

The silent witness: Development of fingerprint evidence on human skin

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To provide a basic understanding of how to preserve and process latent fingerprint evidence on human skin, what conditions and processes are necessary to recover such evidence and when it is appropriate to implement these procedures. It has often been said, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could get the suspect's fingerprint off the victim's body?" Well, now we can, providing a final "silent witness" in the effort to bring justice for the victim. Lifting fingerprint evidence from a body is a team effort and not the exclusive domain of the crime scene investigator. It requires the cooperation of the medical examiner/coroner, the homicide investigator and the latent examiner as well. Because of the cross jurisdictional nature of this type of investigation, it is important that all personnel have at least a basic understanding of everything that is involved. Recognized and proven procedures for recovery of latent fingerprint evidence from human skin can virtually insure success to the careful, skilled, motivated processor. Appropriate support from the medical examiner/coroner to allow this processing to take place will give the homicide investigator and the prosecutor a valuable, indisputable "silent witness" helping to bring closure and justice.

Biography

M. Frank Shonberger, BLS, CSCSA began his career at the City of Miami Police Department. During his 32 years with that agency he commanded the Criminal Investigation Unit, that contained a Forensic Photographic Laboratory, Latent Print Detail, AFIS Computer System, Prisoner Processing Function and a 24/7 Crime Scene Investigation Unit. In 1999 he retired to undertake the challenge of establishing a new Crime Scene Investigation Unit at the Coral Gables Police Department. He is a distinguished member of the IAI and the FDIAI and has been president of the FDIAI.

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