



**George T. Pletts (left) and William A. Snare (right)
have programs named for them, in honor of their service
to the California State Division**



George T. Pletts and William A. Snare

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Members of the California State Division should be familiar with the names George Pletts and William Snare – one is associated with the Meritorious Service Award and the other is associated with the Scholarship Program.

But as veteran members pass on and newer folks join our ranks, the danger is that these two men will be forgotten – that one day, people will assume that George and Bill were fictional characters, created to give a human face to a corporation.

Past issues of the *California Identification Digest* were searched for obituaries and anecdotes about George and Bill (in fairness, alphabetically by last name). Here's what was discovered:

The front page of the November, 1998, *Digest* featured the President's Message (different format than seen today). In it, President Diana Castro wrote: "I am sad to have to bring you this news, but our Dean Emeritus/Historian George Pletts has passed away. He slipped away peacefully on November 2, 1998, at 0100. His wife, Helen, told me that he was not alone; a nurse was by his side and that he had a gentle smile on his face as if everything was going to be okay."

In that same issue, under "In Memoriam," George's obituary was published: "Dean Emeritus George Pletts passed away early Tuesday morning, November 3, 1998, four months to the day after being hospitalized for treatment in his battle with cancer.

"George was this association's fifth Dean Emeritus, and was distinguished in having known all of his predecessors: Harry H. Caldwell, Francis X. LaTulipe, William A. Snare, and Richard M. Bradley.

"George started his police career with the Laguna Beach Police Department just after World War II, retiring 31 years later with the rank of lieutenant.

"George affiliated with CSD-IAI in 1946 and became president in 1970.

"Services are scheduled for 1:00pm Saturday, November 14, 1998, at Pacific View Memorial Park and Mortuary, 3500 Pacific View Drive, Newport Beach."

The U.S. Social Security Death Index gives George's birth as February 10, 1913 and his death as November 3, 1998.

The June, 1999, *Digest* reported the minutes of a Board meeting. Russ Silcock gave the report of the Good of the Association Award Committee: "The Good of the Association Award began in the term of Gary Jackson's presidency, when I was asked to head the Resolutions Committee. This Committee accepted the Award presentation and now the opportunity has presented us with honoring two people at this conference. Unfortunately, the passing of George Pletts has made this award become a complete reality. President Diana Castro spoke of honoring George at his funeral services, and thus we have, by renaming the Good of the Association Award after him – to be the George T. Pletts Meritorious Service Award. At the installation banquet, President Castro and the incoming president shall bestow this honor on two individuals (a member of the George Pletts family will accept on behalf of George). This Association will always remember George Pletts for his dedication to the community that we serve and live in. He will be missed. Ken Moses has also been nominated to receive this award. The Committee of Ricardo Tomboc, Jennifer Carr-Heppert, and myself are grateful to have served this past year and to be part of the history of this Award."

Further in the Committee's report: "Russ Silcock also read a plaque that he made prior to this meeting.

"Retirement, never; dedicating a life to family, law enforcement, and community service, George did not know what the word retirement meant or that the word existed. George Pletts was an active, community-involved resident of Laguna Beach, a loving husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. His law enforcement career with the Laguna Beach Police Department, and his association with other organizations, elevated George to the rank of Dean Emeritus of the California State Division, International Association for Identification. George is a Past President of this Association, and the Southern California Association of Fingerprint Officers.

"George has served as Historian since 1978, and has completely organized all the files and photographs. He maintained these records at his home. At annual training conferences, George always had a display of the historical events from our Association. His perseverance and tedious time George dedicated to the historical data of this organization is unmatched.

"Dedication, patience, tenacity, and his cheerful wit has provided for a life of joy with his loving wife, Helen, of more than 64 years, and his association with all those people who knew and loved George. We will miss you George; your memory will not be forgotten. Allow us to present to your family a token of our appreciation, the George Pletts Meritorious Service Award. This Award signifies dedication, professionalism, community service, family values, and a belief of doing well to all those that we serve. George Pletts represents each of these values."

A motion was then made to change the name of the award from the Good of the Association Award to the George Pletts Meritorious Service Award; seconded; and passed with all in favor.

Bill Snare is the second subject of this article. The March, 1990, *Digest* featured a profile of our Dean Emeritus (author unknown): “William A. Snare entered this world at the Reno, Nevada, home of Mr. and Mrs. Harland E. Snare on August 31, 1890. Bill began delivering milk by horse and wagon at age 10, and when he was 13, Nevada Governor Oddie appointed Bill to the Color Guard of the Governor’s Mounted Staff. Bill’s uncle, J. E. Johnson, became the Identification Officer for the Reno Police Department. We’ll skip Bill’s early life and college days.

“When Bill joined the Bakersfield Police Department, he helped organize their Police Relief Association as well as the Kern County Peace Officers’ Association, and served as the first president of each of these associations.

“He gathered the names and phone numbers of the District Attorneys, Sheriffs and Police Chiefs throughout California, alphabetized them, mimeographed and distributed the first *Peace Officer’s Directory*. The Chief Special Agents’ Association assumed the responsibility of printing and distributing this directory and still does.

“While pursuing his chosen profession, he earned the recognition ‘as an expert in fingerprint identification, in photography, firearms identification and document examination.’ Bill despised being called an ‘expert’ and whenever he could, would qualify himself by stating ‘I prefer to be known as a specialist.’ Later, Bill qualified as an ‘expert’ in number restoration, vehicle identification and the cause and origin of vehicle fires. Bill relates one of the occasions that gave him elation.

“While sitting as a witness in Federal Court and under voir dire, the judge stopped the proceedings by stating that his (Bill’s) reputation had preceded him in court and that he (the judge) would grant him permission to testify as an expert without any further questioning.

“Bill also helped organize the San Joaquin Valley Peace Officers’ Association. He has been a life member of the California Peace Officers’ Association since 1952, is a Past Master and 55-year member of his Masonic Lodge.

“In 1938, Bill was in the first class of police officers to receive California Teaching Credentials to teach criminal justice in California. He is a Past President and currently the Dean Emeritus of this Association, which he considers one of his greatest ‘thrills.’ He is a charter member of the California Conference of Arson Investigators, Past President of the Blue Goose Insurance Fraternity, and one of the founders of the San Diego County Investigators’ Association.

“Bill has taught in Oregon, Arizona, California and Utah, and testified in courts in Nevada, Arizona and California. Yes, Bill actually rode the range as a cowboy, removed his spurs and, literally self-taught, pulled himself up by his own boot straps to become a dedicated law enforcement officer and a true professional in the field of identification.”

The December, 1991, *Digest* featured a memorial article about Bill, written by Doug Coleman: “William A. Snare, Dean Emeritus of the California State Division of the International Association for Identification, died on November 4, 1991, at Stanford Medical Center, following open heart surgery. He was ninety years old.

“Bill began his long and notable career in criminal investigation in 1929. He became a member of the California State Division of the IAI in the early 1930’s, was elected President in 1936, and was honored as Dean Emeritus in 1964.

“Bill was born on August 31, 1901, in Reno, Nevada. Before enrolling in college in 1920, Bill worked at various jobs ranging from milkman to ranch hand to powder monkey. In January of 1923, he successfully passed the examination for Air Cadet training. However, due to his marriage in November of that same year, he was ruled ineligible for an appointment as Trainee and went to work for the Standard Oil Company in Taft. In 1926, Bill started his own business of manufacturing and selling ice cream.

“The Bakersfield Police Department employed Bill in 1928 in the capacity of Desk Sergeant. In November of 1929, he was transferred to the Identification Bureau as a fingerprint technician. Nine months after that transfer, he was promoted to Superintendent of the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation at a salary of \$190.00 a month.

“In December of 1938, Bill accepted a similar position with Fresno County. His duties in both bureaus consisted of a broad range of disciplines including general investigation, fingerprint comparison, photography, questioned documents and firearms identification.

“On March 1, 1941, he was appointed a Special Agent for the Attorney General for the State of California. Along with his responsibilities of general investigation, Bill acted as liaison officer between that office and other law enforcement agencies throughout the state.

“From 1942 to 1945, Bill was hired as a Security Analyst by the Vega Aircraft Corporation in Burbank, and the Maranship Corporation in Sausalito. In 1945, he was employed by the National Automobile Theft Bureau and remained in that position until his retirement. Even after his ‘official’ retirement, Bill continued to be in demand as a forensic consultant to both law enforcement agencies and private industry.

“In addition to his membership in the CSD-IAI, Bill was also affiliated with numerous other professional associations, among them the California Peace Officers’ Association, the Kern County Peace Officers’ Association, the Bakersfield Police Benefit Association, and the Fresno County Sheriff’s Aero Squadron.

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“A member of the California State Division of the International Association for Identification for over fifty years, Bill Snare’s perpetual enthusiasm for our profession was both contagious and inspirational. An attendee at almost every annual training seminar, he could be counted on to welcome and encourage each and every new member. Bill’s professional career truly exemplified the ‘Code of Ethics’ that he authored for our Association. Bill will be sorely missed by everyone that had the honor to have known this humble man.

“William A. Snare is survived by his son, William A. Snare, Jr., of Marina, a daughter, Betty Hollingsworth of Monterey, four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.”

The California Death Records Index gives Bill’s birth as August 30, 1901 and his death as November 4, 1991. ♦

Extracted from CSD-IAI’s Centennial Commemorative Book- Pages 10-13