

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of Forensic Science Progress, Vol. I

REFERENCE: Machly, A. and Williams, R. L., Eds., *Forensic Science Progress, Vol. I*, Springer-Verlag, 175 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010, 1986, \$53.00, 172 pp.

Right off, I must say that I enjoyed the style, content, and purpose of this book. Most of us in the forensic sciences would probably agree that a vast majority of books and monographs foisted off on us in the past ten years or so are neither useful nor accurate.

The editorial forward stated that the purpose of this, the first in a series, is to "produce contributions of high quality by leading scientists in the field of forensic science." Each of the chapters is written by scientists with obvious expertise in the particular subject. Only a few typographical errors were noted which did not detract from or confuse the point of issue.

The chapters on soil characterization by J. I. Thornton and investigation of fire causes by P. J. Thatcher are well written, in my opinion, and emphasize the areas where we must tread with caution, but where so often the dilettantes on the fringes of the forensic sciences nibble, and are willing to provide "expert testimony" for a fee.

H. Mukoyama and S. Seta concentrate on the blood grouping techniques of the various tissue samples submitted from time to time to the forensic science laboratory. The chapter on art forgery detection is fascinating and well done by J. Riederer; one appreciates the need for a vast array of background data necessary to evaluate chemical and biological characteristics of the art object in question.

The chapter on death by firearms, and the determination of accidental or suicidal manner, is comprehensive but overly positive in some statements. When one takes a positive stand on a situation, and disallows any other possibility, the facts must warrant the rigid position. K. Sellier, as example, states that a gun hand with no residues always means there was no self-infliction. He is addressing the issue of suicide versus accident by use of a long gun, and then goes on to give possible explanations for the negative findings. This can be confusing when one might more properly describe this type of analytical finding as inconclusive pertaining to manner of death. Elsewhere he states rather unequivocally that "a case of suicide is to be taken for granted if the body is found with two weapons and two entrance holes." Again, this seems to eliminate all other possibilities than suicide. On balance, however, I found K. Sellier's chapter to be comprehensive and thought provoking as well as well organized.

I intend to watch for this series of books for the purpose of adding them to my library. They provide an excellent starting point subject by subject if one is faced with recovering or reviving data lost from the personal memory bank as a result of onset of age or inability to follow each and every topic through the literature or both.

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