

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of *Techniques of Crime Scene Investigation*

REFERENCE: Svensson, Arne; Wendel, Otto; and Fisher, B. A. J., *Techniques of Crime Scene Investigation*, 3rd ed., Elsevier North Holland, New York, 1981, 498 pages, \$23.95.

The original publication of this book was entitled *Crime Detection—Modern Methods of Criminal Investigation* and was written by Arne Svensson and Otto Wendel in 1955. An English translation was made available. In 1965, the second edition appeared with the same title and authors plus Joseph D. Nickle as editor. Now, 16 years later, the third edition appears with a name change and a third author. Despite the fact that the esteemed Arne Svensson and Otto Wendel of the Criminal Investigation Department of Stockholm, Sweden, are still the two lead authors, this appears to be an almost entirely American book. The dozens of persons who are acknowledged as having contributed to this edition are nearly all from the United States or Canada.

The book contains 16 chapters. Authorship of none of the chapters is noted, but, presumably, the work is almost exclusively Mr. Fisher's. There is a helpful bibliography in which further readings are suggested for 14 of the chapters. The references are not keyed specifically in the text. An appendix specifies "equipment for crime scene investigations," presenting a nicely organized group as proper equipment and supplies helpful for such use. Nearly every chapter has illustrative figures, all in black and white. Some are photographs, and others are drawings or sketches. The longest chapter, that on "Death Investigation," contains 94 pages and 47 figures.

Chapter 12 on "Illicit Drugs and Toxicology" is characteristic of a book such as this that attempts to be all things to all people. To describe psychoactive drugs in five pages is obviously difficult, but, unfortunately, the section contains a number of mistakes as well. Barbiturates are given as an example of an "ethical" drug when, obviously, barbiturates may be either ethical, unethical, licit, illicit, and so on, depending entirely upon the circumstances. Alcohol is called an example of an uncontrolled psychoactive drug despite the fact that every jurisdiction in America has legal attempts at controlling its sale and use. Phencyclidine is incorrectly classified as a sedative-hypnotic. Major tranquilizers are implied to be a significant problem since they "are considered addictive." This is untrue. On the positive side, I particularly like the 58-page chapter on "Establishing Identity." The fingerprint section is modern and well written. Chapter 10 on "Firearms Examination" is also very well done, with numerous photographs from Los Angeles.

I find the title to be rather misleading. This book is a far more comprehensive treatment of the subject of physical evidence than simply investigation limited to the crime scene. It seems

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to be a somewhat simplified complete mini-text of criminalistics, forensic medicine, and pathology. Obviously, that is too ambitious a challenge for any author to satisfy in a 498-page book. Nonetheless, I find the book to be a worthy effort both for the student of criminalistics and, to a lesser extent, an experienced person who may use it as a reference in some settings.

In summary, Willie Sutton, when asked why he robbed banks, is said to have stated, "Because that's where the money is." Similarly, if one wishes to find an expert to write about crime investigation, one should go where the crime is. This supports the predominant involvement of Mr. Fisher and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department in this important book, which had its genesis in relatively crime-free Stockholm, Sweden.