

# Satoru C. “John” Shimoda: The 2007

Robert J. Muehlberger and Frank E. Franck

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.

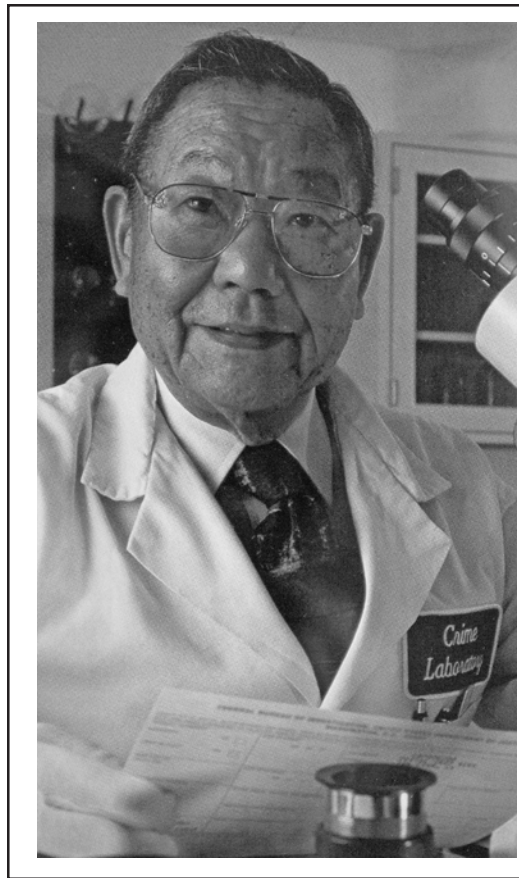
C. The award shall only be bestowed on persons who have attained exceptional distinction in terms of:

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 Howard Rile at [president@asqde.org](mailto:president@asqde.org) if you wish to nominate someone for the 2008 award. Your nomination must include information citing how the nominee meets the ASO criteria.*

Mr. Satoru C. (John) Shimoda, ASQDE Life Member, received the Albert S. Osborn Award of Excellence at the 65<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners. Mr. Shimoda is the 6<sup>th</sup> recipient of this award which is given to a regular or life member of the



ASQDE who has made a major contribution to the field of forensic document examination. Mr. Shimoda, in a very unassuming manner, has influenced, encouraged, and facilitated the training of a large number of both domestic and international forensic document examiners. As a member of

the ASQDE, he worked his way through the various committees, chairs and offices to become the Society's 15<sup>th</sup> President. Working behind the scenes, he was instrumental in facilitating the entry of public examiners into the Society, as well as the membership of female examiners. Until his retirement in 1999, Mr. Shimoda attended every annual meeting of the Society and actively participated as chairperson, panel member and /or presenter.

Mr. Shimoda's career in Questioned Documents came about during his service with the United States Army's Counter-Intelligence and Criminal Investigation Branch in the early 1950's. During his training he became acquainted with Russell Osborn and was invited to study in New York under Albert D. Osborn and Frank Murphy. He was the only public examiner to ever study under the Osborn Firm. He and his family were soon considered as members of the Osborn family, a relationship which grew and flourished. In 1960 he was appointed Chief of the United States Army Crime Laboratories. He served in that capacity until 1966

when he was approached by James V. P. Conway and Simeon Wilson regarding employment as the Assistant Director of the United States Postal Inspection Service Western Region Crime Laboratory, which he accepted. Upon Simeon Wilson's retirement, Mr. Shimoda was appointed Director of the

# Albert S. Osborn Award Recipient

Crime Laboratory. The services of his laboratory were sought out by not only Postal Inspectors but by United States Attorneys, local law enforcement agencies and many federal law enforcement agencies throughout the west coast. Under his tenure, Mr. Shimoda saw the Western Region Crime Laboratory celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries. Through his guidance, the Western Region Crime Laboratory had been instrumental in the training of numerous Questioned Document Examiners. Document trainees from as far as the Philippines and as close as San Francisco received their training and became successful Forensic Document Examiners in a large part due to the ‘open arm’ training policies espoused by Mr. Shimoda.



*ASQDE President Howard C. Rile, Jr. congratulates John Shimoda on receiving the Albert S. Osborn Award.*

Mr. Shimoda became one of the first Diplomates of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners and fully supported the certification program. He is also a Retired Fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, and through the years has actively participated within the Questioned Document Section. He is a Life Member of the California Division of the

International Association for Identification.

As a practicing Forensic Document Examiner, he has worked literally thousands of questioned document case, including the notorious San Francisco ‘Zodiac’ case, from 1966 thru 1974. He has been accepted as an expert

regarding ink examinations utilizing chromatographic techniques and fostered the notion of the “Writer’s Palmar Impression,” a latent print category now incorporated in automated fingerprint identification systems.

At the time of his retirement, Mr. Shimoda had accumulated more than 55 years of Federal Government Service. He was the oldest United States Postal Inspection Service employee and the employee with the most Federal Service ever with the Inspection Service.

As quoted in the March/April 2000 issue of *Postal Life*, “He retired on the last day of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, having earned the respect of everyone who had worked with him.”



*John Shimoda celebrates with his wife, Betty (right) and daughter, Carol (left).*

*continued on page 16*

## ASO Honoree: Shimoda (continued from page 15)

Mr. Shimoda is the epitome of the true professional; a dedicated Forensic Document Examiner always interested in the profession, eager to assist, raring to lend a hand, and forever encouraging the younger examiner. "Thirty years as a documents sleuth has not dampened Satoru (John) Shimoda's fascination with the business" as quoted in the *Western Region Bulletin* #139, dated 5/26/75.

Mr. Shimoda has often been described as unpretentious, which is defined as "modest, humble, soft-

spoken, subdued, quiet and low-key"; *Daly City Herald* dated 2/27/76, "an unpretentious, middle aged Japanese-American"; *Japanese American Daily* dated 3/2/76, "an unpretentious Nisei heads one of the four sophisticated Postal Inspection Service Crime Laboratories in the country...one who "once met" is "impossible to forget."

Mr. Shimoda may be unpretentious but his contributions to the field of forensic document examination meet the standards of excellence recognized by the Albert S. Osborn award.

## Guest Invitations for 2008 Asheville AGM

Registration for the upcoming Asheville AGM will open in April, and all abstracts for papers to be presented are due May 15. In order to give guests you'd like to invite to attend and/or participate in the meeting plenty of time to make necessary arrangements, including submitting an abstract for a presentation or poster, please let them know the meeting dates and deadlines *now*.

Many guests who have previously attended and not presented may not be aware of their status regarding our participation requirements. Guests must present a paper once out of each three times they attend, or they will only receive a fourth invitation once an abstract and paper (or poster) have been received for that year's meeting.

We welcome the participation of new and returning guests, and encourage them to become ASQDE members, so early invitations will enable your guests to determine their status and have time to prepare a meaningful abstract for this year's meeting before the May 15 deadline.

Potential guests may contact **Nanette Davis** at [asqjournal@aol.com](mailto:asqjournal@aol.com) to inquire about their participation status, or ASQDE members may request the information on behalf of their guest prior to requesting a guest invitation.

Guest invitation and abstract forms will be available online early in 2008 for your convenience.

## Profile of an ASQDE Guest

### Susan Morton

Tatiana Shlafer was born in Murom, one of the oldest Russian cities, and one mentioned in fairytales. When she was three years old her family relocated to Kazakhstan. For over 20 years she lived in Tomsk, a Siberian city with six universities, where she graduated with a degree in Jurisprudence from Tomsk State University, the oldest university in the eastern part of Russia.

For 12 years she worked as a Forensic Document Examiner with the Ministry of Interior, achieving the rank of Major.

Four years ago Tatiana (with her son and cat) relocated to the United States to marry Sasha, whom she had met 19 years ago through Esperanto, the international language.

Now Tatiana lives with her family in Walnut Creek, California, and volunteers at Contra Costa County Forensics and Crime Laboratory of the Sheriff's Office and at Walnut Creek Police Department. Tatiana hopes to resume her career as a Forensic Examiner. Tatiana attended the ASQDE meeting in Boulder as my guest and presented a paper on the statistical database of letter forms used by document examiners in Russia.



*On October 23, 2007, Tatiana Shlafer (left) became a U.S. citizen. She was sworn in with 1,602 other new citizens from 101 different countries.*