

# FHP Flight Section



Back row (LtoR): Sergeant. V. A. Cormier, Sergeant. D. G. McDermid, Trooper L. B. Elliot, Trooper J. B. Dobson, Trooper J. C. Baxter, Trooper M. J. Cook, Corporal N. H. Rich, Trooper B. A. Adriance, Sergeant W. F. Flagg, Sergeant F. D. Pedrick and Trooper M. R. Hobbs.  
Front Row: Colonel J. E. Beach, Lt. Colonel R. C. Collar

In 1959, Colonel H. N. Kirkman authorized by the State Cabinet, purchased a Cessna 310, a six passenger twin engine aircraft. This aircraft was used for transportation of command personnel of general headquarters staff.

In 1962, being aware of an increasing enforcement problem in the state due to the completion of the turnpike and numerous expressways throughout the state, and unable to hire sufficient troopers, the Department under the direction of Colonel Kirkman, began studying the feasibility of using light aircraft to close the gap between the thinly scattered troopers in the state.

With its speed and wide coverage, the aircraft could greatly assist our efforts in reducing a growing traffic problem.

A study was then made of many state that were using aircraft for enforcement. Oklahoma was selected and two pilots with Lt. Colonel Simmons were sent to Oklahoma to learn first-hand. In 1962, with the use of a single engine aircraft borrowed from the conservation department, the FHP began to test the feasibility of using aircraft for speed enforcement.

On May 2, 1962 these tests were made near Tallahassee on S. R. 20 at speeds from 55 to 100 mph. Two radar machines, and an electric timer along with calibrated speedometers in patrol

cars were used. A stopwatch in the aircraft was operated by the pilot. These tests and many hours of flying and experimenting were done by our pilots before any actual stops were made for speed violations.

As a result of these tests the FHP initiated the use of aircraft for traffic law enforcement with two Piper aircraft. The efficiency of the two traffic aircraft was above expectation, and a third and then a fourth aircraft was added to the fleet.

The Department operated the four aircraft until 1974 when a fifth aircraft was added. These five aircraft covered the state daily working traffic.

On September 5, 1980, with the assistance of the Governor's Highway Safety Commission, Federal funds were obtained and the Department took delivery of five additional aircraft. These five aircraft enlarged the fleet to eleven. With eleven traffic aircraft the patrol was able to assign one traffic aircraft to each troop throughout the state.

The eleven traffic aircraft statewide averaged about 5,000 flight hours each year with approximately 33,000 arrests for traffic violations.



Trooper Hagerty



Trooper Cook



Trooper Pruitt



Corporal Tomlinson

The Flight Section of the FHP since its origin has lost three members, Trooper J. E. Hagerty, who was killed March 18, 1970 in the line of duty when a U. S. Navy Jet Fighter collided with him in mid-air, cutting his aircraft in half, and on July 13, 1981, Trooper M. J. Cook and Trooper R. L. Pruitt, along with observer, Corporal C. L. Tomlinson, were killed in the crash of the FHP Aircraft while searching for a wanted person in St. Johns County.

In 1981, Sergeant W. F. Flagg was the Chief Pilot with Sergeant D. G. McDermid, assistant. Flying under their command are Sergeant V. A. Cormier, Sergeant F. D. Pedrick, Corporal N. H. Rich, Trooper L. B. Elliott, Trooper J. C. Baxter, Trooper B. A. Adriance, Trooper M. R. Hobbs and Trooper J. B. Dobson.