

DEATH INVESTIGATION



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Terry L. Castleman retired from the Sangamon County Sheriff's Department, Springfield, Illinois with 25 years of experience, and 20 of those years were as a death investigator. He has a degree in Law Enforcement Administration and has completed numerous courses offered by the prestigious Department of Pathology, St. Louis University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri. An instructor and lecturer, he has presented classes and lectures to thousands of police officers, prosecutors, coroners, and pathologists across the country. He has consulted on several homicide cases throughout the United States.

He is a past member of the Illinois Police Association, the Michigan Society of Forensic and Investigative Hypnosis, the International Society of Forensic and Investigative Hypnosis, the Midwest Homicide Investigators Association, the American Society of Law Enforcement Trainers, the Illinois Coroners and Medical Examiners Association and past President and member of the Fraternal Order of Police. Lt. Castleman currently holds an active membership with the International Association of Bloodstain Pattern Analysts.

DEATH INVESTIGATION

A Handbook for Police Officers

By

TERRY L. CASTLEMAN

*Lieutenant, Retired
Sangamon County Sheriff's Department
Springfield, Illinois*



Charles C Thomas

PUBLISHER • LTD.

SPRINGFIELD • ILLINOIS • U.S.A.

Published and Distributed Throughout the World by
CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.
2600 South First Street
Springfield, Illinois 62794-9265

This book is protected by copyright. No part of
it may be reproduced in any manner without
written permission from the publisher.

© 2000 by CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.

ISBN 0-398-07104-7 (hard)
ISBN 0-398-07105-5 (paper)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 00-042304

With THOMAS BOOKS careful attention is given to all details of manufacturing and design. It is the Publisher's desire to present books that are satisfactory as to their physical qualities and artistic possibilities and appropriate for their particular use. THOMAS BOOKS will be true to those laws of quality that assure a good name and good will.

Printed in the United States of America
CR-R-3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Castleman, Terry L.
Death Investigation : a handbook for police officers / by Terry L. Castleman.
p. cm.
Includes index.
ISBN 0-398-07104-7 (laminated) -- ISBN 0-398-07105-5 (pbk.)
I. Homicide investigation. I. Title.

HV8079.H6 C37 2000
363.25'9523--dc21

00-042304

The thousands of investigative hours conducted by the men and women deputy sheriffs of the Sangamon County Sheriff's Department in central Illinois during the homicide of our friend and fellow police officer, Deputy Sheriff William D. Simmons, must be noted. Their professionalism and perseverance through nearly two painful decades before the killer was convicted must also be recognized. I know that the murder of Deputy Bill Simmons touched the hearts and lives of all who called the Sangamon County Sheriff's Department home. With this in mind, this book is dedicated to the men and women, past and present, who proudly wear the uniform of the Sangamon County Sheriff's Department.

CONTRIBUTORS

THE LATE GRANT C. JOHNSON, M.D.

*Memorial Medical Center
Department of Pathology
Springfield, Illinois*

LT. JOHN LEWIS (RETIRED)

*Sangamon County Sheriff's Department
Springfield, Illinois*

PREFACE

THIS HANDBOOK IS INTENDED to be an investigative resource for all police officers who are charged with the responsibility of investigating death. It is written to be both an in-depth and quick reference guide. It will help the development of the necessary skills that any police officer utilizes during the course of each death investigation.

Drawing upon two decades of experience as a police death investigator and 15 years of teaching death investigation-related courses to thousands of police officers, prosecutors, emergency medical personnel, coroners and pathologists, the various aspects of cause and manner of death are examined in this book

This manual has been written to provide relevant educational material for persons who will be involved in the scientific or legal circumstances relating to the investigation of death. The book defines the role of the police death investigator, discusses numerous manners of death, defines procedures for investigating the crime scene, techniques for identification of the unidentified victim, methods for proper handling and transport of the body, and establishes methodical approaches to any death investigation. Pertinent information relating to the basic understanding and use of innovative investigative techniques such as the use of hypnosis, bloodspatter interpretation and psychics are examined.

The police officers that will be involved with death investigation need to develop and enhance his or her own style of approach to this type of investigation.

This handbook is suitable for the college law enforcement or criminal justice student, and may be also utilized as a supplemental study guide for death investigation-related college courses.

T.L.C.

INTRODUCTION

I SPENT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS as a Sangamon County (Springfield, Illinois) Deputy Sheriff. It was the most rewarding career that anyone could ever hope to achieve. In the 20 years that I spent working death investigations, I had the distinct honor of having solved more than 50 consecutive murders. Although all murders were important to me, there was none more meaningful than solving the seventeen-year-old murder of my friend and fellow officer, Deputy William D. Simmons.

I cannot tell you how many deaths that I actually investigated during this time, as there were simply too many. I can say that I attended more than 300 autopsies. Once I even assisted in the performance of a postmortem examination. It had to be one of the strangest things that a police officer can ever do. If I could ever live my life over, I would be a forensic pathologist.

For years other police officers asked me to teach them how I did what I did when it came to death investigation. I hesitated in doing so because I did not know why I was successful investigating deaths. I dismissed it saying, "What works for me may not work for you." This attitude changed shortly after attending a Bloodspatter Workshop in Minnesota, instructed by Bart Epstein and Terry Labor. I learned a great deal from the information they taught. However, it was not until I returned home and attempted to share what I had learned with some pathologists from Memorial Medical Center that I truly understood what I had learned.

From that point on, I began teaching classes. I taught at Lincoln Land Community College, The Springfield Police Academy, The Illinois State Police Academy and with the local mobile training unit. I taught classes in: death investigation, bloodspatter interpretation, crime scene investigation, crime scene processing, interview and interrogation techniques, and forensic hypnosis. These were classes that I

had attended and I did not realize my own knowledge and expertise in these areas until I began to share what I had learned. It seemed that the more I taught and shared with others, the more I learned. I have now shared my knowledge with more than 3,000 medical examiners, coroners, lawyers and police officers from five different states.

I would like to point out one important factor that cannot be learned simply by reading this book, or any book, and cannot be taught in a classroom. For any investigation to be successful you must have TEAMWORK. Sangamon County law enforcement went through a very painful growth in homicide investigation that lasted nearly a decade. It is paramount that every person in a death investigation know the significance of teamwork. This includes all law enforcement, prosecutors, coroners, medical examiners, and crime laboratory personnel.

I don't know why teamwork was such a problem. No one seemed to work together, and everyone thought that everything was someone else's job. Well-known news commentator Paul Harvey was once given credit for saying, "If you want to get away with murder, do it in Sangamon County." That was pretty much true for the time period from 1960 through 1970. About this time, J. William Roberts, became the states attorney. He stated, "We will all work together. We will suffer the burdens together, and we will rejoice in our triumphs." This philosophy was long overdue, and it worked.

This handbook contains information that can be used for in-depth reading about specific information, or for quick reference. This information is intended to assist you with various types of death investigation. I hope that you will find this book not only interesting, but helpful in conducting any investigation you are involved with. It is with knowledge and experience that we can perform all the necessary tasks which must be done in all death investigations.

It is with utmost importance that I embrace the memory of the late Dr. Grant C. Johnson, forensic pathologist. I have truly only admired two men in my life. One was my late father, for having taught me about life. The other was Dr. Johnson, for having taught me so much about death. All that I was, as a death investigator, I learned from the teachings of these two men. Dr. Johnson treated me like a son and he spent countless hours teaching me about life after death and the forensic evidence that a corpse can provide. The days of examining the

hundreds of victims of death, and the endless nights of rolling on Dr. Johnson's living room floor role-playing a victim's last moments alive, shall forever be remembered.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It saddens me that I cannot acknowledge by name everyone that had a positive influence on me during my career in law enforcement.

There are several people that must be noted, for without them, this book would not have been written. I must mention the late Grant C. Johnson M.D., and all the medical staff of the Department of Pathology, Memorial Medical Center, Springfield, Illinois. Thank you for having patience with me, and sharing your expertise in the investigation of death.

To J. William Roberts, former Sangamon County States Attorney, Springfield, Illinois and Justice Benjamin K. Miller, Illinois Supreme Court; I thank you for providing your legal knowledge and experiences.

I must also make mention of six of my friends and co-workers that had a positive impact on my investigative career. From the Sangamon County Sheriff's Department, Springfield, Illinois, Chief Loren Larsen (Retired), Captain John Pyle (Retired), Lieutenant Jack Lewis (Retired), and Sergeant Rick Miller: your confidence, continual support, and the invaluable assistance that made our department so successful with so many homicide investigations.

To Professor Ivan Wright, Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield, Illinois. It was through your efforts that I began teaching. Thanks for all your help at the college.

To Commander Marcia A. Lange (Retired), Springfield Police Department, Springfield, Illinois, I started my investigative career with you and will end it with you. Thanks for all your support.

A heartfelt acknowledgment and thank you to my wife, Laurel J. Castleman. Your support in my teachings and writings has meant so much to me. You are such an important part in my life and in all that I have become.

To my mother, Fairy Castleman, thank you for all your help. Mom was such a good listener and she heard about all my cases. She also told me at the beginning of my police career to write things down and put it in a book someday. Well, mom, here it is.

To Mrs. Pat Pemberton, Bachelors in Journalism, who helped perfect this manuscript, thank you for your countless hours on this endeavor.

To Mr. Michael Payne Thomas, publisher, without his sharing of knowledge and expertise, this handbook could not have been completed.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Introduction</i>	xi
 <i>Chapter</i>	
1. DEATH DEFINED	3
2. THE ROLE OF THE DEATH INVESTIGATOR	6
3. IDENTIFYING THE VICTIM	15
4. CAUSE AND MANNER OF DEATH	19
5. ESTABLISHING TIME OF DEATH	23
6. CAUSES OF DEATH	34
7. ASPHYXIA BY POISONING	40
8. DEATHS DUE TO FIRE	46
9. DROWNING	54
10. GUNSHOT WOUNDS	59
11. CUTTING, STABBING AND BLUNT TRAUMA	66
12. ELECTRICAL AND LIGHTNING DEATHS	72
13. TRAFFIC CRASHES	76
14. DEATHS DUE TO COCAINE	84
15. INFANT DEATH	90
16. SUICIDE	99
17. HOMICIDE	104
18. THE SCENE	117
19. USE OF BLOOD AS EVIDENCE	131
20. USE OF HYPNOSIS	139
21. USE OF PSYCHICS	145
22. STUDIES AND EXPERIMENTS	150
 <i>Glossary</i>	 153
<i>Index</i>	157

DEATH INVESTIGATION

Try to understand that all my life I have believed that all things happen for a reason. We may not know why at first, but eventually we will understand all that happens. I have also concluded that we will learn from these things in our lives that do happen. Life is given to us to live as we choose, but it is taken away from us by death. This happens all too often without offering any choices at all.

Terry L. Castleman

Chapter 1

DEATH DEFINED

THE OLD ADAGE that only two things are certain, death and taxes, is fairly accurate. Some folks may not pay taxes, but the single most absolute fact in life is that everyone will die. Biologically speaking, the course of death is an eventuality. Different tissues and organs in a living body die at different rates. We can break down death into two categories.

Molecular Death: Different tissues die at different intervals. The brain may die but the muscles respond to electrical stimulation for several hours.

Clinical Death: Death as a whole, failure of the body, respiration and circulation cease.

SUDDEN UNEXPECTED DEATH

Definitions

Sudden: Quick or not expected.

Unexpected: Usually refers to death occurring in a healthy person.

Sudden unexpected deaths are related to natural causes (see Chapter 15 for Sudden Infant Death). Some 60 percent to 70 percent of all deaths that come under the jurisdiction of the coroner or medical examiner are due to natural causes. The establishment of cause of death in sudden or unexpected deaths calls for good investigation. Beware of one manner of death masquerading as another. Listed below are two examples of events that can produce a natural death.



Figure 1.1. One form of death can masquerade as another form. Initial observation would indicate that the victim may have died as a result of suicide. Very little blood was found. The victim actually died from pneumonia.

Natural Causes of Death

Heart Attack: (Number one killer)

Symptoms:

1. Shortness of breath
2. Pains in chest

Stroke:

1. Clot in brain area
2. Cerebral hemorrhage
3. Embolism—air in circulatory system

Symptoms:

1. Paralysis on side of body
2. Dizzy
3. Difficulty of speech
4. Affects memory

The autopsy reveals the most probable cause of death; it may not necessarily be incompatible with life but there is no other reason or

explanation. A competent investigation may avert the need for an autopsy. However, if there is any doubt, then have an autopsy performed. It would not be unusual for the family to request an autopsy. Family members will want to know the reason that their loved one died.

Legal concerns of actual death must be considered. In some instances persons are kept alive by artificial means. Should the life support be removed the victim may or may not die. However, in the matter of harvesting organs, the victim must be kept on life support to insure that the transplants of such organs as the lungs, liver or heart are feasible.

Depending on your personal, ethnic or religious opinions, you may hold many different beliefs about death. Some people consider as true that when you die, that is the end. The body simply turns to dust. Others believe that after you die you are reincarnated, into someone or something else. Other beliefs are that when you die you go to be judged for the deeds of your life on earth. At this point you are cast into Purgatory, condemned to Hell or rewarded with Heaven. Still there are some that are of the opinion there is a place or a horizon that is in between life and death. Life after death, without our own beliefs, how do we know what is and what is not true. You will need to have your own thoughts and feelings about what happens after you die. You will also need to honor and respect the beliefs of others.