

SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP ON BLOODSTAIN PATTERN ANALYSIS
(SWGSTAIN)

Spring Meeting
March 24-27, 2003
St. Louis, MO

The following minutes document the biannual SWGSTAIN meeting which took place in St. Louis, Missouri March 25-28, 2003. SWGSTAIN members in attendance were:

Tony Onorato, *Chairperson*, FBI Laboratory
Tom Griffin, *Vice-Chairperson*, CBI
Tom Bevel, *Executive Board Member*, TBI
Bart Epstein, *Executive Board Member*, Laber & Epstein
Paul Kish, *Executive Board Member*, Forensic Consultant & Associates
Pat Laturnus, *Executive Board Member*, Ontario Police College
Kelly Robbins, *Executive Board Member*, Kansas Bureau of Investigation
Rhonda Craig, *Legal Subcommittee Chair*, FBI Laboratory
Ross Gardner, *Taxonomy and Terminology Subcommittee Chair*, Gardner Forensic Consulting
Heather Seubert, *Education and Training Subcommittee Chair*, FBI Laboratory
LeeAnn Singley, *Quality Assurance Subcommittee Chair*, Pennsylvania State Police
Mike Van Stratton, *ASCLD Representative*, Kansas Bureau of Investigation
Richard Eikelenboom, Netherlands Forensic Institute
Rod Englert, Englert Forensic Consultants
Martin Eversdijk, Institute for Criminal Investigation and Crime Science
Neil Fraser, Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Stuart James, James & Assoc. Forensic Consultants Inc.
Jennifer Luttman, FBI Laboratory
Phyllis Rollan, AL Dept. of Forensic Sciences
Bob Spalding, Spalding Forensics
Paulette Sutton, Regional Forensic Center
Toby Wolson, Miami-Dade PD Crime Lab

March 24, 2003

A brief Subcommittee Chair meeting was held by SWGSTAIN Chair Tony Onorato and SWGSTAIN Vice-Chair Tom Griffin to review the progress made by each subcommittee and plan for the current meeting.

March 25, 2003

The meeting began with opening remarks by Onorato.

SWGSTAIN American Society of Crime Laboratory Director (ASCLD) Representative Mike Van Stratton provided an overview of the January, 2003 ASCLD meeting. Van Stratton advised that ASCLD is attempting to increase its involvement with the FBI SWGs. Individual ASCLD SWG representatives will be required to update ASCLD at least once a year to discuss the progress of the individual SWGs. Van Stratton will relay SWGSTAIN's objectives, updates, subcommittees, member roster, etc. to ASCLD via its quarterly newsletter and poster presentations. Van Stratton advised that he had contributed to the ASCLD newsletter a description of SWGSTAIN as a working group which is developing quality assurance and training guidelines for the enhancement of bloodstain pattern analysis (BPA). A lively discussion followed.

Onorato advised the membership that members who are consultants may in the future be required to disclose any possible conflicts of interest that may arise with respect to their involvement in specific SWGSTAIN activities due to their professional affiliation. A standardized FBI form is in development to capture individual members' professional activities that may result in such conflicts. This issue will be reviewed in more detail in the future. A lively discussion followed.

Griffin, acting in his capacity as Chair of the SWGSTAIN Membership Committee, advised the membership of the committee's operational format.

In accordance with the SWGSTAIN bylaws, Executive Board Regular Members will comprise the membership committee and Griffin proposed a rotation with the following randomly selected terms:

Paul Kish- 1 year term

Kelly Robbins- 2 year term (will be rotated into Kish's position after 1 year)

Pat Laturnus- 2 year term

Bart Epstein- 2 year term (will be rotated into Laturnus' position after 2 years)

Griffin asked the Subcommittee Chairs to decide whether or not they would benefit from an additional person in their group. The subcommittees' need for people will be an important stimulus for future increases in SWGSTAIN membership. Griffin stated that the Committee is actively pursuing potential members from Forensic Alliance (FA) and Forensic Science Service (FSS) for potential UK representatives. Ideally, he believes that both agencies should be represented. Onorato noted that at this time no FBI SWGSTAIN Executive Board member will serve on the Membership Committee. A tentative resource pool for future members was solicited from the membership. The members were asked to provide comments about individuals in the resource pool during the course of the meeting in anticipation of further discussions. Laturnus designed and distributed a membership roster which included each member's profession, geographic location, and affiliation.

Legal Subcommittee: Rhonda Craig addressed the issues from the Fall meeting and provided a proposed strategy for this session. Craig emphasized that the focus of this meeting was to continue working on direct examination questions and their suggested responses with appropriate reference citations.

Education and Training Subcommittee: Heather Seubert developed an outline for training matters which will assist in developing specific guidelines for BPA training courses.

Quality Assurance Subcommittee: LeeAnn Singley addressed issues from the Fall meeting and provided an overview for this session's agenda. The group plans to focus on developing guidelines for report writing and standard operating procedures (SOP) for crime scene analysis and for remote analysis of scenes.

Taxonomy and Terminology Subcommittee: Ross Gardner reported that the group will continue to focus on describing patterns, and developing a stable pattern hierarchy.

Research Subcommittee: Mike Van Stratton addressed updates and issues on his Terry Laber's behalf. Van Stratton urged members to continue sending reference material. Van Stratton provided a proposed strategy for this session.

The membership then held subcommittee break-out sessions to address and prioritize their issues for the afternoon and the remainder of the meeting. The remainder of the day was consumed in subcommittee meetings.

March 26, 2003

Onorato began the meeting by welcoming and introducing guest speaker Ms. Laura R. Blumenfeld, Assistant General Counsel from the FBI Laboratory's Investigative Law Unit in its Office of General Counsel. Blumenfeld provided an overview of the legal standards for the admissibility of scientific evidence and the challenges that expert witnesses face when presenting such evidence in court. A question and answer session followed.

The membership then broke into its subcommittees for the remainder of the day. Blumenfeld attended the Legal Subcommittee break-out session.

March 27, 2003

The Fall meeting dates and location were discussed. The possibilities mentioned were Norman, Oklahoma, Leesburg, Virginia, and Quantico, Virginia. The members tentatively scheduled the next SWGSTAIN meeting for November 10-14, 2003. Onorato will contact each member via letter to this effect in the near future to facilitate the administrative needs of individual members.

Onorato and Griffin briefed the membership on the following topics discussed at the Executive Board Meeting which met on March 25, 2003 at 7:20 pm:

ASCLD Representative

The Board suggested that the ASCLD representative serve as a floater and not be assigned to a subcommittee. This arrangement will be discussed with Mike Van Stratton and revisited.

Attendance Issues

The Board discussed the issue of consecutive absences. The Board decided that it will determine just cause for consecutive absences on a case by case basis while adhering to the SWGSTAIN bylaws. A discussion followed.

Terminology Issue

The Board proposed the use of universal terminology to standardize the work products of the individual subcommittees. Where appropriate the following words should be used to convey the following meanings:

1. Must = without exception
2. Should = expected to be done
3. Recommend = appropriate, but not mandatory

Guests

The Board suggested that guests be invited to the Fall meeting. The Board suggested that the guests be representatives of related organizations who would benefit from gaining a clearer understanding of SWGSTAIN. A lively discussion followed and a consensus to do so was reached.

Research Subcommittee: Van Stratton encouraged all members to assist in the development of a resource library by providing relevant articles, references, and validation studies. Van Stratton discussed the possibility of revising BPA validation studies for publication in journal format. Onorato noted that the FBI could provide translation of foreign articles. A lively discussion followed.

Education and Training Subcommittee: Seubert presented tentative guidelines for the educational requirements for trainees, analysts, and instructors on the topic of blood pattern analysis via PowerPoint. Seubert discussed the possibility of compiling a video library for training reference. A lively discussion followed. Members are encouraged to provide feedback to Seubert via e-mail before the Fall meeting.

Taxonomy and Terminology Subcommittee: Gardner reported on the issues and challenges of defining taxonomy, and stated that progress is being made. A lively discussion followed. Gardner encouraged members to assist in the development of the issues by providing relevant input or factual information via e-mail before the Fall meeting.

Legal Subcommittee: Craig reported on the development of a set of questions for use in a direct examination for an admissibility hearing on the topic of BPA. The working document, which is near completion, will be distributed to members via e-mail before the Fall meeting. Craig noted that guest speaker Blumenfeld provided fundamental insight for this group. A lively discussion followed.

Quality Assurance Subcommittee: Singley reported on the development of suggested guidelines for report writing and standard operating procedures for crime scene analysis and for remote scene analysis. A lively discussion followed. Singley thanked the members of the group for their efforts toward a very productive meeting. A tentative agenda for the Fall meeting was established.