

AFTE 2009 – June 4, 2009, Miami, Florida

Acceptance Speech by 2009 Calvin Goddard Award Winner Bruce Moran

Thank you Bob (Walsh) and T.L. (Price), Members of the Board of Directors, fellow AFTE members and guests. I am extremely honored to receive this award because to me it represents the pinnacle of recognition for life time achievement as a firearm and toolmark examiner; a profession that I have been in for the past 32 years. I am humbled that my peers within the AFTE community and Forensic Technology have seen fit to honor me in this way. However, any achievements I have had were accomplished with the assistance and encouragement of others who challenged me to step out of my comfort zone to contribute to this field. I owe a debt of gratitude to Ron Nichols, Jerry Miller, Jim Hamby, Ann Davis, Robert Thompson, Bob Shem and especially my good friend and colleague, John Murdock, who has supported me both professionally and personally throughout the years.

FTI is a company that has served our community well over the years and has contributed much to further our discipline by continually seeking out new technology on our behalf. Of special interest to me has been FTI's development of CMS as a tool to assist in the quantitative evaluation of striated toolmark agreement. Although they would not have had to do so, in 2004 FTI began an effort to integrate consecutive matching striae (CMS) into IBIS so that some day it might be used to enhance our effectiveness in making successful associations between striated markings that appear on fired bullets and cartridge cases.

FTI has made consistent progress towards a solution and has included, in IBIS, a rudimentary striae identification tool based on CMS for 3D bullets. I commend FTI for continuing to direct long term resources into the continued development of CMS as a component of IBIS.

This award comes at a time when our discipline is under increased scrutiny by the general scientific community and those who take advantage of individual cases exemplifying substandard work and then magnifying them to infer that our profession is somehow plagued with systemic problems. Most recently our profession has been specifically challenged by two reports published by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) that have in part expressed deep concerns about the validity and reliability of what we do. The most recent of which is the NAS report entitled "Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States – A Path Forward". After failing to evaluate the scientific underpinnings of our discipline, we are lumped in with other "Comparative Forensic Sciences". Out of thirteen NAS recommendations, six apply to us and I am proud to report that AFTE, working with SWGGUN have already largely addressed these six NAS recommendations for improvement by:

1. conducting and sponsoring annual training seminars involving the theory and practice of firearm and toolmark examination and identification,
2. the publication of our peer reviewed quarterly journal,

3. the adoption of a comprehensive ethics code and enforcement procedure,
4. the publication of a training manual, a procedures manual, and a glossary of terms and definitions associated with this specialized area of forensic science,
5. the adoption of the AFTE Standardization for Comparison Documentation,
6. the adoption in 1992 of the AFTE Theory of Identification, and
7. the adoption in 1999 of a certification program.

The cumulative result has been for most of us to provide the criminal justice system with reliable and well documented findings regarding the identification of firearms and toolmarks. Since I have experience in latent finger prints, footwear and tire track identification, I can say with confidence that the discipline of firearm and toolmark identification is currently the best prepared of the “comparative sciences” to meet the current challenges brought upon us by our detractors. If Mr. Goddard were alive today, I can confidently say that he would look upon the present status of our profession with great favor.

Finally, in regard to the name that appears on this award, Calvin Goddard, I recently read with interest an imaginary interview written by the editors of Crime Lab Report entitled “The father of firearm identification speaks – an Interview with Calvin Goddard” into which actual comments made by Goddard were woven. The interview was masterfully written in such a way that after reading it, I felt as if I knew this man. A man largely responsible for judicial acceptance of the discipline of forensic firearm identification. What struck me most about this interview was Goddard’s response to the question asking what final piece of advice he would offer for the Forensic Sciences; to which Goddard replied “Never stop building upon the existing research and never be satisfied with the state of the art. Continue to develop the science of firearm identification despite what the detractors have to say. The truth will win in the end”. It is this comment by Goddard that captures the essence of the spirit in which this award is given. And it is within this context that I hope future presentations of this prestigious award will inspire others in this field to carry on in the great quest of continually moving our profession forward.

Thank you for being here.