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AFIS — A fingerprint detective

Two robbery suspects are apprehended by Chicago Police officers and are taken into custody. Both are confident that they will soon be back on the street and able to continue their illicit trade.

The two men are career criminals. They know the legal system as well as some lawyers. They know their rights. The court dictates that an arrestee must be available for bond within a specific time frame, and the two have it all figured out.

The two offenders both claim to have "clew hands" and are unable to be fingerprinted. The technician manages to get a fairly satisfactory set of prints from the offenders' "twisted" fingers.

The two also use several aliases to slow up the already limited speed of the Department's fingerprint search technology. By the time police can make positive identifications, the offenders are gone and they will be long gone.

What are two offenders are not aware of is another system that isn't so kind to criminals. The Chicago Police Department now possesses the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), capable of scanning and matching thousands of fingerprints within seconds.

In two minutes it's verified that one offender, who has five aliases, also has a long history of armed robbery offenses. Twenty-five minutes later the same information is learned about his friend, who has eight aliases.

The two offenders are stunned when they hear the news. As they are locked up, the look on their faces indicates disbelief. The fingerprint technicians agree that if not for the AFIS, it's likely the two would be out on the street.

Superintendent Fred Rice refers to it as the most effective crime investigative tool developed in the past 30 years. He rates it, along with the implementation of the motorized beat patrol and personal police radios, as the greatest technological advancement in law enforcement history.

Superintendent Rice is referring to the Department's new \$4.5 million Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS).

More than three years of hard work by a group of dedicated Department members made the acquisition of AFIS a reality. This included the planning, researching and testing of all existing automated fingerprint systems and the adapting of AFIS for Department needs.

The AFIS Project Team was headed by:

Deputy Superintendent Matt Rod-



riguez, Bureau of Technical Services and Director John Morrissey, Records Division.

Lieutenant John Burzinski as project manager, Sergeants Edward O'Reilly and Eugene Meelhan as assistant project managers, Officer Gayle Gooday as project researcher, and Chief Systems

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Emil Giese, AFIS consultant, discusses operation of Fingerprint Reader with Lieutenant John Burzinski, AFIS project manager.