

## BOOK REVIEW

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### A Review of "Crime Scene"

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**REFERENCE:** Ragle JL. *Crime Scene*, Avon Books, New York, 1995.

This paperback book is described in the introduction as "an encyclopedia of forensic science information." It is directed to the "interested layman" and "also for the police officers and attorneys . . . and crime writers." It has 23 photographs and several drawings. The author, Larry Ragle, is the former Director of Forensic Science Services for the Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department in California, a long-time Academy fellow, and, as the book jacket reminds us, he lent his expertise to the O. J. Simpson defense team. I have had the pleasure of knowing him for the last 22 years.

*Crime Scene* is written in a breezy, conversational style weaving cases investigated by Ragle with topics in forensic sciences. Many of the investigators, pathologists, and forensic scientists who worked with Ragle are featured (I am mentioned once on page

79). The eleven chapters run the gamut from basic concepts in forensic sciences through specific topics such as trace evidence, firearms, DNA and forensic biology, toxicology, and pathology. The casual style, perhaps too casual with a liberal sprinkling of *hells* throughout, is an easy read. The author has a knack for describing difficult principles in forensic sciences with understandable analogies for the layman, a skill more forensic scientists should possess.

The serious forensic scientist or forensic science student might have some difficulty with accepting this book as an encyclopedia. It has no index of topics, nor does it have any references to other forensic science literature. It is a poorly edited book—the photographs are not numbered, although they are referred to by number in the text; in some instances, anti-B is used, in another anti-b; 24/100 is called a quarter of an inch; insufflation is referred to as inhalation; CODIS is defined differently just six pages apart!

Despite these and some other errors, I would still recommend this inexpensive book for anyone, layman or professional, who would like to be entertained by a gifted storyteller with a vision of what he thinks forensic sciences should be.

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