

## **AFTE History**

In 1969, in recognition of the potential requirement for an association dealing specifically with the identification of firearms and toolmarks, thirty-five police and civilian specialists from throughout the United States and Canada gathered at the Chicago Police Department Crime Laboratory to discuss formation of an association. Many of these original participants had informally gathered for years during annual meetings of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) and felt the need for an association to address the requirements of firearms and toolmark examiners. The purpose of the conference was described by a statement from the program that read “this meeting is being held to determine the advisability of forming an organization of Firearms and Tool Mark Examiners. It is hoped that the organization will consider future meetings that could be devoted to the presentation of scientific and technical papers, descriptions of new techniques and procedures, review of instrumentation and the solution of common problems encountered in these scientific fields”. The formation meeting was a success and the participants decided to form an association to be named the Association of Firearm and Tool Mark Examiners (AFTE). The officers elected to lead the association were: President Walter J. Howe, Wilton, CT (now retired); Secretary John C. Stauffer, Chicago Police Department Crime Laboratory, Chicago, IL (now deceased); and Charles M. Wilson, Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory, Madison, WI (now deceased). The first official publication of the association was AFTE Newsletter Number 1, published on May 15, 1969 (the name of the newsletter was subsequently changed to the AFTE Journal in 1972). From the original thirty-five participants, the number of members continued to grow as information concerning the newly created association reached other firearm and toolmark examiners. Specific credit should be given to two individuals who were very instrumental in the formation of AFTE: Burton D. Munhall, H.P. White Laboratory, Maryland (now deceased) and Walter J. Howe, Wilton, CT.

In 1970, and each subsequent year to date, the Association of Firearm and Toolmark Examiners (AFTE) has hosted an Annual Training Seminar at a location throughout the United States and Canada. The meeting site is based on both having members volunteer to host the meeting as well as the needs of the members of the association as determined by the Board of Directors. One primary purpose of the annual seminars is to provide for the interchange of information as it relates to all aspects of the science of firearms and toolmark identification.

In 1974, the Association of Firearm and Toolmark Examiners (AFTE) hosted its 5th Anniversary Annual Training Seminar in Washington, DC. Some 87 individuals, representing three countries, attended the seminar.

In 1979, the Association of Firearm and Toolmark Examiners (AFTE) hosted its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Training Seminar in Milwaukee, WI. 149 individuals, representing seven countries, attended the annual training seminar.

In 1980, AFTE published the AFTE Glossary. The glossary consisted of 219 pages of definitions and illustrations related to the field of firearm and tool-mark identification, commonly used abbreviations, various formulas for determining bullet energy and rate of spin, and useful chemical formulas. The glossary was the product of the five member AFTE Standardization Committee, assisted by at least 57 other individuals. Subsequent to publication of the glossary in

1980, a second more comprehensive edition was published in 1982. A third edition of the glossary was published in 1994. This edition featured material from the first two editions with additional definitions and illustrations; new appendices which included definitions for computer terminology, fingernails examination (a toolmark in a biological matrix), knives, machining terms, gunshot wound terminology, and shooting scene reconstruction terminology.

In 1982, AFTE published an official training manual to be used as a modular guide for the training of firearm and toolmark examiners. It was the intention of the AFTE Training Committee to develop and provide a modular education program that could then be tailored to meet the needs of individuals and their agencies. The training committee, consisting of six experienced examiners, and aided by numerous other members of the association, produced a 400 -page manual that has provided an excellent source of material for assisting in training numerous firearm and toolmark examiners.

In 1984, the Association of Firearm and Toolmark Examiners (AFTE) hosted its 15th Anniversary Annual Training Seminar in Metairie, Louisiana. Some 126 individuals, representing seven countries, attended the seminar.

In 1989, the Association of Firearm and Tool-mark Examiners (AFTE) hosted its 20th Anniversary Annual Training Seminar in Virginia Beach, VA. Some 210 individuals, representing 12 countries, attended the seminar.

In 1994, the Association of Firearm and Tool-mark Examiners (AFTE) hosted its 25th Anniversary Annual Training Seminar in Indianapolis, Indiana. Some 300 individuals, representing 21 countries, attended the seminar.

In 1998, in the AFTE Journal (Volume 30, Number 1), articles were published that were the result of some excellent research concerning both criteria for identification studies and striae reproducibility on a firearms barrel. These articles and one concerning meeting the Daubert challenge (a judicial notice for many of the forensic sciences in the United States) are part of an ongoing process by members of AFTE to fully articulate the science behind their field of firearm and toolmark identification.

In 1999, in late March and early April, several members of the Association of Firearm and Toolmark Examiners (AFTE) participated as members of the 'Angoff' Committee. This committee was formed to provide validation of the testing methodology to be used as part of an ongoing certification study process.

In 1999, the Association of Firearms and Tool-marks Examiners (AFTE) celebrated its 30th Anniversary as an association. AFTE conducted the Annual Training Seminar which was held in Williamsburg, Virginia.