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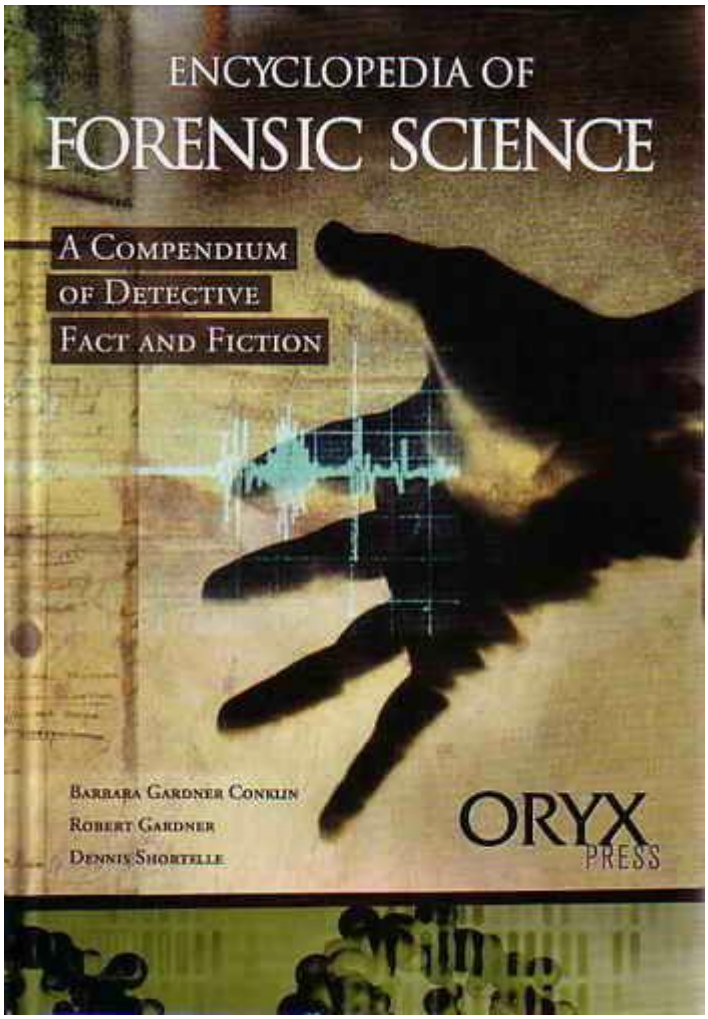
HIGHLY ENTERTAINING, VERY READABLE AND QUITE INSTRUCTIVE

Encyclopedia of Forensic Science - A Compendium of Detective Fact and Fiction *by* Barbara Gardner Conklin, Robert Gardner and Dennis Shortelle. Hard Cover, 7" x 10". Illustrations, Notes, Index. Oryx Press, (An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc), 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881. Publication Date 2002. xvi + 329 pages, ISBN 1-57356-170-3. Library of Congress Control No. 2001036638. Price $70.95, £40.99

Official site of this book: http://www.greenwood.com/books/BookDetail.asp?sku=OXFORS

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Who invented the breathalyzer? What was the infamous Waneta Hoyt case? Who was Alan Moritz? How did Ludwig van Beethoven die?

Stumped? Want to know their answers? No, you don't have to refer to multiple books to know their answers. All these answers - and thousands more - are now available in a single book.

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Welcome to one of the most exhaustive and readable encyclopedia of forensic science published in recent times. Written by a team of three famous authors comprising of a teacher (Conklin), scientist (Gardner) and a historian (Shortelle), the encyclopedia details a number of topics related to forensic science in the popular and time tested A-Z format. Each of the 200 odd entries is followed by a short reference list, which lists important books, magazines, journals and even websites giving additional information on that entry. The entries include not only types of forensic evidence such as lip prints, bite marks, insanity defense, hair evidence and disputed documents (which all of us would expect from such a work), but also information on forensic scientists (e.g. Hans Gross, Milton Helpern, Leone Lattes, Frederick R. Cherrill, George Burgess Magrath, August Vollmer), criminals (e.g. Roland Molineux, Jane Toppan, Wayne Williams, Steven Benson, The Mad Bomber) and even fictional characters in television programs on forensic science (e.g. Thatcher Colt, Dr. Kay Scarpetta, Dr. Daniel Webster Coffee, Craig Kennedy, Dr. John Evelyn Thorndyke).

There are entries on almost every imaginable forensic subject ranging from arsenic poisoning to X-ray diffraction. The entries are explained in a simple no-nonsense language. Almost every entry is

illustrated with actual cases. Some entries are illustrated by more. For instance, the entry on fiber evidence (pages 105-108) is illustrated by three actual cases - The Roger Payne case (1968), Wayne Williams case (1979-1981) and The John Serratore case. The entry on Forensic anthropology (pages 118-121) is illustrated by two cases - the Josef Mengele case and The John List case.

There are useful appendices at the end of the book giving helpful websites and a detailed bibliography. The book is well illustrated with a number of black and white photographs. All in all, the book is a very good read at this price.

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This book is illustrated with a number of pictures like this. This one (on page 104) shows a criminologist examining trace evidence under comparison microscope.



And in case you are still wondering about the questions asked at the beginning of this review, breathalyzer was invented by Robert F. Borkenstein in 1954 (page 27). The infamous Waneta Hoyt case is described - in all its gristly detail - on pages 158-160. Waneta Hoyt killed five of her children - Eric, James, Julie, Molly and Noah - by smothering between Jan. 26, 1965, and July 28, 1971. Incredibly, all deaths were passed of as cases of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), thanks to some questionable research by Dr. Alfred Steinschneider, a New York pediatric researcher, whose landmark (?) papers "proved" that all deaths were due to some genetic disorder which ran in Hoyt's family. He wrote two papers in 1970's "proving" that SIDS runs in families and that SIDS was caused by sleep apnoea. These two papers are (i) Steinschneider A. Nasopharyngitis and prolonged sleep Apnea. Pediatrics. 1975 Dec;56(6):967-71 and (ii) Steinschneider A. A reexamination of "the apnea monitor business". Pediatrics. 1976 Jul;58(1):1-5. Hoyt's lawyers used these papers as evidence that deaths in her family were cases of SIDS, not infanticide. This is one of the most remarkable instance, where spurious papers written in a famous and reputed journal were successfully used in murder defense. Waneta Hoyt case was also perhaps the most famous case where the gap between the actual crime and prosecution took an incredible 32 years - she was successfully prosecuted as late as in 1997. At page 160, the book gives a moving picture of the moment when the judgment was being delivered (on October 24, 1997). Ironically her adopted son Jay Hoyt is seen crying, as the jury hands her the life sentence. Waneta didn't have to suffer much - she died in 1998.

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Alan R. Moritz (1899-1986), was known as the Sherlock Holmes of Medicine (pages 199-200). In 1937 he invented an interesting technique whereby one could visualize the surface of the hair in much

greater detail than had been hitherto possible. He brushed a thin layer on nail polish mixed with amyl acetate on a slide and placed a stretched hair on it. When the hair was later removed, it left its surface impression on the slide which could be magnified and studied under a microscope.

And finally how did Beethoven die? Well, there is a long and interesting story to this (page 227-228), but in short it is something like this. As Ludwig van Beethoven lay dying in 1827, a young musician named Ferdinand Hiller came to pay his respects to the great composer. In those days, it was customary to snip a lock of hair as a keepsake. Not only Hiller, but a number of other fans snipped locks of hair from Beethoven's head - to the point of reducing him to baldness. By a long and circuitous route - after 167 years - some of these locks of hair found their way in the hands of two American Beethoven enthusiasts, Ira Brilliant and Che Guevara, who purchased them in 1994 at a sale at Sotheby's. Subsequently, they and others instituted a series of complex forensic tests (four major tests in all) in the hope of finding the probable causes of the composer's chronically bad health, his deafness, and the final demise that Ferdinand Hiller had witnessed all those years ago.

The first test was conducted to determine whether any opiate pain medication was given to Beethoven during his final days. Dr. Werner Baumgartner at Psychemedics Corporation, Los Angeles conducted this test in May 1996. He came to the conclusion that Beethoven did not receive morphine, laudanum, or other opiates in the final months of his life.

...The second test (on Beethoven's hair) was performed in the fall of 1988 by Walter McCrone of Chicago's McCrone Research Institute. McCrone found that lead levels in the Beethoven hairs was about 42 times higher than normal...

The second test was performed in the fall of 1988 by Walter McCrone of Chicago's McCrone Research Institute. McCrone found that lead levels in the Beethoven hairs was about 42 times higher than normal. This result strongly indicated that Beethoven suffered from lead poisoning throughout much of his adult life, dramatic lead toxicity that likely caused his life-long illnesses, impacted his personality, and contributed to his death. Beethoven's lifelong illnesses-terrible abdominal cramping, rheumatic fevers, abscesses, gouts, diarrhea, eye pain, and even his deafness - may have been the result of the severe lead toxicity. (some researchers now think that lead poisoning was not the cause of his deafness. It could instead have been caused by an immunopathic disorder such as systemic lupus erythematosus).

The third test determined that Beethoven had not been treated with mercury during his final days, laying to rest many rumors that Beethoven had suffered from syphilis during his final days. In the times Beethoven lived, syphilis was treated with mercury (remember the old adage "five minutes with Venus and a life time with Mercury"!). Had Beethoven suffered from syphilis, he would have been treated with mercury, and surely his hair would have revealed it, but there was none.

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In the fourth and final test to date, mitochondrial DNA sequencing was done on three Beethoven hairs at Laboratory Corporation of America in the Research Triangle Park, North Carolina under the direction of lab director Marcia Eisenberg. These results will be employed to test the authenticity of other Beethoven relics (mainly hair removed by other enthusiasts and even bones) claimed to have been existing elsewhere in the world.

Like these stories? Well, if you are as great a forensic enthusiast as I am, you surely will. Go ahead and read this book from cover to cover. You will thank me I recommended such a beauty to you.

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Encyclopedia of Forensic Science

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