

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Georgia's Crime Doctor—The Story of Herman Jones and the First 20 Years of the Georgia Crime Laboratory*

REFERENCE: Jarvis J. *Georgia's crime doctor—the story of Herman Jones and the first 20 years of the Georgia crime laboratory*. Raleigh, NC: Lulu Publishers, 2009, 322 pp.

In the Foreword to this book, Joe Davis mentions attending his first American Academy of Forensic Sciences Meeting in Chicago in 1959 thus confirming us as contemporaries since that was the first year I presented a paper at the Academy. Dr. Davis says of Dr. Herman Jones “He was a true southern gentleman, soft spoken, friendly and a person whose goal in life was to improve forensic investigations in Georgia.” Not only were we therefore contemporaries but also we had the same sense of values and character assessment since those words articulate precisely my own thoughts about “Doc” (which was how he was known by virtually everyone he came in contact with) Jones. Mr. Jarvis in this book has put the meat on the bones of that description and, in that process confirms why we felt that way about Herman Jones.

Although primarily a biography of Dr. Jones' career in forensic science (a worthwhile accomplishment in itself), the author has also recorded the significant events in the development of the Georgia Crime Laboratory which Dr. Jones established. This supplemental task is almost as valuable, not just for the present and future staff members of that organization, but also for forensic laboratory staff members everywhere. Such well-documented histories of other laboratories and laboratory systems are rare indeed and the sources of the required information are rapidly disappearing. Mr. Jarvis has therefore done a considerable service for us all and hopefully his effort will be rewarded by others taking up the challenge to do the same for their laboratories.

As noted, the author has been able to document in a quite scholarly fashion the life and times of his subject(s). In this, as he acknowledges, he was well served not only by the memories of colleagues and friends but also by the records retained within the laboratory, and, perhaps most significantly by the personal papers of both Herman and his accomplished wife June, made available by the Jones family. I hope the author will not be offended when I say that some of the finest writing in this book is that contained in the quoted writings of Herman (or, perhaps as suggested at page 209, by June writing under his byline).

For modern day forensic scientists, one of the most surprising and remarkable descriptions in this book will be how “Doc,” a graduate in chemical engineering, came to be highly respected for his expertise not only in chemistry and toxicology but also in pathology. In this he reflected the experience of his good friend and colleague in the Alabama Department of Toxicology, Dr. Carl

Rehling (an appropriate subject by the way for another biography). To conduct forensic toxicology analyses it was necessary to have the appropriate organs from the body which meant someone had to collect them. In the southern USA in the 1930s and 1940s, physicians were hesitant to undertake that task and thus Jones, Rehling, and others therefore took it on by default. The description of the incredibly primitive conditions under which most of those autopsies were performed will shock modern practitioners.

In 1942, Dr. Jones was attracted to Oglethorpe University in Atlanta where he married his lab assistant June Krause, creating a powerful professional combination as well as a loving marital association that persisted the rest of their lives. Jarvis describes how, shortly after joining the faculty at Oglethorpe, Jones was appointed Dean of the School of Medicine, a truly remarkable appointment for someone not holding a medical degree. The demand for forensic services rapidly increased in volume and expanded in scope and, in 1947, Jones became the first Director of the Fulton County Crime Laboratory with a total budget for equipment of about \$75,000—perhaps enough for one analytical instrument today. In 1952, the county laboratory was transferred to the State with Jones remaining as its Director (and major asset). The political maneuvers involved in this process are artfully described in Jones' own words.

The author has performed an excellent job of describing the subsequent development of the laboratory and its staff. What may come as somewhat of a surprise to current forensic scientists is the fact that many of the Jones' writings (whether Herman's or June's) can only be described as “marketing” the capabilities of forensic science. Their target was not only the general public who would have to fund these services with their tax dollars, but also the law enforcement officers and courts who would be the beneficiaries. The latter, having come as far as they had with “time tested traditional” investigative techniques, were hesitant to invite the white coats into their fraternity. Such marketing is virtually unheard of today; indeed most forensic labs are forced through funding shortfalls to devote their “marketing” efforts to discouraging investigators from requesting every service in every case.

This book includes detailed descriptions of many of the lab's early cases amply supplemented by a large collection of photographs. While today's forensic scientists will find little unusual about these cases (and can undoubtedly cite very similar ones in their own experience) they will be surprised at the limitations of the tools available to Jones and his contemporaries to solve them. Instrumentation and other analytical techniques were extremely limited even though they were “state of the art” at the time. Procedures were less formal and the threshold of proof was unquestionably not as high as it is today. Practitioners were forced

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to rely to a very large extent on their experience and their interpretive skills. Nevertheless, thanks to the scientific expertise and integrity of Herman Jones and his colleagues, justice was undoubtedly done in the vast majority of their cases.

Doc Jones retired from the Lab in 1972 and June in 1975. They moved back to Auburn, Alabama, where they continued their

careers as consultants until his death in 1977 and hers in 1995. All readers will find something of interest in Mr. Jarvis's research and documentation of a critical period in the development of forensic science in North America. Forensic scientists in particular will be intrigued by how much and what was accomplished with such limited resources and techniques.