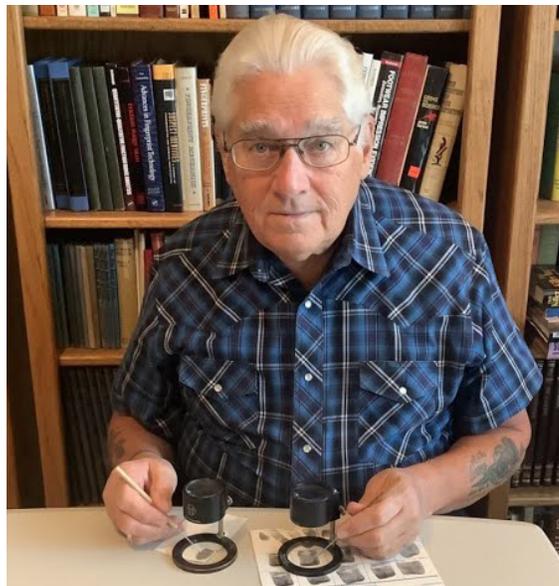


## In Memoriam: Pat A. Wertheim

On March 1, 2025 the world of fingerprints suffered a great loss with the passing of Pat Wertheim. Pat's career spanned five decades, beginning in Kerrville, Texas as a police officer in 1973. Along the way he worked in various capacities for Plano Police Department, Arizona Department of Public Safety, Lightning Powder Company, Defense Forensic Science Center, and Fort Worth Police Department.

Pat was a Life Member of TDIAl, joining in 1981. He served on the Latent Print Certification Committee from 1982 to 1985, the Board of Directors from 1985 to 1988, and was Second Vice-President from 1988 to 1989. He was also a Distinguished Member and Life Member of the IAI, serving in multiple roles with the organization, including as a Reviewer on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Forensic Identification*. Additionally, he was a member of the Scientific Working Group on Friction Ridge Analysis, Study, and Technology (SWGFAST) from 1996 until its dissolution in 2014.

He was a teacher, mentor, and friend to many people in the fingerprint community. He taught courses and lectured at conferences for over thirty years and wrote multiple papers that appeared in a variety of publications. Pat was the world's foremost expert in the detection of forged and fabricated latent prints, having published, presented, taught on the topic many times, and as such he served as a witness on both sides of the aisle in several high profile cases around the world involving forgery and fabrication, including the Shirley McKie case, the Byron Mitchell case, the Alan McNamara case, the Fred van der Vyver case, and more.



In a recent post on LinkedIn, Pat's daughter, Katrina Wertheim-Wiley, posted the following. She has generously allowed it to be reproduced here:

*To all of Pat's esteemed colleagues and friends,  
This is Katrina Wertheim-Wiley, Pat's daughter. Surrounded by his family, Pat passed away on March 1st.*

*A giant in forensic science, Pat dedicated five decades to the field of fingerprint analysis with passion and integrity. He began his career in 1973 as a sworn latent print examiner, and since 1986 as a civilian. His first experience of a fabricated latent print was in the 1990s at the Arizona Department of Public Safety Crime Lab in Tucson. Since then, he researched the topic and wrote articles for scientific journals. He made presentations to the International Association for Identification (IAI), the Fingerprint Society in Great Britain, International Association of Forensic Sciences Australia, and others. Pat taught hundreds of classes and workshops worldwide. Defense and prosecution attorneys consulted him on cases of alleged latent print forgery and fabrication.*

*He was a Distinguished Life-Sustaining member of the IAI and the Southwestern Association of Forensic Scientists, as well as a member of California State Division of the International Association for Identification and the Texas State Division of IAI. He testified in Daubert hearings and held certifications as a Senior Crime Scene Analyst, Certified Ten Print Examiner, and Certified Latent Print Examiner. He served on the editorial board for the Journal of Forensic Identification and, for two decades, on the Scientific Working Group on Friction Ridge Analysis, Study and Technology (SWGFAST).*

*Pat's book with co-author Kathleen Saviers, with the working title "False Fingerprints" will be available in 2026, documenting his controversial cases, such as the murder of Sir Harry Oakes in the Bahamas, the Shirley McKie case in Scotland, the fabricated evidence against Fred Van Der Vyver in South Africa, and forged prints on an alleged Jackson Pollock canvas.*

*He took joy in mentoring the next generation, equipping them not only with technical expertise but with the integrity to continue his fight for ethics. His legacy is now in the hands of the thousands he trained.*

*We invite you to join us in honoring his life and legacy at a virtual celebration of life on Sunday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, his 77th birthday. Details will follow. I will continue to post his stories on this page.*

*If Pat influenced your life or career, we encourage you to share this post, share a memory here in the comments, and especially on his website's message board: <https://lnkd.in/gwWDDd2n>*

*With deep gratitude for the role you played in Pat's remarkable journey,  
His Loving Family*

On a personal note, I first met Pat in 2018 when he came to the Texas Department of Public Safety Crime Lab to be trained on the AFIS upgrade that had just taken place. On the morning of the first day, I went into my boss's office to ask who I would be training that day. When she said the name Pat Wertheim I was taken aback. His reputation preceded him, and I was a little bit intimidated to be training someone as distinguished as he was.

But when I met Pat and his colleague Heather who had come with him from Fort Worth PD, they could not have been more pleasant. Pat was as humble and respectful as he could be. He asked the most intelligent questions about the system and how best to use it that I had ever had anyone ask and was a pleasure to be around.

Afterward, I would email him from time to time or message him on social media about one thing or another and he would always respond right away, always extremely generous with his knowledge. When I published my first paper in the JFI, Pat took the time to send me a congratulatory card, which I will always treasure.

Last summer I had the opportunity to take Pat's Detection of Forged and Fabricated Prints class, and it was then that I truly came to understand who he was as a scientist and a student of fingerprints. His curiosity and pursuit of knowledge went above and beyond what was necessary for the typical duties of a latent print examiner. He had wanted to learn more about what he saw in casework so he took action through experimentation, something most examiners would never take the time to do. I saw how much he cared about people in positions of authority being held to account for misdeeds as he talked about evidence fabrication. His sense of integrity was strong. He was the quintessential forensic scientist, someone each of us should strive to emulate.



Of the photo above, Pat said, "Ah, yes, the good old days. I was program chairman that year and invited friends I knew personally from the IAI. Not shown was Bob Olsen, author of Scott's Fingerprint Mechanics. We were all in the hospitality room after dinner and I handed somebody my camera and asked them to take a picture. Bob was tired and had gone to bed early. I wish he had been in the photo, too! TO and Illsley were great friends and Charles would frequently lean into to TO and drape his shoulder-length hair over TO's bald head."

Pat's family would appreciate hearing from those whose lives he touched. To leave a message, you can visit Pat's website at <https://patwertheim.com/remembrance/>.

Pat's book, *False Fingerprints*, is due out in 2026. You can sign up on his website to receive notifications at <https://patwertheim.com/e-books/#bkres>.

Pat appeared on several podcasts in the last few years. You can view/listen to them at the links below:

[50 Years of Forensics | Forensics Talks EP 87 | ft. Pat Wertheim](#)

[Murder She Spoke Podcast: Interview with Pat Wertheim](#)

[Double Loop Podcast: Pat Wertheim Interview – Episodes 95 and 96](#)

**Selected Publications:**

**Wertheim, P.A.** Investigation of Ritualistic Crime Scenes. *Journal of Forensic Identification* 1989. 39 (2). 97-106.

**Wertheim, P.A.** Qualifying as an Expert Witness. *Journal of Forensic Identification* 1990. 40 (2). 60-68

**Wertheim, P.A.** Crime Scene Note Taking. *Journal of Forensic Identification* 1992. 42 (3). 230-236.

**Wertheim, P.A.** Detection of Forged and Fabricated Latent Prints. *Journal of Forensic Identification* 1994. 44 (6). 652-681.

**Wertheim, P.A.** Murder of Sir Harry Oakes. *Fingerprint Whorld* 2000. 26 (99). 9-28.

Langenburg, G.; Champod, C; **Wertheim, P.** Testing for potential contextual bias effects during the verification stage of the ACE-V methodology when conducting fingerprint comparisons. *Journal of Forensic Science* 2009. 54 (3). 571-582.

Stoney, D.A.; De Donno, M.; Champod, C.; **Wertheim, P.A.**; Stoney, P.L. Occurrence and associative value of non-identifiable fingerprints. *Forensic Science International* 2020. 309.