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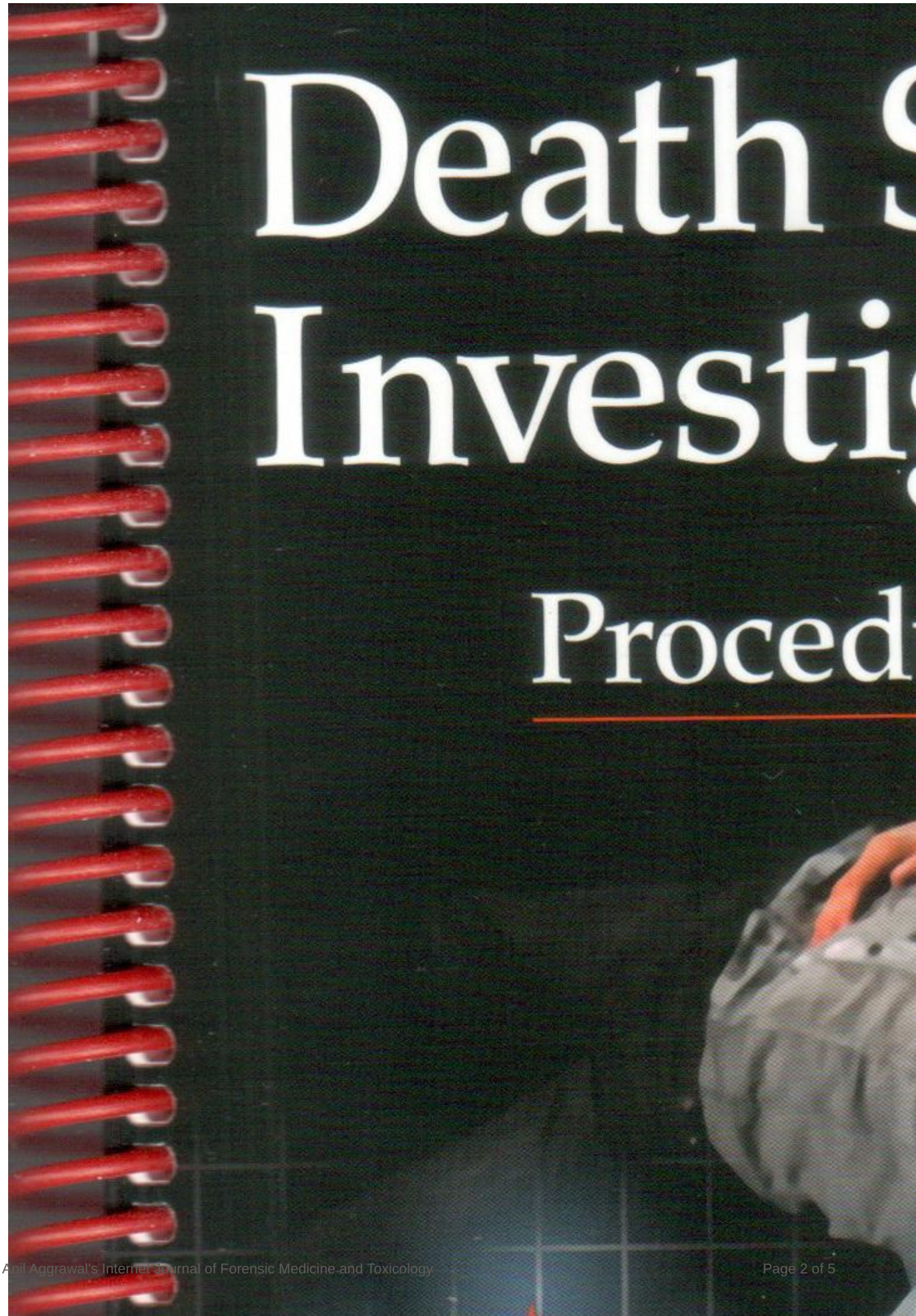
Interview with Michael S. Maloney

Michael S. Maloney
(Click picture to enlarge)



Michael S. Maloney is a partner with Bevel, Gardner & Associates. He holds a Master of Forensic Science degree from the George Washington University and he completed a Fellowship in Forensic Medicine from the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology. For 16 years, he served as a Special Agent for the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) and spent his last ten years as a Senior Forensic Consultant. Prior to his retirement after 25 years of federal service, he was the Senior Instructor for Death Investigations and Sex Crimes in the Forensic and Investigative Skills Branch of the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center with the Department of Homeland Security. Mr. Maloney has undergone extensive training and is considered a subject matter expert in a variety of forensic disciplines including death/crime scene reconstruction, death/crime scene processing, wound dynamics/evidence of injury, bloodstain pattern analysis, and crime scene reconstruction.

***Death Scene Investigation Procedural Guide*, the best selling book by Maloney. Click cover to read its re**


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We at the "*Anil Aggrawal's Internet Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology*" approached him for an online interview and he graciously agreed. The interview was conducted by the editor-in-chief Dr. Anil Aggrawal. Some excerpts....)

Q. 1. You mention “point-to-point” search at a number of places. For instance on pages 77 and then again on 223. Diagram 9.1 on page 78 shows point to point search. But it is not clear to me. Does it show some points? Can you please clarify for our readers, what exactly is point to point search?

A.  It is often necessary during a death investigation to make an expedient path to the body. The point to point search allows the CSI to choose a path that has the least likelihood of having been traversed by the perpetrator and clearing just that pathway to the body. A thorough search of the scene will of course, be made, but this allows for a path clear of evidence to be established. Practical; utilization would include approaching the body for initial documentation, search for perishable evidence (ex: bloodstains that may be obliterated with the passage of time) or to allow the medical examiner or coroner to legally pronounce death.

Q. 2. Would I be correct, if I said that point to point search means arriving at the scene and immediately going to the points where one sees important traces of evidence eg blood, weapon, clothes etc. By doing this one would be disregarding traditional search methods, right?

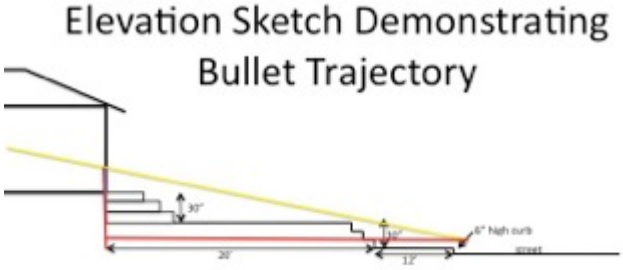
A.  It is a way of arriving at the scene, recognizing that there is a need to immediately go to a critical item of evidence (such as the body) and rapidly determining a point to point path between your entrance to the scene and that item of evidence that is the least likely to disturb other evidence, and then rapidly clearing that pathway only as you establish it. The traditional search methods will be used later. Until then only that path is used to approach the body.

Q.3. You recommend that body should be drawn by triangles. In fact in your entire book, we see bodies drawn as triangles. Any particular reason for that?



A. For field notes it is easy. Anyone can draw "triangle man" and position the head, torso, limbs and even feet and hands if required. I have found with on-scene sketching many are intimidated by trying to draw the human form in the position it is found, this task then becomes excessively time consuming as they strive for a degree of realism that is not required. The use of body templates is often inefficient and just not necessary for the degree of accuracy required on scene. This method allows for clear separation of the limbs and their articulation points (used in triangulating the body into the scene) as well as placement of injuries which will later be specifically located through autopsy photography. This is also more professional than a stick figure with "X's" for eyes! (I have seen this).

Elevation sketch demonstrating bullet trajectory.



Q.4. On page 203, you talk about some sketch types. You do draw bird’s eye view and exploded view, but do not draw the third – elevation. Could you send a drawing for our readers please? Or may be explain it in somewhat more detail. It is not clear how we would, for instance, draw a dagger on the floor, in an elevation sketch.



A. The elevated sketch would not be effective for illustrating a dagger on the floor. The elevated sketch would be used to demonstrate evidence above the floor level. Bloodstain patterns on the walls, bullet defects through walls or doors, or even a chair pulled up to a closet

and the height of the shelf that a gun was kept on would all be illustrated through an elevation sketch. I have attached an example to help clarify [please see on the right].

Q. 5.One of questions suggested by you during investigation of infant deaths is this – “Was a fan operating in or near a window”. How does this help the investigator?



A. On the infant death and drinking water. Many rural water systems depend on well water that is not treated or tested to the level of city water systems. Pollutants, bacteria or other microbes that may ultimately be found as a causal or contributory factor in an infant death may have been introduced through the water system. Additionally in older construction lead may still be found in antiquated water piping systems. This too, may be a contributory factor in an infants demise.

Pollutants both industrial and environmental that are within the infants biosphere may adversely affect health and be a contributory factor to the death. They may cause allergic reaction or a general demise in health that is contributory to the infants inability to overcome more common child illnesses. By sampling these areas they are preserved should the autopsy or toxicology indicate a possible environmental factor as contributory. This sampling if should reflect the conditions at the time of the death and are best done contemporaneously to the initial scene investigation.



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Interviews : Collective Index
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