

A Trooper's Date with Destiny

Oct. 23, 2012

By Beth Ipsen, PIO

(ANCHORAGE, Alaska) – Four men with prior law enforcement experience started their careers as Alaska State Troopers yesterday. One of these men is starting his second career wearing trooper blue. After 10 years as a trooper, Eric Olsen's first career was cut short by a terrible car crash while in Kodiak in 2005. He spent seven long years recuperating – first learning how to walk again, and then trying to get to a point where he could rejoin his “brothers and sisters in blue,” Olson said. He first returned to the Alaska Department of Public Safety as an investigator for the Alcoholic Beverage and Control Board. However, his heart was set on wearing the uniform again.

Olsen's supervisor at the time of his crash in Kodiak, Lt. Maurice “Mo” Hughes, shook Olsen's hand shortly after he was once again sworn in as a trooper and received his badge alongside other lateral hires Pete Steen, of the Palmer Police Department; Charles Withers of the Ted Stevens International Airport Police and Fire Department; and James Eyester of the Chester Field County (Va.) Police Department. Hughes vividly remembers the crash that not only cut Olsen's career short, but almost robbed Olsen of his life. The swearing in ceremony conducted by DPS Commissioner Joseph Masters was made even more poignant when Olsen received his old badge. His badge set was not re-issued after his medical retirement. Instead, it was discovered tucked away in the recruitment unit as if it was waiting to be reunited with Olsen.

The four lateral hires arrived at the Public Safety Academy in Sitka today to join other trooper recruits and statewide law enforcement officers for the last three weeks of the Alaska Law Enforcement Training (ALET). As law enforcement officers in Alaska, Olsen, Withers and Steen have been through ALET before. In addition, Steen spent the past few years working alongside troopers as a member of the multi-agency Bureau of Highway Patrol Mat-Su Team. After graduation on Nov. 16, trooper recruits, including the four lateral hires, will spend four weeks learning trooper-specific duties before heading to one of three training posts for more on-the-job training.



Olsen

While packing for the academy over the weekend, Olsen came across a poem he wrote in 2000, several years into what he thought would be a long career as a trooper. It was the first time he had read the poem in a few years. To him, it had just as much meaning now as it did the day he wrote it.

Dear Lord, guide me today as I leave my home to serve and protect others in villages and my own community.

I ask you to calm the fears of my family, knowing full well that one of the calls I respond to may be the very one to destroy our precious unity.

Give me the strength both physically and mentally, to take on the tasks you set before me, even if the day has already been so very long or the weather so very stormy.

As I go about my work, help me to maintain an even keel, even if some of the horrible crimes I encounter make me want to cry, wretch or reel.

Teach me to appreciate my job, my home, and others around me. Help me not to become angry, spiteful, or speak unjustly.

I take pride in loyalty, integrity and courage.

It's something I should never forget as I look into the eyes of those whose lives are heavy with pain and suffrage.

Throughout my travels, I have been able to witness the good, the bad, the weak and the mighty.

As I stand back and take a breath, I realize you have allowed me to live the life of an Alaska State Trooper, something I will never take lightly.

I appreciate the precious jewels in life you provide me each and every day.

But most of all dear Lord, I just want to say, “Thank you, thank you for helping me reach my goal of being an Alaska State Trooper someday.”



Four lateral hires join the ranks of the Alaska State Troopers after being sworn in by DPS Commissioner Joseph Masters (far right). They are (from l to r) James Eyester, Charles Withers, Pete Steen and Eric Olsen.

From left to right, former trooper Eric Olsen, former Ted Stevens International Airport Police and Fire Department officer Charles Withers, former Palmer Police Department officer Pete Steen and former Chester Field County Police Department (Pa.) officer James Eyester proudly show their Alaska State Trooper badges.

