

The following is the speech Judge Howe plans to make for the AFTE banquet:

**Remarks to be presented at
AFTE Annual Training Seminar Banquet, September 29, 2006**

It is a privilege to be here at the closing evening event of your 37th annual AFTE Training Seminar. I am familiar with the program you have been engaged in over the past week, and tonight's banquet should be a welcome time to begin to reflect on how much you have given of yourselves -- learning and teaching -- as well as what you have gained in knowledge [and possibly weight!] at this impressive seminar.

As I reflected on the circumstance that brought me here this evening, I think how well it is connected to your work here. As you know, I am here in the stead of my father -- whose almost 87 year old mind is perfect, but whose mobility is, understandably, limited.

Whether you would have reason to know it or not, each AFTE member here is connected to my Dad through a wonderful chain of events. It all started in 1935, when General Julian S. Hatcher published his "Textbook of Firearms Investigation, Identification and Evidence". Six years later, in 1941, for my Dad's 22nd birthday, he asked his fiancée (later my Mother) to give him a copy of that book. Albeit not a romantic read, General Hatcher's book was "the bible" for those interested in firearms identification. Shortly after that, near the start of World War II, my Dad became Chief Armament Inspector at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and his ultimate boss, the Chief of Army Ordnance Field Service, was his author-hero, General Hatcher.

Ten years later, in 195__, General Hatcher and my Dad met for the first time: when the General, by then retired and with the National Rifle Association, toured Marlin Firearms Company in New Haven, Connecticut, where my Dad was Assistant Director of Research and Development. Based on meeting my Dad at that time, General Hatcher proposed to the N.R.A.'s leadership that my Dad move to Washington, D.C., which we did, in 1953. My Dad tells me that General Hatcher was such a class act that when Dad was about to arrive at the N.R.A., Hatcher downsized from his large office in deference to my Dad's new role as the retired General's boss!

As my Dad progressed in his 13-year career at the N.R.A., he continued to identify especially with work on technical aspects of firearms. In the early 1960's, he became a member, and then a Fellow, of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. At that time, he -- and others with him -- became aware that AAFS, with its many disciplines, could devote only a small part of its meeting and journal space to firearm and tool mark examination. And thus, AFTE was born, in 196__, as an association of professionals in the discipline.

The concept "professional" has important sociological meaning, and you should take pride in it. First, as a professional, you have engaged in a long process of specialized training in an esoteric body of knowledge. To start your professional life, each of you had to have been educated and credentialed. And to maintain your career, you continue to undertake training. Your work here each year represents an important part of that process: workshops, certification exams, new product demonstrations, and the like. Back home, I am sure that most of you are engaged in continuing educating: whether at training institutes, seminars, internships, licensing, certification, or degree programs. And, of course, you read the AFTE Journal: certainly not light fare!

Also, because part of a professional's obligation is to add to the knowledge base in one's field, you are also no doubt engaged -- whether formally or informally -- as researchers, teachers, and mentors to students, new examiners, and peers. I am sure that all of you here will go back to your forensic labs, offices, or "shops" -- by whatever name -- to share what you have learned here with the others with whom you work. That, too, is part of being a professional.

Finally, being a professional means adhering to a code of ethics. Whether you work for a public agency, research or educational institution, or as a consultant or expert witness, each of you, as a professional in your field, and as a member of this Association, is bound to adhere to the highest ethical standards for an examiner. And I know you do. In your report writing and testimony, never let anyone rush you, or try to lead you astray, as you carry out your role. Your factual recitations and expert opinions are the reflection of all that you are professionally.

As I conclude tonight, I salute each member and friend of AFTE as you carry out the work of a true professional through your journals, your networking, and your meetings.

Meanwhile, my Dad is home in Connecticut, working on his third book on guns, and awaiting my report on this year's meeting, and especially tonight's session. I want to let him know how warmly you have received me here, and how much we all look forward to the publication of his new book in the upcoming months, and to next year's meeting in _____.

Thank you and Godspeed.