

## BOOK REVIEW

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### Review of: *Trail of Bones: More Cases from the Files of a Forensic Anthropologist*

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**REFERENCE:** Manhein MH. *Trail of bones: more cases from the files of a forensic anthropologist*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2005.

In *Trail of Bones*, Mary Manhein discusses cases she has contributed to in her work as a forensic anthropologist with Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. The format is similar to her previous book *The Bone Lady*, also published by LSU Press. Like its predecessor, this volume seeks to educate the general public about the nature and diversity of cases involving forensic anthropology and aspects of the scientific methodology used. Although the emphasis is on presenting the stories of the cases themselves, Manhein skillfully weaves the science into the narrative at appropriate intervals. The result is a very readable and entertaining volume that also educates at a variety of levels.

Each of the 15 chapters presents an individual case. Once the case background is established, Manhein discusses how she became involved, the techniques employed in recovery and analysis, and how results of forensic investigation contributed to the resolution. She adds a personal touch by giving readers a glimpse of her humor and particular reactions to the various developments.

Although this well-written book has many strengths, I especially liked the variety of cases and situations selected for inclusion and the point made many times that forensic anthropologists work with other specialists in an interdisciplinary manner. The wide variety of case types includes those involving multiple scenes, facial reproduction and facial image enhancement, trophy skull identification, positive identification issues, media interaction, single individuals with multiple trauma, careful excavation and other recovery efforts, and differentiating human from non-human remains. Also included is a discussion regarding how forensic anthropology can contribute to identification issues when attempts to recover DNA failed. The nonhuman cases include the unusual and interesting examples of an alligator femur that re-

sembles a human clavicle and an ostrich bone with an antemortem surgical metal plate attached.

The cases also document that although recovery context is important, it can be misleading. The book begins with a case in point in which human remains with perimortem trauma are found near railroad tracks. Resolution of the case reveals that a train was not involved; the remains had been placed there by the perpetrator after removal from a previous location.

Readers of *Trail of Bones* will understand that forensic anthropologists have a role to play in cases and usually work directly or indirectly with a variety of other specialists in forensic science and related areas. The cases presented in this volume document anthropologist Manhein collaborating with specialists in odontology, electron microscopy, paleontology, computer engineering, entomology, pathology, forensic art, chemistry, and DNA technology. This problem specific collaboration is appropriately case and evidence driven.

Discussion also presents a variety of perspectives on key issues in forensic science such as positive identification, the limits of the various subdisciplines of forensic science, and the nature of specialist interaction. The volume documents the variety of ways that forensic science can contribute to identification and case resolution. Also, in spite of good forensic work, not all cases are resolved or resolution arrives in the form of a statement derived from solid investigative work.

In short, I like this book. It presents to the public a realistic view of how forensic anthropologists work within a very readable and entertaining case-oriented framework. *Trail of Bones* also should be useful reading for undergraduates and other students who have developed an interest in forensic anthropology and seek an understanding of the realities of work in this area.

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