

1957

## Police Science Book Reviews

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### Recommended Citation

Police Science Book Reviews, 47 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 746 (1956-1957)

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## POLICE SCIENCE BOOK REVIEWS

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Edited by

Richard L. Holcomb\*

### FUNDAMENTALS OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION.

By *Charles E. O'Hara*. Charles C Thomas, Publisher, 1956. Pp. 722 with index, \$8.50.

A criterion for judging any literary attempt is to measure, by the general effect and content, the extent to which the author has accomplished his purpose. In *Fundamentals of Criminal Investigation* it is the author's expressed desire to provide novice investigators with a basic knowledge of techniques and principles. In addition to accomplishing this purpose, the author has provided an admirable reference for the more experienced sleuths.

It is probably the best available book of its kind and should serve as an excellent text for a beginner's course in crime detection. For one thing, it is more inclusive than other books where the authors had similar aims. With few exceptions, he has given some treatment to almost every known investigative aid. One notable deletion is lie-detection. Such an omission could be testament to the honesty of the author whose training and experience have not perhaps embraced this field.

The text covers a voluminous number of subjects ranging, for example, from rudimentary material to specialized scientific methods. Treatment is given to some specific crimes: arson narcotics violations, sex offenses, larceny of various types, burglary, robbery, truck robbery, homicide, and abortion. Also included are chapters on the more commonly known investigative devices such as physical reproductions, and investigative operations such as arrest, search, and seizure.

While no single topic is totally exhausted, those chapters dealing with specialized scientific methods are relatively concise. This is not

considered as a deficiency, and it is mentioned here only to further indicate that the presentation is slanted towards the investigator rather than the forensic scientist. These chapters are sufficiently voluminous, however, to acquaint the investigator with the potentialities as well as the limitations of scientific methods.

The early chapters, dealing with such elementary material as general methods, investigator's notebook, collection and care of evidence, interviews, interrogations, etc., are particularly excellent in that they prescribe basic rules and suggestions which could be of invaluable assistance to a rookie investigator. They supply definite procedural patterns and sound methods of operation which can serve as adequate substitutes for techniques learned through the "hit-miss school" of experience.

The chapters on specific crimes are equally well developed. It is evident that the author is familiar with the different problems involved in investigating various types of crimes. He has selected for special summation those crimes which are considered more serious or occur frequently. Crimes selected for special consideration correspond very closely to the squad types that are found within the detective bureaus of large municipal police departments, such as homicide squad, narcotics squad, etc. The availability of the book to detectives who are frequently shifted from one squad to another is recommended. It would be similarly valuable to the officers of small towns where specialization is not possible. In his treatment of crimes the author presents the law, necessary proofs, commonly known methods of operation, potential clues, and avenues of investigation.

The entire text is written in a lucid style and can be easily followed by an investigator of average intelligence. In tone it is extremely

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objective and contains no material which appears to be controversial, conforming closely to the most acceptable methods.

The lack of bibliography is perhaps the only shortcoming. Because the author's effort is based on a compilation of notes from courses developed through the years, this exclusion is excusable.

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*POLICEMAN'S LOT.* By *Harry Soderman*. Funk and Wagnalls, N. Y. 1956. Pp. 388, \$5.00

This is the autobiography of a man recognized internationally as a criminal investigator. It is unfortunate that he died just as he completed this book for he still had much to offer the field of criminal investigation and international policing.

Most of us in the United States knew Harry Soderman only as the co-author of *Modern Criminal Investigation*. It is unfortunate that we did not get to know him personally for here was a cultivated man of great energy devoted solely to the advancement of the police profession. *Policeman's Lot* tells how he went to Lyons from his native Sweden as a very young, and poor, man to study under Edmond Locard, one of the pioneers in scientific investigation, and then how he developed to his present prominence. His graphic and interesting picture of the operation of an early French investigative agency and the development of many of the methods we now take for granted is most interesting.

It is unfortunate that there have been so few like Soderman. The police field is lacking in men who have a good knowledge of the operation of many types of police agencies and whose interest is not limited to a single geographic area. We are too much inclined to feel that we know all of the answers in the police field simply because we are pretty good operators in our home town or state. We forget that there are policemen all over the world doing good jobs and that many of their methods, though strange to us, may be superior to ours. It is a pleasure to read the autobiography of a man

that knew much about many systems of policing and who could tell about them so well.

There are not many books in the police field that are the type you pick up and then want to read straight through. This is one of them. It is easy and entertaining reading, but at the same time, the reader feels the great sincerity and the dedicated purpose of the writer. This man went into scientific investigation because he believed in its great potential for good. He left his chosen profession better than he found it. Too few of us can say as much.

I do not believe that Harry Soderman actually felt the way that the title *Policeman's Lot* suggests. It is taken from a lyric in the *Pirates of Penzance*—"A policeman's lot is not a happy one". I think that it is all too evident that Harry Soderman greatly enjoyed the lot that most fortunately made him a policeman.

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*DEFENSE INVESTIGATION,* By *Edward N. Bliss, Jr.* Charles C Thomas, Publisher, Springfield, Illinois. 1956. Pp. 304. \$6.50.

In the foreword Mr. Bliss states that the public defender "is typically American because where on earth but America does the State take enough interest in a man to place the same resources to prove his innocence as it does to prove his guilt." Yet, this statement is an untruth, since the public defender is far from being in existence except in a few, scattered places. Even where the public defender is found, his services are almost always limited to indigent persons.

In reading this book and considering all the advantages such an office has, one realizes just how slowly, and shamefully, our country has progressed in developing a truly effective system of helping those in need of such a person as a public defender. As the author states, men who run our government cannot "see any sense in hiring an investigator (the police) to apprehend the suspect and then hire another one to get him out."

The author does a fine job of explaining that the public defender is far from being a person

just to free the guilty. Mr. Bliss gives an interesting history of the public defender, and he fully tells the limitations, jurisdiction, duties, problems, etc., that confront the public defender.

One of the greatest of these problems was investigating a defendant's alibi when the defender had no investigators or anyone trained to do this work. It was not until 1946, some 33 years after founding the system, that Los Angeles County provided for a paid investigator—at \$160 a month! But, Mr. Bliss was so devoted that he accepted this position, after having for many years given his time gratis as the unofficial investigator, and is still the Chief Investigator for the Los Angeles County Public Defender. It is on his many years of experience that he bases this informative book.

The first 75 pages cover the various aspects of the office of public defender, including two very excellent chapters on "Police Relations" and "Witnesses". The next 208 pages are almost exclusively devoted to various case

studies. The first one covers in great detail a murder investigation, to give the reader an idea of just how comprehensive a public defender's investigation can be. However, plowing through these 200-odd pages of case histories left this reader with the distinct impression that 75 per cent of this was only included to swell the number of pages. For example, 15 case histories have to do with murder, and many of these prove absolutely nothing.

What Mr. Bliss should have done was give more of his opinions regarding various offenses, as he did in the introduction to sex offenses.

This book is strongly recommended for those wanting to know how the public defender operates and what he can accomplish. One of these later includes a general raising of law enforcement, since district attorney investigators and the police never want to be shown up by the public defender's investigator.

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