

vear



The new driving force behind

Accident Reconstruction in the Southeast.





The founder of Vista Engineering LLC has joined forces with Robinson and Associates LLC to form Vear Inc., an industry leader in the field of accident reconstruction, announced Raymond G. Thompson, PhD, PE, who will also serve as president of the new company. Robinson and Associates was founded in Birmingham in 1991 by Edward L. Robinson PhD, who along with Tom Talbot, PhD, PE, and Michael Loop, PhD, will join Vear as senior experts. Both Robinson and Talbot are considered national authorities and founding practitioners in the field of accident reconstruction. The company is located in one of the leading business - high tech incubators in the country, The Innovation Depot located in Birmingham, Ala.

"We are so excited to bring together a collective of the most experienced and sought after accident reconstruction experts in the country under one roof," said Thompson, who founded Vista Engineering in 1998 and has 30 plus years product liability experience as an expert in matters of engineering design, failure analysis and manufacturing methods. "Together with Gary Johnson and Kevin Ruggiero, formerly of Robinson and Associates, our team will represent over 150 years of experience." Vear will provide scientific analysis and engineering experience to vehicle collisions using the latest technology to serve a variety of clients throughout the southeastern U.S., including attorneys for plaintiffs and defendants in civil litigation, as well as law enforcement and insurance agencies.

"Soon after I founded Vista 10 years ago, we did a market survey that showed accident reconstruction as a growing field," said Thompson. "Since then, I have known that this was a direction we wanted to move in, but have waited until we could start a company with the best and the brightest." According to Thompson, his team includes four Ph.D.s in the fields of engineering, physics and psychology; two licensed professional engineers; two graduate engineers; and three nationally accredited reconstructionists. In addition, Vear is dedicated to continuous education in accident reconstruction methods through conference attendance, presentations and publications.

Over the years, Robinson and Vista have collaborated on metallurgy issues related to collisions such as metal fatigue, stress fractures or metal defects. "We have been talking about joining forces for about five years now," said Robinson who has 45 years of experience in applied physics and accident reconstruction. Robinson gained national prominence in 1979 after being hired as a consultant with Ford Motor Company concerning the Pinto car accidents and subsequent fires. He has completed over 2,000 major accident reconstructions.

"As an engineering firm specializing in materials science and engineering-related services, research and testing, Vista is in the business of providing engineering solutions to product manufacturing firms and attorneys," said Thompson. "When we got to know Ed and his team, we quickly realized that they approached vehicle accident reconstruction much the same way as we approached product reconstruction, applying scientific and engineering principles to unravel the tangled remains and mystery of the accident scene. We both use science and engineering principles and technologies to get to the truth of an accident that occurs in only a few seconds."

Johnson has been with Robinson and Associates for the last 10 years and will serve as managing senior engineer for Vear bringing over 16 years experience to the team. Both he and Ruggiero, who will also serve as an engineer with Vear, agree that Vista's professional licensed engineering status will be a boost to their credentials. "This is an exciting time for our company and the field of accident reconstruction," said Johnson. "Unfortunately, accidents happen and in the U.S. alone, there are six million crashes on our roadways each year resulting in 40,000 fatalities. Vear will continue to be at the forefront of our industry to best serve the legal profession and insurance industry in dealing with casualty claims and liability disputes." Vear has plans to locate field offices in key cities to better serve clients outside Alabama.



Vear Team Of Experts Combine Leading Edge Technologies And Engineering To Provide

Scientific Answers To The Causes Of Accidents And Claims.

As Alabama's largest accident reconstruction firm, Vear Inc. is also one of the leading authorities and resources in technology-mediated reconstruction and computer simulation for their industries. They pride themselves in incorporating the most current and up to date training, software and equipment in this continually evolving technology.

"When I started in this field in the 1970s, we used a pencil, pad of paper and a slide rule," said Edward L. Robinson PhD, a senior expert with Vear. "There were a tremendous number of people doing accident reconstruction investigations that shouldn't have been." According to Robinson, the 80s saw 15 to 20 professional societies for accident reconstruction being formed in the country which led to seminars and teaching programs.

"But as technology has continued to evolve, the industry has become more sophisticated, and accident reconstruction became much more of a science," he said. "We have to know exactly how to apply various scientific and engineering disciplines to the specific problem at hand and be experienced in courtroom situations, giving depositions and testifying in trials."

When it is patently obvious that some scientific or technical problem is involved which is either beyond the scope or experience of the claims person or requires additional support to sustain a decision regarding a claim, Vear experts are called in. And usually that is at the scene of an accident in which one or more fatalities has occurred. "We are available seven days a week, 24 hours a day," said Raymond Thompson, PhD, PE, president of Vear. "Delays can cost more than just money, they can jeopardize the outcome of the case."

There are many tools of the trade that have emerged over the last few years that Vear experts are heavily trained in, and unlike many forensics reconstruction firms, have access to at their fingertips. "When we are looking for answers, our clients know that we are utilizing the latest technology and the most comprehensive set of equipment," said Thompson. From computer accident simulation and black box downloads to laser site mapping and crashworthiness simulation, Vear prides itself in being equipped with the necessary technology in house for each type of accident including tractor-trailers, medium duty trucks, passenger vehicles, motorcycles, ATV's, off-road equipment, travel trailers, trailer hitches, go-carts, golf carts and utility vehicles.



Vear has brought many “firsts” to accident reconstruction in the region such as:

- Purchasing one of the first commercially available Crash Data Retrieval (CDR) units in 2000;
- A Vear expert attended the first CDR Technician Instructor course in February, 2006;
- One of the newest, most important trends to hit the industry is Black Box Data which can record vehicle speed, engine rpm, brake and clutch status, engine load, percent throttle, cruise control status and diagnostic code status. When automobile manufacturers started putting black boxes in cars and trucks, Vear began investing in black box readers as they come on the market to conduct downloads for attorneys, insurance companies, rental car companies, trucking companies, railroad companies and law enforcement and provide interpretation;
- When heavy truck manufacturers began installing black boxes in their engines in the late 1990s, Vear became experts in the event data recorders and have been factory trained for major manufacturers including Detroit Diesel/Mercedes, Caterpillar, Cummins and Bosch/Vetronix (GM, Ford and Chrysler);
- Vear is the only firm in the state to own an accelerometer with data acquisition capability and a GPS and inertial based accelerometer;
- Vear is one of the few firms of its type in the country with full time metallurgy engineers on staff which allows for quicker testing of stresses and fractures, a common procedure for the VEAR team;
- When new software is available to the industry, VEAR is one of the first to bring it to the market;
- Vear experts are actively involved in the industry attending seminars by the Society of Automotive Engineers and the National Transportation Safety Board, several of the professional reconstruction societies and the Institute of Police Technology and Management.

According to Robinson, in physics research you're dealing with good data and theories in development. "But with accident forensics, we're dealing with well established theories but often limited and sometimes poor data," he said. "Our challenge is to formulate a coherent and consistent scenario...it's like putting together a puzzle with several of the pieces missing and perhaps a piece or two from another puzzle."



Vear Experts (Management Bios)

Dr. Raymond G. Thompson, president

30+ years product liability experience

Dr. Thompson serves both plaintiff and defense lawyers as an expert in matters of engineering design, failure analysis and manufacturing methods. He has 33 years of experience in engineering design, engineering mechanics, failure analysis, manufacturing practice, materials specifications, materials analysis and materials testing. He received a BSE in general engineering in 1974 and a MSE in materials engineering in 1975 from the University of Alabama in Birmingham. He received a Ph.D. in materials science and engineering from Vanderbilt University in 1979.

Dr. Thompson has been or is currently a registered engineer in Alabama, Arkansas and South Carolina and is a Fellow and a member in good standing with the American Society of Materials and the American Welding Society. Dr. Thompson taught in the Ceramics Engineering Department at Clemson University from 1978 – 1981 and taught at UAB in the Department of Materials Engineering from 1981 – 2002 and Department of Civil Engineering beginning in 2008. While in these positions he taught undergraduate and graduate level courses in engineering design, fracture mechanics, strength of materials, materials testing, mechanics of materials and manufacturing practice. He also conducts award winning research in materials science and manufacturing processing and has led various national and international committees in these areas.

In Dr. Thompson's private professional practice, he has acted as a consultant for industry in the selection and use of many materials, the fabrication of products and the processing of materials. Dr. Thompson continues to be active in research through contracts with the Department of Defense and the National Science Foundation. He participates in national committees in engineering and reviews articles for technical publications in science and engineering.

Dr. Edward L. Robinson, senior expert

45+ years accident reconstruction experience

Dr. Robinson has 45 years of experience in applied physics and accident reconstruction. He consulted with Ford Motor Company in 1979 concerning the Pinto car accidents and subsequent fires and has completed over 2000 major accident reconstructions.

He received a BA with honors in Physics and Mathematics from Howard College (now Samford University) in 1954. He received a MS in Physics in 1958, and Ph.D. in Physics in 1962, both from Purdue University. Dr. Robinson has been a member of the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) for over 25 years where he has attended every International Congress in Detroit, Michigan since 1987. He has been awarded full accreditation as a traffic accident reconstructionist by the governing board of directors of the Accreditation Commission for Traffic Accident Reconstruction (ACTAR). Dr. Robinson is a member of 17 other professional societies including 3 international accident reconstruction societies (Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom).

Dr. Robinson taught Physics at the University of Alabama at Birmingham from 1977 to 1991. While in this position he taught undergraduate and graduate level courses and supervised masters and doctoral candidates. He has conducted extensive research in the area of nuclear physics including the discovery of new radioactive isotopes of Aluminum, Sodium, Sulfur and Silicon. Dr. Robinson has published 3 SAE Technical Papers directly related to the field of vehicular accident reconstruction. Dr. Robinson has attended over 40 accident reconstruction classes and conferences. He has also served both plaintiff and defense lawyers as an expert in matters of accident reconstruction.



Dr. Thomas F. Talbot, senior expert

45+ years accident reconstruction experience

Dr. Talbot has over 45 years of experience in engineering design, engineering mechanics, and failure analysis. He received a BME from Auburn University in 1952 and an MSE from the California Institute of Technology in 1953. He received a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1964.

Dr. Talbot is currently a registered engineer in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. Dr. Talbot served as a member of the Alabama Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors from 1985 – 2005. Duties included Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary. Dr. Talbot is also a member of the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying and has served as the Southern Zone Assistant Vice President. He has also served on the Uniform Exam Qualifications Committee, Law Enforcement Committee, and the Examination Audit Committee.

Dr. Talbot is a Life Member of the American Society of Metals, a Life Fellow of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, and a Life Fellow of the American Welding Society. He is also a member of the Society of Automotive Engineers, National Council of Engineering Examiners, National Society of Professional Engineers, Alabama Society of Professional Engineers, and National Association of Professional Accident Reconstructionists.

Dr. Talbot taught in the Mechanical Engineering Departments at Georgia Institute of Technology from 1958 – 1965, Vanderbilt University from 1965 – 1967, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham 1967 – 1989 where he served as Chairman of the Mechanical Engineering Department from 1983 – 1989.

Since January 1963, Dr. Talbot has consulted with law firms, insurance companies, corporations, and government agencies concerning product liability and accident reconstruction. He has represented both plaintiff and defendant. He has performed accident reconstructions for automobiles, tractor trailer/ automobile, tractor trailer/tractor trailer accidents, and motorcycle and bicycle accidents.

Since 1954, Dr. Talbot has held a Pilot License. He currently has an airplane single engine land and sea; airplane multiengine land; instrument airplane; commercial pilot license and more than 4,500 hours flying time. Dr. Talbot was in the United States Air Force Active Reserve from 1956 – 1985 and retired at the rank of Brigadier General.

Dr. Michael S. Loop, senior expert

30+ years visual science and human factors experience

Dr. Loop earned his Ph.D. in Psychology at Florida State University and is currently an Associate Professor of Vision Sciences (Physiological Optics) and Neurobiology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Also, he is a scientist with the Civitan International Research Center. He is a member of the Alabama Academy of Science and the Herpetologists League. Dr. Loop is the author of several articles and papers on visual perception and behavior. He is also a consultant in the application of basic psychophysical knowledge and data to non-laboratory situations.



Gary M. Johnson, managing senior engineer

16+ years accident reconstruction experience

Mr. Johnson is a second generation accident reconstructionist with 16 years of experience in the investigation and reconstruction of motor vehicle accidents. He received a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice in 1995 from Auburn University and will receive a Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering from UAB in December of 2008.

Mr. Johnson is a member in good standing of the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), and has been awarded full accreditation as a traffic accident reconstructionist by the governing board of directors of the Accreditation Commission for Traffic Accident Reconstruction (ACTAR).

Mr. Johnson was a police officer with the city of Auburn, Ala., from 1994 to 1999 where he received four letters of commendation from superiors. Mr. Johnson served in the United States Navy from 1984 to 1990. He successfully completed Naval Nuclear Power School and was a member of the Blue crew of the USS Ohio, SSBN-726. While in the Navy, Mr. Johnson was awarded the Navy Achievement Medal from the Secretary of the Navy, Good Conduct Medal and letter of commendation from the Commander of the Pacific Submarine Fleet.

Mr. Johnson has testified at trial and deposition for both plaintiffs and defendants. Mr. Johnson actively attends conferences, seminars and classes in crash data retrieval and accident reconstruction. Mr. Johnson also conducts pro bono event data retrieval for law enforcement agencies, and has consulted with District Attorneys and Attorneys General in both Alabama and Tennessee on the subject of recorded event data.

Kevin R. Ruggiero, engineer

5+ years accident reconstruction experience

Mr. Ruggiero is an accident reconstructionist with over five years of experience in the investigation and reconstruction of motor vehicle accidents. He graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering in 2002.

Mr. Ruggiero is a member in good standing of the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), and has been awarded full accreditation as a traffic accident reconstructionist by the governing board of directors of the Accreditation Commission for Traffic Accident Reconstruction (ACTAR).

Mr. Ruggiero began his career at Tandy Engineering and Associates in Houston, Texas where he was employed as an engineer and accident reconstructionist from March 2003 to December 2006. During this time Mr. Ruggiero developed an expertise in rollover accidents and general accident reconstruction. In January of 2007, Mr. Ruggiero relocated to Birmingham, Ala., where he began employment at Robinson and Associates.

As an engineer with VEAR, Mr. Ruggiero continues to expand his expertise in accident reconstruction by regularly attending relevant continuing education conferences throughout the United States.



Vear Services Overview:

Comprehensive accident reconstruction

Black Box downloads, including:
Engine/powertrain control module downloads
Brake module downloads
Airbag module downloads

Analysis of Black Box downloads

Vehicle damage pattern analysis

Speed analysis from:
Crush (damage)
Conservation of Momentum
Skid Marks

Driver perception and reaction analysis

Collision avoidance potential

Determination of trajectory

Forensic mapping and scene evaluation

Investigation of slip and fall accidents

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