

Tom Seipert – Co-Founder of IACIS

I founded IACIS with the help of Michael R. Anderson after attending the first ever federal law enforcement training course in 1989. The class dealt with the seizure and processing of computers and related evidence. After attending the class, I realized that computers were becoming a critical source of evidence in criminal cases, and a training and certification organization was needed to support state and local law enforcement agencies. More about the particulars of the course development and the creation of IACIS, but first let me give you a little background about myself and my love of law enforcement.

Law Enforcement Career

I served for over 30 years as a Police Officer in Portland, Oregon. I started in 1971 with the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office as a Deputy Sheriff. I retired in 2001 as a Detective Sergeant with the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) in 2001. I was an Investigator for over 25 years of that time and a Sergeant for over 18 years of that same time. The last 12 years of my law enforcement career is when my involvement with computer evidence began.

I loved being a Police Officer and I've only had a few bad days in my career and most every day I was able to say I enjoyed it. I did every exciting job as a police officer except, riding motorcycles, or work any SWAT type job. I also was lucky to be featured in an episode of the TV series "Cops".

I worked a variety of assignments which included undercover operations, burglary investigations, surveillance of wanted persons, arrests of dangerous suspects and my last five years were spent as the Sergeant in PPB's Crime Scene Forensics Unit. In this role, I continued training PPB personnel in computer seizures, computer evidence processing and computer evidence related court testimony, a practice I began and promoted within the police department.

I still miss the excitement of those days, but the wonderful memories are still there. Several times, I found myself in very dangerous encounters with knife wielding crooks, murders and I even played chicken with a homicide suspect in a parking lot. He had a car which essentially was his weapon, and I had a short-barreled shotgun which I was preparing to fire directly at his windshield. He "chickened out" and turned his car just as I fired. The round blew out the driver-side tire, we arrested him and found the weapon used in the homicide on him too. Exciting times they were! Like I said, I loved the excitement of the job and I retired with mixed feelings.

IACIS Background:

In 1989 I was invited to attend the very first Seized Computer and Evidence Processing Course by IRS-CID Special Agent Michael R. Anderson who I had known and worked with in law enforcement in Portland, Oregon for several years. Anderson created the course after being detailed to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) as the lead instructor and course developer regarding computer technology related training for the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division (IRS-CID). He created the unique course with the help of private sector computer experts, e.g. Peter Norton, Paul Mace, Chuck Guzis as well as Assistant US Attorneys in Oregon. This was the first federal training course developed regarding the seizure and processing of computers. My class was a beta test of the training course which was held in October 1989 at FLETC in Brunswick, Georgia.

The class consisted of approximately 20 law enforcement officers with computer knowledge. Because this was a beta test of the course, Anderson was allowed to fill half of the class with local, county, state, along with Special Agents from other federal agencies including the FBI and US Customs. Because of the popularity of Anderson's Portland Search Warrant Program, he knew law enforcement officers and special agents from around the country. His thinking was to include non-federal law enforcement to make sure that the course and certification properly dealt with all types of criminal law issues and presentations outside of the federal court system. IRS-CID management agreed with Anderson's thinking on this, and I was fortunate to have been invited to attend the beta course along with 9 other guest law enforcement members.

The training and certification process was difficult, but I was able to complete the course and was certified at the federal level to seize and process computers for evidence and to testify in court about my findings. After attending the beta federal training course, I realized that this was a new and previously unknown area of expertise that soon would become a revolution in law enforcement investigations and court testimony. Being the "Dreamer" I was then, I envisioned Computer Forensics to be at the beginning of a new era in computer sciences. I pulled Anderson aside and asked him how other law enforcement agencies would receive this kind of training. He told me that he didn't know and that this training course was specifically for IRS-CID Special Agents and possibly other federal law enforcement officers.

After graduation from the beta training course, several of us met to celebrate at a now closed local cop bar called Pam's #1. I expressed my concern about a lack of this kind of training for other law enforcement officers, and I proposed the formation of an organization that would become the educational model and standard for training all law enforcement officers in this new field. Anderson said that he would help set up the training courses and certification process. Several members of his IRS-CID training team agreed to help in the

creation and management of the organization. I was informally elected to be the President of this new and yet to be legally formed organization. After some discussion we decided to name the new organization, the “International Association of Computer Investigative Specialists”. I then incorporated IACIS in Oregon the following year.

Part of my role was developing the structure and governing body for this new organization. The first IACIS Training Conference was held in Portland, Oregon in February 1991. Anderson agreed to take on the role as the director of all training and course developed. IRS-CID management would not allow any of their staff to hold seats on the volunteer Board of Directors, so Anderson and the other IRS-CID Special Agents were forced to resign from the IACIS Board of Directors.

Anderson however sought approval to help IACIS on his own time, and he taught the first two IACIS Training Conferences by using his vacation time. Anderson also agreed to Chair the IACIS Certification process and IACIS Past President Dean Chatfield became the first IACIS member to be certified under Anderson’s leadership. Anderson also provided IACIS with the names of all of the users of his Portland Search Warrant Program across the nation. There were several thousand users of that software, and that became critical in promoting the IACIS Training Conferences in the beginning. Without his networking, I’m not sure we would have been able to fill those first classes. IACIS, as it stands today, was built on Anderson’s dedication and commitment to helping other law enforcement officers. His vision is what needed to be included in these courses, and him soliciting his outside private resources was instrumental in what IACIS ultimately became.

Establishing IACIS As A World Leader

IACIS was a brand-new training organization in the law enforcement world. As the training organization in this field, IACIS needed to also establish its credibility and establish authenticity in its evidence collection protocols. After our first training conference (which was attended by many law enforcement officers from state, local and federal agencies) we started to gain more credibility. I handled all the daily correspondence and telephone calls and represented the organization as its chief spokesman. As more conferences were planned, I dealt with the registration of all the incoming students and all the logistical details necessary to put these conferences on.

I was a fulltime Detective Sergeant serving in the Portland Police Bureau and worked long hours. I also had to develop the organizational structure, write the bylaws, plan all the logistical details for several years. I continued to serve as President of the organization until I was replaced by Dean Chatfield in 1997. During this time, many people came and served in various positions as volunteer staff and/or directorships. IACIS was always

envisioned to be a volunteer driven enterprise held together by dedication to law enforcement.

The computer world was very much different then as floppy disks and 20/40 meg hard drives were the norm. The Internet was in its infancy and DOS 4.0 was the primary operating system. Windows was on the horizon but not developed yet as well as Apple Systems. I think it's come a little farther along now but these days I talk more about tomatoes than technology.

Life now

Currently, I live on a small farm about 25 miles east of Portland, Oregon and after raising apples and other fruit, I've settled on raising the best tomato plants in this area. Last year we had 140 different varieties of mostly heirloom tomatoes. This tomato business started as a hobby and dun got out of hand! Most people in my life don't know about my past career. I've come to realize that when I do move on to my final day, they will say ...

“Hey did you hear? Tomato Tom passed away. “Damn I am going to miss those tomatoes!”