

Let's Talk A New Feature by Gideon Epstein

I suppose the first thing to do would be to properly introduce this change to what was previously called the "Personal Notes" column. Susan asked someone to take it over, and I was willing to do that but wanted it to be more than a place where you list your changes of address, phone number or e-mail name. I believe that every professional publication should have a place where we can just "talk things out."

Those of you who came out of the Army Crime Laboratory System and are old enough to remember may recall that in the late '70s I had a column in the Military Police Journal called "You the Investigator." It was sort of a personal column where the special agents could show off their favorite unit pictures or discuss something of mutual concern to everyone. Our profession certainly has a number of subjects that deserve to be discussed.

I have always believed that one of the reasons we can't agree on some very basic issues that are important to the profession is that we tend to view them only in our own light. I hope this column will allow us to talk about the things that concern us and to try to understand the impact various issues have on different types of document examiners in different types of laboratories and circumstances. Unlike the old days, we now have e-mail, where we can communicate our ideas and thoughts so much more quickly. There are some who think that many of you will not have very much to say. I am hoping that there will be enough of you who feel strongly enough about certain subjects to want to discuss them. Time will tell if I am right. So with this, the first "Lets Talk" column, I welcome you to

contact
me, by
whatever
form, and
let me know
what concerns
you and "LET'S
TALK."



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**From the
Editor**

Susan Morton
San Francisco, CA



GUILTY OF INNOCENCE

There has been a great deal of news recently about Barry Scheck's Innocence Project. We have all read about death row inmates being cleared of heinous crimes at the last minute, usually based on DNA analysis. Many states are passing legislation to enable reviews of convictions based on scientific evidence. No one wants to see people wrongly convicted, and we all rejoice when the truly innocent are vindicated and set free. But the number of these cases in recent months raises a disturbing question: How did all these wrongful convictions come about?

The media would have us believe that all these miscarriages of justice are due to the poor quality of early DNA techniques. The DQ α test used in the 1980s is not very specific. It cannot isolate genetic material to a particular person; thus innocent suspects were not excluded, and some were convicted. It is all the fault of bad science.

Swine Sweepings (politically correctese for hogwash). When DQ α arrived on the scene, it was so much more specific than the traditional serology that had been used before that it did usher in a new era in the usefulness of biological evidence. I was tempted to dub my work QD α in hopes that some of its respectability would rub off. However, *its limitations were well known*. Extensive frequency studies were done before DNA testimony was allowed in court. The scientists who testified in these cases clearly stated exactly what the evidence did and did not show. If the evidence was oversold, it was not by the scientists.

Does this problem extend to other areas? We are learning about DNA cases because a new, much more specific technique has become available that has shown wrongful convictions. No such new techniques have been developed in ballistic comparisons or fingerprints. Are there problems with those cases, too?

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Recertification Jan Seaman Kelly
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June 20th

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Ron Dick: *A Giant Has Passed*

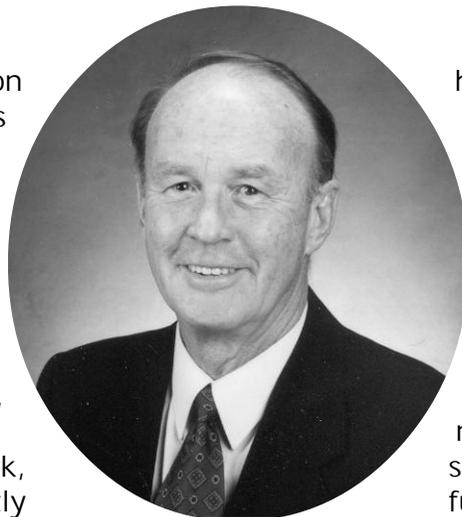
by Linda Hart

Ronald Melvin Dick was born on March 17, 1930 in the village of Moores Mills in the province of New Brunswick, Canada—just down the road from Canoose, as he liked to say. Ron received his elementary education (grades 1 through 8) in a one-room schoolhouse in Moores Mills. He attended and graduated high school in the town of St. Stephen, about seven miles away.

A close boyhood friend, David Clark, recalled “We played together frequently and visited each other’s homes on weekends. Little devils that we were, we would sometimes sneak off into the woods with a sheet or two of newspaper and some matches. There, well secluded, we would roll dead ferns or pine needles into makeshift cigarettes and smoke them. What a feeling of freedom! What a bonding ceremony. We had one problem; when we puffed on these things, they would flame up and singe our eyebrows. I’ve forgotten what explanation we gave to our mothers when asked the cause. Following graduation, we went our separate ways, he to a brief stint in the Canadian Navy, then on to join the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and I to college.”

Ron became a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at the age of 19 and performed general police duties with them from 1949 through 1959. During his time with the RCMP, he married and began a family. He ultimately found himself outnumbered—the lone male in house with a wife, Annabel, and five lovely daughters, Debbie, Doris, Joanne, Nisha and Cindy.

Ron began his training as a document examiner in 1959 with the Florida Sheriffs Bureau in Tallahassee, Florida. He spent three years training under the supervision of Harry M. Ashton, formerly an examiner for the U.S. Postal Service. This was true distance training, with Ron working and studying in Tallahassee most of the time while Harry Ashton maintained his offices in St. Petersburg. Ron would put many miles on his car in those days, traveling back and forth between St. Petersburg and Tallahassee. He recalled that training in “those days” was more formal than training today. However, it appears that some of the formality



Ronald Melvin Dick
1930 - 2001

he referred to was in how he addressed his mentor. Ron said that he never once called him by his first name.

His training with Mr. Ashton was exceptionally thorough. He was required to write extensively on each aspect of handwriting/signature comparisons in addition to the other examinations he would one day perform. He was not permitted to begin a new area of study until he had demonstrated through his writings that he had full comprehension of the prior area. Many of these mini-books on subjects such as variation in handwriting, class characteristics of handwriting, and disguise were left to me when Ron went into semi-retirement.

1965 marked Ron’s first total venture into the world of private practice. Ron had the distinction of quitting his government job for private practice rather than “retiring” into it. This was the special bond he shared with Jan Beck. By the late 1960s Jan and Ron were the only private practice examiners who had given up the steady paycheck for the uncertainties of private practice without a retirement check to back them up. This started a long and enduring friendship.

Ron often told stories about his time in private practice. One of his favorites involved his need to work in a “real” office.

He awoke on the first day of this new life at 7:00 am, showered, shaved, put on his coat and tie and went into his office space (*a converted bedroom*) and began typing envelopes announcing the availability of his services while waiting for the phone to ring. On Tuesday, he awoke at 8:30 am, showered, shaved, put on clean pants and shirt and continued to type envelopes and await that first call. By Friday, he roused himself sometime after 10:00 am, pulled on his bathrobe and dragged himself into his office. When the phone finally did ring late that afternoon, he almost missed the call because he was outside mowing the lawn rather than face the prospect of typing one more envelope.

There was a point to that story, as there was with most of his stories. He found that he needed an office

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The Gavel

A Message from Our President

A. Frank Hicks
Jackson, MS



“These people are totally unwilling to compromise or entertain the idea that there may be a way of doing things other than the (one) they support.”

It was my privilege to represent the ABFDE at two meetings in Seattle in February. The first was the meeting of the Forensic Specialities Accreditation Board that met on February 17 and 18. Because of the many responsibilities that some of the people in attendance have with other groups, there was a fluctuating number of people present depending on the day and the time of day, but it was usually around 12 to 15 representatives. These people represented many certifying bodies, including ABC, IAI, ABFO, AFDE, ABFDE, two toxicologist certifying bodies and an engineering group. I found it interesting that QD was not the only profession that had two certifying bodies present.

Committee reports were one of the first items of business. The Finance Committee reported on the Board's expected income from dues and compared this to the expected expenses. Needless to say, the outgoing money far outweighs the expected income. The AAFS has provided some services, particularly office expenses, at no cost to the Board. There has also been some NIJ money from which the Board has been drawing some funding. Both of these sources will soon be expiring.

There was an extended discussion about what we could do to raise more funds so that we could operate independently on the financial front. It is estimated that FSAB needs to bring in about \$12,000 per year to handle expenses. One thing that will be explored is the possibility of another NIJ grant. The other point of discussion

was to change the fee schedule. One proposal is to charge each organization a flat fee (\$250) and \$4 for each certificant beyond 50. This funding, based on rough estimates of the number of total certificants of all the organizations present, would generate slightly over the needed amount. This fee schedule would place a rather heavy burden on IAI, which has six certifying bodies and roughly 1,500 certificants. Their share of the total funding of FSAB would be over 50%. I proposed that we consider changing the flat fee to \$300 per year with a \$3 charge for each certificant beyond the first 50, which would bring in almost exactly the projected amount needed. This would save the IAI roughly \$900 per year. It would also save us a little money. As a point of reference, the National Committee of Certifying Agencies (NCCA) charges its members \$3,000 per year. In the end, it was decided to finalize this later and just try to be fiscally responsible with what we have at the time.

Officers in FSAB serve only one year, so new officers were elected at this meeting. The president is Dr. Graham Jones, vice president is Yale Caplan (ABFT), secretary is Susan Johns, treasurer is Rick Tontarski (ABC) and the director-at-large is Joe Polski (IAI).

There was then an extended discussion about "grandfathering." There were strong opinions that the FSAB should not condone the certification of people whose competency had not been tested. During this discussion, a

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ABFDE Welcomes New Diplomates

Charles L. Eggleston



Charles Eggleston is a senior forensic document examiner with the Forensic Science Lab of the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration in Silver Spring, MD, and formerly with the Forensic Science Lab of the chief inspector for the IRS in Washington, DC.

Charles began training in document examination in 1981. He trained for three years under the supervision of senior document examiners and ink chemists at the ATF Forensic Science Lab in Rockville, Maryland, pursuant to an IRS-ATF interagency agreement.

He holds a Master of Forensic Sciences degree with a concentration in questioned documents from Antioch University and a Bachelor of Police Science degree from New Mexico State University. He is a member of the QD Section of the AAFS.

Charles entered federal service in 1971 as a criminal investigator for the Internal Security Division of the IRS. For two years, he was a senior instructor/course developer in criminalistics in the Criminal Investigator School at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia. 

Wesley P. Grose



Wes Grose has been a full-time forensic document examiner with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department since 1994. He also maintains a small private practice.

He began his studies in document examination in 1983, while obtaining a Master of Forensic Sciences degree at George Washington University in Washington, DC. He was encouraged to pursue the QD field by Clarence Bohn, a retired FBI examiner who was the instructor of his document examination class. Subsequently, he was selected for an internship with the

U.S. Secret Service in the QD Section of their Forensic Services Division, where he studied with Rich Dusak, Gregg Floyd, Tom McAlexander, Ron Morris and others.

In the summer of 1984, following completion of the internship and graduation, he took a position with the Auditor-Controller's Office, where he continued his studies with the senior examiner, Barbara Torres. In 1986 he transferred to the District Attorney's Office, where he studied under the review of Georgia Hanna.

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John J. (Jim) Ross, Jr.



Jim Ross is a forensic document examiner at the U.S. Immigration & Naturalization Service Forensic Document Laboratory (INS/FDL), where he completed his training and has worked since 1995. He received a graduate degree in forensic science from The George Washington University and a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from York College of Pennsylvania. His primary duties involve the examination of domestic and international travel/identification

documents to determine authenticity and reveal alterations. Jim has testified as an expert witness in the field of questioned document examination in U.S. district court and has given several presentations on the detection of counterfeit and altered travel documents. He is a member of the ASQDE and AAFS.

When not at work, Jim enjoys spending time with his wife, Tracey, and their two labrador retrievers. 

Secretary's Report

Jan Seaman Kelly
Las Vegas, NV



“...if you have agreed to be a reference, please complete the form and return it.”

The Reference Form

The year 2000 brought forth many document examiners desiring ABFDE certification. The administration office in Houston receives the certification application from the examiner. Peggie mails the reference form to the three individuals listed as references and then forwards a copy of the application with cover sheet to me, as I am the chair of the Credentials Committee. Once I receive the college transcripts and the three listed references, copies are made and mailed to the two Credentials Committee members for their review. After review, the committee members will vote on whether to pass the candidate to the Testing Committee or decline the application.

Delays in forwarding the applicant's file to the Credentials Committee members occur because the college transcript has not been received or the Diplomat listed as a reference has failed to mail the completed reference form. This article will address the Diplomat's responsibility of being a reference for someone who is applying for certification.

The reference is basically a statement that the Diplomat has firsthand knowledge of the applicant completing the required training; currently engaged in 100% document work; and is a person of good character, integrity, and high ethical and professional standing. Based upon this knowledge, the Diplomat is asked if he or she would recommend the applicant without qualification for certification by the Board. Diplomates who have not personally worked with the applicant

are asked to list the names of those who have worked with the applicant in the field of document examination. In a nutshell, the Diplomat's responsibility is to have knowledge that the applicant completed training, is a full-time document examiner and is a person of integrity and good character. Based upon this criteria, can the Diplomat provide a good reference of recommendation to the Board?

Currently, there are a few applicants whose files cannot be forwarded to the members of the Credentials Committee because the Diplomates who agreed to be listed as a reference have failed to complete the form and mail it to the Board office. If you agree to be the applicant's reference, please complete the form as soon as you receive it and return it to the Houston office. If you feel you cannot provide a good reference for the applicant, or you have changed your mind and do not wish to be a reference, notify the applicant.

We all agree that the process of certification can be stressful, and the applicant is anxious to get the process underway once the application has been submitted. Therefore, as a courtesy to the applicant, if you have agreed to be a reference, please complete the form and return it.



ABFDE Workshop



June 8 and 9, 2001



Milwaukee, WI
Wyndham Center Hotel



Room: \$72 single/double
\$82 triple/quad
Registration: \$300



"Typography" by Bill Flynn

"Conventional & Digital Photo"
by Jan Masson and Brian Carney

"ABFDE Testing Expectations"
by Jan Kelly and Paige Doherty



Call Howard Birnbaum at
602-223-2740, or e-mail
him at buckbirn@aol.com
to reserve a spot.

SPACE IS LIMITED!!

Workshop for Document Examiners

Printing Process Identification and Image Analysis for Forensic Document Examiners

On June 5 through 8, 2001, Rochester Institute of Technology will offer a new workshop for document examiners.

"Whether you're new to the field or are a seasoned document examiner, the need to keep up with the rapid development of printing technology is crucial. In this new four-day seminar, you'll gain a better understanding of the differences between authentic documents that were printed traditionally and forgeries that were printed on the latest non-impact digital devices.

"We've assembled an impressive group of experts who have worked with federal, state and local forensic laboratories, as well as private practitioners. They'll update your current skills and increase your awareness of how state-of-the-art ink-jet, electrostatic, dye diffusion, laser, xerographic

and thermal transfer technologies differ from traditional graphic arts processes.

"Plus, they'll give you a comprehensive view of substrates and security inks and demonstrate image analysis tools such as optical inspection devices, image plotters and Adobe Photoshop.

"Justice systems worldwide depend on your expertise to expose fraudulent currency, stamps, passports and other documents. By attending this program, you'll not only enhance your career, you'll also be helping to better protect the interests of organizations and individuals who rely on the accuracy of your determinations.

"We've included a special link to our web site for a full description of this seminar just for forensic professionals. Please visit our web site, www.rit.edu/CIMS/CET/forensic.html; call Dave Tontarski at RIT, 800-724-2536, ext. 2759; or e-mail dct1020@rit.edu for further assistance."

Recertification Report

Jan Seaman Kelly, Chairman
Las Vegas, NV

“Even though the form states the signature must be notarized, it is not required.”

Notarized Signature Not Required

For those recertifying in 2001, the old recertification form was mailed in January and will be used instead of its replacement, the ARDE. If you are scheduled to recertify this year and did not receive the multipage form, please notify Peggie or your Diplomat Manager.

On the old form, the Diplomat need only answer questions 1 through 6. Since annual updates have all ready been submitted, the Diplomat will answer question number 6 with "See NOPA." The NOPA will reflect the recertification points tallied during the recertification period through the last

August 15. If additional points were earned from the last August 15 to the Diplomat's recertification anniversary date, the Diplomat may submit the documentation.

The Diplomat signs his/her name on the back page of this form. Even though the form states the signature must be notarized, it is not required. Two years ago the Board of Directors waived the requirement of the notarized signature and the listing of the social security number. Once the form has been signed, make a copy for your file and mail the original to your Diplomat Manager. If recertification is achieved, either through point accumulation or testing, the Diplomat receives a new Diplomat card and a letter extending certification for the next five years.

The members of the Recertification Committee are available to assist you in successful completion of your recertification. Please don't hesitate to contact your Diplomat Manager with questions or concerns you may have regarding recertification.

Let's Talk

(continued from page 1)

Jim Blanco has moved his office, and his new address is 901 Sunrise Avenue, Suite A-11, Roseville, CA 95661 (what a relaxing address: "Sunrise Ave. in Roseville, CA). Tel: (916) 780-6558; Fax: 780-9006. His E-mail address has not changed. Good luck to Jim in his new digs.

It is important to know that our friend Farrell Shiver has taken over as editor of the ASQDE Journal. A tough job. He will need all our support in the way of papers, so if the urge to publish is overpowering, keep Farrell in mind.

Keep this column in mind if you have any personal notes that you want to pass on to the membership, and it doesn't have to be confined to just QD matters. If you are new parents or did something really unusual on your last vacation that you want to share, this is the place to do it.

A note from the Ed.: I have just heard that Gary Herbertson has relocated from Colorado to Berkeley, CA. Gary must be the only retired FBI agent residing within the city limits of Berkeley. Gary's particulars are: 2203 McKinley Avenue, Berkeley 94703; (510) 845-4482; herbertson@att.net.

ABFDE News

Annual subscription rates:
 ___ Agencies: \$65; ___ Former Diplomates: \$35

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Richard A. Dusak, Treasurer
 U.S. Secret Service
 950 H Street, N.W., Suite 4000
 Washington, D.C. 20001-4518

Ron Dick

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outside of his home to provide him with the discipline and structure he required to “*feel*” like a professional. The second point was that the phone usually rings on the day you are ready to call it quits—and that case is always a winner.

He remained in private practice until 1969, when he accepted a position with the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington, DC. Jan Beck would “give him *hell* for abandoning ship” for a steady paycheck. However, Jan understood that feeding, clothing and educating five daughters weighed heavily on Ron’s mind.

At the CIA, he met and worked with Thomas McAlexander and Dr. David Crown. Ron told many stories of car-pooling into work with Dave each day. Unfortunately, I cannot relate any of them here, as they were provided on a *need-to-know* basis only. Tom McAlexander describes the period like this:

“Sometime around 1969, while working for The Agency That No One Can Mention, the chief who shall remain nameless but whose name rhymes with Proctor Rave Clown, was recruiting, and the word around the office was that he was about to bring Ron on board. Of course, he wouldn’t say so, because it was Top Top Secret, and we were only cleared for Top Secret. So one day I asked him if it was someone of the caliber of Ron Dick. After a moment of shock, he admitted that yes, it was someone of that caliber. A few weeks later, Ron came on board, and he became my mentor and great friend. A few years later, he and I both worked for the Secret Service until his return to his beloved Florida.”

Dr. David Crown, who recruited Ron so many years ago, described him as “a restless guy. He worked best, I think, when he was on his own, running his own business. He was a damned good examiner and I was lucky to have his assistance for a few years.” He added, “Ron did some research on dichroic filters which was a great assist to the questioned document field.” Jan Beck also recalled this as probably being Ron’s greatest contribution to our field.

Following two years with the CIA, Edwin Alford recruited Ron to work in the newly formed Secret Service laboratory. Mr. Alford sought him out because of his reputation as a professional. He said that soon after starting up the laboratory, he realized that someone of Ron’s caliber was needed. “Ron had a major impact on the Secret Service laboratory and was a strong influence on our laboratory and our personnel. He could relate to the young people, and he set a good standard for them.”

Ron transferred to the U.S. Secret Service in 1971 and worked there until 1977. He worked there initially with Mr. Alford, Lyle Fowler and John Hargett. John Hargett recalled that Mike Bertocci and Tom McAlexander later joined the four of them. John described Ron as “a low-key personality who took the work seriously. But he always had time for a laugh and enjoyed mixing fun with work obligations.” John added that Ron’s greatest contribution to the field was his “dedication without taking himself too seriously.”

Tom McAlexander said, “During the Secret Service years, I found myself going to Ron often when there was a problem with an examination. He always had the confidence to state his opinion, regardless of the difficulty of the problem. It was after he had left and I had no one else to go to that I realized that he had imparted some of that confidence to me.”

These are sentiments expressed by many others who knew and worked with Ron through the years. Christine Cusack remarked, “He was a generous man, willing to help those who followed him.” Janis Winchester said, “His cunning wit and willingness to look at the lighter side of life contributed to his winning personality. Ron was a great teacher and helped advance the field of forensic document examination. He was vigilant for the truth in forensic cases, both during the examination and during the court process.”

Tom McAlexander described Ron as “somewhat like Will Rogers—Ron almost never met a man he didn’t like. He was not a ‘party animal’ but was often the life of the party. He was friendly, outgoing and upbeat, and he always encouraged young examiners.”

Ron returned to his document “roots” in 1978 when he again accepted a position with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (formerly the Florida Sheriffs Bureau) as a document examiner in their Sanford laboratory. He worked with John McCarthy, who had moved from New York to Tallahassee to fill the opening created by Ron’s departure years earlier. John reports that “Ron was the only examiner covered by migrant labor laws.” He also recalled a time when the ASQDE had regular column in the newsletter entitled “Ron Dick’s New Address.”

It was during these later years in Florida that he became acquainted with Teresa Stubbs in the Tampa FDLE laboratory. He told me that he met her first when she was a clerk in the lab, and later he helped and advised her when he could as she undertook her training as a document examiner. Teresa said, “Ron was initially my mentor in the QD field, but we quickly became friends. What was not to like about him? He

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Continuing Education

David S. Moore
Fair Oaks, CA



April 2001

- 24-27 **Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Scientists and Southeastern Association of Forensic Scientists Joint Meeting**
(Includes one-day "Paper Knowledge Workshop" chaired by Ted M. Burkes)
Williamsburg, VA
Contact: Rick Fortune
Virginia Division of Forensic Science
(804) 786-9637
rfortune@dfs.state.va.us

June 2001

- 5-8 **Rochester Institute of Technology "Printing Process Identification and Image Analysis for Forensic Document Examiners"**
Rochester, NY
Contact: RIT, Corporate Education and Training
67 Lomb Memorial Drive
Rochester, NY 14623-5603
(800) 724-2536, x815
Fax: (716) 475-7000
dct1020@rit.edu

(See page 7 for description) June 2001

This list of opportunities available to Diplomates seeking recertification credits may not be all-inclusive. Provide details of upcoming meetings or workshops you want included in this newsletter to

David S. Moore
Moore Document Laboratory
9010 Barrhill Way
Fair Oaks, California 95628
(916) 980-3205 / Fax: (916) 989-9674
E-Mail: dmoore@mooredocs.com

June 2001(continued)

- 8-9 **ABFDE Workshop**
(Includes three workshop: "Typography" chaired by Bill Flynn; "Conventional & Digital Photo" chaired by Jan Masson and Brian Carney; "ABFDE Testing Expectations" chaired by Jan Kelly and Paige Doherty)
Rochester, NY
Contact: Howard Birnbaum
(602) 223-2740
buckbirn@aolcom
(See page 7 for more details)

August 2001

- 19-22 **American Society of Questioned Document Examiners (ASQDE) Annual Meeting**
Des Moines, IA
Contact: Jerry Brown
Iowa DCI Criminalistics Laboratory
Wallace State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319-0042
(515) 281-3666 / Fax: (515) 242-6297
brown@dps.state.ia.us

September 2001

- 7-9 **Southwestern Association of Forensic Document Examiners (SWAFDE) 20th Anniversary Meeting**
(Includes two one-day workshops, "Forensic Examinations of Typographic Documents" chaired by William Flynn, and "Detection of Counterfeit Documents" chaired by Richard Outland)
Tempe, AZ
Contact: Kathy Nicolaidis
3030 North Central Avenue, Suite 501
Phoenix, AZ 85012-2713
(602) 241-1890 / Fax: (602) 241-1932

Ron Dick

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was funny, a great storyteller with the memory of an elephant. When it came to QD work, he was the best there was. He was a true professional, with impeccable credentials and strong ethics."

In 1984, Ron left the government sector for good and again established a private practice. I will admit my part in pushing him in that direction. I first came to know Ron outside a courtroom where we were testifying for the opposing parties on the same case. I met him previously at a professional meeting, but this was the first time we actually sat and talked. We observed all of the rules and did not speak of the case we were there on, and he suggested we have lunch after our testimony was finished. We did just that and found to our surprise that we had agreed down the line on every document and signature. Neither of us understood why we both were called in that case. What we did come to understand was a common philosophy when it came to the examination of documents. As lunch was ending, I told Ron that someday we would work together.

Ron had managed to develop a good practice in Tampa. Nevertheless, by late 1984, I had convinced him to set up a second office with me in Miami. He generally worked half the week in Tampa and the remainder in Miami. My husband and I have never owned a house together that Ron did not have a key to, with a room clearly designated as "Ron's Room." He put many miles on his lease car—which he ended up buying, as he could not afford to turn it in with 170,000 miles at the end of three years.

Ron finally gave up his Tampa practice and moved full time to Miami. We worked together for more than 15 years. He taught me much during those years. I learned to write the type of report expected of a private practice examiner. And I taught him to abandon his trusty typewriter in favor of a computer.

Ron was always active in our field. He served the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners as a director, chairman of the Membership Committee, secretary and president. He was a Fellow and past chairman of the Questioned Document Section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. He was a Diplomat of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners and served as a director for several years. He was also a charter member of the Southeastern Association of Forensic Document Examiners.

Ron was always known as a gifted teacher. He was responsible for supervising training of new examiners

for the U.S. Secret Service during the time he was employed there. He also served as a guest instructor at the Questioned Document Schools sponsored by the Secret Service in Washington and at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center at Glynco, Georgia. He conducted training seminars for Georgetown University in Washington, DC; Valencia Community College in Orlando, Florida; Alabama Training Institute; and the Utah Police Officers Standard and Training.

In 1964, Ron presented the paper, "Qualified Opinions in Handwriting Examinations," at the annual conference of the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners in Denver. In this paper he explained his philosophy of opinion testimony, the validity and the need to recognize qualified opinions. Jan Beck recalled that this and similar papers on the use of qualified opinions tended to "stir the debate" during meetings in the '60s. Ron often smiled in amazement that this debate continued to this day.

Perhaps the greatest contribution to our field came from the work he did with Tom McAlexander and Jan Beck. They worked together to give us the opinion terminology that we argue over today.

Ron was diagnosed with lung cancer during his term as President of ASQDE. He survived the loss of one lung and completed his term in office. At the end of that term, he officially retired, yet he never lost his love for his profession. He built himself a small cabin on the Canoose River near his boyhood home. He would summer there and return to South Florida when the snow fell. When here, he continued to meander down to Miami to work on cases, but now he insisted that he not be paid. He worked cases at the end of his life because he loved the work and for no other reason. He often told me that he would have paid to do this work, and I understand that sentiment.

Ron suffered a small stroke this last year and could no longer drive. He also found reading difficult at times. Although he no longer trusted himself to work on cases, he continued to discuss them and his philosophy of document examination. He never tired of the "*I had a case.*"

Ron passed from life in his sleep on February 23, 2001. The last person he spoke with was his old boyhood friend, Dave Clark. They had reminisced on their early years together, and their bond had truly passed the test of time.

Teresa Stubbs recently shared these thoughts with me: "What I loved most about Ron was his passion for life and people. He once told me of a poem that he loved that basically said that the saddest thing after one's

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Report: AAFS Meeting

by Susan Morton

The American Academy of Forensic Sciences held its meeting in Seattle from Feb. 19 through 23. Happily, this was the week *after* the blizzard and *before* the earthquake.

Wes Grose assembled a fine QD program. I particularly enjoyed a presentation by Jim Green on security features on documents. I happened to look down at my hands during his talk and had one of those flashes of happy insight. I realized that those brown patches are not age spots—I have planchettes!

The new officers for the QD Section for this coming year are Art Anthony, chairman, and Bill Bodziac, secretary. Gerry Richards continues to represent us on the Board of Directors.

In more general news about the Academy, there are four items of interest. Firstly, the membership has agreed with a proposal by the Long-Term Planning Committee to reorganize the office to include a new position. This new person will be charged with obtaining grants and keeping our interests known in Washington. We anticipate that this position will pay for itself, so there will not be any need to raise dues to cover it.

Secondly, accreditation of certification boards proceeds apace. The ABFDE is preparing to apply and will probably be first to achieve accreditation. Interestingly, another questioned document group is also planning to apply—the Association of Forensic Document Examiners.

Thirdly, the Academy has formed a consortium with the IAI and several other forensic groups to pool resources and hire a lobbyist in Washington. We were successful in getting some legislation passed last year, but it still needs to be funded. Fortunately, Senator Sessions has taken up our cause and promises to fight for the funding.

Lastly, the Academy has agreed to assist the American Association for the Advancement of Science in its CASE Program. The CASE Program is to provide experts in abstruse scientific areas to guide judges in their new gatekeeping roles under the Federal Rules of Evidence. Many of these scientists will come from academia, but forensic experts will certainly be needed. They don't anticipate that these advisers will testify as much as offer guidance. This is a real crowd-pleaser amongst federal judges. Interestingly, the only voice of dissent on the Academy's Board of Directors was that of Jim Starrs. He opined that this invades the prerogative of the advocate (presumably to obfuscate the facts) and strikes at the very core of our blah, blah, blah.....While he was orating, I had an inspiration for a new endowment fund—we need to provide a sum of money so that every year after Starrs dies, we can dig him up to verify who is in his grave. I circulated the idea later, and it was very popular.

The meeting next year will be at the Marriott Marquis in Atlanta. Hope to see you there.



Ron Dick

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death is to be judged to have never lived. That judgment could never be made about Ron, for he lived his life fully, on his own terms with passion and humility, a principled man with the patience of a saint. I know this because I have tested it on occasion. He was a treasure. I miss him dearly, for we shall never see his like again."

Ron's family and friends, many from our field among them, met in Tallahassee to mourn his passing, but we found ourselves celebrating his life instead. Ronald Dick was a great man and we will sorely miss him.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Edwin Alford, Jan Beck, David Clark, Dr. David Crown, Christine Cusack, John Hargett, Thomas McAlexander, John McCarthy, Teresa Stubbs and Janis Winchester for sharing their thoughts, advice, time and memories with me.



President

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number of organizations mentioned that they had grandfathered some of their certificants, but we seemed to have the largest percentage of grandfathers. As you know, our Diplomates are roughly 50% grandfathers, and these people were not tested.

Of interest, the last three certifying bodies in IAI did not start with any grandfathering. They had a small group of people put together the first tests and agree not to take these tests themselves. When a number of people had been tested and certified, these new Diplomates made up new tests, and the original test creators took those new tests. This sounds like a good approach.

For their other three certifying bodies, they have already instituted policies requiring all untested grandfathers to undergo testing prior to being recertified. The FSAB voted that any certifying body already in existence as of February 17, 2001 which applies for accreditation must not have more than 50% of its certificants be untested grandfathers. Further, there must be a program in effect to conduct competency testing on all those untested grandfathers so that all of these people will have been competency tested within five years after the date the body is accredited. In addition, competency must be tested as a part of every certificant's recertification process. Both of these policies will impact hard on ABFDE. We have no program in place to do either of these things. Both of these things have been discussed by the ABFDE Board in the past, and we rejected instituting them, primarily for logistical reasons. We no longer have a choice if we want to pursue FSAB accreditation.

On this point, let me say that I believe it is in the best interests of ABFDE and all of our Diplomates for us to continue to pursue accreditation through the FSAB. This recognition will lend further credibility to our certification program, which will impact on every Diplomat. Once FSAB accreditation has begun, it will become an issue in the courts, and I want all our Diplomates to be able to say that not only are they certified but their certification program is accredited.

The vehicle for competency testing the grandfathered Diplomates and making this a part of the recertification requirements for all of us will be a topic of discussion and a vote at the upcoming Board of Directors meeting. I will be happy to entertain any suggestions any of you may have about

how to carry out this requirement. Please call me at 601-987-1623 or e-mail me at fhicks@mcl.state.ms.us with your comments and suggestions. I hope no one will consider this competency testing requirement to be a slight at anyone, especially those who were "grandfathered." I have the utmost respect for all of our Diplomates, especially those who were involved in the founding of our certifying body. These people have been, and continue to be, leaders in our profession and have been the professional compass pointing us all in the right direction.

Another topic discussed was whether the FSAB should define the knowledge base a particular discipline should test for. I don't think this is going to fly, if for no other reason than that it would be a tremendous amount of work and may not be within the purview of this organization.

The majority of the remaining meeting time was spent reviewing the Policies and Procedures Manual. I don't think anything that was done here has any specific impact on us; it was just a matter of specifying how FSAB would function, like our Green Book.

At the ABFDE Board of Directors meeting in Houston, we will select a Director to represent the ABFDE at FSAB meetings for the next three years. Brian Carney has ably represented us in this position for several years, and we all thank him for his work in this capacity.

The meeting of the E30.02 Subcommittee of ASTM Committee E30 was convened at 2:30 pm on Sunday, February 18. There was a huge crowd for this meeting, as it had been publicized that a vote would be taken on whether or not to approve the Standard Guideline for Handwriting Comparisons as proposed by SWGDOC. By my count, there were 35 live bodies present and 20 proxy votes. There were about a dozen SWGDOC representatives present. Needless to say, a lot of people recognized the importance of this meeting. Peter Tytell, chair of this subcommittee, said this was by far the largest turnout ever. Unfortunately, whoever had scheduled this meeting for three hours had no concept of what lay ahead. No one who was aware of the many weeks that SWGDOC has spent discussing this guideline would have thought that we could handle this vote in only three hours. I also heard that this guideline had received the most negative comments during the ASTM review process of any ASTM guideline ever. That may have been slight hyperbole, but you get the idea. There is

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President

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still a lot of dissension about this guideline in our community, and it doesn't all center around the 9-level scale, although that does seem to be the lightning rod. To make matters even more dismal, there were other topics on the agenda for discussion. All of the other topics were important; but, in my opinion, they were not the main reason for having the meeting.

If you aren't familiar with the ASTM process, a proposed guideline is announced to the ASTM members, who are given the chance to comment on the guideline. If anyone votes negative on any aspect of the guideline, that negative must be resolved or withdrawn before the guideline can be sent up to the main committee, where it is opened for further discussion. Every single negative must be resolved before the guideline can be moved forward. A guideline that has passed the subcommittee level may be struck down at the main committee level or sent back to the subcommittee for revision. This process takes a great deal of time to complete, particularly since the subcommittee usually meets only once a year for three hours. Peter said that he might try to get a midyear meeting scheduled in conjunction with the ASQDE meeting. If this happens, we need to make every effort to have as many Diplomates there as possible in order to try to get this process moving forward.

We finally got to the handwriting guide and initially took care of a couple of minor concerns that people had expressed. When we actually got to the 9-level scale for expressing opinions, there was some discussion about what some of the negative comments were. Unfortunately, we were literally out of time. The main E-30 Committee was scheduled to meet at 6:00 pm, and Peter and some others in the E-30.02 Subcommittee had to attend that other meeting. It was agreed that we would go right up until 6:00 before adjourning. There was a proposal to reconvene on Monday morning, since a room was available for the entire day. However, most of those in attendance on Sunday said they couldn't be there on Monday. Also, someone raised the point that since the meeting had been announced for Sunday from 2:30 until 5:30, it was not allowed to extend the formal meeting into another day. Before we left on Sunday, a motion was made to find one of the negatives concerning the 9-level opinion scale nonpersuasive, thus allow-

ing the guideline to proceed to the next level. This motion was very narrowly defeated. Thus, the guideline has to be sent back to the task group to address this issue. The task group is SWGDOC. It seemed obvious that a number of people who were there had shown up specifically to vote against allowing the guideline to proceed with the 9-level opinion scale in it. That is certainly allowed, and the people with the most votes get to control the process, which is fine; but it was disappointing to see this struck down in this manner. It was very sad, also, that so little of the business that needed to be addressed had actually been addressed. Even if the negative about the 9-level opinion scale had been overcome, there were a number of other negatives that had to be resolved before the guideline could be sent to the E-30 Committee, and we never got close to discussing most of them.

I must say that I was extremely disappointed with how little was accomplished at this ASTM meeting. SWGDOC has worked hard for several years to prepare this handwriting guideline. It is obvious that there is a group, or maybe several groups, who are going to do everything in their power to block the approval of this guideline if the 9-level opinion scale is a part of it. This is in spite of the fact that this opinion scale is already a published ASTM guideline, has been peer reviewed and, based on my survey of Diplomates, seems to be used by the overwhelming majority of the community. These people are totally unwilling to compromise or entertain the idea that there may be a way of doing things other than the way that they support. Rather than offering alternatives that can be discussed, they just exert their influence to block any progress. It's the typical "my-way-or-the-highway" approach. Apparently, these people have a different concept of "consensus" than I do. I think it is unlikely that any of the guidelines proposed by SWGDOC are going to be exactly what every single FDE wants, but we have to take some action to move things forward, and then we will all have to adapt some of the aspects of our work to the guidelines. Or, since the guidelines are strictly voluntary, an examiner can simply decide not to adhere to a guideline and explain their reasons if asked.

I'm not exactly sure how SWGDOC is going to approach the handwriting guideline now. It is certainly possible for them to look elsewhere to get the guideline published, and I imagine this will be discussed. The ASTM process is somewhat time

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