

Report of the Standardization Committee of the International Ass'n for Identification - August 1, 1973

In 1970, at the 55th Annual Conference of the International Association for Identification, a Resolution was adopted which resulted in the creation of a Standardization Committee. Subsequent to the Conference, a Committee of 11 members was appointed, consisting of individuals whose aggregate experience in the identification field amounted to roughly 250 years.

The assignment given to the Committee covered two specific areas: (1) To determine the minimum number of friction ridge characteristics which must be present in two impressions in order to establish positive identification, and (2) To recommend the minimum requirements of training and experience which a person must possess in order to be considered qualified to give testimony on friction ridge impressions before a grand jury or court of law. Each of the foregoing constituted a task of considerable significance, since any recommendations made by the Committee and accepted by the IAI would undoubtedly attract wide attention from identification personnel, as well as from legal and judicial authorities throughout the world.

Members of the Committee were in agreement that their attention would first be given to the question of determining the feasibility of recommending a minimum number of ridge characteristics as a requirement for positive identification. The Committee likewise agreed that the study would require a substantial amount of time, and warranted a careful and deliberate approach rather than one of expediency in order to meet a predetermined deadline.

Interim reports were presented to the delegates at 1971 Annual Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, and at the 1972 Annual Conference in Milwaukee, Wisc. The reports analyzed at some length the responses which the Committee received to a questionnaire sent to identification officials throughout the world in March, 1971, inquiring as to existing legal requirements, agency policies, and operational procedures in the areas of friction ridge identification and court presentation. The responses confirmed the fact that existing national or local laws in the responding jurisdictions do not mandate any minimum number of matching characteristics before permitting friction ridge evidence to be admitted in court. The responding agencies further indicated that they adhere to a policy

which permits their qualified technicians to testify as to positive identification based upon a varying number of matching ridge characteristics, dependent upon a variety of factors including clarity of the impressions, types of characteristics, location of the characteristics in relation to the core or delta, absence of unexplainable differences, conditions under which the latent or "unknown" impression may have been found and so forth. In short, the responses emphasized the fact that each identification represents a unique set of circumstances, and the mandating of a minimum number of matching ridge characteristics would therefore be impractical.

In submitting interim reports in 1971 and 1972, the Standardization Committee strongly recommended that a federally funded in-depth study be conducted in order to establish comprehensive statistics concerning the frequency, type and location of ridge characteristics in a significantly large data base of fingerprint impressions. In the opinion of the Committee, such a study, in addition to having potential sociological and medical values, might well provide the basis upon which a determination could be made as to the practicality of utilizing weighted values when comparing friction ridge characteristics for purposes of establishing positive identification, with additional weight being given to the more unique types of characteristics. General guidelines to be followed in the study, including standardization of terminology with respect to the different types of ridge characteristics, were included in the interim reports.

During June of 1972, a proposal was submitted to Project SEARCH for the funding of such a study through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. Although the proposal has been accepted by Project SEARCH, a formal request for LEAA support has not yet been submitted.

Limited studies of friction ridge characteristic distribution by type, frequency and location have of course been conducted by various agencies. The members of the Standardization Committee have reviewed the results of all such studies brought to their attention.

Based upon a review of all available technical data, upon the experience of the personnel in those agencies throughout the world who responded to the questionnaire referred to earlier in this report, upon the results of ridge characteristic studies conducted to date, and upon the personal expertise of the individual members

of this Association, the Standardization Committee proposes that the following statement be officially endorsed as representing the unanimous opinion of the delegates assembled here today at our 58th Annual Conference:

The International Association for Identification assembled in its 58th Annual Conference at Jackson, Wyoming, this First Day of August, 1973, based upon a three-year study by its Standardization Committee, hereby states that no valid basis exists at this time for requiring that a pre-determined minimum number of friction ridge characteristics must be present in two impressions in order to establish positive identification. The foregoing reference to friction ridge characteristics applies equally to fingerprints, palm prints, toe prints and sole prints of the human body.

Finally, the Committee recommends that the incoming president extend the life of the Committee for an additional year in order that it may give consideration to the feasibility of recommending minimum requirements of training and experience which a person should possess in order to be considered qualified to give testimony on friction ridge impressions before a grand jury or court of law.

The members of the Committee wish to extend their appreciation to the many identification officials and technical personnel throughout the world who have cooperated in the work of the Committee during the past three years.

Signed: Paul D. McCann, Chairman
Deputy Director, Division of
Criminal Justice Services,
Albany, New York

T. Dickerson Cooke, Director, Institute of Applied Science,
Chicago, Illinois
Capt. Emil G. Giese, Cmdg., Identification Section, Police Dept.,
Chicago, Illinois
Walter G. Hoetzer, Past Presiden, IAI and former Identification
Officer, Police Dept., Utica, N. Y.
Prof. Herbert L. MacDonell, Criminalist and President, MacDon-
nell Associates, Corning, N. Y.
Prof. Andre A. Moenssens, University of Richmond, School of
Law, Richmond, Virginia
Beverly E. Ponder, Special Agent Supervisor, FBI Identification
Division, Washington, D. C.
Rolland L. Soule, Associate Director, Southern Police Institute,
University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky
Thomas J. Spurlock, Supervisor, Records Bureau, Metropolitan
Dade County Public Safety Department, Miami, Florida
Lester O. Thoensen, Retired Chief of Police, Davenport, Iowa
Joel Tisdale, Chief, Identification & Criminal Records Division,
Texas Dept. of Public Safety, Austin, Texas

NASH RECEIVES DONDERO AWARD

The 1973 John A. Dondero Award was presented to Det. Lt. Ernest W. Nash, Michigan State Police, by Mrs. Marilyn Picard, daughter of John Dondero, at the annual banquet at Jackson, Wyoming.

This award, made by the family of John Dondero in his memory, is given to an active member of I.A.I. who, in the opinion of the Board of Directors, has made the most significant and valuable contribution in the area of identification and related sciences during the calendar year immediately preceding the annual conference of the association. Nominations for the award may be made by any member.

In presenting the award, Mrs. Picard quoted freely from the nominating letter submitted by Farrell Babcock:

"It is my honor and privilege to submit the name of Det. Lt. Ernest W. Nash of the Michigan State Police for nomination as recipient of the Dondero Award.

"My submission of his name for consideration is based on my personal knowledge of his sincere dedication to police work and in particular his dedication to the identification phases of law enforcement.

"Lt. Nash joined the Michigan State Police in April, 1956, worked his way up through the ranks, and in January, 1964, was assigned to the Latent Print Division. During his tenure in the Latent Print Division of the State Police he handled latent prints from nearly every police department in the state and was involved in testifying in many courts throughout the state on print identification. In December, 1968, he was promoted to Detective Sergeant and placed in charge of the Voice Identification Unit. Since that time he has been assigned to and is still in charge of the Voice Identification Unit. His selection was based on his work in the Latent Print Division and on his knowledge of electronics. After visiting the Voiceprint Laboratories in Somerville, N. J. in the fall of 1966, he advised that such voiceprints could be used in the successful investigation of crime. This recommendation lead to a grant from the U. S. Department of Justice to conduct scientific research to validate voiceprints as evidence in courts.

"Lt. Nash worked with Dr. Oscar Tosi of Michigan State University to develop the research design and assisted in its implementation. During that same period, Lt. Nash enrolled at Michigan State University in the Department of Audiology and Speech Sciences, pursuing a bachelor's degree to further qualify, thereby, assisting in having voiceprints acceptable as scientific evidence. He began using voiceprints in