

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Sex-Related Homicide and Death Investigation: Practical and Clinical Perspectives*

REFERENCE: Geberth VJ. Sex-related homicide and death investigation: practical and clinical perspectives. Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2003.

Vernon Geberth, retired New York City Police Department Lieutenant Commander and editor of CRC Press' series, Practical Aspects of Criminal and Forensic Investigations, has given the law enforcement and wider forensic community a needed textbook, *Sex-Related Homicide and Death Investigation: Practical and Clinical Perspectives*. Already justifiably well-known for his *Practical Homicide Investigation: Tactics, Procedures, and Forensic Techniques*, now in its third edition, and for his courses in homicide investigation, Geberth draws upon his considerable experience and that of myriad others in offering the reader a didactic and pragmatic new book in investigating sexual assault homicides.

Split into 14 chapters, Geberth offers perspectives into normal sexual development and sexual deviance, then segues into segments utilizing case studies in the dynamics of violence, developmental and family history of perpetrators, police response, victimology, and other aspects of sexual assault and murder. Many stand to benefit from this text as the author delves into pragmatic crime scene investigation, collection and preservation of physical evidence, interpersonal dynamics of perpetrator and victim, serial killers, and sex-related child homicides and child abduction cases. The author also describes sex-slave torture cases and criminal personality profiling and signature crimes.

The text is filled with excellent advice throughout; however, this reviewer has a few concerns he would like addressed in future editions. In chapter 6, Geberth writes, "[...] homosexual cases often involve bite marks of the back, arms, shoulders, axillae (armpits, face, and scrotum) of the victim. Heterosexual cases usually involve the breasts and thighs." Such a statement needs a reference or attribution, but none is present. Particularly unsettling is a statement in chapter 4 on "Sexual Asphyxia and Autoerotic Fatalities," re-

garding notification and advising the surviving family of the mode [manner] of death in autoerotic fatalities:

The official explanation of the circumstances of the death is best undertaken with the assistance of clergy or a professional practitioner, after considering the family's ability to cope with the facts of the case. However, it is important to note that each case and set of circumstances will dictate the proper course of action. In some instances, I believe investigators who recognize what has happened may make a conscious decision to spare the family and allow them to believe the death to be a suicide. However, in the official police report the death should be properly classified as accidental. Under certain circumstances, this action might be an entirely appropriate alternative. I offer this personal advice as a veteran homicide cop. Whatever course of action you decide, "Just make sure you do the right thing."

This reviewer would maintain that under no circumstances should the investigator, no matter how well meaning, misrepresent the manner of death as "suicide" in such an accidental autoerotic asphyxia. In all circumstances, "doing the right thing" would mean telling the truth. Not only would the labeling of such a death as suicide saddle the surviving family with another potentially equally burdensome grief, but such a misrepresentation would irreparably damage the investigator's integrity. What if the family wishes to read the police report in the future? What if they should read the medical examiner's report? Far better advice would be to engage the surviving family with an experience grief counselor who would be able to adequately explain over time the circumstances of their loved one's death and explore tactics for dealing with their grief.

With the rare exceptions noted above, the book is a very good and comprehensive study of sexual assault homicide investigation and will be of great use to law enforcement officers, forensic laboratorians, forensic pathologists, forensic anthropologists, attorneys, and others.

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