

Steve Molnar Key Person of the Year Award Committee

[Past Award Recipients](#)

Mission

- To research and select an AFTE Member who has made significant contributions to the association through the submission of publications to the AFTE Journal.

Committee History

The Key Person of the Year award is named after Steve Molnar. Steve was a firearms examiner from the state of Ohio and who passed away in the early 1980's. Steve was instrumental in bringing to life and supporting the life's blood of our association, what was then the AFTE Newsletter that has now evolved into the AFTE Journal. Steve was the editor of the Newsletter during AFTE's fledgling years. Steve saw the Newsletter as an opportunity to be more than just a newsletter, but as a conduit for exchange of technical information among all of our members.

He also recognized the importance of publishing high quality papers that could be referred to by all firearm and toolmark examiners. To that end, Steve not only acted as a publisher, but submitted many articles of his own to inspire others to make technical contributions that would further our discipline and benefit future firearm examiners.

It was his efforts that greatly assisted the Newsletter in getting off to a strong start during those tenuous first few years. AFTE has honored Steve Molnar by using his name to recognize and thank other individuals who have made significant contributions to the AFTE Journal. The Molnar committee was formed to research and select worthy candidates for this honor.

Historically the committee has always been unanimous in their choice of Molnar Award recipients and has been confident that all recipients have clearly deserved the award. Nonetheless concern about the effectiveness of the selection process has occasionally been voiced, as were some fears of possible manipulation of the process by potential awardees.

Three serious shortcomings have characterized the selection process as it was implemented until 2001. First, the Molnar Award selection was based on only the past year's Journal articles.

1. The AFTE member who published one or two well researched and written articles every year might never receive deserved recognition, but clearly would have contributed significantly to our profession over his or her career.
2. Some published articles reflect extraordinary research efforts whose significance shapes our profession for years to come. For example, imagine Al Biasotti publishing his Master's thesis on identification criteria, and the Molnar committee assigning a significance equal to that of any other well written AFTE article! No mechanism has been in place within the evaluation system to effectively incorporate degrees of significance.
3. The final criticism of the selection process is the fear that an individual could intentionally publish several articles in one year and "guarantee" receiving the award.

This possibility introduces a competitive aspect that is in conflict with the philosophy underlying the Molnar Award. Changes to the selection process were deemed necessary. Changes that were made in the evaluation process were intended to respond to the above problems and were grounded in our understanding of the principles embodied in the Molnar Award's purpose. With this in mind the Molnar Award is intended to additionally recognize any member whose contributions reflect a personal commitment to improving our profession and AFTE throughout their career. The Molnar selection process is now being directed at an individual's efforts throughout a career* rather than one year's effort within that career, as was the case until 2000. Just as the recipient's commitment can be expected to continue throughout his or her career, the honor bestowed by the Molnar Award highlights that individual's efforts throughout the remainder of their career**. In other words, "once honored always honored". The further philosophy behind this approach is to even the playing field among those who make significant contributions over a very short period of time and those who make less frequent but steady contributions over a long period of time. This mechanism allows for recognition of more senior members as well as newer members.

** The evaluation process is currently being directed at the last ten years of AFTE Journal articles.*

*** A member will be bestowed the Molnar Award only once throughout his or her career, and past Molnar Award recipients will not be considered for future Molnar Awards.*

To implement this modified selection process the year 2001 was especially busy. The committee had the task of reviewing publications in not only one year but also the previous ten years (Volumes 23 - 32) of the AFTE Journal to comply with the modifications in the selection process. The job was extremely tedious and time consuming but was successfully completed. A storable Microsoft word table was created with a running compilation of:

1. Authors name
2. Publication reference [Year, Vol., No., and page number]
3. The averaged point scores for each publication by the committee members. The purpose of the storable table was to ease in the management of the running ten-year tabulations of total point scores by contributing authors in the Journal. The table was completed and is now being used as a very convenient means of updating the total point scores relative to the ten years reflecting the current years' award. The additional burden of reviewing the previous ten years of the journal has provided the committee with a permanent ten year basis for which to drop the scores of the last year and add the scores of the current year to tabulate total point scores to aide in the selection of future award recipients.

At the October 2011 mid-year Board meeting, some changes were made to the Molnar Award scoring guidelines. The following are the changes that affect the scoring of AFTE Journal articles and the award recipient.

- The author must have been a member or "applicant" of AFTE at the time the article was published.
- Multiple authors will split the appropriate amount of points (the score given to each author is the number of points scored by the article divided by the number of authors).

- All ties will be handled by the consensus of the Committee.

The points have been awarded in this fashion since the 2012 Molnar Award. None of the points awarded prior to 2012 scores have been changed; however some of these considerations may be taken into account while determining future recipients.

The committee individuals undeniably base their recipient choice upon subjective evaluation. However, the evaluations are conducted independently, and in ten years there has been no instance where the selection was not unanimous with the first evaluation compilation. This reflects uniformity in what Molnar committee members value in the AFTE Journal contributions, and additionally reflects what the AFTE membership wants to see published in the Journal.

The committee is comprised of a chair and four committee members.

Chairperson - Duties/Responsibilities

- Assist the board in the selection of committee members to serve on the committee.
- Provide direction and guidance to participating committee members during the selection process.
- Provide written report(s) to the board containing recommendations of an award candidate for each year (Volume) the journal is published.
- Maintain up to date records of the selection process in order to defend the selection process if it were challenged and to provide sufficient records to allow a smooth transition from one committee chairperson to the next.

Committee Members - Duties/Responsibilities

- Assist the committee chairperson in the selection of an award recipient (described in the *Guidelines* section of this report)

Selection Guidelines

The evaluation process used requires that committee members:

1. Read all articles and assign points to an author or authors. Selectors are offered general guidelines for evaluation and point assignment. These guidelines are noted below. A third point category (25-30 pts) has been added in response to the desire to be able to acknowledge the special significance of some published research. The other two point categories have been expanded from previous ranges to offer evaluators a broader range of discrimination.
 - a. **Assessment Criteria for the Molnar Award**
 - i. **0 - 5 points** - Should include general information articles, e.g. new guns, ammo, bullet recovery tank designs, etc., basic case presentations that involve no research, reprinted articles. Typically the "potpourri" type of material is in this category. Some case presentations will cross over into the next point range.

- ii. **6 – 15 points** - Articles in this range will be thoroughly researched and presented clearly. Most of the journal articles of substance will fall in this category. Length is not a factor, but will often reflect the better-researched articles that present material in depth. Information that is well researched, but is primarily a reiteration of material from other sources, will fall into the lower end of this point range.
 - iii. **25 – 30 points** - Articles in this grouping must be extraordinary. The selector must believe that a significant impact or contribution has been made to our profession by the research and/or information presented. Such a designation should be unusual.
- 2. A suggested approach for committee members to keep in mind for conducting critical and unbiased evaluation of published research contributions to the AFTE Journal is as follows:
 - a. **Analyzing the Research of Others**¹ - When analyzing published research, there are several things the reviewer should consider:
 - i. Gather as much information as possible. It is unlikely a single report will contain complete information, but if you investigate other sources, you will be better able to analyze the research.
 - ii. Understand and define all terms
 - iii. Question the method by which the data and information were derived.
 - 1. Were the facts derived from experiments?
 - 2. Were the experiments well executed?
 - 3. Did the experiments include a control group?
 - 4. Were there lots of subjects or only a few?
 - 5. Was the experiment appropriate to what they wanted to know?
 - 6. Have others repeated the experiment with similar results.
 - iv. Question the conclusions.
 - 1. Are the conclusions appropriate based on the data?
 - 2. Was there enough information on which to base the conclusion?
 - v. Uncover assumptions and biases.
 - 1. Was the experimental design biased?
 - 2. Are there underlying assumptions that affect the conclusions?
 - vi. Question the source of the information.
 - 1. Is the source reliable?
 - 2. Is the source an expert or supposed expert?
 - 3. Does the source have anything to gain from the results reported?
 - vii. Examine the big picture.
 - 1. Are the results consistent with other information known?
 - viii. Don't expect all the answers or complete information.
 - ix. Understand your own biases and values and try not to let these interfere with an objective evaluation.
- 3. Report to the committee chairperson the individual point scores for each publication article using the table format described in the *purpose of the committee* section of this report.
- 4. The chairperson will then:

- a. Average the current year's total point scores and add the values (associated with the author and reference) into the master table.
 - b. Drop the entries for the oldest volume.
 - c. Total the accumulated points of the last ten years for each author.
 - d. Sort the candidates by accumulated point score.
 - e. Elect the top-scoring candidate with the following considerations:
 - i. Candidate is not a previous recipient of the award
 - ii. Candidate is a member of AFTE
 - iii. Candidate is in good standing
5. The chairperson will select the highest scoring candidate meeting the above considerations and consult with the committee members for consensus and approval.
NOTE: Committee members are provided the convenience of having the preceding ten-year period of evaluations tabulated by the work of previous committee members. Committee members are not required to re-evaluate the work completed by these participants. However, committee members are not bound by these previous evaluation scores and are free to re-visit publications by authors that have been considered by previous committee members. This mechanism can provide the ability of the committee to re-assess total point scores of potential award candidates who's scores are tied (or are extremely close) requiring a more critical evaluation of their contributions to assist in the final selection of the current year's award recipient.
6. The chairperson will provide a written report to the AFTE Second Vice President with a recommendation for the award.
7. If this candidate is not approved, the committee will supply the next eligible candidate until the AFTE Board of Directors accepts a committee recommendation.
8. The incumbent chairperson will maintain records of each selection process and maintain a file (digital and hard copy) by year to be made available to the Board of Directors or to be provided to the next appointed chairperson for a smooth transition from one chairperson to the next.

[1] Guideline entitled "Analyzing the Research of Others" adapted from Gelinas, R., Machalinski, C., Fundamentals of Biology - #102 – Laboratory Manual, Arlson Crest Publishing Co. , 2000, pg. 4 – 5.