



One Year in Office

Director James Comey, August 2014, Stone Mountain, GA

"I believe I am like the president of the world's greatest university. A huge part of what we are is you — our alumni, which is a tremendously important part of a university. We are part of your organization and you are — and always will be — a part of the FBI. I thank you for what you are and for what you have given us."

INSIDE

2014 ATLANTA REGIONAL CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FIRST CAREER CENTER PROGRAM

Features

- 4 Family Connections
- 5 2014 Southeast Regional Conference: Stone Mountain, GA
- 6 Career Day Summary by Jack Barrett
- 15 Conference Class Reunions
- 20 Amerithrax – The Realization of Biological Terrorism by Scott Decker
- 24 Society of American Archivists annual meeting summary by Susan Rosenfeld, Ph.D.
- 26 Meet Your New Board Members and Foundation Trustees
- 28 Medal of Honor Convention
- 56 Reno National Conference by Bob Gast
- 57 Reno National Conference Registrants
- 61 Career Cameo – Interview with Mary Ellen O'Toole

In Every Issue

- 2 Society News
- 3 The President's Page by Ellen Glasser
- 18 Member News
- 19 Member Publication Notice
- 25 Traveler's Notebook: G-Man Journeys by Sherri Rost
- 29 New Members
- 30 Personal Finance: What is a Home Equity Conversion Mortgage? Part 2 by Larry R. Schneider
- 32 Crossword Puzzle by Merl Reagle
- 33 Chapter Notes
- 43 Obituaries
- 50 Anniversaries

Have you moved recently?

If you have moved, it is critical that you contact the Society National Office with your new address. This request is not meant for snowbirds who have two addresses. Even if your *Grapevine* and other Society communications are being forwarded by the U.S. Post Office, that new information is not in our database and other members will not be able to find you in the Society Directory. The U.S. Postal Service runs all bulk mail through a database that will automatically change your address on our bulk mail lists. It will look like the Society is correctly addressing your mail, when in fact the U.S. Postal Service has placed that new address onto the piece of mail, not the Society. Please email us at society@socxfbi.org, go online at www.socxfbi.org or call 1-800-527-7372 to check the address we have on file. Thank You!



Please note our new office hours
9:00 AM to 8:00 PM EST.



AMERITHRAX – The Realization of Biological Terrorism

by Scott Decker (1990-2011)

Robert Louis Stevens made one last adjustment to the stack of pictures and stood up in front of his third floor cubicle. Tomorrow, Thursday, his employer, American Media Incorporated would be closed for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Stevens had stayed late to finish editing photographs for the *Sun* newspaper —sometimes referred to as a supermarket tabloid — and tomorrow he would begin a five-day vacation. Stevens had been editing photos for tabloids since he and his wife, Maureen, emigrated from England in 1974. He first worked for the *National Enquirer* and then the *Globe* and this year joined the staff of the *Sun*. He enjoyed identifying stories he thought readers would find interesting and selecting and occasionally touching up photographs to go along with the articles. Most of the pictures submitted to the *Sun* came by way of the internet and electronic mail, but Stevens also took some from American Media's extensive archives—a collection which included the *National Enquirer's* famous 1977 photograph of Elvis Presley in his coffin—and occasionally from pictures still sent to the *Sun* by way of the post office.

The next morning Stevens and Maureen dropped their luggage into her white Saturn and pulled away from their home in south Florida's ocean-side village of Lantana. A few minutes later they joined the northbound traffic of Interstate 95 for Charlotte, North Carolina and a visit with their youngest child.

As Stevens had gotten ready to go on vacation, Ernesto Blanco continued his rounds of delivering mail through the American Media building. He had worked at the company for the past few years and liked his job. Blanco had already retired from running his own business in Miami, but the quiet life became routine. So he took the job with American Media in Boca Raton, a forty-five minute trip north by commuter train.

Early Friday morning, Blanco once again stepped off the train and headed to work. The seventy-three year old wasn't his usual jovial self. He felt drained. Maybe it was the flu, maybe not, but something was wrong. This was unusual. He was rarely sick.

On Saturday, two days after the Stevens' arrival in Charlotte, they drove an hour west to picturesque Chimney Rock State Park. There they would hike the trails, enjoy

lunch, and maybe find some cool, clear mountain water to drink. The park featured the four hundred and four foot Hickory Nut Falls. Hiking to the falls, they would pass endangered flowers and the more common green, purple and brown striped, potentially poisonous Jack-in-the-Pulpit.

Chimney Rock itself towered over two thousand feet high. Park rangers had built strong stairs up to the flat stone summit. Making the climb could be exhausting but worth the effort. At the top, late September's low humidity produced clear skies that would reward them with a seventy-five mile view in every direction.

The Stevens returned to Charlotte that evening. Stevens went right to bed, refusing supper, exhausted and nauseated. Maybe the Chimney Rock climb had been too much or maybe it was something in the mountain water he drank from Hickory Falls or perhaps he got too close to the Jack-in-the-Pulpits. But Sunday was no better. On Monday morning, Stevens and Maureen began the long drive back. He was still sick and getting worse. He had no way of knowing that on the same day his co-worker, Blanco, whose condition had also worsened over the weekend, checked into the Miami Cedars Medical Center. By early Tuesday, Stevens had likewise been admitted to a hospital, Lake Worth's JFK Medical Center.

The next day, the Florida State Laboratory tested blood samples from Stevens. The initial results indicated that Stevens had anthrax. The State Lab repeated the tests. The results confirmed the presence of anthrax. The staff concluded Stevens had contracted the inhalational form of the disease. They sent a specimen from Stevens to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta for further confirmation. The CDC conducted its own series of tests and confirmed Florida's results. On Thursday, October 4, 2001, CDC officials made their public announcement: Robert L. Stevens, an employee of American Media Incorporated in Boca Raton, Florida had contracted inhalational anthrax.



Scott Decker

Since the turn of the century, only eighteen cases of inhalational, also known as pulmonary, anthrax have been documented in the United States. Nearly all were fatal. The bacterium responsible for the disease, *Bacillus anthracis*, also affects humans via the more common cutaneous infection—disfiguring, but with treatment usually not fatal—and by a third, also rare, gastrointestinal route. The name, anthrax, is derived from the Greek word for coal, in recognition of the deep black skin lesions that manifest in a cutaneous infection. The disease also infects animals and is most often seen in herbivores—goats, sheep, cattle, horses, pigs.

The key to the disease's infectivity is the ability of the bacillus to sporulate. During times of microbial famine, the bacteria convert to spores as a survival mechanism, no longer capable of reproduction or growth, but able to stand extreme temperatures—hot or cold—and extended periods of drought, direct sunlight, dampness and disinfectants. Each spore is a fraction of the size of its metabolizing parent cell. As it matures, the spore dehydrates, adding layers of protective walls and outer coats, readying itself for years in a dormant state. Dried spores, as on hides shipped from Asia, or lying in the parched soil of an East Texas cattle ranch, can rise through the air in a gas-like state, mimicking an aerosol. Once afloat, colorless, invisible without the aid of a microscope, an unsuspecting victim inhales the diaphanous dust. Within hours the spores germinate, followed by growing, multiplying bacteria coursing through the victim's blood.

Less than twenty-four hours after the CDC's announcement, Stevens—the first pulmonary anthrax victim in the United States since 1976—succumbed. That same day, news began to circulate that a co-worker of Stevens had also been hospitalized with similar symptoms. By the end of the first week of October, Blanco was close to death. The attending doctor at Cedars Medical Center placed him on extraordinary levels of antibiotics, administered intravenously. A mechanical respirator kept him breathing. The FBI and the CDC dispatched teams to North Carolina and Palm Beach County, Florida to search for a cause.

Even before Stevens lost his fight with anthrax, the FBI Laboratory had begun a quest for answers in the science of genetics. The Laboratory Division had a close relationship with Dr. Paul Keim at Northern Arizona University. Keim, a world expert on anthracis, had developed a test that

separated isolates of anthracis into nearly one hundred distinct strains based on differences in their DNA. Scientists in the FBI's Hazardous Materials Response Unit at Quantico, working with counterparts in the CDC, soon had a sample



Stevens Isolate (KEIM Photo)

from Stevens' spinal fluid, teaming with live bacteria, on the way to Flagstaff. Within hours Keim had the answer—the strain of anthracis called "Ames" infected Stevens. Used in laboratory experiments, Ames was extremely potent and lethal—a standard for testing the effectiveness of anthrax vaccines at the country's premier research facility for defending against biological warfare agents—the United States Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) at Fort Detrick, MD. FBI Miami's Evidence Response Team, with help from the CDC and Miami Public Health Laboratory, began testing. They soon found anthracis contaminating Stevens' computer keyboard and Blanco's mailroom.

One week after Stevens' death, news anchor Tom Brokaw received a suspicious letter. Testing by the New York Public Health Lab found live anthracis spores. The CDC confirmed the results. Most of the spores had been lost after the letter was opened, but enough remained to identify the spores as Ames. The envelope had been postmarked, "Trenton, NJ." Three days later, on October 15, an intern working in the Hart Senate Building on Capitol Hill opened a letter addressed to Senator Tom Daschle. A pungent odor filled the office as light tan powder floated



Ames Repository at AIB

in the air and spilled to the carpet. The envelope bore the same handwriting as Brokaw's and a Trenton postmark. This time a fictitious return address in New Jersey had been added. The powder was highly refined and contamination spread across Capitol Hill. Quick action by the Office of the Attending Physician for the United States Congress—testing and providing antibiotics to thousands—undoubtedly saved many lives. Later that week, the New York FBI Hazmat Response Team recovered a third letter from the *New York Post*.

By the end of October 2001, four people had died of anthrax. At least seventeen others in Florida, New York, and the National Capitol area had contracted either cutaneous or inhalational anthrax.¹ They survived due to aggressive treatment by quick-thinking physicians, but would carry

¹The final victim, Ottilie Lundgren of Oxford, Connecticut, would succumb to inhalational anthrax on November 21, 2001.

scars and disabilities for life. The investigation became Major Case 184, AMERITHRAX, and the Washington Field Office designated Office of Origin. WFO quickly organized a task force and established the first floor training classroom as their base of operations. The task force would grow to three squads of agents, postal inspectors and analysts and occupy the Northern Virginia Resident Agency and an off-site near Fort Detrick.

Initial suspicions fell on al-Qaeda. One of American Media's newspapers had published an unfavorable article about Usama bin Laden. Most of the 9/11 hijackers had lived in the Boca Raton area; the wife of an American Media editor had rented four of them an apartment. Pilot hijacker Mohamed Atta had inquired about crop dusting in south Florida earlier in the year. The mailer may have targeted tabloid employees with the hope of blaming al-Qaeda, we will probably never know.

A suspect soon emerged; one that fit the assessment released by the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit — a lone male domestic to the United States with knowledge, interest and experience in science. Steven Jay Hatfill quickly rose to the top of the list of persons being investigated. His resume included former United States military bio-weaponeer, Bill Patrick, as a personal reference. Patrick had been in charge of anthrax production during the 1960s — the height of the USA's now-disbanded biological weapons program. Hatfill claimed both an M.D. and Ph.D. He had trained managing anthrax victims and researched Ebola virus at USAMRIID. He cited military experience with the elite C Squadron of the Rhodesian Special Air Service during the Rhodesian Bush War at a time when government forces were suspected of complicity in an anthrax outbreak that killed one hundred and eighty-two people.

A key event came in November with the recovery of a fourth letter, unopened. Senator Patrick Leahy's letter contained nearly one gram of spores — highly concentrated and pure, opening the door to a wide range of forensic initiatives: Carbon-14 dating to determine when the spores had been grown, measurement of stable isotope ratios for oxygen to locate the source of water used to culture the

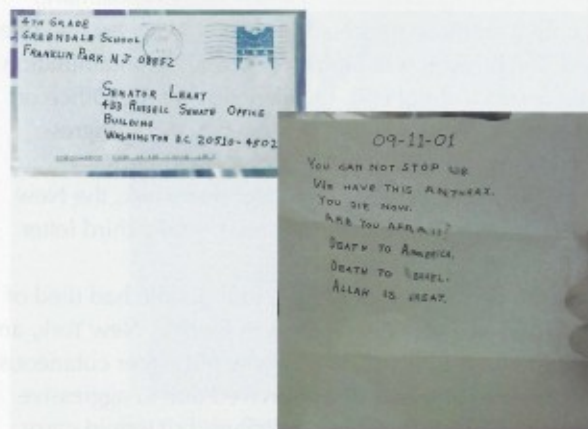
bacteria, detection of specialized iodide compounds used in spore purification. A new field quickly evolved, that of microbial forensics. In anticipation of the unique challenges posed by this developing science, WFO's front office devoted one squad to forensic investigation and coordination. Throughout the case, agents with advanced degrees and pre-bureau work experience in plant pathology, biomedical science, epidemiology, genetics, medicinal and forensic chemistry would staff the "Science Squad."

Applying state-of-the-art techniques required partnering with subject matter experts across the country and access to specialized instrumentation. Agreements were made with noted institutions such as Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution on the southwestern tip of Cape Cod and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory fifty miles east of San Francisco, The Institute for Genomic Research in nearby Rockville and Commonwealth Biotechnologies² outside Richmond.

A second break in the case came with the discovery that the anthracis inside the envelopes contained small percentages of oddly shaped colonies. Germinated and grown on plates of gelatin-like blood-red agar, the majority of the spores formed identical colonies—small, round, off-white in color. But here and there, a colony grew to become large and irregular with a yellow or gray tint. Sequencing the DNA of these mutant colonies located changes and provided a genetic fingerprint specific to the mailed spores.

While the forensic projects gained momentum, agents and postal inspectors examined aspects of Hatfill's life. They found that the summer before the mailings his security clearance had been revoked. They could not substantiate service with the Rhodesian C Squadron. While he had studied for a Ph.D. in South Africa after graduating medical school in Rhodesia, he had never completed the dissertation requirement. There was doubt whether he had fulfilled the new Zimbabwean requirement of public service for medical students.

Locating institutions and scientists working with anthracis began immediately following Robert Stevens' anthrax diagnosis. While the FBI Laboratory contacted Keim and arranged to ship him an isolate from Stevens, the Miami Division requested records from the CDC. Five years earlier in 1996, Congress had mandated that the Department of Health and Human Services maintain a list of all laboratories in the United States working with select pathogens. Health and Human Services gave CDC the job. In response to the Miami agents' request, CDC identified over ninety institutions in the United States registered to culture anthracis. Contact with each facility found sixteen that maintained stocks of Ames. Working through the United States Attorney in Washington, D.C., the task force began collecting any and all samples, cultures, sub-cultures and isolates of the deadly strain. In three locations, supported by



Anthrax Letter addressed to Senator Patrick Leahy

² Commonwealth Biotechnologies, Inc. reorganized to become American International Biotechnology in 2009.



Finding Princeton mailbox

the Hazardous Materials Response Unit and field division Hazmat Response Teams, they conducted searches of laboratory freezers, walk-in cold rooms and refrigerators. The Science Squad scanned academic literature and patent applications for discussion or description of the strain. To ensure compliance with the request for any and all samples, laboratory directors were called to Washington to attest that they had provided all Ames under their control. Diplomatic efforts by Legal Attachés added cultures from Canada, Sweden and England. The collection of Ames exemplars would grow to over one thousand and searching continued through mid-2006, in parallel with the development of a screening test for the DNA fingerprint.

In 2004, Commonwealth Biotechnologies began genetic screening of the growing collection. They quickly found a match in a sample derived from a batch of Ames spores called Reference Material Research Lot 1029, abbreviated simply as RMR-1029. Eight samples were found to contain the mailed spores' genetic signature when testing was complete. Each match traced its origin to RMR-1029.

Dr. Bruce Edward Ivins, a long-time USAMRIID microbiologist, kept RMR-1029 inside his bio-containment laboratory—secured by magnetic card access. Eccentric and quirky, given to performing as a juggling clown on occasion, often the life of the party, known for playing guitar and piano at church services, a staunch anti-abortionist, the research community considered Ivins an expert in producing high quality, pure anthracis spores.

The task force reviewed the access records to Ivins' bacteriology laboratory for mention of virologist Hatfill. None appeared. Likewise, interviews of former co-workers could not place Hatfill in proximity to the RMR material. But, investigators did find suspicious activity in the log sheets—for Ivins. In August 2001, he began entering his laboratory late in the evening—alone—up to several hours per visit. A review of prior months and years indicated this to be a new habit. He had worked three nights in a row immediately before the New York letters were mailed. He repeated the pattern before the Capitol Hill mailings.

Ivins, always on the list of persons under investigation,

now moved to the top. His career, years of research on anthrax vaccination, had been called into question before the mailings. In 1999 and 2000, *Vanity Fair* and *The Washington Post* published articles blaming the vaccine for Gulf War Syndrome. In the summer of 2001, the USAMRIID Command suggested he switch to researching glanders, a disease of horses and livestock. At the same time, his psychiatrist doubled Ivins' prescribed dosage of Celexa, an anti-depressant.

The task force applied for search warrants and in November 2007 searched Ivins' office and residence, finding handguns, a Taser and a basement firing range. USAMRIID barred him from all laboratory work with infectious anthracis strains. Then, during FBI interviews in early 2008—accompanied by his attorney—Ivins admitted to crimes long passed. He had broken into Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority houses in Chapel Hill and Morgantown, admitted to a forty-year obsession with KKG women, stole a graduate student colleague's—a Kappa—laboratory notebooks and returned them anonymously, vandalized her car and residence. He maintained mailboxes in fictitious names. He had recently purchased anti-surveillance equipment and swept his home for FBI microphones. He had acquired tracking software to see if his email was being monitored. His story changed each time he was asked about late nights in his laboratory, until finally, he had no reason. But he would not admit to mailing the letters.

In the spring of 2008, Ivins spilled non-lethal bacteria, and following a long-standing pattern of indifference, did not report the accident. The Command barred him from all laboratory access. The task force began to prepare for indictment and his attorney told him to expect the worst—the possibility of a death sentence. In July, during a group therapy session, he blurted out a plan to murder co-workers. His therapist alerted police and the next day the Provost Marshal escorted him from Fort Detrick. He was committed for two weeks of observation and the task force searched his house, recovering ammunition, gunpowder, a Kevlar vest and chest plate. Upon Ivins' release, his therapist obtained a Peace (restraining) Order. Surveillance resumed. As agents and postal inspectors watched, shortly after midnight, an ambulance arrived at Ivins' home. Within minutes, medics carried him out, prone and unconscious. At the hospital, he became responsive and admitted suicide as his organs failed and breathing required help. He died the next day. Searching his trash, the task force found a receipt for Tylenol PM along with two large empty bottles. Toxicology tests showed high levels of Tylenol in his blood, the cause of liver and kidney failure. Ivins left behind no note, no confession, no details of how and why the mailings. Sadly, he had robbed his victims and the American people of an examination of the evidence and judgment in a court of law. Tragic as this case was, the investigation achieved great advances in forensic science and established hallmarks of cooperation between academia, private industry and government.