

## BOOK REVIEW

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### A Review of "Forensic Biology for the Law Enforcement Officer"

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**REFERENCE:** Wilber, C. C., *Forensic Biology for the Law Enforcement Officer*, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1974, 386 pages, \$19.00.

*Forensic Biology for the Law Enforcement Officer* is well written and informative, and it covers the subject quite well. The chapter on identification of human skeletal material is outstanding. There are few technical errors in the book.

I would certainly disagree with marked dependence on the use of stomach contents to estimate time of death since the digestive process varies considerably with age and emotional state. The portion on gunshot residues implies that grease rings are not powder-based contaminants, that contact wounds with rifles are easy to identify, that wadding falls out of a shotgun pattern at a distance of six feet, and that at muzzle to target ranges beyond the blackening and powder particulate range no range information is possible. I also disagree with these statements. The ballistics section contains much useful information but could be better organized with somewhat less repetition.

The chapter on alcohol is excellent, although a metabolism rate of 10 mg/100 ml per hour is somewhat low and, of course, would give rise to an overestimation of a prior blood alcohol. The amount drunk-blood alcohol level chart uses a 115-pound individual as an example, but few people of that weight are arrested.

The sections on strangulation and drowning contain much useful theoretical information but are somewhat shy on practical information for the police officer. The theoretical requirement that it takes the absorption of 20 ml of water to cause death in drowning and the statement that deaths in burning cases are always associated with markedly elevated carbon monoxide levels are subject to question. I do not recall ever having seen diatoms in talcum powder. There is probably not enough emphasis in the explosive chapter on the collection of residues for analysis.

In summary, then, the book is well done, makes interesting reading and, aside from a few technical errors, could be extremely valuable to an interested police officer.

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