

A Message from the President

April 2001

Fellow Members,

As this is being written, it's budget preparation time at most agencies. A stressful time as decisions are made that determine future effectiveness. Reflecting on the process of preparing budget requests and planning for the future in general, I am reminded of how easy it is to focus on new hardware and technology, and not the personnel that utilize the tools being asked for. Requesting a new piece of equipment and making grandiose claims of improved efficiency looks good on paper and sometimes leads administrators to believe that more and better equipment requires fewer personnel. Worse than that is when they believe the equipment does all the work and can be operated by people with no specialized training! Nothing could be further from the truth and we must be on guard against this erroneous thinking.

I recently saw a documentary on the next generation of passenger airliners. It was said (as a joke I think) that the cockpit crew of these new automated marvels would consist of a "pilot" and a monkey. The "pilot" to welcome passengers on board and the monkey to bite the pilots hand if he tried to touch anything in the cockpit.

As an organization, the F.D.I.A.I was formed for 9 stated reasons. These include "To keep its' members apprised of the latest techniques and discoveries in Forensic Identification" "To encourage the improvement of the science of Forensic Identification" and "To encourage research in scientific identification". So it is appropriate that we look at new technology and seek to incorporate it in our work, but the remaining Aims and Objectives of our Association deal with "persons actively engaged", "members" and "collective knowledge" etc. There is a reason for this emphasis on people. There is a reason that training is a major focus of our association.

The science of Forensics is about **people** doing a technical job that they were **trained** to do. It might seem that we are only worried about being "replaced" or forgotten, but as professionals in our field we know what is required to make these marvels of technology produce results. No equipment in the world can compensate for a poorly trained operator or technician. We should constantly remind ourselves and our agencies of this simple fact.

Take an interest in your career, argue for the training you need to effectively do your job, and pass the knowledge you acquire on to others. Offer to conduct in-house training classes at your agency, or perhaps work with a neighboring agency to arrange regional training classes. We should all consider ourselves capable of conducting training in our field and it looks great in court when you can say that you are an instructor in your field.

The Florida Division of the I.A.I. exists to improve your knowledge, help us achieve that goal. I invite your comments and suggestions.

William Schade
President

