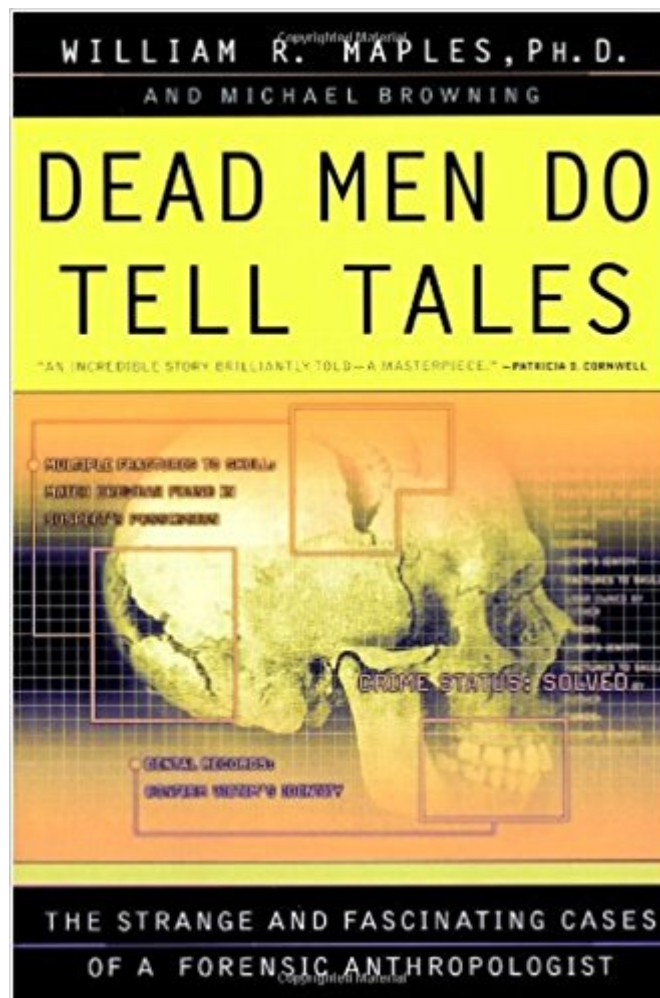




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Dead Men Do Tell Tales: The Strange And Fascinating Cases Of A Forensic Anthropologist



Synopsis

From a skeleton, a skull, a mere fragment of burnt thighbone, prominent forensic anthropologist 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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Customer Reviews

Noted forensic anthropologist Maples, whose specialty is the study of bones, and freelance journalist Browning here recount Maples's criminal and anthropological investigations over the past 20 years. The meandering text combines episodes from Maples's personal life and education with discourses on his philosophy, his teaching at the Univ. of Florida and his work. The book's strength is as a snapshot of the world of forensic scientists, vividly portraying the siege mentality of many of them when their objective data are used for purposes other than ascertaining the truth about how a victim died. Despite the two-dimensional depiction of the people who were the objects of Maples's investigations-including the "likely" remains of Romanov Tsar Nicholas II-his memoirs should hold readers' interest. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Maples' first exposure to his career came as a freshman in college when a class he wanted was full and his adviser then suggested he take the survey course on anthropology. Maples was fortunate, as will be any reader with a strong stomach who picks up his book. He tells how he learned to look at mangled bodies and continues to explain how he learned to both see and observe and how he discovered such fruitful techniques as tasting bone samples. Although it tends to be lifeless, forensic anthropology is not a cut-and-dried subject; nevertheless, Maples narrates his cases clearly and engagingly. He describes the remains (or, when burnt, cremains) presented to him, describes what he looks for, and guides us through his thinking and the search for additional clues and information. His most difficult, fascinating, and perplexing case dealt with a 1985 apparent double murder and burning, while among historic bodies, Maples dealt with those of Francisco Pizarro, Zachary Taylor, Czar Nicholas II, and Joseph Merrick, "the Elephant Man." William Beatty --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Forensic anthropologist, Dr. William R. Maples has studied the bones of people killed in almost every conceivable way: "meat cleavers, machetes, ice picks, bayonets, hammers, wrenches, screwdrivers, crowbars, pry bars, two-by-fours, tree limbs, jack handles...neckties, pantyhose, ropes, bootlaces, towels and chains." Even a frozen ham. He (along with his co-author, Michael Browning) tells a vivid story and is not afraid to editorialize: "At the center of the labyrinth of certain human personalities there lurks a Minotaur that feeds on human flesh, and we have not yet found the thread to help us map this maze and slay the beast." I've read many classics by forensic pathologists such as Sir Sidney Smith ("Mostly Murder"), Dr. Keith Simpson ("Forty Years of Murder"), and Dr. Michael Baden ("Dead Reckoning: the New Science of Catching Killers") and have read crime fiction by forensic anthropologists such as Bill Bass ("Carved In Bone" published under the pseudonym 'Jefferson Bass'). "Dead Men Do Tell Tales" is my first autobiography by a forensic anthropologist, and it deserves to be placed on the shelf with my all-time favorite true crime books. There are case studies of heinous crimes--the drifter, Danny Harold Rolling, who murdered five University of Florida students--but also cases involving historical figures such as President Zachary "Old Rough and Ready" Taylor who died of an unspecified gastrointestinal disorder after only sixteen months in office. Was he our first assassinated president? In one of his most famous cases, Dr. Maples was invited to Russia to examine the bones of what might have been the last Czar of Russia, his family, and servants. All were gunned down by a Bolshevik death squad in July, 1918. Along with other forensic scientists, he has also been involved in identifying the bones of our soldiers who never returned from war. One of the most affecting skeletons that he was asked to

examine was that of the "Elephant Man," Joseph Merrick. This book is truly a feast (a somewhat grisly feast) for those of us who value the application of science to otherwise unsolvable mysteries. If you are reading "Dead Men Do Tell Tales" while at the dinner table, you might want to save the photographs until after you have finished digesting. In 1997, Dr. Maples died of brain cancer at the relatively young age of 59.

The book is definitely worth a read. The author spends almost half the book fluffing himself up and writing loads of not-so-humblebrag anecdotes. I reached a point where I was ready to give up on the book - it was so repulsively self-aggrandizing. And then the author pivots and starts describing actual cases he has tackled, and you see how well forensic anthropology can help answer questions on long dead people as well as recently deceased folks, ala Bones. Overall, if the author had written just the cases, and added maybe a couple more of them, the book would be 4.5 stars worthy.

Having long been interested in the forensics of crime solving, this book had me totally mesmerized. I hated reaching the end of the book, leaving me wanting more examples of how murders were solved from tiny fragments of bones or teeth, or from cuts & slashes on bones. Amazing work, artfully & skillfully recounted.

I was truly impressed by the easily conveyed information that both of the authors' presented for us laypeople! As I've gotten older, there are innumerable subjects that interest me, which would have been a great help in my school years, i.e., ancient to modern history, ancient cultures, forensics, & other such areas! This book produced quite a vast amount of interest on a lot of those subjects! From the identification of the assassinated remains of the Romanovs, to the proven bones of Pizarro & back to the horrific murders committed in Gainesville, Florida, by Danny Rollings, everything was fascinating & interesting! If there were any complaints, it would have to be that it desperately needs updating! I had no idea what the copyright date was & a few clues as I read made me realize it had to be in the 1990's! Dr Maples is the highly known forensic anthropologist who was a major scientist in the verifying of the mangled bones of the Romanovs, however, there wasn't any mention of the later found remains of the two missing bodies that were buried & exhumed some time later. There was also the surprise that Anna Anderson, who laid the best foundation of her claims of being Anastasia, among very many, had yet to be exposed as no relation whatsoever after DNA testing. Even so, it provided a great deal of information that I was able

to take away as some I had no clue before, so if a book can do that for me & also be a compelling read, it's a win-win to me!

It's not that I used to dance on people's graves and drink wine from their skulls before, but I was rather inclined to treat the remains without any special homage. They are dead, I thought, they are indifferent to what we do with their bodies. But I started to read this book (simply out of scientific interest), and I immediately saw Dr. Maples' serious and respectful treatment of the remains he works with as the right way to approach this matter. There are no macabre jokes, no vulgarity, none of that which usually indicates the presence of the fear of death in a human being. Despite being very serious, he still manages to make the book fascinating. Its scientific aspects aside, this is an extraordinary tale of extraordinary events. The language is smooth and does not distract the reader from the contents; at the same it is enjoyable in itself, what with the author's connection to English literature. And of course I learnt a lot about forensic anthropology as a scientific field. The profession is indeed regrettably rare; a good writer and a forensic anthropologist is a lucky combination, which may not repeat itself in the next couple of decades.

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