BOOK REVIEW

Jay A. Siegel,[1] *Ph.D.*

Review of *Physical Evidence in Forensic Science*

REFERENCE: Lee HC, Harris HA. Physical evidence in forensic science. Lawyers and judges Publishing Co., Inc., Tucson, AZ, 2000, 297 pp.

The authors do not state the audience that this book was written for, but, judging from the level of the material and its length and breadth, it seems apparent that they had criminal investigators in mind. This is supported by the contents of the last chapter on legal aspects of forensic science, which deals almost exclusively with search and seizure issues.

This book could best be described as an extended outline of the basic types of physical evidence. It is done in outline form and devotes from 3 to 14 pages to each type of evidence. Within each topic is covered the basic nature of the evidence, collection and preservation, and laboratory analysis. There are also many useful spectra, chromatograms, diagrams, pictures, and tables that illustrate these topics.

The book starts out with introductory material on physical evidence including classification, stages in analysis, and the role of physical evidence in solving crimes. The latter section is particularly informative and provides a good summary of the many ways that forensic evidence contributes to the criminal justice system. The next section covers all of the various sciences that contribute to forensic science, with an emphasis on criminalistics. The last chapter in the introduction covers reconstruction of crimes and crime scenes and the role of the laboratory.

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The main part of the book is, as mentioned above, a short description of the various types of evidence from arson to voice identification. These topics are presented alphabetically, which I found to be somewhat awkward. This method certainly makes it easy to locate a particular type of evidence, but it lacks the more logical and traditional approach of presenting evidence in related groups such as trace, pattern, chemical, biological, etc. Certainly most, if not all, forensic science survey courses presented in high school and college present evidence in this traditional way because one can appreciate the commonalities present in the analysis of various types of related evidence. If one were to use this book as the cornerstone of a course in forensic science, it would be a bit awkward, since the material is generally not taught alphabetically.

The last section of the book covers the law and forensic science, with most of it on search and seizure (4th amendment considerations). There is a short section on *Daubert versus Merrill Dow.*

The appendix contains a curious assortment of material. There are some recipes for screening test reagents for blood and bloody fingerprints and there are directions for the "druggist's fold" for holding small amounts of powder in a makeshift paper container.

The book is an excellent expanded outline of the scope of physical evidence and how it is collected and analyzed. It is very readable and organized. It should be at the side of every criminal investigator. It would also be of value to lawyers who work with physical evidence in their cases. If one is teaching a course in criminalistics and plans to use a lot of supplementary material, then this book would be a welcome resource for beginning students, because it helps to organize the field and make it coherent. This cannot be said of every book in forensic science.