

Steven Johnson, IAI Incoming President, Address to the Membership Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 14, 2014

Good evening, everyone. In the spirit President Hammer conveyed last year, I will try to keep this short. Wow, what a ride! I can't believe a police shift roll call assignment to the evidence car 26 years ago has led to this. Before I get started, I want to thank all of you for attending this year's conference but I want to especially thank our many vendors and conference sponsors. Without their generous support, our conference would not be the success it is. I want to thank our conference staff for their hard work and the Minnesota Division for their support (especially the great weather)! I also want to thank several people, both absent and present, that have had some influence on my being in this humbling position. First, to those who have served before me; thanks for your support, leadership, encouragement and, most of all, being role-models, especially Lesley. She has been a constant source of feedback, wisdom and inspiration in our time serving together on the Board of Directors and through the vice presidencies. I'd also like to thank my family for being here and supporting me: my mom for letting me stay up late tonight, my dad just for staying up late, my wife for being there and my kids for expressing their pride in their dad. Finally, I want to thank those that encouraged me, especially many of my fellow forensic artists; specifically Karen Taylor and Diana Trepkov for challenging me to get more involved. I feel I've got some pretty big shoes to fill but, together, we will move forward into the next century of existence.

Ninety-nine years! Let's put that into perspective. When the original members of our association met in Oakland, California back in 1915, the average price of a new car was \$500, a pound of coffee was 30 cents, gas was 8 cents a gallon, the median home price was \$4800 and eggs were 34 cents a dozen. Unfortunately, you had to do all this on an average annual income of a little over \$1000.

Among the many changes over the last 99 years are the types and rates of crime. Horse thievery was still very common but the homicide rate was actually higher in 1915 than it is today. Much of the success in fighting crime can be attributed to people like you. When Harry Caldwell and his contemporaries gathered together for the first time, I doubt they envisioned the breadth and scope of the IAI over the next century. This coming year, we will be entering our 100th year of existence as an organization. We remain the oldest and largest forensic science identification organization in the world. While we stay in existence, no other organization can claim to be the oldest, but many will vie to become the largest. While I'm not here to call for a contest to see who ends up being the biggest kid on the block, I do

want to encourage all of our members to extol the virtues of being a part of this fantastic association. As the premier forensics practitioner organization, we face many challenges. Media attention and scrutiny on a myriad of disciplines has painted the forensic sciences in an often unflattering light. Despite the professionalism, ethics and honor that our members exhibit daily, there are those who besmirch the reputation of all practitioners when they cut corners, “stretch” the truth, fall prey to bias and generally fail to properly exercise their due diligence when performing their jobs. This scrutiny has also piqued the attention of state and federal legislatures. Combined with the 2009 National Academy of Sciences report, the focus on forensics and its applications in the law enforcement and judicial arenas has never been more intense. Bills proposing stricter guidelines for forensics, laboratory accreditation and practitioner certification are being considered at the highest levels of the government. While the specifics of these legislative efforts are still being worked out, one thing remains clear, our lives as forensic practitioners, managers, academics and researchers will be forever changed, hopefully for the better.

Recently, the National Institute of Standards and Technology collaborated with the Department of Justice to create the Organization of Scientific Area Committees or OSAC. I’m sure many of you had a chance to hear the latest news of this effort during this week’s conference. One of the first steps in the development of the OSACs was the creation of the Forensic Science Standards Board. Quoting from the NIST press release, *“The board will oversee three resource committees and five scientific area committees. Subcommittees will focus on specific disciplines, including DNA, toxicology, medico-legal death investigation, facial identification, latent fingerprints and firearms and toolmarks, among others. The subcommittees will propose consensus documentary standards, for adoption by the board, to improve quality and consistency of work in the forensic science community”*. Many of the aforementioned disciplines are represented by the IAI. In June of this year, I had the honor of being named one of the first appointees to the FSSB and I will be soliciting your support and input over the next few years as the OSAC continues to grow and find its way. Although somewhat controversial, the underlying focus on providing guidelines and crafting standards for all commonly accepted forensic disciplines is sound.

As to the state of our organization; we face some difficult times. While we remain financially sound through the generosity of our members and our sponsors, as well as the law enforcement agencies and labs that have supported us over the years, there are challenges ahead that could impact our sustainability. The instability of the market and its impact on our long range investments as well as the rising costs of administrating this organization will challenged us. I pledge to

work together with incoming Chair Lesley Hammer and the rest of the Board of Directors to start thinking outside the box when it comes to establishing financial continuity and stability for the IAI well into the future. Additionally, one of my duties as the incoming President is to make committee appointments. If you are currently considering participating as a member of a sub-committee or certification board, please understand the commitment necessary to serve effectively.

Over the coming year I want you all to think about the IAI and what it means to you, to the community and our role in the pursuit of justice and the truth.

- Looking back, we can take pride in:
 - Creating highly respected certification processes in:
 - Latent Print Examination, Four levels of Crime Scene, Forensic Art, Footwear, Bloodstain Pattern Analysis, Forensic Video, Tenprint, Forensic Photography
 - We remain recognized as a world leader in a multitude of forensic disciplines including:
- Biometric Information Services, Digital Evidence, Firearm and Tool Mark, Tire Track, Laboratory Analysis, Forensic Podiatry, General Forensics
- Presently
 - Many agencies and organizations still make “certification by the IAI” a prerequisite for employment
 - Some of the hurdles we face include:
 - Establishing consistent standards and “best practices” across a number of forensic disciplines
 - Improving our lines of communication with our members and the community
 - Seeking financial support for training, forensic laboratory services
 - Educating the public and the legal communities regarding our abilities and limitations
- Looking Forward

- To our younger members:
 - You are the future of the IAI!
 - I ask all of you to Challenge the “status quo” and be committed to and take pride in this prestigious Association!
 - We will continue our Membership/Outreach efforts Expand our social networking
 - Increase our communications with the membership
 - If we are truly an “international” organization, let’s continue to reach out to our brother and sister practitioners to mentor and encourage membership growth outside of the U.S.
- We will work together to continue to improve our conference and educational program
- We will work with and support the NIST/OSAC enterprise
- We will continue to increase our Research & Development efforts
- Research the need and value of Accreditation
- Address future certifications in other forensic disciplines as directed by the OSACs

Finally, I want you to remember this organization isn’t about me, the board of directors, the other officers and staff; it’s about you and what you can do to support the association and, in turn, better yourselves and your disciplines. The IAI can lay claim to being “the Oldest” Forensic Science Identification Association as long as we stay in existence. But we need to be more than that! We should be the “most dynamic”, the “most exciting”, or better yet The Most Innovative, Most Active and with the Most Integrity! Innovation, Action, Integrity – I-A-I. I like the sound of that. **Innovation, Action, Integrity.** Thank you all for being here this week and especially this evening. Please travel safely back to your families and loved ones and I look forward to seeing all of you and, hopefully, many more next year in Sacramento!