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Police Science Book Reviews

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POLICE SCIENCE BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by

Richard L. Holcomb*

PRACTICAL FORENSIC MEDICINE. By *Francis E. Camps, M.D., and W. B. Purchase, C.B.E., M.C., M.B., D.P.H.*, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1957, Pp. 541, 30 tables, 86 figs., 2 color plates. \$13.50.

The authors have dealt with a number of discrete subjects that often arise in medicolegal practice. Treatment of each topic varies widely as to comprehensiveness. Some sections, such as that dealing with Human Skeletal Remains, are extremely detailed and informative. Most sections, however, are rather sketchy. This is particularly glaring when one notes that in the space of pages 273 through 281 there are discussions of Criminal Responsibility, Testamentary Capacity, Civil Negligence, Criminal Negligence, and Contributory Negligence.

Featured is an 80-page Collectanea of Poisons. In noting the tabulation of chloral hydrate, one finds no reference to the securing of brain tissue for analysis. Also, in the text the authors deny that a "Mickey Finn" is a drink containing chloral hydrate. Those familiar with the accepted derivation (referring to the name of a bartender in Chicago at the turn of the century) would quarrel with the author's use of the term to mean a large quantity of some purgative.

The writing style is lively. At times, however, technical accuracy is sacrificed. This is particularly true in the paragraphs dealing with the law of homicide.

Though there are severe limitations on the book as a standard text, it qualifies as a valuable addition to the criminalist's library. Figures and tables are particularly well thought-out to illustrate very practical points that the police scientist might be inclined to overlook otherwise.

ELWYN L. CADY, JR.

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THE INFORMER IN LAW ENFORCEMENT. By *Malachi L. Harney and John C. Cross*, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Illinois, 1960, Pp. 83. \$4.50.

The matter of style is often paramount as any beauty contest illustrates. While certain technical dissents can be noted to this slim volume, the gravamen is lack of style.

There is surprisingly little literature freely available to officers which tells how to develop and work with confidential informants. Considering the publicity given this area of enforcement in the last ten years one might expect to have plenty of source material. Certainly, the popularity of discussions on the Fifth Amendment was no greater than the interest in informants during the past decade. Yet literature of any type concerning informants is still almost non-existent while various aspects of the Fifth Amendment are recorded. Actually, this absence may be no accident but evidence of the general aversion to informants.

Having had experience in this field with the Federal Bureau of Investigation this reviewer waited for this book with great anticipation. We like to see what others in our field are doing and having seen in this book, there is no quarrel with the principles set out. Most officers who have had experience with informants will agree with the rules given.

The authors are to be particularly congratulated on their omission of mystery which is often thrown about the operation of informants in the particular fields of narcotics and subversion. This overdramatization is a difficult temptation to overcome and when acceded to can completely ruin a proper presentation.

The title of the book, and the consequent frequent use of the word informer conflicts with the authors' own advice on the best term to be used. They give excellent admonition to eliminate use of the word informer because of poor connotations and substitute a more euphemistic term. Since

their reasoning is so sound it is difficult to see why they did not lead the way and refuse to use informer in their title or text. What to substitute is a matter of choice.

The Army's Counter Intelligence Corps some years ago differentiated between people who volunteer accusations for selfish ends to have others punished—called informers and anyone else who gives information—called an informant. The Army's Criminal Investigation Division by contrast referred to all such individuals as informants. In his recent statements J. Edgar Hoover consistently has used the term informant. It does seem more acceptable although not the only acceptable word, and the authors missed a good opportunity when they decided to stick with informer.

The authors begin with a reference to the Greenlease kidnapping case of 1953 as an illustration of the advantages and danger in the use of the police informant. The advantage of course is that an informant often can help solve a crime which conceivably would otherwise remain unsolved. For the illustration of danger in the Greenlease case the speculation made is most interesting. The authors admit no public disclosures have been made but surmise that one of the reasons for the informant's tip might have been the promise that the informant could make off with part of the ransom.

Citing the "woman in red" of the Dillinger case and a number of specific Treasury Department and Narcotics cases, the authors present a strong argument for the use of informants. Information on organized crime does not often come from orthodox sources, particularly in narcotics circles where a primary rule is not to deal with strangers. Despite the argument for the use of informants, Americans dislike informants and probably always will. No good purpose is served by unnecessary repetition in the press or in releases that police use them. The intelligent public knows it anyway. Granting the truth of these statements we can take another look at the dearth of books on informants and perhaps be grateful.

The authors present a complete list of the various sources of information available to investigators and the limitations which should be kept in mind. These include bellboys, taxicab drivers, janitors, and similar occupations. Whether or not people in these occupations should be called informants is another matter. Probably the frequency with which any one such person is used should determine his classification as a police informant.

What motivates a true informant? Motives are catalogued as follows: fear, revenge, perversity, ego, reward, contrition, nuisance, and unknown. Some of the motives cited have been characterized from the authors' descriptions, and they seem to have covered all possibilities.

What positive measures should an officer observe in handling informants?

1. Be fair in representations and promises.
2. Get receipts for money paid.
3. Keep secrecy inside and outside the department.
4. Obtain background, photograph, fingerprints, and written statements if informant is expected to become a witness.
5. Reduce all informant's information to writing and have it filed promptly where it can be located for assistance of other officers.
6. Cross check informant's information through other informants to insure its reliability.

What things should an officer avoid in handling informants?

1. Avoid entrapment or the appearance of it.
2. Never give drugs to an informant addict.
3. The officer should avoid underworld attitudes and vocabulary when referring to informants.
4. The informant should never control the investigation.
5. Don't make informants a privileged class of petty criminals.
6. Don't become personally involved with informants.
7. Don't tell an informant more than he has to know.

The authors offer good merchandise but seem not to have considered literary assistance as a help in selling it. It is only the book's style and design that are seriously inadequate and as a consequence will probably keep it from the recognition it deserves.

RALPH G. MURDY

FIELD INTERROGATION. By *Allen P. Bristow*, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1958, Pp. 101, \$3.75

Field interrogation, as defined by the author is "a conversation, held in the area where the subject was first encountered by the officer, which attempts to learn the identity of the subject, his business in the area, and his possible connection with any criminal activities". This is an excellent method of preventing crime or assisting in the solution of crime. It is a very basic method practiced, with varying degrees of skill, by all law

enforcement officers. This publication tells how to do the best possible job, and it tells how very well. There are many illustrations, the book is well written and well organized. All of the points usually covered in instructing in this area are well covered, and in addition, there are many, many points that have never been treated before.

The nine chapters are entitled: An Introduction to Field Interrogation; Selection of Subjects for Field Interrogation; Preliminary Conversation; Recognition of Criminal Traits; Documents of Identification; The Interrogation; The Search; Recording Field Interrogations; and Instituting a Field Interrogation Program. Most of these titles explain the subject matter. However, there should be some comment on a few of them. For example, Recognition of Criminal Traits might lead you to believe that the author would talk about some of the early, and now discredited, work of the anthropologists where they tried to link physical appearance or measurements to criminal tendencies. This is not the case here. The author gives very practical methods of doing such things as recognizing prison issue clothing, or prison made belts and jewelry. Tattoos, particularly those done in prison are discussed. There are excellent photos and drawings illustrating these points. The chapter on Documents of Identification is outstanding. Most police have some ideas about some of these as for example, social security cards, but few realize just what you can learn from them, what they will tell you about the subject. Many sorts of identifying documents are discussed, and again, well illustrated.

There have been too few books written on practical, every day, police work. It is refreshing to find one on a topic that the police should use every day, and then to find it well written, well illustrated, and highly practical. The author is to be congratulated for an outstanding job. This book is of value in any size organization and at any level of command.

R. L. HOLCOMB

SEX CRIMES. By *John Drzazga*, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1960 Pp. 241, \$7.50

The only reason this book is being reviewed is because it was published in the Police Science

Series edited by V. A. Leonard and will be called to the attention of law enforcement officers. This is a rather dull, quasi-historical compilation of various sorts of sex activities. It has little to do with police work, is not interesting and not worth buying.

R. L. HOLCOMB

THE POLICE TRAFFIC CONTROL FUNCTION. By *Paul B. Weston*, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Ill., Pp. 301, Illus. 42, \$11.50

This is an attempt to cover the entire field of police traffic control, including many areas of traffic engineering and parking in 301 pages. It cannot be adequately done.

This book is well written and organized, most of the material is good, but it suffers badly because many areas are treated superficially. Further, it is pretty much of a shot-gun approach. There is some detail on many basic operational methods for patrolmen, and some on highest level administrative and organizational responsibilities. As a result, it is difficult to determine just who this book is aimed at. It might be better suited to a citizen who wanted to get an over all picture of police traffic activity than to a police officer who wanted either a text or a reference volume.

The author is a retired Deputy Chief Inspector of the New York City Police. Much of the material, of course, is drawn from his experience in New York. As a result, it is a little difficult to see some of the applications except to the unique problems that arise in that city. On the other hand, the book is basically sound, the material is written from the police viewpoint, is clear and easy to read.

An idea of the variety of topics covered is best shown by the chapter headings: Traffic Control; Highway Capacity and Conflict; Traffic Control Devices; Accident Records; High Accident Frequency Locations; Commuter Auto Traffic and Operational Controls; Traffic Direction and Problems of Congestion; Driver Control and Traffic Law Enforcement; Pedestrian Safety; Accident Investigation; Organizing for Traffic Control; Research and Action.

This book is of some value, but it missed the mark by trying to do too many things for too many people in too few pages.

R. L. HOLCOMB