

In Corporate Crime, Paper Trail Leads To Ink Analyst's Door

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**Mightier Than Broker's Word,
2 Ballpoints Could Land
Martha Stewart in the Pen**

By **MARK MAREMONT**

Will Martha Stewart be undone by a blue ballpoint pen?

In the case against Ms. Stewart, a key piece of evidence is a tiny, handwritten notation made by her stockbroker on a trading worksheet filled with similar scribbles. Prosecutors claim the broker belatedly inserted the note to help cover up Ms. Stewart's improper stock trading. Their support: Laboratory analysis showing that the blue ballpoint ink he used is different from ink elsewhere on the document.

Forensic ink analysis, a little-known crimefighting tool, is suddenly in the spotlight in several high-profile business scandals. In Harrisburg, Pa., federal prosecutors pursuing accounting fraud at Rite Aid Corp. used ink analysis to help show that certain documents were backdated. And in San Francisco, the CEO of Aptix Corp. has been indicted on federal charges that include perjury, after ink analysis and other evidence indicated he had fabricated a notebook to help win a patent lawsuit. He has pleaded not guilty.

Scrutinizing ink is on the rise, in large part, because investigators are spending more time chasing corporate officials for crimes that can be difficult to prove or that are mind-numbingly complex. In many cases, it can be easier to demonstrate a coverup than the underlying crime. For example, the government charged Ms. Stewart and her broker, Peter Bacanovic, with perjury and obstruction of justice, not insider trading. And what better way to prove a coverup than with scientific evidence of fabricated or altered documents?

"The issue in a lot of these white-col-