

Less Common Aspects Of Forensic Work

In previous articles we explored some of the most commonly known areas in which forensic experts carry out their daily duties. Among these, we mentioned forensic anthropology, forensic pathology, forensic dentistry, forensic nursing and forensic chemistry or toxicology. Forensic Science, however, is a very broad field of study and involve many other disciplines that on a daily basis contribute to solve crimes. Let us now take a brief survey of other, less known aspects of Forensic Science.

Forensic Entomology: Even though mostly disregarded (at best), insects can result highly informative and even critical for certain forensic investigations. Many insects develop through a complex series of stages from egg to adult, but most important is that these life cycles are highly consistent, the different stages occur always in the same way and take the same time to complete. Knowing this, an entomologist (someone who is expert in insect biology) can make a number of useful observations and establish conclusions based on the insect larvae and adults that are present in a corpse. Insect evidence can provide estimations of the time passed since death. It is also possible to determine how long a body has been dead or whether or not a body has been moved after death.

Forensic Botany: Plants or certain vegetal matter can often be very informative about the decaying process of human bodies and their surroundings. Botanists can analyze seeds, pods, roots, leaves, stems, and more to determine when and where a body died, if a body was moved after death. Under certain conditions they can also establish estimates of time since death and location of death estimations based on plant evidence.

Forensic Photography: Although it has changed a lot since the golden age of police TV serials and movies, photography is still a crucial component of forensic work. A forensic photographer must carry out meticulous and comprehensive visual documentation of death scenes, crime scenes and accident scenes. This include the general scenario but also many details that are often disregarded at first glance but can result very important at later stages of the investigation. The intuition of the photographer is very important in this case. Forensic photography makes use of special equipment and techniques such as macrophotography when it is necessary to record images of small evidentiary materials such as bullets or other projectiles, blood spatter, or any sort of close-ups of evidence at death scenes. These professional exhibit profound knowledge and skill in general photography, film developing, digital photography, videography, digital imaging and other, more focused techniques.

Homicide Detective, Crime Scene Investigator. This is a less defined but important part of the forensic work. These workers are usually in charge of organizing the investigation of death scenes and performing collection of evidence associated with death(s). They also conduct or supervise further stages such as processing of evidence and all the administrative work associated with investigating deaths and crimes. In some institutions or departments, these positions are occupied by sworn officers that have received the appropriate training to supervise the scientific aspects of resolving a criminal case and can be under the jurisdiction of a senior officer or an attorney.

About the Author

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