

BOOK REVIEW

William P. Ryan,¹ M.B.B.S.

Review of: *Practical Homicide Investigation* (3rd Edition)

REFERENCE: Geberth VJ. *Practical homicide investigation, tactics, procedures and forensic techniques*. 3rd ed. CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL, 1996, \$89.95, 901 pp.

I was invited to review this excellent presentation by the author and a colleague of his when attending the American Academy of Forensic Science Meeting in February 2004. I felt daunted at the prospect, particularly when I saw the size of the production but having read all 860 pages of the book, I am most enthusiastic to have the privilege of presenting this review.

The author is well known in his police circles having spent some 25 years with the New York Police in this particular role of investigation of homicides. Hence it is no surprise to find that the result of his endeavors is a book that is in the first place, so easy to read, but secondly so cleverly constructed as to inform both the reader and to be so available as a reference manual.

For this review, my approach was to read it on retiring at night and I found it extremely readable, as I have just stated. To me there is no superfluous padding and the information conveyed is very explicit. The themes are well illustrated either by case reports or by photographic images and these aides are clearly presented without distracting from the impact of the text.

¹ Standish Medical Centre, 33 Berry Street, Nowra NSW, Nowra 2541, Australia.

For its use as a reference book, I would highlight the fact that the major principles of crime scene investigation are reiterated in most of the chapters. Please don't think that this becomes a boring, repetitive text—far from it. The important lessons are highlighted relevant to each chapter. The obvious example is the necessity of preservation of a crime scene that as we all know is so vital to the successful investigation of a major crime.

As a practitioner in clinical forensic medicine and forensic pathology for over 40 years, I found it gratifying that, although this is an American based text, the details in the outline of procedures is by no means contradictory to the principles we follow in Australia and hence I feel that it is a very valuable addition to any library interested in assisting in forensic medicine, no matter in which discipline.

I would commend it as a very readable, well set out volume which I am sure would prove its use in many instances. In the later chapters the detail with which he deals with profiling (always a contentious issue) is unbiased, descriptive and can only be described as a constructive explanation of the value of a profiler in many instances of crime, particularly serial killers.

The book is easy to read, concise and well presented.