

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of "Handbook for Dental Identification"

REFERENCE: Luntz, Lester L. and Luntz, Phyllys, *Handbook for Dental Identification*, J. B. Lippincott, Philadelphia and Toronto, Ill., 1973, 194 pages, \$14.00.

This book represents the first American-authored text on the rapidly emerging forensic specialty of forensic dentistry. The primary author is Dr. Lester Luntz, a man eminently qualified in the field, one regarded by his professional peers as a pioneer of forensic dentistry, and a gentleman dedicated to the advancement of forensic dentistry in this country.

The 194-page text consists of ten well-written chapters which span the entire spectrum of the field. Personal case histories of the primary author are liberally studded throughout the text material. The book is primarily written for the dentist and assumes that the reader possesses a basic knowledge of the field of dentistry. The text should also possess great appeal for the law enforcement officer, lawyer, and pathologist as it provides a detailed description of the methodology in the utilization of dental identification.

The book, composed as a handbook for dental identification, provides excellent coverage of the techniques employed in forensic dentistry. Any dentist can take the book in hand and confidently pursue the various ramifications of dental identification since the Luntzes, in meticulous fashion, have laid the stepping stones for such tasks. No detail is left untouched regarding the format to be used in procedural aspects of forensic dentistry. The latter represents a unique feature of the text material neither found nor as broadly covered in any other current text in the field.

The book initially presents an enlightening historical treatise on forensic dentistry. Subsequent chapters precisely depict the necessary equipment for dental identification procedures and present a step-by-step introduction to the postmortem dental examination. The authors provide excellent coverage of further topics such as antemortem and postmortem records, X-ray techniques, and photographic equipment. The subject matter dealing with bite mark analysis is adequate but lacks the depth necessary to fully present the problems inherent to the controversial area of bite mark identification. The latter criticism does not represent a serious deficit, however, for the dentist concerned with a bite mark case should personally review the numerous bite mark articles in the literature.

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The text is not an academic treatise, but as stated in the title, is meant to represent a “how-to-do-it” approach to the field. The book is without comparison in this regard and deserves a position within the library of any person possessing an interest in the dental aspects of forensic science. In the opinion of the reviewer, the publication is mandatory for any dentist emerging into the field of forensic dentistry.