

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Dental Autopsy*

REFERENCE: Silver WE, Souviron RR. *Dental autopsy*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2009, 273 pp.

In *Dental Autopsy*, Drs. William E. Silver and Richard R. Souviron share their wealth of knowledge and experience of forensic odontology. Dr. Silver's years of involvement in forensic dentistry have led to his participation in many significant cases. With a career that has spanned over four decades, Dr. Souviron is not only one of the founding members of the field, but also is one of the most experienced professionals of the practice of forensic odontology.

The book will serve as a useful reference text for a variety of audiences. It is well suited for non-dentists with an interest in forensic dentistry or for those considering entry into forensic dentistry. The seasoned forensic odontologist will appreciate the cases discussed and perspective the authors have on the subject matter.

As stated, this book has as part of its mission the education of non-dentists, such as medical examiners, coroners, lawyers, and other lay people in the methods and roles of the forensic odontologist. It is written in an advisory and friendly style as if the authors were acting as personal mentors. This is accomplished in large part in the style of a manual, with detailed instructions for procedures and technique. Instructional methodology is interlaced with case examples that serve as illustration of the point at hand making it easy to understand and appreciate the techniques described.

The volume is well organized and easy to follow. In 16 chapters, the authors condense their knowledge of the field. The first chapter, entitled Introduction to Forensic Odontology is provided by Joseph Davis, MD, past-President, AAFS. In this chapter personal experiences of cases and a historical perspective of the Miami Dade Medical Examiners Department are recounted.

Chapter 2 provides an overview and guidelines for dental context in the medical autopsy. In Chapter 3, a detailed description of tooth anatomy, numbering systems, and nomenclature is provided along with brief descriptions of dental anomalies and malformation. This may serve as useful reference for those without a dental background. The next chapter delineates the classification of remains, with illustrations of what a forensic dentist may be called upon to

examine. Chapter 5 explores the role of the dental professional in the medicolegal process. This is followed by a chapter describing the instrumentation and equipment that a forensic odontologist will use in a morgue setting. In Chapter 7 procedures are discussed should the forensic dentist be invited to the crime scene together with description of chain of custody of evidence. Chapter 8 covers antemortem dental records, but the heart of the book is Chapter 9 in which the dental autopsy is described in detail, once again written in a personal style, giving the reader vivid insight of the morgue experience. This is followed in Chapter 10 by a useful summary of national and international systems of identification, and then appropriately Chapter 11 deals with mass disasters and the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT).

A brief overview of facial reconstruction is provided in Chapter 12, followed by a more detailed journey through the topic of bite-marks in Chapter 13, again illustrated by cases of significance. Chapter 14, concerning expert witness testimony, is perhaps the most telling part of this volume. The authorship of this chapter clearly arises from many years of testimony both for the prosecution and defense. The advice contained in this chapter alone would justify this book a position on the shelf of the forensic dentist. The final two chapters touch on psychological consequences and professional organizations, followed by an appendix containing examples of forms and reports.

The experiences of the authors are emphasized not only by examples in the text but also by numerous color photographs and diagrams throughout the book. The quality and quantity of the color photography is an added value. Considering the topic the reader should be prepared for the graphic nature of some of the images presented.

In conclusion this book communicates well with its intended audience. Readers will agree that this is at the same time a manual and a memoir. Learning from the wealth of experience of Drs. Silver and Souviron is the essence of this text. The personal encounters are what distinguish this book from its neighbors in the odontologist's forensic library.

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