

In the Spotlight ..... 3

Energy-saving  
Switch ..... 5

Jerry Hand  
Retires ..... 7

# INSIDER

Newsletter for the Employees of Ames Laboratory ■ Volume 14, Number 6 ■ June 2003

## MFRC Holds Fourth Annual Meeting

Meeting attendees are pleased with the MFRC's progress

“**A**round the world the fight against crime, especially terrorism, is a massive undertaking, and we’re seeing the organization of a massive coalition to fight it. We’re proud at Ames Laboratory to be a part of that coalition.” With that statement, Ames Laboratory Director Tom Barton kicked off the fourth annual meeting of the Midwest Forensics Resource Center at Ames Lab, June 5. Referenc-

ing the Lab’s efforts in the 1940s to develop the process to purify uranium for the Manhattan Project, Barton told MFRC members this is not the first time the United States has fought forces that have mobilized to destroy it. Just as the Lab’s scientists were proud to be part of the World War II effort, Barton said they are equally as proud today to help combat crime in all forms. Adding that fighting crime takes a team effort, Barton told MFRC members, “We’re proud you are coming here and working with us.” *continued on page 2*



Participants in the Midwest Forensics Resource Center Annual Meeting

The MFRC is made up of representatives from crime laboratories across the Midwest. Its goals are to provide the labs with casework assistance, training, education and research, or "CATER," said David Baldwin, director of the MFRC. Baldwin says the four goals demonstrate a strong commitment to service and partnership. "We want to continue to improve crime-lab operations within the Midwest region and to pool needs and resources in order to build a strong partnership with the crime labs," said Baldwin.

An affirmation of this commitment to partnership is manifested in the expansion of the MFRC membership. Prior to the 2003 annual meeting, MFRC states included North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa. At this year's meeting, however, the MFRC was pleased to add crime-lab officials from the states of Michigan and Ohio to its ranks. Recognizing the growing list of partners, an obviously pleased Baldwin joked at the opening session, "Soon we'll need a larger room."

Todd Zdorkowski, associate director of the MFRC, noted the addition of the two new states confirms the MFRC's mission is right on track. "Our newest partners have come to us via word-of-mouth references. One crime-lab director says something to another, and we find ourselves playing host to a new partner. The new directors are skeptical of the MFRC at first, but our meetings and work convince them the MFRC is useful," said Zdorkowski. "New crime labs wouldn't be joining if we didn't have something useful and new to offer them. I think they appreciate the opportunity to help set the MFRC's agenda, to work on its projects and to see the results."

The ability to offer casework

assistance and research expertise is what attracted Mike Stone to the MFRC. Stone is a member of the Omaha Police Department's

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*"The MFRC brings a kind of much-needed 'one-call-does-it all' approach to crime-lab needs."*  
—Mike Stone, Omaha Police Dept.

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crime laboratory, which is the second crime lab in the state of Nebraska to join the MFRC. Stone became interested in becoming a partner in the MFRC after reading a newspaper article in which the center was mentioned. Intrigued mostly by the MFRC's ability to coordinate research and casework assistance, Stone decided the time was right to attend a meeting of the MFRC. Following the opening session, Stone commented, "We have lots of individual efforts going on at crime labs in the

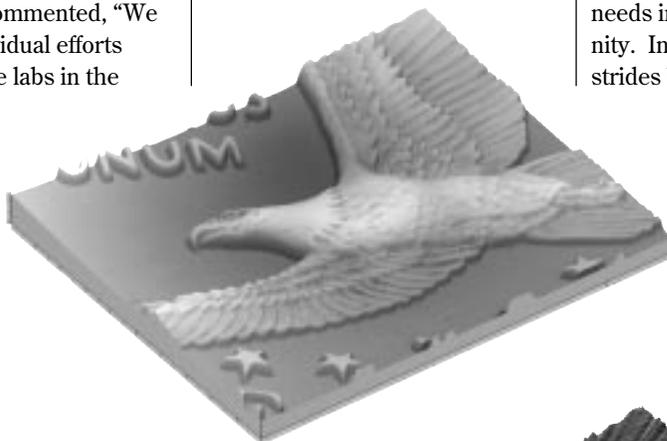
Midwest, but no one coordinates that effort. The MFRC brings a kind of much-needed 'one-call-does-it-all' approach to crime-lab needs."

This coordinated approach paid off for Sandra Stoltenow, criminologist supervisor with the Iowa Department of Criminal Investigation, in solving a perplexing case in Marshalltown, Iowa, in May 2002. The case involved the discovery of the bodies of two men who had been sleeping overnight in a tent pitched in one of the victim's father's backyard.

Puzzled by the lack of any signs of foul play, and because autopsies of the victims did not show a cause of death, the DCI sought the MFRC's expertise to help solve the case. MFRC officials put them in touch with an electrical-safety and low-voltage specialist at Iowa State University who helped determine that an electric space heater the men had been using inside the tent that was sitting on the wet tent floor

likely sent a low voltage current through the men and electrocuted them. This information allowed the DCI to close the case. A grateful Stoltenow said, "This saved time and trouble and a whole pile of evidence we didn't have to go through in the lab."

In addition to its relationships with crime laboratories, the MFRC continues to nurture its relationships with numerous federal agencies, including the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the FBI; the Department of Justice/National Institute of Justice; and the Department of Energy. Representing DOE's National Nuclear Security Administration at the annual meeting, Steve Shubert, a program manager who tries to develop relationships between DOE labs and law enforcement, applauded the MFRC's diverse approach to forensic science and crime fighting, saying the center's mission and goals address critical needs in the forensics community. In particular, he believes the strides being *continued on page 4*



**The top image is of an American Eagle on an ordinary coin. The bottom diagram shows a contour map made from that image using a profilometer. Maps like this one can be used to accurately match marks on tools to tool manufacturers.**

