



ABFDE News

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THE GAVEL

KIRSTEN SINGER

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Greetings, Diplomates, and welcome to the beginning of 2012! A new year tends to bring with it the hope for positive change and a fresh start. The Board's four new Directors are catching on fast, and we look forward to their contributions. Here is the status of the Board's major initiatives:

Reaccreditation — ABFDE submitted its application for reaccreditation to FSAB in March 2011. The FSAB Application Review Committee (ARC) provided its first review results on November 29, 2011, which require ABFDE to provide additional information in response to the review. The Board plans to submit all final responses to the ARC by January 20, 2012.

ACT Project— Director Grant Sperry has collected current and updated written test questions and is in the process of assigning them to their pertinent categories according to the Test Content Blueprint established by ACT. Expect to hear sometime this year that ABFDE is seeking Diplomates to participate in pilot testing of the updated problems. If you have any questions regarding this project, please contact me, Grant, Marie Durina or Rosalind Spencer.

ABFDE Newsletter Editor — The Board has a new Newsletter Editor — Diane K. Tolliver! She will be replacing Vice President and current newsletter editor, Lisa Hanson. We are grateful and excited to have Diane as the Editor. If you have articles you'd like to submit to the ABFDE Newsletter for future publications, please contact Diane at TolliverD@aol.com. Future newsletter deadlines are May 15th and September 15th.

ABFDE Workshop — The Board will again host the workshop, *Certification 101 – Demystifying ABFDE Board Certification*, in conjunction with the August 2012 ASQDE meeting in Charleston, SC. Additional details can be found later in this newsletter.

**“If it is a Miracle,
any sort of
evidence will
answer, but if it
is a Fact, proof is
necessary”**

— Mark Twain

(continued on next page)

A TRAINEE'S PERSPECTIVE

BY AIMEE PAINE



Approximately 12,000 inmates are incarcerated each year in Pennsylvania's State Prison system. Of those inmates, the Department of Correction's testing determines 50% read at less than a 6th grade level (*Educating Inmates in the PA DOC* By Susan McNaughton; 2011 No. 8).

Although I was new to the Questioned Document Section in 2008, I was not new to the thought processes and communication standards of Pennsylvania State Correctional Inmates. Let me explain.

I did time. Prior to becoming a Questioned Document Examiner with the Pennsylvania State Police, I was a State Prison Corrections Counselor and County Probation/Parole Field Officer for a combined total of 9 years. When I first set out to become a questioned document examiner, I had no idea that my prior training and experiences would tie in so well with the QD section.

One day during my training, I was asked by a fellow examiner to look at a homicide case he had been assigned. It involved questioned letters written by inmates. When I looked at the questioned letters, it reminded me of the letters (a.k.a. kites) I saw inside the prison and in the homes of people I once supervised on probation or parole. I informed my colleague that perhaps if we took the words on the questioned documents and re-arranged them into a different composition the investigator could use the composition to dictate request writing. Hopefully it would not be as apparent to the suspect writers that there were certain letter combinations and words we wanted to see replicated for comparison purposes.

This was a new and innovative idea. Take a questioned document's content and "re-cast" it. I like to use the word re-cast because I simply take the words and phrases and arrange them into a new composition. The re-cast can be in the form of either a letter or lyrics, depending on the amount and content of the original questioned document's content.

To expound further, in this particular case, my re-cast became rap song lyrics using a combination of several questioned handwritten letters authored by inmates. The song title became Brandon Lee in order to obtain handwriting exemplars with the name Brandon. Some of the original questioned handwritten letter content was as follows: "Get Brandon arrested", "I'm a real a** ni**a", "so he can get life for shooting", "I don't know if my kites aren't gettin to you", "say that Mr. and Brandon shot at each other," "that way we just fight", "we beat the homicide".

The new "re-cast" text becomes a rap song, entitled Brandon Lee (2010) written by Trooper AJ Paine: "Look me up on the blocks, fu***** ni**as in here, think they all that, shooting off their mouths, while holding the gat. I'm sick of it all, dumb a** sh**, take this plea, take that plea, like Brandon Lee. That sh** was the dumbest. Sending 3 or 4 kites a day, put money on my books, everyone say, have a ni**a look out for you, but damn I'm not done fightin today."

Although the standard "London Letter" may be used to obtain request standards from writers involved in a QD investigation, today's generations typically do not communicate using London Letter verbiage. The London Letter does serve a purpose but it does not always allow for the different letter combinations and words needed in some QD examinations.

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"It is my belief that everything is symbiotic, what is thought or experienced can affect countless others.."

(The Gavel continued from page 1)

Recertification Reminder — Rick Horton, the Recertification Chair, would like to remind Diplomates that Recertification letters (where appropriate) should be received in January or early February. If you are recertifying and did not receive a letter, contact your manager for assistance. Rick will be reminding the managers to check their flock to make sure nobody gets missed. The Recertification Managers are as follows:

A-F Jim Josey	M-R Rick Horton
G-L Marie Durina	S-Z Bill Riordan

ABFDE Annual Meeting — the annual meeting of the Board is scheduled for the weekend of May 4 –6, 2012 in Phoenix, AZ. One of our topics of discussion will be whether to allow Australian FDEs to apply for ABFDE certification. If you have any thoughts or questions regarding this proposal, or any other information or topics you would like discussed at the annual meeting, please contact any of the Directors on the Board and we will include your suggestion either on the agenda, or during the meeting.

Continuing Education (by Chair Frank Hicks) — As we begin a new year, we can look forward to many workshops being scheduled at various regional and national meetings. The coordinators for these workshops are encouraged to apply for ABFDE recertification points for those Diplomates in attendance. These applications need to be submitted well in advance of the meeting in order for the applications to be reviewed by the Continuing Ed Committee. The necessary form is available on the ABFDE.org web site. Go to the Downloads link. Under the heading Forms and Applications, you will find the Workshop Application Form. Send this completed form to afhqde@yahoo.com.



(A Trainee's Perspective continued from page 2)

Once the re-cast version of the questioned document is created, it is sent to the investigator involved with the case and the request standards are produced. The original questioned document(s), re-cast exemplars and any other pertinent evidence is submitted back to our laboratory and examined by a different QD examiner.

In the short time I have been a questioned document examiner with the Pennsylvania State Police Crime Lab, I have been able to re-cast words in two separate homicide cases. Each case resulted in a positive identification being made by a different Questioned Document Examiner in our section. In both cases the QD examiner was subpoenaed to testify in trial court.

It is my belief that everything is symbiotic, what is thought or experienced can affect countless others. The objective of my expertise is to uphold the truth of that belief while continuing to provide quality forensic service to the citizens of the Commonwealth. I also hope I have inspired the creative side of the questioned document community in approaching future QD examinations.

— Trooper AJ Paine is a forensic document examiner trainee with the Questioned Document Section Pennsylvania State Police . She has a BS in Applied Behavioral Science (1998 Pennsylvania State University- Harrisburg Campus) and a MS in Administration of Justice (2004 Shippensburg University).



Continuing Education

February 2012

20-25 **AAFS 64th Annual Meeting**
Atlanta Marriott Marquis
265 Peachtree Center Avenue
Atlanta, Georgia
Contact: Carl McClary
(404) 417-2706
carl.mcclary@atf.gov

April 2012

12-14 **SAFDE Annual Meeting**
Duluth, GA
Program Chair: Kate Savoie
Workshop Chair: Steve Drexler
www.safde.org

April 2012

13-15 **SWAFDE Annual Meeting**
Monterey Marriott
Monterey, CA
Contact: Sean Espley or Joe Merydith
(916) 227-3623
www.swafde.org

May 2012

8-11 **CSFS Annual Meeting**
Simon Fraser University
Vancouver, BC
"Forensics: Public, Private or
Partnership?"
www.csfs2012.irmacs.sfu.ca

May 2012

14-18 **MAAFS Annual Meeting**
Turf Valley Resort
Ellicott City, Maryland
www.maafs.org

July 2012

22-28 **IAI Annual Educational
Conference**
Phoenix Convention Ctr
Phoenix, AZ
www.theiai.org/conference

August 2012

18-23 **ASQDE Annual Meeting**
Doubletree Guest Suites
Charleston, SC
Program Chair: Tobin Tanaka
Site Chair: Jason Lee Miller
www.asqde.org



MAAFS Workshop

Paper Fundamentals for Forensic Document Examiners

Presenter: Elaine Wooten, ICE Laboratory

Date: May 14, 2012

The purpose of this workshop is to cover the fundamentals of paper examination, with a specific emphasis on the impact of those technological changes. History and basic exam techniques will be presented, then industry reps will discuss advances in paper manufacturing as well as security features incorporated into paper. The workshop will conclude with "I had a case" scenarios.

For more information, visit www.maafs.org

ABFDE Workshop at ASQDE AGM

Certification 101 – Demystifying ABFDE Board Certification

Instructor: Lisa Hanson, D-ABFDE and various other ABFDE Diplomates
August 18, 2012; Charleston, SC; 8am – 5pm; Cost: \$175 (Lunch included)

(Please note, this workshop is not only for examiners who are interested in Board Certification; it is also an instructional workshop on how to work multifaceted, complex questioned document cases.)

Prior to coming to the workshop, all participants must engage in pre-attendance examinations of practice Practical Tests. The morning session will cover the ABFDE Certification Process, from the Application through Oral Boards. Benefits of being Board Certified will be discussed, as well as the atmosphere that has developed in the courts concerning QD in this post-NAS Report world. The practical problems will be the basis for the second half of the day. Attendees will be divided into smaller groups to exchange observations regarding each of the problems.

For more information, visit www.abfde.org

Registration will open in March. Applications will be available on www.abfde.org.

Canadian Society of Forensic Science Workshop

Questioned Documents: Conclusion Scales and Logical Inference – Part 1

Instructors: Brent Ostrum and Tobin Tanaka Date: May 9, 2012

Location: Simon Fraser University Burnaby, BC, Canada

For more information, visit www.csfs.ca

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Deadline for the next
issue:

May 15, 2012

www.abfde.org

2011-2012 Board Officers

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VICE PRESIDENT.....Lisa M. Hanson
SECRETARY.....Kathleen Annunziata Nicolaides
TREASURER.....Jim Green

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CREDENTIALS.....Kathleen Annunziata Nicolaides
HISTORIAN.....Kathleen Annunziata Nicolaides
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NOMINATIONS.....A. Frank Hicks
PUBLIC RELATIONS..... Marie Durina
RECERTIFICATION.....Rick Horton
RULES & PROCEDURES.....A. Frank Hicks
TEST PREP & VALIDATION.....Rosalind Spencer
TESTING.....Lisa M. Hanson
WEBMASTER.....William Leaver
WORKSHOP COORDINATOR.....L. Jim Josey



ABFDE Testing Schedule

The written and oral boards will be offered at the following national and regional forensic document conferences:

February 2012

AAFS, Atlanta, GA

August 2012

ASQDE, Charleston, SC

September 2012

MAFS, Milwaukee, WI

Testing may also be available at other regional conferences during the year. If interested, contact Testing Chair Lisa Hanson at Lisa.Hanson@state.mn.us.

