

BOOK REVIEW

D. T. Reay,¹ M.D.

A Review of *Crime Doctor*

REFERENCE: McCallum, J. D., *Crime Doctor*, Gordon Soules Book Publishers, Vancouver, B.C., Canada, 1978, \$10.00.

Crime Doctor is a biographical sketch of Dr. Charles Larson, whose leadership and intellectual stimulation have contributed much to pathology throughout the country and, in particular, to the Pacific Northwest. The book is a testament to Dr. Larson's investigative contributions to forensic pathology. The whodunit mystery reader should find this book enticing and, to full-time forensic pathologists, the book delineates an interesting and varied professional life that is in contrast to pathologists tied to the autopsy table of a busy medical examiner facility. Dr. Larson practiced and developed forensic pathology while still a private practitioner of pathology and has been able to develop a satisfying and interesting career in forensic pathology without formally practicing in the context of a coroner or medical examiner office. In my view, this is his unique accomplishment and amplifies his many talents also manifest in his many professional associations and leadership roles. Although each person in forensic pathology may have "war stories," this book details Dr. Larson's experiences during World War II in Europe. The accounts of the examination of concentration camp victims make for interesting reading.

The book has its shortcomings. The author, John D. McCallum, unwittingly generates an element of irreverence by frequently misspelling Dr. Milton Helpert's name. The author drifts from his biographical intent by spending more than a third of the volume in detailing the conviction, sentencing, and execution of a man guilty of two murders (and perhaps others). In my view, this distracted substantially from the merits of the book. Although I was fascinated by the biographical material presented, I found this digression to be annoying and detracting from the worth of the book.

Crime Doctor lends itself to easy reading and I have found myself handing my copy to medical students, residents, and physicians who want to know about the sense of discovery and satisfaction that forensic pathology provides. The lay reader should also find this book immensely readable and it is easily within everyone's financial reach (\$10.00).

¹Chief medical examiner, King County, Seattle, Wash. 98104.