



ABFDE News

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THE GAVEL

KIRSTEN SINGER, PRESIDENT



Hello, Diplomates! It seems I was just writing The Gavel in May, and now the summer is already past. I am, however, pleased to be writing this message as it is chock-full of good news. First and foremost, the ABFDE has certified the first forensic document examiner from Australia! Congratulations to Melanie Holt for becoming our first Aussie Diplomat. We look forward to future Aussies joining the Diplomat ranks. We have also added two more home-grown Diplomates; you may read all of their bios in this newsletter.



Other good news also arrived this month: Congratulations to Linton Mohammed and Rigo Vargas on their selection by NIST for the Organization Scientific Area Committee (OSAC) for Physics/Pattern. Judging by the flurry of emails following the announcement, it is clear that our community is confident in their ability to represent FDEs, and also pleased with some of the other people selected for this OSAC.

I am also aware of two potential Daubert hearings that were averted in the past few months. In one, Carl McClary was the examiner, and I participated as the Subject Matter Expert. The two of us assisted the AUSA in preparations, and submitted Government's Response documents from the same circuit, as well as PowerPoint presentations describing our testimony. The defense ultimately withdrew their motion to exclude the FDE. In a second potential Daubert hearing, I submitted a detailed Rule 16, relevant Government's Response document, and PowerPoint presentation. I do not have direct knowledge that the documentation convinced the defense to withdraw their motion, but I will continue to emphasize the importance of preparation and an early, thorough response.



THE GAVEL

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In the last newsletter, I reported that a complaint had been filed against a Diplomat by a non-Diplomat/non-FDE. The Professional Review Committee reviewed the materials, and concluded that there was no basis for an ethical or competency violation. Many thanks to the three Directors who agreed to serve on the PRC and independently and objectively reached the same decision.

Finally, and sadly, we must say farewell to three of our colleagues — Marvin Rennert, Kevin McDowell, and Dave Purtell. They have left significant professional legacies, but more importantly, their biographies make clear that they were loved, respected, and will be greatly missed.



James Greene: Treasurer's Note

I am grateful all membership dues have been received for the year. There were some delays in Diplomates receiving their dues notice and packets because email addresses were changed without notification sent to the corporate office or a Board member.

There were also checks mailed, but not received at the Houston office. What their final destination was, we may never know. I appreciate the patience of those who had to replace their checks.

RECERTIFICATION POINTS UPDATE

By Rick Horton,

Recertification Points Chair

Hello Fellow Diplomates,

Good news regarding your Recertification Points- you now have two new areas in which points may be earned!

The first new area is for **Participation in QD Related Research**. If you participate in a research project (such as Tom Vastrick's funded project from last year or the current Linda Mitchell/Dr. Merlino project) you may apply for 1 point if your participation consists of up to 5 hours or 2 points if your participation consists of more than 5 hours. Typical participation involves QD related tests or problem solving. Diplomates may receive up to 10 points during a 5-year recertification period.

The second new area is for **Alternative QD Related Training** such as webinars or other venues not attended at a QD meeting, workshop or classroom setting. Typically, this would involve internet-based training (such as the recent NIST webinar) or other relevant online classes, but other requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. You may apply for .5 points per hour for this type of training (2 points per half-day). There is no limit on points.

As always, it is your responsibility to justify the points. Participation in research can easily be verified if the researcher provides the ABFDE with a list of the participants' names; likewise for large webinars or online training. However if you attend a smaller webinar or alternative training class remember this- when you submit your points in July it may be difficult for your Manager to verify it. Print out an overview of the event with date, time attended, and some type of verification of attendance (your name). If you have any questions, at any time during the year, do not hesitate to contact your Recertification Manager.

And just in case you have not been in contact with your Recertification Manager recently, here is a list of the current managers:

Jim Josey (A-F) jjoseyjr@hotmail.com

Sean Espley (G-L) seanep@hotmail.com

Rick Horton (M-R) Richard.Horton@dfs.virginia.gov

Bill Riordan (S-Z) William.Riordan@ci.irs.gov



So, good luck and happy point gathering!

New Diplomat Melanie Holt - Our First From Australia

This electronic interview with Melanie Holt was conducted by the Editor, Diane Tolliver.

Congratulations, Melanie, on your recent achievement of fulfilling all the requirements to become an ABFDE Diplomat in Honolulu, Hawaii. How did you get into Document Examination?

Well it's a bit of a long story... When I first left school, many years ago, I completed a Bachelor of Commerce Degree at University. I did this partly because I was interested, but mainly because my parents felt it was important. At the time, a commerce degree seemed as good as any other "practical" degree. I graduated and then worked in our family business for a while. While this experience was enjoyable, I had other dreams. After working there for a number of years, I decided the time was right and took a year off to travel and pursue creative interests.

Once I returned, I decided it was time to get a "real" job and to start ticking off all the things I thought important in life. Forensic Science was always an interest. I was an avid Patricia Cornwell reader as a teenager. I just didn't know it was an option when I finished school. I looked around for courses and settled on the

"I was invited to an Australian Academy of Forensic Science meeting one evening and heard Paul Westwood speak....I then focused all my studies in that direction."

Applied Science Degree (Forensic Investigation) at the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT). They had a GREAT crime scene house and promised a very practical, hands-on degree. To get into this Degree I needed to have completed chemistry at High School, something I purposefully avoided in my senior high school year. I enrolled in a course at a technical college and for some crazy reason, for which I am not entirely sure, decided to do advanced algebra as well. I passed both courses (surprisingly) and was accepted into the Degree.

As I progressed through the course I started to eliminate different fields of Forensics for my future career. I realised pretty quickly that blood and guts were not for me. This became quite apparent when I fainted at the sight of the dead rat they wanted us to dissect in our biology course. So that ruled out Crime Scene. In fact biology just made me feel queasy in general. Hence, DNA wasn't an option either. As the Applied Science Degree at Canberra Institute of Technology wasn't a focused chemistry degree, I was unlikely to get a position as a drug or other chemical analyst. Fearing I'd made a very bad life decision, I started looking for other options within the forensic fields. I was invited to an Australian Academy of Forensic Science meeting one evening and heard Paul Westwood speak. He spoke about forensic document examination and the types of examinations they did. It was really interesting and something I could see myself doing. I approached Paul and his company, Forensic Document Services, Pty Ltd, about doing some work over my vacation and loved every minute of it. Now knowing what I wanted to do, I then focused all my studies in that direction. I knew it



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Melanie Holt, New Diplomat

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would be a bit of gamble to focus solely on document examination, but it was a calculated risk that eventually paid off.

What was your education and training?

I completed the Bachelor of Applied Science (Forensic Investigation) at CIT. During the breaks I did a bit of casual work with FDS. Paul, Michelle and the team were very encouraging and supportive. I got a real taste for what the job entailed and loved it!

I have been with the NSW Police for just over four years. Our training consists of both on the job training through supervised casework and completing a Diploma in Forensic Document Examination through CIT. This is structured course work covering all aspects of document examination. In 2013 I completed my Honours Degree by completing a thesis titled "Sequencing ESDA examinations with the recovery of trace DNA on questioned documents".

What's your career profile been so far?



As was my luck, I graduated in the midst of the global financial crisis when businesses and governments were not hiring. It was virtually impossible to get a job in forensics - in any field. I had even graduated with the Institute Medal (recognition to the person in each course who gets the highest overall grade) for my degree. I got a job doing accounts for a company and tried all avenues to get a document examination job in Sydney, where I lived. It took about 18 months, but eventually a position with the New South Wales Police Force came up. I had actually applied for the job about 2 years before and just missed out on it - by half a point. I was devastated, but in hindsight it was probably a good thing as I may not have completed my degree otherwise. The section leader at the time kept in touch with me, and as soon as another position became available, let me know so I could apply. I was extremely lucky to get the position as I believe there have been very few civilians hired since.

I commenced my employment with the NSW Police Force in June 2010. I was initially trained under Senior Sergeant Clifford Hobden, (now) Sergeant Matthias Zierholz and currently Sergeant Dean Swift. In January 2013 I qualified as an expert and was allowed to issue reports in all aspects of document examination in my own name. I love the fact I have ownership of my cases now and believe I have grown as an examiner.

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The New South Wales Police Force

The NSW Police Force is one of the largest police organisations in the English speaking world. It began as the first civilian police force in Australia, known as the Night Watch, and was formed by Governor Arthur Phillip in 1789 to guard Sydney Town.

In 1862, all Watch Teams were combined under the *Police Regulation Act 1862* to form the NSW Police Force. That Act was later replaced by the *Police Regulation Act 1899*. In June 1987, the NSW Police Force (operations) and the NSW Police Department (policy and administrative support) were amalgamated and formalised by the *Police Act 1990 No. 47*, which, as amended, is the legislation governing the organisation.

Melanie Holt, New Diplomate

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What do you like best about Forensic Document Examination?

I think the best aspect of forensic document examination is that we get to see our part of the case the whole way through. Unlike fingerprints where one person develops the prints and another identifies them, or biology where one person swabs, another runs the samples and a third interprets the results. We get to do it all – the analysis and interpretation. That's pretty exciting. I also love the problem solving, whilst the basics of the examination are pretty much the same from case to case, identifying each writers' individualising features makes it interesting. I also love the range of examinations we get to do. And most of all I love those seemingly mundane cases that turn out to be extraordinary.

We often get some really high profile cases through our laboratory and it's exciting to be part of that process. I enjoy the interaction with the Detectives and seeing how excited they can get when you inform them of the potential of document examination to help their case. Surprisingly, a lot of them still do not know the types of examinations we can conduct. I am working hard to try and change this by lecturing at various Detective training days when they are run.

The most exciting aspect is in those rare cases, and they probably only happen a handful of times a year, where document examination solves the case. That is when you know you have really made a difference.

What are your biggest career achievements thus far, Melanie?

The last two years have been really busy. I finished my Honours, became an expert, got my first article published (see the current issue 17(1) of JASQDE) and of course, was certified by the ABFDE.

What aspects of FDE work do you like the most?

That's a difficult question. There are so many aspects I love. Since being qualified to provide expert opinions, I have really developed a love of handwriting comparison, which is a good thing considering it is the largest part of the work. I like it more now than when I was a trainee as I have ownership over my cases. My experience, training, and attendance at the ASQDE conferences have enabled me to look at the handwriting at new, deeper levels.

I also enjoy the physical evidence cases that come in from time to time. They are often the most interesting, especially when it's something outside the norm like a canister or a burnt map. These unusual cases keep the work interesting and challenging.

What are the biggest challenges you've faced so far?

My first major challenge was my Honours. It was a case of what could go wrong, did! Even things I couldn't even imagine were possible - part way through the research our biology unit left the Police and became part of the Department of Health. As a result there was uncertainty if the project would have the support of the new management and continue. Due to the back log caused by the relocation of the Biology laboratory it took a long time for my samples to be processed, when they were eventually run there was a substation fire causing the machine to stop at the exact moment my samples were being processed. Seriously what are the chances of that? Luckily the samples were ok and I was relieved they were my samples which could have been redone, if necessary, rather than important crime scene samples. When it came time to write my thesis, my computer hard drive died.

My second challenge was getting through the ABFDE practicals. I do not think I have ever worked so hard in my life. There were a few examinations that I had not done before, so there were steep learning curves I went on as well. It was quite an emotional ride. I will confess that I almost gave up a few times. Luckily, my good

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Melanie Holt, New Diplomate

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friends and colleagues (Linton, Brent and Kevin – I’m looking at you) wouldn’t let me give up and provided emotional support and encouragement. I also have the type of personality that I HAVE to finish what I start and I could not give up the opportunity to be the first Aussie to get certified. It was also fitting that it happened in Hawaii seeing as it was the first ever ASQDE/ASFDE Inc joint conference. A HUGE thank you to John Paul, Todd, and Marie for giving up their valuable Hawaii-time to sit on my panel.

What made you decide to undergo certification with the ABFDE?

Michelle Novotny was actually the instigator. She had approached the Board to see if they’d consider letting Australians undergo the process and asked if I would be interested. Always up for a challenge, I blindly said 'yes', not fully understanding what I was getting myself into. Kathy Nicolaides came to Australia last year to run a workshop at our ASFDE Inc conference. As part of her visit she said she would proctor the written component. At the time there were going to be a few of us sitting for it but one by one they dropped out, leaving just me. I passed and the rest, as they say, is history.



Michelle Novotny (Forensic Document Services Pty Ltd), Melanie Holt (New South Wales Police Force) and Bianca McKechnie (Reserve Bank of Australia) at Duke’s Waikiki Restaurant, August 2014.

I think one of the main reasons I wanted to go through the ABFDE certification process was to make sure my skills and knowledge were at a level that was good enough to provide the court with my opinion. I really wanted to see how I compared to other examiners and if I was at a similar standard. It was certainly a challenging process and now that I have completed it, I am really glad I did it. I believe it has made me a better examiner and I have more confidence in my ability. A big thank you to the ABFDE Board for letting us Aussies take part. I hope to be able to communicate the benefits of certification to my Aussie colleagues and encourage them to undergo the process. I also hope that the certification will be looked on favourably by the Australian courts.

The management here at the NSWPF have also been very encouraging and proud of my achievements in gaining certification. I was not sure if they would really understand the significance of it and grasp how gruelling a process it was. To their benefit they have and seem really proud of the fact that, at present, they have the only internationally certified forensic document examiner in Australia.

examiner in Australia.

Personal interests

I live very close to our laboratory in a suburb of Sydney called Seven Hills. The laboratory is a five minute drive from home. Seven minutes on a bad day. I made a deliberate choice to live close to work so as to avoid having hours of my life wasted in traffic jams. Moving close to work was really one of the best decisions I have ever made. It used to take me an hour and a quarter each way to get to work. This was just too many hours out of the day spent travelling. By making the move I get over 10 extra hours of free time a week. I try and utilise it by sleeping more and going to the gym most evenings.

I live with my partner, Nathan, in a modest 3 bedroom cottage style home. We have three adorable four-legged furry “children”. Two cats, Ruby May and Mia (meant as a play on Meerkat) and a scoundrel dog that you can’t help but adore called Eddie Bear.

I enjoy going for bike rides, walking the dog, spending time with good friends, going to the gym and reading. Recently, I have been trying my hand at learning to play the ukulele and knitting. I am also a keen property investor and love looking at and reading about property. In fact, I’ve been known to spend many a Saturday doing this.

Meet New Diplomate – Brenda Lanners

Brenda Lanners has been a Forensic Document Examiner at the San Diego County Sheriff's Regional Crime Laboratory since 2011.

Brenda is originally from Minnesota. She moved to San Diego in 1996 to attend San Diego State University with the intention of becoming a dolphin trainer. Though she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology in 2001, her dreams of becoming a dolphin trainer were never realized. In 2002 she started a company called Animal Avenue, which specialized in pet sitting and dog walking. She sold her company in 2006 and went to work for the San Diego Sheriff's Department. While working for the Sheriff's Dept. Brenda returned to school and earned an Associate of Science degree in Forensic Technology at Grossmont College and quickly transferred to the Sheriff's Crime Lab. She started training in the Questioned Documents Unit in 2009.

Brenda was trained by Dr. Linton Mohammed for one year and for an additional two years by Marie Durina. During her QD training, Brenda earned a Graduate Certificate in Forensic Document Examination from Oklahoma State University. She is currently a Trainee Affiliate Member of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) and an Affiliate Member of the ASQDE.

Brenda has a 22 year old son named Eli. She also has a houseful of animals, including: three cats named Katie, Misha, and Farrell; two dogs named Oliver and Lucy; and a cockatiel named Bob Garcia. She is *affectionately* known as



“The Cat Whisperer” to many and “The Crazy Cat Lady” to others. Brenda spends a lot of time at Sea World, the San Diego Zoo, and the San Diego Safari Park. She also makes it a point to visit all the local zoos and aquariums wherever she travels.

From the San Diego County Sheriff 2013 Annual Report

International Accreditation

The Crime Laboratory has been accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors Laboratory Accreditation Board since 2003. Every five years, the lab undergoes a detailed accreditation inspection. In December, the Crime Lab was assessed to approximately 400 standards, set by the International Organization for Standardization by a group of inspectors from all over the country. The assessment was successful and the Crime Lab passed the accreditation process.

Accreditation is important to the Crime Lab for several reasons. First, it is a way to show the Sheriff's Department, detectives, prosecutors, juries and the public that the laboratory adheres to very high quality standards. Secondly, only accredited laboratories can access the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) DNA database, which is important in the solution of crimes without suspects, using DNA evidence. In addition, certain federal forensic grants are available only to accredited crime laboratories.

Congratulations to New Diplomate – Linda Mitchell

Linda Mitchell is in private practice in Southern California with offices in San Diego and Riverside Counties. She is a 2008 graduate of the University of Phoenix Online with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice Administration.

Linda completed her training in 2011 with Manuel Gonzales of Alliance Forensic Services in Escondido, California, who has more than 34 years of professional experience. Linda's training conformed to SWGDOG.org guidelines and the Southwestern Association of Forensic Document Examiners (SWAFDE) Training Guidelines (2006) which included training from FBI and Secret Service materials.



She is a member of SWAFDE, IAI (document section), AAFS (Associate Member, QD Section) and the National Notary Association.

Born and raised in Southern California, Linda began her career in 1973 as a Dental Hygienist in Los Angeles and later moved to San Diego County where she met and married her husband, Allen (and his two sons). In 1994, she and Allen started a manufacturing business with his son where she helped with outside sales and bookkeeping in her spare time. In 2004, Linda discovered what would become her self-described professional calling – Forensic Document Examination. From that point forward her career has been defined by the goal of achieving certification.

Several other colleagues have made a memorable difference in the professional life of Linda. David Moore was the first certified FDE “to call me toward ‘the light’. It was his direction that lead me to seek a qualified trainer. He also provided me with a great sounding board during my training.” Linton Mohammed, senior FDE at the San Diego Sheriff Crime Lab at the time “I began this journey, gave me a goal...graduate from college, then look for a trainer.”

Hugh Curfman and Randy Gibson “were always up for moot court.” Ron Morris was always “that voice in my ear saying ‘be conservative, be conservative, be conservative!’”

Marie Durina, “who I met the same day as...Linton, while she was still a trainee herself. Since then she has been available for conversations on any number of FDE subjects.”

[www.http://forensicdocexaminer.com/](http://forensicdocexaminer.com/)
Linda L Mitchell



Continuing Education

October 2014

- 6-10** **Midwestern Association of Forensic Scientists (MAFS)**
 Joint meeting with ASTEE (American Society of Trace Evidence Examiners)
 Crowne Plaza St. Paul-Riverfront Hotel
 St. Paul, MN
<http://www.mafs.net>



- 13-18** **International Association of Forensic Sciences (IAFS)**
 20th World Meeting
 Seoul, Korea
<http://www.wff2014korea.org/>

February 2015

- 16-21** **American Academy of Forensic Sciences Meeting (AAFS)**
 67th Annual Meeting
 Hyatt Regency Orlando
 Orlando, FL
 Seattle, WA
<http://aafs.org/meetings/2015>



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FORENSIC SCIENCES

May 2015

- 18-22** **Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Scientists (MAAFS)**
 Hyatt Regency
 Chesapeake Bay, MD
www.maafs.org



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Continuing Education

August 2015

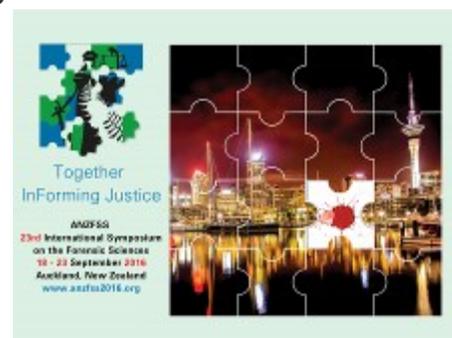
- 2-8** **International Association for Identification (IAI)**
Sacramento, CA
100th Anniversary
www.theiai.org/conference/index.php



- 13** **American Society of Questioned Document Examiners (ASQDE)**
Toronto, Canada
Eaton Chelsea, Toronto
Bonnie Beal, Program Chair
Diane Kruger, Site Chair
<http://www.asqde.org/AGM/aqm2015.html>

August 2016

- 18-23** **The Australian and New Zealand Forensic Science Society (ANZFSS)**
23rd International Symposium on the Forensic Sciences
Auckland, New Zealand
www.anzfss2016.org



Many Diplomates are members of multiple organizations. Please help spread the word about workshops and meetings of groups you may be a member of by e-mailing these events to the ABFDE News Editor, Diane K. Tolliver, at TolliverD@aol.com.

Continuing our professional education is necessary to maintain ABFDE certification. Please help the editor make this information available on a world-wide arena.

Meeting announcements may be submitted to the editor at TolliverD@aol.com.

“Bolstering and Cumulative” A Review of Judicial Contradictions and the Impact on FDEs

By Grant R. Sperry

This brief article will serve as an introduction to a more detailed review of a precedent case involving four FDEs and a homicide case which ran its course through grand jury testimony and three separate state trials in Florida recently.

Case Background

On May 1, 1999 a high school honor graduate employed at a mall based Chick-fil-A in West Palm Beach (WPB) Florida was murdered execution style after closing hours at work. Robbery was the apparent motive at the time. At the crime scene was a small notepad containing hand printed entries suspected to be the combination to the safe. It was later determined that the notepad belonged to Chick Fil A but had not contained the questioned writings prior to the close of business. (The written combination was one number off)

Over the course of the next five years numerous leads were followed and an arrest and conviction of one of the perpetrators occurred. One perpetrator was convicted and sentenced to life in prison; even after recanting at trial his confession as being untrue and the result of coercion by law enforcement.

In 2004, the US Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) Crime Lab in Memphis received a request from a Postal Inspector in WPB to provide assistance. The request was approved and evidence was subsequently received from West Palm Beach Police Department and State Attorney's Office. Course of business and/or specimen writings from numerous suspects were

QUESTIONED ENTRIES

SS, 65, 9, 10

14 fine
STOP
left right left right

submitted together with the questioned document.

One of the writers was subsequently identified as the writer of the questioned entries. In accordance with laboratory protocol, a second examiner (ABFDE Diplomate Patricia Manzolillo) conducted the required review and ultimately verified the identification.

The State of Florida elected to get a second opinion and retained the services of a noted FDE and ABFDE Diplomate (Bill Flynn) from Arizona. The same evidence provided to the USPIS lab was provided to the independent lab in Arizona. The FDE in Arizona determined it was 'highly probable' the writer of the known writings (previously identified by the USPIS FDE) wrote the questioned entries. This conclusion was verified by a second FDE (Kathy Nicolaidis).

Below is a timetable of events and comments which summarize the issues that provide a basis for the forthcoming paper:

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“Bolstering and Cumulative”

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Grand Jury – Indictment July 2007

1st Trial – February 2009 (hung jury / 11 to 1 for conviction)

2nd Trial - July 2009 (convicted of murder)

Appellate court decision – Dec 2012

The defendant argues the trial court abused its discretion by allowing the State “to bolster the testimony of its two document examiners with testimony that other non-testifying examiners verified the identification.” The State responds that the defendant waived the issue by failing to file a motion in limine, and by failing to raise the “bolstering” objection during the first trial. The State further responds that the error was invited.

The State then suggests there was no improper bolstering because the experts only discussed peer review as a means of explaining the process through which handwriting is analyzed at the lab. Lastly, the State argues that any error was harmless. We agree with the defense that the testimony constituted improper bolstering and was not harmless. We therefore reverse.

Proposed Daubert Hearing – Denbeaux and Saks deposed. Judge denies request for hearing in June 2014. (Excellent citations provide by judge in his ruling; Tom Vastick retained by State to assist in Daubert preparation)

3rd Trial – July 2014

Judge’s final ruling: testimony limited to one FDE and nothing more than a reference to a quality assurance process. Absolutely no testimony allowed as to details of

the QA process on any level. At trial, I was asked on direct if our laboratory has a quality assurance process. I responded ‘yes, we do’. Nothing further was allowed.

State Attorneys had previously provided notice to the defense that the ‘verifying’ FDE would testify as to the QA process and therefore could be cross examined, thus providing the remedy to the Appellate Court’s basis for reversal of the previous conviction. At trial, the judge precluded testimony by the FDE involved in the QA process as being cumulative; even if offered for the limited purpose of establishing the laboratory’s quality assurance standards/processes. Thus the remedy provided by the Florida Appellate Court was ignored by the trial judge.

Denbeaux testified (to be transcribed) for the defense a week after FDE testimony. Judge ruled scheduled rebuttal testimony by research scientist and co-author involved in studies conducted by Dr. Kam would not be allowed. Denbeaux’s testimony went to the jury absent rebuttal.

For years, the shortcomings with respect to meaningful quality assurance standards within our laboratories have been the subject of intense criticism, debate and legal challenges. Forensic laboratories (especially the FDE profession) have, to a great extent, realized the need and addressed the criticisms through the development of standards and procedures which bring consistency, quality and added value to the process and results. The QA process employed by many FDEs and long advocated by the judicial community has a needed and valuable place in the lab. However, at least in

Marvin Rennert

Diplomate 1978-1989

Marvin G. Rennert, Jr., 67, of Grasonville, MD died on December 23, 2013. Mr. Rennert passed at home after battling pancreatic cancer. In the days leading up to his death, he was surrounded by those who loved him the most and passed with his loving wife, Carol by his side.



Born August 14, 1946 in San Antonio, TX, Marvin was the only child of the late Florence and the late Marvin G. Rennert Sr., Marvin attended Pan American University where he received a Bachelor of Science Degree in History and later received a Master of Forensic Science from Antioch School of Law as well as a Master's Degree from Georgetown University. He served proudly in the US Army during the Conflict in Viet Nam where he was a member of the Canine Special Unit. Marvin's career with the Federal Government continued with his many years working for The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Marvin was an ABFDE Diplomate from 12-18-78 to 5-9-89. He was among the first group of Diplomates certified in the infancy of ABFDE. He also served as the first Proficiency Review Committee Chair for Questioned Documents within the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors – Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB).

In the years since his retirement from ATF, Marvin worked as a Forensic Consultant. This opportunity allowed him to travel the world and to live in Colombo, Sri Lanka with his wife, Carol.



“Bolstering and Cumulative”

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the mind of one judge, the jury shouldn't be allowed to hear and consider these standards and quality processes when assessing the weight and credibility to be applied to FDE testimony.

The forthcoming paper(s) will address specifics related to the FDE components of the trial, the Denbeaux and Saks depositions, Denbeaux's testimony at trial and many other nuances related to the three trials; including anomalies present in the third trial unrelated to FDE testimony and evident contributors to the acquittal.

Whether or not the rulings in this Florida case will serve as precedent remains unclear, however it is likely other judges have the same mindset and these types of adverse rulings with respect to FDE testimony on QA standards and processes may likely be an ongoing challenge for our profession.

Kevin Hall McDowell

Diplomate 1990— 2010

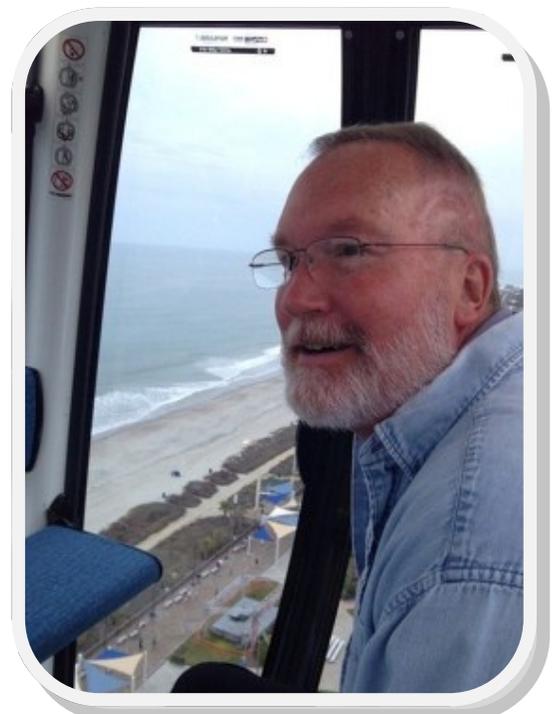
Kevin Hall McDowell, 60, of Myrtle Beach, SC and formerly of West Virginia, passed away Wednesday, May 28, 2014 at Grand Strand Regional Medical Center, Myrtle Beach.

Kevin was born on June 9, 1953 in Morgantown, WV, a son of the late Arlys and Pauline (Musgrave) McDowell.

He was a member of the West Virginia State Police for 25 years and worked an additional ten years as a civilian. He served as a Trooper and Forensic Analyst in the crime lab. He was an avid lover of cars, proclaiming, "I was a fan of NASCAR when NASCAR wasn't cool."

Kevin is survived by his loving wife Beth Peal McDowell of Myrtle Beach, SC; son Phillip (Martha) McDowell of Charleston, WV; brother Alton (Patti) McDowell of Franklinton, NC; brother-in-law Charles (Cheryl) Peal of Cross Lanes, WV; nephews Chris McDowell of Morgantown, WV, Steve (Cameron) McDowell of Franklinton, NC, Andy (Elyse) Peal of South Charleston, WV; niece Katie (Mahmoud) Peal Al-Widyan of Paris, France; great nephew Keaton; great nieces Harper and Lina; and a multitude of others touched by his kindness and humor.

Per Kevin's wishes, no services were held. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Kanawha Charleston Humane Association at 1248 Greenbrier Street, Charleston, WV.



David J. Purtell, age 99

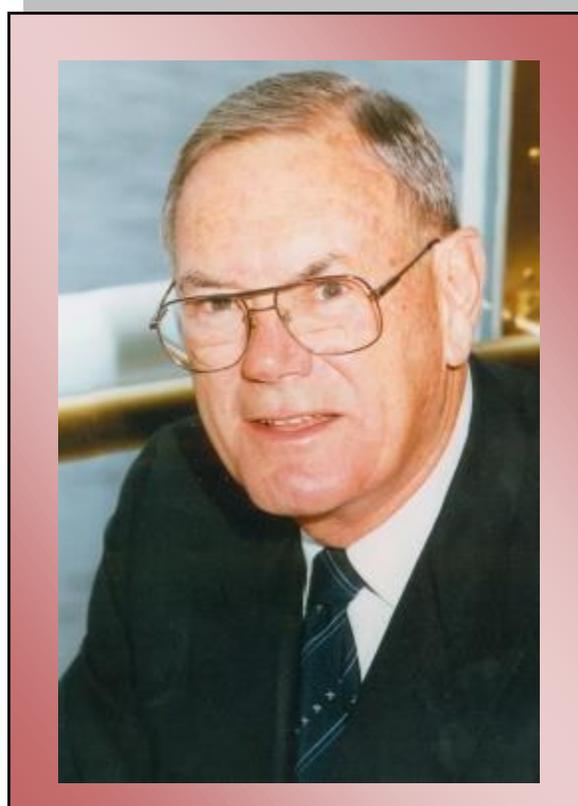
Document Examiner, Lab Director

By James L. Hayes, with contributions from James A. Green, Dr. Andre Moenssens, and Kirsten A. Singer

David J. Purtell's long career began as a Chicago Police Department (CPD) officer who was given the job of establishing a questioned document laboratory. Under the guidance of Commissioner Timothy J. O'Connor, Dave went from police officer to Captain to Director of the Chicago Police Crime Laboratory. This was a rarity because it was a CPD practice to transfer an officer upon promotion.

Dave was an ABFDE Diplomate from October 29, 1978 through the year 2000. He was one of the first group of Diplomates during those formative years.

Dave was an active member of many organizations including the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners and the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, where he held several leadership roles. Dave first attended a Society meeting in 1959 and subsequently served as the ASQDE President from 1970-1972. In 2006, Dave was presented the Albert S. Osborn Award of Excellence from the ASQDE.



The last ASQDE meeting Dave attended was in 2008 in Asheville. At this meeting, he proudly watched his trainee, Maureen Casey Owens, also receive the ASO Award of Excellence.

Dave passed away just one month before his 100th birthday. A birthday celebration had been planned and ASQDE (then) Vice President John Paul Osborn had planned on taking video snippets from members wishing Dave "happy birthday" from the forthcoming AGM.

Among his many accomplishments, Dave was awarded a Distinguished Fellow status from Northwestern University, his Alma mater. He was a proud Army Veteran of World War II.

Herbert J. Walter trained Dave as he worked at the Chicago Police Department. Upon retirement

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David Purtell

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Dave took over the Herbert J. Walter offices continuing a practice that began in the 1920's. During World War II, Dave served in the Counter Intelligence Corps.

He most enjoyed "private practice" and would frequently lunch with his friendly competition Donald Doud. At meetings Dave would always be available to help and encourage fellow Document Examiners. He could often be found at meetings with friends and colleagues at a local Irish pub.

Dave Purtell and his wife Elizabeth (nee Reed) did not have children. He was proud to say it's a "great life with the right wife." Much of his professional success was attributed to his lovely wife, Elizabeth. Dave was born and raised on the Southside of Chicago. Dave was a true Southside Irish Catholic boy who was a fan of the White Sox and anybody who played the Cubs.

He was the brother of the late Tom (late Margaret), and the late Catherine Purtell; dear uncle of Thomas and many other nieces and nephews. In his final years, suffering from impaired eyesight, Dave was cared for by nephew Tom Purtell in Florida. In Chicago, Dave's services were conducted by Curley Funeral Home, Our Lady of the Ridge Church, with interment at Holy Sepulcher Cemetery.

Dr. Andre Moenssens, a friend and ally of the forensic document profession, wrote to ASQDE Members:



"I was shocked to read Jim Green's message that Dave Purtell had passed away. I met him first at the AAFS meeting at the Drake Hotel in Chicago in 1961 and grew to know him well – as I did Linton Godown who asked me to incorporate the ASQDE as an Illinois non-profit corporation during the same era. The late Fred Inbau of Northwestern University, with whom I coauthored several books, is the person who introduced me to Dave and Linton...we both sat in on the QD Section meetings of that February in 1961.



"Dave was just a wonderful person, a through and through good man, as well as a thorough QD person. I guess it is hard to grow old and see all the folks you have known and admired – many of them younger than myself – pass away. It is a touching reminder of what is to happen to all of us." Andre Moenssens

Dave Purtell was a remarkable man, a significant contributor to the ASQDE and our profession. He will be greatly missed.

Minutes of the April 2014 BOD Annual Meeting

Bonnie L. Beal, ABFDE Secretary

The ABFDE Board of Directors met for their Annual Meeting April 25 and 26, 2014 in Houston, TX. Present were: President Kirsten Singer, Vice President Lisa Hanson, Secretary Bonnie Beal, Treasurer Jim Green, Sean Espley (April 26th only), Marie Durina, Frank Hicks, Rick Horton, Jim Josey, Gary Licht, Janet Masson, Bill Riordan, and Rosalind Spencer.

The 2013 BOD Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved and distributed.

Treasurer's Report – Jim Green

In accordance with the SOP's, an external audit was requested on 1/26/13. The audit covered years ending June 30, 2010 and June 30, 2011. The years included entries by prior and current Treasurers Jeff Taylor and Jim Green, respectively.

The Hobbs Group randomly selected checks and related receipts, deposited checks and related deposit slips, transfers between accounts, policies, and other information. All were collected and submitted.

On October 17, 2013 the final report by the Hobbs Group was received. The report showed minor discrepancies. Examples included a lag time of payment of two bills exceeding 30 days. Another was a difference in the date a transfer of funds occurred between accounts and date it was recorded in QuickBooks. A few payments were made without a co-signer signature on the check. No discrepancies of any significance were identified.

Income and expense information was provided to the Hobbs Group to facilitate the preparation of the 2012 "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax" form. Allyson DeHart, an accountant with The Hobbs Group, filed the form on the Board's behalf in November, 2013. Payment in the amount of \$75 was made to The Hobbs Group for this filing action.

The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) form BRA-25 was not completed last year. The submission is required every other year and will be filed again this year.

For the past several years, we have paid an annual premium of \$3,960.00 to RSUI Indemnity Company for the Board of Directors' liability insurance. Their premium for 2014 was raised \$400 to \$4,360.00. A few weeks ago, our insurance agent recommended we review a competitive quote from CAN Insurance; \$3,004.00. The same liability coverage is provided as our current carrier with deductions lower than provided under the CFM policy. An application was completed and submitted to CAN Insurance for their review. We expect to have the policy issued in the near future.

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Interest in the amount of \$9.52 accrued in the CD during 2013. The interest was added to the prior balance of the Ames fund (\$4,529.75), to bring the current balance to \$4,539.27.

The 2013 – 2014 Diplomate dues payments totaled \$26,074.44.

Fortunately, no payments were made to ACT during the past year for their validation services. (The last payment made was in 2011 for \$17,162.67, causing a significant impact on our checking account balance.)

Six application payments were received for total deposits of \$1,568.45.

Payment in the amount of \$100.13 was made to the Corporate Service Company on January 5, 2014 to maintain statutory representation in D.C. (Our Corporation documents were initially filed in D.C.)

A dues payment was made to FSAB in the amount of \$842 on 10/18/13.

It is encouraging to note all balances are higher, albeit slightly, from a year ago: CD \$7,577.03 (Currently earning 0.08% interest. Expires 8/14/14.); Savings \$324.17 (Interest accumulates at 0.01 per month.); Regular checking \$27,170.88 (3/31/14 balance: \$25,149.83.) The two most recent Profit and Loss Statements are provided below. Routine income and expenses were consistent between the two recent reporting years. The expense for the audit kept our income from exceeding that of the prior year.

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ABFDE Profit & Loss Statement

Ordinary Income/Expense	Income 4-1-13 through 3-31-14	4-1-12 through 3-31-13
Application Fee	1,568.45	1,250.00
Brochures	85.90	0.00
Coffee mug	0.00	115.00
Hilton 2nd Edition	336.74	712.87
Total Hilton 2nd Edition	336.74	712.87
Membership Dues	26,074.44	28,000.82
Total Income	28,065.53	30,078.69
Expense		
ABFDE BoD Mtg 2014		
Airfare	3,014.41	0.00
Total ABFDE BoD Mtg 2014	3,014.41	0.00
ABFDE BofD Meetings	0.00	11,237.91
Total ABFDE BoD 2013	3,941.42	1,415.30
Total ABFDE BoD Meetings	3,941.42	12,653.21
ABFDE BofD - Other	2,000.00	0.00
Total ABFDE BofD	5,941.42	12,653.21
ABFDE BofD Mtgs ABFDE	6,849.97	0.00
Total ABFDE BofD Mtgs	6,849.97	0.00
ABFDE Workshop 2013 Administration	0.00	510.65
Audit - 2013	6,788.25	7,086.72
Bank Error	4,075.00	0.00
Bank Fees	-15.00	0.00
Check copies	0.00	101.95
FSAB	0.00	6.00
FSAR Membershin Dues	842.00	857.00
Total FSAB	842.00	857.00
Insurance - nonemployee	0.00	3,960.00
Legal Fees	88.50	0.00
Northeast Trophies & Awards	37.75	0.00
Overpayment	250.00	0.00
Plaques	48.15	0.00
Postage and Delivery	83.86	107.99
Prep of 2011 Form 990	0.00	500.00
Reconciliation	0.00	-44.95
Refund - Hyatt	-2,263.54	0.00
Reimbursement	122.55	0.00
Statutory Rep.	100.13	96.41
Stop Payment on 2 checks	873.71	0.00
Supplies and Materials	570.37	0.00
Trademark renewal	519.45	0.00
Transferred from business	-1,500.00	0.00
Voided	-424.50	0.00
Total Expense	26,002.48	25,834.98
Net Ordinary Income	2,063.05	4,243.71

Credentials Report – Bonnie Beal

The Credentials Committee received five applications this year; four of the five applicants have passed onto the testing phase. The committee is awaiting documentation for the fifth applicant.

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Continuing Education Committee Report – A. Frank Hicks

There were 8 workshops approved for a total of 42 recertification points. The workshops were held across the country at national, regional, and local meetings.

FSAB Committee Report – Bonnie Beal

The ABFDE was reaccredited under former Secretary Nicolaides in February 2012. This accreditation is for five years. A new application will need to be completed prior to the year 2017. FSAB requires an annual report from all accredited organizations by March 31 of each year. Our FSAB Annual Report was submitted on March 26, 2014, along with the Substantive Changes and updated RPG. We have not heard back from FSAB regarding the report at this time.

Public Relations Committee Report – Marie Durina

This report covers the period of May 2013 through March 2014.

NIST Symposium on Measurement Science and Standard in Forensic Handwriting Examination

This NIST-sponsored symposium was held in Gaithersburg, MD on June 4-5, 2013. This was the first symposium of this kind and ABFDE was listed as a collaborator. The purpose of this conference was to enhance the current state of forensic handwriting analysis through the use of advancements in measurement science and the latest research investments in quantitative analysis capabilities.

NIST organized this event in collaboration with the American Academy of Forensic Sciences – Questioned Document Section, American Board of Forensic Document Examiners (ABFDE), American Society of Questioned Document Examiners (ASQDE), National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and Scientific Working Group for Forensic Document Examination (SWGDOC). In addition to presentations by Dr. Kam, Dr. Srihari, and Dr. Merlino, several ABFDE Diplomates also presented at the symposium. These included:

Ted Burkes; John Paul Osborn; Peter Tytell; Rigo Vargas; Linton Mohammed; Kirsten Singer; Marie Durina; Lisa Hanson; Brent Ostrum; Jan Masson; Jane Lewis; Brian Lindblom; Tom Vastrick

The symposium was attended by a live audience as well as webcasted for "virtual" attendees. This led to the question as to how many recertification points would be available to Diplomates who attended in person vs. those who attended "virtually" via webcast. It was decided that physical attendees would receive 8 points toward recertification and webcast attendees would receive 4 points for attendance. Some attendees were concerned about this discrepancy and were of the opinion an equal amount of points should have been awarded to all attendees. As webcast seminars and symposiums of this kind may become more prevalent in the future, a determination should be made about how and when the ABFDE will award recertification points to Diplomates.

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Texas White Paper and ABFDE Position Letter

On January 18, 2013 President Kirsten Singer submitted a letter on behalf of the ABFDE to the Executive Office of the United States Attorneys setting forth the ABFDE's position regarding testimony in United States courts by qualified forensic document examiners. Due a change in management at the AUSA's Office, this comprehensive letter was not given an audience at the AUSA's office, but was retained for possible future use.

In November 2013, the State of Texas released a White Paper addressing issues in forensic science and appearing to be very much in favor of certification for all forensic practitioners. The original letter intended for the AUSA's office was slightly revised and updated, and found a new target audience with some of the stakeholders involved in the Texas White Paper, specifically the participants from the Texas Criminal Justice Integrity Unit. For more information on this group see: <http://www.cca.courts.state.tx.us/tcju/members.asp> The updated letter was mailed to 15 individual participants of TCJIU on March 18, 2014 along with a copy of our brochure entitled "Profile of a Forensic Document Examiner". While we are not overly confident about the immediate impact of our letter upon this group, we are viewing as an attempt to go on the record about our profession and an opportunity to make small inroads for possible networking in the future with those who have a close relationship with the justice system.

Updating of the Recertification Application Form on ABFDE Website

In May 2013, several attempts were made to revise the Recertification Application form currently on the ABFDE website. The current form is of extremely poor quality and several versions of a new, improved form were proposed. Three versions of the new form were discussed, and members of the BOD expressed various concerns via e-mail regarding content, especially with regard to what should be required of Diplomates (i.e., the requirement of proficiency testing, and what constitutes being "actively engaged" in the profession.) Treasurer Green discussed an inexpensive source to have the form become a "fillable pdf form" that would facilitate on-line submission by Diplomates. It was decided to revisit this issue at a later date, in the hope that a new form could be adopted or at the very least, the appearance of the current form on the website be upgraded.

Inquiry about ABFDE Code of Ethics

In January, 2014, the Public Relations Committee received an inquiry from an ethics teacher. She expressed concern about the removal by the ABFDE of the paragraph on liability that was previously in its ethics code. She stated, "in order to mitigate an association's liability when exercising ethics investigations and sanctions, that a statement of member liability concerning ethics was strongly recommended, maybe even required, to be included somewhere in the Bylaws." In the teaching of her courses on ethics throughout the State of California, she vigorously tracks ethics-related material for a multitude of forensic organizations, and often uses material on various websites as examples of what constitutes "acceptable" and "non-acceptable" examples of ethical models.

President Singer promptly responded to the teacher to assure her that the paragraph she cited is still present in the Rules and Procedures Guide, and advised her that the Guide was revised per

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FSAB in 2012 to separate sections and make them more readily available on the ABFDE website.

She was advised the liability paragraph is on page 15, under Section III Code of Ethics and Standard Practices, and was also provided with the following information:

2009

DIPLOMATE/CANDIDATE LIABILITY

Any Diplomate or candidate of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners, who has violated any of the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Competency, or portion thereof, may be liable to censure, suspension or expulsion by action of the Board of Directors, as provided in the Professional Review Procedures

2012

B. Diplomate/Candidate Liability

Any Diplomate or candidate of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners, who has violated any of the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Competency, or portion thereof, may be liable to censure, suspension or expulsion by action of the Board of Directors, as provided in the Professional Review Procedures.

She was advised that, in addition, ABFDE maintains annual Directors and Officers Liability insurance; and Diplomates must sign a "Statement of Affirmation and Agreement" when they submit their annual dues.

Finally, she was provided the following text recommended by our legal counsel as an amendment to our Bylaws in 2011:

Bylaws amended:

5. Denial and Revocation of Certificates

- f. In an effort to promote the purpose of the organization, all Diplomates are subject to review as outlined in the Professional Review Procedures. By agreeing to the terms and conditions placed upon the Diplomates as a condition of certification and membership, all Diplomates agree that any complaint made by one Diplomate against another Diplomate for Professional Review is done in order to maintain the purpose, integrity and reliability of forensic examination.

New Textbook includes Forensic Document Examination and Reference to the ABFDE

In 2011, author Richard Walton began working on a textbook entitled "Practical Cold Case Homicide Investigations Procedural Manual" intended for use by law enforcement and private investigators of homicides and death investigations that have become "cold cases". Mr. Walton contacted

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the San Diego Sheriff's Crime Lab seeking input from a forensic document examiner on Chapter 27 of the book "Questioned Documents", which had been drafted several years earlier by a now-deceased detective. The chapter was extensively re-written to include information about what constitutes a qualified forensic document examiner, and referring readers to legitimate FDE organizational websites including the ABFDE, ASQDE, SAFDE, and SWAFDE. The textbook was ultimately published and was made available for purchase in February, 2014. It is hoped that its contents will aid investigators in their attempts to close unsolved cases that were previously thought to have no resolution.

Website

The ABFDE website has been updated to include a current Directory of Diplomates. Additional updates include current versions of the following RPG documents posted by Secretary Bonnie Beal: Code of Conduct, General Provisions, Background Purposes, Code of Ethics, Bylaws, Duties of Officers and Committees, Procedure for Application and Certification, and an Outline of Substantive Changes. Laureen Leaver has proven invaluable in helping the BOD keep the website current and her assistance and diligence in this regard is extremely appreciated.

Recertification Committee Report – Rick Horton

As of March 25 the ABFDE has 112 active Diplomates. Three (3) new Diplomates completed the testing process and were issued an ABFDE Certificate of Qualification and Membership Card. Sixteen (16) Diplomates met the recertification criteria for the next five (5) year period and have received, or are in the process of receiving, their Certificate of Recertification and new Diplomate Membership card. One (1) Diplomate failed to meet the recertification criteria during the past five (5) years and may not receive their Certificate of Recertification and Diplomate Membership card. Two (2) Diplomates retired/resigned. One (1) Diplomate passed away.

Rules and Procedures Committee Report – A. Frank Hicks

Shortly after the 2013 BOD meeting, proposals were made to change the Application for Recertification in Document Examination and ask for information such as how many cases an examiner had worked in the preceding five years and to make it a requirement to participate in proficiency testing. These topics were discussed at length and it was decided to make this a topic for discussion at the 2014 BOD meeting.

The ABFDE President received a letter from the Canadian Association of University Teachers to ask the ABFDE to join as an "intervener" in a criminal case in Canada. Other professional forensic document examination organizations have also been invited to intervene in this case. Much discussion has been had on this issue and it was decided to bring the topic up for discussion at the 2014 BOD meeting in Houston, TX.

Secretary Beal has proposed some changes to the wording of several areas of our Rules and procedures Guide. These were emailed on April 9, 2014, and will be discussed at the BOD meeting in Houston.

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Test Preparation and Validation Committee Report – Rosalind Spencer

One new practical problem was received and distributed for validation this year. A number of other new practical tests are in the pipeline. It is important that the pool of tests be refreshed periodically, to keep it relevant. Practical tests may include some contextual bias. Probabilistic conclusions, if properly reasoned, will be acceptable.

Rosalind stated if we would like to submit a practical exam, she only needs one or two versions of it, not three or four.

The pool of multiple-choice written questions has been completely refreshed, thanks to the hard work of the Directors and Diplomates. The second review of the first written test was held at the ASQDE meeting in August 2013, with good results. Work on the second written test is in progress and a review will occur this August at the ASQDE meeting.

Workshop – Jim Josey

There was one ABFDE workshop held during this reporting period. The workshop was held on February 19, 2013 and was a full day workshop titled “ABFDE Demystifying Certification 101”. It was held at the USSS building in Washington. This is an ongoing workshop that was borne as a result of requests by FDE Trainees and newly trained FDE’s to provide more information regarding preparing for ABFDE certification. The workshop was organized and presented by Lisa Hanson and Kirsten Singer. Diplomates in attendance to lend support to the workshop included Jeffrey Payne, Kathleen Storer, Bonnie Beal, and Gregory Dalzell. Feedback after the workshop has been very positive.

We need to inject some new blood into our workshops and encourage our new Diplomates to help put on the workshops.

Historian – Bonnie Beal

The 2013 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes and Newsletters have been archived.

Testing Committee Report – Lisa Hanson

This report covers the period beginning May 5, 2013 and ending April 25, 2014

Three (3) candidates successfully completed the certification testing program and achieved Diplomat status.

There are eight (8) candidates currently in the testing process. One candidate withdrew from the testing process.

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In accordance with FSAB standards, the “Performance Characteristics” and “Current Status of Each Candidate” spreadsheets are maintained. These statistics are maintained to record and track the performance of testing candidates during the various phases of the certification examination process.

Oral Examination

Three (3) oral examinations have been conducted resulting in three (3) passing evaluations.

Future Testing

There is presently one Candidate eligible to take the Written Exam and two Candidates eligible to take the Practical Examination and two Candidates eligible to take the Oral Examinations.

There will be two (2) Candidates that, if they have completed their Mentorships, will be able to request their Practicals.

There may be one (1) Candidate that, if s/he begins and completes his/her Mentorship, will be able to request his/her Practicals.

A Testing Committee Oral Examination Panel is tentatively available during the upcoming Annual ASQDE Conference in anticipation of Candidates who may qualify during the next four months.

Written examinations and Oral examinations will be offered at all upcoming national and regional meetings in accordance with the needs of the candidates and the availability of ABFDE Directors.

The Certification 101 workshops have been well received. One was provided prior to the BOD meeting and another workshop will be provided a few weeks after. The support of the Diplomates who have helped has been crucial to the success and she could not do this without the Diplomates' help.

Secretary Report – Bonnie Beal

The BOD voted and awarded Diplomate status to three new Diplomates. The BOD also voted on a measure to determine when a document examiner is considered an “expert consultant” when accepting a case. The motion passes that a document examiner is considered an “expert consultant” when the Diplomate has accepted a retainer fee and has had follow up email correspondence with the client, even if no report has been issued.

The RPG was reviewed and recommendations were made for some editorial changes. In addition, the Confidentiality Agreement for the Credentials Committee has been updated. These changes were detailed in the Outline of Substantive Changes dated June 14, 2014. A copy of the Outline of

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Substantive Changes will be distributed to the Diplomates along with a copy of the 2014 BOD meeting minutes.

Nominations – Frank Hicks

No elections for Directors were held in the past twelve months.

Professional Review Committee – Lisa Hanson

There were no cases submitted to the professional Review Committee during this calendar year of 2014.

Old Business

ACT –Beal

The pilot testing of our new written test has been slow going. Only eleven of the needed 50 Diplomates have taken the test. Many regional associations have not been willing to provide the two hours needed to take the test during the normal meeting time. The Board is looking at different ways to get the Diplomates to help with this important project.

Training Syllabus Update – Riordan & Licht

The training syllabus is still in the process of being updated by removing obsolete articles and reviewing and adding newer articles.

SWGDOC Update – Singer

The guidelines developed by SWGDOC will be transitioned over to be guidelines or standards once the FSSB and OSACs are up and running. At this time, the SWGDOC is continuing to work on the QD guidelines. For a more detailed description of what the OSACs are and their development go to www.nist.gov/forensics/osac/index.cfm.

It is going to be a more cumbersome process with fewer document examiners (~14) doing the work of the current 40 examiners on SWGDOC. Standards are harder to pass; guidelines are best practices and are easier to pass.

Mentorship Program – Hanson

We have had a total of three Candidates choose the mentorship option; however, we need to have sharper guidelines and deadlines. The points were to determine, what practical the candidate failed in and to set them up with a mentor to provide additional training in that area. Changes were made to the RPG providing six months to complete the mentoring process with at least 80 hours dedicated by both the mentor and candidate.

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ABFDE Position Letter for DOJ/TX – Durina & Masson

We sent an ABFDE position letter and to each Judge and attorney, fifteen in all, on the Texas Criminal Justice Integrity Unit (TCJIU). This committee was very pro accreditation and certification of all forensic science laboratories and scientists in the State of Texas. The letter started out with applauding their efforts in encouraging certification and accreditation and then launched into what constitutes genuine forensic document examination. Our brochure “Profile of a Forensic Document Examiner” was also included. We have not had any feedback as of yet. It was decided to send the letter to each State’s Attorney General.

Modify Recertification Application – Points for distance learning – Durina

The Board discussed how to award points for distance learning and what will constitute distance learning. The webinars should be pre-approved and will be approved on a case-by-case basis. They have to be relevant to the field. The RPG, specifically “H. Recertification Requirements 3.1 area” was changed to include webinars and points allotted. Under 2.2 the addition of documentation requirements was added. If the webinar is not pre-approved, the examiner should not expect a guarantee that it would be approved.

Practical Evaluation Criteria – Hanson

The Testing Committee will be moving to a Pass/Fail criteria for the practical exercises in the future.

Frank Hicks and Marie Durina stepped down from the BOD. They provided great dedication and hard work to the BOD. They will be missed.

FSAB Issues

A couple of Diplomates brought concern regarding FSAB’s non-transparency and the lack of Directors and Officers insurance by FSAB. The BOD discussed these concerns and at this time is taking a wait and see approach. It appears FSAB is trying to be accredited to ISO 17011 which requires transparency and insurance.

Professional Review

A Professional Review Committee has been convened.

Status of Aus/NZ applications – Beal

We have had two applications; one is in the testing phase and one is in the credentials phase.

CAUT Request – Singer & Spencer

President Singer sent a letter to the group representing CAUT stating that we will not be participating with the intervener. Intervening on occasions when the court’s ruling is contrary to evidence tendered by Board certified document examiners does not fall within the Board’s mandate. Regretfully, the ABFDE cannot intervene in every case where the findings of an ABFDE certified examiner are challenged by examiners not certified by the ABFDE. It is important that the ABFDE maintain its impartiality. It was viewed that joining the coalition would give the impression of being an advocate for Mr. Diab. The ABFDE is concerned with a forensic practice that operates

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on accepted methods and principles; however our mandate is certification of forensic document examiners. Therefore, we recommended they contact the Scientific Working Group for Forensic Document Examination (SWGDOC), the organization which publishes standards and guidelines for the field of forensic document examiners and gave them the website www.swgdoc.org.

Examination protocols for digital images – Josey

There is a blog site for IT people who do not understand what we do; they only know what one graphologist does. They raked QD across the coals stating that we weren't qualified to be examining documents of this type (PDF/electronic) that have been prepared and transmitted over the Internet that so many things can go wrong. One Director was very concerned because they seemed to automatically assume that we were all like the graphologist. He started calling colleagues asking if we had any procedures on how to examine PDFs and electronic documents and the importance of caution. We were told some Diplomates are writing procedures for examining electronic and PDF documents.

RPG Changes

A copy of the recommended changes to the RPG was provided to the BOD prior to the meeting. After discussion each change was unanimously approved. Please see the "Outline of Changes to Standards" on the website for the "Outline of Substantive Changes". In addition, clean-up changes, such as, deleting extra spaces or adding spaces, changing the word "credit" to "points" and changing font/size for consistency, etc., were fixed.

Departure of Directors

Marie Durina and Frank Hicks tendered their resignations from the Board. It was accepted with sadness. Their dedication and thoughtful insights were invaluable to the Board. Thank you both for your service.

We are happy to report that Tom Riley and Farrell Shiver have accepted to be Directors. We welcome them aboard starting July 1, 2014.

Election of Directors

Tom Riley and Farrell Shiver were appointed to the BOD to fill the director slots vacated by Marie and Frank.

Miscellaneous Information

The BOD is moving to a digital format; along with this, a new computer and A/V equipment will be purchased for the ABFDE BOD and will be maintained by the secretary.

Next Meeting

The next ABFDE BOD meeting will be held May 1 – 3, 2015.

This ends the meeting minutes.



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**Webmasters:
Bill & Lauren Leaver**

2014-2015 Board Officers

PRESIDENT.....Kirsten A. Singer
VICE PRESIDENT.....Lisa M. Hanson
SECRETARY.....Bonnie L. Beal
TREASURER.....Jim Green

2014-2015 Committee Chairs

CONTINUING EDUCATION.....William M. Riordan
CREDENTIALS.....Bonnie L. Beal
HISTORIAN.....Bonnie L. Beal
NOMINATIONS.....Rosalind Spencer
PUBLIC RELATIONS.....Janet F. Masson
RE-CERTIFICATION.....Richard A. Horton
RULES & PROCEDURES.....Bonnie L. Beal
TEST PREP & VALIDATION.....Rosalind Spencer
TESTING.....Lisa M. Hanson
WORKSHOP COORDINATOR.....Sean A. Espley



Thinking of going through the ABFDE Certification process?

Come to the 101 Basics of Certification course at the next meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Scientists.

Contact: Lisa Hanson, ABFDE Vice President and Testing Committee Chair

lisa.hanson@state.mn.us



Send contributions to:

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ABFDE News**

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