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Book Reviews: Technical Books Section

...EXCELLENT FIELD REFERENCE ...I would like to have the book in my scene of crime investigation kit...

Death Scene Investigation Procedural Guide, 1st Edition, by Michael S. Maloney. Spiral-bound, 10.1" x 7.1" x 1". CRC Press LLC, 6000 Broken Sound Parkway NW, Suite 300, Boca Raton, FL 33487-2742. , . Publication Date Feb 15, 2012. 366 pages, ISBN-10: 1439845905; ISBN-13: 9781439845905 (alk. paper). Price: $59.95.

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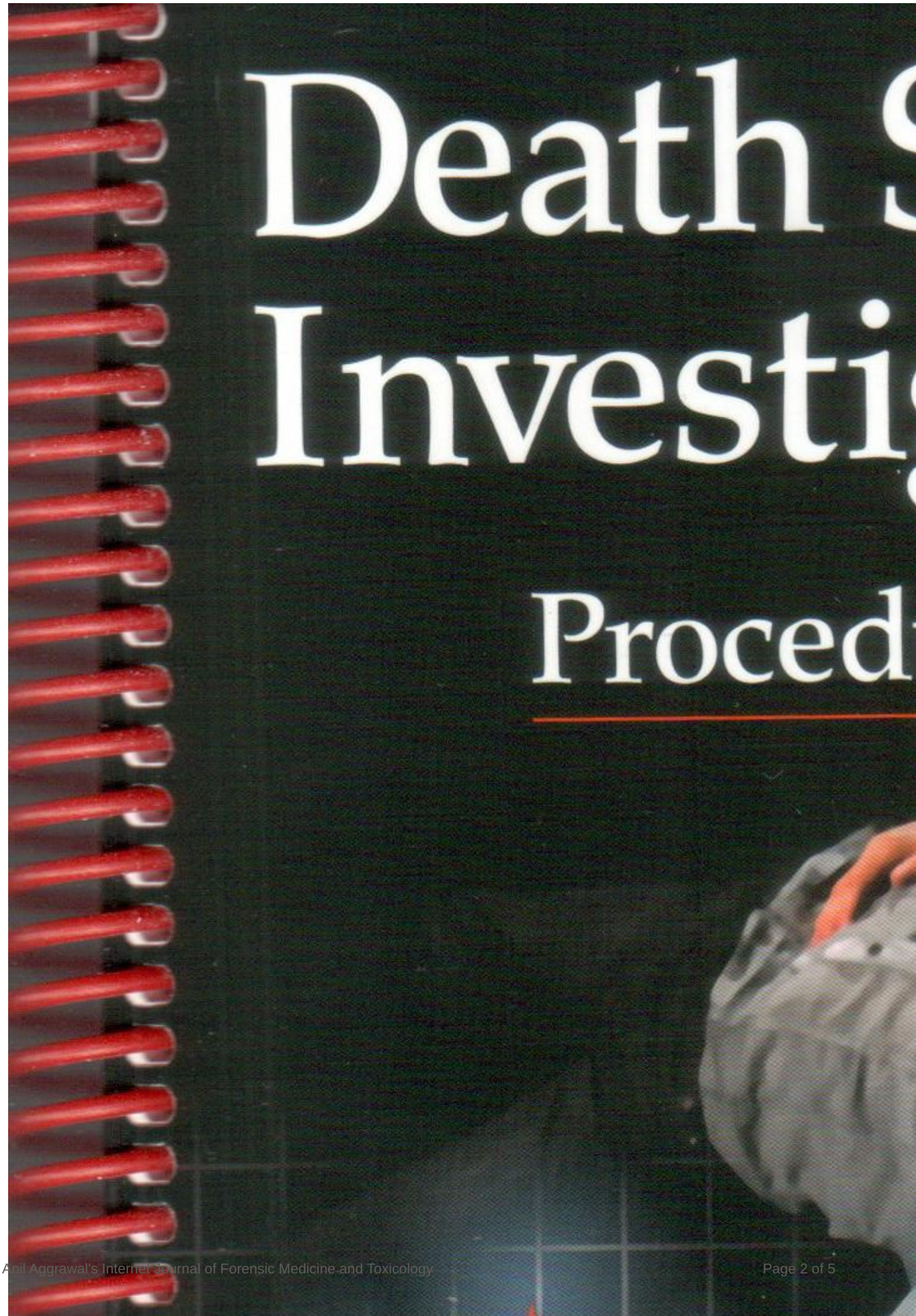
Death S
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Whenever I visit crime scenes, I have always wanted a simple, easy to use, step by step guide, which I could use to ensure that I do not miss out on any vital clue. There had been none, and I always greatly missed and pined for such a book. No more now. The book under review fulfils this much felt need admirably. The book is divided in 6 convenient sections and gives 16 appendices.

Section 1 deals with death scene investigation proper, section 2 with recovery of remains, section 3 with wound dynamics and mechanisms of injury, section 4 with special death scene investigations, section 5 with death scene management and section 6 with death scene processing.

Maloney takes us on a information ride in this book. For instance in chapter 4 on accidental deaths, he begins by telling us the legal considerations. Then death scene interviews, scene considerations, recovery of human remains and initial approach and contact with the body are discussed.

In chapter 8 on autopsy protocol and investigator's role, we are told not only of the importance of autopsy but of ancillary examinations such as examination of clothes. Detailed techniques of cloth examination are given. Excellent line diagrams [fig 1] supplement the information.

In chapter 9 Maloney deals with crime scene search methodology. We are told about a rarely discussed point to point search. Most of us know about the usual zone or quadrant, Lane, line or strip, Grid, Spiral and Wheel searches. In this search the investigator straightaway moves to the points where he sees pieces of evidences lying around.

Fig 1 - Proper way to examine clothing and record defects as suggested by Maloney in his book on p enlarge].

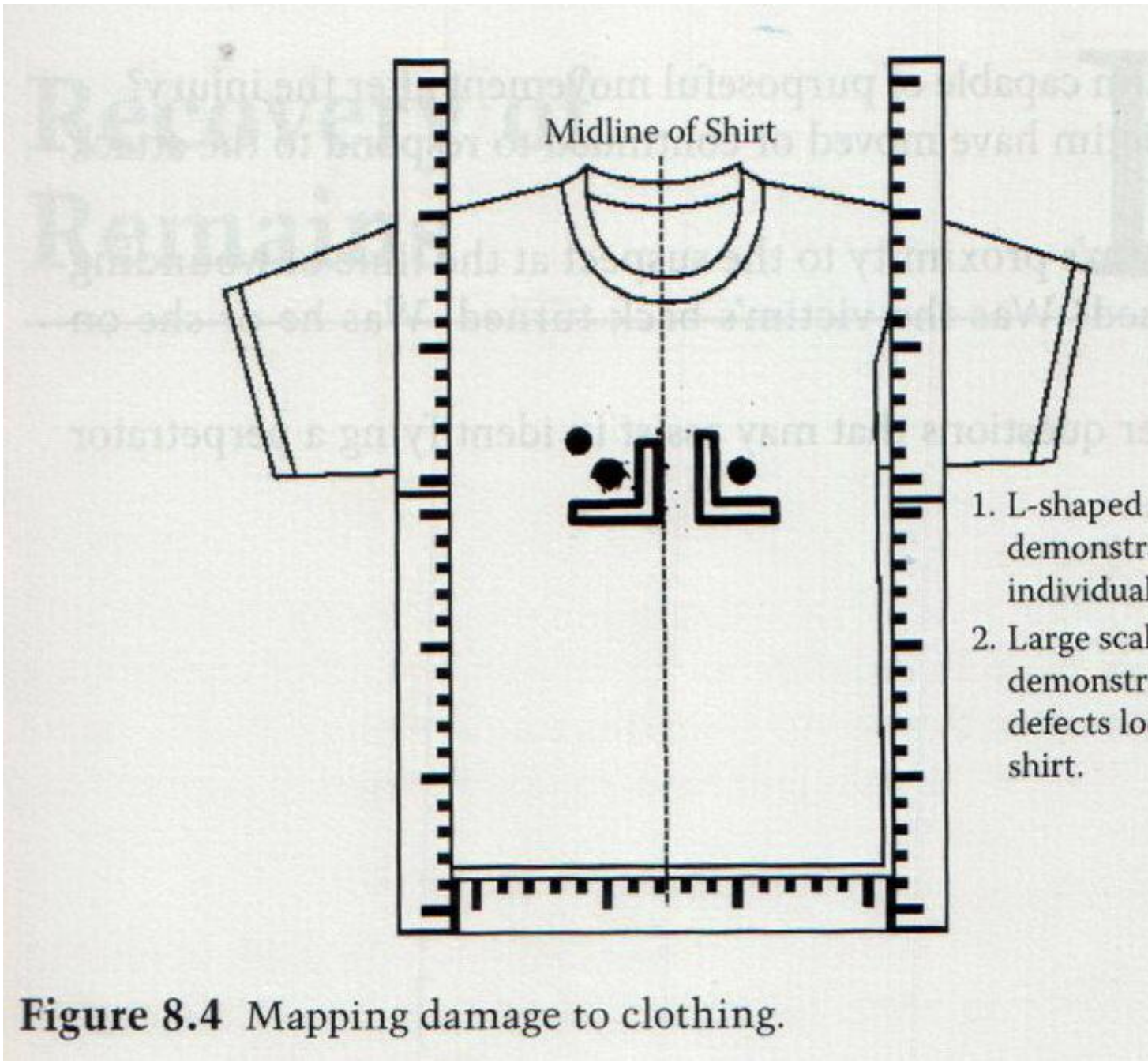

Figure 8.4 Mapping damage to clothing.

Chapter 11 deals with another important work of forensic scientists – recovery of buried human remains. Remains can be located by visual methods, probing methods, cadaver dogs and by technological methods. Technological methods include methane gas detection, Forward Looking Infrared [FLIR] and thermal tomography, magnetometry and electrical resistivity. Thermal tomography works on the fact that decomposition of body and entomological activity increases the temperature of body. FLIR can be mounted on a helicopter or fixed wing aircraft and large areas searched in minimum possible time. Magnetometry detects magnetic fields of buried ferrous objects and while it cannot detect human flesh, it does detect ferrous artifacts buried along bodies, eg zippers, shoe eyelets, belt buckles, snaps and weapons containing iron. Electrical resistivity is based on the principle that electrical resistance of soil changes as fluids from a putrefying body leach into the surrounding soil.

Chapters 15 and 16 deal with sharp and blunt force injuries respectively. A number of fresh points not given in other books are mentioned.

Click here to read an exclusive interview with Dr. Michael S. Maloney.

I found all 16 appendices very useful. They are mostly worksheets, which forensic scientists and pathologists can profitably use in their day-to-day work. For instance Appendix K deals with immersion burn worksheets, appendix L with Sudden unexplained infant death worksheet, appendix M with Firearms documentation worksheet, Appendix N with post blast worksheet and so on.

All in all I found the book an excellent text on practical death scene investigation, which gives us very useful practical information on the latest techniques in an easily digestible manner. I am going to use this book in all my future crime scene investigations.

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