



Voice OF V

The official voice of Region V



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March 2006



LEARNING MORE ABOUT OUR TEAM MEMBERS

JOHN W. CALLAHAN

John Callahan is the Coroner at the Grundy County Coroner's Office in Morris, Illinois. In addition to Coroner, John is an educator: he teaches Forensic Photography and Digital Imaging at the local college, as well as Drivers Education and Anatomy at the local high schools.



Mr. Callahan is a graduate of Marseilles High School, where he was Class President for all four years. He continued his education at Illinois Valley Community College in Oglesby, Illinois, studying Criminal Justice. John graduated from the Police Training Institute at the University of Illinois. Following a comprehensive background in law enforcement, John attended Worsham College in Wheeling, Illinois, earning his degree in Mortuary Science.

John possesses considerable criminology experience: in 1986, he worked as patrolman and juvenile officer for the Marseilles Police Department; he worked for six years as Deputy at the LaSalle County Sheriff's Department; in 1995, he joined the Grundy County Coroner's Office as Chief Deputy and completed the Medicolegal Death Investigator's Course at the University of St. Louis. In 1998, Mr. Callahan was appointed Coroner of Grundy County and became a Board Certified Medicolegal Death Investigator, after attending the masters program at the University of St. Louis. Since his initial appointment to office, John has won two consecutive elections for Grundy County Coroner – in both elections, he received the highest number of votes for any elected official.

Mr. Callahan is a member of numerous professional organizations: Illinois Funeral Directors Association, Illinois Coroners/Medical Examiners Association, International Association of Coroners/Medical Examiners, Midwest Homicide Association, and the

Grundy County Law Enforcement/Manager Association. He is also an active participant within his community, including The First United Methodist Church, Morris Lions Club, and Morris Fraternal Order of Eagles. John has been president of the Grundy Community Hospice for the last four years. This hospice remains the only “volunteer” hospice in Illinois.

John joined DMORT V in 1995. In 1998, he hosted the Region V Annual Training Session in Morris, Illinois. His deployments include: World Trade Center Tragedy (New York City, New York 2001), Hurricane Katrina – East Morgue (Gulfport, Mississippi 2005), and Hurricane Katrina – West Morgue (St. Gabriel, Louisiana 2005).

John resides in Morris with his wife, Mary. He has two children - Grant (25 years) and Jacob (22 years). John also has a granddaughter, Haylee Jo (15 months), who keeps everyone busy. John enjoys spending his leisure time fishing and “kicking up” dust in his woodwork shop, where there is plenty to create for his young granddaughter.

John Callahan treasures his association with DMORT: *“This type of work has meant so much to me, both personally and professionally. There are many friends in DMORT, and I am meeting new people on deployments. The learning experience is priceless. The satisfaction of using your profession to help those, who you never knew prior to the deployment, is incredible. Adapting to the situation is challenging, yet rewarding. Working with death on a daily basis opens your eyes to what tomorrow brings. Live each day to the fullest and treat everyone the way you would like to be treated.”*

John recalls a “team moment,” while deployed in Gulfport: he had the pleasure of organizing a Region V Cookout. The team skillfully prepared a complete pork loin dinner for 135 people, using a single grill and one additional burner. This act of collaboration and camaraderie satisfied everyone’s spirit and appetite.

John Callahan definitely belongs in the “recipe” for the Region V Team!

HURRICANE KATRINA DEPLOYMENT

A Personal Narrative

By O.J. Fawcett

Region V Funeral Director

This Fall, I was one of many of the federal Disaster Mortuary Response Team (DMORT) members deployed to Mississippi and Louisiana in response to the many deaths caused by Hurricane Katrina, as well as numerous human remains who were displaced from cemetery crypts and compromised graves. There were some recoveries by team members, but our primary purpose was aid in the identification process, casketing some remains and returning them to the cemeteries, and releasing the majority of the others to local funeral homes.

In expectation of possible mass fatalities due to Hurricane Katrina heading for the Southern Gulf Coast, the two DMORT Deployable Mobile Morgue Units (DPMU's) were dispatched on or about August 27th to be prepositioned, in case they would be needed in Louisiana and Mississippi.

I flew to Gulfport, Mississippi on September 9, 2005. The first location of the DMORT Katrina East morgue was in a damaged cargo building on the far side of the Gulfport Airport. The first group deployed to Gulfport was subjected to spartan living conditions. They slept in refrigerator trucks, ate MRE's (Meals Ready-to-Eat), washed up with a hose, and were forced to dig a latrine. By the time I arrived, there were sleeping tents, "Port-o-Potties," and four showerheads in a semi-trailer for about 160 workers. When Hurricane Rita caused more damage to the building, the operation was moved to the parking lot of a large water park.

When remains were received at the morgue, they were stored in refrigerated trucks. In the identification process, the body bags were brought into the morgue on stainless steel tables and taken to the Admitting station, where they were assigned a bag number, a folder with the necessary forms for each of the additional stations, and assigned a tracker. The tracker carried the paperwork, moved the remains to each station, and saw that each section chief documented information obtained and signed off for that station.

The next station was Photography, where photos were taken of the clothed body, unclothed body, and all personal effects. Clothing was described as to the style, color, and size of each item. All personal effects were described and placed in a bag, labeled with that bag number and placed in a locked metal locker.

Pathologists at the next station noted any scars, tattoos, piercings, wounds and trauma, evidence of medical implants, and examined and noted any serial numbers on the implants, which could provide a person's name from the manufacturer. Anthropologists were there to provide information from skeletal remains as well as any inconsistencies with x-rays. Full body x-rays were taken of each remains to locate implants, fractures, and unique bone structures. Fingerprints were not attempted due to body conditions.

The Dental station took dental x-rays, and noted missing and artificial teeth, as well as any restorative work. A tissue sample for DNA was taken from almost all of the remains with the exception of most of the remains from the cemeteries. Once the examinations were completed and the paperwork was complete, the remains were returned to a refrigerated truck.

This information was entered into the Victim Identification Program (VIP) on a computer in the Post Mortem area. Information of this same type, gathered from family members, medical and dental records, etc. were entered into this same program in the Ante Mortem area. Comparison of data from Ante Mortem and Post Mortem areas assisted in narrowing down who this person might be, or more importantly who this person could not be. The computer never made identifications, but it helped to narrow

down the choices. The Medical Examiner, with the assistance of DMORT, made the final decision as to identity and cause of death. When DMORT closes down and leaves, they transfer all of this information, as well as x-rays and photos to a CD, and leave it with the Medical Examiner or Coroner and purge the computer.

The first week, I was primarily a tracker, but on September 15th, five dentists and five mortuary officers were flown by a U.S. Marine helicopter to DMORT Katrina West located at St. Gabriel, Louisiana near Baton Rouge. I lived at the base camp, but worked twelve-hour days at the "National Find Family Call Center," that was located in the ballroom of a hotel in Baton Rouge. Families were encouraged to call this center to report missing family members or friends. A report was taken with the name and address of the missing person, the name of the caller as well as their phone number. Persons like myself then returned these calls to see if they had been located and if not, tried to get the information for a Death Certificate, as well as information such as scars, tattoos and location of possible medical and dental x-rays, so they could be obtained to compare with the Post Mortem information.

DMORT Katrina West is where the human remains from New Orleans and surrounding area were taken and was a larger operation. I never was involved with the morgue there, so I am not too informed about it.

I returned home on the September 22nd and returned to Gulfport for a second two-week deployment in October. Again, I was assigned to the morgue, primarily as a tracker, but another mortician and I applied some external preservation to some initially unidentified remains and the remains that were returned to crypts and cemeteries before we casketed them.

Even though people were assigned in their professional duties in each section, often if they were not needed in that section for a period of time, they were willing to sweep floors, clean equipment, or do whatever was needed to get the mission accomplished.

I am extremely proud of our mission and what we accomplished. We were tasked with identifying approximately 375 human remains that were killed by the storm or swept from compromised crypts and graves in Mississippi. DMORT Katrina East was closed down several weeks ago (October 2005). The last I heard, there were only seven who had not yet been identified.

DMORT Katrina West is a larger operation and faces greater difficulty in identifying their victims due to larger loss of life, medical and dental records destroyed by the storms and floods in New Orleans, possible loss of entire families and with many families still scattered throughout the country, creating difficulties in obtaining identifying information. The identification process there may extend over the next year, and I suspect that there will be many who may never be identified. Recently, facilities at St. Gabriel were closed down and moved to Carville, Louisiana (November 2005).

I was fortunate to meet many great people from all disciplines and from many areas of the country. I hope to maintain contact with many of them. Other Region V members from Minnesota who were deployed to St. Gabriel or Carville are: Andrew Baker, M.D. and Shawn Wilson from Hennepin County Medical Examiners Office, Ray Benson and Joan Held-Benson from Nisswa, Harold Risk from St. Cloud, and Mark Haskins (videographer) from Bloomington. There may be others deployed from Minnesota that I am not aware of.

This article is based on my personal experience and observations and in no way is to be construed as to be the position of DMORT or the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS).

Lucky Finds a Home
By "Lucky" Jarabek



"Woof" to Everyone!

As many of you may know, and some of you may not, my mom (**Audrey "AJ" Jarabek, Region V**), brought me home when she was down working Hurricane Katrina/Rita! A girl at the airport on our flight home suggested that I be called "Lucky" as I am lucky to be alive, and lucky to have been brought to a new home after such a traumatizing "childhood." After realizing how much work I was, Mom tried her darnedest to find me a good home. No one wanted me, because I was a "male dog" and because everyone anticipates me to "get so big." I am a German shepherd mix, and my doctor tells my mom that I will probably get to be a pretty good size. Well, after nine weeks, she did find me a home, and after only FOUR days of missing me terribly, she called and requested me to come back home to my "family." Can you imagine? Who would have guessed? Now she loves me SO much, and I have charmed all of the family and friends. I am SO in!!!!

I am writing to say hello to all of you. If you're my mom's friend...you're my friend! I wanted to meet you all and fill you in a bit on myself.

I have just had my six-month-old birthday! Mom brought me home at six weeks, weighing in at a mere five pounds. As of last Friday at my doctor visit, I am tipping the

scales at 47lbs. Wow...I just might get to be a big boy like they said. I start training with our local Police Department K-9 team dogs two weeks from this Saturday. I am SO excited! Mom says I am VERY easy to train and learn everything very quickly. I love to mind; I can see it pleases Mom so much! She spoils me terribly, and walks me all of the time, even on the freezing cold days. I love to fetch my toys when she throws them. We have a lot of fun together! I will already sit, down, shake, come, fetch, and stay on command. If you can believe it, Mom has even taught me how to pick up all of my toys and put them back in my dog-toy-basket one by one. Everyone seems to be most impressed with this. I love the treats; I'll do most anything for one! The latest task she has taught me is that I must sit and wait, drooling over my food, until she says "OK"...then I am able to dig in, but not a moment before. She keeps telling me that a good dog is a good thing!

Above is my 5-month old picture at which I was right around 38 lbs or so. I hope you like my smile!

UPDATES AND NEWS FROM OUR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER ***SUE ATWOOD***

Uniforms:

Those who ordered uniforms last summer will be receiving them over the next couple weeks. There is a per box shipping fee. Each order consists of two blouses, two pants, and one belt. Your "old" uniforms are not obsolete. They can be updated with the new patches. Information on how to obtain additional patches will be forthcoming.

2006 NDMS Conference:

Wording on the conference website this year has been confusing. All NDMS members are "invited" to attend. Open registration for 1000 slots will begin March 15th. The conference runs from April 24-26, with pre-conference courses offered April 22 & 23. The conference website is: www.ndms.chepinc.org.

Region V Training:

Tentative dates are June 2-4, 2006. Location -TBA.

Paperwork:

Member responsibility includes: keeping a current license, keeping an up-to-date immunization card, submitting current direct deposit information, keeping current contact numbers on file, and holding the most current FEMA ID card. The 2006 ID cards expire at the end of April. A group email will be sent out when the 2007 cards are available.

Congratulations:

Jane Kaminski, DDS, has earned the Certified Emergency Manager (CEM) designation and was recognized by the International Association of Emergency Managers in January. This is the highest honor of professional achievement available from the Association which has in its membership more than 2,900 emergency managers-representing local, state, and federal, private and military emergency managers. The CEM designation is presently held by 550 men and women in the emergency management profession.

LATE BREAKING NEWS**The Untimely Death of Brian Fiffick:**

The National Transportation Safety Board notified us last week of the death of Brian E. Fiffick in an automobile accident in DC on February 25, 2006. Brian became known to most of us during his first major deployment for the Amtrak train-truck crash in Bourbonnais IL in March 1999. He continued to be a valued colleague and friend during many subsequent missions. Many Region V Team members will remember his enthusiastic and informative participation in our June 2005 Region V training exercise at Rickenbacker Airport.

Don and Pam Bloom, Bob Shank, Jr., Brad Targhetta, Shannon Dotson, Frank and Julie Saul traveled to the Youngstown area to attend his visitation and funeral. Their participation was much appreciated by his wonderful family and our colleagues at the NTSB. The crowded visitation and funeral attested to the fact that Brian was much appreciated by young and old alike. His strong family ties enhanced his ability to relate to the families of transportation accident victims.

He was only 33, and will be much missed by family, friends, and colleagues.

Shannon Dotson Promotion:

Shannon Dotson, a longtime member of the DPMU, has been promoted to Acting Commander of this free-standing Team which will be expanded to 40 members.

Don Bloom Appointment:

Don Bloom, the "inventor" of VIP, will be able to supervise the use of his program in his new position as Deputy Commander of the FAC which is expected to become a free-standing Team with 25 members (at least 2 from each Region).

Andy Baker Election:

Andy Baker, MD, D-ABP-FP, who is the Chief Medical Examiner of Hennepin County, MSP MN, has been elected Secretary of the Pathology/Biology Section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. He is now in line to become Chairman of this important Section. Andy is perhaps best known to most of the Team members for his presentations on the identification of the 9/11 Pentagon victims during his service at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology.