

The Reconer's Rag

The Official Newsletter of the
Texas Association of Accident Reconstruction Specialists



April 2011

Issue Editor: Jim Moore

2011 - SPRING CONFERENCE

The 2011 Spring Conference, after a slight delay, was held in San Antonio, Texas, on March 25th, 26th & 27th. C. Gregory Russell, President of Accident Analysis & Reconstruction, Inc., was our guest speaker and the topic was, Using Microsoft Excel in Collision Reconstruction. I for one, did not know that you could do all that he does in Excel and I'm sure there were others with the same opinion. During the conference, Greg sold his Excel reconstruction program and workbook at a discount to attendees. Sorry if you missed out on this.

Now for a shameless plug for Greg. His Excel reconstruction program and formula workbook may be purchased directly from him at email address c.g.russell@verizon.net. His CSV-Pro'11 program can only be purchased through the Crash Data Group at www.cdr-system.com. For those of you doing CDR downloads, the CSV-Pro '11 program is almost a must for some of your analysis needs. Check it out!

A hospitality session followed the second day's presentation. Assorted cold drinks and snacks were served up pool side for all attendees and our presenter. A big thanks goes to Mike and Brian Andrews for chasing down the refreshments at the last minute.

BOARD MEETING MARCH 25, 2011

Thursday evening, following the opening day's presentation, a Board of Director's meeting was held.

Members Present:

James A. Moore, President
J.O. Montgomery, Vice-President
Mike Andrews, Treasurer
Michael Yosko, Secretary
Bill Smith, Director II

Members Absent:

James McDonald, Director I
David A. Brown, Director III

The following items were discussed and voted upon:

TAARS will be joining the University of Tulsa, Traffic Crash Reconstruction Research Consortium. Membership in the consortium will allow for TAARS to conduct at least one robust crash test each year

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and for TAARS to receive crash test data from other consortium member organizations. Check http://tucrrc.utulsa.edu/TU_Crash_Reconstruction_Research_Consortium/Home.html for additional information regarding the consortium. Hopefully, this will allow for TAARS to get back into crash testing.

A committee was appointed to provide assistance for the TAARS venture into the world of crash testing. Mike Andrews (Chair), Ron Brandin, Dave Brown, and Bryan Reynolds make up the committee and will be working to identify suitable test locations and will also organize local support as needed. If you have some place in mind, please share with us and we will negotiate with the location.

According to Mike Andrews, and his vivid recollection, the TAARS web site has not been updated since his mentor, Henry Ford was a tinkering in his garage. Brian Andrews made a presentation to the BOD and was appointed to update and maintain our site. The site should be ready for review in 60 days and a sample of his web skills can be viewed at www.completerecon.com.

UPCOMING 2011 - FALL CONFERENCE

Our 2011 Fall Conference is scheduled to be held in the DFW area on September 22nd, 23rd & 24th. Michael Yosko will be instructing the Crash Data Retrieval System Level 1 and Level 2 courses. Dual TAARS and CDR/CSI Certificates will be issued to attendees. Michael will then team up with Andy Priest and Jim Moore and perform several 'hands-on' downloads of various Engine Control Modules.

EMMETT R. WILLIAMS & CONRAD DIPPEL SCHOLARSHIPS

Regarding our scholarship programs, it will soon be time for our next annual conference and we have yet to receive any nominations. The rules for our scholarship programs are posted on the TAARS website, but as most of you already know, TAARS will pay for the tuition of a deserving individual, member or non-member, to attend a reconstruction course. If you know of any deserving individuals out there please contact a TAARS Charter or Regular Member to nominate them by submitting their information to Michael Yosko, Secretary/Committee Chairman.

UPCOMING 2012 - SPRING CONFERENCE

Assuming all goes well with us joining the Traffic Crash Reconstruction Research Consortium, our hope is to hold our first (of many future) robust crash tests for our February 2012 meeting. Now here is where we really need your help:

1. What type of hands-on crash testing would you like to see?
2. Would you like to help plan in and participate in the testing?
3. Since we have to provide test vehicles, we are seeking vehicle donations. Please check with any contacts that you might have.....and once we secure any vehicles, we will have to transport (need trailers or wreckers) and store them (empty lot or junk yard facility) until test time.
4. We need to find a test facility (parking lot, air port, fair grounds, etc) with minimum dimensions of 1,000' x 500' that we can use. The Consortium will be providing insurance.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please check to ensure your TAARS Yahoo e-group data is up-to-date. If you need assistance with this, please contact Michael Yosko myosko@gt.rr.com or Brian Andrews brian@completerecon.com. Also make sure your contact information is up to date with our Secretary, Michael Yosko.

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EDITORS NOTE(S)

Since the inception of TAARS, its goal has been to provide crash investigation and reconstruction training for its law enforcement members and private reconstructionists. While some of the conferences may have had weak topics or poorly planned, the officers did try. Yes, everyone remembers WREX 2000, the really big show, the one that TAARS dreamed up and spearheaded, you know from eleven years ago, the one that is still being talked about today, but now, our organization is withering on the vine so to speak.

TAARS over the years has provided its members with exposure to most of the aspects of everyday crash investigation and reconstruction and in some cases certificates were to be had at discount prices (i.e., CDR Tool Technician and Vericom 2000 and 3000 training). Many LE types made acquaintances with some of the private recon folks who have provided free help to their agencies and I know some of the private folks have certainly made friendly contact with someone who knew someone that knew the investigating officers and put in a good word for them.....hey, what a deal for everyone.

Prior to the meeting that ended up with me being elected President, I had decided that I was at the age and time in my career to start winding down. Initially, I declined nomination and when no one else stepped up to the plate, I then felt compelled to step up and do the job.....with the agreement that the Board of Directors would be assisting....not just attending. Now that I'm here, I realize that we are TAARS's future and TAARS needs your help to continue on and hopefully grow.

I don't know how my tenure as President will be remembered, but at least I can say that I tried. TAARS is in the process of getting back into crashing stuff at least once a year and we need your help.....will you please step up to the plate?

While I'm begging.....has anyone got any ideas for our 2012 Fall Conference? It has been suggested that we bring Rick Jobe with Vericom Computers back for training with the latest VC-4000. Attendees would receive a TAARS and Vericom certificate upon completion of the training.

Yes folks, we are trying to think ahead, so please join us for your future too.

If you would like to contribute to The Reconer's Rag, please submit articles, antidotal stories of work, photographs and/or suggestions to Jim Moore at JimMoore@jammva.com.

FMS BOOK REVIEW

Fundamentals of Forensic Mapping: A review from the desk of Joseph E. Badger

Mick Capman, founder of the Great Lakes Accident Reconstruction Society and better known as the Grandfather of Forensic Mapping, evidently was the driving force behind the latest book to come down the pike for accident (crash) reconstructionists. Kent Boots and Joel Salinas put their heads together to put together an exhausting 233-page essay titled *Fundamentals of Forensic Mapping*. (I can call Mick the Grandfather of Forensic Mapping since he and a colleague "first coined the term 'Forensic Mapping System' while driving to IPTM/Special Problems in 1992-93." Says so, right on page six.)

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Of that coined term, Capman said, "Forensic Mapping has been officially tagged by myself as our trademark (USTMO) since the early 90's ... only in an effort to 'protect' the term from use by those outside public safety (engineers, surveyors, and others from the dark side) and private recon folks. No way, no how could I stand by and let what Forensic Mapping means/stands for, in law enforcement, and see it 'claimed' by folks outside our discipline."

Mick wrote the book's "Forward." And don't look at me like that, I know it's a Foreword, but Mick is bigger than I am and he can spell it anyway he wants.

I asked Mick to comment on the Boots & Salinas book. He offered: "Kent Boots and his partner Joel, co-authors of Fundamentals of Forensic Mapping, have strived, as I have, to keep it simple by penning a good read that fills the need for an unbiased, fair and all encompassing read on the complexities involved with combining 21st Century Theodolite technology, with the deliverable being a precise to-scale diagram. Kent and Joel's book should be in the library of every agency using Forensic Mapping technology, alongside their copy of the Skills Handbook of Forensic Mapping.

The folks who published the book have a website, www.kineticenergypress.com where you can read about this book as well as others. If you purchase the book online, the cost is \$65 plus \$4 s&h or \$6 if you want it sent by Priority Mail.

Let me tell you about the first-of-its-kind book. It is both a "How-To" book and an encyclopedic reference work. According to the publisher's website, "This new publication, the first comprehensive text published on the subject of Forensic Mapping, provides a refreshing overview of the topic and a detailed discussion of the ingredients that combine together for effective and successful mapping of complex scenes."

It covers specifically "three main software manufacturers who have developed software specific to crash and crime scene investigation; The CAD Zone, MapScenes, and Visual Statement. Each of these companies has developed both diagramming software and data collection software. Versions of the various programs current at the time the book was written are the only ones being covered, not older versions."

Probably the neatest thing about the book is not the printed text but the CD-ROM that comes with it that allows you to search the entire text. Although the CD-ROM has 17 different files (including an Adobe reader if you don't have one on your computer), one of those files called Fundamentals of Forensic Mapping.pdf has the entire 233-page book in one handy place. You can copy and paste both text and pictures for inclusion in a report. Or use the document's search feature to find that elusive section you wanted to reread (a feature I used more than once to write this review).

Although the 8½ x 11 book itself is easy to carry around (it has a soft cover), I think you will enjoy the CD-ROM version largely because the pictures are in fantastic color. (The publisher naturally chose black and white photos for the print version to keep the cost down.)

There are over 50 words and terms defined in the Glossary, in case you forgot what EDMI stands for or you want to know exactly what a Theodolite is.

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Should you be just starting out to do forensic mapping of crash – and interior crime – scenes, *Fundamentals of Forensic Mapping* is a must-read; however, I suspect old-timers who have been around the transit and laser plummet a few times will have a few aha moments reading it too.

I asked the authors why did they want to write the book in the first place. They responded:

(Boots) “Many people in the accident reconstruction and crime scene investigation industry do not know what Forensic Mapping is. Too many times the term ‘surveying’ is used in conjunction with the use of a total station in crash and crime scene documentation. There are plenty of books on surveying but there was not a single book on Forensic Mapping. I felt it was time that a book be written on Forensic Mapping and was excited about the possibility it would be the first one. I teach Forensic Mapping on a somewhat regular basis. PowerPoint presentations are nice during a lecture but they don’t make good reference sources after a class. I wanted to be able to give my students a textbook they could use to reference during the class and more importantly after the class.”

(Salinas) “As a Forensic Mapping instructor I had a first-hand opportunity to see what students and officers were lacking and what problems they encountered in the field while mapping both crash and crime scenes. I don’t think that any instructional course could cover in detail what was covered in the book. Certainly not in a 40-hour training class. A lot of what I wrote about was firsthand experience regarding problems that came up as well as ideas that I developed for making mapping of certain scenes easier. If you take a look at the trouble shooting chapter, these are all situations I encountered first hand.”

I asked the authors what they expected the reader to get out of the book. They replied:

(Boots) “The reader will hopefully gain a better insight as to the theory and concept behind how a total station works; many training courses do not include this information. They will also learn the basics and gain valuable insight into how to apply the concepts out in the field. It was written as a ‘How-to’ book regarding the practical application of the equipment out in the field. The reader will benefit from our combined years of experience and techniques we have discovered. It is also a reference book in that all of the components and many of their options are described. This will be helpful to the reader if they need to make any equipment purchases or upgrades to existing equipment. The reader would definitely need to attend a class, and we even indicate in the book in more than one place that the book is not intended to be a substitute for formal training. Most survey supply companies provide 1-3 days of training. This basically teaches the user how to set up the instrument and take a few shots. The surveyor teaching the class usually doesn’t know anything about Forensic Mapping.”

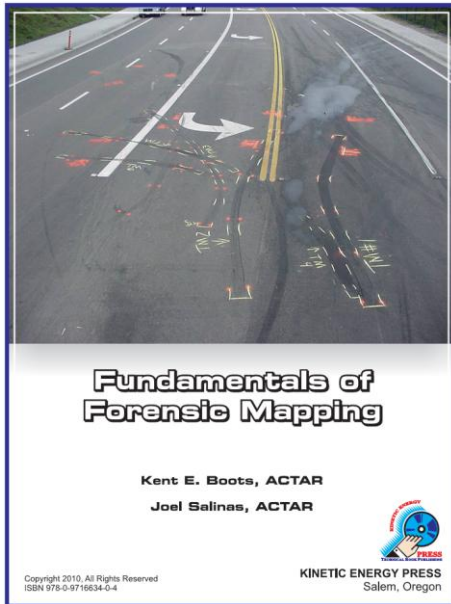
(Salinas) “What I wanted to accomplish is to have the book serve as a resource for anyone with basic training in the field of FM. For someone who has received no training my hopes were that they could pick up the book and get a basic understanding of the equipment, the various software packages, and make an informed decision when it came time to get started in the right direction.

“I have heard stories of Law Enforcement agencies buying equipment from a survey shop without consulting others. The survey shop provides basic training in how to operate the equipment with no application to the Forensic market.

“This book is not meant to replace any instruction material put out by the manufacturer. If anyone has ever tried reading the instruction manual that came with their Total Station, they would realize that

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it is geared toward the surveyor who has an understanding of survey practices. The field of Forensic Mapping, although it uses similar equipment as a surveyor, is completely different in a lot of respects.”



If you have any questions about the book – or forensic mapping in general – feel free to contact either author by e-mail. (Boots at kent@factualdiagrams.com; Salinas at joelsalinas@sbcglobal.net.)

If you go to the website (see above), you will find a list of the “Topics Covered by this Book.” Not printed in the published text, but included on the CD-ROM are 13 appendices, including: Court Citations where expert or specialized testimony was permitted by crash/crime investigators on the use of total station technology for diagramming (mapping) crash or crime scenes; a Forensic Mapping Worksheet; mFX Quick Start Reference Guide; and more. (The book has 25 references to “mFX” and I wasn’t sure what that acronym meant. Mick Capman provided an explanation: “Visual Statement uses ‘mFX’ to mean their MOBILE diagramming software, that installs on most Windows-based external data collectors (TDS Recon & Nomad, for example).”

To contact the publishers, you may call Kinetic Energy Press in Salem, Oregon, at 503-540-3479, or send e-mail to: actar661@cs.com. Order online at www.kineticenergypress.com

(About the reviewer: Joseph E. Badger is an internationally known accident reconstructionist who has had over 100 articles published in such periodicals as Law and Order magazine, Accident Reconstruction Journal, Accident Investigation Quarterly, and others. Having retired after 20 years with the Indiana State Police, Mr. Badger resides in Bloomington, Indiana.)

EDITOR'S TIP

Did you know that you can download a free copy of the CDR File Reader (READ ONLY) Software Version 3.7 at www.cdr-system.com. This program will not allow you to harvest data; however, it will allow you to open and view the original .CDR and .CDRx files instead of relying on just the .PDF file.