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Wilton Marion Krogman, Ph.D. (1903–1987): The End of an Era

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ABSTRACT: Dr. Wilton Marion Krogman was one of the major founders of physical and forensic anthropology in the United States. His extraordinary career spanned nearly six decades, and he was universally admired and respected for his scholarship, teaching, research, wit, and humanity. While studies based on human skeletal remains have long been used to assist the medico-legal system, the late Dr. Krogman can be credited with uniting these areas into the discipline of forensic anthropology. His "Guide to the Identification of Human Skeletal Material" (1939) in the *F.B.I. Law Enforcement Bulletin* became the foundation of this discipline; his monumental book *The Human Skeleton in Forensic Medicine* (updated with the author in 1986) solidified its establishment. The purpose of this paper is to pay tribute to this great man and outline his influence on the development and advancement of forensic anthropology.

KEYWORDS: physical anthropology, Wilton Marion Krogman, historical background

The passing of Dr. Wilton Marion Krogman, Ph.D. on 4 Nov. 1987 marked the end of an era. Born in Oak Park, Illinois on 28 June 1903, his illustrious career spanned nearly six decades. Bill Krogman was truly a pioneer in establishing the foundations of forensic, physical, and dental anthropology.

His long and distinguished career began at the University of Chicago in 1921 with a scholarship in American History. After receiving his Ph.B. (1926), M.A. (1927), and Ph.D. (1929) from the University of Chicago (Phi Beta Kappa), Dr. Krogman studied with Sir Arthur Keith in London as a National Research Council Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (1930–1931). Upon his return to the States, he became a professor of physical anthropology and anatomy at Western Reserve University (1931–1938) and the University of Chicago (1938–1947). In 1947, he joined the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine as professor of physical anthropology, and became Professor Emeritus in 1971. At the same time, Dr. Krogman founded and directed the Philadelphia Center for Research in Child Growth, which was later named the W. M. Krogman Center for Research in Child Growth in his honor. Between 1971 and 1983 he served as Director of Research at the H. K. Cooper Clinic in Lancaster, Pennsylvania (Fig. 1).

During his many active years in the field, Dr. Krogman published more than 200 books and articles in professional journals and popular magazines of the caliber of *Scientific American*. Auspiciously, he began his career with a monumental, prize-winning work on the anthropological aspect of dentition that consumed almost an entire issue of the *Journal of Dental Research* [1]. His scholarly activities ranged from the areas of growth and development of

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FIG. 1—Wilton Marion Krogman, Ph.D. (picture taken in 1983).

anthropoid apes and normal children [2,3] to his later research on the subject of cleft palate. He was particularly proud of his work entitled “The Growth of Man” published in 1941 [2].

Truly a “Renaissance Man,” his studies extended to prehistoric human skeletal remains from such diverse geographic locales as Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Australia, and the United States. Much of his work has become standard reading in anthropology [3,4], and the most popular articles such as the “Scars of Human Evolution” [4] were reprinted time and again.

It is quite likely that Dr. Krogman was the first physical anthropologist to join the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. He is best known to forensic scientists for his research, assistance to law enforcement, and teaching, and he firmly believed in sharing his knowledge through the publication of case studies [5–11]. He first presented his ideas on the discipline of forensic anthropology to anthropologists themselves in 1935 [12] and continued this emphasis through later publications [13,14]. A fan of Sherlock Holmes [15], he even took his forensic anthropological skill to the investigation of the Piltdown Hoax [16]. His wide-ranging expertise also included the art of radiographic analysis [17]. In addition, he prolifically directed his vast knowledge toward other forensic scientists, law enforcement agents [5,7,18–20], physicians and dentists [21–24], and even the general public [4,8,9,25–28].

Krogman also was responsible for clarifying and elaborating some of the most crucial issues in forensic anthropology [5,14,20,29,30]. His 1939 paper entitled “A Guide to the Identification of Human Skeletal Material” [29], to which the *F.B.I. Law Enforcement Bulletin* devoted nearly an entire issue, is widely considered to mark the beginning of forensic anthropology in the United States. This lengthy treatise dealt with practically every aspect of forensic anthropology and was probably the first article written by an anthropologist for law enforcement personnel. He emphasized age, sex, stature, and race differences and illustrated the importance of facial reconstruction. In a later article entitled “Reconstruction of the Living Head from the Skull” [5], he described in detail the procedures and later modifications [14,30] that set the standards for and initiated further research in facial reconstruction technology.

Despite the groundwork laid by Krogman and a few others, forensic anthropologists were rarely an important segment of the medicolegal system until about 1962 when he published his landmark book *The Human Skeleton in Forensic Medicine* [30]. This well-rounded reference book detailing skeletal biology, variation, and their related forensic science significance ushered in an era characterized by the increasing involvement and interaction of anthropologists and the rest of the forensic science field. Dr. Krogman continued to encourage the

growth of this field by joining with the author to bring the book up to date in 1986. We both felt it was vital to redefine forensic anthropology in terms of new advances, techniques, and developments from all over the world. At the same time, earlier concepts were reassessed so that their inherent principles would not be lost [14].

Dr. Krogman was a man of great personal warmth and scholarly quality. He was indeed the foremost authority, teacher, and researcher of our time. Always friendly, helpful, and supportive, he made physical and forensic anthropology a fascinating subject to learn and practice. His unflinching sense of humor was aptly reflected in his beautifully polished limericks. His scholarship was a model of quality and quantity for all of us to emulate. A true pioneer, Dr. Krogman forged the solid foundations upon which our field will continue to grow.

Among Dr. Krogman's long list of richly deserved honors and awards are the Viking Medal in Physical Anthropology for Outstanding Contribution in the Field, the Drexel Institute Award for Contributions to Child Growth and Development, both the 1969 Ketcham Award and the 1982 Annual Award from the American Association of Orthodontics, and the American Cleft Palate Association Honors Award. He was named as an Honorary Fellow of the American College of Dentists, a Member of the Charter Faculty, Institute for Advanced Education in Dental Research, National Institute of Health, and was inducted into the National Academy of Sciences in 1966. His contributions have been recognized with a number of honorary degrees: an LL.D. from Baylor University, a D.Sc. from the University of Michigan, and another D.Sc. from the University of Pennsylvania.

I was deeply moved by one of his last letters to me in which he wrote "I want to tell you, my dear friend, that writing the second edition with you was one of the happiest occurrences of my professional research life . . ." Needless to say, the experience of working with and getting to know this extraordinary gentleman was the highlight of my career. Indeed, Dr. Wilton Marion Krogman has greatly enhanced the lives of all of us who have had the privilege of being touched by his knowledge, wit, warmth, and humanity.

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