

## TECHNICAL NOTE

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### Writer's Palmar Impressions

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**REFERENCE:** Shimoda, S. C. and Franck, F. E, "Writer's Palmar Impressions," *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, JFSCA, Vol. 34, No. 2, March 1989, pp. 468-474.

**ABSTRACT:** In questioned document cases in which the writing cannot be positively identified, "writer's palm print(s)" can sometimes be developed below the questioned handwriting. The position of a writer's palm print can be used to infer that both the palm print and the handwriting originate from the same hand.

**KEYWORDS:** questioned documents, palm prints, handwriting, latent prints

The concept of a writer's palm print is well recognized among dual discipline examiners. That is, examiners qualified in both handwriting and latent print cases [1-3]. Some single discipline latent print examiners, however, are seemingly unaware of the concept.<sup>2</sup>

Since latent print and handwriting evidence must remain separate, a latent print identification must not be used to bolster a handwriting opinion. Do situations exist in which a marriage between the two types of evidence is warranted? Can the relative position of a palm print be used to infer authorship? Presence of an identified palm print proves possession without a doubt, yet it may be more important to prove authorship than mere possession. Should a person have had legitimate access to an item, proof of possession is of no value [4,5]. Also, in certain cases, the questioned writing, specimen writing, or both sets of writing may be disguised to the point of having little, if any, value for comparison purposes.

#### Cases

##### *Routine Example*

In Fig. 1 the payee endorsement and palm print were both identified as being by the same person.

##### *Written Endorsements Disguised*

In Fig. 2 the payee endorsement is not identifiable. The writer's palm print was developed and identified as the subject's right palm print.

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<sup>2</sup>F. E. Franck, personal communications, 1983.

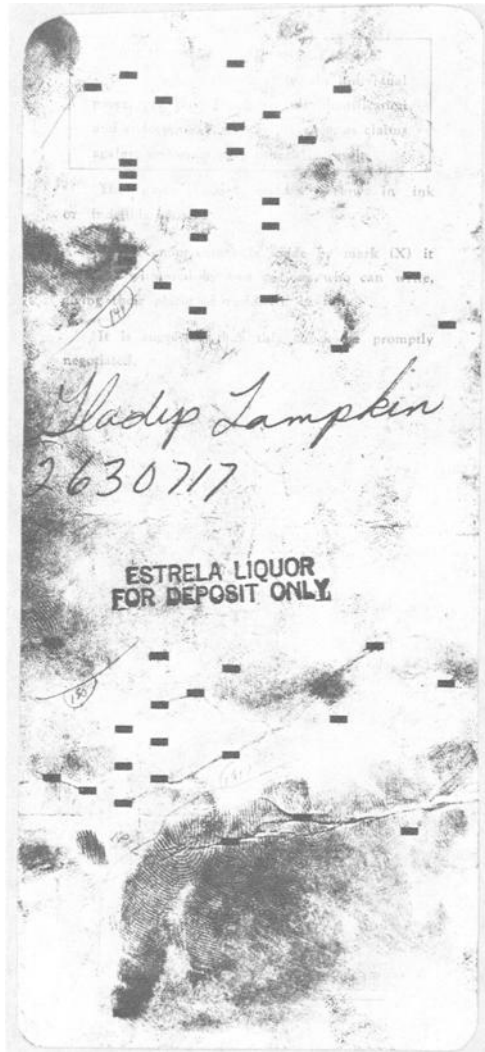


FIG. 1—Payee endorsement and palm print both identified as being by the same person.

Figure 3 is a handwriting specimen chemically processed for latent prints. The developed palm print on the specimen writing occupies the same relative position to the endorsement as the questioned palm print.

#### *Specimen Writing Disguised*

In Fig. 4 the questioned writing is not identifiable. The writer's palm print was developed and identified.

In the above cases, the writer's palm prints were developed and identified, providing a reasonable inference that the subjects wrote the questioned writings.

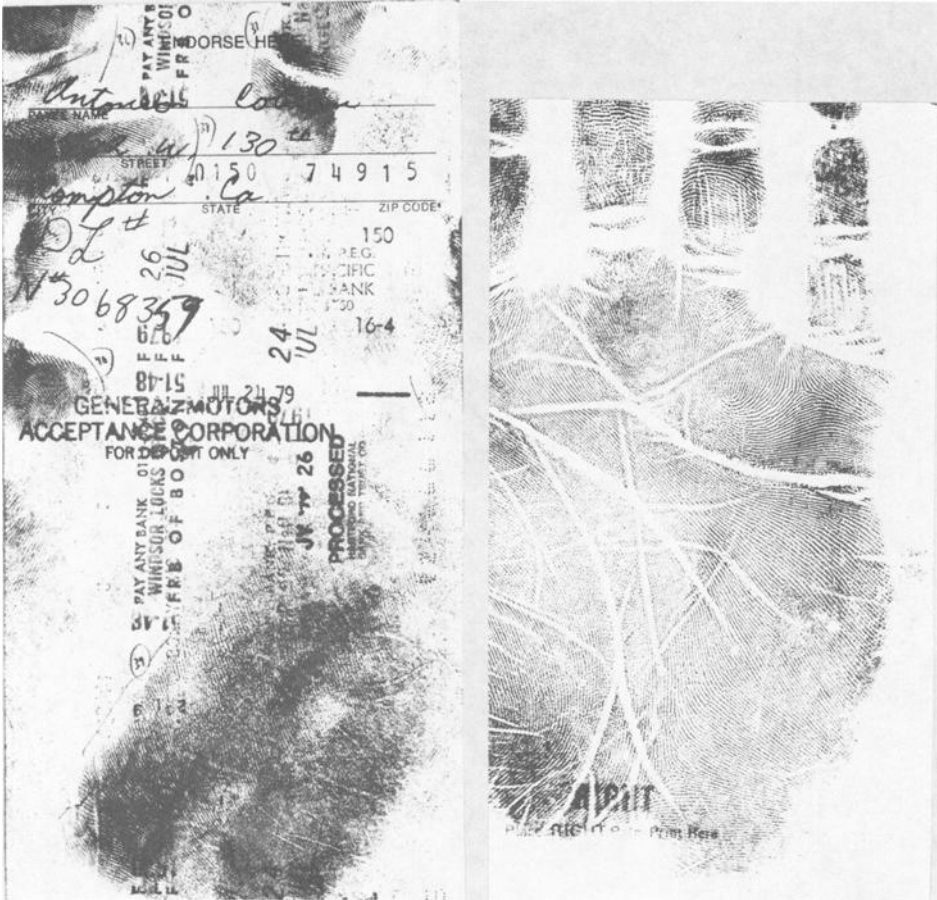


FIG. 2—Payee endorsement not identifiable (left). Writer's palm print developed and identified as subject's right palm print (right).

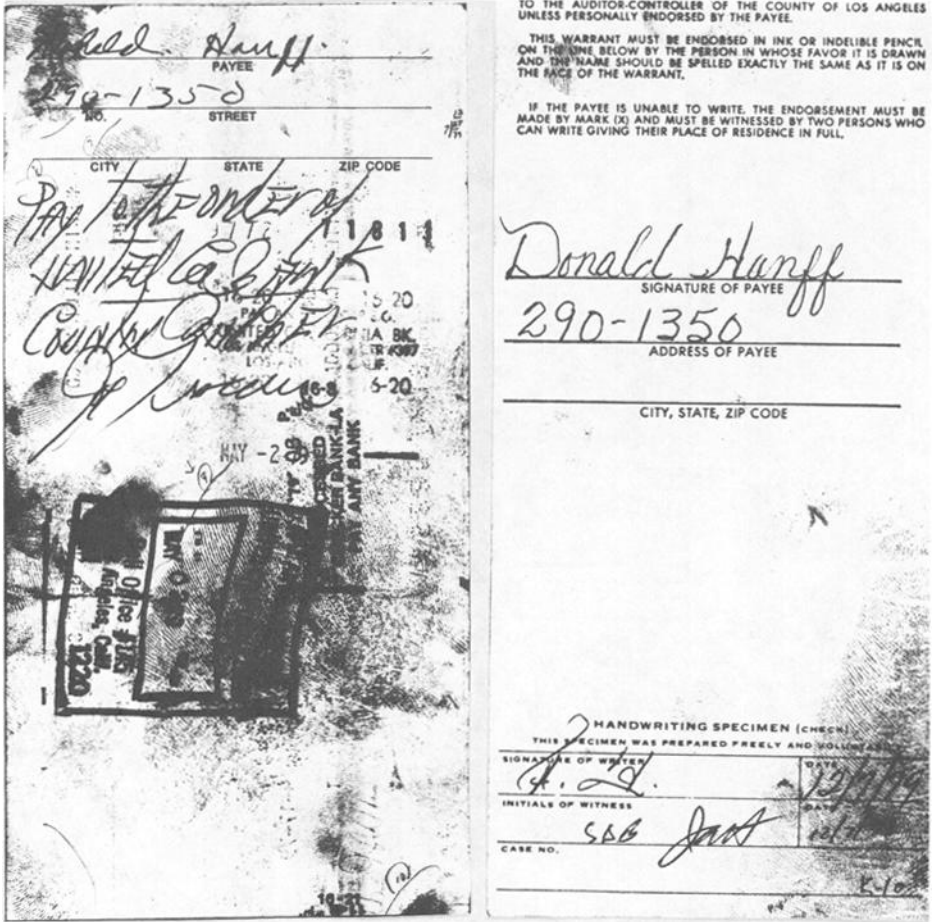


FIG. 3—Handwriting specimen chemically processed for latent prints. The developed palm print (left) occupies the same relative position to the endorsement as the questioned palm print (right).



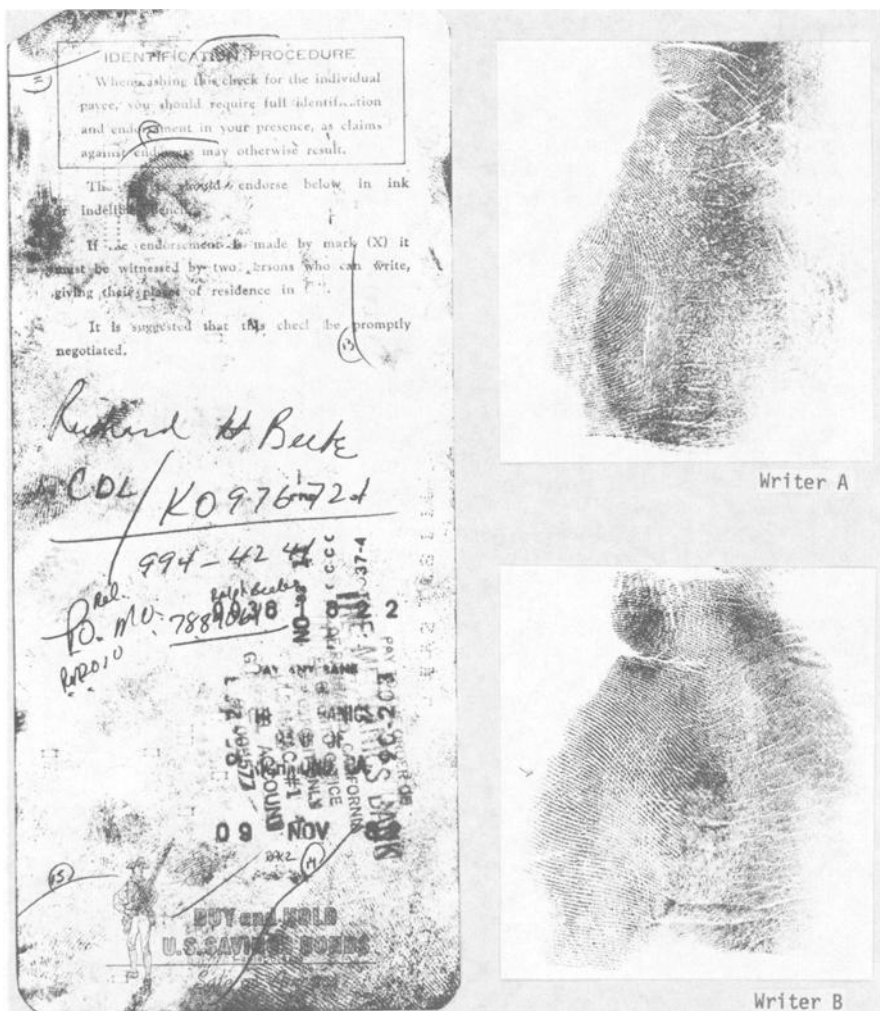


FIG. 5—Payee endorsement was written by Writer A, but writer's palm print belongs to Writer B.

**Caution**

Single discipline examiners must coordinate their efforts closely. In Fig. 5, the payee endorsement was written by Writer A, yet the writer's palm print belongs to Writer B. (Writer B was identified as the writer of data other than the payee endorsement.)

Expert testimony has been offered and upheld regarding the position of developed latents in a number of cases [6-8]. Writer's palm prints should be regarded in the same context.

**Summary**

Writer's palm print evidence is a viable concept and may be the only link between a subject and the authorship of anonymous communiques. The admissibility of writer's palm print testimony rests primarily on the arguments proposed for its introduction and ulti-

mately upon the discretion of the judge. Writer's palm print evidence has been offered and accepted in prior cases [9-11].

### *Acknowledgment*

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