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Interview with William Silver and Richard Souviron

William E. Silver (left) and Richard R. Souviron (right)
(Please click to enlarge)



This journal has been publishing interviews with noted authors in the field of forensics, since its inception. This time - instead of interviewing a single author - we interviewed a team of forensic odontologists. Dr. Silver and Dr. Souviron have recently come out with a bestseller *Dental Autopsy*. This book was reviewed in this issue, and was adjudged one of the best in the field by our reviewers.

Readers would like to know a bit about the authors. Dr. William Silver practiced Orthodontics in Boston after service in the US Air Force in Japan. He received Diplomate status in the American Board of Orthodontics in 1962 when he moved his family to Miami . Dr. Silver served as Chief of the Dental Department at Miami Childrens Hospital and held office in many organizations. After completing the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology course, he became interested in Forensic Dentistry and volunteered at the Miami Dade Medical Examiner Department. In 1995 he founded the Miami Dental Identification Response Team (DIRT) and in 1996 he co-directed with Dr. Souviron the dental identifications after the VALUJET crash in Miami. In 2001 Dr. Silver joined the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT) . He participated in the dental identifications during the World Trade Center disaster in New York and a few years later he worked with DMORT on dental identifications following Hurricane Katrina. He is a member of the American Society of Forensic Odontology , a Fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Science and in 2007 Dr. Silver achieved Diplomate status in the American Board of Forensic Odontology. Working as Deputy Chief alongside Dr Souviron at the Miami Dade Medical Examiner Department has become one of the great rewards of his life in retirement

Dental Autopsy, the best selling book by Silver and Souviron. Click cover to read its review

Dental Autop



Dr. Richard Souviron received his DDS degree from Emory University School of Dentistry in 1960. He has been in the active practice of General Dentistry in Coral Gables Florida since 1960. Dr. Souviron serves as the Chief Forensic Odontologist for the Miami Dade Medical Examiner Office , a position that he has held since 1967. Dr. Souviron is one of the 10 original founding forensic odontologists for the Odontology section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. He has served as Chairman of the examining and credentialing committee for the American Board of Forensic Odontology and was President of the American Board of Forensic Odontology. He has also served as President of the Miami Dental Society, Coral Gables Dental Society and the Miami Dade Dental Research Clinic. In addition to his forensic duties and general dentistry practice, Dr. Souviron volunteers as the dentist for the animals at the Miami Dade Metro Zoo, Jungle Island and the Miami Monkey Jungle. He has performed numerous dental procedures on lions, tigers, gorillas and elephants. His hobbies include working on his ranch in Wyoming, fly fishing, hunting, diving and driving his tractor. His golf is almost unmentionable with a handicap of 20.

We at the "*Anil Aggrawal's Internet Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology*" approached the team for an online interview and both the authors graciously agreed. This interview is important also because it happens to be the journal's 25th interview! The interview was conducted by the editor-in-chief Dr. Anil Aggrawal. Some excerpts....)

Q. Why did you write this book? And who would benefit from it?

A.



(Silver) Lectures and courses are very expensive and time consuming. They have a limited audience of perhaps hundreds but this book is really the easiest way to learn about Forensic Odontology and it has a potentially unlimited audience of thousands . Dentists, Medical Examiners, prosecutors, defense attorneys, crime scene investigators, anthropologists , dental hygienists and nurses can learn about forensic dentistry when they buy this easy to read book. The chapter dealing with expert witness work applies to anyone who provides this type of service to the legal community. We designed this book for the non-dentist as well as the dentist .

Dr. Souviron, with scalpel, instructs autopsy participants during seminar on Forensic Odontology. (Plea



Q. Why the title "*Dental Autopsy*"?

A.



(Souviron) This is really a reference text. It could really be titled "*Forensic Odontology 101*" or "*So You Want to be a Forensic Dentist*" The best way to find out about this field is through the Dental Autopsy and all its related procedures.

Q. Do you ever have emotional problems when doing this work?

A.



(Silver) Of course, any one who has normal reaction is going to have problems dealing with the deceased. In my particular case, I have a problem dealing with young children that are victims of homicides, particularly those inflicted by a parent. When dealing with the deceased I think that we just get a greater appreciation for life itself. Sometimes it is difficult to maintain one's composure in the face of devastating circumstances.

Q. Does this book contain actual cases or are they fictionalized?

A.



(Souviron) All the cases presented here are actual cases.

Dr. Souviron discusses bitemarks with students and colleagues at the morgue. (Please click picture to enlarge)



Q. Is there a difference in forensic dentistry today from what was practiced in the 60's and 70's?

A.



(Silver) The major differences are in technology. Computers, digital photography and advanced techniques in bitemark identification such as fingerprinting the bitemark and lifting DNA from a bitemark. None of these techniques existed in the 60's and 70's. Digital x-rays are a good example of an increase in technology by providing electronic storage and eliminating darkrooms and chemicals . However ,they require more time, as well as greater training and personnel in their application.

Q. Do you ever get called to a crime scene like CSI?

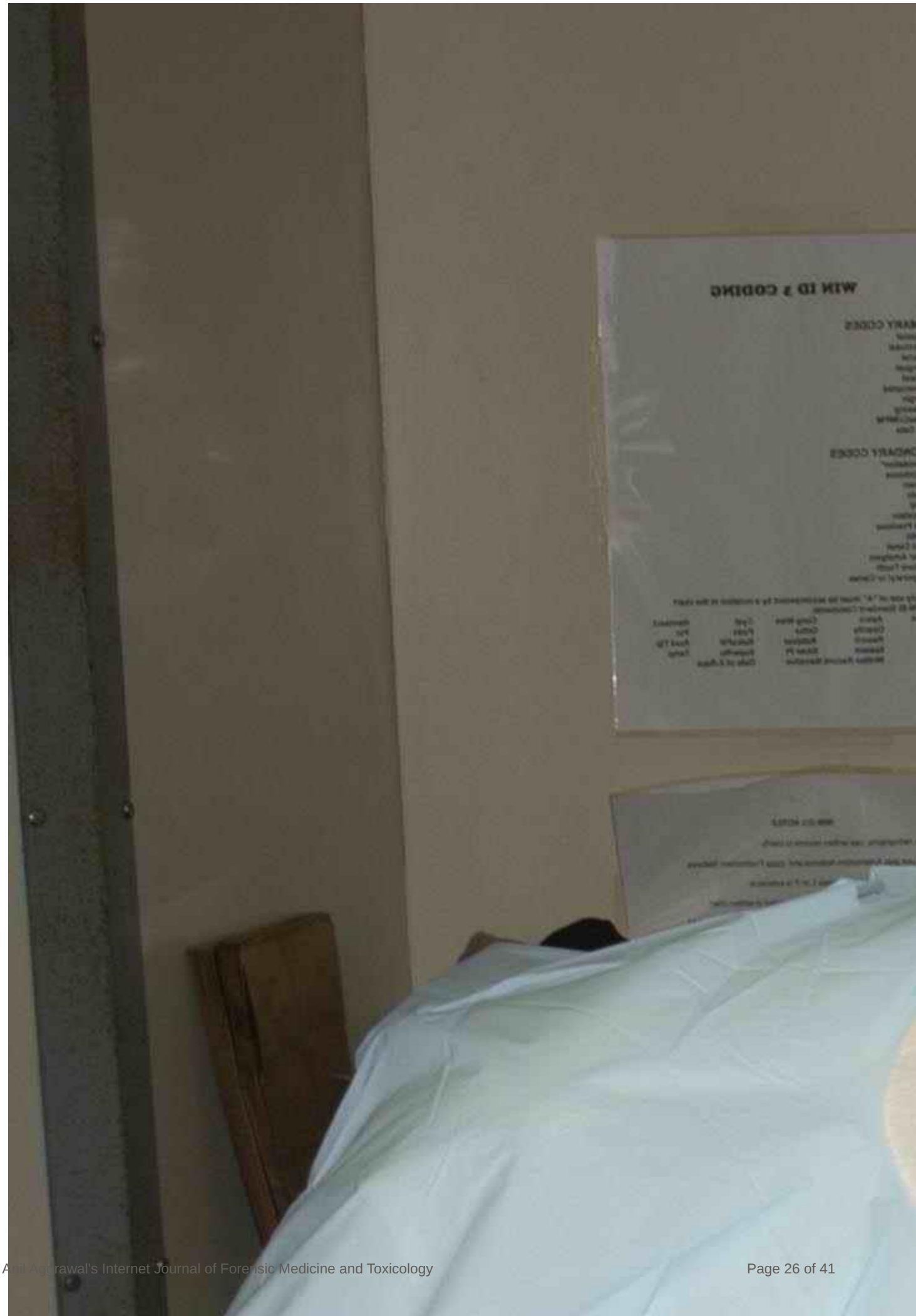
A.



(Souviron) Sometimes we get called to a crime scene but not quite like CSI because we don't pack any iron. Don't believe everything you see on TV. We do a great deal of our work, probably 95% of our work right in the morgue.

Specifically, if a woman has been attacked and raped we may be called to the rape treatment center to document the pattern injuries that are found. Additionally, we have been called to the hospital to examine a child who has been abused where bitemarks are involved. The documentation of these injuries as quickly as possible helps with the analysis and inclusion or elimination of a suspect.

Dr. Silver (Left) and Dr. Souviron (Right) working together on a project in the dental examination room



Q. Have you been called in on high profile cases and how do you handle them?

A.



(Silver) Yes, several over the past years. They are handled like any other case, in an efficient and confidential manner. Every case demands the same meticulous attention - no matter the profile. Except in high profile cases there are more people looking over your shoulder. Also. protocol requires that the forensic odontologist never speaks directly to the press.

Q. What is the most rewarding case that you have been involved with? What is the most difficult case? What is the most unusual case that you have been involved in?

Dr. Souviron (Left) and Dr. Silver (Right) confer during a dental examination at the Miami Dade morgue



A.



(Souviron) The answer to all three of these is very difficult to single out one specific case. Each case has its own unique qualities and in my opinion where Forensic Odontology makes the greatest difference is in the identification of an unknown individual so that the family can have closure. In criminal cases the bitemarks have proven to be pivotal in the conviction or even more important the exoneration of the innocent. Specific example, on bitemarks would be the high profile case of the Chi Omega murders at Florida State University in which Ted Bundy was linked to the homicides by his bitemark left on one of the victims. In identification there was a recent case in the newspapers where there were two young ladies whose identifications were mixed up, one was deceased and the other one was hospitalized. The family stood by the hospitalized patient thinking that it was their daughter when actually the person who was deceased was their daughter. This is simply because no dental identification was made on the deceased. If dental identification had been made at the time, then the families would have known who was deceased and who had survived.

Q. Are you as a dentist involved in mass disaster situations?

A.



(Silver) Yes, very definitely. The forensic odontologist is a member of the team that works to identify the victims of a mass disaster whether it is a hurricane, an airplane crash or an act of terrorism. No matter what or where, it is the forensic odontologist who will be on that team working to identify the victims. During the World Trade Center disaster , of the first 1000 identifications , one-half were made by the dental teams.



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Interviews : Collective Index

Interviews in our sister publication : Collective Index

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