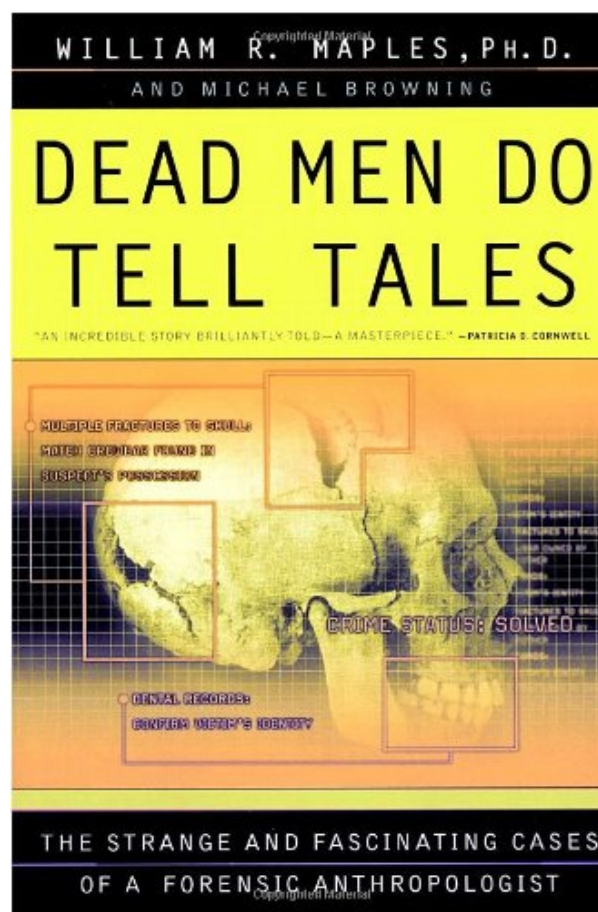


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AND FASCINATING CASES OF A FORENSIC
ANTHROPOLOGIST BY WILLIAM R.
MAPLES, MICHAEL BROWNING**



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DEAD MEN DO TELL TALES

"AN INCREDIBLE STORY BRILLIANTLY TOLD—A MASTERPIECE!" —PATRICIA S. CORNWELL



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From a skeleton, a skull, a mere fragment of burnt thighbone, Dr. William Maples can deduce the age, gender, and ethnicity of a murder victim, the manner in which the person was dispatched, and, ultimately, the identity of the killer. In *Dead Men Do Tell Tales*, Dr. Maples revisits his strangest, most interesting, and most horrific investigations, from the baffling cases of conquistador Francisco Pizarro and Vietnam MIAs to the mysterious deaths of President Zachary Taylor and the family of Czar Nicholas II.

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Roll the Bones and Read the Truth They Cast

By Mark Hills

For nearly a century the science of forensics has grown from a barely understood art to a marvel of modern science. From development of finger printing in the early 1900's, to DNA gene matching of today, forensic pathology and anthropology have blossomed into the law's best weapons against criminals that stalk our world. In 'Dead Men Do Tell Tales' we enter the world of Dr. William Maples, PhD of the C A Pound Human Identification Center in Gainesville, Florida-an often brutal and ghoulish realm of dismembered corpses, hastily torched cremains of hapless victims or those dumped in septic tanks to rot and putrify in the other detritus of man's remains. Dr. Maples' own study is the field of forensic anthropology-the study of the human skeleton, and this man's expertise in that field has cemented my interest in amateur study of forensics. Told in the first person, Maples comes across as brilliant and personable, if a little supremely confident in his own abilities as an investigator. And like Stephen Hawking's 'A Brief History of Time', isn't afraid to admit when he has erred. Where the book shines, aside from its plethora of information, is in the presentation of that information-Maples never uses terms that he doesn't explain, knowing full well that the book is going to be read more by laymen like me than a peer within the profession. So do not expect detailed treatises on anatomy, pathology or pages of chemical breakdowns. Instead, Maples presents an easy to understand work that is surprising in its level of detail, and a credit to himself and his co-author, Michael Browning, for making it understandable.

Though it is a book on anthropology, one cannot write about one subject without at least touch on the pathology end, since the two are intimately related. After explaining his own origins from his birth in Dallas, Texas, his schooling and odd jobs he held in order to pay for his college-mostly that of riding shot gun in an ambulance while working for a mortuary as they sped from accident to accident, trying to scoop business away from competing funeral homes. He majored in English, but took a course on anthropology on a lark at the suggestion of his university counsellor. In so doing he met Tom McKern, who impressed Maples with his skill as a teacher, mentoring himself to the older professor.

Past the first chapter we enter Maples' job, past his trapping baboons in Africa in 1960s to his eventual relocation as Gainesville and the C A Pound offices there. Florida, he describes, is a living organism with highways making up its arterial system, and a place where criminals, like blood cells, pass through, dumping their often mutilated cargo of human debris. In many ways I believe he softened the blow in his descriptions of finding the body of man in a septic tank where it had been for over a decade or that of three murdered drug dealers near a golf course who had been executed by fellow criminals then unceremoniously tossed into a pit to be buried. Mere words cannot describe these gruesome atrocities, but he makes it clear that while it doesn't bother him anymore, it does turn even the hardest cop green with nausea.

His affinity with tools, since they are so often used as murder weapons, has led him to collect quite an assortment of hatchets, crow bars, hammers, saws-and could often be found in the hardware department at Sears looking at tools, trying to find the right one that matches the damaged bone. His expertise in this field enabled him to study John Merrick's remains-the Elephant Man of the 19th century, and even to Russia where he examined the skeletonized remains of Tsar Nicholas and his family, almost seventy years after they were murdered by Bolsheviks during the 1917 revolution. All of this experience-almost forty years before his death in 1999, has set Maples in his ways. He possesses a strong, passionate belief that there is true evil in the world, and that somehow the world is better off without certain murderers around. Though this is tempered by his own research into the most humane ways to execute someone.

'Dead Men Do Tell Tales' is a fascinating, enjoyable read-captivating in its insights in forensic pathology and anthropology in a language that everyone can understand. It gives the novice reader in the field a general understanding of the chemical changes our bodies go through as they decompose, the organs and other bodily system are rendered down in the earth-by insects and animals, and how evidence is gleaned off bones-chisel marks, bullet holes, little nicks and scratches that can tell the investigator what tool was used, and a little insight from Maples' point of view of the people who used them. It is a fascinating, engrossing book that anyone with a reasonably strong stomach should be able to enjoy. A fitting testimony to a highly skilled man who is sadly no longer with us. Thank you, Dr. Maples.

37 of 39 people found the following review helpful.

An Outstanding Book

By David A. Wend

I bought a copy of this book when it first came out and it remains one of my favorites. Dr. Maples presents the story of his life in this book: how he became a forensic anthropologist, clues on how people are identified and his most famous cases. The cases that come to mind are his identification of the Tsar's family, his investigation into the death of President Zachary Taylor and his thoughts on the Elephant Man. His dedication to solving impossible problems makes fascinating reading. Along with the riveting detective story quality of the book, you come to know Dr. Maples, and an interesting man he was. I count my interest in forensic science from the day I read this book; it is the kind of book that you stay up to 3 in the morning to finish.

26 of 27 people found the following review helpful.

Dr. Maples provides medicine for victims, too

By A Customer

As a victim's sibling in one of Dr. Maples' cases, I know first-hand what excellent work he did to make sure the case was solved based on forensic evidence, not assumptions. The book also helps survivors understand the hard work it takes to learn the truth-- and ease one's mind.

Dr. Maples' legacy is that he helped families cope with tragedy, and his book is good medicine for the soul. It was an honor to know him.

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