on April 11, 2015 L/Cpl. Ridgeway responded to another hit and run vehicle collision where a moped was struck from the rear. The vehicle that struck the moped left the scene, leaving the moped operator seriously injured. L/Cpl. Ridgeway scoured the collision scene for evidence but found little in the way of vehicle parts. He did however find a cellphone on scene, which subsequently led to the discovery of evidence. Within 48 hours, the vehicle was located and an arrest was made for Leaving the Scene of a Collision Involving Injury.

### **Troop 10: Insurance Enforcement Unit**

#### **L/Cpl. E. Scott McMahan**

L/Cpl. E.S. McMahan joined the South Carolina Highway Patrol in 1988 and was assigned to Greenwood County. He later transferred to Oconee County where he retired in September 2012. After retirement, L/Cpl. McMahan rejoined the Highway Patrol as a temporary enforcement trooper and was later transferred to the Troop 10, Insurance Enforcement Unit. In the 18 months he has been with the unit, he has done an outstanding job.

On December 1, 2015, L/Cpl. McMahan was assigned to work in the area around the Greenville/Spartanburg Airport. He had stopped his patrol vehicle to enter addresses into his computer when an unknown subject approached him and asked him if he knew how to administer CPR. L/Cpl. McMahan told the subject that he did and L/Cpl. McMahan followed the subject over to an area located close to an aircraft.

He got there just as EMS from Greenville County was arriving on the scene. He provided assistance to EMS workers while they attempted to resuscitate the subject. L/Cpl. McMahan did not leave until he had helped load the subject onto the gurney and into the ambulance. This subject was a 66 year old pilot for Liberty Corporation and had been flying for over 30 years. Still concerned about the well-being of the subject, McMahan went by the hospital to check on him. Unfortunately, the pilot had died a few minutes before. He visited with the pilot's family and co-workers who thanked L/Cpl. McMahan for his concern and willingness to help.

L/Cpl. McMahan and his wife, Sherri, live in Westminster, South Carolina They have four children and attend Golden Corner Baptist Church in Walhalla, SC. He enjoys golfing, fishing, and spending time with his family.

### **Troop 11: Training**

#### **Lt. Derrick J. Gamble**

Lieutenant D.J. Gamble is the Assistant Unit Commander for the DPS Special Operation Unit, the Honor Guard Commander, and the Advanced Civil Emergency (Response) Team

Commander. Over the past year, Lt. Gamble has done an outstanding job of leading and delivering all aspects of the tactical weapons training to all South Carolina Department of Public Safety troopers and officers as well as other South Carolina law enforcement.

Lt. Gamble is actively involved in providing his co-workers with the most current emergency response training, but specializes in teaching advanced courses. In 2015, Lieutenant Gamble's leadership and knowledge were tested for the world to see.

As incidents of civil unrest in the United States unfolded, the DPS Special Operations Unit redirected its efforts toward the training of all SCDPS personnel in basic civil response tactics as well as refining procedures for tactical support to CERT operations and to local agencies during special events.

These efforts began in preparation for the possibility of civil unrest during the 2015 Memorial Day Bike Fest in Myrtle Beach. Lt. Gamble conducted mandatory riot control training in February 2015, which continued through April 2015. At the end of this training, 687 law enforcement Troopers and Officers had received basic training in crowd control tactics as well as SLED, DNR and Fairfield County Sheriff's Officers also were trained in these strategies.

As turbulent events unfolded in 2015, Lt. Gamble continued to lead Security and Mobile Field Force Teams during protests at the Statehouse; assisting in the removal of the Confederate Flag as part of the Honor Guard; and other high profile events, including operations during the 1,000 Year Flood.

During all these events, Lt. Gamble was either present or actively involved in leading, organizing, and implementing the operational plans that involved the Department of Public Safety. He led these situations with professionalism and excellence.

## **Telecommunications Operator of the Year**

**\*\* TCO Shatara Park was the overall winner for TCO of the Year \*\***

### **Blythewood:**

#### **TCO Von Legrand (Lee) Carrigg, Jr.**

TCO Von Legrand (Lee) Carrigg Jr. has been with the Blythewood Telecommunications Center for almost 20 years and is a dedicated, hardworking and dependable employee. He is a model dispatcher and strives to be the example for newer TCOs to follow. TCO Carrigg shows a great amount of respect for his co-workers, officers, and the general public.

He embraces change and is willing to step up to any challenge presented to him, whether it is training new employees or learning new procedures in the CAD system.

TCO Carrigg is always willing to help out his fellow workers and the Telecommunications center as a whole. He has volunteered to work when shifts are short-staffed, stay over to make



sure the shift transitions go smoothly, and consistently makes himself available. Whenever someone has a question and there is not a supervisor readily available to assist, TCO Carrigg is the shift go-to guy.

He comes to work with an eager and ready-to-start attitude, even if his Gamecocks lost a game. He and his wife, Lisa, have two beautiful daughters, Lilly and Savannah.

TCO Carrigg is a model operator and is a leader in the Telecommunications Unit.

**Charleston TCC:  
TCO Shatara Park**

TCO Shatara Park is a dedicated employee and is always willing to assist other employees. TCO Park first began her career with the Highway Patrol in 2007 and was the Charleston TCC nominee for TCO of the Year in 2009. She returned to the department in December 2013 after having to leave briefly due to her husband's military relocation. TCO Park arrives at the office early and handles the daily stress of the job well. She has been commended by several troopers on how professional she conducts herself on the radio, keeping abreast of all communications even during hectic time periods on a patched radio.

One example of her professionalism occurred when she answered a call from an elderly female who was traveling and had become lost. TCO Park was on the phone with the caller for over an hour trying to get her to the location in Aiken she was seeking. TCO Park was finally able to convince the driver to pull off the interstate and into a business to verify her location since the mile markers and information the caller was providing were not corresponding with our area. The caller was actually not in our area, or even our state. But TCO Park was able to notify appropriate personnel in Virginia who checked on the caller. This is just one example of TCO Park's dedication to her important position.

TCO Park also took on the task of training a new TCO in 2015 and has volunteered to be a primary assistant to our ATAC in making sure all warrants are entered accurately, completely, and in a timely manner.

TCO Park graduated Herzing University in 2013 with an Associates of Science for medical billing and coding. She was also a Specialist in the National Guard from 2004 to 2010. They live in Ridgeville with their 4 year old twin boys, Connor and Wyatt.

**Florence TCC:  
TCO Eunice McLain**

TCO Eunice A. McLain has been a Telecommunications Operator in the Florence TCC since July 2, 2007. TCO McLain came to us with prior communications experience having previously worked at the Marlboro 911. She showed an eagerness and capacity to learn the job in the most professional manner. She quickly excelled in all aspects of the on-the-job training program while later meeting the requirements for her CAD certification.

TCO McLain remains detail-oriented, attentive, and persistent when it comes to her work ethic when facing any challenge in dispatching calls for service. She exhibits a solid understanding and knowledge of what it means to follow established protocol and standard operating procedures in the Florence Center. TCO McLain provides information, insight, and training to new hires and others.

TCO McLain maintains accurate and complete CAD, NCIC, and fatality records as they are packed with information to ensure compliance with established protocol. She willingly assists other TCOs on her shift by answering telephones, calling wreckers, running driver licenses or motor vehicle tags, and completing NCIC hit confirmations. Her attention to detail ensures the safety of all Patrol personnel on her radio console by checking on them during their traffic stops.

On September 26, 2015, around 3 a.m., TCO McLain was working the Georgetown/Williamsburg radio when a Georgetown trooper was attempting to make a traffic stop on Royal Pines Drive that escalated into a vehicle pursuit. McLain assisted the trooper by alerting area troopers and other law enforcement agencies to the location and direction of the pursuit.

McLain packed notes into the CAD record, making sure all information documented the traffic stop from start to finish, including all troopers involved, arrest information, vehicle information, subject information, and NCIC Wanted Persons check information. McLain's handling of this vehicle pursuit demonstrates the need for the TCO to remain calm and assist the officer under stressful situations.

**Greenville:**  
**TCO Tamesha Strong**

TCO Tamesha Strong has been with SCDPS since February 2009. She started out in the Greenwood TCC and quickly excelled in learning all aspects of the Telecommunications Operator role. Ms. Strong is a very vibrant employee and loves to make others laugh. She is a pleasure to work with and often has other operators in a joyous mood in a short amount of time. TCO Strong runs all consoles in the TCC and helps other operators learn their jobs. She can be depended on to be at work, get the job done, and create an atmosphere of teamwork.

Upon the closure of the Greenwood TCC, Ms. Strong moved herself and her two young sons, Amori, 7 and Jalen, 9, so that she could be closer to work at the Greenville TCC. TCO Strong has also been taking online classes and graduated this year with an Associate's degree in applied science with a major in criminal justice. She is determined to create a learning environment for her children and ensuring that she is teaching them to do their very best.

Being a single parent, she has kept up with the many demands of raising her children, school work, job duties as well as running a household.