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Book Review

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BOOK REVIEWS

**WITNESSES FROM THE GRAVE:
THE STORIES BONES TELL, by
Christopher Joyce and Eric Stover
(Boston: University of Massachu-
setts Press, 1991), 305 pp. \$19.95**

The homicidal state shares one trait with the solitary killer—like all murderers, it trips on its own egotism and drops a trail of clues which, when properly collected, preserved, and analyzed are as damning as a signed confession left in the grave.

The great mass murderers of our time have accounted for no more than a few hundred victims. In contrast, states that have chosen to murder their own citizens can usually count their victims by the car-load lot. As for motive, the state has no peers, for it will kill its victim for a careless word, a fleeting thought, or even a poem. (p. 217)

The above quotation is from a talk by Clyde Snow at the 1984 annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science regarding the possible contribution that scientists could offer to the relatives of the “disappeared” in Argentina. I had the opportunity to hear Clyde Snow’s slide show presentation at an excellent 1989 conference at Wellesley College devoted to the subject “Science in Aid of Human Rights.” The Wellesley presentation focused upon his work in Argentina in locating the graves of the disappeared and reconstructing from the remains who they were and how they met their deaths. I found myself totally captivated by the presentation, not because of the eloquence of Snow as might be suggested by the excerpt quoted above; rather, it was a combination of a subject matter that was new to me, the

effective use of slides, and most importantly the character of Dr. Clyde Snow.

Common to the great teachers I have known is an enthusiasm for the subject matter, and it was clear that Clyde Snow was fascinated by the study of bones. His credentials as a brilliant scientist were apparent. As a detective, he rivals Sherlock Holmes. Snow noted that part of the failure of the Argentine military in covering up their atrocities was not appreciating that the individuals in charge of crematoriums are bureaucrats and thus they keep accurate records. He was able to determine the significant increases in N.N. (no name) graves, especially of young people, in cemeteries located near the torture centers in the period of disappearances. But the power of Snow was the consequence not only of a sense of sagacity wrought from having seen the dark side of human nature but a sense that Clyde Snow was an incorruptibly decent human being.

So impressed was I that I asked Clyde Snow to open the first Annual Meeting of the Amnesty International USA Legal Support Network which we hosted at the Morgan Institute. When the lights were turned back on, I do not recall seeing any dry eyes in this audience of human rights lawyers.

I relate this experience because the talented science writers Christopher Joyce and Eric Stover set Clyde Snow’s work in Argentina in the development of the field of forensic anthropology. The setting of the table includes the 1849 dismemberment murder of one Harvard scientist by another, the dissolving of his wife in a vat by a Chicago sausage manufacturer, the 1970s case of John Wayne

Gacy, the serial killer of young boys, a mass airline disaster, and the celebrated case of identifying the remains of the Nazi "Angel of Death," Joseph Mengele in Brazil in 1985, to name a few.

The authors have made the advancements in the science of forensic anthropology achieved in these cases understandable to the lay audience and they

have done so in a book that is difficult to put down once opened. The human rights community owes a debt of gratitude to Joyce and Stover for this splendid book, and, of course, to Clyde Snow for his courage and inspiration.

—Bert B. Lockwood, Jr.
Editor-in-Chief

Announcement

In cooperation with the Refugee Studies Program, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University, England, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Department of Political Science at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, will accept Ph.D. candidates whose dissertation research within their area of specialization will be concerned with refugees in countries of first asylum. Candidates will have to meet the entrance requirements of Carleton University for Ph.D. candidates in either Anthropology and Sociology or in Political Science.

During the first two years of their study, successful candidates will be in residence at Carleton University in order to complete their course work and other requirements. They will spend their third year at Oxford University, affiliated as Visiting Study Fellows under RSP/QEH procedures, attending specialized seminars in Refugee Studies and formulating their dissertation proposal under the guidance of RSP staff members. They will defend their dissertation proposal at Carleton University, and their dissertation research will be supervised by a committee consisting of staff members from RSP and from Carleton University. The degree will be awarded by Carleton University. The University will try to secure funding for a limited number of eligible Ph.D. candidates from developing countries.

Inquiries should be directed either to the Graduate Coordinator of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology or of Political Science, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B6.