

100 MOMENTS

FINGERPRINT UNIT

By Stephen Fife (1984-2010) and Julie Fife (1984-1992)

The fingerprint unit used the Henry classification system in which you manually classify the fingerprint card, search by the classification and then filed the card by this system. It was a slow process. Supervisor Ron Gustafson and lead worker Deb Hewitt were charged with the task of researching the new automated system that the FBI was using before Iowa decided on our Automated Fingerprint Identification System known as the AFIS system. Our unit was a manual search unit until 1988 when AFIS took the unit into the future of electronics.



1988: DIRECTOR TOM RUXLOW JOINS
COMMISSIONER GENE SHERPHARD AND
GOVERNOR TERRY BRANDSTAND AT
THE AFIS DEDICATION

After the dollars were appropriated to purchase AFIS the fingerprint unit began the task of preparing the files to be boxed and sent to California to be loaded on discs to create our database. During this

time the FBI was stopping the Henry Class training because they were fully automated and this led to training by the AFIS Company. Once we, Debbie-Steve-Julie, were all trained our section then trained all new personnel being hired. The fingerprint section went out to the individual agencies to train officers in the art of fingerprinting so we would get better quality fingerprints for AFIS.

Rodney Robertson was hired after Debbie went to the Lab. Julie left in 1992 and more hiring was done. Rodney left for a position in Indiana and the unit grew to a total of 7 staff and a Supervisor. Steve did most of the training with the new hires to include Ward Ingham, Mike Fries, Anna, Craig Triplett, Dan Prall, Mark Halterman, Becky Fengel, Mark Mitchell and Lisa Keller. The DCI except the lab moved from the Wallace Building to the old Harvester Building, which is the current location of the Dept. of Public Safety and Division of Criminal Investigation, DCI.

Steve was named AFIS system's manager when they moved to the current location and attended the national AFIS convention to learn about new system software updates.

Once the contract expired for the system Doug Barker was a contracted IT technician for AFIS who was hired just for our system.

In conclusion, that's how we trained people at the DCI. We taught them the manual system so they could have a better understanding of the automated system. As soon as they were tested on the two

aspects they could be put on the hiring list as qualified ten-print technicians. I was proud to be a part of that. In the future, I would like to see a network of states get together to form a network like the Western Intelligence Network (WIN) out west. We have the North-South corridor (I35) and the East-West corridor (I80) that intersects right here in Des Moines. I know the states that get involved would have to solve different political differences and other challenges, but I think the payback would be great.

Waterloo police strike first fingerprint jackpot

By JACK HOVELSON

Of The Register's Waterloo Bureau

WATERLOO, IA. — The first "hit" on a new state system that speeds and expands matching of fingerprints to identify crime suspects has been scored by the Waterloo Police Department.

Fingerprints lifted from two burglary scenes here and then fed into the Automated Fingerprint Identification System in Des Moines were matched against 14,150 sets of prints in two minutes. The system singled out Anthony D. Jackson, 18, of Waterloo, who was arrested and charged with two counts of second-degree burglary, Waterloo police said.

The Waterloo arrest was in connection with two burglaries that occurred last August, police said.

Before the prints were put through the new system it took two Waterloo police officers trained in fingerprint identification eight hours to manually examine the print records of 41 potential suspects.

The new system uses a computer to compare recorded fingerprints with prints found at crime scenes. The system ranks similarities between prints by numerical scores, giving lawmen the option of examining by eye only the most likely candidates to get a match with the crime scene print.

"Before we had this we needed to have the suspect's name before we could try to match it with a set of prints in our files," Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation Director Thomas Ruxlow said. "Now all we need is a single print."

Ruxlow said nearly 200,000 sets of

fingerprints have been loaded into the system's center in Des Moines and more will be added. The DCI receives copies of all fingerprints recorded by law enforcement agencies in Iowa, as does the FBI in Washington, D.C.

Eventually, a system of satellite computers sprinkled around the state at various police departments or sheriff offices will eliminate the need to take a crime scene fingerprint to Des Moines for a search by the computer system, officials said.

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