

The Black Dragon

Racial Profiling Exposed

award-winning investigative journalist

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author of Brady's Run

Jigsaw Press
Sun River, Montana

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*To my sons
Peter, Simon, Spencer and James Collum*

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The Black Dragon is the culmination of twenty years of work that began for me in 1989. At the time, I was an investigative reporter chasing a story about the practice that was to become known as racial profiling. The Oxford English Dictionary defines racial profiling as “*selection for scrutiny by law enforcement based on race or ethnicity rather than on behavioural or evidentiary criteria.*”

Racial profiling is a vestige of the Jim Crow America most of us associate with Alabama, Mississippi and the Deep South. I saw it with my own eyes as a white child growing up in the 1950's and '60s in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. I recall realizing at a young age that there was something inherently wrong with the fact that 'Coloreds' or Negroes, as black-skinned people were commonly referred to then, were prohibited from bathing at the city beaches where I swam, or drinking from the water fountains in the supermarket where my mother shopped, or eating at most restaurants that my family and I were free to enter as we pleased. I remember being horrified at the images on television of black civil rights marchers attacked by dogs and fire hoses in Selma and Birmingham. Of adults vilifying Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a “communist” for his non-violent protests. Of King being murdered. And a country in flames. It's hard to explain to young people today how raw and bitter relations between the races were when I was young.

Of course, racial relations have vastly improved since then, yet America is still not the *Promised Land* that Dr. King spoke of the day before his murder. Racial inequity, though greatly diminished,

unfortunately does still exist in America—as evidenced by the contents of this book.

As an adult, I came to the conclusion that racism is a direct result of ignorance. Not stupidity, but ignorance. Even after the desegregation of schools and restaurants and beaches, blacks and whites in our country have lived in largely separate worlds. I believe that divide is responsible in great part for the ignorance between the races and, consequently, the racism that still exists in the United States.

Much of my career in journalism has been dedicated to rooting out racial injustice, from private companies preying on poor and uneducated minorities to school systems methodically denying proper educations to economically disadvantaged minority children. Consequently, I—unlike many white Americans—had the good fortune to spend a lot of time with people who don't look like me. I covered stories in the poorest wards of Houston, the crime-ridden neighborhoods of Newark, and the most blighted sections of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. And the single most important lesson I learned from those experiences is that—black, white, brown, yellow, or red—we are all the same. The overwhelming majority of us want to be safe and prosperous, live good lives and see our children do well.

By the time I moved to the Northeast in 1987 to work as an investigative reporter at a television station covering New York City and New Jersey, I—like many white Americans—believed that decades of progress had finally eradicated most of the ugly practices of America's past.

Yet, when my colleagues and I began looking into a story we'd been tipped off about—that something terrible was happening on the New Jersey Turnpike—we discovered a secret and cynical system at work that harkened back to the worst of our country's racial yore. In essence, a Race War was being waged under the banner of the War on Drugs. As we subsequently found, this war was an illegal campaign fought by an elite police agency in collusion with prosecutors, judges, and elected officials who seemed perfectly content to attack one societal problem by violating the most basic rights of tens of thousands of their fellow citizens and led some to brand New Jersey "*the Mississippi of the 1990s.*"

Our initial reports presaged a much wider awareness of racial profiling. By the late 1990s, profiling had become such a titanic

issue, not only in New Jersey but throughout the United States, that I felt compelled to write the story of how and where the practice was born. (Little did I know at the time that, as *The Oxford English Dictionary* later informed me, I had actually coined the term *racial profiling*.) But I didn't write *The Black Dragon* only because I helped light the fuse. Rather, because it is such an incredible story, truly an epic saga, filled with heroes and villains and all of the raw emotions that race evokes in America.

This book recounts a dark chapter in the history of American race relations. It does not paint a pretty picture of what happened in the Garden State, including more than a decade of cover-up of racial profiling that reached to the highest levels of government. However, I would be remiss if I did not report that, in the years after *The Black Dragon* concludes in 2002, the State of New Jersey and its Division of State Police finally took steps to eradicate the problem.

In 2005, New Jersey became the first state in America to prohibit racial profiling and require every police officer within its borders to undergo intensive instruction on profiling and protecting citizen rights. Jersey also became one of only two states in the nation to make racial profiling a criminal offense. In addition, in 2009 the State Police successfully met the dictates of a consent decree with the U.S. Justice Department and was removed from federal monitoring.

As for me, shortly after spending September 11, 2001, and the days immediately thereafter at Ground Zero, I left the world of journalism to begin writing this book. I am fortunate to have had access to a prodigious treasure trove of information, including approximately 200,000 documents, hundreds of hours of sworn testimony, and interviews with many, many dozens of individuals (please see *Acknowledgments*).

One other thing. Because I personally played a fundamental role in the story, I was faced with the awkward task of writing about myself, which I had never done before and chose to do here in the third person, a vanity for which I hope readers will forgive me. I sincerely hope what follows does justice to the amazing story of *The Black Dragon*.

—Joseph Collum—

“The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding.”

—Justice Louis Brandeis *“Olmstead v. United States”*

Prologue

THE NEWS TRAVELED FAST. By midnight word had spread from Netcong to Red Lion to Bass River. The entire Outfit knew something had happened. Something bad.

The next morning the headlines splashed across the front pages were all the chatter in courthouses around the state. When names leaked out, insiders volunteered their utter lack of surprise.

“He was a time bomb waiting to go off,” someone said.

A collective shudder shot through the ranks of the *crime dogs*. They’d always feared something like this. In hindsight, it was bound to happen sooner or later. What astounded them, though, was that this case seemed so textbook: A carload of *johnnies*, out-of-staters, in a rental vehicle. And they tried to escape. Tried to run the *diggers* down, for God’s sake!

The needles all pointed to one conclusion: the *johnnies* were dirty. Absolutely had to be! Then to find nothing! Incredible! It made no sense.

A sickening notion began to grip the organization. War drums had been beating for years; that was nothing new. They’d always been able to fend off the enemy, hold the fort. But this was different. This was exactly the kind of thing that could blow a hole in the ramparts.

This was trouble.

Chapter I

THE NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE was the most important highway in America in the 1980s, the nation's most heavily traveled road, with 200 million cars, trucks, and buses logging more than 4 billion miles a year. It was also the main thoroughfare to and from the greatest city in the world.

At its northern extreme, the Jersey Turnpike was a 12-lane monster, a reeking, shrieking gasoline alley dissecting a twilight zone of refineries, toxic swamps and fire-breathing smokestacks. The panorama was one of raw power. On one side, jumbo jets roared into Newark Airport; on the other, legions of giant blue cranes perched like robotic praying mantis plucking containers from mammoth cargo ships at Port Elizabeth. Endless lines of railroad tankers, boxcars, and hundreds of miles of twisting pipes lined its perimeters. At rush hours so many vehicles gushed from tributary roads the Turnpike became a surging river of metal rushing toward its Niagara in the distance—the Empire State Building, the World Trade Towers, New York City.

The Turnpike retraced an ancient trail blazed thousands of years before by the Hackensackee Indians through a region they called "*Scheyichbi*"—"land bordering the ocean." Colonists adopted the native path. George Washington and his rag-tag Continental Army battled the British along the same route that eventually became the main artery for stagecoach lines linking the infant nation's business hubs of New York and Philadelphia. Railroads followed. Then the automobile sealed New Jersey's destiny as *the* corridor state of the northeast.

By the 1940s, endless convoys of cars and trucks had the state gagging on their fumes. Bold action was required and in 1949 the pastoral peace of rural South Jersey was shattered by bulldozers and hot tar. A blacktop spine was carved through cranberry bogs and asparagus fields that soon stretched the length of the state. *Time Magazine* hailed it as “*The Miracle Turnpike*,” a 117-mile engineering marvel, designed and built in a breathtaking two years, a monument to America’s can-do spirit.

The finest road ever constructed for its time, the Turnpike was a wide, straight, muscle-bound conveyor belt for speed. At 75 miles per hour, the five-hour marathon between Philadelphia and New York became a lickety-split two-hour sprint. The roadway wasn’t friendly or pretty; no flowers, trees, or hospitality centers. Service plazas were bleak yet functional, designed for travelers to gas up, make a pit stop, gobble a burger at Bob’s Big Boy, and hit the road again.

The highway was owned and operated by a monolithic institution called the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, a public entity which answered to no one, made its own regulations and ruled with an iron glove. No stopping, no picture taking, and not even diplomatic immunity was recognized. Ambassadors and foreign dignitaries, presuming themselves impervious to the law, were routinely caught zooming down the Turnpike at 100 miles per hour only to be shown to the nearest exit and banned from the highway.

By the 1980s, the Authority was collecting nearly \$200 million dollars a year in tolls. And a basketful of that money ended up in the coffers of the New Jersey State Police which, for a stipend of almost \$20 million a year, dedicated an entire 187-member unit—Troop D—exclusively to the Turnpike.

Troop D called itself “Dog troop,” but the “D” could well have denoted *danger*. Five state troopers had been killed on the highway since it opened in 1951—three shot to death and two run down. Dozens more were seriously injured by guns and cars.

Turnpike troopers weren’t beat cops; they had no constituency, no friendly drive-by waves from local soccer moms, ministers or mailmen. The Turnpike was a city on wheels—a long, mobile city with a daily population of more than a half million and all the mischief attendant to a major metropolis. Those who traveled it were potential

ne'er-do-wells and, over time, an unwavering principle evolved among members of the New Jersey State Police. That troopers were more than just glorified traffic cops, but true crimebusters. The big road could be an excellent venue to catch criminals, outlaws, real desperados, particularly narcotics traffickers.

So, during the late 1960s the troopers began making a number of drug arrests. Curiously, though, the vast majority of their prey looked strikingly similar—young, white, long-haired men, many of them college students from nearby schools like Rutgers University in New Brunswick.

In 1970, a Rutgers Law School professor and civil rights attorney named Frank Askin filed a federal lawsuit accusing the State Police of violating the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution by systematically targeting long-haired travelers for highway stops and searches. Askin claimed 95% of the searches were fruitless and asked the court to issue an injunction to stop the practice. The case dragged on for years, in large part due to a hostile U.S. District Court Judge Robert Shaw, who Askin privately described as a “judicial troglodyte.”

After three years of courtroom maneuvers Judge Shaw reluctantly held a trial that was supposed to last days, but stretched on for six months and 67 witnesses. Most of the testimony came from long-haired hippie-types like Ron Greenblatt, who had a full beard and flowing hair down to his waist.

Greenblatt had recently played the role of Jesus Christ in a film about the crucifixion. Before that he'd been a student at Rutgers. Greenblatt testified he had been stopped and searched by troopers 13 times. When asked if he was angry at the State Police he said: “I forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Before Judge Shaw could render a verdict, he died suddenly of a heart attack. The case was transferred to another federal judge, John J. Kitchen, who upon assignment remarked: “This case killed Judge Shaw; it's not going to kill me.” Two weeks later Kitchen dropped dead. A third judge was forced to recuse himself due to ill health. Finally, the case was assigned to Judge Curtiss Meanor, who found Askins' evidence disturbing.

“The district court's extensive findings of fact reveal what can only be described as callous indifference by the New Jersey State Police for the

rights of citizens using New Jersey roads,” the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals wrote, pointing out in a footnote that Judge Meanor was still alive and well.

But by 1975 the U.S. Supreme Court had issued a ruling that blocked federal courts from intervening in the operations of local and state police departments and Meanor reluctantly declined to give the injunctive relief Askin sought. The six year battle to rein in alleged State Police harassment of motorists came to naught, a lost opportunity that would reverberate over the next two decades.

When the *Great Drug War* of the 1980s was launched, the State Police were ready. New York City was the drug capital of America, which meant—coming or going—most illicit narcotics would likely be transported through New Jersey by way of the Turnpike. The State Police would be America’s front line troops in the war and their battlefield would be the long, mighty asphalt colossus troopers called *The Black Dragon*.

Chapter 2

1921 WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR. Babe Ruth hit 59 home runs; Rudolph Valentino starred in *The Sheik*; Albert Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics; and Jack Dempsey knocked out Jacques Carpentier in the first \$1 million prizefight. Then, on December 5th, a blizzard roared through the northeast United States, covering the Atlantic states in a shroud of snow.

In New Jersey, the arctic wind whistling through the capital city of Trenton was not enough to prevent an historic ceremony from playing out on the steps of the gold-domed State House. In a biting cold, 81 men lined up side-by-side dressed in French blue tailored jackets with gold trim, olive doughboy jodhpurs, Sam Browne belts, and tan knee boots. Some sat on horses and wore cavalry hats. Others straddled big Harley-Davidson motorcycles and wore stiff-crowned caps with peaks raked sharply over their eyes. A distinctive triangular badge adorned the breast of each man, inscribed with the words “*Honor—Duty—Fidelity.*” As snow swirled, a brawny figure slowly made his way down the line, greeting and saluting every man.

Until this day, none of the 81 had ever worn a lawman’s badge. A collection of butchers, farmers, fishermen, and soldiers, they were the first members of the New Jersey State Police and the imposing man in front of them was giving each his marching orders. The horsemen were dispatched south to rural hamlets and villages where the roads were mostly dirt and the farm population sparse. The motorcyclists were sent north where at least some paved roads existed.

Their leader was remarkably young. Herbert Norman Schwarzkopf had been born 25 years earlier in Newark, New Jersey, the only child of German immigrants. His father Julius, a jeweler, wanted his son to have a fine education, so young Norman went off to West Point. He was not only a diligent student, but also starred on the football field, captained the polo team, and was the Military Academy's heavyweight boxing champion. Schwarzkopf graduated in 1917 at the height of the Great War and was sent to France.

At the Battle of Marne, after 50 days of bitter combat, Capt. Schwarzkopf was caught in a cloud of mustard gas and knocked out of action. After the armistice, because he spoke German, he was appointed provost marshal, police chief, mayor, and civil judge of an occupied German farming town.

When Schwarzkopf returned to the United States he was detailed to the cavalry in El Paso, Texas, to guard the U.S.-Mexican border. But in 1920, Julius Schwarzkopf became crippled by arthritis and his son was forced to resign from the military and return to Newark, where he became his family's sole supporter.

At that moment, New Jersey was a state in siege. Bandits and bootleggers were operating with impunity. Only large cities had police protection. No one was immune. A.D. Rider, the renowned "Cranberry King" of South Jersey, was ambushed by 10 masked men who shot him, his daughter, and brother and made off with a large cash payroll. In Springfield, a party of 18 wealthy gentlemen leaving the exclusive Baltusrol Golf Club was jumped and robbed by gunmen laying in wait. Newspapers carried daily accounts of the disorder. On June 16, 1921, *The New York Times* reported:

"The seizure near Andover, N.J. of a truck loaded with valuable silks and the wanton killing of a motorcyclist by a masked band of highwaymen in broad daylight calls attention once more to the failure of local authorities to protect the users of much-traveled roads in that state. The ruffians who shot the chance-comer on his way to work and flung his body into a brook were as blood-thirsty and callous as human nature ever is. It is high time authorities bestirred themselves and spent something for protection. Unless all the country townships of the state arouse themselves, it will be advisable for travelers for pleasure and on business to arm and be ready to defend themselves."

Prominent citizens began banding together in vigilante groups. Trucks traveled in heavily guarded convoys. There was a growing cry for a State constabulary. But the primary roadblock was New Jersey's Governor Edward I. Edwards, whose *métier* was not law and order. A product of the nefarious Hudson County Democratic machine of political boss Frank Hague, Edwards had won election crusading against Prohibition and pledging to make New Jersey "wetter than the Atlantic Ocean."

Edwards harshly opposed a State constabulary, but in March 1921 lawmakers overruled him and voted to create the Division of State Police. Ironically, they gave Edwards authority to hand pick the first State Police chief. The most likely candidate was assumed to be Lt. Thomas Broadhurst, a Hague flunky from the Hudson County Boulevard Police. Instead, the eccentric governor surprised everyone. Among the forty applicants was a friend of his son. John Edwards had fought in France alongside Herbert Norman Schwarzkopf and the younger Edwards urged his friend to apply. In his meeting with Schwarzkopf, the governor asked:

"What are your credentials for this job?"

"I'm a West Point graduate, I've had experience in the military, and I'm a good organizer."

"What are your politics?" the governor asked.

"I don't have any," Schwarzkopf said. "I've never voted in an election in my life."

Eschewing his own allegiances, Governor Edwards decided he didn't want a State Police Superintendent beholden to the unsavory political machine that had spawned him. Schwarzkopf was tough, honest and enterprising, and, despite his youth, Edwards saw in him the kind of natural leader needed to build a law enforcement organization from the ground up. It was a bold, inspired choice. Schwarzkopf turned out to be perfect for the job.

"A man of honor," his son, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf Jr., recalled decades later in his autobiography, *It Doesn't Take A Hero*. "He would teach me the simple rule he lived by: No matter what happens, no matter how bad a situation is, no matter what you think the consequences will be, you tell the truth. An honorable man does not lie. A Schwarzkopf does not lie."

Above all, Schwarzkopf was a leader.

“When you are called to lead, lead,” he would say in his measured, commanding voice. “And when you take leadership, do the right thing.”

A chain smoker who was constantly firing a Zippo to his ever-present Camel cigarettes, State Police Superintendent Schwarzkopf cherished every facet of sculpting his new force. Applications poured in from 1,600 men, which he whittled to just 116 candidates who were called to report to Sea Girt, New Jersey. On September 1, 1921 they were issued olive denims and assigned to tents that would be their homes for three ruthless months.

The first State Police Academy was pure military. Schwarzkopf worked his trainees relentlessly, seven days a week without respite. Every morning they ran five miles in formation. Schwarzkopf devised a series of equestrian exercises, teaching the men to ride and care for their horses. The most challenging of these were the Monkey Drills, a stunt contest that included recruits standing astride a galloping team of horses. He brought in law enforcement experts from the Pennsylvania State Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police. And by December, the original 116 recruits had been pared to 81. They were administered the oath of office as the first New Jersey State Troopers.

To distinguish his men from other police, Schwarzkopf commissioned his father Julius to design a triangular badge rather than a star or shield, with three stars, one in each corner, signifying the State Police motto: *“Honor, Duty and Fidelity.”* Each trooper was awarded a badge with a number that would be his for perpetuity. Schwarzkopf wore Badge Number One.

The superintendent called the State Police his “Outfit,” and molded it to reflect military values. Troopers lived in barracks and worked 10 day shifts followed by a 24 hour leave, “if possible.” Marrying without Schwarzkopf’s permission was grounds for immediate dismissal.

“From the day I was old enough to understand words until the day he died,” said General Schwarzkopf (who, seven decades after his father founded the State Police, led the U.S. military as commander of Desert Storm) “my father talked about his dream for this organization. He wanted the New Jersey State Police to be superbly qualified policemen. Super cops! Absolutely incorruptible, without any political

allegiance, committed to selflessly serve all the people of New Jersey. Bootleggers would offer him bribes to keep his troopers off certain roads so they could take their contraband through. Pop always approached the job like the western sheriff who says to the bad guy: 'Get out of town by sundown.' A gang would be moving into town and he'd take a couple of troopers, big gorillas, and pay the leader a visit. He'd say, 'You do not want to move into Red Bank. Let me explain to you what's going to happen to you if you do.'"

Banditry and crime waned under Schwarzkopf. In 1932, he became internationally renowned when his Outfit solved the *Crime of the Century*, the kidnapping-murder of aviator Charles Lindbergh's infant son in Hopewell Township. The State Police investigation led to the capture, conviction, and execution of Bruno Richard Hauptmann. The State Police developed a reputation as one of the elite law enforcement organizations in the country and Schwarzkopf set the standard for all future State Police Superintendents. Although he retired in 1936, his colossal shadow would always loom over the organization.

"Shortly before he died, while driving down the parkway," General Schwarzkopf recounted, "he passed a state trooper on the side of the road. He waved. He always waved. He said, 'I never pass a state trooper without waving at him, and there has never been a time when the state trooper didn't wave back.' But this particular time, he was dying of cancer; he sat up, waved, the trooper waved back. He sat up a little straighter and said, 'Son, that's my Outfit.'"

On December 5, 1921, in the blinding snow, the young Schwarzkopf stood before his Outfit of 81 men, 61 horses, 20 motorcycles, one automobile, and a truck, and read "General Order Number One," which became the foundation of the New Jersey State Police:

"The force, individually and collectively, should cultivate and maintain the good opinion of the people of the State by a steady and impartial line of conduct in the discharge of its duties, and by clean, sober and orderly habits, *and by a respectful bearing to all classes.*"

Chapter 3

AROUND 10 O’CLOCK ON SUNDAY NIGHT, September 27, 1987, Nate Jones was listening to jazz and enjoying the remains of a pleasant autumn weekend as he steered his metallic blue Mercedes Benz 380 SL along the dark highway. The Friday before, Jones had driven from his home in Trenton, New Jersey, south to Washington, D.C. to visit his son, Nate Jr., a law student at Howard University. He was proud of Nate. For the Jones family, it was another step up the ladder of success.

Jones’ wife Barbara had stayed home for the weekend, and father and son had spent some quality time together. As Sunday evening approached, Jones hugged Nate Jr. and left the capital, pointing his Mercedes north on Interstate 95. He drove through Maryland and Delaware, then over the Delaware Memorial Bridge into New Jersey, keeping his speedometer at about 60 mph.

A half hour from Trenton, red flashing lights began bursting like fireworks in Jones’ rearview mirror. *What the heck did I do wrong?* he wondered. *I can’t believe this!* He eased the Mercedes onto the shoulder of the highway and, seconds later, two New Jersey state troopers walked up to his car, one to the driver’s door, the other on the passenger side.

“What did I do, Officer?” Jones said. “Why did you stop me?”

“Where are you coming from, sir?” one trooper responded.

“Why am I being stopped, Officer? I don’t think I was speeding.”

The trooper neglected his queries to ask Jones where he was heading.

"I'm on my way home. I live in Trenton, and I will tell you my family is expecting me soon. Why am I being stopped?"

"Sir, I need to see your license, registration, and insurance," the trooper said.

"I keep my papers in the trunk. I don't feel safe keeping them in the convertible."

"Please get out of the car and open the trunk."

Jones persisted. "Officer, I'm asking you again, what am I being stopped for?"

"Sir, if you continue to ask me questions like that I'm going to have to arrest you."

"Arrest me for what? What have I done?"

Jones believed he already knew what he'd done. He was a black man driving an expensive car, factors he was well aware police often viewed with suspicion.

Nonetheless, Nate Jones hardly fit the profile of a criminal. At 54 years old, he was gray-haired and rotund, the principal of a public elementary school. Yet, he suspected the only thing these two troopers saw was a black man driving a Mercedes Benz.

"Get out of the car and open your trunk," one trooper ordered.

Jones relented and climbed out of the Mercedes and walked to the rear of his vehicle, the State Police cruiser's headlights and flashing red strobe illuminating the darkness. Before he could unlock the trunk, the second trooper stepped up to Jones.

"Have you been using drugs, sir?" he said.

"That's a ridiculous question," Jones said.

"Are you involved in drugs?"

Jones didn't smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol and had never taken an illegal drug and was offended by the question. More bothersome, though, was the trooper's menacing tone. Jones had been trained for confrontations like this. During the 1970s he'd served as president of the Trenton NAACP and led marches, protests, and boycotts. He'd been schooled by the NAACP in the tenets of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., particularly with regard to not antagonizing the police, never putting yourself or others in explosive situations, and always remaining calm and peaceful. Jones made sure to keep his composure and give the troopers clear, precise answers.

“No, officer, I am not involved in any drug activity,” he said. “And I still want to know why you’re doing this.”

“I told you if you don’t stop asking me that I’m going to arrest you.”

“But I have a right to know why I’m being stopped.”

Suddenly, one of the troopers grabbed Jones by the wrists and led him to the front of the State Police cruiser.

“Lean over the hood and put your hands behind your back,” he commanded. Jones felt handcuffs close around his wrists as the second trooper took the car keys from his hand.

“What are you doing? Why are you doing this?”

“I told you. You’re under arrest,” the trooper said.

The NAACP hadn’t prepared Jones for anything like this. He was locked in the back seat of the police car. The troopers opened the Mercedes trunk and began combing through its contents. They found Jones’ license, paperwork, and \$200 in cash.

“Why are you hiding so much cash in your trunk?” a trooper asked.

“I keep it there in case of emergency,” Jones said.

“It’s not for drugs, is it?”

“No, it’s not for drugs,” Jones answered calmly.

The troopers spent nearly an hour ransacking the automobile while Jones waited. Finally they locked the Mercedes, got into their car and drove away with him in the back seat, under arrest for obstruction of justice and resisting arrest.

Chapter 4

KENNY RUFF PULLED HIS CAR INTO Newark Station May 7, 1988 and was instantly engulfed in a maelstrom of noise and motion. The barracks was at the gateway to Newark International Airport where several major roads merged into a massive bottleneck. Hundreds of cars and trucks were crawling bumper-to-bumper through the toll plaza as DC 10's shrieked low overhead. Ruff was awestruck. The Jersey Turnpike! The Black Dragon! For a young cop looking to test his mettle, this was the most demanding highway in America.

Ruff was a tall, strapping man, resplendent in his blue uniform trimmed with gold. He climbed a single flight of stairs to the second floor and was buzzed into a lobby where a New Jersey State Police logo adorned the wall. Shift change was in progress and dozens of troopers were coming and going. One sat at the radio desk just inside the door, a bank of computers behind him, and beyond that the station commander's office, the squad room, gym, detective bureau, locker room, interrogation room, breathalyzer room, and kitchen. There was also a lock-up cell filled with detainees. Ruff noticed he had something in common with them. They all had black skin.

Kenny Ruff had grown up only a few miles away from this very spot. Crestmont Homes was one of Newark's worst housing projects, a foreboding vertical tenement where men pissed, vomited, and shot heroin in the stairwells when they weren't drinking wine and shooting craps in front of the cemetery across the street. Failure was on constant display. Ruff was the third of five children abandoned by their

father when Kenny was six years old. His mother, Elizabeth Ruff, was an iron-willed woman who kept her brood on a tight leash. The Ruff kids were inside early every night and in church every Sunday. Kenny spent most of his free time playing baseball. As he got older, though, most of his friends quit playing ball and started hanging out with the drunks and junkies. Elizabeth Ruff saw the writing on the wall and, when Kenny reached 7th grade, she moved her family to East Orange, a few miles from Newark, but a world apart. Ruff finished high school and went to Bloomfield College, where he played baseball and graduated with a degree in criminal justice. His goal was to become a New Jersey State trooper.

At that moment, the State Police was trying to extricate itself from a federal court order in effect since 1975, a time when only 13 of the organization's 1,800 troopers were black. The court had ordered the department to dramatically increase its minority troopers. But, a decade later, that mandate still had not been satisfied and the Outfit was desperately trying to entice African-Americans to join up, advertising in newspapers, on billboards, bus benches, and recruiting at primarily black schools. In September 1986, Ruff entered the State Police Academy. Of the 150 candidates in his class, 21 were black or Hispanic, including Ruff, Darryl Beard and Greg Sanders.

Beard was a big, affable 19-year-old from Queens who'd never dreamed of being a cop. He went away to college in Pennsylvania with a fuzzy notion about getting a high tech education. Then one day a State Police recruiter showed up on campus and painted an intriguing picture of an organization with boundless opportunity for excitement, advancement, and a starting salary of \$25,000 for those with the steely resolve to become a trooper. On a lark, Beard took the exam and passed. He mulled it over for awhile and, to the surprise of his family, friends, and even himself, he quit college and signed on with the State Police.

Greg Sanders was a short, oval-faced, bespectacled man who looked and spoke like a chemist, which, in fact, he was for a New Jersey petroleum testing laboratory. The only problem was he hated chemistry. At age 22, Sanders knew he didn't want to spend the rest of his life stuck in a lab pouring gasoline from one test tube to another. He wanted to do something interesting with his life, something with

diverse possibilities. He saw a State Police ad touting opportunities for minorities and it stirred something inside him.

Sanders, Ruff, and Beard arrived at Sea Girt the same day, sixty-five years after Herbert Norman Schwarzkopf's first class of recruits. The State Police Academy was the most grueling police school in America; some said tougher than U.S. Marine Corps boot camp. Located on 165 acres near the Jersey Shore, Sea Girt was all about pushing recruits to their limits. The regimen no longer included Schwarzkopf's equine exercises or the Monkey Drills, but candidates had to complete long daily distance swims, do hundreds of push-ups, run three-and-a-half miles, and train in boxing, judo, firearms, high-speed driving, accident investigation, traffic law, constitutional law, juvenile justice, psychology, sociology, first aid, typing, English grammar, and take a weekly spelling test. Everything was spit and polish, with daily inspection at 6:30 a.m., meals eaten in silence, and lights out at 10 p.m.

Recruits were indoctrinated into State Police culture and taught to put great stock in the Blue and Gold. "*We are the best,*" was the message, and they were proud to be part of the best. Being a trooper meant being a member of an elite brotherhood, the New Jersey State Police "family." Only the strong survived. Fewer than ten percent of applicants were accepted and typically only half of a class's recruits graduated. Ruff, Beard and Sanders were young and in excellent physical condition and made it with little difficulty. Their futures seemed bright.

Only one dark cloud loomed on the horizon. The three men noticed an apparent disparity in the way minorities were treated. Blacks and Hispanics seemed to be criticized more than whites, were passed over for assignments like squad leader, and got more than their fair share of the worst chores, like guard duty, washing cars, pulling grass from sidewalk cracks, and fetching cartons of milk for instructors. But the recruits didn't dare complain. They knew if they grumbled, they'd be gone.

On January 15, 1987, after 100 days at the academy, the three friends stood with classmates in the vast War Memorial Auditorium in Trenton decked out in their blue and gold uniforms, visors pulled low over their eyes, heads tilted back, chins jutting out. They filed to the stage and saluted the Superintendent.

“Welcome to the family of the New Jersey State Police,” he said. “You are now a member of the most elite.”

Each received the prize they’d toiled for so long and arduously: a shiny, triangular, brass badge inscribed with the number that would remain theirs for perpetuity. Then, in unison, they filled the hall with a refrain they’d been chanting for 100 days: “We don’t know what you’ve been told! All we want is the Blue and Gold!”

The new troopers were assigned to barracks around the state. Ruff was sent to Netcong in rural northwestern New Jersey where he worked hard and accumulated a cluster of kudos. “*I could have frozen to death,*” wrote a doctor Ruff had rescued from his stalled car during a heavy snowstorm. A prosecutor praised his testimony in a trial to State Police supervisors. “*You have a right to be proud of this young trooper.*”

A year later, Ruff, Beard and Sanders were reunited at Flemington Station in central New Jersey, a country outpost where the main job was arresting drunk drivers and investigating collisions between cars and deer. By then each had learned a lot about being policemen. And, while they loved the job, they’d also detected some alarming omens. Sanders was told by a supervisor: “If you want to get involved in the criminal program, *think dark!*” Ruff found a cartoon in his mailbox depicting a white shoe salesman with his arm around a black man with the caption: “*You wanted to see something in a black loafer?*” Another was a questionnaire entitled “*Employment Application for Jesse Jackson’s Staff.*”

“Yo’ Momma’s Name:

Yo’ Fava’s Name (if known):

Marital Status: Common Law__ Shacked Up__ Other__

Sources of Income: Theft__ Relief__ Welfare__

Place of Birth: Charity Ward__ Cotton Patch__ Back Alley__ Zoo__

How Many Children By: 1st Wife__ 2nd Wife__ Neighbor’s Wife__ Shack-ups__

State Your Greatest Desire in Life (Other Than a White Woman):”

Ruff complained to his lieutenant about the literature and was stunned by his response.

“You guys are thin-skinned martyrs,” he said.

Being a new trooper, Ruff let it go. As was the case at the academy, he knew if he was branded as someone who cried “racism,” his career could be injured, perhaps irreparably.

Then, in May 1988, Ruff, Beard and Sanders received exciting news. They were being transferred to Newark. That meant the Turnpike—where the action was. The young troopers saw it as a gold mine of opportunity and that night they celebrated.

A few days later, they arrived for duty. The squad commander, Sgt. Walter Zukowsky, held roll call in the kitchen. As the squad took seats around a long table, Beard noticed something on the wall labeled the “*Ha-Ha Board*” pinned with jokes and cartoons. His eyes were drawn to a sketch of a black man tied to the roof of a car surrounded by several white men holding guns. The caption read: “*Hunting Season.*”

Zukowsky introduced the new troopers and talked about the dense traffic and high stress the yearlings would face on the Turnpike. Compared to Newark, he said, other stations were like country clubs.

To Kenny Ruff, this new sergeant seemed like a personable guy and he sensed he’d like Zukowsky. Then he made an odd remark.

“I don’t know how all this is going to turn out,” he said.

Ruff was confused by the comment.

“Excuse me, sir,” he said. “What do you mean by that?”

“What I mean,” Zukowsky said, “is I’ve never had this many blacks on my squad. I don’t know how to treat you guys.”

Ruff, Beard and Sanders looked at each other but didn’t pursue it. Afterwards they retreated into the locker room and talked amongst themselves.

“What’s up with this? Is he serious?”

“It sounds like Jim Crow back in the ‘40s.”

“Wow, this is scary stuff!”

Chapter 5

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF HERBERT Norman Schwarzkopf, no two men made a more profound impact on the New Jersey State Police than Clinton Pagano and Justin Dintino. Both joined the Outfit the same year—1952—yet the two were polar opposites.

Pagano was charming and polished; Dintino plainspoken and uncultivated. Pagano kept a sleek automatic strapped to his ankle; Dintino's beat-up revolver was usually stuffed in his briefcase. Pagano mingled with VIPs, while Dintino preferred grilling Mafia dons. As a former Marine, Pagano was a natural fit for the organization's military countenance; Dintino never served in the armed forces and was not enthralled by the marching, the saluting, the "*yes, sirs*" and "*no, sirs.*"

Yet, both men excelled as few others. Pagano began his career as a motorcycle trooper and climbed rapidly through the ranks, becoming a car theft investigator and detective. What separated Pagano from the rest, though, were his consummate political skills. He had a knack for getting close to the high and mighty, jockeying his way into jobs as a driver and aide to New Jersey's Attorney General. More significantly, he became the State Police representative to the office of Essex County's powerful prosecutor, Brendan Byrne.

Dintino, on the other hand, had no use for politics or politicians. The thing he cared most about and displayed a flair for from his earliest days as a trooper—when he arrested a Bible salesman who, in his spare time, robbed banks—was solving crimes. Dintino was a natural born sleuth.

In the 1960s, New Jersey was a snake pit of corruption. Graft was as common as spots on dice. Despite Schwarzkopf's early success against gamblers and bootleggers, Jersey had become a sanctuary to gangsters like Lucky Luciano and Carlo Gambino, who had scores of gluttonous mayors, judges and cops feeding like swine at their troughs. Even the State Police wasn't immune. In 1967, *Life* magazine published an exposé called "*The Brazen World of Organized Crime*," which quoted an FBI wiretap of a pow-wow between three crime bosses grumbling about a high-ranking State Police official they were paying to protect gambling operations. The greedy bastard wanted his \$7,000 a month kickback doubled.

Dintino was a young investigator when he got his first glimpse of State Police protection of racketeers. He'd been raiding race horse parlors and numbers operations in small towns between Atlantic City and Philadelphia. After a plentitude of arrests, a major from headquarters paid him a visit. The major hadn't made a gambling arrest in South Jersey for years, yet he chewed out Dintino in front of his entire squad for encroaching on his turf.

To some inside the State Police that became Dintino's badge of honor. Particularly David B. Kelly, the tough, crusty World War II hero—winner of two Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars, and a Purple Heart—who was appointed Superintendent in 1965. Kelly quickly took bold steps to disinfect the Outfit. Shortly after assuming control, he put together a secret Intelligence Unit composed of a small cadre of handpicked agents, Dintino among them. Existence of the team was kept hush-hush, lest Kelly's plan be crushed by the crooked politicians he hoped to put out of business. For months the new squad met in the basement of the Superintendent's home to surreptitiously plot their attack.

Dintino was assigned to chart the Philadelphia Mafia family of Angelo Bruno, who controlled vice in South Jersey. The young detective began stalking the crime boss night and day, doggedly following him around Philly, the Jersey Shore and points in-between, as Bruno collected booty from his bookmaking and numbers rackets. Before long, Dintino was the pre-eminent authority on Philadelphia's syndicate.

Kelly's cloak-and-dagger operation soon identified seven organized crime families with an army of 3,500 foot soldiers openly doing business

in New Jersey. They controlled gambling, loan sharking, labor unions, garbage and construction, and had a cavalcade of police and elected officials in their pockets.

When Kelly finally went public, the dossier his men put together was so stunning that unscrupulous officeholders were too busy scrambling for cover to try to quash the Superintendent's initiative. Kelly announced formation of an Organized Crime Task Force—the first of its kind in America. Staffed by 50 investigators, the elite squad signaled a sea change in New Jersey and the State Police. A throng of gangsters and parasitic politicians went to jail and the Outfit was transformed from a corrupt highway patrol into the most sophisticated state investigative agency in the country. By the early 1970s, Dintino was captain in charge of organized crime investigations and one of the most respected mob experts in the United States.

Pagano's career was also in steep ascent. He reached the rank of captain and was placed in charge of the State Police Narcotics Bureau. Pagano and Dintino were never close, though they sometimes crossed paths, mainly at black tie state functions. Pagano rubbing elbows with Jersey's power brokers, Dintino on duty making sure some mobster didn't walk in uninvited and get his picture taken shaking hands with an unsuspecting governor.

Then, in 1975, New Jersey's new governor Brendan Byrne anointed his old protégé, Clinton Louis Pagano, ninth Superintendent of the State Police. It was a stunning and disputatious pick. Only a captain and relatively low on the State Police food chain, Pagano had leapfrogged a long column of majors vying for the top spot, like a common bishop vaulting the College of Cardinals to become Pope. The promotion bothered and bewildered many in the Outfit, including Dintino.

Pagano seemed to be the antithesis of the great Schwarzkopf—bantam-sized, no college degree, and nearly twice the age the legendary founder had been when he assembled the State Police.

But Pagano was not to be underestimated. Physically disciplined, he didn't smoke, ran several miles a day, and, at 47, had the physique of a man half his age. Perpetually polite, always impeccably dressed, Pagano had piercing blue eyes, a magnetic personality, and before long revealed himself to be a capable, charismatic, stalwart leader. By the

late-1980s, he'd become the most powerful Superintendent in State Police annals, regarded with a mix of fear and respect as the "*J. Edgar Hoover of New Jersey.*"

Dintino knew Pagano was no slouch and considered him a good cop. But his failure to support the new Superintendent could have meant the end of his career as New Jersey's leading Mafia fighter. Ever the politician, though, Pagano had a genuine talent for turning adversaries into allies. Instead of demoting Dintino, he kept him at the helm of Intelligence.

Pagano was a man who saw the world in black and white, good and bad, right and wrong. If he had a sworn enemy it was crime and he attacked with missionary zeal. But, as Superintendent, his true genius was manipulating the system in favor of the State Police. He was particularly adroit at getting others to pay the Outfit's bills. Pagano turned troopers into high-priced rent-a-cops, collecting tens of millions of dollars annually from state agencies like the Turnpike Authority and Garden State Parkway Authority, charging \$100,000 per year for each trooper assigned to the roads. In 1977, when casinos came to Atlantic City, Pagano raked in the first big jackpot. Invoking the specter of the ultimate poltergeist—La Cosa Nostra—he insured every gambling house from Baltic Avenue to the Boardwalk would be staffed by a platoon of troopers—at a hefty fee. Rather than mob stoppers, though, troopers became glorified bouncers for the gaming industry, tossing more drunks and loud-mouthed losers out of casinos than gangsters. But the revenue kept State Police coffers flush with cash.

By the late 1980s, Pagano was overseeing a \$160 million empire and the most comprehensive law enforcement organization in America. Under his stewardship, the Outfit grew to 2,700 troopers who not only watched over highways and casinos, but guarded the Governor, Attorney General and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; patrolled waterways; regulated alcohol; protected nuclear plants; supervised emergency management; ran crime labs; trained police dogs; weighed trucks; maintained a fleet of helicopters and an army of scuba divers; and tested racehorse urine.

And as Pagano's domain grew, so did the aura surrounding him. He instilled fear in criminals and politicians alike, though in New Jersey it was often difficult telling the two apart. A legend persisted

that Pagano—like J. Edgar Hoover—kept secret files on prominent state figures, an intimidating prospect for lawmakers. How could they deny funding requests to a man who might have dossiers on their drug habits or sexual peccadilloes? There was no proof Pagano actually used embarrassing information, but the perception was real.

“They were all afraid,” a state official told *New Jersey Monthly Magazine*, “and he allowed them to be afraid.”

Most of all, Pagano was keeper of the flame ignited by Schwarzkopf. The State Police was Pagano’s family. His brothers Girbert and Lester were also troopers (Lester was killed in a car crash in the line of duty). And woe to the trooper who betrayed family. Pagano kept a quotation hanging on his office wall, the same quote the FBI’s Hoover had in his office.

“If you work for a man, in heaven’s name, work for him: speak well of him and the institution he represents. As long as you are part of the institution, do not condemn it. If you do, the first high wind that comes along will blow you away and you probably will never know why.”

Chapter 6

THE SAVORY AROMAS OF PIZZA, CHOP SUEY, AND fried chicken mingled in the hot night air of Queens, New York on July 12, 1987. The sidewalks along Farmer's Boulevard were bustling with pedestrians and fast food joints were doing brisk business when a white Cadillac screeched to a halt in front of Ho-Ho's Kitchen just as six people walked out carrying bags of hot Chinese food. Gunbarrels poked from the car windows, flames spat and two people collapsed.

Minutes later the same Caddy pulled up to a video arcade a few blocks away. Witnesses thought they heard firecrackers. Six people were hit this time. A man took off running but a gunman chased him down and he died, lying on dirty concrete in a pool of his own blood. Police blamed the drive-by shootings on rival crack gangs.

"Living in this neighborhood is like playing Russian roulette," a local resident told *The New York Times*.

New York had been enjoying a respite from the drugs and violence that had dominated the city during the 1970s when Leroy "Nicky" Barnes controlled narcotics. Barnes was a flamboyant, self-educated ex-junkie who—under the tutelage of Mafia boss "Crazy Joey" Gallo—became known as the "King of Harlem." He posed for the cover of *The New York Times Magazine*, which dubbed him "Mr. Untouchable." Barnes was the real life Superfly, a black Al Capone who owned so many fancy cars the FBI's round-the-clock surveillance team couldn't keep track of him. He created "The Council," a black La Cosa Nostra that controlled heroin in the northeast United States, and once threw

a gangster's ball at the Time-Life Building, the epicenter of midtown establishment. "Council" members wore black corsages. But Barnes couldn't stay Teflon forever and, in 1978, the Feds sent him away to prison for life.

With Barnes gone, Gotham's wave of drug violence ebbed and the homicide rate was actually shrinking for the first time in a decade. But that ended in 1984 when, almost in the blink of an eye, New York exploded into another era of lawlessness. The fuse was lit by a new high-octane concoction called *crack*. Demand for coke had been fading and prices were plummeting. Then some resourceful entrepreneur in the Caribbean whipped up the recipe for a cheap, new super-cocaine that produced an amazing high that one user likened to "having 100 orgasms at once."

Crack was first detected in the New York metropolitan area in December 1983. At the time, its primary consumers were white professionals and middle-class suburban kids from Long Island, New Jersey and affluent Westchester County. But at \$2.50 a vial, crack quickly made its way into poor neighborhoods. By early 1984, the drug hit Harlem and spread from there like shock waves from a nuclear blast. Police tracked its progress almost block by block as it swept from 125th Street near the Apollo Theater and Cotton Club south to Alphabet City on Manhattan's lower east side. And with crack came a new groundswell of carnage. After a five year decline in murder, blood began running in the streets again. This time there was no Nicky Barnes, no Mr. Big, no general. Instead, 18-year-old lieutenants commanded platoons of 13-year-old street soldiers who hawked drugs on corners like Coney Island carnival barkers. Neighborhoods became dusk-to-dawn drug bazaars.

"These junkies are like cockroaches," one neighbor complained. "They never stop."

Crack transformed urban America's cultural landscape. On schoolyard playgrounds, kids quit playing hopscotch and invented a new game—the winner the one who found more empty crack vials. Yet, the most devastating impact was on women.

Poor black and Hispanic men had long been vulnerable to the seductions of alcohol and heroin while women kept the fabric of inner-cities from ripping apart. But crack decimated the matriarchal order

and, almost overnight, the number of drug-addicted females in New York doubled. In 1986, the city experienced a 250% increase in babies born addicted to drugs. Thousands of mothers abandoned their newborns in hospitals. New York City's foster child population jumped from 16,000 in 1985 to nearly 50,000 by 1990.

The crack conflagration leapt from city to city. U.S. News & World Report compared it to a medieval plague. Newsweek called crack "*The Most Addictive Drug Known to Man.*" Time dubbed it "*Issue of the Year.*" The biggest jolt came June 17, 1986, when crack killed 22-year-old college basketball icon Len Bias.

Bias wasn't some depraved junkie; he was a charismatic, clean-cut young African-American man with everything to live for, a model for every black child in the nation. The tragedy ignited an anti-drug inferno that politicians stoked with a vengeance.

"Crack is killing a whole generation of children," President Ronald Reagan announced.

Congress didn't need a weatherman to know a storm was brewing. Democrats acted with dizzying speed to prove they were tougher on drugs than Republicans. A process that normally took months or years was accomplished in a few days.

"We held no hearings, consulted no judges or prosecutors. It was all driven by politics," Eric S. Sterling, then-counsel to the U.S. House Judiciary Committee, told PBS's *Frontline*.

At a breakneck pace, Congress made epic revisions in narcotics codes and, in the process, turned the Drug War into a Race War. Despite lofty pledges to target kingpins, the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 set out draconian penalties aimed squarely at small-time crack dealers and addicts—most of them black and Latino. Prison sentences for crack were 100 times harsher than for powdered cocaine, the upscale white man's drug. First offenders caught with five grams of coke received probation while five grams of crack earned a minimum five years in prison.

The bulls-eye had been painted on the backs of minorities. And the message was not lost on New Jersey's Governor Tom Kean.

"Illegal narcotics is the Number One enemy of the 1980s," Kean said. "I want zero tolerance for drugs in New Jersey. We insist—no more drugs."

New Jersey enacted a sweeping manifesto called SNAP—State Narcotics Action Plan—a declaration of war on everyone from pot heads to bigtime traffickers. SNAP called for development of “drug courier profiles” and an aggressive Highway Drug Interdiction Program designed to take advantage of New Jersey’s historic role as a corridor state.

The cocaine to make crack was coming from Colombia. Smugglers there paid \$1,500 a kilo and flew it to the Bahamas, loaded it onto high-speed boats for Florida, then drove it north to New York City, where the same kilo fetched \$15,000.

But, to reach the Big Apple, traffickers had to travel through New Jersey, which meant driving up the Jersey Turnpike where a gauntlet of State Police lay in wait under the command of their field general, Clinton Pagano.

“The plan for a drug-free New Jersey is achievable,” Pagano declared, “provided every trooper and every citizen lends a hand.”

Chapter 7

LATE ON A SUNDAY IN MARCH OF 1989, Valerie Taylor began the long drive from New York City to her home in Washington, D.C. Her three children were already asleep. Daughter Tekia, 13, was up front next to her mom while her younger brother and sister were dreaming in the back. They'd spent a pleasant weekend visiting Valerie's sister in the Big Apple.

Taylor was an attractive African-American in her 30s who'd grown up in New York and—except for the four hour drive—loved coming back to see her family. She crossed the Hudson River on the George Washington Bridge and drove onto Interstate 95, which she would follow all the way home. But just a couple of miles down the road, without warning, lights flashed in her rearview mirror.

Taylor glanced at her speedometer. She was driving only a few miles over the 55-mile per hour speed limit. But, as she eased onto the highway shoulder, her stomach tightened with anxiety at the realization she was back on the Jersey Turnpike. Seconds later a state trooper was at her window.

“Do you know you were speeding?” he said.

“No, I didn't,” Taylor said.

“Can I see your license and registration, please?”

Taylor fished the license from her pocketbook, then reached over and began rummaging through the glove box for the registration. A second trooper appeared at the passenger window and shined a flashlight into the car.

"I'm sorry, officer, I can't seem to find the registration," Taylor said. "This is my husband's car. He's got my car."

The trooper said, "Don't you know, Miss Taylor, it's illegal to operate a motor vehicle in the state of New Jersey without a registration?"

Taylor couldn't believe it was happening again. A few months earlier she and her husband, Malcolm, were driving home after a visit to New York. Malcolm and their youngest child were asleep when Valerie pulled into a Turnpike service plaza for gas and coffee. On her way back to the car, a state trooper had stopped her and started asking questions about where she'd been and where she was going. Taken aback by the impromptu inquisition, she'd answered him nonetheless. Then he asked her to open the trunk. Taylor was shocked.

"Why do you want to search my car?"

"Is there something in your car you're hiding?" he asked.

"No, I'm not hiding anything."

"Well, if there's nothing to hide, why don't you let me take a look?"

"I didn't do anything for you to have to search my vehicle."

After awhile, the trooper left without forcing the issue further, but it had been a chilling encounter and Taylor drove south determined to get out of New Jersey as quickly as possible. Malcolm had warned her about the Garden State. He drove the Turnpike frequently on business trips and had been stopped by troopers several times. He was never given a ticket, but was interrogated each time and his car had been searched twice. Malcolm shrugged off the incidents with a laugh.

"Basically, it was because I was black and it was Jersey," he said. But on this night Valerie was alone and the situation was anything but funny.

"Where are you coming from?" the large, broad-shouldered trooper asked.

"The city. We've been visiting my sister and doing some shopping."

"Where are you going?" he said, leaning into the car, a hand on his gun.

"Home," she said. "Washington, D.C."

The passenger door suddenly opened and the inside light went on, waking Tekia. The second trooper shined his flashlight around the interior of the car.

"I've got sleeping babies in here," Taylor said. "I don't appreciate you searching inside my car with my kids in here."

"Could you please step out of the car?" the trooper said.

It was a chilly night but Taylor reluctantly exited the vehicle. In the blinding glare of headlights racing by it was difficult to see the trooper's face. He ordered her to follow him to the rear of the car. Through the back window she could see the other trooper shining his flashlight into Tekia's face. Valerie was afraid.

"Please open the trunk, ma'am," the big trooper said, standing over her.

"Why?"

"I want to look inside."

"There's no reason to search my car."

"Are you refusing to let me search your car?" he said.

"I didn't do anything wrong. You have no reason to search me."

"Ms. Taylor, you are driving without a registration. If you don't open the trunk I will have your car impounded. I will have you arrested and your children will be left out on the side of the highway."

Taylor felt trapped. She knew that to resist would be trouble. Reluctantly, she opened the trunk and began pulling out everything, including her baby's wet diapers.

"These are dirty underwear!" she said, holding them up under the trooper's nose. "These are clean clothes. These are receipts from the shopping we've done."

"Is that all you have?" the trooper said. "Are you sure you were visiting your sister?"

"Well, I don't feel I have to answer these questions. I let you search the trunk. You harassed me and my children. Now you're going to tell me that I'm lying?"

Eventually, the troopers wrote Taylor a warning and let her go. As she drove south on the Turnpike, her blood began to boil. Taylor knew the State Police had been looking for drugs. And she had no problem with them trying to stop narcotics traffic. But she also believed she'd been stopped and searched for one reason—because she was black. *There has to be a better way*, she thought.

Chapter 8

“PULL THEM OUT OF THE CAR,” the white Trenton cop shouted to his partner.

Paul McLemore, a black man, was sitting behind the wheel. Another black man was next to him and a third was passed out drunk in the back seat.

“Don’t do that,” McLemore said, reaching for his gun as the policemen opened the door.

McLemore’s mind was racing and he quickly formulated a mad plan. If these cops tried to force him and his passengers out of the car, he would kill them. He’d fire two bullets into the pig standing next to him, then two more into the cop on the passenger side. When they were dead, he would drive down East State Street, turn left on Broad Street, make a right at Perry Street, and go straight to *The Times of Trenton* and spill his guts:

“Hey, man, you got two cops lying out on the street. I just blew them away because they was trying to play cowboys and nigger with me and I beat them to the draw.”

In November 1969, McLemore was a Molotov cocktail about to erupt in a blaze of glory. A tall, rock-hard man with an Afro hairdo, a mustache and a 9-millimeter automatic pistol in a shoulder holster under his black leather jacket, that evening he’d strutted into the Tuxedo Club, a watering hole for bourgeois black men in Trenton. Two celebrities were at the Tuxedo, militants from Oakland, California, the Mecca of black radicalism—Elijah Turner, of the Black

Panther Party, and Paul Cobb, from C.O.R.E., the Congress for Racial Equality. Turner and Cobb were the real deal. They were out on the west coast with Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver, challenging the police, opening schools, and spreading the word that blacks didn't have to take the white man's shit anymore. The head of the local NAACP introduced McLemore to the Californians.

"This is the most militant nigger in town," he said. "And he's a state trooper!"

Paul McLemore was not only a New Jersey State Policeman. He was the first black trooper in State Police history. A former Marine from Buffalo, McLemore moved to New Jersey after being discharged and took a job at a plastics factory in Paterson with a white Marine buddy named Johnny Smars. Then, one day Smars announced he'd had enough of factory work.

"I'm going to join the state troopers."

"Who the hell are the state troopers?" McLemore asked.

"They're the guys that ride around with the boots and britches. I'm gonna take the exam. Why don't you come, too?"

"I'm not going to be no cop, man."

"Oh, these guys aren't just cops. They're special. It'll be like the Corps again."

The next day McLemore drove with Smars to Parsippany, took the exam and passed with flying colors. He was sworn in October 2, 1961—almost 40 years to the day after Herbert Norman Schwarzkopf founded the organization. But the lily-white State Police did not greet its first Negro with open arms.

New troopers were generally assigned to stations near their homes. McLemore was detailed to State Police headquarters 78 miles from Paterson. The quasi-military State Police lived in barracks, usually bunking two or three to a room. But McLemore slept alone.

Over time, he got a bird's eye look at how troopers treated other blacks. He was assigned to New Jersey's farm belt where thousands of migrant workers flocked every spring from the Deep South to pick potatoes, peaches and all manner of produce. They lived in labor camps far off the beaten path where troopers were the only law and migrants believed they were all-powerful. State cops often drove chronic trouble-makers across the state line and told them they'd been deported and

not to return to Jersey. McLemore once accompanied a white trooper to a call on a farm worker who'd beaten his wife.

"What the hell did you do, Henry?" the other trooper said.

"I'm sorry, boss."

"You ain't supposed to be doing that."

"Yes, sir, I know. It ain't gonna happen again."

"You're damned right it ain't gonna happen again," the trooper said. "I'm splitting you and her up. I hereby declare you divorced. Get out of here and don't come back."

It was common for McLemore to hear Rev. Martin Luther King referred to by fellow troopers as "Martin Luther Coon." McLemore was never called "nigger" to his face, but troopers routinely applied the term to civilians. "Those niggers are crazy," he'd hear, "present company excepted." As white troopers got to know him, they'd say: "Paul, you're a credit to your race," as if it were a compliment.

Despite it all, McLemore loved being a trooper and figured putting up with the bigotry was the price he had to pay to do something he cherished. Then, at two o'clock on the morning of July 12, 1967, his telephone rang with the call that would change his life forever.

"Get your riot gear and report to Hightstown. They're going crazy up in Newark."

Newark was burning. A local cop had shot a black cab driver and touched off a major riot. The State Police rode into town like a cavalry to the rescue and black residents cheered. Finally, order would be restored. But, instead, the rioting grew worse. Troopers began raiding and destroying black-owned businesses. The economic devastation was overwhelming, something Newark would never get over.

At one point, McLemore was part of a cordon of police lined up in the street with M-1 rifles as hundreds of bystanders screamed curses at them. Suddenly a little black kid broke through the police line and ran up to McLemore, the only black man in uniform.

"You silly motherfucker," the boy said. "Do you realize how stupid you look?"

McLemore looked down at the boy, stunned. He didn't know what to say. A Newark cop saw the boy taunting him.

"You little black bastard! How'd you get in here?" he said.

“Fuck you, pig!” the kid said.

The cop put his shotgun under the boy’s chin and led him off as he yelled back at McLemore. “You’re still a silly looking motherfucker! You pig! You ain’t even got the balls to shoot!”

It was a defining moment in McLemore’s life. He realized this child had had more guts than he ever did. This mere boy was willing to die defying his white oppressors while he, a big strong man, stood by in his uniform with his guns and bandoliers crisscrossing his chest, as twenty-six people died—most of them black, most of them killed by police. McLemore felt ashamed and haunted by Newark and that kid. He began reading about black oppression. Everything from Frederick Douglas to Malcolm X to Stokely Carmichael to Eldridge Cleaver’s *Soul On Ice*. And the more he read, the more hostile he became.

After the riots, McLemore was transferred to State Police Community Services. His assignment was to gather intelligence on black radicals. But he refused. Instead he wrote detailed reports explaining the roots of racial discontent. He grew a mustache and an Afro and eventually came to the conclusion that the only way blacks were going to overcome the tyranny of their white nemeses was by force. That was his state of mind when he walked into the Tuxedo Club and met the celebrity radicals.

“The most militant nigger in town—and he’s a state trooper!”

The radicals from Oakland couldn’t believe McLemore was a cop. But as the night went on and the rhetoric escalated they found their beliefs were almost identical. McLemore was enamored with the men. They were on the front lines in the fight against the white man. They closed the Tuxedo that night and McLemore offered to drive them to their hotel in his unmarked State Police car. On their way, they were stopped by the two Trenton cops. Paul Cobb was sitting in the front passenger seat; Elijah Turner was unconscious in back. McLemore showed the cops his State Police ID.

“You’re a trooper?” one of the cops said.

“That’s what it says,” McLemore said.

“Don’t get wise with me.”

“Look, leave me alone. By the way, why did you stop me?”

“You cut me off.”

“You are a liar,” McLemore said.

“Who are you calling a liar?”

“You.”

One word led to another and then the cops said they wanted to check out his car.

“Why?” McLemore said.

“We want to know who these people are in your car.”

“It’s none of your business, officer. This is a State Police vehicle.”

“Well, we want to know who these people are. Get out of the car.”

As the cop opened the passenger door McLemore grabbed his pistol, thinking: *Lord, I don’t want to go out like this but if they touch anybody I’m going to blow them away.*

“Don’t do that,” he said.

Everything stopped. No one knew what to do next.

“Maybe we ought to call a street sergeant,” one cop said finally.

“That’s a good idea,” McLemore quickly agreed.

The incident effectively ended McLemore’s career. He was already viewed with growing alarm inside the State Police. When superiors discovered he’d gotten into a confrontation with police while chauffeuring a couple of black militants in his troop car, he was court-martialed and sent to State Police Siberia, working the graveyard shift in the teletype room at headquarters.

McLemore decided to get out. While he worked all night, he started going to school during the day, earning his bachelor’s degree, then a law degree at the University of Pennsylvania. It took him seven years to break free but, on October 2, 1976, McLemore retired from the New Jersey State Police, exactly 15 years after becoming the first black trooper.

He would not be the last.