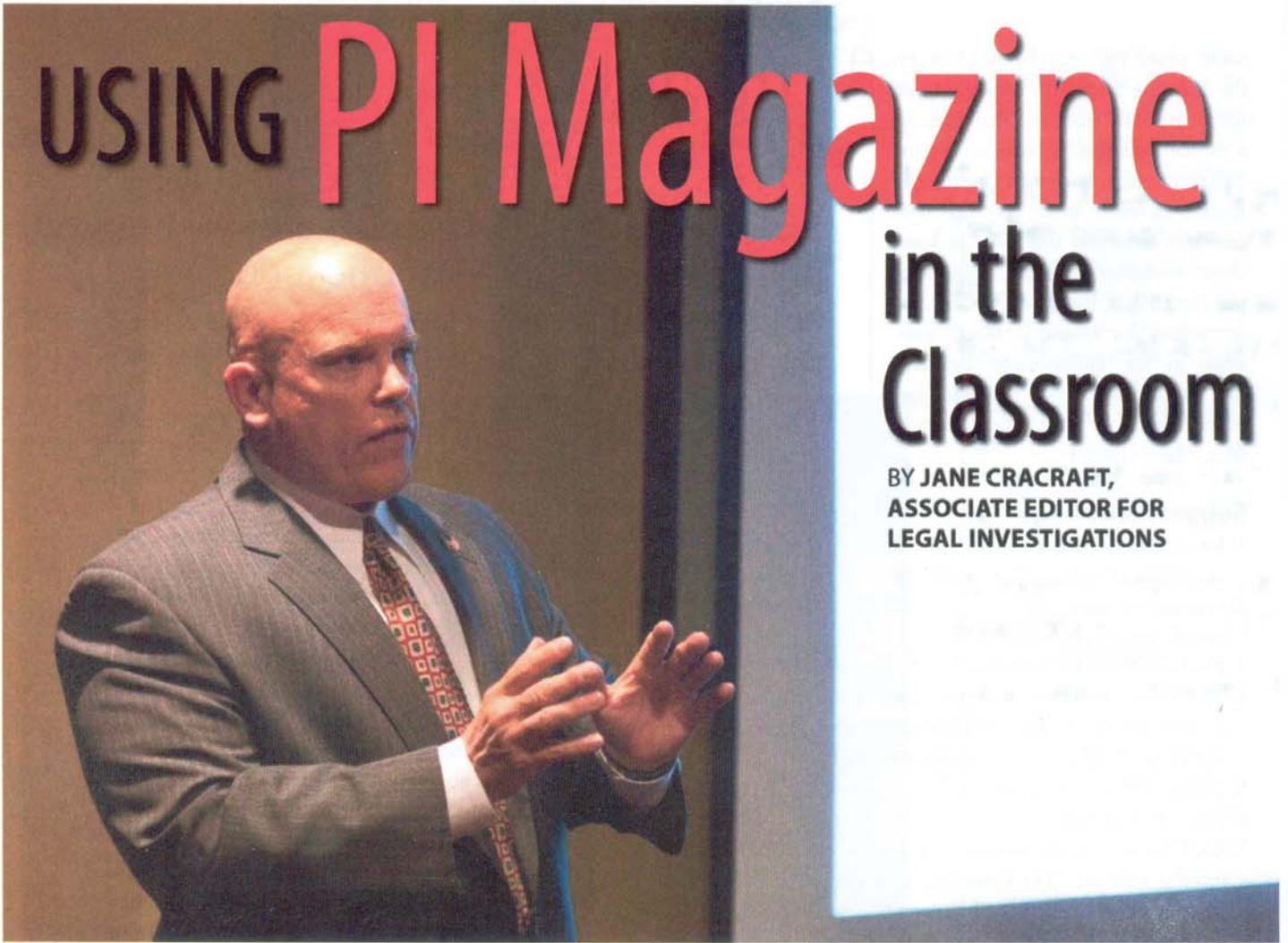


# USING PI Magazine in the Classroom

BY JANE CRACRAFT,  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR FOR  
LEGAL INVESTIGATIONS



RICK JOHNSON OWNS THE PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS ACADEMY OF THE ROCKIES, IN DENVER.



ESTALINE PALMORE DISCUSSES PI MAGAZINE WITH A STUDENT.

**M**ANY INVESTIGATORS ARE GETTING THEIR FIRST LOOK AT PI MAGAZINE IN A CLASSROOM WHERE IT IS BEING USED AS A TEACHING RESOURCE.

At Central Technology Center in Sepulpa, Oklahoma, instructor Estaline Palmore always brings her three most recent magazines into the classroom to share with the students. Some past articles have been used again and again as the starting point for classroom lessons, including one explaining fingerprinting and one showing techniques for surveillance in rural areas.

At the Private Investigators Academy of the Rockies, owner Rick Johnson supplies each student with a 600-page course notebook, which is updated every quarter. The notebook always includes PI Magazine. Johnson makes arrangements with publisher Rosemarie Mesis to obtain recent back issues for each class.

While Palmore and Johnson teach in entirely different settings, each of them offers coursework geared to newcomers in the field, or those who are just trying the idea of private investigations on for size.

### Oklahoma

The curriculum in Oklahoma is approved for persons seeking licenses in the state. “But I go beyond what is required for licensing,” Palmore explained. “I show them how to be productive. For example, I teach them there’s a lot of stuff that isn’t going to show up

on databanks. I show them how to go to the courthouse to find assets, how to do searches manually.”

She talks about client relations, billing, and managing an agency, and emphasizes that there are difficulties as well as rewards in running an investigative agency. For example, she tells how her agency got into legal difficulties when a manager took a risky assignment that Palmore had turned down.

Also, she gives her students real life assignments, such as helping a woman of Native American heritage document her family and find her place on tribal rolls so that she could qualify for educational and health benefits.

“She thought her relatives were all in Oklahoma, but we found family ties for her in Missouri and Arkansas,” Palmore said.

Having grown up in Locust Grove, Oklahoma, Palmore has been interested in the 1977 unsolved murder of three Girl Scouts at

a camp in that vicinity. This “cold case” has been the subject of research by many of her classes, and she has also taken a student with her to examine the site on property now owned by an old friend of hers. Unfortunately, they found the land badly overgrown and infested with rattlesnakes and copperheads, so they had to back off from part of their inquiry.

Now 83, Palmore’s long career includes having an associate’s degree in business, working as a telephone operator and a newspaper entertainment reviewer, being a hairdresser for more than 50 years and selling real estate from 1970-2009 until heart trouble slowed her down.

She and her husband, who retired after a 17-year military career, started Elite Protective Security Services in Tulsa in 1984. She became a full fledged security officer and private investigator there. The investigative side of the business handled worker’s compensation cases, domestic and child custody cases, legal investigations, general investigations and process serving. She sold the agency in 1996 after her husband died, then spent a number of years working for Creek County Youth Services at a shelter for abused and neglected children, in a “first offender” diversion program and as a school counselor.

Through all her experiences, Estaline Palmore has learned that any skills or information gained in one field can be applied to others. At Central Tech, she teaches a block of three courses

“...each of them offers coursework geared to newcomers in the field, or those who are just trying the idea of private investigations on for size.”



STUDENTS AT CENTRAL TECHNOLOGY CENTER IN SEPULPA, OK DISCUSS A PI MAGAZINE ARTICLE WITH INSTRUCTOR ESTALINE PALMORE.

for investigators. Phase I and Phase II of security services add up to 40 hours, and those classes are followed by a 36-hour private investigation course, consisting of nine 4-hour sessions, offered twice each year.

Mike Baugus, director of the evening courses at Central Tech said that Palmore’s classes are well-received, receiving consistently good evaluations from the students. Her investigative classes are designed for six to ten students, so each student receives individual attention. Only a few of them are of college age. Many are considering a mid-life career change. There tend to be more men than women, she said. While some are considering careers in private investigation, others are more focused on security work or law enforcement. They take Palmore’s class to get insight into the field and extra credits. Many of her students come from the nearby Tulsa metropolitan area, but others drive 50 or 100 miles to take her class.

“It’s such a nice place to teach...they let me do anything that’s legal,” she said.

### Colorado

In Colorado, longtime investigator Rick Johnson offers two 18-hour courses each year. Johnson is a past president of the Professional Private Investigators Association of Colorado (PPIAC). He started his career as a district attorney’s

investigator and he has been in private practice for 25 years, heading a well-established agency in Denver. The agency's high profile assignments have included cases of government officials' misconduct as well as insurance work, complex civil cases, criminal defense and family law investigations.

Johnson's class meets for six 3-hour sessions in a classroom at the Denver Athletic Club. Topics include surveillance, insurance defense investigation, public records, report writing, public corruption, fraud investigations, criminal defense, and process serving. Other investigators lead some of the specialized sessions. Typically Johnson has 25 to 30 students in each class. At times there is a waiting list.

For the first class, Johnson arrives dressed in a conservative suit and tie—and later, after he steps out of the room, the class will be asked to recall details of his appearance. The first homework assignment is to pick a stranger at random and follow that person for two hours without approaching the stranger or being noticed, and then to write a detailed account of everything that happened. Surveillance lessons are paired with instruction about Colorado's stalking law and other privacy concerns.

Challenging homework assignments are part of the course, as students struggle with learning how to do report writing, how to market an agency, and how to keep track of billable hours.

Johnson's students also come from a wide range of backgrounds and have varied reasons for taking the course. Some have no intention of working as a private investigator but want to enhance their observational and research skills.

"This is an intense introductory course," said Johnson. "It's like boot camp. After the course, it's common for a student to say, 'I had no idea how complicated this area is and how many liabilities there are. I don't want to do it.'"

Of his 350 graduates, some took the plunge, including five current members of the board of directors of PPLAC.

Both Johnson and Palmore encourage students to join their state investigators' associations and other professional groups. **PI**

## ARE YOU TEACHING PI COURSES?

PI Magazine would like to hear from you if you teach on a regular basis at a public college or in a private setting. Who are your students? What topics do you cover? How long have you been doing this? What are your favorite resources? Send your contact information and your comments to [janeecraft@comcast.net](mailto:janeecraft@comcast.net).

### FOR A STUDENT DISCOUNT ON A PI MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION:

Contact Rosemarie Mesis at (800) 836-3088 or email: [roe@pimagazine.com](mailto:roe@pimagazine.com)

### CONTACT INFORMATION:

*Estaline Palmore can be reached in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at (918) 605-7426 or [gep22228@aol.com](mailto:gep22228@aol.com)*

*Rick Johnson can be reached in Denver, Colorado, (800) 530-2300 or (303) 296-2200, or at [rja@denverpi.com](mailto:rja@denverpi.com)*

*Jane Cracraft is a retired Colorado investigator who serves as PI Magazine's associate editor for legal investigations. She's a past president of PPLAC and a longtime member of the National Association of Legal Investigators (NALI)*