

Maureen Casey-Owens: The 2008

David J. Purtell

The **Albert S. Osborn Award of Excellence** was created to recognize those individuals who have contributed above and beyond what is expected of a Society member.

The criteria for the ASO Award are as follows:

A. The recipient must be a living member in good standing of the ASQDE and may be either a Regular or Life member at the time of the nomination.

B. The recipient must have been active in the field of questioned document examination for a period of at least 25 years and must have been a member of the ASQDE for a period of at least 20 years.

C. The award shall only be bestowed on persons who have attained exceptional distinction in terms of:

1. Cumulative activities, such as professional research or literary accomplishments which advance the field of questioned document examination, and

2. Outstanding service to the ASQDE over a long period of time, such service resulting in generally recognized and beneficial improvements in the Society.

Please email Farrell Shiver at president@asqde.org to nominate someone for the 2009 award. You must include information citing how the nominee meets the ASO criteria and it must be received by **December 31, 2008**.

Early in the career of this author, a professor at the University of Chicago's School of Business provided to this writer some sage advice. He said,



essentially, that a worker can be either a peon or a professional in his endeavors. A peon works from nine until five, five days a week. A professional goes beyond the basic requirements of a job, endeavoring always to make worthwhile contributions in one's field. These contributions will entail a certain amount of the worker's discretionary time to research problems, to write papers, to participate in scientific forums, and to volunteer on boards or hold office in professional organizations. This article is about the accomplishments of such an individual.

Maureen Casey Owens is a graduate of Mundelein College, now incorporated into Loyola University Chicago. A Chemistry major and a Math minor provided her with a good science background to enter the field of forensic science. In 1961, she applied for and accepted a position as a

Physical Science Aide in the Document Section of the FBI Laboratory. Returning to Chicago, she applied to the Chicago Police Department, and in

1963 began her career in Document Examination in the Scientific Crime Detection Laboratory.

Maureen came on board in a civilian capacity, as the technical laboratory staff at that time was composed solely of

sworn police officers. She studied under the tutorship of then Chief Document Examiner David J. Purtell, and would advance to become head of the Document section herself in 1974.

It is the belief of the author that the essence of a good document examiner is, in good measure, dependent not only upon the quality and intensity of the training received, but the industriousness of the trainee. Thus, Maureen's early months of training involved not only becoming familiar with the literature, learning proper laboratory procedures and utilizing laboratory equipment correctly, but also such grease monkey jobs as taking apart typewriters and checkwriters to study the parts and movements which could cause defects in a machine.

Taking advantage of the resources of Chicago and its surrounding areas, Maureen regularly visited

Albert S. Osborn Award Recipient

manufacturers of typewriters, checkwriters and rubber stamps; paper mills, printing houses, security printers, banks, and other document related industries, to learn how defects might develop in the manufacture as well as the use of a product. She took a course on Paper Selection given by the Graphic Arts Association of Illinois and subsequently joined the Paper Club of Greater Chicago, and the Illinois Association of Young Printing Executives, trade organizations devoted to the dissemination of information in the paper and printing industries. She later served as President of the Paper Club.

In the 1960's and 1970's, Chicago was often host to the many Office Products and Stationery Suppliers trade shows, and here Maureen was able to learn first hand about the newest office products and bring back to the laboratory myriad specimens for inclusion in the document reference library. In a similar vein, her knowledge of handwriting was enhanced through a study and collection of Penmanship System manuals, teacher's instructional manuals, and physically taking handwriting standards from hundreds of individuals in the course of her work.

Another part of Ms. Owens' training included examining cases submitted to her by such respected document examiners as Ordway Hilton, Donald Doud and George Swett. She was asked to do a complete workup and report,

substantiating in detail her findings. George Swett was once delighted to find that she had solved a typewriter problem by picking up on a measurement he had overlooked.

Ms Owens was active in the Professional Organizations related to Questioned Documents. She is a retired Fellow of the American Academy of

forming committee of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners in 1977, subsequently serving on the Board and as Treasurer of the ABFDE.

Maureen attended nearly all meetings of the AAFS and ASQDE, actively participating in the programs by presenting papers, being a member



(from left) Dominick Owens, Maureen Casey-Owens, Dave Purtell, Howard Rile

Forensic Sciences, having served in several capacities in the AAFS; as Questioned Documents Section Secretary and Chairman, representative to the Executive Committee, Vice President, Secretary and then President from 1984 to 1985. She received the Questioned Documents Section Award in 1987. Maureen was the third woman to join the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners; served the organization in many capacities, and was President from 1984 to 1986. She was a member of the

of a panel, or organizing outside programs. These outside programs might include visits to banks, printing companies, paper converters or equipment manufacturers. She was also known as the unofficial social chairwoman of these meetings for arranging luncheons and dinners for the participants.

Most of all, Maureen enjoyed her many years as a member of the Chicago

continued on page 16

Why Help Trainees?

Howard C. Rile, Jr.

One significant change was made this year and that involved assisting trainees. As you may recall from the email I sent out earlier, it came to my attention that several trainees had been prevented from coming to the meeting after their agencies had withdrawn the support they initially promised. An arrangement was made whereby the Society contributed approximately \$500 per trainee to assist them in coming to the meeting. The trainees did not get a free ride. They had to use their own time and contribute at least 50% of the other expenses to match whatever assistance the Society has provided.

I'm pleased to report that the response of the members in general to this rather unorthodox development has been very positive. Thanks in large part to the auctioneering skills of Peter Tytell, additional funds were raised at the auction following the President's Reception that more than offset the expenditure for the trainees. It also demonstrated a very reasonable use for some of the duplicate material in the library. In addition, it also brought to my attention a very incredible donation that I will discuss further later.

At the ABFDE workshop that was held immediately prior to the beginning of the AGM, a question was asked of the attendees about how many people expected to be practicing as document examiners in 10 years. Well over two-thirds of the people at the workshop indicated that they would not be practicing in 10 years. If nothing else, this emphasizes the need for the Society to encourage new members and trainees to become familiar with and actively participate in the ASQDE, not just for the benefit of the ASQDE, but the profession in general.

One member recognizes this problem and is willing to do something about it. Dan Purdy has made an incredibly generous donation of \$10,000 (Canadian) to the ASQDE, specifically to assist trainees to attend and become familiar with the ASQDE. Following are excerpts of a letter I received from Dan:

"I've been thinking about making a worthwhile contribution to the Society for several years. The reason is really very simply that...I had a very enjoyable career the past 40 years. Much of what I've achieved as a forensic document examiner has come from attending ASQDE meetings, first as an invited guest, and later as a member of our organization. It's impossible to assign a value to the knowledge I received or the many friends I've made along the way.

...This confirms my intention to donate \$10,000 [Canadian] which the Society can use to establish a fund, endowment, grant, benefaction or whatever you want to call it that will help trainees or junior examiners continue to grow and develop in their new career. I hope other members will recognize the benefits of such an undertaking and make contributions of their own.

There is only one stipulation I wish to make regarding the purpose of the fund and I feel strongly about it. I want the fund to provide financial assistance to trainees with more than one year experience or newly qualified non-member examiners with less than 1 year experience based on need and merit. I intend to make a few suggestions in that regard, but they will certainly not be binding. Rather, they will be presented for consideration only. I think it best if the fine details regarding the administration of the fund were determined by members of the EC."

I think it truly can be said that Dan not only talks the talk, but walks the walk. I

hope Dan's incredibly generous gift will motivate other members to make donations of their own. Members can also consider other ways of supporting this initiative. For example, books and other items could be donated to be auctioned at future meetings, old equipment, stock and/or bond donations will also be accepted. The ASQDE is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; consequently, all donations are tax deductible and a receipt will be issued to every donor.

Why help trainees? Because it is in the ASQDE's best interest to do so.

ASO Honoree: Casey-Owens

(continued from page 15)

Police Crime Laboratory. She found the combination of police work and document examination to be a unique and rewarding profession. Whatever her duties, she always maintained an active caseload, testified in court, trained new document examiners, and lectured on document examination to police groups, business and community groups, and at law school and university courses.

Retiring from the Chicago Police Department, Ms Owens began a successful private practice in Chicago. After moving to North Carolina, her last hurrah involved identifying the Anonymous author of the book *Primary Colors*. She and her new hometown became quickly acquainted when the local papers picked up the story from the *Washington Post*. Today, she and her husband, Dominick, enjoy the serenity of a quiet creek in Hampstead, North Carolina.