Wisconsin Coroners and Medical Examiners Association

THE EXAMINER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Happy New Year! I hope each of you had a quiet holiday season allowing you to spend time with your family and loved ones. Unfortunately 24/7/365 also includes holidays.

I like everyone else in the world ponders whether or not a New Year resolution is in my best interest. Inevitably they always fail but at least for a brief period of time I feel like I accomplished something to better myself.... albeit days, weeks, months. Weight loss, getting in shape, spending more time with my family and going to church more often is usually at the top of the list but I think those are the same as most people so I thought I should come up with something new. Rather than asking my friends and family about things that I could improve upon I went to a rather non traditional source.....my boss. Our new County Executive and I have been acquainted with each other for 25+ years however this is the first year that he signs my paycheck. While sitting down with him during a lull in budget meetings I simply asked him; Tom, how do you like me now? What can I improve upon to make me a better Medical Examiner and Department Head? After a rather brief pause he simply stated "empathy, you need more empathy". Because I didn't have a clue what that word meant I simply nodded my head and said, "I'll work on that"! Quickly I went make to the office

and "Googled" the word to see what I am getting myself into.

To show empathy is to identify with another's feelings. It is to emotionally put yourself in the place of another. The ability to empathize is directly dependent on your ability to feel your own feelings and identify them.....wow, intense stuff!

Knowing that I have been doing this job for a very long time and just the fact that I wasn't real clear on the definition made me realize that despite the fact that I have a sound technical background in death investigation free of attachment and personal concern it is very important to maintain focus on the human aspect of caring and understanding. Death is not just a case number, an autopsy or a death certificate. It is about people and how they feel. Regardless of how unattached we may want to be, we must keep in mind that how we act and what we say can make a difference.

So this is my New Year resolution.....learn, show, live in an empathetic manner. Please be patient as I need a lot of work.

Stay warm,

Al

WCMEA SUMMER CONFERENCE JUNE 1 – 4, 2008 HEIDEL HOUSE RESORT (www.heidelhouse.com) Green Lake, Wisconsin

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Printed and Mailed Courtesy of: **RTI Donor Services**

DOT AND HIGH-TENSION CABLES

DOT hopes high-tension cables will reduce cross-median crashes

A North Carolina DOT study found that cross-median crashes are three times more deadly than other highway crashes. Statistics from Iowa during the 1990's show that only 2.4% of crashes on their interstate system resulted in 37.2% of all interstate fatalities.

According to the Wisconsin Traffic Safety Reporter magazine, "Reducing cross-median crashes is among the top 10 priorities in Wisconsin's 2006-2008 Strategic Highway Safety Plan." The Wisconsin DOT and jointed forces with the Wisconsin Traffic Operations and Safety (TOPS) Lab at UW-Madison to study cross-over crashes on almost 1,500 miles of the state's divided highways.

Between 2001-2003, 53 fatalities were recorded in 631 cross-over crashes; more than 600 people were injured. Five "hotspots" were identified:

- I-39/I-90/I-94 in Columbia and Dane Counties
- I-94 in Dunn County
- US 41 in Fond du Lac, Winnebago and Brown Counties
- US 53 in La Crosse County
- US 151 in Dane and Dodge Counties

Instead of concrete or metal barriers, the plan is to use cable median barriers. Both low-tension and high-tension barriers are being studied. Cables deflect collision forces laterally, thereby reducing forces transmitted to occupants of vehicles. The cables usually cause less damage to striking vehicles and are cheaper to erect, with costs ranging from \$44,000 to \$55,000 per mile. They often require more maintenance after impact that other types of barrier, however. That information contradicts an article in the Appleton Post-Crescent on November 27, in which John Lee quoted Jerry Zogg, chief roadway standards engineer for the DOT as saying the cost of the cable systems cost \$18 to \$20 a foot to install, or nearly \$100,000 per mile, still much less than concrete barriers, which range from \$50-\$90 per foot.

The WTSR article noted, "In November 2006, cable median barriers were installed along a stretch of I-43. By August, the Ozaukee County Sheriff's Department reported that the cables already had been hit at least 22 times, with no fatal crashes. During the year before installation, four fatal cross-median crashes on this stretch resulted in six fatalities." In November 2007, three teens died in a cross-over crash after their vehicle reportedly went under the cables; authorities are studying that situation now.

For more information, contact David Noyce, TOPS Lab, at noyce@engr.wisc.edu.

WEBSITE WOES?

Marc Playman

There seems to be some major confusion about members signing up for the members only of the website. I will try to clarify.

Per Howard Fischer, the Webmaster, enter a user name and password. The user name can be anything you want it to be. The password must contain a NON ALPHA-NUMER-IC CHARACTER. That means something other than a number or letter in the ALPHAbet. Pick a symbol...any-thing above the number keys: $!@#\%\%\&()_+$ as part of your password.

Log on to: http://members.wcmea.com/subscribe.aspx

Example:

| 1 | |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| User name: | joeuser |
| Password: | mary123# or !mary123 |
| Secret question: | your mother's maiden name? |
| Secret answer: | whatever your mother's maiden name |
| | was, like Smith |

That's it. Once you've registered, you will have access to a number of new ideas for "members only." It is quite impressive and I commend Howard for all of his hard work on this. Howard is the coroner of Juneau County. Look for constant updates in the member area.

Also, I will take this opportunity to remind you to please renew your membership. Log on to <u>www.wcmea.com</u> and go to the Membership area.

Working with the Forensic Anthropologist

Wisconsin Coroners and Medical Examiners are fortunate in that, in our state, there are two Board Certified Forensic Dentists (Drs. L. Tom Johnson and Donald O. Simley II) and one (of 75 in the country) Board Certified Forensic Anthropologist (the author). I have had the pleasure and honor of working with many of you over the past 14+ years on a wide range of cases that benefited from our close collaboration. For some long-practicing and newer coroners and medical examiners who have not yet had the opportunity to work with me, I wanted to write a short article on the field of forensic anthropology and how my interests and expertise can assist you in your medico-legal investigations.

In short, what forensic anthropologists do is to apply their knowledge of human anatomy, human osteology (the study of bone) and biological variation in a legal context. Many received their undergraduate training in university departments of anthropology where they were exposed to the four subfields – archaeology, physical anthropology, cultural or social anthropology and linguistics (the study of language) before continuing on for advanced degrees that included fieldwork, internships, and specialized research.

Forensic anthropologists and forensic pathologists (M.D.s) often work collaboratively, even when the body is intact enough for an autopsy. In cases that present with advanced decomposition (including exhumations), mummification, burning (often with bone fragmentation), dismemberment and skeletonization, the forensic anthropologist may serve as your primary source of information for determining:

- 1. If the bone is human; this is a critical first step that will determine your subsequent involvement and that of law enforcement.
- 2. The number individuals represented.
- 3. The sex, age, ancestry and stature of the individual(s) and whether or not they are consistent with any personal identification found with the body.
- 4. An estimate of the postmortem interval (PMI) or time since death.
- 5. The manner of death (cause of death is typically pronounced by the coroner or medical examiner but sometimes it is only the anthropologist, given the condition of the remains, that can offer an interpretation).

In the past I have assisted with search and recovery (systematic mapping and excavation) of clandestine graves in addition to the laboratory analysis of those biological remains along with associated items recovered at the scene. I specialize in trauma reconstruction, the reconstruction of badly burned bone fragments and the effects of disease on bone. I am also available to identify bone from digital photographs sent via e-mail to determine if the bone is of human origin. If you have one or more ëcold casesí that you think may be worth a second look, I would be happy to work with you.

When I am asked, "When should I call you in?," or sometimes after-the fact, "When should I *have* called you in?," my answer is always, "The earlier, the better." I believe strongly in a team approach and will never show up uninvited at a scene. When I am contacted by law enforcement regarding potential involvement in a case I always ask, "Have you contacted your coroner or medical examiner already?"

For those of you who would like to contact me now, or in the future, I am available 24/7 at 608.692.4543 (mobile) and via e-mail at nnnnsic@aol.com. If you would like to see more in-depth coverage on specific topics or have questions that I can cover in the *Examiner*, please let me know.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a healthy and happy New Year and recognize the important work you do as well as the exceptional support and comfort you bring to the families you serve throughout the year.

Leslie E. Eisenberg, Ph.D., D-A.B.F.A Consulting Forensic Anthropologist and Associate Member, WCMEA

25 TAKE AMBDI TEST

On January 6, 25 members of the WCMEA took the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators test, attempting to achieve Diplomat status. The test was administered by Roberta J. Geiselhart, Supervisor of Investigations for the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office. Roberta is also the current president of ABMDI. The test was administered before the 2008 WCMEA winter conference in Wausau. We salute those who took the test, and tip our hats to those members who have taken the test previously.

WISCONSIN NURSE RIDES ROSE PARADE FLOAT IN HONOR OF ORGAN, TISSUE DONORS

A Shawano, Wis. resident and tissue recipient helped honor those who gave the gift of life through organ and tissue donation by being among 24 people who rode a special float in the 2008 Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif.

Dawn Giese, a registered nurse at Community Memorial Hospital in Oconto Falls, Wis., rode the float in recognition of the thousands of people who donate tissue each year. Her trip to Pasadena was sponsored by RTI Donor Services, which is also one of more than 50 associations across the nation—including recovery organizations, industry partners, transplant centers and transplant recipient groups—supporting the float project.

For the first time since the donation-themed float made its inaugural 2004 appearance in the parade, all of this year's float riders were people who have benefited from organ, tissue, eye and blood donation. A tissue transplant changed Giese's life.

A spinal injury in her lower back caused devastating pain when she tried to walk up and down stairs, roll over in bed, or drive a long distance. Worse, she was unable to sit for more than 20 minutes at a time. "In meetings, I had to get up and walk around," she notes. "I got used to it."

Giese's work hours were limited because she could not take pain medication while performing her nursing duties, so she spoke with a surgeon about options to allow her to continue her nursing career. The best solution: A transplant using donated bone tissue. The procedure ended the pain and limited mobility she had endured for six months.

"I tell people, especially other transplant patients, that I'm 95 percent pain-free, 95 percent of the time," says Giese. "There's really nothing I can't do."

In addition to being able to continue her nursing profession, Giese is involved with flower gardening, playing the French horn and keeping up with the blended family of five children she shares with her husband Randy. The experience has also helped her approach families at the hospital about donation. "I tell them that I wouldn't be walking if it wasn't for someone's generous gift."

The Rose Parade float presented the theme "Life Takes Flight" as it symbolized the importance of donation. The float design featured a balloon festival with four colorful hot air balloons rising up to 30 feet high.

The 119th Rose Parade, "Passport to the World's Celebrations," took place on Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2008. For more information on the "Life Takes Flight" float, visit the official Web site at www.donatelifefloat.org.

RTI Donor Services is a not-for-profit tissue recovery network dedicated to serving donor families and the donation community in perpetuating the circle of life. In addition to offering families the option of tissue donation, RTI Donor Services supports their wishes as a responsible steward of human donated tissue gifts, and provides family services, as well as community information and awareness. RTI Donor Services may be accessed through the Internet at www.rtidonorservices.org.

How to Commit to Donation in Wisconsin

To make the decision to be an organ and tissue donation, indicate your wishes on your driver's license, state identification card or donor card. Update your donation wishes by visiting www.wisconsindonor.org. It also is important to share your donation wishes with your family members so your decisions are understood and supported.

HINZE NAMED COLUMBIA COUNTY ME

Angela Hinze, RN, has been named as Medical Examiner in Columbia County, succeeding Marc Playman, who announced his retirement in November. Angela had served as the chief deputy for the past year. She had worked as a nursing supervisor



at Divine Savior Hospital in Portage. She currently is studying forensic nursing and is pursuing a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and forensic investigation.

Playman was elected coroner in 2000; Columbia County recently changed to a Medical Examiner system. He also served the public as a police officer, paramedic and head of EMS in Wisconsin Dells. He has been a member of WCMEA for many years, and was serving as the membership chairman at the time of his retirement.

Columbia County consists of over 55,000 residents. The office handled 454 calls in 2007.

Post-Mortem Testing for Cyanide

The WSLH offers cyanide analysis in post-mortem blood samples.

Purpose:

The test is intended to confirm suspected intentional exposure to cyanide salt. The test may also be used to confirm exposure to hydrogen cyanide gas in special circumstances, such as a terrorist event.

Limitations:

Please be aware that post-mortem cyanide results from fire victims generally cannot be used to establish whether cyanide exposure is the cause of death.

Sample collection:

- The blood collection vials provided in WSLH coroner kits are appropriate containers.
- Additional acceptable specimen containers include: grey top vacuum tubes (NaF and potassium oxalate), lavender top (EDTA) and green top (heparin).
- A minimum of 0.5 mL of blood is required.
- It is not necessary to submit a separate sample for cyanide analysis if alcohol/drug testing is also being requested.
- The preferred specimen is preserved (NaF) whole blood collected from a **peripheral** site. Specimens collected from other sites may not give valid, interpretable results.

739 TRAFFIC FATALITIES FOR 2007

The state Department of Transportation reported that 739 people died as the result of traffic accidents on Wisconsin roadways for 2007, up 4 percent from 2006 but well below the five-year average of fatalities, 788. Officials estimated that 125 of those killed would have survived had they been wearing a seat belt.

In 2007, the 739 people killed occurred in 657 crashes, including 111 motorcycle riders. In 2006, 659 accidents claimed 712 lives. Currently, there are about 250,000 motorcycle registrations in the state.

Other fatalities in 2007 included 10 bicyclists – two more than in 2006 – and 56 pedestrians, the same as in 2006.

Over 40% of motorists killed were involved in alcohol-related crashes.

The fewest number of fatalities in recent times was 645 in 1992. The most killed lately include 927 in 1981 and 836 in 2003. From 1964 through 1973, more than 1000 traffic deaths occurred, included 1168 in 1972, the deadliest in Wisconsin history.

- Serum and plasma are not acceptable.
- Frozen specimens are not acceptable.

Sample submission:

Prior to submitting a sample for cyanide testing please contact the laboratory at (608) 224-6241, or email the laboratory at WSLH_TOX@mail.slh.wisc.edu. Be sure to indicate on the request form that cyanide exposure is suspected and request cyanide testing in the "Other" box on the WSLH request form.

Interpretation:

Please contact the WSLH Toxicology Section at (608) 224-6241 for assistance with interpreting results.

WISCONSIN LEADS U.S. IN DRUNK DRIVERS

According to information released by Mother's Against Drunk Driving (MADD), Wisconsin leads the nation when it comes to drinking and driving. Quoted in a November 24 story in the Appleton Post-Crescent, written by Kelly McBride, Kari Kinnard, MADD's executive director, said "We continue to see Wisconsin as coming in as worst in every category of alcohol-related traffic fatalities, underage drinking and binge drinking. Alcohol consumption, sadly, is not a surprise." MADD cites lax drunken driving laws and the lack of sobriety checkpoints as contributing factors to Wisconsin's dubious ranking.

According to MADD, there were 305 drunken driving deaths in Wisconsin in 2006, making up 42.1% of the total state traffic fatalities. Those figure differ with the statistics released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, who reported 319 drunk driving deaths, 44% of total Wisconsin crashes. Kinnard said, "We need to tackle it as a society together. The drinking culture in Wisconsin – we can separate that. You can drink; it doesn't mean you have to drink and drive."

Besides Wisconsin, the worst states were South Carolina, Montanta, Hawaii and Texas. The best states were Utah, Kentucky, Nebraska, North Carolina and Alaska. Utah had 54 drunken driving fatalities in 2006, accounting for 18.8% of all traffic deaths.

Wisconsin Updates

- Three teens died in an Ozaukee County crash after their vehicle went out of control, crossed a median and went under cable barriers before striking another vehicle on Interstate 43 near Grafton.
- In Manitowoc County, an inmate was charged with felony murder after a fight over a sandwich left his 19-year-old cousin dead.
- La Crosse County authorities exhumed the body of a woman, age 24, that was murdered in 1985. Her body was found decapitated and burning in a ditch. Her head was never found; no one was ever charged in the case.
- In Chippewa County, a pickup truck left the roadway, plunged down a steep embankment and rolled into an ice-covered pond, killing the driver.
- In Shawano County, authorities dug for evidence in the disappearance in the case of Amber Wilde, a UWGB student missing since 1998. She was 4 ½ months pregnant at the time she went missing.
- In Columbia County, three seniors from Mukwonago High School were killed in a head-on crash on Hy. 33.
- In Kewaunee County, two toddlers were killed when the van they were in started on fire. The driver of the van left it running while she went inside a hardware store. Six children were in the van when the fire started.
- In Jefferson County, two snowmobilers died when their sled went through thin ice on the Rock River.
- In Milwaukee County, a pizza delivery man was shot and killed. The man had been shot two times previously.
- In Racine County, a teenage girl died after she was shot in the back outside of a bar. Police do not feel the girl was the intended target in the case.
- The Department of Natural Resources reported that three hunters died during Wisconsin's nine-day gun deer hunting season. The fatalities included a 29-yearold man in Burnett County, a 26-year-old man in Price County, and an 18-year-old man in Waushara County.
- In Kenosha County, a 3-year-old boy died after finding a pistol in a nightstand and accidentally shooting himself in the chest.
- In St. Croix County, a 6-year-old girl died while apparently using a hair dryer while in a water-filled bathtub.
- In Portage County, a 14-year-old boy was charged with first-degree reckless homicide, accused of supplying prescription drugs that another boy, 14, took at a party before being found dead at a relative's home the next day.

- In Wood County, a man died after an hour-long scuffle with police. An ambulance was called after the man was found on the ground. The man refused treatment but became combative when officers tried to arrest him on outstanding warrants.
- In Dodge County, a man accused to choking and beating his estranged wife to death outside the door of the Fox Lake police department last March pled no contest to first-degree reckless homicide, as part of a plea deal.
- In Dane County, a couple and their two grandchildren, ages 10 and 13, died of carbon monoxide poisoning while sleeping inside their trailer in the parking lot of the Alliant Energy Show in Madison. The group was attending a horse show. Police said the propane heater that caused the carbon monoxide was so old they could not detect the make or model number of the unit.
- In Milwaukee County, a physician was killed when the car he was driving was struck by a tire which came off a semi-trailer.
- In Milwaukee County, a man was accused of beating his estranged girlfriend to death with a rubber mallet after she left him for another man.
- In Jefferson County, a man died while kitesurfing on Lake Koshkonong.
- In Douglas County, 4 workers died from toxic hydrogen sulfide fumes while working in a 12-foot-deep sewer line.
- In Milwaukee County, a prostitute pleaded guilty to killing a 77-year-old potato farmer after D.N.A. evidence linked her to the case. They met at a casino in 2002. The prostitute said the couple argued after the man refused to use a condom.
- In Portage County, a judge dismissed a homicide charge against a man accused of shooting a truck driver he thought was having an affair with his ex-girlfriend.
- Two Amish bicyclists died after they were hit while riding before sunrise in Shawano County. One of the men was to be married just days after the accident.
- In Rusk County, a 50-year-old man died as the result of coronary artery disease. He had been recovering at home from injuries suffering in a roadside bombing in Iraq earlier in the year.
- In Portage County, an 18-year-old woman was killed when her car was truck by a Portage County Sheriff's Department squad car that was responding to a call to backup another officer. The squad car's emergency lights and siren were operating when the crash occurred.

GOOD LUCK, DR. JENTZEN



About 200 death investigators attended the 19th Annual John R. Teggatz Forensic Science Seminar in Milwaukee last November. The program was sponsored by the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office. Shown are Christopher Poulos, Dr. K. Alan Stormo, Dr. Robert Corliss, Dr. Wieslawa Tlomak, Dr. P. Douglas Kelley, Dr. Vincent D.M. DiMaio, Dr. Robert Huntington and Dr. Jeffrey M. Jentzen.

Dr. Jeffrey Jentzen recently announced his resignation as the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner. He has accepted a job at the University of Michigan. Dr. Jentzen oversaw many accomplishments during his time in Milwaukee, including developing a national curriculum for death scene investigators, creating a child death review team, designing and developing the current ME's office there, which has been NAME accredited since 1990, sponsoring a forensic science seminar annually for the past 19 years, partnering with UWM to create the Institute of Forensic Sciences, creating a forensic fellowship that resulted in training 15 board certified forensic pathologists, helping to create the firearm injury review system that is now the National Violent Injury Reporting System, developing a satellite ME's office in Fond du Lac, and being elected NAME President in 2008. The cases he will remember most involved the Jeffrey Dahmer murders in 1991, the heat wave of 1995 and the plane crash into Lake Michigan in 2007 which killed members of a transplant team from the University of Michigan.

WISCONSIN UPDATES (CONTINUED)

Some reports indicate the squad car went though a red light just prior to the crash.

- In Dodge County, the driver of an SUV died after colliding with a 7,500 gallon manure tank which was being pulled by a farm tractor.
- In Kewaunee County, a DNR employee drowned wile making a routine check at the Besadny Fish Facility.
- In Adams County, the driver of a semitrailer truck that hit a school bus in March 2006, killing one student, has pleaded not guilty to charges in the case.
- In Rock County, a high school dropout who became a billionaire roofing company executive and one of the nation's richest people died after falling through his garage roof. He was considered the 91st richest man in the United States, with a net worth of \$3.5 billion, according to Forbes magazine.
- In Columbia County, the leader of a gang of drifters and his girlfriend pleaded not guilty to killing one of their own, burying her in secret and torturing the woman's son.
- In Brown County, authorities have classified the death of a 21-year-old college student whose body was found in her car, submerged in the Fox River, as an accident. She had been missing for two weeks, last seen after a night out with friends, before her body was discovered. Her family believes she died before her car entered the water and have hired their own experts to review findings in the case.
- In Kenosha County, a sewer construction worker who became trapped in a deep trench died from the pressure of the wet soil that inundated him. Mechanical asphyxiation was ruled to be the cause of death by Dr. Mary Mainland.
- In Dane County, an appeals court has upheld the negligent homicide conviction of an 81-year-old man who crashed his pickup truck into an Amish family's horse-drawn buggy, killing a pregnant woman and her son in 2004.
- In Milwaukee County, two men were convicted of murder in the execution-style slayings of two brothers and their mother.
- In Oneida County, a 2-year-old boy died after fire destroyed Spang's Italian Restaurant in Minocqua. The boy was in an adjoining apartment.
- In Rock County, a man pleaded guilty to first-degree reckless homicide and other charges in the killing death of a woman in an investment firm office in Beloit.
- In Milwaukee County, a 75-year-old pastor died from asphyxiation after her airway was occluded by duct tape during a robbery.

Jon Hagen 2139 W. Glendale Avenue Appleton, WI 54914 jonhagen@aol.com

WISCONSIN UPDATES (CONTINUED)

- In Rock County, officers shot and killed an armed man who entered a home and critically injured a female occupant.
- In Bayfield County, human bones found during a sewer reconstruction project probably were left from a flood in 1942 which damaged two cemeteries. Many bodies were disinterred and according to a former mayor, he didn't think all of the remains had been recovered.
- In Forest County, the district attorney said it was unlikely that any criminal charges would be filed in the case of the shooting rampage by a 20-year-old off-duty sheriff's deputy that killed six people. The deputy then shot himself to death.
- A Chippewa County sheriff's deputy was killed after being struck by a car while directing traffic at the scene of a semitrailer truck fire. Jason Zunker, 31 died after being struck on Hy. 53 just south of Bloomer.
- A 4-year-old Milwaukee boy died after a large-screen television fell on top of him as he was attempting to insert a DVD.
- In Milwaukee County, police fatally shot a man who stabbed a woman to death in a domestic dispute.

UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- April 21-25, 2008 Medicolegal Death Investigator Training, St. Louis
- April 23-25, 2008 Medicolegal Investigation of Death, Wayne State University
- June 1-4, 2008 WCMEA Summer Conference, Green Lake
- October 6-10, 2008 Medicolegal Death Investigator Training, St. Louis



Dr. Haskell addresses the audience at the 2008 WCMEA Conference in Wausau.