



Odontology Section - 2015

G18 Honoring My Mentors — Drs. Levine, Snow, Maples, Stimson, and Stein

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The goals of this presentation are to abide by Dr. Martell's meeting theme and to pay tribute to the forensic scientists who helped shape my 38-year career as a forensic odontologist.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by stressing the importance of mentors and mentoring for all American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) members, not only in a specific section but also in the wider forensic community.

Beginning in October of 1976, I have had the good fortune to learn from and work alongside four of the most preeminent forensic scientists in the world: Drs. Lowell Levine, Clyde Snow, Bill Maples, and Robert Stein. Three of the four, most recently Dr. Snow, have passed away.

I first met Dr. Levine in 1976 at The Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) while taking my first course as a "newbie" in the field of forensic dentistry. In May of 1979, I had just finished attending my second AFIP course, Aircraft Accident Investigation, and would return to Chicago from Washington, DC, on the night of May 24. The next day, the American Airlines DC 10 crash occurred. As one of the first forensic dentists on the scene, I was tasked by American Airlines to "find Dr. Levine" who had worked with American Airlines on an accident in the United States Virgin Islands a few years earlier. I had the good fortune to work alongside and learn from Dr. Levine in a major mass disaster when morgues had to be assembled from scratch, long prior to the current instantly operational Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team system.

At the same disaster incident, I met Dr. Clyde Collins Snow, probably the original "Indiana Jones." Even in the midst of the chaos of a 273-person mass fatality incident, Clyde was a patient teacher of forensic anthropology. In the morgue at his table, he would carefully measure the bones that had been cleaned by the Chicago Police Department Homicide detectives. Clyde would explain in detail why and how he was doing his examinations. I even learned that it was possible to determine if a female had given birth based on the scarring of the pubic symphysis. We had a birthday party on Independence Day for Clyde, complete with a sheet cake and champagne, courtesy of Dr. Stein, the Chief Medical Examiner for Cook County. Unfortunately, July 4 was not Clyde's birthday. He entered his birthday into the American Airlines ID Database in European fashion, month-day-year, so actually he was born April 7, not July 4. He never let on until years later.

In 1984, I became the consultant odontologist for the Cook County Medical Examiner's office and Clyde, having worked both the Gacy case and the DC 10 crash, was the forensic anthropologist now used by the office. He would fly to Chicago each month and spend a few days on skeletal cases. I worked alongside him again on numerous cases when he came into town. He never stopped teaching, asking questions, and also learning some forensic odontology from me.

I met Bill Maples at AAFS meetings. My first real work with him was on the Forest Lawn cremation case. I was invited to a meeting at the Cook County Medical Examiner's Office to assist with the dental radiography of a metal dental post that was found in interred cremains and that became critical to the correct identification. Dr. Maples was the lead anthropologist on the case. I would work another cremains case in Chicago with him and testify for the defense with him on a third case.

The final mentor I wish to mention is Dr. Robert Stein, the first Chief Medical Examiner of Cook County. In August 1984, I received a call from his secretary, asking if I could come to the medical examiner's office the next morning to assist with a case. The victim had been assaulted, raped, and strangled. As she lay on the morgue table, her shorts were pulled part way down her legs. I remember Dr. Stein's first gruff words to me, "You did not touch the body, did you?" I replied no. Later that morning, he would say to send him a bill. I said no, but he said to do so as I would be working there in the future. I would learn much from him over the years and he always treated me with respect as a peer forensic scientist.

Mentors, Levine, Snow