

## ***NJAAR-THE FIRST 25 YEARS***

By Joe Cofone

### **Introduction**

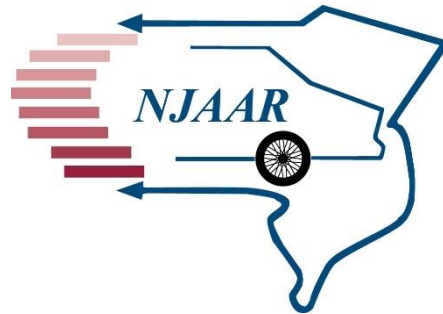
The year 2016 is a milestone for the New Jersey Association of Accident Reconstructionist as the Association observes its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. On such a momentous and historic occasion, it is only fitting that a concise historical and biographical account of the Association be recorded for posterity.

The information that follows is taken from documented sources, such as available issues of our newsletter Momentum and other Association documents. The details provided from these sources are augmented with information provided to me by others who have been part of the Association over the course of its existence. Also included are personal recollections, observations and a clear insight into some of the workings of NJAAR.

### **Creation by the New Jersey Police Traffic Officers Association**

NJAAR officially began in 1991. However, the ground work for the Association was laid in mid-1990. As a Board Member of the New Jersey Police Traffic Officers Association, I recall initial discussions regarding the formation of a spin-off organization. This newly formed Association would be dedicated toward promoting traffic safety through improved investigations of traffic crashes so that their underlying causes could be better understood. The thought was that an enhanced understanding of causation factors would lead to appropriate countermeasures designed to safeguard the walking and motoring public and ultimately save lives. As with the parent association, it was believed that creating a forum where ideas could be discussed and exchanged and training provided, the expertise of its members could be enhanced.

The NJPTOA Board of Directors bought into the idea and in the later part of 1990 after discussions at a monthly general meeting, an initial steering committee was



appointed by then NJPTOA President, Chief Anthony Parenti of the Fanwood PD in Union County. The original steering committee consisted of Chief Parenti, Frank Volpicella of the South Brunswick PD in Middlesex County, Jack Barry of the Nutley PD in Essex County, Gary Furnari a Nutley attorney who later went on to become a NJ State Senator and later a Superior Court Judge, Dave Korey of the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office and me, who chaired the committee, and was with the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office. This initial group was responsible for creating the foundation and framework of the Association. The group typically met at the Nutley PD headquarters. Later the organizing group was expanded to include several other members.

The general By-Laws were crafted by the committee over just a few meetings. They were patterned largely after the NJPTOA By-Laws in structure and form, but contained articles specifically addressing the new organization's intended purpose. The steering committee recognized and acknowledged early on that if we were to achieve our stated intentions, we had to adopt the premise that accident investigation and reconstruction requires a multi-disciplinary approach. Therefore, one of the key provisions of the first By-Laws was the recognition that, although NJAAR was largely a police organization, it was important to allow related professionals such as engineers, forensic experts, medical experts and attorneys the ability to participate in the Association. As such, membership levels were created to satisfy this requirement.

There were five elected officers in the early years. In addition to the primary four was a financial secretary, who was largely responsible for the collection of dues and the maintenance of membership records and handling membership renewals. The Board also consisted of the president of NJPTOA or his designee. Additionally, there was a provision for three advisors to the Board. In the early years these advisory seats were each held by an attorney, medical field professional and engineer.

The NJPTOA provided the seed money to get the Association started. Among the early expenses were legal fees for a Trenton law firm, which had somehow been associated with then Governor Jim Florio, to review our bylaws and establish NJAAR as a legal entity. The NJPTOA also helped secure some of our early meeting locations.

## *NJAAR Is Born*

On Friday, April 5, 1991 an organizational meeting took place at the Fanwood PD headquarters. In attendance were members of an extended steering committee who were also known as the Board of Trustees. Present were Tony Parenti, Jack Barry, Dave Korey, Frank Volpicella, Bill Cicchetti of the Washington Twsp. PD in Bergen County, AP Nick Sewitch of the Middlesex Co Prosecutor's Office, Gary Bowne, a safety engineer with Mercedes Benz of North America and me. I was elected chairman and Jack Barry was elected secretary.

At the meeting it was reported that the Corporation's Certificate and Articles of Incorporation had been filed and recorded by the New Jersey Secretary of State on **March 19, 1991**, making this the official legal birth date of the Association. NJAAR was formed as a nonprofit corporation. The task ahead was to complete the organization of NJAAR so that it could commence its activities.

During the April 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, proposed By-Laws were duly submitted and reviewed and considered by the Board. A motion by Frank Volpicella and a second by Dave Korey to adopt the By-Laws was voted on and unanimously approved. NJAAR was now officially in business.

Election of the first Board of Officers was the initial matter to be addressed and after some brief discussions a vote was taken. I was elected President; Vice-President was Dave Korey; Jack Barry was elected Secretary. The Treasurer was Frank Volpicella and Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, a temporary title later changed to Financial Secretary, was Roy Wherry of Vernon PD in Sussex County.

An initial Board of Directors was also inaugurated and consisted of the above officers as well as appointees Nick Sewitch, Gary Bowne, and NJ State ME, Dr. Robert Goode, M.D. Three committee chairmen and co-chairmen were also appointed. They were Bill Cicchetti, chair of the Membership Committee assisted by co-chair Bernie Lombardo of the Ringwood PD in Passaic County. This committee was largely responsible for the process of vetting applicants for membership into the Association. This role later passed to the Secretary; Dennis O'Day of the Rahway PD in Union

County was appointed chair of the Seminar Committee with Frank Volpicella taking on a second role as co-chair. Jack Barry also assumed another position as the chair of the Newsletter Committee.

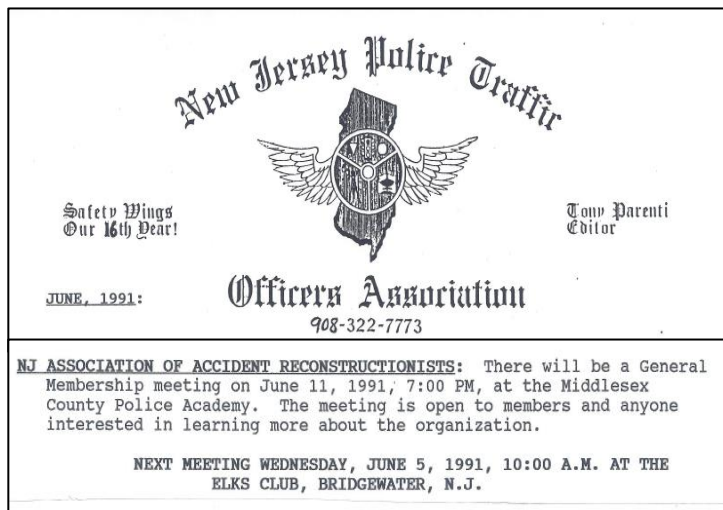
Also enacted was a motion made by Tony Parenti and seconded by Frank Volpicella that members of the Board would be exempt from dues while holding office.

At the onset, annual membership dues were twenty-five dollars but many years later were raised to thirty-dollars. Members were provided a certificate of membership and issued a membership card. After a few years the card was no longer provided.

In order to accommodate the broader spectrum of the membership we hoped to attract, and also to be less of an interruption to the work day, the first Board decided that initially, meetings should be held in the evening and, to the extent possible, at a centrally located venue and at quarterly intervals as required by the By-Laws.

**June 11, 1991 at 7:00 p.m.** was set as the inaugural general membership meeting that was to be held at the Middlesex County Police Academy in Edison.

### And So It Begins



*The first public announcement of NJAAR's inaugural meeting appeared in the June 1991 issue of Safety Wings, the NJPTOA newsletter. (Courtesy A. Parenti)*

Association also spread among local engineers. Applications, which had been sent out in advance of the first meeting, were being received and our membership base began to grow.

Information was reported at the May and June NJPTOA monthly meetings announcing the purpose and formation of the Association and the date of its upcoming first meeting. A notice also appeared in the June NJPTOA newsletter. All NJPTOA members were welcomed to attend, join, and encouraged to participate. Word of the

The first meeting was attended by thirty-one members, which included most of the five officers. Present at the first meeting were:

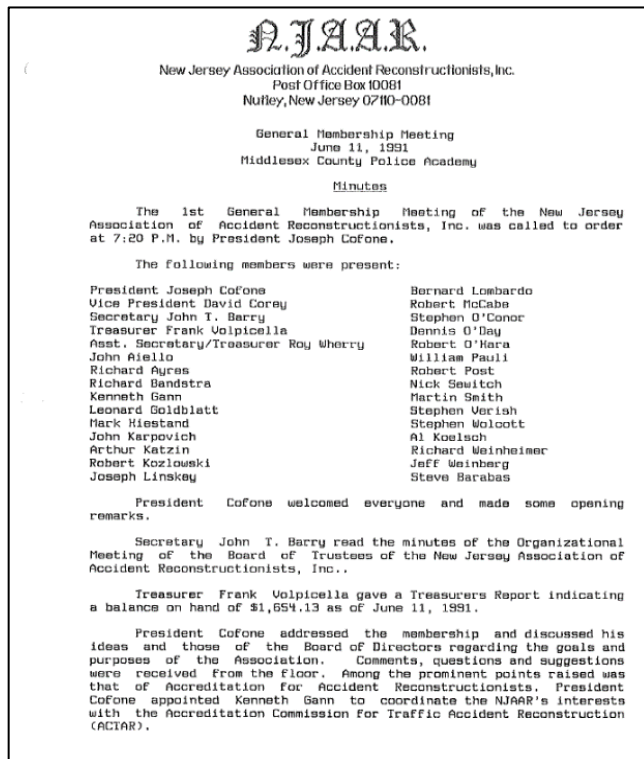
Steve O'Connor, Bill Pauli, Ken Gann, John Aiello, Robert Post, Dennis O'Day, Bob O'Hara, Mark Hiestand, Leonard Goldblatt, Richard Ayers, Nick Sewitch, Rich Weinheimer, Bob Mc Cabe, Richard Bandstra, Robert Post, Martin Smith, Stephen Varish, Stephen Wolcott, John Karpovich, Al Koelsch, Arthur Katzin, Bob Kozlowski, Jeff Weinberg, Joseph Linsky and Steve Barabas.

The meeting began with minutes from the organizational meeting being read by Jack Barry. This was followed by the first treasurer's report which was rendered by Frank Volpicella, who reported that NJAAR had an initial fund of \$1,654.13. The purpose of the Association as well as its goals and ideas for its future development were the initial topics presented to the membership. This was followed by questions and suggestions which were solicited from the attendees. The most prominent suggestion raised during that first meeting was the pursuit of accreditation for reconstructionists. It was probably the first time many of us heard about ACTAR, which was still in its early developmental stages. Following an involved discussion, member Ken Gann was appointed to coordinate NJAAR's interest with ACTAR.

The final order of business was the establishment of several committees which were staffed as follows:

*Education:*

Steve O'Connor (Co-Chairman), Bill Pauli (Co-Chairman), Ken Gann (Accreditation), John Aiello, Robert Post, Dennis O'Day, Bob O'Hara,



Minutes from NJAAR's first meeting, June 11, 1991.

Mark Hiestand, Leonard Goldblatt, Frank Volpicella.

*Seminar:*

Dennis O'Day (Co-Chairman), Frank Volpicella (Co-Chairman), Richard Ayers, Ken Gann, Nick Sewitch

*House:*

Dave Korey (Chairman), Ken Gann, Bob O'Hara, Nick Sewitch

*Newsletter:*

Jack Barry (Chairman), Rich Weinheimer, Bob Mc Cabe

*Membership:*

Bill Cicchetti (Co-Chairman), Bernie Lombardo (Co-Chairman), Roy Wherry.

The *second* general meeting during that first year was held at the Somerset Police Academy in Hillsborough on September 24, 1991 at 8:00 p.m. Twenty-five members were present. A variety of matters were discussed, but more importantly, this meeting set the format for many of our future meetings, consisting of organizational business followed by a training component. This format was influenced by, and similar to, the way the SAE held its local meetings.

Highlights of this meeting are as follows: In just a few short months inroads were being made with Northwestern University's Traffic Institute, who, according to Steve O'Connor, offered guest speakers for future seminars; The seeds of an Association website were planted when member Rich Weinheimer suggested and volunteered to establish an NJAAR computer bulletin board where members could exchange ideas and information; It was reported that Board Member, Dr. Robert Goode, NJ State Medical Examiner, volunteered to assist the Association in the pursuit of their goals and offered to make a presentation at a future meeting; An occupant restraint committee was formed with Rich Weinheimer and John Karpovich acting as co-chairmen; A discussion was brought to the floor by member Len Goldblatt wherein the topic of using a standard surface prior to measuring roadway surface friction coefficients was discussed; Finally,

the meeting was capped off by our first ever presentation on the topic of pedestrian collisions. It was given by Dennis O'Day.

The *third* meeting of our first year was held on December 5, 1991 at 7:45 p.m. at the US headquarters of Mercedes Benz of North America, located in Montvale in Bergen County. The meeting was arranged by Board Member Gary Bowne, a safety engineer with the company. There were thirty-one members in attendance.

The business portion of the meeting included Education Committee Co-Chairman Steve O'Connor reporting that Gary Cooper of Northwestern University would be speaking on Work and Energy at our upcoming March 1992 meeting. Unfortunately, for reasons unknown, Mr. Cooper never made it to the meeting. It was around this same time the NJ Division of Highway Traffic Safety was in the process of talks regarding the purchasing of crash training courses from either the Northwestern University Traffic Institute or the Institute of Police Traffic Management at the University of North Florida, as it was then known. Eventually NUTI was awarded the contract.

Seminar Co-Chairman Dennis O'Day began a discussion regarding the holding of a seminar in Atlantic City, possibly for the fall of the following year. This early suggestion was rather prophetic as in a few short years NJAAR would become an active participant in the Joint Conference.

The training portion of the meeting was provided by Gary Bowne who made a presentation regarding Mercedes Benz's efforts to improve crash survivability in their vehicles. He also provided a tour of the MB facility and a live demonstration of an airbag activation and deployment. Mercedes was also kind enough to supply food for the meeting.

Our *fourth* meeting, which concluded our first full year cycle of general meetings, took place on March 3, 1992. The meeting was held at the Union County Police Academy at 7:45 p.m. and was attended by 31 members.

Membership committee Co-Chairman Bill Cicchetti reported that NJAAR now had 52 members and an additional 21 applications had been received, with the applicants undergoing the vetting process.

There was also a discussion at this March 1992 meeting regarding NJAAR making application to be an ACTAR member organization. In 1990, a year before we formed, eleven professional accident reconstruction associations with world-wide representation met to explore the possibility of forming an internationally recognized accreditation program open to both public and private accident reconstructionists. As a result of that meeting ACTAR was formed and incorporated in 1991. A suggestion was made to have Ken Gann, the chairman of our ACTAR exploratory committee, make application to ACTAR on behalf of NJAAR. Further discussions on the matter lead to questions regarding ACTAR's requirements and overall viability. A consensus from the membership emerged wherein NJAAR should wait to see if ACTAR becomes a sustainable entity, at which time we could revisit the issue of joining the organization.

Progress was also reported on the creation of the NJAAR bulletin board. Newsletter Committee member Rich Weinheimer was spearheading the effort. However, the attempt to create the bulletin board, though noble, never came to fruition. It would take until January of 2006 for NJAAR to create a Yahoo Groups site, which was set up by Dave Benn. Unfortunately, it too never proved to be very popular with the membership. To date, only twenty-six members belong to the group. There has been a total of approximately 70 postings since its inception. In some years there were no postings at all. Thus far this year the group has seen a flurry of activity that has not existed since the year the site was created. It is proffered that the reason for the lack of interest in the NJAAR Yahoo Group is largely due to the existence of the long established INCR and EDR Users Groups. These Groups provide a means to search files for technical information and also a forum to post questions. They also provide an opportunity to make contact with nationally renowned experts as well as other reconstructionists from around the country and the world.

Discussions were also held at the March 1992 meeting regarding the launching of an NJAAR newsletter. It was also Rich Weinheimer who put the call out for interesting cases that could be published in our newsletter. For many professional groups of the time, such as the NJPTOA, the newsletter format was an effective way of



disseminating organizational and technical information. It would be about another year or so before our version, Momentum, was established.

Finally, the training component for this meeting was offered by Board Member Dr. Robert Goode, who made an informative presentation to the membership relating forensic pathology and accident reconstruction.

In the ensuing years subsequent meetings were held at various police academies, police headquarters and non-law enforcement venues around the state. For a period of time we tried to select a venue where meals would be available, such as a hotel or restaurant. For example, there was a period of several months when meetings were held at a Ramada Inn located just off exit 135 of the Garden State Parkway on Valley Road in Clark. Still, there were other occasions when the meetings took place at the same location that the NJPTOA held its regular meetings.

Meeting attendance for the first year or so was rather stable and, relatively speaking, very good. For about the first two years it was not uncommon to have close to 60 % of our members present for a general meeting. However, with each ensuing year, even as our membership roll grew, the meeting attendance numbers began falling off.

Over the course of our existence, perhaps two of the greatest challenges the NJAAR Board of Directors seemed to be constantly confronted with was, first, maintaining and increasing meeting attendance and second, inspiring the membership to become more active in the Association.

This trend is not uncommon among the many professional associations in our field. The various NJAAR Boards that existed over our first twenty-five years addressed these issues in a number of ways. In terms of increasing attendance numbers, the Board employed several tactics; We tried moving meetings to locations around the state; When that did not increase attendance, meetings we held at a somewhat more centrally located facility, such as the John Stamler Academy on Raritan Road in Scotch Plains, Union County and later at the Middlesex County Police Academy in Edison; We also experimented with changing the meeting times to work-day hours; Changed also were the frequency of meetings from four times a year to irregular intervals. We

presently meet usually once, or perhaps twice, a year as part of a day-long seminar. This latter method seemed to evoke the most interest and highest attendance from our membership. It also emulates the practice of many other similar associations.

With respect to encouraging more participation, NJAAR established a policy about 15 years ago wherein the next year's dues of any member who gave a presentation at a meeting, or had an article published in Momentum, would be waived. Surprisingly, very few members took advantage of this opportunity.

Finding guest speakers for our meetings was, and is, always a challenge. At times, there were speakers known to, or heard by, a Board member that we were able to book for a meeting. Most of the time such presenters came free of charge, or at most, for a small honorarium. For example, I recall one meeting where one of the Board members convinced a civil attorney he knew to make a presentation and explain what he looked for when hiring an accident reconstructionist.

Board members were also called upon to make a presentation. John Brick, Dave Benn, Bob Clarke and me, just to name a few, did so and on more than one occasion. Occasionally a general member would step forward and present a topic to the membership. For example, I recall member John Scott's interesting lecture on truck ECM data and Ed Weber on forensic vehicle inspections, and Lou Haworth on EDR data. Andy Rich also gave several stimulating talks on a variety of topics.

Due to his affiliation with IPTM, Frank Volpicella knew and had access to some top instructors in our industry. Frank would know in advance whenever one of the IPTM specialty instructors was in the area teaching classes and so he would schedule a general membership meeting during that same time. He would communicate with the instructors either before they arrived in NJ or once they were here, and he was always able to convince them to provide an evening lecture. We heard from people like Dave Brill and Walt Dobson on heavy trucks, Bill Wright on EDR data, Keith Rodaway on GPS data, Mike Read on pedestrian reconstruction, John Daily and Nate Shigemura discussing evidence interpretation and vehicular homicide investigations, and others. Frank was also in tune with other various crash training programs, outside of IPTM, that were taking place in our state. He successfully persuaded these other well-known

authorities to make a presentation at one of our quarterly meetings. Rusty Haight, “The Human Crash Test Dummy” comes to mind and so too Rick Jobe, President of the company that manufactured the “Vericom” brake computer. Budgetary constraints at the Division of Highway Traffic Safety reduced the number of specialty course offered in NJ, and so the pool of potentially available guest speakers also diminished.

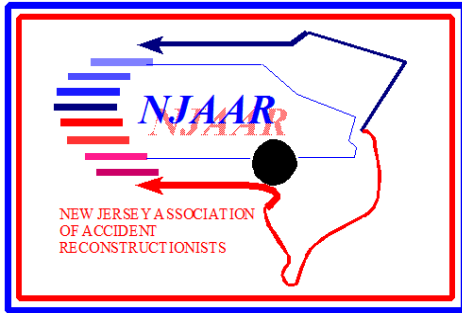
The NJAAR membership demographic is such that it is mostly composed of active and retired police officers. Approximately 6 or 7 percent of our membership is composed of engineers. About 2 to 3 percent of the membership comes from related and allied fields. Through the first 10 years or so of NJAAR’s existence, the membership rolls continued to grow and then plateaued. As to be expected, the number of members fluctuated over the course of the ensuing years. NJAAR has enjoyed a membership roll that for a good number of years hovered somewhere near 220. Since 2014 membership dues have been suspended. The reason for such action is attributed to a sentiment held by a majority of members of the former Board which maintained that the general membership was not served as best as it could have been. The waiving of the dues was viewed as a justifiable reparation. Commencing this year dues have been reinstated. As of this writing in late summer of 2016, early indications are that membership renewals may be significantly declining. The new Board is optimistic it will reignite the general membership’s interest and that the membership roll will return to previous levels.

### **The NJAAR Logo**



*First NJAAR Logo adopted  
circa 1991.*

It was Bill Cicchetti who introduced our first official logo, which he designed in late 1991 or early 1992 mainly for our membership certificates. This logo was also used on our early version of stationary and is presented here. Bill had solicited the assistance of an officer in his department in putting the logo together. Somehow the artwork for the logo got lost and/or was never transferred with the membership files Bill passed along after he stepped down from the Membership Committee. As such, we went without an official logo for several years and just used the Association’s initials instead.



NJAAR's new logo debuted in 1999.

Our logo was officially changed in 1999 to a version I designed and which is also illustrated here.

Sometime around 2008 the design was slightly modified to the current familiar and cleaner version which appears above, adjacent to this document's title.

## Our Newsletter

It took a few years, but by the end of 1993 all was in place to launch our newsletter. The name "Momentum" was suggested by someone on the Board and was

overwhelmingly accepted because it symbolized movement, change and growth. It was to become the Official Publication of NJAAR.



Volume 1, Number 1 of Momentum, March 1994 - the official publication of NJAAR.

The Board felt that having a newsletter was important to the legitimacy and professional standing of the Association because it provided a forum whereby members could express and exchange ideas and opinions. It was also viewed as an important vehicle to keep the membership informed as to the general operational workings of the Association between meetings. And finally, it provided important technical information.

Our first editor was Pat Doyle, a Trooper with the NJSP, who devoted much time and effort to make Momentum a reality. The first issue had an official publishing date of March, 1994; However, it had been mailed to members in February.

The headline story spoke of NJAAR's initial participation in the annual Joint Conference. The issue also contained several interesting articles, one of which was entitled "The Future of Accident Investigation Training in NJ" by Steve O'Connor. Another article, "Diabetes, Breath Acetone and Breathalyzer Accuracy: A Case Study" written by Dr. John Brick, dealt with Diabetics and DWI. Several years later, John would become a Board advisor.

The issue also announced that the President of the Vericom, Rick Jobe, would be speaking at our meeting on March 1 of that year regarding the accelerometer his company manufactures. The membership was also advised that a representative from ACTAR would be available at our June meeting to discuss the accreditation process and the ACTAR exam.

The last item appearing in the first issue was written by then, and now current, Secretary Bob Klingen. Bob penned a very useful column entitled "In Case You Missed the Meeting", highlighting the general membership meeting from the previous quarter. In Momentum's inaugural issue Bob discussed the previous meeting which had been held on December 7, 1993 at the Ramada Inn in Clark. This regular feature column ended when Bob's initial tenure as Secretary concluded. It is unknown if the column will return should Momentum be re-launched, which at this writing seems to be a viable possibility.

Beginning with this very first issue was a feature that has appeared in nearly every release of Momentum. It was entitled the "President's Message". The message has been primarily used by each President to keep members informed of important matters as well as sharing ideas, goals and a vision for the Association's future.

An occasional piece, which began under Pat Doyle's tenure, and has appeared intermittently in the newsletter over the years is the "Member Profile". This was a general short biography about a featured NJAAR member. The first such profile highlighted Board Member Dr. Robert Goode. Over the years some of the other members who have been featured were: Richard Ayers, Warren Twp. PD, Sgt. Leslie Houston, Long Beach Twp. PD, Ken Scott, Trenton PD, Board Member and Ocean County AP Steve Janosko, current Treasurer and former VP Bob Clark of Atlantic City PD, former treasurer and current VP, Bill Pauli, and past Board Member Dr. John Brick.

Beginning with the second issue in 1994 Pat also ran another interesting but short lived item he called “Quick Tip” where he’d offer a useful tip for simplifying and improving crash investigations. This column ran until the middle of 1995.

Pat Doyle asked to be replaced as Editor in September of 1998. He requested to continue his work on the development of NJAAR’s first web-site. Dave Benn agreed to take on the task. He was assisted by Jeff Grey. The inaugural issue for Dave as Editor was December of 1998. Later, Dave assumed the role entirely, as Jeff went on to become NJAAR’s ACTAR representative.

Dave Benn, the longest serving Editor of Momentum who held the post for about twelve years, authored a column that appeared quite often. It was known as “From the Editor” wherein he discussed various industry news items and upcoming events such as the Joint Conferences.

In 2001 before there was Facebook or LinkedIn, Dave began a recurring piece he called “What’s Happening”. This short feature contained what could be considered social information regarding our membership. Such items as retirements, promotions, birthdays, and other such related events were highlighted. This feature ran for about five years, ending in 2006.

The original thought was to publish Momentum quarterly to coincide with our meeting schedule of the time. Unfortunately, this was a goal that could not be fulfilled, but not for lack of trying on the part of the Editor and Board of Directors. As best as can be determined, 1999 may be the only year where Momentum was published four times. There were several years where it was published three times and even more years where it was published just twice. There were also years where it was only published once.

One recurring theme that has appeared in issues of Momentum, whether through the President’s Message, From the Editor column, or a side bar, was for active participation from the membership. Specifically, we tried to encourage the membership to provide articles to support the publication and/or to offer presentations at our quarterly meetings. As indicated earlier, in appreciation for the member’s contribution,

the annual membership renewal fee would be waived for the ensuing year. We also tried to convey and reinforce the fact that such a contribution would boost the author's credibility and professional standing in the accident reconstruction community. Despite a myriad of pleas to our membership, we just could not generate the degree of support we needed to publish Momentum as often as we would have liked.

Dave Benn made a noble attempt to keep Momentum alive. In addition to his regular duties as Editor, he also penned at least nine articles over the years. Also contributing to the effort were John Brick and Andy Rich who, along with Dave, topped the list of members who are the most published in Momentum. John and Andy each contributed at least eight articles and they both have probably given more presentations on the behalf of NJAAR than any other member or speaker. Some of the other members who over the course of Momentum's life answered the call were; Jeff Grey, Frank Pritzl, me, Ed Weber, Steve O'Connor, Doug Wiatrak, and Jim Mentzer. Also published in Momentum were contributing articles, which had appeared in other related trade publications, from well-known people in our field who were not NJAAR members such as Al Baxter, George Bonnett, John Kwasnoski and Joe Badger.

Confronted by the reality of the prevailing situation, publication of Momentum was suspended entirely and indefinitely beginning in 2011. Although the publication has been out of print for about five years, Dave "technically" maintained the position of Editor until December of 2015, at which time he became NJAAR's current president. Sometime in early 2016 it was announced that John Accardi would assume the position of Momentum Editor, suggesting a re-launch is in the works.

In considering contributing causes for the decline and demise of Momentum, one reason may be attributed to a membership benefit, which began in 2012, that enables members to subscribe to issues of the Accident Reconstruction Journal at a discounted rate. This long-standing and respected peer-reviewed publication offers a multitude of technical articles written by some well-known authorities and also provides other industry related news bimonthly. Essentially, a member's need for such information is satisfied by the ARJ.

Part of our arrangement with the ARJ allows NJAAR to list organizational news in the publication. The space provided was limited, perhaps to about a half page. By taking advantage of this offer the accident reconstruction community at large could get a sense of NJAAR's progress. Additionally, it would be a tool to promote and boost our image as a leading Association in our field. One thought offered at the time discussions of utilizing this benefit were being held by the Board was that the ARJ space could be used to augment news and other items contained in Momentum. As it turned out, a majority of the Board members rejected the idea of taking advantage of this opportunity, a policy that may or may not be revisited and reviewed by the newly empaneled Board. The reason for this position is largely related to the fact that during the Board's deliberations of the matter, it could not get beyond an unresolved question regarding just what organizational information should be placed in the ARJ. One view was that given the publication schedule of the Journal, it would be unfeasible to put in information that required a timely response. I also seem to recall discussions to the effect that not all NJAAR members might subscribe to the Journal and so would have no way of being made aware of NJAAR business. There was also a sense that using the Journal space might in some way infringe upon Momentum.

If a Momentum is to have an afterlife, and hopefully it will, it will probably need to take on a different form. Physical hard copies will likely be replaced by digital versions, which are less costly to produce and offer more in terms of design options. This is the challenge awaiting its new Editor and the newly empaneled Board of Directors.

### **Our Officers and Board Advisors**

There have been a relatively small number of members who have volunteered to act in the capacity of officers and advisors to the Board. We reflect on the service these individuals have provided to the Association.

Under the Articles of Incorporation, the Board of Directors, which consist of the officers and advisors, shall consist of nine members. This pertained to the originating and all future Boards. The Board is also obligated to meet at least once each calendar quarter.



Elected positions are for a term of two years. Appointed positions are at the pleasure of the President.

An important By-Law change in 2015 imposed term limits for Officers. No officer shall serve more than four consecutive terms in any given office, which is equivalent to eight years. This requirement does not apply to the three Board advisors. The amendment was created with the hope of bringing in new ideas and direction and at the same time, perhaps reduce the extent of potential stagnation that may inflict the Association.

*President* –The president of any Association is arguably the most important and challenging of roles anyone can assume. The president must provide the thrust that keeps the Association moving forward. The person holding that office must ensure that goals and objectives of the Association are being met and the people working toward an objective remain on a path to fulfill the task at hand. As frustrating and difficult as it may at times be, a president must do their best to motivate other officers and members to take an active part in the Association. He or she must also encourage others to share in the president's vision for the future of the Association. When things falter or wane, which in all professional organizations is bound to occur, the president must be the one to bring the Association back on course. Direction and example must come from the president. The position holds much responsibility and, of course, there are limitations to what any one person can do. While the success of an Association depends largely on the actions and leadership of the president, the success of the president in satisfying the obligations of the office depends largely on the actions and support received from the other Officers, Board members and the general membership. If someone is not pulling their weight, it is the President's responsibility to let that person know. If need be, the president must reappportion or reassign the delinquent duties to someone else. This can be one of the more difficult aspects of the job. Conversely, if the President is lacking in leadership and performance, other Officers and Board Members are required to bring it to the President's attention. Generally, when things go right the president deserves kudos for leading the way. When things go wrong, the president rightly bears the criticism for not leading the way.

NJAAR has had three presidents up to this point in its history. I served as charter president, beginning in 1991. After four years in that position I believed it was time for a change. The infusion of new ideas and leadership are, in my view, important to the health and well-being of any Association, especially early on. The periodic infusion of new leadership shows that the organization is viable beyond those persons who got things started. Having said this, each President, or any other Officer or Board Member for that matter, must gauge by their own standards when it's time to pass the torch. Perhaps the worst legacy for any leader is having rendered an Association irrelevant.

Our second president was a founding father and charter member, Frank Volpicella. Frank's term began in 1995 and with a tenure of twenty years, he is to date our longest serving president. Besides his long tenure at the helm of NJAAR, Frank is perhaps best known for his many years as a crash investigation and reconstruction instructor. He has been and continues to be involved with the NJ crash training program since its inception in the early 1990s. The program is currently being administered by Kean University. He worked for the Northwestern University Traffic Institute for several years beginning in 1994 as an adjunct instructor teaching around the country. He left in 2001 when he was hired by IPTM, where he has also been teaching around the country regularly for many years.

Most of our greatest successes and achievements have occurred during Frank's term in office. He justifiably deserves much credit for those triumphant times and events. Conversely however, Frank was confronted with a good amount of apathy and indifference that affected all levels within the Association. Along with that came a corresponding share of not-so-productive years which were a challenge to deal with. By virtue of the fact that he was president, Frank had to shoulder much of the responsibility for those down years.

As is prevalent in many professional associations, there exists a natural cyclical interest from the general membership, Officers, and a Board of Directors. NJAAR was not immune to this phenomenon. The objective, when faced with such cases, is to attempt to manage the cycles so that the positive phases have a longer period than the negative phases, which undeniably, is easier said than done. In some cases, it might

require the adoption of a new organizational paradigm, which can translate to changes to the By-Laws and/or leadership.

Our newest and current president, Dave Benn, began his tenure in January of 2016. Dave has been a long-serving and untiring member of the Board. He is very active in our industry. Outside of his responsibilities to NJAAR, Dave serves as Secretary of ACTAR and is a NATARI Board Member. He teaches regularly for the NJ Kean University crash training program. He was part of the original teaching cadre when the crash programs started in NJ around 1990 or 91. Dave also instructs for IPTM, teaching across the US and in other parts of the world. He also has a private practice, Impact Reconstruction Consultants in Lumberton in Burlington County. The general membership is intently awaiting Dave's vision for NJAAR's next chapter.

*Vice President* – The importance of this office is often over-looked or downplayed. The VP must be every bit as enthusiastic and committed to the Association's goals as the president. Many of the general points mentioned above regarding the president can also be applied to the VP. While the duties may differ somewhat to those of the president, the responsibility to the Association is the same.

There have been five Vice-Presidents to date. Dave Korey, a charter member of the Board, was our first VP. Dave had the distinction of being one of the first full-time detectives in NJ assigned exclusively to investigate and reconstruct motor vehicle crashes. He was part of the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office, the first office in the state to have a unit dedicated solely to crimes arising from motor vehicle crashes. His term as VP began in 1991 and extended to the end of 1997.

Following Dave was Bob Klingen who joined NJAAR shortly after we formed and served as VP from 1998 to 2001. Bob is a former member of the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office Fatal Accident Investigation Unit where he served twelve years. He was also the chief of the Midland Park PD in Bergen County before he retired from law enforcement. For many years Bob has operated a very successful reconstruction practice, Klingen and Associates, which is presently located in Mahwah in Bergen County.

In 2002 Jim Mentzer of Monroe Twp PD in Gloucester County, who was also a charter member, became the next VP. He held the office until the end of 2008. He was also a crash reconstructionist for the Gloucester County Prosecutor's Office for several years. Like many of the Board members, Jim was an instructor for the NJ Kean University crash training program. Jim was part of the original NJ teaching cadre that began in the early 1990s. He also taught for about six years for IPTM in the 2000's. Jim left the reconstruction industry shortly after leaving office and is currently a traffic investigator for NJDOT.

Bob Clarke of Atlantic City PD, who joined NJAAR in 2000, was our next Vice-President beginning his tenure in that role in 2009. Bob held the position until the end of 2015. Bob does private reconstruction consulting work and teaches in the use of the LTI laser measuring device and the Crash Zone computer program. He also teaches for the Kean University crash investigation training program.

The current VP is Bill Pauli, a charter NJAAR member, who took office at the beginning of 2016. Bill had formerly been our Secretary. Bill supervises the Collision Analysis and Reconstruction Team for the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office. He also teaches for the Kean University crash investigation training program. He has been with the NJ program since its inception in the early 1990s.

*Secretary* – One of the true unsung heroes of any Association is the secretary. The task is among the most important, as it is the secretary who creates a living history of the Association by documenting not only the major decisions and important events, but also the mundane proceedings such as motions, vote counts, meeting locations and times, topics discussed, and so forth. The secretary performs his duties for both the Board and general meetings. The accuracy of what and how the secretary records the Association business can help to quickly resolve issues that may later arise.

To date, there have also been five Secretaries in the history of the Association. Our first secretary was a charter member and founding father Jack Barry, who was with the Nutley PD in Essex County at the time the organization formed. Jack served in the role of Secretary from 1991 through the end of 1993.

From 1994 to the end of 1997 Bob Klingen, who was with the Midland Park PD in Bergen County, was the secretary. Bob's work was very important during the 1997 Joint Conference, which was our first attempt at actually planning and hosting the event.

Beginning in January of 1998, Bill Sorochinski of the West Milford PD in Passaic County became our secretary. Bill served for two years. After retiring from the PD he relocated to Florida.

In 2000. Bill Pauli of the Bridgewater PD in Somerset County and later with the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office, took on the role as secretary. Bill held the position for fifteen years. His work was instrumental in most of NJAAR's successful hosting of the Joint Conference and also the Association's one-day seminars which have become a near annual event. He largely administered associated registration and communication tasks for the events in addition to his normal duties. In 2000 his role was expanded to include membership matters after the position of Financial Secretary was eliminated at the end of 1999.

Bob Klingen, who rejoined the Board in 2016, was elected as our current Secretary, reprising his role of 19 years earlier.

*Treasurer* – A time consuming and sometime thankless job is that of treasurer. If the Secretary is the backbone of an organization, the treasurer can be considered its spinal cord. The treasurer must be someone of extreme integrity and honesty and is at times in the best position to determine if the Association's undertakings are affordable and thereby feasible.

NJAAR has had four Treasurers. Our first treasurer was Frank Volpicella. He served in that capacity for four years after which he became our second president.

In 1996 Roy Wherry of the Vernon PD in Sussex County became our second treasurer. Roy held that position until the end of 1998. He had previously served as Financial Secretary.

Current President Dave Benn became the third Treasurer in 1998 and held the post for 17 years.

Bob Clarke became our current Treasurer in January of 2016. He had previously been our Vice President.

*Financial Secretary* – The principal role of the Financial Secretary was to administer membership records. The system by which applicants were vetted and application fees and dues were collected and recorded became unwieldy and confusing. The thought that prevailed at the time was that things would work much easier if the membership records were handled by the Secretary. As a result, the position of Financial Secretary was eliminated in a 1999 By-Law revision that took effect the following year.

We have only had two Financial Secretaries. Our first Financial Secretary was Roy Wherry. He held the position from 1991 until the end of 1995. He reprised the role in 1998 and held it to the end of 1999. Roy has the distinction of being our first and last Financial Secretary. Roy is also a former chief of the Vernon PD located in Sussex County.

Jeff Grey of the Burlington County Prosecutor's Office became the second NJAAR member hold the office of Financial Secretary. He held the post from 1996 to the end of 1997. Jeff was also known for his work as an instructor for the both the NJ Kean University crash training program and IPTM. He was also a partner with Dave Benn in an accident reconstruction practice in Lumberton in Burlington County. He retired from the accident reconstruction field in 2015.

*Advisors to the Board* – The position of Advisor to the Board was included in the original By-Laws and it was an elected position. In later years a By-Law change empowered the president to make the appointments.

When the organization first formed, the immediate Past-President was not part of the Board of Directors. Instead the President of the NJPTOA (or later, his designee) was included. This was later changed in a By-Law amendment that removed the NJPTOA president as a Board member.

The first By-Laws established that only Regular Members could serve on the Board. A 1999 amendment established among other things, that only the officers would

be elected and that three appointed directors shall serve as a legal, technical, and medical advisor. The technical advisor to the board was generally held to mean someone from the engineering community while the legal advisor has historically been an attorney. The medical advisor, although originally a physician, may be someone from a medically related profession. The idea was to recruit people from each of those disciplines to serve on the Board. This same 1999 revision also eliminated the position of Financial Secretary and assigned that seat on the Board to the NJAAR Past President. A 2015 By-Laws revision expanded the interpretation of the requirements for the three advisors who serve on the Board. The change established that an appointed Board advisor may be anyone who may be or has been engaged in the legal, technical, medical or other accident reconstruction related or allied field.

The initial advisors to the Board were: Dr. Robert Goode, M.D. who was the NJ State Medical Examiner; AP Nick Sewitch of the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office and finally Gary Bowne, a safety engineer with Mercedes Benz of North America. As the NJPTOA President, Tony Parenti, Chief of the Fanwood PD in Union County, also had a seat on the Board.

Beginning in 1995 following my term as president, the sitting Board and President requested that I remain on the Board also in an advisory capacity. The Board reasoning was that the practice was common in many associations due to the past-president's involvement in many aspects of the Association business. In a subsequent By-Law amendment some years later, the Past-President position on the Board was established. I remained on the Board until the end of 2015 at which time the new Past-President, Frank Volpicella, assumed the seat.

Chief Tony Parenti of the Fanwood PD and later Union County Prosecutor's Office, retained his seat on the Board during his tenure as NJPTOA president which ended in about 2007. A respected reconstructionist, he was very instrumental in the creation of NJAAR. Like so many others, career and personal obligations precluded a more direct and active involvement in the Association. None of the NJPTOA presidents since Tony expressed an interest in being directly involved in the Association. In a 2015 By-Laws amendment, the NJPTOA President's seat was abolished.

Gary Bowne left the Board at the end of 1996. He was replaced by Frank Pritzl, another safety engineer with Mercedes Benz.

Frank Pritzl remained on the Board until 2014 at which time he resigned due largely to professional obligations and difficulty in making meetings. Frank had previously relocated from Piermont, NY to Hartford, Connecticut after leaving Mercedes Benz and going to work for the Travelers Insurance Company. For a period of time he made the commute from Connecticut to Central Jersey for the Board and regular meetings. Frank, who was a very involved member of the Board, was a great help in many of the Joint Conferences NJAAR hosted, largely with the securing of speakers, one of which was himself.

A recommendation that Frank once brought to the Board, that he championed along with John Brick, was the establishment of Standard Practices for various aspects of Accident Reconstruction. Frank envisioned that the established standards could pervade our industry and, as a result, elevate NJAAR's reputation to an industry leadership status. The topic had been discussed several times over the course of several years and some initial attempts were made to get things going, but the idea never seemed to generate traction and so was never adopted by the Board. Besides the considerable effort that would be required, a majority of the Board felt that the standards more or less already existed in the form of the classic accident reconstruction textbooks, such as the J. Stannard Baker and John Daily tomes. Granted, the procedures contained in the texts may not have been expressed in a format similar to the SAE Automotive Handbook, they were however delineated in an understandable form and are accepted in the accident reconstruction community. Ironically, Frank, who has also been an active SAE member, was recently appointed as Chairman of the Data Collection and Archiving Committee. As such, the standards he espoused may eventually be published through the SAE and could one day serve as the definitive procedural source for the accident reconstruction community.

Like Frank, John Brick was also strongly committed to the goal of NJAAR establishing standard crash investigation and reconstruction practices. To this end, John recently authored a textbook entitled "Forensic Alcohol Test Evidence: A



Handbook for Law Enforcement and Accident Investigation”. Part of the book includes standard practices for the investigation of alcohol related crashes. He was assisted by Dave Benn and Jeff Grey, who co-authored that chapter in John’s book.

In 1997 Robert Goode resigned from the Board. He retired from the NJ State ME’s Office in 1994, but stayed on the Board for a few years afterward. It is believed he relocated to another state.

Dr. Goode’s departure saw Dave Korey, whose tenure as VP ended at the close of 1997, appointed as an advisor beginning in January of 1998. Dave remained on the Board for about a year.

In the latter part of 1999 John Brick, PHD, who had been an NJAAR member since about 1993, was appointed as the medical advisor to the Board following the departure of Dave Korey. John is an eminently qualified national and world renowned expert in the area of the interactions between pharmacology, physiology and behavior in the area of alcohol and drugs. He operates a private practice, Intoxikon International, in Yardley, PA. Having someone of John’s professional standing on the Board added an element of prestige to the Association. During the course of his tenure he gave much to NJAAR, contributing often to the newsletter, which helped it become a peer-reviewed publication, and actively participated in various seminars and conferences which were sponsored in whole or in part by the Association. He was a voice of reason, clarity, and wisdom. After a tenure of about 15 years, John resigned from the Board in 2014 citing personal matters and less time due to increased professional obligations.

In the spring of 2008 after seventeen years of service Nick Sewitch resigned from the Board. Nick was probably the first assistant prosecutor in NJ to specialize in crimes related to motor vehicle crashes and had developed a well-respected expertise in that area of the law. He was part of the initial effort for NJ Prosecutor’s Offices to have in-house squads dedicated to investigating and reconstructing crashes where criminal recklessness was suspected. In the mid-1980s Middlesex County was the first in the state to create such a unit. As Nick’s career in the prosecutor’s office began to advance he was assigned other duties and responsibilities. He was Chief of both the Fatal Accident and Homicide Units, and Coordinator of both the Middlesex County Traffic

Safety Task Force and the Drug Recognition Expert Program. In short, time constraints and obligations at work made it impossible for him to continue forward with NJAAR. Nick would intently listen to various ideas and proposals that the Board considered and he always seemed to contribute good advice and insight to the discussion. Nick retired from the Prosecutor's Office in 2012. He is currently an adjunct professor with Monmouth University in NJ.

Sometime in mid-2008 Ocean County AP Steve Janosko took over Nick's role as an advisor to the Board. Steve remained on the Board until 2013. Steve had been a police officer before becoming an attorney and then an assistant prosecutor which gave him a broader perspective on some issues that came before the Board. He too offered sound advice and was an active member of the Board. Personal obligations and retirement relocation were cited in his resignation. He is believed to be in private practice.

In 2014 engineer George Meinschein was appointed to the Board. George had been an NJAAR member since 2002. George is a P.E. and has his practice, which specializes in accident reconstruction, in Freehold, NJ. George has been very active during his relatively short tenure on the Board. He participated in several NJAAR seminars as a planner and speaker and he is most responsible for the newly approved NJAAR website. Extremely knowledgeable and energetic, George has proven himself as a valuable member of the Board. If NJAAR had the equivalent of an MVP, George would be the recipient two years running.

In 2016, newest Board Member, Sgt. Chris Kelley of the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office was appointed by Dave Benn as an advisor to the Board. Chris joined NJAAR in 2009. He is a multi-talented investigator/reconstructionist with specialties in photography and the use of the 3-D laser scanner. He is the only active police officer on the Board. Chris is also the youngest member of the Board. One hope is that other, younger members will be inspired by him and become motivated to take on an active role in the Association. In a sense, Chris represents the promise of new leadership that will take the Association forward into the future.

At the onset of this section it was pointed out that not many people have stepped forward to fill the various offices when elections were forthcoming or vacancies on the Board occurred. One of the reasons undoubtedly is related to the time element the commitment requires. As such, it is only fair compensation to suspend the dues of the Board members, as reflected in the By-Laws, and cover at least part of their expenses in representing the Association at the Joint Conference.

### *Our Participation in the Annual Joint Conference*



The first Joint Conference was held in 1993 in Ocean City, MD and was sponsored by the Maryland Association of Traffic Accident Investigators, aka MATAI,

who has since changed their initials to MdATAI so as not be confused with a mid-west association that shared the same acronym, and the National Association of Traffic Accident Reconstructionists and Investigators, aka NATARI, which is principally located in Pennsylvania. Some of the MdATAI members in attendance at the '93 conference were also key members of the National Association of Professional Accident Reconstruction Specialists, aka NAPARS, and so for all intents and purposes, that organization was also considered an active participant. It was following this conference that the group of three decided to invite NJAAR to participate.

It was early 1994 that NJAAR was approached by the leadership of NATARI, at the behest of MdATAI and NAPARS, to host the Joint Conference later that year. The location for the conference was the Diplomat Hotel, situated on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City. The event was planned to run from Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup> to Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup>. For agreeing to participate and acting as host, NJAAR members would receive a full-member conference fee discount and the Association would only need to make a minimal financial contribution. It was a great opportunity for NJAAR and one for which we were appreciative. For all intents and purposes however, NATARI organized and ran this Conference. Though our participation was somewhat limited, we studiously observed how the process of hosting such a conference worked.

The focus of the 1994 Conference was motorcycle accident investigation and reconstruction. The presentations on the first day of the conference consisted of the following speakers and presentations: Al Baxter spoke about “Motorcycle Operation”; CPA Sue Cummings gave a presentation on “Starting Your Own Business”; That evening the banquet and awards dinner was held. The next day Dr. Bernard Abrahams spoke on “Motorcycle Conspicuity”; Engineer Bruce Gambardella spoke about “Motorcycle Coefficient of Friction – Yamaha Motorcycle”; Dr. Claus Speth, MD spoke on the topic of “Motorcycle Accident Injuries”; and Dr. John Brick, Ph.D spoke about “Alcohol/Drug Intoxication Test Evidence :Use in Accident Analysis”; On the last day of the conference Grahme Fisher, Ph.D gave a presentation on “Linear Momentum and Physics”; Sue Cummings closed out the conference with a second talk about Pension Plans and Taxes.

During the afternoon of the first day the group was invited to observe several motorcycle crash tests that involved a motorcycle colliding into cars. It also included motorcycle drop tests, evidently designed to determine the sliding friction coefficient for a motorcycle sliding and tumbling on its side. This 1994 conference has gone in history as the first attempt by any Association in the United States to do motorcycle crash testing. An important lesson which emerged from this testing and has applied to every conference crash test since, is to expect the unexpected. An important and interesting footnote to this test was that it was also the first motorcycle crash test conducted by Al Baxter, a Philadelphia police officer at the time and NATARI Board Member. Al has since risen to become a prominent national authority on motorcycle crash investigation and reconstruction.

The way these first tests were done could be best described as simple and direct. Some might say that they were conducted literally by-the-seat-of-



*Photo from the first motorcycle crash test by any Association in the US. It was conducted at the 1994 Joint Conference in AC which was hosted by NJAAR. (Courtesy of A. Baxter)*

one's-pants. Al held onto the test motorcycle while leaning from the back of a moving Monroe County PA pickup truck. The motorcycle was released with the hope it would strike a target vehicle. On one test the bike did not travel as expected and ran into the area where the assembled crowd of spectators stood. Fortunately, no one was struck. By sheer luck the bike also managed to miss a Lincoln rented by one of the attendees, which was parked down the road well past the target vehicle. On one test the motorcycle dented the passenger door of the pickup from which it was being held. What Al later learned was that as he held onto the motorcycle he did not realize it was leaning ever so slightly. When the motorcycle was released it became subject to lateral forces that caused it to veer off course.

Three crash tests were successful in getting the motorcycle to strike the target vehicle; However, in the first test the motorcycle deflected off the bumper of the target vehicle resulting in a broken front fork and negating use of the data.

Motorcycle drag factor drop testing was also conducted. A motorcycle was dropped from the rear of the pickup truck twice. The speed of the pickup at the time of each release was known. This was applied to the distance the motorcycle slid to arrive at an estimated drag factor.

In 1995 we became full and equal participants in the annual event, but our first hosted conference was still two years down the road. As a result of our participation in the Joint Conference, NJAAR became known throughout the national accident reconstruction community as a viable and active organization.

After the inclusion of the New York Statewide Traffic Accident Reconstruction Society, aka NYSTARS, in the conference rotation in 1998, we on the Board, in our typical Jersey style, affectionately referred to the Joint Conference as the annual meeting of "the five families". We were getting to know members from other associations and they were getting to know us. Some wonderful professional relationships, networking and friendships were taking root. It was an exciting time in our history.

Atlantic City was initially selected and has remained our conference home for a number of reasons. With most attendees coming from bordering states, most of which are located on the coast, it is conveniently located. We have also been successful in securing very favorable hotel rates there. Another important factor has been our ability to gain access to a nearby facility to conduct the conference crash testing. Of course AC, being a destination in and of itself, also provides a source of evening entertainment for attendees.

Three Board members have been largely responsible for the success of the NJAAR hosted AC conferences. Frank Volpicella usually handled the venue arrangements, Bob Clarke the securing of the test facility and Bill Pauli the general logistics and record keeping. The rest of the Board members assisted in participating as speakers or in securing other speakers and with various tasks that may have been required.

This first event we planned and hosted as a full-fledged member of the Joint Conference took place on October 1 to 3, 1997 at Bally's Park Place on the Boardwalk. It drew one of the most sizable audiences in the history of the Joint Conferences with 160 reconstructionists in attendance. In addition to Frank Volpicella, the conference committee also consisted of Bob Klingen, Bill Sorochnski, Jack Hill, John Karpovich and me.

The conference's main topic and the focus of the crash testing was "Low Speed Impacts". Rusty Haight was hired to do low-speed crash testing. The Michelin Tire Company came in with a staff of several people and provided a lecture and hands-on demonstration regarding "Michelin Tire Forensics". Bio mechanist Ken Brown of ARCCA spoke on the topic of "Crashworthiness/Human Tolerances"; Volvo Inc. discussed "Volvo's Premier of Exclusive Safety Devices (air bags); Gary Whitman of the American Academy of Pediatrics gave an presentation entitled "Child Restraint (Use, Misuse, and Vehicle Incompatibility)"; In addition to the standard conference lecture, there were three one-hour optional evening classes dealing with the topics of "Advance Forensics (Vehicle Restraints)", "Small Occupant Dangers with Passive Devices", and "Seat Back Yielding During Rear Impacts".

I recall a presentation given on a second evening. The speaker was Dr. Dennis Shanahan, who was with ARCCA at the time. His talk was one of the highlights of the conference. Dr. Shanahan was part of the team that reconstructed the TWA Flight 800 crash. The plane exploded and crashed into the Atlantic Ocean near East Moriches, New York, on July 17,



*Dr. Dennis Shanahan's presentation contained a version of this Flight 800 photo to discuss how he and his team reconstructed injuries and kinematics in the Flight 800 disaster.*

1996, minutes after takeoff from John F. Kennedy International Airport. All 230 people on board were killed in what is the third-deadliest aviation accident in U.S. territory. There had been speculation that the plane was shot down by a stray Navy missile. After a four-year investigation the NTSB concluded that the probable cause was found to be an explosion of vapors in the plane's fuel tank. Specifically, Dr. Shanahan was the NTSB forensic and medical consultant in the case. His presentation showed how his team pieced together the plane's cabin in an attempt to determine the nature of the explosion and to help answer how the crash occurred. Most if not all who attended Dr. Shanahan's lecture would agree this was one of the most riveting presentations ever given at a Joint Conference.

Our next opportunity to host the conference occurred in 2003. As usual, it was held in Atlantic City. The topics we covered were: "Pole and Tree Crash Investigation", which I presented; "New Car Technology" which included topics of passive and active restraints, crumple zones, air bags, traction control and HID Vehicle lighting. This was a joint presentation by Sylvania Osram and Mercedes Benz; "Daubert Standard; EDR Technology in the Court



*Lateral Pole Crash Testing at the 2008 Joint Conference. It was the first time such a crash test was conducted at a Recon Conference in the US.*

Room” by Dennis Donnelly, ESQ.; “Biomechanics” by Alan Cantor of ARCCA; and “Digital Photography” by Canon USA; The crash tests consisted of three frontal pole impacts and two vehicle-to-vehicle impacts all of which were conducted by Rusty Haight. Rusty then presented the data from the testing on the last day of the conference. The conference drew 134 attendees.

Our turn to host the conference came around again in 2008, occurring between October 15 to 17. The entire Board at the time served as the conference committee. Special kudos went to Bill Pauli who acted as conference coordinator and Bob Clark who secured our test facilities and provided for the installation of the utility poles used in the crash testing. Bob also arranged for ancillary assistance from several of his fellow police officers from the Atlantic City PD, and also the city’s fire department and a local tow operator.

The presentations pertained to: “Critical Speed Do’s and Don’t’s” by Wade Bartlett; “PRT (What Number Do I Use)” by Jeff Muttart; “Airborne Analysis” by Andy Rich; “Lateral Pole Impacts” by me and Andy; “CDR for Commercial Trucks and Buses” by John Scott who at the time was with the NJ accident reconstruction firm JDA; “Alcohol, Cannabis, Cocaine and Driving” by Dr. John Brick and “CDR Updates” by Rusty Haight. The crash testing involved three lateral pole impacts, which until this event, had never been conducted at any crash conference in the US. We drew 132 attendees at this conference, nearly the same as our previously hosted event.

In 2013 it was our turn once more. Once again it was the Board who acted as the conference committee, with Frank and Bill leading the charge.

This time around the topics included “COLM: The Crash Circle and Secondary Slap” presented by Wade Bartlett. Wade also presented “Friction: Overview and some Citations”; Andy Rich presented “Advanced Momentum Concepts”; Alan Cantor President of ARCCA presented “Accident Reconstruction for Cases Involving Injuries”; Also from ARCCA was Senior Biomechanist, Brian Benda, who discussed “The Engineering of Human Injury Reconstruction”; Senior Safety Engineer Matthias Struck of Mercedes Benz of North America gave a presentation entitled “Crash Avoidance Technology”; John Brick presented “Driving Under The Influence of Drugs and Alcohol”;



A representative from STS Tire gave a presentation on handling characteristics of tires. There were 126 reconstructionists in attendance for this conference.

Anyone who has ever attended a crash conference knows that the crash testing demonstrations are generally the most spectacular part of the entire event. They also know that any protracted down time between the actual crash events can try one's patience. Most attendees understand that in the name of science even the best planned test event can go awry. For the most part the attendees are inclined to be understanding and supportive under such circumstances. One of the best methods for making set up time between crashes casually go by is the offering of an on-site lunch provided to attendees. For just about all the conferences we hosted, NJAAR has been fortunate to have the lunches sponsored. Our chief benefactor in this regard has been member Jack Desch, owner of John Desch Associates, arguably one of NJ's largest accident reconstruction firms.

No matter the association involved or where in the country they may occur, safety precautions at the crash tests are taken quite seriously. Policy established by the testing entity regarding how the tests are to be run and where spectators are to be positioned during the testing are strictly enforced so as to ensure a safe outcome. The crash tests nearly always occur free of incident or injury. No matter how much oversight there may be, there is always a chance that something could go wrong.

The Crash Reconstruction Research Consortium out of the University of Tulsa was brought in to conduct crash tests for the 2013 conference. The crash testing planned for the event was designed to evaluate the use of COLM in secondary contacts. A cable and pulley system was being used to simultaneously deliver both test vehicles to impact. During the first crash test a mishap occurred during one of the vehicle's ride up to impact. A guide cable broke and in a whip-like fashion struck crew chief Russell Strickland in the torso. Russ was standing near the impact zone monitoring the test at the time he was hit. Clearly stunned, somehow he remained on his feet for a short while. He was attended to immediately by emergency personnel who had been standing by. Russell was directly taken and subsequently admitted to a

nearby hospital. He suffered contusions and lacerations and was released the next day. Further crash tests at the conference were cancelled.

A long-standing tradition at the Joint Conference has been the banquet, which is held on the second night of the conference, typically a Thursday. On some years a seated dinner was provided and at other times food was served buffet style. In past years it was a semi-formal affair where jacket and tie were the rule rather than the exception. This seemed to lend a dimension of class to the entire conference event. Besides the conference attendees, the affair was open to spouses and guests. Over the past 10 years or so the atmosphere has become extremely relaxed and so too the dress code which reflects, and conforms to, the changing social attitudes of the times. Much of the fanfare that had become part of the banquet has changed or disappeared entirely. On at least one occasion a number of years ago there was even talk of eliminating the event totally. What the attendees have found over time is that the quality of the food, augmented by plentiful quantities of adult libation, and the camaraderie we feel toward each other generally defines the best part of the affair. The general consensus is that the banquet is part of the Joint Conference tradition and should endure.

The way the evening typically unfolds is that at some point following dinner the host organization typically recognizes some of its members, often out-going officers or Board members, and of course the committee who planned and executed the event. In the very early part of our involvement with the Joint Conference, the hosting organization would pay tribute to the other participating groups, sometime awarding plaques or other tokens. The president of each of the supporting associations typically would give a very brief speech generally consisting of congratulatory praise to the host organization for their efforts in putting together the event. The last speaker was usually the president of the association that would next be hosting the Joint Conference, who typically provided an idea of topics being considered as well as the event's planned location.

While there has occasionally been some form of entertainment at the banquets, by far the best such performance was a roast conducted by Pat Burley, a MdATAI

founding father and respected member of the accident reconstruction community. Pat's act, which for a number of years was a regular part of the banquet, usually got the room roaring in laughter. The man was witty and entertaining to say the least. He lambasted his victims in a style that sometimes rang of truth but never of genuine malice. His targets were usually the leaders of the co-sponsoring associations and sometimes a few of the attendees. For instance, it was Pat who imposed the good-humored and lasting moniker "Frankie the Hand" on Frank Volpicella. While people looked forward to hearing Pat's barbs, some silently hoped they would escape his crosshairs. For others, being signaled out by Pat was worn as a badge of pride and notoriety. Everyone knew he was joking and all was in good fun. Ironically, at one banquet following a well-intentioned rib directed at him, Pat demonstrated that his police-cured thick skin may have had a thin spot. Of course alcohol was an inherent part of the banquet. It flowed quite freely and virtually everyone imbibed, so it may have been the reason for his reaction. Be that as it may, to the dismay of those of us who are fans of his, the tradition ended several conferences ago as Pat was no longer a regular attendee.

Planners of those early conferences also provided daytime entertainment opportunities for spouses and significant others, such as shopping trips, sightseeing and other such activities. The host organization also used to hold a golf outing on the day before the planned opening of the conference. The last such planned event of this sort was at the NJAAR hosted 2008 Joint Conference. It was organized by member Barry Wythe.

While the duration of the actual conference is typically around two and one half days, related activities commence the Monday of conference week with the ACTAR prep course. Students pay a separate additional fee apart from the general conference fee to attend. For many years Dave Benn and Jim Mentzer used to collectively present the course. Later Andy Rich was brought in to do likewise, but in a solo capacity. The eight-hour ACTAR exam was administered the next day. That evening, which is also the eve of the Conference opening, a greet-and-meet is held at the conference hotel. Attendees get to speak and socialize with colleagues, perhaps do some networking and catch up with friends in the industry, some of whom they may not have seen since the

previous year's conference. Appetizers are served and drinks are available. The official opening of the conference occurs on the following morning.

Another important component to the success of each conference has been the participation of vendors. The products they offer often are of the latest technology, designed to help simplify the work and increase the accuracy of reconstructing crashes. Each vendor pays a fee that is used to offset conference expenses. In return, they are provided space in a designated area on the main conference floor in which they display their products. Quite often the vendor space doubles as the break room where attendees may find refreshments and can leisurely peruse the various exhibit tables. With usually two extended breaks daily, one in the morning and the second in the afternoon, the vendors are assured of a good flow of foot traffic which might translate into additional sales. The majority of participating vendors usually represent companies that sell various analytical, data, and/or drafting computer programs as well as measuring devices. Sometimes the vendors are incorporated into the presentation schedule so that they may briefly present their products. At other times they might provide sample products that are raffled off at the beginning of each day's presentations. From year to year the number of participating vendors varies. As a general trend, it seems their number has diminished with each succeeding conference. This sometimes is reflective of the potential audience the vendor thinks he can reach. Usually the more largely attended conferences draw the most vendors.

Of the five hosting Joint Conference associations NJAAR does an excellent job in attracting attendees. Our average attendance has been about 130. It is difficult to determine exactly what will draw the largest response. The primary focus of the conference and the attendant crash testing would probably be among the more significant factors. Sometimes a particular guest speaker or one of the offered topics has an influence. Location of course is another contributing factor.

An NJAAR tradition at the conferences we host is to provide the committee members with like-colored shirts emblazoned with the NJAAR logo. The color for that year's conference is determined by the Board. This practice was started so that conference attendees could easily spot the committee members who could help resolve

any issues or to provide directions. Dave Benn volunteered to be the official NJAAR haberdasher back when Association shirts were first offered to the general membership in 1996. He has typically handles the procurement of the shirts for the NJAAR conference committee.

As has been the practice, the WREX 2016 mega conference has resulted in a year's suspension of the Joint Conference. As such, NJAAR is next scheduled to host the Joint Conference in 2019.

### WREX Conferences



NJAAR was also an active participant in both World Reconstruction Exposition events that have taken place. As required in each case, we provided seed money and at least two people to assist as directed by the lead organizers.

In 2000 we joined with 21 other associations around the country for this first ever mega event. The conference was held on September 24 -29 in College Station, Texas and included three days of lectures and two days of crash tests. Many of the presenters were well-known names in our field. There were also numerous events occurring simultaneously and so attendees could select what they wanted to see from a provided menu. Representing NJAAR at the conference was Bob Klingen and Bill Pauli.

NJAAR was one of the twenty-one sponsoring organizations for WREX 2016 that was held at the Rosen Shingle Creek Hotel in Orlando, Florida on May 2-6. During the five-day event twenty-one presentations were given. One of the presentations was by NJAAR member Andy Rich who lectured on the use of statistics in traffic crash reconstruction. There was one full day of 15 high- speed crash tests and an additional day of 29 various interactive field testing events. Frank Volpicella and Bill Pauli represented NJAAR at the event. Dave Benn, Bob Clarke, George Meinschein and Bob Klingen were present in the capacity of NJAAR Board Members and Chris Kelly in his capacity as a sergeant with the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office.

For each of the WREX conferences the Board thoroughly discussed whether we should be involved in the event. Each time the Board concluded that it was important to

participate because we were an established and recognized member of the national accident reconstruction community. Not to do so would place our professional standing and commitment to the field in question. The Board recognized that participation could be financially costly; as much as \$3000 for the most recent event, not to mention travel expenses for our representatives. In each case the question was raised as to how participation in these events directly benefited our membership. Some on the Board expressed that the quid-pro-quo should be that all data and information provided to our representatives must be made available to general membership in some form and in a timely fashion. Another suggestion was for our representatives to do a presentation or write a detailed article about the conference within a reasonable time following the conference.

Bob Kligen and Bill Pauli did make a presentation about WREX 2000 at a general meeting in April of 2001. Dave Benn also penned a short article wherein he directed members to a conference website where they could download photos, diagrams and written accounts of the test crashes. There is every intention to extend this, or a similar policy to the 2016 conference. Evidently a link will be made available to the membership where they may download data from the most recent conference. There may also be the possibility of maintaining the data files in the Membership Only area of the NJAAR website once it is developed.

### **ACTAR Affiliation**



The Accreditation Commission for Traffic Accident Reconstruction (ACTAR), which formally began in 1991, may be the single most important thing to professionalize the field of accident reconstruction.

ACTAR has helped to assuage a long and unwinnable debate regarding who makes better crash investigators and reconstructionists; engineers or police officers. The classic arguments have consisted of one side maintaining that engineers, due to their advanced mathematical and scientific training, are better equipped to analyze crashes. The opposing view holds that police officers with accident reconstruction training, due to their on-scene exposure and hands on experience, typically do a better

job. In some cases, engineers who attempt accident reconstruction without any training in the field tend to have problems with evidence interpretation, which is the police forte. Conversely, there are some police reconstructionists who lack the fundamental understanding of physics that the engineers receive, and which may lead to erroneous types of analysis.

It is important for reconstructionists from both disciplines to demonstrate to the legal and scientific community that they are competent and possess some minimal level of training. They must also show that they have a good understanding of the nature of crash evidence coupled with a practical application of the scientific principles that serve as the foundation of accident reconstruction. ACTAR provides some assurance that an accredited reconstructionist satisfies these requirements.

At our June 7, 1994 meeting Charlie Sulzbach, a NATARI representative and member of the ACTAR Board, made an informative presentation about the accreditation process. He also provided insight as to how ACTAR formed and its intended purpose. His talk was well received and it helped to fuel a growing impetus for NJAAR to become an active ACTAR participating organization.

In November of 1994, Secretary Bob Klingen was directed by the Board to send a letter and application fee to ACTAR, requesting NJAAR be accepted as a Participating Organization. In addition to the fee, if accepted, NJAAR had to agree to appoint a primary and alternate representative. Our Association also had to agree to cover the expenses of our representative for the first three meetings they attended wherever in the country they might be held. As a Participating Organization NJAAR would have voting rights in ACTAR on all policy issues. Our general members would also enjoy reduced fees for taking the exam.

Effective January 1, 1995 we were accepted as a Member Organization to the ACTAR Board. At the time we were accepted NJAAR had 160 members. ACTAR also reported that nationally 627 individuals were accepted into the ACTAR program, which means they qualified to take the exam. There were 354 people who had passed the exam up to this point and received accreditation.

There was no per se provision in our then existing By-Laws, nor in the present version, regarding how we were to select our ACTAR representatives or what qualifications NJAAR members were required to possess in order to hold the positions. Nor was there a formal ACTAR committee. As such, the positions are appointed by the President. Although there is an absence in the By-Laws regarding NJAAR's formal adoption of ACTAR's requirements and standards for selecting members to the positions, we nonetheless abide by those requirements and therefore, the representatives must be ACTAR accredited. When we first started to actively participate in ACTAR a call was put forth to the general membership seeking volunteers for the positions. Two members, who happened to be ACTAR accredited, stepped forward and were appointed.

Our first ACTAR Representative was Jim Mentzer and the Alternate Representative was Jeff Grey. Jim stepped down sometime around 2001 and Jeff Grey ascended to the Representative position. Dave Benn assumed the Alternate position. Jeff resigned his position in late 2010 and Dave moved up to the Representative slot. He is currently the Secretary of the ACTAR Board of Directors. Recently Bob Clarke was appointed to the Alternate's position.

Our representatives actively participate and represent our views with respect to accreditation in our industry. I am not sure if our general membership realizes that if they have any suggestions or questions about policy change at ACTAR they may bring their thoughts to a meeting and if a consensus emerges, our representatives will bring the idea or question to the ACTAR Board of Directors.

Our ACTAR membership has also helped to make NJAAR known to other reconstruction organizations across the country. According to 2013 numbers NJAAR had about 220 members of which approximately 16% have achieved ACTAR accreditation. In time this number is expected to increase.

NJAAR has provided an opportunity, in the form of its one-day seminars, for members to acquire on the order of six to eight ACTAR CEUs. Moving forward NJAAR will hopefully emulate what other associations have done and expand this opportunity



by providing more training. Doing so would be a great service and benefit to the membership.

### [NJAAR Website](#)

Our first venture onto the Internet was the establishment of an email address, [NJAAR@aol.com](mailto:NJAAR@aol.com) which was the result of an effort by Pat Doyle. The membership first became aware of our email address in a 1996 issue of Momentum. The email address was created with the intention of making communications with the Association easier and faster, with the added benefit of reducing operating expenses. This address was active up until about early 1999 at which time it was integrated into our website.

What follows is a brief explanation of how our website came to be.

Our first attempt to develop a website began sometime in 1998. At that time Pat Doyle, with the assistance of his wife who was knowledgeable in some aspects of



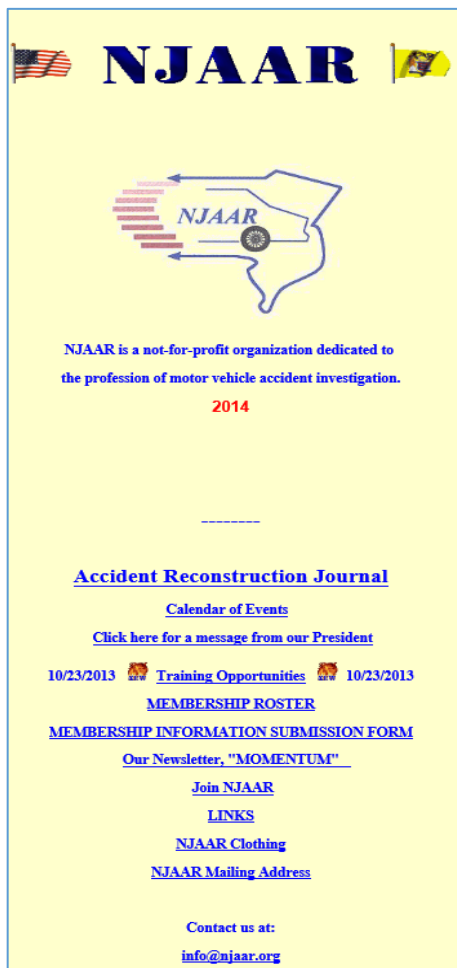
*Our first homepage designed by Pat Doyle as it appeared circa 1999. (Courtesy of J. Petrone)*

website design, is believed to have laid the general ground work for the site. Recall that in 1996, while still the editor of Momentum, Pat had established what could be considered our debut on the Internet by establishing the email account through AOL mentioned above.

The first documented reference that our website was up and running appeared in the April 1999 issue of Momentum. It lists the [www.njaar.org](http://www.njaar.org) address, but there was a typo in the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) prefix. Typically, it is seen as http, but it was shown as htth in Momentum. This probably created some confusion early on

but evidently was later corrected. Pat Doyle administered the website for its first three or four years. It is believed that Pat may have owned the original domain name NJAAR.org.

The domain name "[njaar.org](http://njaar.org)" was created on September 29, 1998, ostensibly by Pat. The original website homepage, show here, featured a white background and a dark blue side panel that contained red-colored hyper-texted subheadings. Users could access general NJAAR info such as a statement regarding our purpose, a calendar of events, a welcoming message by the President, a list of members, a membership application that could be downloaded, and finally a copy of our newsletter. Beneath this were general headings of various related links.



*Our home page from around 2003 to 2014 which was designed by Jeff Petrone. (courtesy of J. Petrone)*

There was no logo displayed on the home page as the artwork for the original logo was not available and the replacement logo had not yet been designed. In lieu of a logo Pat inserted an animated gif file which depicted the image of a tractor trailer impacting a barrier. At the bottom of the page was a mail button wherein someone could send our organization an email. The site-generated emails went to Pat and our president, Frank Volpicella. It is not entirely clear, but they may have also gone to one or two other Board members as well.

Beginning sometime in late 2001 and into early 2002, it became increasingly difficult and nearly impossible to reach Pat, which in turn made it tough to keep the website current. What we later found out was that Pat was moving away from crash investigation and reconstruction and into other areas of law enforcement and so unfortunately, he no longer had the time to devote to the website or related NJAAR matters.

In response to the direction by the Board that an active website administrator was needed, President Frank Volpicella approached Jeff Petrone, an officer with the Manville PD in Somerset County. Jeff had been an NJAAR member since about 1999 and he had the reputation of being knowledgeable in the development of websites. At first Jeff was asked to collaborate with Pat Doyle to update the NJAAR website. Jeff was able to have some initial communications with Pat, but after a short while he stopped receiving replies to emails he had sent Pat and found it impossible to connect with him.

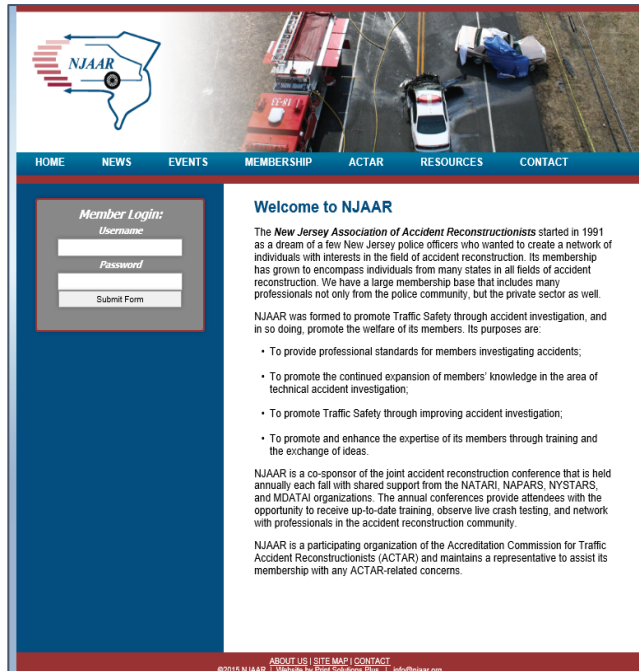
Ultimately, Pat relinquished his role as administrator. Jeff was appointed to the position and took over as Administrator sometime in 2003. It turned out that Jeff's neighbor was a website developer, who also hosted websites. The NJAAR.org domain name was transferred from Pat Doyle and into Jeff's neighbor's company's name, Infogrove.com.

Jeff updated and improved the site in that year. He added links to training opportunities and also our NJAAR clothing line. His general page design included our logo centered near the top of the page which was cast in the NJ State colors. He also expanded and updated the links section. Jeff made a second revision to the site in 2011 with the inclusion of a greatly expanded Links page.

Early in 2014, Jeff transferred the domain name NJAAR.org from Infogrove.com into his name which he presumably still owns. As of this writing, Infogrove still hosts the NJAAR site. However, due to some issues not controllable by NJAAR, the most significant of which pertains to the bandwidth available to the Association, the current Board is in the process of formulating a plan that may shift hosting to another company which would presumably provide for unlimited space. The bandwidth factor is important for some of the plans and goals the Association has for the newly designed website.

Jeff's involvement as administrator seemed to wane somewhat over the ensuing years of his tenure and is attributed mostly to the demands of his job. Although it became difficult at times to contact him, Jeff still would help resolve occasional issues when he could be reached.

Sometime around June of 2013 the Board felt there was a need to further improve and modernize the site and make it more of an interactive tool for our membership. Though well intentioned, this feat became a herculean chore and it took some time for the idea to gain any meaningful traction. The Board seemed to be stuck on how to proceed and who to hire to update and expand the site's capabilities. Each time the Board met the same issues re-emerged. The resolutions that were discussed at the prior meeting were only partly completed or never implemented at all. The cycle kept repeating itself. For some of us it felt like we were cast in the movie "Groundhog Day", reliving the same nightmare time and again. For many of us on the Board the situation became quite frustrating. The dysfunction was also starting to metastasize to other issues as well. On rare occasions things became heated and dissatisfactions were vocalized. I coined the word NJAARitis out of the exasperation that resulted from the fact that every time we advanced a step to accomplish a goal, at the very next meeting we seemed to retreat three steps. In my view this prevailing condition was one reason for the departure of some people from the Board and the contemplation of others to do likewise. Be that as it may, somehow the Board found a way to pull together and get through the malaise, but it took over two years to bring the revised website to fruition.



*The Home page of the 2015 version of the NJAAR Website designed by George Meinschein.*

In the very early stages of this newest undertaking to update the website, Bob Clarke, Dave Benn, Bill Pauli and I were part of the initial efforts which began following a Board meeting in late 2014. Thanks almost exclusively to the efforts of George Meinschein, the newest Board Member at the time, the technical and domain name ownership issues that hampered the effort to revise the site were clarified and the

problems were on a path to becoming resolved. In August of 2015 the new website, designed by George, became active.

Part of the new design and capabilities provided members with the ability to renew their membership and pay dues on line. In the very near future it may also be possible to register for NJAAR seminars and to cast votes on line as well. A new member's only area, which is still in the developmental stages, will allow exclusive access to other resource and reference material.

### **Our Annual Seminar**

The idea of having some sort of annual training event was proposed by the membership early on in our existence. The first such event took place on Saturday, June 10, 1995 at the Middlesex County College in Edison. Frank Volpicella was successful in securing the site.

The event drew 50 members and guests. The guests were comprised mostly of non-member police officers who had come to learn about NJAAR. The day consisted of about a half hour of classroom discussion of the critical speed equation followed by a discussion of how the tests were to be conducted. After performing the robust testing preliminary results were discussed back in the classroom. Participants were charged twenty-dollars for which they were provided a light breakfast, lunch and beverages.



*The author at the board discussing the results of preliminary skid testing during our first and only NJAAR field test event in June of 1995*

The focus of our first and, to date, only field testing day was the validation of the critical speed equation, although skid testing was also performed. We used a 1989 Ford Crown Victoria police car with conventional hydraulic brakes and a 1995 Mercedes Benz C220 equipped with Electronic Traction System and ABS. While ABS had been around for about four or five years, ETS was very new, available only in high-end vehicles. Thanks to Board Member Frank Pritzl, we were able to test the new technology in a new model year vehicle. The police car was provided by Alan Baber of the Clinton PD. During testing, each vehicle was fitted simultaneously with a VC-2000, a G-Analyst, and a Bomonk Brake Meter. Speeds were checked using an MPH K-55

Doppler radar. A make-shift test track was coned out in one of the college's larger parking lots.



*1989 Ford Crown Victoria during NJAAR's 1995 Yaw Testing (courtesy of F. Pritzl)*

A total of 16 tests were run, ten of which were brake tests and six yaw tests. It was not especially difficult to get the Ford to yaw. It exhibited all of the classic characteristics of being in slide slip. The Mercedes, however, proved to be difficult as Frank Pritzl predicted it would. During a preliminary test, we could not tell if the vehicle had entered into the yaw as no physical evidence was produced on the pavement. In order to determine if the vehicle was out tracking, Frank suggested applying a different color chalk to the upper and outer sidewalls of the front and rear outside tires. He then drove the car to an extreme steady state, nearly to the point where control was lost, and wherein the rear wheels did track outside the fronts, but only barely. The evidence was in the form of thin colored lines on the pavement, with the color of the rear tire residing outside to color of the front tire.

The findings of the testing validated the use of the Critical Speed Equation. One interesting ancillary finding was a reasonable determination of a longitudinal deceleration rate of a free-rolling vehicle in the yaw. The calculated value was estimated to be between 0.13 and 0.17g.

Besides those already mentioned, others in the testing group were: Harry Buttito, Pat Doyle, Dr. Robert Goode, Jeff Grey, Rich Maxwell, Captain Smilek of the college PD, Mike Grasso of North Brunswick PD, Michael Natoli, Wayne Nolte and Jack Desch.

This initial seminar was also important for a second reason. It was the only time in the history of the Association that we published our findings, albeit exclusively to members of the Association. Frank Volpicella and I, along with members Michael Natoli, Wayne Nolte, and Jack Desch met on several occasions to review and analyze the data. It was a multi-disciplinary effort. Mike, Wayne and Jack are of course very competent Professional Engineers and Frank and I composed the law enforcement

reconstructionist component of the writing team. It took nearly a year to finally render a report.

Although we encountered some logistical problems with getting attendance certificates to participants and formally publishing the data industry wide, I believe overall it was a rewarding and positive experience. The effort was evidently considered a success by our members because in subsequent meetings later that year those in attendance expressed an interest to continue this type of program. Some members of the Board evidently felt otherwise. As a result of discussions at a few ensuing meetings of the Board of Directors a consensus emerged for the adoption of a one-day seminar format. Most of the Board felt that such training should focus on one or two central themes where guest speakers will be invited to make relevant presentations rather than the undertaking of testing. As we now know, this suggestion eventually became a reality, but not for several years.

One of the reasons the annual NJAAR training seminar took so long to take root was because the Board supported and did not want to undermine the annual Joint Conference, which provided the membership with the opportunity to hear national and world-class speakers, and cultivate professional networking and observe full scale crash tests. We made every effort to encourage our membership to attend. The Board also felt that since we regularly provided a training component at our quarterly general membership meetings, we were already satisfying the local training needs of our members.

We came to learn in time that traveling to the various Joint Conference venues could be unfeasible or too costly for most of our membership base. After a five-year hiatus, the Board decided it was now time to revisit our previous position and provide our membership the benefit of a more comprehensive full-day training opportunity. We were also emulating a trend that was developing among other associations around the country. Eventually the annual seminar supplanted our quarterly meeting format.

Although the 1995 field tests might be considered a seminar, our first hosting of a more conventionally considered full-day training seminar was actually a two-day event held on May 25 and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2000 at the Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville.

Frank Volpicella with the aid of Nick Sewitch was able to secure the venue. Nationally renowned crash reconstruction expert Rusty Haight was the speaker. His presentation dealt with the "Relationship Between Crush and Energy in Collision Reconstruction". This was likely a fee-based event.

Our next seminar was held later in that same year, on November 17, 2000 at the Middlesex County College in Edison. Frank Volpicella used his influence to acquire the space at the college where the event was held. The featured speaker was Dr. Robert Fish, who is both a DDS and an attorney. His topic dealt with being an expert witness and included information on how to market one's skill as an expert and how to present oneself in court. He elaborated on how to deal with attorneys prior to and after trial. NJAAR members paid a ten-dollar fee to attend.

On October 11, 2001 we held our next full day training seminar on the topic of Motorcycle Crash Investigation. The speaker was nationally renowned expert Al Baxter, who had written a book on the subject that was published by IPTM. The seminar was held at the Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville. Members were charged a fee of fifteen dollars to attend.

On April 12, 2003 we presented our next full day training seminar, which was held at the Middlesex County College. Frank Volpicella was once again able to convince the college to grant NJAAR the use of an amphitheater space. We hired Rusty Haight to discuss the function, history and evolution of the EDR. Members were charge ten-dollars each, which helped underwrite Rusty's fee.

Our next seminar was held on November 23, 2004 at the Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayerville. Nick Sewitch and Frank Volpicella helped secure the site. The academy was selected because of its close proximity to the Garden State Parkway and it was free. In large part this last fact allowed NJAAR to offer the training free or for little cost to all attendees. A representative from Bendix Corporation spoke on the topic of air-brakes. A short business meeting was held following the presentation. The conference was well attended.



On May 5, 2005, we held the next mini conference, again at the Middlesex Fire Academy. Jack Desch and I put together a presentation for the first part of the conference that compared and contrasted criminal and civil case reconstructions. Following us was Frank Pritzl who discussed new vehicle technologies. Again, the event was free to all attendees. Attendance was also good for this conference.

About a month later, on June 1, 2005 at the Union County Police Academy in Scotch Plains, another half-day conference was held. Tony Parenti, who was the academy director, provided the classroom space. A short business meeting was followed by a presentation by Dave Benn and me on conducting interviews relating to crash investigations for both the criminal and civil arenas. This event unfortunately drew poor attendance. We surmised that perhaps this seminar followed too closely on the heels of the last one and additionally, there had not been sufficient time to advertise the event.

On September 7 and 8, 2006 NJAAR hosted a two-day conference, the theme of which was "Back to Basics". it was held at the Middlesex County Fire Academy. Among the topics presented were: Vehicle and Road Evidence, Critical Speed Yaw, Alcohol and Drugs, Methods for Measuring Crash Scenes, New Vehicle Technology, Vector Diagraming, and Report Writing. Among the presenters were Dave Benn, Frank Volpicella, Bill Pauli, Andy Rich, John Brick, Jim Mentzer, Jeff Grey, Frank Pritzl and Burlington County AP Tad Drummond. The cost of the conference was \$20 which covered replication of handout material and a light breakfast. It was also open to members from any of the Joint Conference organizations and also the NJPTOA. This conference was very well attended. Its popularity was largely attributed to the diversity of the topics.

On September 6, 2007 our next seminar was held at the John Stamler Police Academy in Scotch Plains in Union County. It was a half day event wherein I lectured on the topic of "Rollover Crashes". This was a reprise of a presentation I had done at prior conferences around the country.

Our seminar was held more than seven years later, on November 21, 2014. It was once again held at the Middlesex County Fire Academy. The topics presented were "Critical Speed Yaw and Spin Analysis" by member Matt Rasukas of the NJSP and Bob Clarke; "Electronic Stability Control" and "Math and Physics of Negotiating a Curve" both were presented by George Meinschein; "Tire Design and Performance" by Tony Galuppo of STS Tire and Auto. Conference materials were made available to attendees via Drop Box, a first for NJAAR. The seminar attracted 145 attendees. A \$10 fee covered the cost of a box lunch.

The most recent one-day seminar took place on November 5, 2015 once again at what has become our seminar home, the Middlesex County Fire Academy. The topics presented were as follows: "Anatomy of a Vehicular Homicide" presented by Bill Pauli and Somerset County Assistant Prosecutor Matthew Murphy, Esq.; "Basic Crash Scene Management" presented by Agent Gary Gouck from the Morris County Prosecutors Office Vehicular Homicide Unit; "Advanced Accident Reconstruction" which was a Conservation of Linear Momentum analysis with supporting CDR data analysis that was presented by Bob Clarke; and finally, "Incorporating EDR & HVEDR Evidence into an



*NJAAR member Matt Rasukas lecturing on Critical Speed Yaw at our 2014 seminar. (Courtesy R. Clarke)*

Accident Reconstruction" presented by George Meinschein & Bill Pauli. The conference attracted over 100 attendees and was free. It included a box lunch.

The next seminar is planned for November 10, 2016. The scheduled speakers and topics are: Chris Kelley on EDR data in a reconstruction as well as a review of Momentum, Delta

V and PDOF. George Meinschein is slated to do a presentation on "What Can Go Wrong", where he will discuss what the opposing side in a case may do to discredit an expert's analysis.

The planning and logistics surrounding these crash seminars take a good amount of time. I can attest to the fact that the Board works diligently to ensure that the day is a success and truly helpful for the attendees. While the entire Board is involved in these events, since around 2000 much of the demanding behind the scenes tasks associated with the seminars were shouldered by Frank Volpicella and Bill Pauli.

### *Cooperstown It's Not*

NJAAR does not have a Hall of Fame, but it has created a special honor for certain members who have demonstrated exceptional service to the Association.

After John Brick and Frank Pritzl were no longer active NJAAR Board members, the remaining members of Board at that time thought that given the lengthy duration of their respective tenures and the large contribution of time and energy both men gave toward advancing NJAARs purpose, it would only be fitting to recognize them in a very special way. In response to this and acknowledging the probability of future honorees, a proposal was made at a Board meeting to create a special membership class to be known forever as "Life Member".

To qualify for Life Membership an NJAAR member must be in good standing in the Association for at least 5 years and has demonstrated active participation in service to or for the Association. Any active member in good standing may nominate a qualified person for this honor. All proposed applicants would be investigated by the Membership Committee who would render a report at a Regular or Special Meeting of the Board of Directors. Candidates may be voted upon by the Board of Directors or approved by a majority vote of the members present at an Association meeting.

Life Members do not pay dues or administrative fees. Life Members also retain their original voting rights. There is no limit as to the number of honorees that may be selected in a given year. The honoree may still be an active member, not necessarily someone who resigns from or otherwise leaves an office or a position in the Association. There is nothing in the By-Laws that precludes Life Members from any other rights enjoyed by regular active members, including holding office or serving as a Board advisor.

John Brick and Frank Pritzl were in the inaugural induction. Last year Frank Volpicella, Jeff Grey and I were also inducted as Life Members. There is little doubt that going forward others on the Board as well as general members will have this honor bestowed on them.

### *The Next 25 Years*

The field of accident reconstruction is an evolving one, often following technological advances in the automotive sciences. As automobiles change so too the methods to reconstruct the crashes in which they become involved. There are many in our field and in the automotive industry who believe that the crash worthiness of a motor vehicle is about as good as it will get. The evolving science and emerging automotive technology seems to be focusing on avoiding crashes all together. The driverless car, in relatively short course, will become a reality. These advancements beg the question: What are the implications for the future of crash investigation and reconstruction?

Not too long ago reconstructions were based almost entirely on physical evidence and the interpretation of such evidence. Electronic evidence, EDR data to be exact, was considered secondary and was examined for its correlation to the roadway and vehicle physical-evidence-based reconstruction. Today the reverse is true. EDR info is accepted as primary evidence and the calculations we undertake are usually in support of the electronic data. This change in the hierarchy of how we go about reconstructing crashes has all but become permanent, as the accuracy of the electronic instruments that store vehicle crash data has been recognized by the courts, but also, and perhaps more importantly, accepted by the general public which typically serves as the trier of fact.

Video cameras are everywhere and we can only expect that they will become even more ubiquitous and of higher and better resolutions as we move forward. The likelihood that more crashes will be captured on video will increase in like fashion.

In the not too distant future even the process of documenting crash scenes will change. In development are unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) equipped with high-definition cameras controlled by specialized software that will be piloted over scenes

and will document everything we now collect with ground-level cameras, total stations and 3-D scanners and in a fraction of the time.

What this tells us is that the field will become even more technically driven than it is now. The vehicles and video will tell the reconstructionist how the crash occurred. The reconstructionist, in the next 25 years or so, will need to become very well versed in the interpretation of the evidence provided by the electronic instruments. As the accuracy of the instruments improve and the possibility for malfunction diminishes, we know that there may still be times when erroneous data might present itself. At such times the data and physical evidence needs to be analyzed correctly so as not to obscure the truth. Occasionally the reconstructionist may have to resort to what today we would consider to be conventional methods for reconstructing crashes.

As the field of accident reconstruction changes so too the related professional associations like NJAAR. If the associations are to exist at all they must be relevant to the times. How they will evolve remains to be determined, but there is a high probability that they will exist for the foreseeable future.

NJAAR's mission has been paraphrased in the accounts presented above and is contained in detail in the first Article of its By-Laws. Largely, the Association has been a source of education for its members and it has discharged this duty admirably. Except for its very first membership seminar event, NJAAR has not singularly conducted testing or experimentation to advance better understanding of some of the principals and methods employed in the field, although it has been responsible for some of the best attended Joint Conferences and most interesting crash tests performed during its hosting of the annual event. The nature and objective of a given test or experiment determines the feasibility for any association to individually engage in the endeavor. Usually cost is the prohibitive factor. To defray expenses, the Joint Conference, and others like it, has been the place to perform many of those types of experiments. There are still other types of tests and experiments that do not necessarily need to involve crashing vehicles and easily fall within a given associations ability to conduct. In my view NJAAR, as well as the other reconstruction associations, can and need to do more individual and collective testing and experimentation.

## Epilogue

As this document comes to a close I would like to say that I am proud that I was present at the birth of NJAAR and have been part of the very fabric of this Association for many years. I am privileged to have known and worked with the many good people who have dedicated their precious time to make NJAAR a success. I consider the Board members I served with to be respected friends and brothers-in-arms. Above all, they are fine human beings who by their nature tend to be genuinely altruistic. While there may have been differences of opinions and, on rare occasions, heated debate and argument, in the end there was always civility and respect. I can unequivocally state that everyone I ever served with on the Board had the best interests of the Association at heart when they rendered their opinions and votes. NJAAR was, and is, fortunate to have such people serving the Association.

In reflecting back on its first 25 years, I have to honestly conclude that NJAAR is not and may never be a perfect organization. I am sure the same can be said of all the professional associations in our field. Certainly there were times when those who have served the Association acknowledged, either publicly or privately to themselves, that occasionally the ball was dropped. Each of us could probably call to mind things that could have been better done in service to our membership. I can also categorically state that when such times became evident, NJAAR leaders made an honest effort to correct any mistakes and shortcomings. Albeit, protracted periods of time may have elapsed until the problems were resolved or goals were fulfilled. We also need to recognize that any deficiencies that may have arisen over the course of our existence were not exclusively the result of any actions, or lack therefrom, by the Board. The general membership is just as responsible because, ultimately, they determine by their participation and support how the Association is to function. It is a fact that in any organization of our type membership's interest will be cyclical. The challenge for the current and future Boards will be to generate more occasions where interest levels are high.

Some may interpret the preceding paragraph, and even some of the content contained in other parts of this account, as a critical review of our journey in these first

twenty-five years. To any and all critics that there may be, my response is that I have tried to be honest and forthright in my rendition of certain events as I recalled them.

The story of NJAAR's history, however, has a number of positive aspects. We need not lose sight of the fact that NJAAR has enjoyed a number of magnificent successes. For the times when things may not have been working their best, there were also times when the organization ran like clockwork and absolutely shone. On balance, NJAAR remains well represented and respected in the accident reconstruction community. We have been involved in some ground breaking experimentation and have done much to educate not only our membership, but also the members of other Associations with which we may have an affiliation or common interest. Additionally, one merely needs to look at caliber and achievements of some of our members to get a sense of how good we are. We have had several of our members rise to national, and in at least one case international, recognition. I speak of the NJAAR members known well outside the borders of NJ. People like John Brick, Frank Pritzl, Andy Rich, Ed Weber, Dave Benn and Frank Volpicella, to mention just a few. To any others I have forgotten to mention here, please accept my apologies.

NJAAR has also acted as an inspiration for the formation of other reconstruction organizations. I specifically recall during our early years, and before their launch in May of 1996, that some of the NYSTARS founding fathers, like Tim Smith, Tim Tausz and others attended our meetings with the hope of beginning what has also become a very successful and enduring group and a co-partner in the Joint Conference.

It is my observation that NJAAR is still a work in progress. It has achieved many of the early goals set by its founders and I like to think still has its best days ahead. Despite periods of frustration and what seemed like overwhelming inertia, the organization persisted in spite of itself. It demonstrated that it does possess a good degree of character, tenacity and endurance.

It would be great if our civilization advanced to the point where traffic crashes were extremely rare and almost never heard of events, thereby obviating the need for organizations such as ours. On that day the world would be a safer and better place. But until that day, I for one am glad that NJAAR, and the other associations like it, exists

and continues the mission of helping its members, through the information and forums it may provide, in finding the truth about how crashes occur.

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