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Police Science Book Reviews

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POLICE SCIENCE BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by
Richard B. Holcomb*

HOMICIDE INVESTIGATION TECHNIQUES. Edited by Robert A. Wilson. Charles C Thomas, Publisher. Springfield, Ill. 1961. pp. 131. \$5.50.

This book is a collection of papers delivered at the 1961 Institute on Homicide Investigation which was conducted by the Southwestern Law Enforcement Institute, a division of the Southwestern Legal Foundation of Dallas, Texas. There are 16 different lectures dealing with as many aspects of homicide investigation. Six may be described as covering non-medical aspects, two relate to law, one federal and one covering Texas law, and the remaining deal with medico-legal problems.

The array of lecturers is outstanding, but the book suffers from the fact that the reader will probably feel he has nothing to sink his teeth into. This is understandable in part, for a number of the lecturers used slides, none of which are reproduced. Also, none of the discussion which usually is an important part of such a conference has found its way into the book. Two chapters dealing with gunshot wounds and firearms identification are more complete, if one is looking for a description of case work or techniques. The section covering sexual deviation is also closer to standard text book material than many of the other chapters.

If one is interested in having a preview of what a conference on homicide investigation may be like the book provides an excellent insight into what might be expected, but it is not a thorough-going treatise on the investigation of murder.

RALPH F. TURNER

Michigan State University

VEHICLE TRAFFIC LAW. By Edward C. Fisher. The Traffic Institute, Northwestern University, Evanston, 1961. Pp. 503, \$10.00.

Judge Fisher, the author, and Robert L. Donigan, the editor of this book, have the reputation of being the two leading authorities on vehicle traffic law. They deserve this reputation, and this new book is one more in a series that enhances this reputation.

The author has been a judge in a court where many traffic violation charges were heard. He is

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now associate counsel for the Traffic Institute. This combination of experience has resulted in material that is not only legally sound and complete, but material written with the police officer in mind. There is a great deal of difference between the civil aspects of a traffic case and the criminal aspects. While there have been some standard works on traffic law, they have been concerned with the civil aspects. This material does offer some sort of a guide in criminal cases and is of limited interest to the police, but here we have a book that explores, and very thoroughly treats the traffic law as an enforcement officer meets it. Many important questions that have never been carefully considered before are thoroughly covered, many routine questions are most carefully examined.

It is difficult to write a book on law designed for all officers because of the variation of the statutes from state to state. It means examining the laws and cases of all states, then carefully pointing out the differences and footnoting the cases. The author has done this with the high degree of care that marks his previous publications. As a result, this book is of value to any police officer.

There are twenty chapters. Basically, they are in six sections; the development of the traffic problem and traffic laws; the power to regulate traffic, the validity of traffic laws, required obedience and where traffic laws apply; double jeopardy; elements, issues, and defenses involved generally; specific sorts of violations, such as right-of-way; and prosecution of traffic offenses.

There is no doubt that this book, like others by the same men will become standards and will be used for many years. Any police officer concerned with the traffic law as well as any judge, attorney, claim investigator, or others will find that here is a book that they will use regularly, almost as often as they will the traffic code of their state.

This is an outstanding publication.

RICHARD L. HOLCOMB

PRACTICAL HOMICIDE INVESTIGATION. By Edward A. Dieckmann, Sr. Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Illinois, 1961. Pg. 85, \$4.00.

This short volume is, as the author indicates in

his preface, "not only informative and distinctly workable, but interesting as well, . . . an enjoyable sort of book with a minimum of dullness." However, it is difficult to present anything but a skeleton of the total body of information an investigator should know in so brief a presentation. That which is given is basic and fundamental, but all too often it is not amplified enough to be comprehensive. The stress is on conscientious, thoroughly detailed investigation of all facets of the crime and the need for teamwork among all the groups involved in an investigation. The need for competent, trained personnel in homicide investigation is demonstrated. Occasionally, the author tends to underestimate the value of the scientific personnel who may contribute some of the answers. In this book the reader is assured of an interesting few hours of worthwhile and provocative reading.

IRVING SUNSHINE

Cleveland, Ohio

RACE TENSIONS AND THE POLICE. By J. E. Curry and Glen D. King. Charles C Thomas, Publisher, Springfield, Ill. 1962, Pp. 127, \$5.50.

This is much more than a book on race tensions. While there is an excellent treatment of problems of race relations, prejudice in relation to all minority groups, rumor, crowd behaviour, mobs, and police preventative measures, and tactics are discussed.

Here is a remarkable combination of theory and good sound police practice with the two so related showing how the sociological theory can be applied to very specific police tactics. This is not easy to do, but the authors write extremely well. As a matter of fact, this is one of the best written books I have seen in the police field. It covers a great deal of material clearly, yet with a minimum of words. As a result, it is easy, and extremely interesting to

read. No one except police officers with many years of experience and basic understanding of the problems could have written such a book.

The title is a little unfortunate. Some people may fail to notice this publication unless they have a specific interest in race tensions. Actually, race tensions are only one area of group tensions where the police are involved. There are problems with all minority groups. Here the authors make a point I never previously considered—the police are a minority group with many of the same problems, and solutions, of other minority groups. Here again the application of sociological and psychological theory to the solution of the problems is excellent. These officers have applied what the theorists have learned, and in so doing they have come up with entirely practical approaches to difficult police problems.

The chapter on "Rumor" is outstanding. There has been a great deal of discussion, and much has been written on this topic. All this material has been reduced to a relatively brief chapter, but this reduction has not hurt the clarity.

In the final chapters there is a wealth of material on the prevention of the formation of mobs and police action after a potentially dangerous crowd has formed or a mob is actually in operation. Again, this is sound material, clearly written.

This book very probably would not be so useful if it had not been written by officers with large racial groups in their city. These men know the problem first hand. In their writing they show the true professional viewpoint. There is a completely objective handling of these problems.

There are only a few publications in the police field that have been theoretically sound, yet practical. Even fewer have been this well written. I hope that these men continue to write.

RICHARD L. HOLCOMB