

Maples Symposium Introduction*

The passing of a friend, mentor, and colleague forces us to evaluate not only our own mortality, but to try and understand the effect the deceased had upon the living. When that individual is an educator, the effect is perhaps felt even greater. For nearly thirty years William R. Maples was one of the most respected forensic anthropologists in the country. He taught and mentored students at the University of Florida, assisted local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, and served the Physical Anthropology section and the Academy by performing various administrative duties and working as a member of special committees. This loss, though felt greatest by his family, is one that has affected us all in ways both large and small.

These papers began as special symposium entitled "The Life's Work of William R. Maples—A Tribute by His Colleagues, Students, and Friends," held in the Physical Anthropology Section at the 50th Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, 13 February 1998, in San Francisco, California. The original research, historical essays, and case reports were delivered to recognize publicly his academic achievements and to allow colleagues to present their own work in his honor.

The papers found herein are taken from those presented in San Francisco and are published to recognize Dr. Maples, his long career, extensive professional and public service, and, of course, his contributions to the field of forensic anthropology. We take some measure of comfort knowing that Bill Maples' mentoring, research and service program persist at the University of Florida. And, through the next generation of forensic anthropologists Bill Maples' style and dedication to the cases and to the larger community continues. Perhaps that is the greatest tribute.

Born in Dallas, Texas on 7 August 1937, William R. Maples developed an early interest in human identification and medico-legal issues. He received his Master's Degree in 1962, and was chosen to serve as manager of the Darajani Primate Research Station in Kenya. He initiated studies in Africa toward his doctoral degree that he received from the University of Texas in 1967.

Dr. Maples began his teaching career at Western Michigan University. In 1968, he joined the faculty of the University of



FIG. 1—William R. Maples, Ph.D.

Florida where he eventually rose to the rank of Distinguished Service Professor. William Maples served as chair of the Anthropology Department in 1973, and in 1978 was named Curator of Physical Anthropology at the Florida State Museum (The Florida Museum of Natural History). During the 1970's, Dr. Maples began consulting with Florida's medical examiners; bringing his expertise in the identification of age, race, sex, stature, and cause of death to crime and accident investigations. Dr. Maples developed a relationship with the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory providing oversight, expertise and consultation involving military personnel missing or killed in action during the Second World War, Korean War, and Vietnam conflict. Maples provided expert opinion and congressional testimony, which

¹ C.A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory, The University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

² Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office, Fort Worth, TX.

* The symposium in honor of Dr. William R. Maples, from which the following papers originated, was organized by Dana Austin-Smith, Ph.D., Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office, Fort Worth, TX 76104, and Anthony B. Falsetti, Ph.D., C.A. Pound Human Identification Laboratory, The University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611. Presented at the 50th Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, San Francisco, CA, 1998.

Dr. Falsetti assisted as a co-editor in the preparation of the symposium papers.

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helped shape the reformation and professional mission of that laboratory.

Maples brought compassion and scientific rigor to the more than 1200 cases with which he was involved during his twenty-eight year career. A pioneer in the field of forensic anthropology, Maples was nationally and internationally respected for his analysis of human skeletal material. He participated in a number of current and historical high profile investigations including President Zachary Taylor, Medgar Evers, Francisco Pizzaro, and The Elephant Man—Joseph Merrick. In 1992, Maples supervised a team of forensic scientists that identified the remains of the last Russian monarch, Czar Nicholas II, and his family, who were killed by revolutionaries in 1918. Bill Maples was internationally renown, but

was also involved locally and assisted with many investigations including the Gainesville student murders.

Though diagnosed with cancer in 1995, Dr. Maples continued working for the next two years. During his final year, Maples assisted medical examiners in Dade County identifying victims of the ValuJet airline disaster in the Everglades.

On 27 February 1997, William R. Maples died at his home in Gainesville, Florida. *“They have tales to tell us, even though they are dead. It is up to me . . . to catch their mute cries and whispers, and to interpret them for the living, as long as I am able”* (1).

Reference

1. Maples WR, Browning M. *Dead Men Do Tell Tales*, Doubleday, 1994.