

Best of

Dying Words

*Provoking Thoughts on Life from a Retired
Homicide Detective and Forensic Coroner*



Garry Rodgers

Best Selling Crime Writer and Huffington Post Blogger

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Best of DyingWords

- Book One -

*Provoking Thoughts on Life from a Retired Homicide Detective
and Forensic Coroner*

Garry Rodgers

Bestselling Crime Writer and Huffington Post Blogger



dyingwords.net

Provoking Thoughts on Life, Death, and Writing

Website of Garry Rodgers - Retired RCMP Homicide Detective and Forensic Coroner

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Copyright

Best of DyingWords, Book One — Provoking Thoughts on Life from a Retired Homicide Detective and Forensic Coroner

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* * *

Preface

Thanks for picking up a copy of ***Best of DyingWords, Book One — Provoking Thoughts on Life from a Retired Homicide Detective and Forensic Coroner.***

I selected these forty-one articles for you from my blog posts at www.DyingWords.net. I penned most of them myself, but some are by invited guests who have great individual expertise in their disciplines and have their own unique thoughts about life.

I don't remotely pretend to have all the answers about life—not sure if I have all that many. But I've been around sixty years and I've thought a lot about life during my careers as a homicide detective, a forensic coroner, and now bestselling crime writer and blogger at the [Huffington Post](http://HuffingtonPost.com).

So I guess that counts for something.

I have a philosophy on life — It all comes down to the way you think.

The two most important things to think about are your health and your happiness. It's pretty hard to buy either one.

And I also have a philosophy about money.

I've heard this saying "*I've been rich and I've been poor. Rich is better.*"

Yeah, but being rich isn't all about having gobs of money. It's also about having health and happiness.

My all-time favorite book is [Think and Grow Rich](#) by Napoleon Hill. It's my religion. I live my life by its principles.

This masterpiece is by no means a get-rich-quick scheme. Far from it.

Think And Grow Rich lays out seventeen proven and timeless principles of personal achievement—principles when applied to your thought pattern will deliver Napoleon Hill's promise that whatever your mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve with positive mental attitude.

Hopefully, these assorted blog posts will provoke you to think and grow rich in your life.

Garry Rodgers

Vancouver Island, Canada
February, 2016

* * *

Think And Grow Rich

“Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve with positive mental attitude.”

* * *

Think And Grow Rich was written in 1937 and sold 70 million books before its author, Napoleon Hill, died in 1970. Who knows how many copies since. Talk about a best seller. It's still in print.

It's about the science of personal achievement— the philosophy of success. And there's a lot in it for you.

Andrew Carnegie, the philanthropist of U.S. Steel and Carnegie Hall fame (the Bill Gates/Warren Buffet of the day), wanted to leave the masses a timeless formula for prosperity. He challenged a young buck, a West Virginia reporter by the name of Napoleon Hill, to research and write it.

Carnegie didn't pay Hill.

He just introduced Hill to the players of the time—writers, inventors, business people, presidents, royalty, socialites, clergy, sports stars, and entertainers.

Hill spent twenty years studying the secret of what makes people successful. He identified seventeen common principles and wrote a heady book titled *The Philosophy of Success*. It didn't sell well, so he modified it as *The Science of Personal Achievement*. That didn't sell well, either.

Napoleon Hill didn't quit. He condensed it with a catchy cover and a slick title: *Think and Grow Rich*.

People wanted to get rich, so they bought up his book and, when everybody started talking about it, they told their friends, who wrote their pen-pals, who dialed-up others, who lettered-the-editor...

And it struck many people that growing rich was far more than making money.

Napoleon Hill spew pure truth. He got it bang-on and his secret has stood the test of time. Read it. Modern updates are available if you don't care for the male vernacular of the time.

Here're Napoleon Hill's seventeen principles of success. Think about how they can work towards bringing health and happiness into your life.

- 1. Definiteness of Purpose**
- 2. Positive Mental Attitude**
- 3. Self-Discipline**
- 4. Personal Initiative**
- 5. Enthusiasm**
- 6. Creative Vision**
- 7. Accurate Thinking**
- 8. Controlled Attention**
- 9. Learning From Adversity and Defeat**
- 10. Maintenance of Sound Health**
- 11. Budgeting Time and Money**
- 12. Pleasing Personality**
- 13. Applied Faith**
- 14. Teamwork**
- 15. Going The Extra Mile**
- 16. Master-Mind**
- 17. Cosmic Habit-Force**

These principles are of no particular order, but they follow a pattern.

To achieve something, you must first conceive what you want—your definite purpose—knowing where you want to go. Then, you must have a positive mental attitude to go with it.

In other words—you must believe you are going to achieve your definite purpose—then you must build your world around it— using all these principles—especially the mastermind.

Go read, or re-read, [*Think And Grow Rich*](#).

And I've already given you a spoiler. The Napoleon Hill secret is—

“Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve with positive mental attitude.”

* * *

What’s This DyingWords Blog All About?

Okay, Mister Expert in life, death and writing...

(I'm an expert because I've lived sixty years, investigated hundreds upon hundreds of human deaths as a cop and a coroner, and I've written a lot of stuff about, well, stuff.)

So what do you think life's all about? What happens in death? And what wonderful wisdom do you have about writing?

First of all, I truly believe that life's most important possessions are health and happiness. It's pretty challenging to live out a fulfilled life without a good helping of both.

Secondly, I believe that death is not the end of the line for you.

To be straight, I've never been there myself, but I've come really, really, frikkin' close to death and I don't mean by just bagging and autopsying cadavers.

I came so close to being shot to death that it scared me out of my state of local consciousness and into another entire realm of sensory existence.

It's called a near-death or fear-death encounter. Many, many people have experienced the same phenomena and mountainsides of trees have died to support their reports, so I'm nothing special in that regard.

But there was something weird—really weird—about my encounter that caused many to question whether paranormal intervention occurred.

It's a crazy story, but something happened there that you don't see every day. There's already one book written about my case called [*Descent Into Madness*](#) and I wrote a

novel called [No Witnesses To Nothing](#) which is based on the “*Teslin Lake Incident*”. That's for another day and, no, I'm not trying to sell you another book. Yet.

I became fascinated with death and spent the remainder of my spared life investigating death, appreciating life, and writing about it. Now I want to share my experiences with you.

And I know you're fascinated with the dichotomy of life and death.

Go ahead. Admit it.

Everyone alive wonders what's behind the black door.

And a lot of us are absolutely shit-scared to find out.

In fact, the fear of death is second only to the fear of public speaking, and I still get the jitters about that.

But I'm cool with death and I'm happy with life.

Why? Because I accept that death is part of life and I try to make the most of life while I still have it.

But death is going to happen to all of us. You. Me. Your family. Your dog and your cat. Your friends. Even the biggest asshole you ever met is going to cross-over some day.

You just don't know when.

So here's the goods—in my humble opinion.

Death is part of the life cycle and you go back to the same place you were before you were born.

Oh, for sure your body will decompose as your matter and energy are transformed.

But “*you*”—that tiny spark of consciousness that makes you alive—that is seeing, reading, and processing my words—doesn't extinguish.

It just changes form and carries on. Just like the bugs do with your flesh and bones.

I believe that spark—call it your soul—alters its local state of consciousness and re-attaches itself to that cloud of non-local consciousness that gives order to everything—that plane of infinite intelligence.

I call it God. Seems a good word. It's been used a lot.

You atheists uncomfortable enough?

Good. Because I think you're fulla shit if you believe in atheism. Same goes for Scientology. And Jehovah's Witnesses. Like, there's only 144,000 seats in heaven so whoever knocks on the most doors gets in. My God, where do those guys get off?

Now, I believe that Jesus Christ was an actual human being who had advanced intuitional awareness, but I don't buy into the Christian story of immaculate conception and physical resurrection and ascension. And I really don't get the "*Allah Akbar*" thing before blowing yourself up.

Now Shamanism makes sense to me, but that's for another blog post.

See, I tagged the [DyingWords](#) blog site *Provoking Thoughts* for a reason.

I want to provoke your thoughts about life, death, and writing.

* * *

Altered States Of Consciousness

Thirty years ago I had an out-of-body experience—an OBE.

And, no, I'm not nuts.

At the time, I was a Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer involved in an Emergency Response Team operation. We attempted to capture an armed and deranged bushman wanted for murder in the northern Canadian wilderness. It's now known as "*The Teslin Lake Incident*".

Mike Buday, my partner, and I were static—in a defensive position—camouflaged in deep snow while a second squad drove the suspect towards us across a frozen lake. Three hundred yards away, we lost sight as Michael Oros entered the thick-timber shoreline. In less than ten minutes, Oros circled behind us.

I had the eeriest sense. Then—of imminent—extreme—danger.

I glanced over my left shoulder. Through a thick, gray wash of leafless brush, I saw Oros' face materialize forty-four yards away. I yelled "*Mike! He's right behind you!*" Oros' rifle exploded. He shot Mike Buday—my best friend and my partner—in the back of the neck, killing Mike instantly.

In the same nanosecond—my state of consciousness altered—I snapped into an alternate plane of existence.

Non-locally—I viewed the scene from outside my body as if sitting on a branch of a huge tree, watching it unfold from above.

I had a complete sense of calm—like time stopped—and the world all around was a slow-motion picture. Frame by frame, I watched Oros work his rifle bolt. Turn. Point his rifle at me. And pull his trigger.

I kept watching as the M-16 rifle in my hands rose. It rotated to my left. Beaded on Oros' face. And squeezed off one round.

Oros' head vanished. I snapped back into local consciousness. And that turned into terror.

The investigation determined my M-16's returning shot hit Oros in the forehead. It terminated his existence immediately. When the bolt on Oros' .303 British army rifle was opened, the investigators found the live cartridge in Oros' chamber had the firing pin punctured. It failed to go off. No scientific reason for the misfire has ever been determined, but somehow it was stopped and my life was spared.



Likewise, the scientific reason for my out-of-body experience has yet to be determined and I've spent the past three decades investigating it.

And I do believe there's a scientific explanation for it because I'm not nuts and I know that it happened. And I refuse to write it off as "*Paranormal*".

I'm not the only one who's experienced an OBE. Researchers claim that around ten percent of people have experienced some form of yet-to-be-explained, altered state of consciousness. I think that the scientific knowledge of consciousness is an untapped frontier. Possibly it's the next phase of human evolution.

So what, really, is an OBE?

Turning to good ol' Wikipedia, it's a mental experience that typically involves a sensation of floating outside one's body and, in some cases, perceiving one's physical body from a place outside one's body (autoscopy).

The term out-of-body experience was introduced in 1943 by George Tyrrell in his book *Apparitions* and was adopted by researchers as an alternative to belief-centric labels such as astral projection, soul travel, or spirit walking.

OBEs can be unintentionally induced by brain traumas, sensory deprivation, near-death/fear-death experiences, extreme and immediate danger, disassociative and psychedelic drugs, dehydration, sleep, and electrical stimulation of the brain, among others. It can also be deliberately induced by some skilled practitioners, such as Shamans.

Scientifically, how does it work?

I've pondered this ever since I recovered from my shock and grief of the *"Teslin Lake Incident"*. It was part healing process and part of my natural curiosity into the science of how and why things happen. I'm not sure if I have the right answer, but I pretty comfortable that OBEs are just part of our human design, just like the flight or fight response to danger. It's also probably what's behind the reports of *"my life flashed before my eyes"* from car accident victims.

All existence seems to come from a source of infinite intelligence which provides the rules for how the forces of the universe operate such as space, time, energy, matter, and intelligence (STEMI is the term — check this [blog post](#) for more).

Integral to human existence is our various levels of consciousness such as awake, asleep, and the always-operating subconscious level that keeps our heart and lungs working. But there's clearly other states of consciousness like meditative, prayer, hyper-awareness, and the dangerous one which we've all experienced when driving—then realizing we don't remember the last ten miles.

I'm not religious by definition of belonging to a dogmatic organization, but I'm definitely spiritual by way of believing there's a reason behind universal existence that can be explained if we possess the knowledge to understand it.

Somehow it seems that our various levels of human consciousness are tied into one central point in our mind. That may just be what the soul is. And our soul may be our portal to infinite intelligence.

Four years ago I took a sabbatical to research the soul—call it a soul search.

A plug for my book — [*No Witnesses To Nothing*](#). I market it as a crime thriller with supernatural overtones, but that's just marketing bullshit to get attention. It's actually the story of my search for the science and spirituality behind the human soul. I just disguised it as a murder mystery so people would read it and maybe discover something in themselves.

My journey took me to sweat lodges, talks with leaders in science, teachers in spirituality, and long introspective walks with my dog. My stroll ended up at the door of a true, modern-day Shaman (actually a Sha-woman) and it was here that I opened my eyes to see what was behind my OBE.

Dr. Leslie Gray is a San Francisco-based clinical therapist. I found her work on altered states of consciousness fascinating. She helped me view my OBE as a normal, human response to an extremely traumatic event.

I believe Shamanism to be a legitimate, sound, and professional scientific practice—once I was able to get the knowledge to understand it.

Shamanism is the all-inclusive practice of willfully altering your state of consciousness to access knowledge from other sources of intelligence.

There's nothing new about Shamanism. It's been around as long as the human species and it's a natural practice of obtaining information. Some people are just better at it than others.

Here's a quote from Dr. Gray:

“Shamanism is a method where virtually everyone can learn to ‘journey’ to a world of non-ordinary reality for the purpose of healing themselves, or others, and increasing personal knowledge. This age-old and culturally transcendent technique lets you ‘leave’ your physical body by willfully altering your state of consciousness to acquire first-hand knowledge from a normally hidden universe.”

The science of how consciousness works remains to be discovered, but I'm now comfortable that my OBE during *“The Teslin Lake Incident”* was nothing paranormal.

It was a totally natural, human response that automatically altered my consciousness to a state of hyper-awareness which allowed me to respond in a life or death situation.

I'm so thankful the Creator designed me that way.

* * *

STEMI—Five Known Realities In The Universe

There are 5 known realities in the universe.

Space. Time. Energy. Matter. And Intelligence. STEMI for an acronym.

I think about STEMI like a ball game.

Space is the ball field. It's where we play. We need to play somewhere. Right?

Time is the measurement of how long we're going to play. The duration.

Energy is the dynamics, like getting off the bench and getting going. Keeping it moving. Hitting it out of the park and making the crowd roar.

Matter is the ball, the bat, the uniforms, the players, and the fans. Little stuff like that. It'd be a boring game if nobody showed up.

Intelligence is the rules. The ideas for the game. It'd be a pretty whacky game if there were no rules.

Let's look at these concepts a bit more.

Space is that dimension in which objects and events occur and have relevant position and direction to each other. We know on earth to observe the three dimensions of height, width, and length. It keeps us from walking in front of a bus. Then, there's the fourth dimension.

Space-Time is now well recognized as a fourth dimension. It's also obvious, although most don't recognize it. These four dimensions are fundamental to our understanding of the physical universe. Oh, there are many theories floating around about additional dimensions. Branes, warps, strings, and M-Theory are fun to ponder, but the four-dimensional model works very well.

Time can be a problem, though. We move about freely in space, but not in time. Time is linear. It's a temporal measurement. Pretty much a one-way street. Time travel makes a great plot for *Back To The Future* and *The Twilight Zone*, but in reality... it ain't never gonna happen. Time is nature's way of preventing everything from happening all at once. Or, from doing it all over again.

Energy? Some days I have none. Energy is a scalar, physical quantity describing the amount of work performed by a force.

There are many types of energy. Nuclear, chemical. kinetic, potential, thermal, sound, gravitational, and that biggie of all, electromagnetism, which is transmitted in waves.

A basic law of physics—the law of conservation of energy—tells us that any form of energy can be transferred to another, but the total remains the same. The total inflow of energy into a system must equal the total outflow.

So, all the energy available since the *Big Bang* is still available to us and always will be. It changes form all the time, but the fundamentals do not.

Matter is composed of particles. Anything that has mass and occupies a volume, or space, is matter. But matter needs energy to exist. Matter stays matter until it is accelerated to the speed of light.

Then, in theory, it converts back to pure energy and ceases to exist. $E=MC^2$ and all that jazz. But relativity doesn't allow that to happen easily in practice.

Intelligence? I don't pretend to have a grip on that. All I know is that there's some magnificent source of intelligence that gives order to existence. I believe it manifests itself by way of local and non-local consciousness. And I believe we all are capable of tapping into both forms if we just allow ourselves.

I'm not a religious person in the conventional sense, but I'll give credit where credit's due.

Take *Genesis* from the *Hebrew Bible*. Whoever wrote that got the process right in the opening sentence.

In the beginning (*Time*) God (*Intelligence*) created (*Energy*) heaven (*Space*) and earth (*Matter*). It was not till the third line that God said "*Let there be light*". She'd already whipped-up the universe before turning on the lights.

Pretty cool game we're playing, eh?

* * *

Does God Exist?

In my opinion, yes.

Because to think otherwise is illogical.

And because we think, therefore we exist. And because we exist, therefore we were created. And therefore something created us.

And this is logical.

So—tell me—why are so many people uncomfortable with God?

Like, let's give credit where credit's due. To our creator.

Hey, I'm not flogging religion. Religion is about belonging to a particular set of values like the mainstreams of Christianity to Muslim to Hindi to Buddhist and to all sorts of offshoots—and all those have something good to offer—but don't get me going on whackos like Scientologists and J-Dubs that hi-jack the Lord.

You don't have to be religious to be spiritual. And you don't have to be Catholic to be Christian. And you don't have to be smart to know that God exists.

Here's a good quote from the Bible:

“Be still and know that I am”.

Now I think that's God speaking.

* * *

Are You Intelligently Designed?

I never came away from an autopsy without reflecting on the marvelous design of the human body.

There are twelve major systems in your anatomy; all interlinked to ensure your survival. Remove any system (except maybe your reproductive one) and you'll die. And these systems go about their business—day after day—year after year—without your having to consciously think about operating them.

All that's required is a bit of maintenance and, when things go wrong, modern medical science usually knows how to patch you up. Today's medical practitioners can replace your organs, your limbs, your hair, and your teeth. But what modern science doesn't know is how all this came to be.

I'm going to do some edited plagiarism from William A. Dembski, of the *Access Research Network*, who wrote an excellent article on intelligent design. The idea has been around since the ancient Greeks, who did some deep thinking about where they came from and where they were going. Some of it was explained by mythology, some by theology, and some by analogy. But the central question—did something intentionally design us—remains unanswered today.

Design theory—also called design or the design argument—is the view that nature shows tangible signs of having been designed by a preexisting intelligence. The most

famous version of the design argument can be found in the work of theologian William Paley, who in 1802 proposed his "watchmaker" thesis. His reasoning went like this:

"In crossing a heath, suppose I pitched my foot against a stone and were asked how the stone came to be there; I might possibly answer, that, for anything I knew to the contrary, it had lain there forever. ... But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch happened to be in that place; I should hardly think the answer which I had before given would be sufficient."

To the contrary, the fine coordination of all the watch parts would force us to conclude that it must have had a maker—that there must have existed, at some time, and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers, who formed it for some purpose. We'd struggle to comprehend its construction and designed its use, just as we've struggled with ourselves.

Paley argued that we can draw the same conclusion about many natural objects, such as the eye. Just as a watch's parts are all perfectly adapted for the purpose of telling time, the parts of an eye are all perfectly adapted for the purpose of seeing. In each case, Paley argued, we discern the marks of an intelligent designer.

Although Paley's basic notion was sound and influenced thinkers for decades, Paley never provided a rigorous standard for detecting design in nature. Detecting design depended on such vague standards as being able to discern an object's "purpose". Moreover, Paley and other "natural theologians" tried to reason from the facts of nature to the existence of a wise and benevolent God.

All of these things made design an easy target for Charles Darwin when he proposed his theory of evolution.

Whereas Paley saw a finely-balanced world attesting to a kind and just God, Darwin pointed to nature's imperfections and brutishness. Although Darwin had once been an admirer of Paley, Darwin's own observations and experiences—especially the cruel, lingering death of his 9-year-old daughter Annie in 1850—destroyed whatever belief he had in a just and moral universe.

Following Darwin's triumph, design theory was all but banished from biology. Since the 1980s, however, advances in biology have convinced a new generation of scholars that Darwin's theory was inadequate to account for the sheer complexity of living things. These scholars—chemists, biologists, mathematicians, and philosophers of science—began to reconsider design theory. They formulated a new view of design that avoids the pitfalls of previous versions.

Called *Intelligent Design* (ID), to distinguish it from earlier versions of design theory (as well as from the naturalistic use of the term design), this new approach is more modest than its predecessors. Rather than trying to infer God's existence or character from the natural world, it simply claims "that intelligent causes are necessary to explain the

complex, information-rich structures of biology and that these causes are empirically detectable."

Like I said, I never came away from an autopsy without reflecting on the marvelous design of the human body.

* * *

The Dichotomy Of Life And Death

Do you ever think about how everything is a dichotomy?

Life and death. Order and chaos. Good and evil.

There're two sides to every coin—heads and tails.

You can't have a front without a back. An up without a down. An in without an out. And you sure can't have a top without a bottom.

Nor can you have life without death... or death without life.

Do you remember the movie *O God* with George Burns as the big guy?

The little girl who co-starred (can't recall her name, but she was excellent) challenged God to prove his existence. He really had to think and then he told her about opposites. He said you can't have hot without cold, happy without sad, full without hungry, safe without danger, and he went on with a lot more dichotomies. He said that it was him, God, that made it all happen.

She took it all in and asked what his opposite was. He replied without hesitation "*The Devil*". She asked how to protect herself from the Devil. God told her to always believe in God and ask for God's help.

Just like I do every day and I hope you do, too.

But my vision of God may be a little different than yours.

I don't buy into conventional religions which work a fear/reward factor into forcing you to follow the herd. I don't see God a vain old white man in flowing robes sitting on a throne in the sky and meddling in the day to day affairs of individual humans—a God who you have to suck-up to in order to get to heaven, or keep out of hell.

No, I see God in everything. From the stars and the sea, the trees and the critters, and in other people. I see God as that non-local plane of infinite intelligence that makes it all happen.

And I believe that we're simply a part of God and that we can ask for and get guidance if we just believe in God and know what we want when we ask.

And it's up to us as individuals to take responsibility to do the right thing, not the wrong thing.

Hmm. Another dichotomy. Right and wrong.

Just like life and death.

* * *

Is There Life After Death?

In my opinion, yes.

But it depends on how you think of life.

If you think of life as the physical part of your existence then, of course, you're immortal.

A basic principle of physics is that matter cannot be created or destroyed—only changed.

And your body has been changing since the moment you were conceived. Most of the cells in your body are not the same ones you had a year ago. That's why we eat—to supply energy and matter for replacing the cells that “*die*” off.

When you “*die*”, your cells decompose and go on in the stream of life. If you're buried, your body rests in containment, but still goes on to becoming part of the earth. If you're cremated, most of your mass goes up in smoke and into the atmosphere, and your ashes go wherever your family places them—in the water, under a tree, or fired off in a cannon like I know how one lady went out. (True story). Or if you “*die*” in the ocean, the crabs eat you. Hey! They gotta eat, too.

But what about your soul?

I like the word soul because it simply labels that intangible part of your existence that provides “*life*” to everything that exists. It can no more be created or destroyed any more than your cells. It only changes from one form of consciousness to another.

Ever hear of the term “**animism**”?

It's the indigenous belief that everything has a soul. A life force. The essence to existence. The conduit of consciousness. The intangible field that connects with all else including humans, animals, plants, celestial bodies, and the forces of nature.

I believe that when you “*die*”, your soul transcends from this plane of local consciousness and rejoins that plane of non-local consciousness which is the cloud of infinite intelligence that gives order to all existence.

You go back to where you were before you were born.

I call that source of infinite intelligence “*God*”.

I'm comfortable with that word, too. It's simple and it's been used a lot.

Are you comfortable with your soul?

You should be.

Because your soul is the only thing you came into this plane of existence with and the only thing you're going to take going out.

* * *

What Death Teaches You About Life

Regular [*DyingWords*](#) readers know that I'm a retired cop and coroner, but probably don't know that in my “*retirement*” I have the dream seasonal side-job.

I skipper a wildlife tour boat for a high-end, fly-in, eco-tourism lodge on Canada's British Columbia Pacific coast.

I take people from all over the world to see grizzly bears and whales in their wilderness habitat. I get paid to do what others pay dearly to experience.

Pretty cool retirement, eh?

Yesterday, I took seven guests to watch the food chain in action. (Five enjoyed it. Two didn't. That's their problem that they didn't clue-in and ruined their own holiday.)

Actually, the chain is more like a ball. In the middle of the ball are the salmon. Right now the salmon are returning to spawn in the freshwater rivers after completing their cycle in the open-ocean, salt-water.

Salmon start life as eggs laid in the exact place where they return to die.

How do they find their way home? No one knows. Scientists write it off to instinct. That's the easiest cop-out to get around dealing with a huge gap in the human understanding—consciousness. But that's for another blog post.

So the salmon fry start out as being food for everything else that needs them—other fish, birds, mammals, insects, amphibians, and reptiles. They work the numbers game, head out en-masse to the sea where the predation continues. They fight their way home through whales and dolphins and seals and sea lions and bears and eagles and gulls and otters and wolves and, of course, human fishers. (Fisher is a gender-neutral, politically-correct word that we must now use.)

Then, those salmon who make it through the gauntlet lay their eggs (right where they were born, remember!), and they die. Some end up in the stomachs of bears, some in eagles or seals, some in mink or martin, and some in other fish.

But nothing goes to waste. Their carcasses rot and fertilize the streams, or they're dragged on shore and fertilize the plants. They're also pooped out by all the feasting creatures and fertilize the riparian zone, which is the forest canopy along the stream's edge which gives shade and protection for the eggs and the fry.

And the ball keeps rolling.

But remove the salmon and the ball deflates.

The salmon are vitally important in keeping the earth ball bouncing.

Without the salmon, the whole food chain collapses and nature is in one hell of a mess.

Where do you as a human life play in all this?

Well, if you come for a boat ride with me, I'll show you how the food ball works here in the Canadian wilderness. I'll help you observe nature at work, but I'll let you figure out your place in the life and death cycle.

Here's a hint: You're every much as part of the ball (which we call earth) as every other critter is.

So, go enjoy your life while you have it because you're going to end up dead one day.

Just like the salmon.

And all those who depend upon the salmon.

Oh, yeah! Another thing.

Please don't ruin anyone else's trip before you get off the boat.

* * *

Avert Your Eyes — Insight Into Human Nature With Seth Godin

I'm a big fan of writer, marketer, motivator, and change-maker Seth Godin and follow his blog religiously. Seth has previously guest-posted on [DyingWords](#) and he generously agreed to return with this insightful piece about human nature.

* * *

When there's a wreck on the side of the road, we can't help it. Despite our best efforts, we look at the accident, sometimes even slow down to get a really good look.

Why?

To remind ourselves it's not us. To reassure ourselves it's not someone we know. Phew. Rubbernecking is our way of reassuring ourselves.

Often, though, we do precisely the opposite when it comes to the apparently unfixable, to the enormity of horrible events, to tragedies. (Enormity doesn't mean "extra enormous". It refers to the emptiness of something so horrible and large we have trouble comprehending it).

Time Magazine produces a cover that we can't bear, so we don't buy that issue. We don't see the billboard. A disease appears incurable, so we don't talk about it. It's easier to talk about the little stuff or events with hope.

We also do it with science, to facts about the world around us.

There's a long history of denialism, defending the status quo and ignoring what others discover. That two balls of different weights fall at the same speed. That the Earth rotates around the Sun. That the world is millions of years old. That we walked on the Moon. The denials all sound the same. They don't come from stupidity, from people who aren't smart enough to understand what's going on. They come from people who won't look.

Why deny? It's a way to avert our eyes.

Two related reasons, internal and external.

The external reason is affiliation.

What happens to one's standing when you dare to question the accepted status quo? What are the risks to doing your own research, to putting forth a falsifiable theory and being prepared to find it proven wrong? What will you tell your neighbors?

When adherence to the status quo of our faith or organization or social standing looms large, it's often far easier to just look the other way—to feign ignorance, or call yourself a skeptic (n.b. all good scientists are actually skeptics, that's how they build careers... the difference is that the skeptical scientist does the work to prove to her peers that she's right, and acknowledges when she's not).

There's more data now available to more people than ever before.

And the prize for using statistics and insight to contradict the scientific status quo is huge. If a thesis doesn't sit right with you, look closer—not away. Do the science, including acknowledging when your theory isn't right.

The internal reason is fear.

The fear of having to re-sort what we believe. Of feeling far too small in a universe that's just too big. Most of all, of engaging in a never-ending cycle of theories and testing, with the world a little shaky under our feet as we live with a cycle that gets us closer to what's real.

Part of being our best selves is having the guts to not avert our eyes—to look closely at what scares us, what disappoints us, what threatens us.

By looking closely, we have a chance to make change happen.”

* * *

Why Feminism Will Change The World

This special guest post is from my daughter, Emily Rodgers, of Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada. Em gets it. Always has & always will. So proud of her.

* * *

Feminism. What do you think of when you hear the word?

Do you think of bra-burning, ball-busting, liberal women complaining that men are jerks and declaring the need to stand by our "*sisters*"?

Well, truth be told, this is exactly why women need to fight harder and smarter than men to be respected, understood, and appreciated. Because few take "*feminism*" seriously.

I will tell you exactly what real feminists think and do. I'm not talking about the man-haters. I'm talking about women who believe in equal rights being just that: EQUAL.

Think of women as the underdog. We've been told our whole lives we can't do things because that's what men are for, or that men will always do it better... so why bother.

Anyone who has actively followed sports knows there's much to be learned from the underdog. Fighting through adversity consistently and patiently leads to the development of new approaches and lines of thinking, and eventually to success and achievement.

Feminism on principle wants to eliminate the divide and bring equality to men and women. However, feminism itself certainly has a divide.

On one hand, there are radical feminists who want nothing more than to see the male species eliminated entirely. And then there are what I call "*moderate*" feminists who want the same opportunities for both men and women. Isn't that, after all, what "*equal rights*" means?

This is why I call myself a Feminist.

It's no secret that women have suffered and still do.

The suffering of not having the right to vote, the right to employment, the right to control over one's own mind, body and soul—the right to life.

But feminism is not about getting back at "*men*" for the inequality women suffer. It's about using our empowerment which comes from persevering through the underdog role, to pave the way for equality on every level. Whether it be race, sex, class, age, sexual orientation, or any other reason to judge someone, women have the numbers and the power to make a difference and set the example.

We can use our cause to make the world a better place.

And not just play the "*blame game*" like many of the aforementioned radical feminists tend to do. That's not what true feminists are about. And the many people involved in the original women's movement would agree. We can't have a world worth living in without both men and women.

I recently bought a bracelet for \$33.

Thirty of those dollars go to an organization called *BraveHeart Women* which brings together Israeli and Palestinian women in the attempt to force them to set aside their differences and realize that they are all women.

These women are raising families, contributing to society, educating their communities, trying to please and appease, and doing all of that while being marginalized by their own culture. They have critical roles to play in this world and their religion should not determine their hatred for each other.

If only we could apply this same *BraveHeart Women* tactic to all other religious, idealistic wars and disputes that have been based on power struggles. Do you see where I'm going with this?

Women are leading the way in modern ways of negotiation and peacemaking. And why? It's because many women know firsthand what it is like to be discriminated against and, therefore, have solutions to offer.

I encourage you to put your judgments on feminism aside and just think about what it has to offer this world if properly promoted and applied.

Some people dream about winning the lottery. I dream about a world in which women have implemented systems that no longer tolerate discrimination.

It can't be done by one person.

It takes many people with the same vision. United and committed. Determined and passionate. And for you, it started when you read the first word of my post. Take this perspective out into the world with you today. Make one small effort to change the way things are. Notice what is deemed acceptable and what goes against what I've shared with you here.

Women are the dark horses—remember the power you hold.

Use it.

Use it wisely.

And use it today.

* * *

What's The Meaning Of Life?

Some people believe there's one single meaning of life.

They think that the universe was created for a purpose and that human beings are part of some larger cosmic plan.

They think our meaning comes from being part of this plan and is written into the universe waiting to be discovered.

A humanist view of meaning in life is different.

Humanism is “a philosophical and ethical stance that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively, and generally prefers critical thinking and evidence (rationalism, empiricism) over acceptance of dogma or superstition.”

This is reprinted from the *British Humanist Association*:

“Humanists do not see any obvious purpose to the universe, rather it’s a natural phenomenon with no design behind it. Meaning is not something out there waiting to be discovered, but something we create in our own lives.

And, although this vast and incredibly old universe was not created just for us, all of us are connected to something bigger than ourselves, whether it is family and community, a tradition stretching into that past, an idea or cause looking forward to the future, or the beautiful, wider natural world on which we were born and our species evolved.

This way of thinking means there’s not just one big meaning of life, but that every person will have many different meanings in their life.

Each one of us is unique and our different personalities depend on a complex mixture of influences from our parents, our environment, and our connections. They change with experience and changing circumstances.

There are no simple recipes for living that are applicable to all people.

We have different tastes and preferences, different priorities and goals. One person may like drawing, walking in the woods, and caring for their grandchildren. Another may like cooking and watching soap operas, savoring a favorite wine, or a new food.

We may find meaning through our family, our career, making a commitment to an artistic project or a political reform, in simple pleasures, such as gardening and hobbies, or in a thousand other ways, giving reign to our creativity or our curiosity, our intellectual capacities, or our emotional life.

The time to be happy is now.

The way to find meaning in life is to get on and live it as fully and as well as we can.”

Personally, I don't agree that there's no intelligence behind the design of the universe, but I agree with this view about happiness being part of the meaning of life.

Watch this 3-minute video on Humanism's view about happiness. It's really well done and will make you think about life:

[How Can I Be Happy?](#)

* * *

Sweat Lodges — A Profound Spiritual Experience

I've had the honor to participate in three *Carrier First Nations* sweat lodge ceremonies. They were profound spiritual and cultural experiences and I'd like to share them with you.

Sweat lodge ceremonies have been a First Nations tradition since time immemorial and they serve all people, not just the indigenous. Sweats ceremonial clean and heal the body, both physically and mentally. They purge the mind, bring clarity, and test participant's endurance, strength, and courage. They're holy places where people renew deep and natural connection to the universe and the realm of spirits.

Though usually associated with healing, each sweat holds different purposes and each leader conducts their affairs a bit differently. One session might work out family or community problems. Another might handle addiction or other health issues. Some pass on oral traditions through storytelling. But all ceremonies aim to purify your mind, body, spirit, heart, and mend your dis-ease—be it physical, emotional, directional, or spiritual. It's much like a dialysis of the soul.

“*Sweat lodge*” essentially translates into returning to the womb and the innocence of childhood. Entering the dome-like structure and crawling its shallow, earthen pit is representative of passing the womb of *Mother Earth*. The lodge is dark, moist, hot, and safe. The darkness relates to human ignorance before the spiritual world and, even more, blindness to the physical world.

Extensive symbolism is practiced in sweat lodge ceremonies. It's a place of transformation and purification through sensory deprivation, extreme heat, steam, prayers, pipes, rattles, drums, and song. Enlightenment is attained through breathing, meditating, journeying, and sharing words and song. It's a unique and profoundly personal experience where your body is cleansed of toxins, stress is removed, and your mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellness are aligned.

In the purification of your spirit inside a sweat lodge, all sense of race, gender, and religion is set aside. As in the Mother's womb and the Father's eyes, we are all the same. We are One. Each of us has the equal ability to sit with the *Creator* itself.

The entrance to a sweat lodge faces the East and the sacred fire pit where rocks are heated in a wood fire. This has very significant spiritual value. Each new day begins in the East with the rising of *Father Sun*, the source of life, power, and the dawn of wisdom, while the fire heating the rocks is the undying light of the world—eternity—it's a new spiritual beginning; a new day that's sought in the ceremony.

Central to the sweat is the ideal of spiritual cleanliness. Many sweats start with fasting for an entire day, especially avoiding caffeine, alcohol, and other unhealthy substances. Prior to entering the lodge, participants smudge with sage, sweet-grass, or cedar smoke as a means toward ritual cleanliness.

Inside, participants sit in a circle around the central pit into which white-hot rocks are shoveled in by the fire-tender. Modesty is expected, but any material objects such as jewelry, watches, or iPods are discouraged. This is a sacred place to pray, meditate, learn and heal, and that must be the focus. With the door shut and the lodge lit only by the glow of the rocks, the leader begins by pouring water from a wooden bucket onto the rocks.

When the steam and temperature rise, so do the senses.

Messages and vision from the *Creator*, or *Infinite Intelligence* if you'd like to call it that, are received through the group consciousness. One at a time, as a talking stick is passed, all inside get an opportunity to speak, to pray, and to ask for guidance and forgiveness from the *Creator* and the people they have hurt or who have hurt them. As they go around the circle, they tell who they are and where they are from, so the *Creator*, the *Spirit People*, and all there can acknowledge them.

A sweat is typically four sessions—called rounds or endurances—each lasting about thirty to forty-five minutes. The round ends when the leader announces the opening of the door.

The first round is for recognition of the spirit world which resides in the black West where the sun goes down. The *Creator* may be asked for a "*spirit guide*" by some of the participants.

The second round is for recognition of courage, endurance, strength, cleanliness, and honesty, calling upon the power of the white North.

The recognition of knowledge and individual prayer symbolize the third round, praying to the direction of the daybreak star and the rising sun that we may gain wisdom and that we may follow the red road of the East in all our endeavors.

Fitting, the last round centers on the yellow South and stands for spiritual growth and healing.

From spirit guides of the west—from the courage, honesty, and endurance of the north—from the knowledge—and wisdom obtained in the east—we continue the circle to the south from which comes our growth.

Respect, sincerity, humility, the ability to listen, and the need to slow down and think about what's important in life, are the keys in growing through the sweat lodge ceremony.

And a caution—you can't endure a sweat lodge ceremony with a closed mind. You'll just be horribly uncomfortable, claustrophobic, and you'll probably claw for the door to puke-out your guts.

* * *

The Dalai Lama Is A Shaman

The Dalai Lama posted this on his Facebook site:

“All the world's major religions, with their emphasis on love, compassion, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness can, and do, promote inner values. But the reality of the world today is that grounding ethics in religion is no longer adequate.

This is why I am increasingly convinced that the time has come to find a way of thinking about spirituality and ethics beyond religion altogether.

My confidence in venturing into science lies in my basic belief, that as in science as in Buddhism, understanding the nature of reality is perused by critical investigation: if scientific analysis were to conclusively demonstrate that certain claims in Buddhism to be false, then we must accept the findings of science and abandon those claims of Buddhism.”

It takes a huge set of cojones for a major religious figure like the Dalai Lama to publicly say this.

He's not saying that his belief in Buddhism is wrong. He's just saying he's got an open mind and is willing to look and listen to science.

As in scientific control.

A controlled way of thinking about spirituality, and ethics, and other forms of consciousness.

It's unfortunate that so many of the world's religions are closed to scientific discussion.

Over the years, I've critically investigated the science around religion.

That led me to a belief in Shamanism.

No, not to some witch doctor dancing around a fire with a bone and a chicken.

The science of Shamanism has been around 40,000 years, in all cultures, and on all continents. It's appeared in identical forms to all peoples; despite language, customs, technology, and total remoteness from each other.

Shamanism is about scientific mind control.

It's about a controlled mind, scientifically entering into altered states of consciousness. Its mandate is to achieve wisdom, just like the Dalai Lama does in meditating in his Buddhist faith.

Controlled, altered, scientific states of consciousness gives us the wisdom to promote inner values of love, compassion, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness; which are the Dalai Lama's values.

These values add up to a total state of happiness.

Nirvana.

In the Buddhist context, "*nirvana*" refers to the imperturbable stillness of mind after the fires of desire, aversion, and delusion have been finally extinguished.

So a Shaman goes about Shamaning—helping others—just as a minister goes about ministering. Or the Dalai goes about Lamaing.

Shamanism is a blend of science and spirituality. Shamans use outer scientific knowledge to offer inner spiritual values.

Pretty much like the Dalai Lama has been doing.

He connects with infinite consciousness and brings us wisdom.

So the Dalai Lama is a Shaman.

* * *

Was Jesus Christ Supernatural?

Whether you're Christian or not, you have to behold the enormous impact Jesus of Nazareth continues to have on humanity.

Twenty-one centuries after his recorded birth, approximately 2.2 billion souls adhere to Christianity—a mainstay being their belief that Jesus possessed supernatural abilities.

The religion asks you to accept the Articles of Faith—the Immaculate Conception, the Miracles, direct communication with the Divine, and the Resurrection/Ascension.

All of these require your acceptance that Jesus was, and continues to be, a supernatural entity. The payback of your faith, they say, is everlasting life for your soul.

So what, exactly, does supernatural mean?

Without checking with Webster, I'd say it's events for which there appears no natural, scientific explanation.

Much of our understanding of science comes from operating in our timeline. 2,000 years ago the PC I'm writing this on and the Internet connection you're receiving it through would be mind-blowing. We'd probably get stoned for Blogging.

Over the past two years, I did a lot of investigation into the supernatural while writing [**No Witnesses To Nothing**](#). The novel's based on a true-crime story where many believe paranormal intervention occurred, as there's no natural, scientific explanation for what went down during a police operation on a frozen Canadian Yukon lake, thirty years ago.

My research into the science and spirituality behind the human soul took me into the worlds of organized religion, First Nations mythology, Shamanism, consciousness, and quantum physics.

I confirmed there's a lot of really weird shit that goes down which science sucks at explaining, but there's continual scientific progress being made into understanding all kinds of fascinating things.

Recently, the Higgs Boson confirmation bust the quantum door wide-open in our understanding how the sub-atomic communicates—some call it the “*God Particle*”.

Another little gem is in DNA research with *Single Nucleotide Polymorphism* (SNP) explaining how genetic code realignment at the quantum level accounts for how chameleons and cuttlefish camouflage. It seems they think themselves into shape shifting.

I believe the human soul exists and I made an attempt to scientifically & spiritually explain how the soul works in [**No Witnesses To Nothing**](#).

But I gotta admit that it comes down to faith—just as one-third of humanity accepts that Jesus Christ was supernatural and I respect that.

* * *

What's So Special About The Human Brain?

Why do we study other animals and they don't study us? What is it about the human brain that allows the cognitive ability for abstract reasoning and creativeness? What is it that makes the human brain so special? It comes down to one thing that humans do that no other living creature does.

I just watched a fascinating TED Talk by neuroscientist Dr. Suzana Herculano-Houzel where she looks at the difference in animal brain structures and arrives at a surprising, yet simple explanation.

For years, mainstream science assumed there was a direct relationship to the rate of intelligence and the size of the brain.

However, if you look at the brain of a cow compared to the brain of a chimp, they both weigh around 400 grams. Using that theory, the two species should have about the same intelligence. Carrying it further, a human brain weighs about 1.5 kilograms, an elephant's is 4.5 kilos, and a blue whale tops out at 9 kg. Something clearly is wrong with the size of the brain vs. intelligence theory.

Is there an intelligence relationship in the size of an animal's brain to the size of its body?

Take gorillas for instance. Their bodies average 180 kg and their brains are 0.5 kg. Human bodies average 75 kg and our brains are 1.5 kg. So the human brain to body ratio are 7.2 times larger than gorillas and we appear to be a lot smarter—although that's debatable with some people.

But the daily energy consumption that a human brain requires is proportionately much higher than a gorilla's brain.

Gorillas spend most of their day feeding to supply energy in keeping a larger body mass fueled, whereas humans only require three quick meals to support a smaller body but a larger and more active brain.

Human brains are only 2% of our body mass but require 25% of our energy consumption to operate. Gorilla brains only consume 10% of their daily calorie intake.

So what's going on here?

Dr. Herculano-Houzel researched the long-held assumption that there was a direct proportion of neurons, or thought processors, per weight of gray matter. It was thought the human brain held around 100 billion neurons, but she couldn't find the source of this information.

So, she decided to do some experimentation.

Dr. Herculano-Houzel developed a process to extract neuron nuclei from gray-matter cells and established that the average human brain contains 86 billion neurons—16 billion in our cerebral cortex alone, which is by far the highest in any species and the seat of cognitive awareness.

She observed that there was nothing different in the basic structure between human brains and other primates like gorillas, chimps, and orangutans.

And yes, humans are just another species of primate. It's just that we have a much higher brain to body size ratio and we have a lot more neurons than our cousins do.

But our brain to body energy requirements are so much higher than apes, yet we feed far less. This led her to ask the question *"What happened in our evolutionary process that made human brains so proportionately larger?"*

Anthropology determines that the human brain suddenly increased about 1.5 million years ago. Something else happened at the same time.

Humans learned to cook their food.

We learned to use fire to pre-digest our caloric intake which supercharged the ability to fuel and grow the brain. Because of cooking high-calorie, high-protein foods, our brain size rapidly increased to becoming a large energy-consuming asset rather than a liability.

Humans spent far less time searching for, devouring, and digesting low-calorie, raw vegetative foods than other primates did. Our omnivorous diet allowed us to focus our cerebral cortex on developing better food processing ventures like agriculture, civilization, electricity, and supermarkets.

So what do we do that no other creature does?

We cook.

* * *

Watch Dr. Suzana Herculano-Houzel's fascinating, 13 minute [TED Talk here](#).

* * *

The Real Genius Of Albert Einstein's Brain

On April 19, 1955, Mrs. Schafer asked her fifth graders at Valley Road School in Princeton, New Jersey, if they had anything to contribute for current events. A smart little girl, sitting at the front, shot up her hand and blurted "Einstein died!" A smart-ass boy, at the back of the class, said, "Yeah, and my dad's got his brain."

When Albert Einstein died of an abdominal aneurysm the previous day, it was his will that his body be cremated. There was no mention of his brain being kept for scientific study. The story of what happened to Einstein's brain over the past sixty years, and what today's science tells us about the cause of his genius, is fascinating.

Einstein was autopsied by Dr. Thomas Harvey, a pathologist at Princeton University, who removed the brain and kept it without the Einstein family's knowledge. Dr. Harvey was caught like a grave robber, however worked out a deal with Einstein's son, getting permission to retain the brain—but only for research, not for profit or show.

Dr. Harvey fixed the brain in celloidin, which is a standard procedure in preserving gray matter, then dissected it into 240 blocks and 1,000 microscopic slides, photographing it extensively. He sent specimens to leading neurologists around the world for their examination and, in time, received most of the pieces back.

Findings were that Einstein's brain was somewhat smaller than most male's—2.7 pounds vs. 3.0 pounds, however the inferior parietal region which governs mathematical and special reasoning was 15% larger than average. Otherwise, they thought at the time, he was a pretty normal guy—at least anatomically.

For twenty-three years Dr. Harvey kept Albert Einstein's brain in two glass jars in a wooden crate, sometimes in his basement, sometimes in a closet, and for a while behind a beer cooler under his bed. In 1978, it was "*rediscovered*" and became a media frenzy.

That died down and it stayed with Dr. Harvey, traveling here, there, and wherever Dr. Harvey went as his career disappeared into twilight.

In 2010, after Dr. Harvey's death, the brain was transferred to two locations—the U.S. Army's National Museum of Health and Medicine, and the Mutter Museum in Philadelphia where parts of it are on public display.

But science didn't forget about Albert Einstein's brain.

As techniques advanced, Dr. Harvey loaned it out to researchers.

In the 1980's Professor Marian Diamond of the University of California, Berkley, pursued a theory that the ratio of glial cells in Einstein's gray matter may be higher than average. Glial cells provide nutritional support for the neurons in the brain which allow the parts to communicate. Sure enough, she found that the glial cells in Einstein's left inferior parietal area were "*statistically significant*" and that this high ratio could have contributed to his ability to understand complex scientific problems.

Advancing to 1999, a team of researchers at McMaster University in Canada made the shocking discovery that a portion of Einstein's brain called the parietal operculum region in the inferior frontal gyrus in the frontal lobe was vacant. They also found that part of a bordering region called the lateral sulcus, or the Sylvian fissure, was absent. The researchers speculated that this vacancy, or a missing part of Einstein's brain, actually allowed his thoughts to "*see*" each other, rather than "*speak*" which backs up Einstein's own claim that he was a totally visual thinker, not a verbal communicator.

And, in a 2013 study published in the credible, medical journal Brain that analyzed Einstein's corpus callosum—the large bundles of nerves that connect the two cerebral hemispheres—scientists determined that Einstein's nerve connections were thicker than average which may have contributed to his obvious ability to function at a high plane of thought.

The actual anatomical reason for Einstein's genius remains a mystery.

Perhaps, as science advances, new techniques will develop and may conclusively explain why a simple patent clerk, with a flawed brain, was able to see himself riding on a light beam through space and then found a way to express the theory of relativity through words.

But here's how smart Albert Einstein really was.

He understood the public's obsession with his status and he understood human nature. He wanted his body burned, including his brain, so it wouldn't be a shrine to the macabre. He knew that scientists wanting their own celebrity status—their own moment in the science sun—would pore over his glial cells, his parietal region, his lateral sulcus, his frontal gyrus, and his corpus callosum and would profess that they'd cracked the code of genius.

And he knew most of it would be bullshit.

Albert Einstein understood what made him different—he simply saw his own thoughts.

He probably wanted people to figure it out for themselves.

* * *

Emotional Intelligence — IQ vs. EQ

There's a world of difference between book smarts and street sharps—between braininess and savvy. The first has its place, but the second is more useful.

Being smart is the ability to logically think things out. Being sharp is the ability to tune into the world, to read situations, and to survive.

In my time as a cop, I dealt with a lot of people. I have to say some of the sharpest weren't dressed in suits, carrying briefcases, and living off retainers—they were living off their wits on the street.

There but for the grace of God go I. Regardless of how these street people developed their lifestyle, it was evident some of them were pretty *"intelligent"*.

So what is intelligence?

Intelligence has been defined in many different ways such as your capacity for logic, abstract thought, understanding, self-awareness, communication, learning, emotional knowledge, memory, planning, creativity, and problem-solving.

Where it comes from is anybody's guess.

It's something that's designed into us, possibly embedded in our brain through DNA.

I'm a believer in the concept of *Infinite Intelligence* which is the basis of Napoleon Hill's masterpiece on human achievement in his timeless book *Think And Grow Rich*. If you haven't read it, do so. If you have read it, go read it again.

Intelligence has long been measured in a quotient called IQ. It's different from a measure of your ability to control your emotions which is called EQ—a much more difficult thing to measure.

Most average adults have an IQ around 100 on the *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale*.

The *MENSA* club requires members to be in the top 98 percentile which sets the bar at 132.

According to the *Guinness Book of Records*, the *"smartest"* person in the world is *Marilyn vos Savant*, who scored 185.

Probably the most intelligent person who ever existed was *Leonardo da Vinci* who's been estimated at around 220.

Conversely, mental retardation used to be divided into sub-classifications, but these labels are officially obsolete due to political correctness:

Borderline Deficiency (IQ 70-80), Moron (IQ 50-69), Imbecile (IQ 20-49) and Idiot (below 20).

I've dealt with a few in my policing career who rated around 15 and I have my own term for that classification.

So what about emotional smarts?

I have a great book called *The EQ Edge* by Steven J. Stein, Ph.D. and Howard E. Book, M.D. I'll steal their definition of EQ.

“Emotional Quotient is the set of skills that enable us to make our way in a complex world -- the personal, social and survival aspects of overall intelligence, the elusive common sense, and sensitivity that are essential to effective daily functioning. It has to do with the ability to read the political and social environment, and landscape them; to intuitively grasp what others want and need, what strengths and weaknesses are; to remain unruffled by stress and to be engaging. The kind of person others want to be around and will follow.”

Sophisticated mapping techniques in brain research have recently confirmed that many thought processes pass through our emotional centers as they take the psychological journey that converts outside information from infinite intelligence into individual response and action.

God only knows where infinite intelligence comes from.

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What's Your Myers-Briggs Personality Type?

“The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) is the best-known and most trusted personality assessment in the world. It's helped develop effective work teams, build stronger families, and create successful careers. The MBTI assessment improves quality of life for you and your organization. Giving you this personalized way to take the assessment fulfills our mission: bringing lives "closer to our heart's desire.”

This descriptor is from the home page of the *Myers-Briggs Foundation*—an organization that furthers the 1940's work of psychologists Katharine Briggs and her daughter, Isabel

Briggs-Myers who furthered Carl Jung's theory. They categorized people into four principal psychological functions by which humans experience the world—sensation, intuition, feeling, and thinking—and that one of these four functions is dominant for a person most of the time.

Sounds familiar... I took this personality test a few years ago and jotted the score in my notebook. Hmm... might make a good blog topic so I'll take it again and compare to the old score... lemme take another look at what this thing's all about.

Myers & Briggs developed an *"introspective, self-report questionnaire designed to indicate psychological preferences and typing how people perceive the world and make decisions"*.

Paraphrasing from Wikipedia (this is not-so-exciting stuff - promise it'll get livelier) — *"Carl Jung's typology theories postulated a sequence of 4 cognitive functions (thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition), each having 1 of 2 polar orientations (extraversion or introversion), giving a total of 8 dominant functions. The purpose of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality inventory is to make the theory of psychological types described by Jung understandable and useful in people's lives."* (I hope so because this is a pretty wordy explanation.)

The theory's essence is that seemingly random variation in behaviors is actually quite orderly and consistent, due to basic differences in the ways individuals use their perception and judgment.

Wiki goes on *"Perception involves ways of becoming aware of things, people, happenings, or ideas. Judgment involves ways of coming to conclusions about what's been perceived. If people differ systematically in what they perceive, and in how they reach conclusions, then it is only reasonable for them to differ correspondingly in their interests, reactions, values, motivations, and skills."*

Okay. Starting to make sense to me. Tell me more about these 8 functions.

"In developing the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, the aim was to make the insights of type theory accessible to individuals and groups. They addressed 2 related goals in the developments and application of the MBTI instrument:

The identification of basic preferences of each of the four dichotomies specified or implicit in Jung's theory.

The identification and description of the 16 distinctive personality types that result from the interactions among the preferences."

Whoa. 16? Thought there was 8? Not following the math.

"Stick with us," they said. "We evolved — $4 \times 4 = 16$."

Okay...

"We took Jung's base and turned it into four questions:

What's your favorite world? — Do you prefer to focus on the outer world, or on your own inner world? This is called Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I).

How do you absorb information? — Do you prefer to focus on the basic information you take in, or do you prefer to interpret and add meaning? This is called Sensing (S) or Intuition (N).

How do you make decisions? — When making decisions, do you prefer to first look at logic and consistency, or first look at the people and special circumstances? This is called Thinking (T) or Feeling (F).

How do you structure? — In dealing with the outside world, do you prefer to get things decided, or do you prefer to stay open to new information and options? This is called Judging (J) or Perceiving (P).

When you decide on your preference in each category, you have your own personality type, which is expressed as a four letter code."

Okay. The 16 personality types of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument are listed here as they are often shown in what is called a "type table". Casually, they're grouped into four personalities:

Analysts

INTJ — Architect — Imaginative & strategic thinkers with a plan for everything.

INTP — Logician — Innovative inventors with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge.

ENTJ — Commander — Bold, imaginative, and strong-willed leaders who will find or make a way.

ENTP — Debater — Smart and curious thinkers who cannot resist an intellectual challenge.

Diplomats

INFJ — Advocates — Quiet and mystical, yet very inspiring and tireless idealists.

INFP — Mediator — Poetic, kind, and altruistic, always eager to help a good cause.

ENFJ — Protagonist — Charismatic and inspiring leaders who are able to mesmerize followers.

ENFP — Campaigner — Eager, creative, and socially free-spirits who always find a way to smile.

Sentinals

ISTJ — Logician — Practical and fact minded individuals who's integrity cannot be doubted.

ISFJ — Defender — Very dedicated and warm protectors, always ready to protect loved ones.

ESTJ — Executive — Excellent administrators, unsurpassed at managing things and people.

ESFJ — Consul — Extraordinarily caring, social and popular people, always ready to help.

Explorers

ISTP — Virtuoso — Bold and masterful experimenters, handy with all kinds of tools.

ISFP — Adventurer — Flexible and charming artists, always wanting to explore or experience something new.

ESTP — Entrepreneur — Smart, energetic, and highly perceptive people who truly enjoy living on the edge.

ESFP — Entertainer — Spontaneous, enthusiastic, and energetic people; life is never boring around them.

Interesting, I thought. I'll take the test again and show [DyingWords](#) followers what makes me tick. So I googled around and found three different FREE approaches to the M-B test and took them all:

[Humanetrics](#)

[My Personality Test](#)

[Truity Type Finder](#)

I also checked the [Myers-Briggs site](#), but they want \$150 to sign-in, although it comes with an hour of shrink time.

So how'd I make out?

INTJ — Every frikkin' time, including the one I did a few years ago.

So how accurate is it? You be the judge. Here's my *INTJ* psychological diagnosis from the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*.

"The INTJ personality type is the Introverted Intuition with Extraverted Thinking type. Individuals that exhibit the INTJ personality type are knowledgeable, inventive, and theoretical, whether they're working on long-term personal goals or creative projects in their professions. They are "big-picture" thinkers, creating constructive ambitions and planning for them accordingly. Myers-Briggs test INTJ types hold a clear idea of what they would like to accomplish in their future, and they use that vision as motivation to complete all of the necessary steps to obtain their dreams. This dedication to their visions and their ability to find ways to achieve them make INTJ types high-functioning employees:

Their looking-towards-the-future mentality helps them to create original and inspiring ideas for companies, as well as a well-thought-out plans for achieving these goals.

Value the intellectual ability of themselves and those of others, and place a high importance on it.

Can be adamant and commanding when the professional environment requires a certain level of authority.

Because of their ability to think long-term, they are often placed in (or place themselves in) authoritative positions in business and groups.

Quick to find solutions to challenges, whether that requires basing their solutions on pre-conceived knowledge or finding new information to base their decisions off of.

Can relate newly gathered information to the bigger picture.

Enjoy complicated problems, utilizing both book and street smarts (logical and hypothetical ideas) to find solutions.

They're Strong Planners With Great Follow-Through

INTJ personality types are long-term goal-setters, creating plans to bring their goals to completion, and then following this plan using thought-out approaches and procedures devised by the INTJ. They are self-reliant, individualistic, and self-secure. INTJ personality types have a large amount of faith in their own competence and intelligence, even if others openly disagree or the opposite proves true. This also makes Myers-Briggs Type Indicator-assessed INTJ types their own worst critics, as they hold themselves to the highest standards. They dislike turbulence, perplexity, clutter, and when others waste their time and/or energy on something unimportant. This MBTI type is also succinct, analytical, discerning, and definitive.

In their personal lives, Myers-Briggs test INTJ types exhibit many of the same behaviors that they do in their professional lives. They expect competence from their peers and are more than willing to share their intelligence or ideas with those around them. Occasionally, INTJ personality types may find it difficult to hold their own in social situations, whether that is due to their actions or their opinions. To others, MBTI Assessment Test -assessed INTJ types seem set in their ways or opinions because of their high respect for themselves, but oftentimes reality is just the opposite, with the INTJ type taking in new tidbits of information at all times, evaluating their own opinions and ideas accordingly. They are also often seen as a tad distant, closed off from others emotionally but not intellectually.

Sometimes INTJ Types Are Too Confident

This distance associated with this MBTI test-assessed personality type can occasionally progress to the point of negativity. INTJ types can close themselves off so much that they stop revealing what they are thinking/how they are coming to certain conclusions, which can make it seem as though they are simply rushing through a task. They can often do just that—jumping to underdeveloped endings without considering all new or present information. This flaw can also cause Myers-Briggs test assessed INTJ types to overlook important data and facts necessary to achieve their goals.

Their high level of competence coupled with their big-picture way of thinking can sometimes cause problems for this Myers-Briggs type. Because so many of their ideas are long-term, INTJ type ideas can occasionally lack the ability to fully come to fruition.

In their relationships with others, MBTI Test-assessed INTJ Personality Types may come off as judgmental, especially to those who aren't as openly enthusiastic about the INTJ types ideas or intelligence. If they feel that others are not viewing them as highly as they view themselves, there is also a chance that they will not necessarily provide the level of feedback that that individual may need. However, by concentrating on developing their Sensing and Feeling, the INTJ type may fashion more intimate connections with their peers, spending less time in their heads and more time engaging with the world around them.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator INTJ personality type uses their big-picture thinking along with their logical problem-solving skills to succeed in a variety of occupations, usually those requiring scientific reasoning/understanding and those that involve building or creating something scientifically tangible. For these reasons, Myers-Briggs Test assessed INTJ types often find themselves choosing careers such as plant scientist, engineer, medical scientist, internist, or architect. MBTI test INTJ types also find themselves leaning towards those professions that require them to hold an authoritative position or a leadership role, such as a management consultant or a top executive.

To be successful in these problem-solving careers, Myers-Briggs test INTJ types must learn to consider short-term goals and opportunities as well as their already over-

arching, long-term goals. This can include immediate priorities, career choices that the INTJ values but may not consider rational, and present values that INTJ type may be neglecting in favor of their long-term vision. Creating immediate and long-reaching goals for yourself can help you level your thinking and focus more on the moment.

Furthermore, this MBTI personality type may have a hard time dealing with sudden life changes or events. By allowing yourself time to think about immediate goals and surprising situations without focusing solely on the long-term outcome, you can be ready for unforeseen circumstances that may come their way.

One of the most important strategies that the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator test INTJ type can implement to be successful in the workplace is to open themselves up to new people, new experiences, and new ideas. If you find yourself closed off or antisocial in the work environment, slowly opening yourself to other networks and creating personal relationships with those around you can help you become a more well-rounded employee.”

How accurate is this?

Actually, it makes me look like a bit of an asshole. Far from perfect. A bit of a get-er-dun prima-donna when, in fact, my biggest criticism over the years is that I'm too nice of a guy for my own good.

Anyway, it was a good mental exercise that made me think for a while, and I got a kick outa being matched with notable characters with the same personality. Factual ones were Rudy Giuliani, John F. Kennedy, and Hannibal—leader of the Carthaginians. Fictional characters were the protagonist and antagonist in *Silence Of The Lambs*, Clarise Starling and.... yeah—Hannibal Lector.

So I challenge you. You can have a FREE psychological analysis just like mine. Go ahead and take the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® Test* at:

[**Humanetrics**](#)

[**My Personality Test**](#)

[**Truity Type Finder**](#)

At very least, it's a buncha fun.

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What Makes Conspiracy Theorists Tick?

A conspiracy theory is the belief that a plot by powerful people or organizations is working to accomplish a sinister goal—the truth of its existence secretly held from the public. Conspiracy theorists see authorities—governments, corporations, and wealthy people—as fundamentally deceptive and corrupt.

Their distrust of official narratives runs so deep that they connect dots of random events into what they believe make meaningful patterns, despite the overwhelming conflicting evidence, or absence of supporting evidence, to their conclusions.

Aside from a lack of common sense, what makes these guys tick?

First, let's look at what *Time* magazine identified as the prominent conspiracy theories believed by the American public. These were identified in a recent poll. I'm not kidding you. Some people actually swallow these crazy concoctions.

From lowest to highest percentage they are:

- 10. The Reptile Elite** — Among us are flesh-eating, blood-drinking, shape-shifting, extraterrestrial reptilian humanoids bent on enslaving the human race. The British Royals and the Bush family are part of the group, as was Margaret Thatcher.
- 9. The CIA and AIDS** — Thinking is that the Central Intelligence Agency was out to destroy homosexuals and blacks so they invented the deadly HIV virus and injected it in place of hepatitis vaccinations.
- 8. Holocaust Revisionism** — Most deniers accept that the internment camps existed, but claim the numbers of people murdered are greatly exaggerated. General Eisenhower saw this coming when he forced hundreds of civilian witnesses to tour the camps and bear the truth to the world.
- 7. Jesus and Mary Magdalene** — These folks claim Jesus and Mary Magdalene were a married couple, but Jesus occasionally shared her with his disciple, Peter. They attribute this to the Gnostic Gospels which were discovered in 1945 and claim it's being covered up by the Vatican. Mainstream scholars dismiss as the Gnostic Gospels as even being authentic.
- 6. The Moon Landings Were Faked** — According to this crowd, none of the Apollo missions happened. They were filmed on a Hollywood lot, or possibly at area 51. Watch this clip of Buzz Aldrin punching conspiracy theorist Bart Sibrel in the face. [Click Here](#)
- 5. Secret Societies Rule the World** — If you're a member of the global elite, then you'd already know this. And you might belong to one or more of many groups; the Illuminati, Freemasons, Skull & Bones, Opus Dei, Bilderberg Group, or maybe even have a seat on the Council of Foreign Relationship. Sorry, your Costco card won't cut it.

4. Paul McCartney is Dead — Supposedly the Beatles covered-up the real Sir Paul's death in 1966 and an imposter has been in his place ever since. Maybe I'm Amazed because I saw a recent clip of Paul McCartney in front of tens of thousands at Hyde Park takin' a swing at Pretty Woman with Bruce Springsteen. If he's an imposter, he's some good at it.

3. Area 51 and Aliens — There is a real Air Force base at Groom Lake, 150 miles north of Las Vegas, where all sorts of black op aircraft are tested. Like most military installations, public access is restricted, but you can get a good look at it on Google Earth. The resolution is excellent but I couldn't find any saucer-shaped craft or ET-looking creatures. Oh, right... they keep them inside... or maybe back at Roswell.

2. 9/11 Cover-Up — Apparently 42% of Americans believe the attacks on the New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania were orchestrated by some arm of the U.S. Government. Sad.

1. The JFK Assassination — The mother of conspiracy theories. Times' poll reports that only 32% believe that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. So two-thirds of Americans truly think their 35th President's murder is unsolved? How can that be?

Well, it comes down to mindset.

I'm not saying that conspiracies don't happen—even at a mass scale. The Holocaust was a massive conspiracy to exterminate the Jews. The Nazis totally believed the Jews were a threat to their existence. It was an article of faith within the Third Reich.

9/11 was a monstrous conspiracy—by Bin Laden and al-Qaeda. The Russian Revolution was a conspiracy. So was the American Revolution—fifty-six men signed the *Declaration of Independence*. Nixon conspired to hide Watergate. Abraham Lincoln was murdered through a conspiracy. So was Julius Caesar. And don't forget Stalin, the Mexican Drug Cartels, and Scientology.

If some conspiracies are true, then how do you determine which ones are false? The more these characteristics apply, the more likely the theory is wrong:

- 1. "Proof" of the conspiracy emerges through dot-connecting without any hard, physical evidence.**
- 2. Execution requires large and complex elements.**
- 3. The agents require nearly super-human powers.**
- 4. Everyone maintains secrecy.**
- 5. There is a grandiose ambition for control.**

6. The plot ratchets from small to large events.
7. Everything has a sinister overtone.
8. Facts and speculation are mingled without assigning degrees of probability.
9. The theorist is extremely suspicious of authority—government and private.
10. The theorist refuses to consider alternative explanations, seeking only confirmation of the theory.

I understand the mindset of real conspirators. It's all about self-preservation. But what about the tin-foil hat crowd?

In *American Conspiracy Theories*, political scientists Joseph Uscinski and Joseph Parent conducted an “extensive empirical study” on the subject and found:

“Conspiracy Theorists are often caricatured as a small demographic composed primarily of middle-aged white male internet enthusiasts who live in their mother’s basements—but that’s wrong. Conspiracy theories permeate all parts of society and cut across age, gender, race, income, political affiliation, educational level, and occupational status.”

What gives? How does a cross-section of otherwise normal people get so distorted in their thoughts and believe in really weird things?

Quassim Cassam is a professor of philosophy at the University of Warwick. He’s embarking on a study on why people believe in outlandish theories. Part of this work is to answer why people get pushed to extremes like joining ISIS.

Professor Cassam says:

“It seems to be because of the kind of thinker they are, or to put it bluntly, because there’s something wrong with how they think. It’s the peculiarities of their intellectual constitution—in a word, their intellectual character. It’s what social psychologists call a conspiracy mentality.”

Cassam goes on:

“The gullible rarely believe they’re gullible and the closed-minded don’t believe they’re closed-minded. Closed-mindedness is the toughest intellectual vice to tackle because it’s in its very nature to be concealed from those who have it. There’s no reasoning with those kinds of people.”

I found an article in the journal *Applied Cognitive Psychology* where Dr. Jan-Willem van Prooijen of the University of Amsterdam summed it:

“Conspiracy theorists tend to have one thing in common—they feel a lack of control over their lives.”

Part of my John F Kennedy Assassination book research was checking the online chat boards on the JFK forums. Lemme tell you—there are some whacko, nut-jobs out there.

I believe there are four reasons why people believe JFK’s murder was a conspiracy. These reasons probably apply to most conspiracy theories and theorists.

- 1. They don’t have the correct information to understand the case facts.**
- 2. They haven’t got the personal knowledge, or experience, to properly interpret the evidence.**
- 3. They simply want to believe in a conspiracy.**
- 4. They don’t have the mental capacity for objectively processing thoughts.**

There’s no reasoning with those kinds of people.

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Ayahuasca — World’s Most Dangerous Eco-Tourism Scam

Ayahuasca (*l-ya-wask-ah*) psychedelic tours are a popular rage among worldly young people seeking enlightenment in the jungles of the Amazon rainforest. Why anyone would pay thousands of dollars to blow-up their mind by ingesting a brew containing the most potent hallucinogenic on the planet puzzles me.

This morning I was on Facebook and saw a feed from Michael Sanders, an author who was crowdfunding money to publish his book *Ayahuasca — An Executive’s Enlightenment*. I opened his link which opened me into a thriving world of scammers and con-artists who prey on the gullible that’ll risk their brain cells to find the next trendy mystic among the world of plastic shamans.

So what is ayahuasca? My friend Wikipedia says this.

Ayahuasca (usually pronounced /ˌaɪjəˈwæskə/ or /ˌaɪjəˈwaːskə/), also commonly called yagé (/jɑːˈheɪ/), is an entheogenic brew made out of Banisteriopsis caapi vine, often in combination with various other plants. It can be mixed with the leaves of Chacruna or Chacropanga, which are dimethyltryptamine (DMT) containing plant species. The brew was first described academically in the early 1950s by Harvard ethnobotanist Richard Evans Schultes, who found it employed for divinatory and healing purposes by the native peoples of Amazonian Peru.

Hmmm... Dimethyltryptamine. DMT.

*Mirrors on the ceiling
The pink champagne on ice
And she said "We are all just prisoners here, of our own device"
And in the master's chambers
They gathered for the feast
They stab it with their steely knives
But they just can't kill the beast
The last thing you remember
You were running for the door
Trying to find the passage back
To the place you were before*

Love to be there?

Then DMT's your ride.

DMT is the most intense psychedelic toxin—as well as the most illegal substance—in the world. Paradoxically it's the most rare drug to acquire and the most common to possess because every time you go to sleep a part of your brain produces this chemical and the product you endure is your dreams.

DMT is the drug which causes your pleasant dreams at night.

And your nightmares.

Ayahuasca amplifies the DMT response in your neurotransmitters a million fold and you can have this by paying any one of at least 94 service providers that I found on the internet site *AyaAdvisor.com*. It's a *TripAdvisor* for people who really want to trip.

Leading the pack is an outfit called *Pulse Tours*. For \$1995 USD they'll pick you up at the airport in Iquitos, Peru, (you have to get there yourself) and host you for seven days & nights so you can fuck your mind on the *Amazon Ayahuasca Adventure*. Give 'em \$2995 and you can stay three weeks for a *Total Human Transformation*. But look what you get.

"Our 21-day program includes spiritual/energetic cleansing via our powerful and super concentrated jungle medicines and native Shamans; physical fitness/martial arts/yoga within our 88 sq. meter "Jungle Gym", elite nutrition/super foods proprietary to the Amazon rainforest; topped off with our famous jungle adventures in the Amazon paradise where the Ayahuasca Adventure Center is located. Included are:

12 Ayahuasca Ceremonies with authentic Shipibo Shamans

3 Kambo (Frog Venom) ceremonies with a local Matses Shaman

9 Floral baths

20 nights/21 days accommodation at Ayahuasca Adventure Center in primary Amazon rainforest paradise

Pickup/drop off in Iquitos, Peru (International flights NOT included)

Daily jungle excursions with professional local jungle guides

Unlimited access to 88 sq. meter fitness facility including yoga mats, Onnit kettle bells, battle ropes, steel maces, Moving Zen suspension straps, punching bag, gloves, pads, jump ropes, spinning bike and free weights

Cell phone and wi-fi reception

20 hammocks on site

20 breakfasts, 20 lunches, 8 dinners, plus unlimited fruit, drinking water, and tea

Lifetime 20% discount on return visits to Ayahuasca Adventure Center and membership to exclusive Facebook group”

There’s a caveat attached to the funding. Read carefully.

"50% non-refundable deposit due upon booking. The rest of the balance is due in cash form upon arrival to Peru in bills of CRISP quality (unless mentioned otherwise). Your deposit is valid for a lifetime, should the need to cancel your retreat occur. Alternatively, you could transfer the deposit to someone else, at no additional cost."

Sounds like a pretty intense and interesting deal for three grand. I’d look forward to the frog venom sessions. And the floral baths seem a nice touch, drinking water is considerate, and twenty nights in a hammock saves phosphates from washing the sheets. I did the math and see that I’d be getting 12 ayahuasca sessions over 20 days and 8 dinners which add up to make sense.

Yep, great service... for the service provider.

So the entrepreneur in me got thinking and I’d like to offer you a unique trip to an exotic location.

For \$995 I’ll pick you up at the Vancouver airport and deliver you for six nights and seven days to the *Downtown Eastside* where you can mingle with junkies and meth-freaks and hookers and hawkers in a feat of survival more violently thrilling than the *Hunger Games*.

You'll get to crank heroin and smoke crack-cocaine. Do mushrooms and MDMA. Weed? No big deal—everyone smokes weed in BC.

You'll sleep in an alley and shit in the street and lay claim to a dumpster and panhandle and pimp. You can get beaten and burned. Rolled, robbed, and raped. And have a chance for some gunshots or being knifed while you sleep.

You can pontiff with head cases and seek relief shelter. Or OD on horse tranquilizer and do NarCan and paddles.

And experience Code-3 CPR, a white body-bag, or quietly shoplift your ride into the back of a VPD squad car and be booked into cells.

Blow your mind and your wallet on the experience of a lifetime—an intoxicating trip into a concrete jungle with authentic shopping-cart shamans in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. A most exotic trip, TripAdvisor says.

So send me your deposit. Now while it lasts.

And make sure you arrive with bills of CRISP quality (unless mentioned otherwise).

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Marihuana — Driving High

Sabra Botch-Jones, M.S., M.A., D-ABFT-FT, is a forensic toxicologist at Boston University School of Medicine/fTox Consulting, LLC. With the move towards decriminalization of marijuana across North America comes the issue of legal DUI tolerances with cannabis impairment. Sabra wrote this accredited, scientific article specifically for [*DyingWords*](#). Thanks, Sabra!

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Several States have moved into a new era with the legalization of medical and/or recreational use of marijuana. With this shift we must stop and ask the question of “*are we ready*”?

With the year 2014 behind us, we have 24 states with legislation allowing the use of marijuana for certain medical conditions and two states (Colorado and Washington) having passed laws allowing its use recreationally. This is a historical shift for a substance that has had a worldwide presence since 28th century B.C.

Safety-sensitive functions such as operating a motor vehicle require our full attention and distracted or impaired operation can be catastrophic. Driving under the influence of

an impairing substance, including legal recreational (i.e alcohol) and prescription drugs, puts our lives and those around us at risk.

Therefore, let us explore the risk posed by driving “*high*” and what research is telling us.

What We Know

A multitude of studies exist on cannabis intoxication and its effect on the skills needed to drive safely. With this magnitude of information, the answer to our previous question “*are we ready*” should be yes, but is it?

We know that drug use, alone or in combination with alcohol, increases our risk of being involved in a motor vehicle accident; however, the level(s) (if any) of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) used to determine impairment is the subject of debate.

Research shows inter-individual variation in impairment, with some individuals being dangerously impaired at very low levels. Conversely, there are individuals who showing no appreciable cognitive effects test well above the suggested levels.

This variability makes passing legislation based on compound levels extremely difficult and may lead to erroneous perceptions that driving while high is not dangerous.

Complex tasks such as driving require attentiveness, accurate perception of speed and timing as well as alertness. These are all areas that THC can negatively effect.

In a placebo-controlled cross-over study investigating the acute effects of smoking high-potency cannabis joints on psychomotor skills related to driving, researchers found that subjects still reported experiencing a “*high*” or “*feelings of intoxication*” well past peak levels, with measured concentrations dropping below the legal level 5 ng/mL set by some states.

It is challenging to correlate what this level means to actual impairment due to the fact that THC levels in the blood peak quickly following inhalation and decline rapidly based on pharmacokinetics. Adding to the complexity of analytical interpretation of THC in the blood is time, with subjective effects felt as soon as after 1 to 2 inhalations.

Researchers have also shown that significant impairment of tracking skills (used as an indication of accurate motor control) accompanies marijuana use. Ultimately these authors concluded “*that smoking cannabis significantly decreases psychomotor skills and globally alters the activity of the main brain networks involved in cognition even at low concentrations of THC in the blood.*”

In addition to these skills, attention alone, divided attention, visual functions, and reaction time are all areas impaired when an individual drives “*high*”. The impairment of each of these skills differs depending on the dose and potency o the drug.

Therefore, the effects of marijuana and the detrimental consequence on a particular skill varies depending on the particular function being employed.

What Should We Do?

Establishing levels of THC in which a jurisdiction considers an individual impaired is challenging. Some countries have established a zero-tolerance approach to compensate for individual-to-individual impairment. In the United States, we have created similar laws for certain drugs to account for the lack of scientific knowledge and/or user variability and this may be an approach to consider.

Regardless of what approach is taken, as with all drugs (recreational or prescription), ultimately it is the individual that must be responsible for their actions.

Refrain from operating a motor vehicle when impaired and be aware that negative effects can continue well past the feeling of being “*high*”.

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She began her career with the Federal Aviation Administration’s Bioaeronautical Sciences Research Laboratory at the Civil Aerospace Medical Institute and was a Senior Forensic Toxicologist/Quality Manager at the Tarrant County Medical Examiner’s Office.

Sabra is board certified as a Diplomate by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology. She earned her Master of Science degrees in Drug Chemistry and Forensic Toxicology from the University of Florida as well as undergraduate and graduate degrees in Criminal Justice from the University of Central Oklahoma. She conducts research in the areas of forensic toxicology, analytical chemistry, as well as epidemiological studies on drug use.

Sabra has authored and co-authored 14 scientific articles. She is active in a number of professional organizations including the National Safety Council’s Alcohol, Drugs and Impairment Division (Executive Board), Society of Forensic Toxicologists, Southwestern Association of Toxicologists, Association for Women in Science (Writer-AWIS Magazine), and the American Academy of Forensic Sciences.

Sabra was recently selected to be a member of the toxicology subcommittee of the Organization for Scientific Area Committees.

Find Sabra at her [Boston University Faculty Link](#).

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Brother XII — The Devil Of De Courcy Island

Brother Twelve, aka Edward Arthur Wilson, may not be as well-known a cult icon like L. Ron Hubbard or Reverend Jim Jones, but he was every bit as charming, deceitful, and as treacherous a swindler. Brother XII might have stolen his title, claiming to be the twelfth disciple of a disembodied entity that identified itself as one of the twelve masters in the Great White Lodge, but he rightfully earned the name *Devil of De Courcy Island*.

They say that truth can be stranger than fiction and the best stories can be found closest to home.

Well, for me, the case of Brother XII holds both because he was a real guy and his commune was built in the 1920's on De Courcy Island in British Columbia's Gulf Islands, just south of Nanaimo near Cedar-By-The-Sea. I can darn near see the place from my back window.

The story of Brother XII has all the elements that a crime-thriller writer could want.

A psychotic controller using ancient Egyptian spiritualism to attract and subdue his victims. Psychological manipulation for religious submission. Politics. Sex. Conspiracy. A hidden and lost treasure of millions in gold. An evil mistress with the name Madame Zee. Overtones of murder and hidden bodies. And a mystic cult that survives today.

Like, you just can't make this shit up.

Now that I've finished my latest crime-thriller *No Life Until Death* I've started my next novel based on the fascinating and truly evil story of Brother XII. Only I'm bringing Brother Twelve into real time. The working title is *No God Without Gold*. The tagline is *There's a Deadly Price for Salvation*.

This story's been in my mind for twenty-five years after I first heard about it from old Provincial Court Judge Stan Wardill. I used to appear before Stan's court as a young constable and we got talking on the street one day. Turns out Stan was an expert on Brother XII and owned property on De Courcy.

Stan was 100 % convinced that Brother XII left behind a hidden treasure in gold when he fled the commune under the cover of darkness to avoid being lynched by enraged followers.

Stan and his son, Donnie, spent years scouring De Courcy for the cache. So have many other people and the local legend holds that it's still out there. Some say "Bullshit! He took it with him." One thing's for sure—at one time it definitely existed.

The hoard was known to be worth over a million dollars when gold was worth twenty bucks an ounce. Do the math at today's value.

I'm really enjoying researching and writing *No God Without Gold*. If I wasn't under the gun to finish it, I might just paddle over to De Courcy and poke around. You never know what you might find in your own backyard.

* * *

Don't just take my word that Brother XII was real. Here's a clip from Wikipedia and some links to other websites and books.

Extracted from Wikipedia:

Edward Arthur Wilson, better known as Brother XII, (July 25, 1878–November 7, 1934?) was an English mystic who, in the late 1920s, founded a spiritual community located just south of the city of Nanaimo on Vancouver Island, off the west coast of British Columbia, Canada.

Wilson was born in Birmingham, England. He traveled the world as a marine biologist and apparently studied world religions, preparing himself, by his own account, for a destiny that was revealed to him in a vision in the South of France in the autumn of 1924. He soon attracted a devoted following, including a group of wealthy and socially prominent individuals.

Having taken the name Brother XII, he established the Aquarian Foundation in 1927. The group's beliefs were based largely upon the teachings of the Theosophical Society. Wilson encouraged his followers to build homes in his colony Cedar-by-the-Sea on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

With the goal of creating a self-sufficient community independent of the outside world, the Foundation acquired additional property on nearby Valdes and De Courcy Islands, largely through the donations of a wealthy socialite named Mary Connally from North Carolina. Other followers gave donations, large and small, to support Brother XII's work as a spiritual teacher, as well as his political activity in support of a Democrat Senator from Alabama, James Thomas Heflin, who ultimately supported Herbert Hoover but was for a while a third-party candidate in the 1928 presidential election in the United States.

An insurrection developed within the ranks of the colony when Brother XII's critics charged that he had claimed to be the reincarnation of the Egyptian god Osiris though he replied that he had been speaking figuratively, that Osiris and Isis were male and female principles in Nature.

Still, Brother XII's misuse of Foundation funds and his extramarital affair with a woman who he claimed was his soul-mate led to the breakup of the colony. The Aquarian Foundation was legally dissolved in 1929 though he continued his work with the followers who had remained loyal to him during the crisis, as well as a number of new recruits.

As time passed, he became increasingly dictatorial and paranoid, fortifying his island kingdom and reportedly accumulating a fortune in gold. His mistress, Mabel Skottowe, who operated under the name "Madame Zee", worked the members without respite, the tasks given being considered tests of their fitness to advance spiritually.

One man who had been imprisoned in a cellar on the northern end of Valdes Island managed to row to Nanaimo to report the circumstances to the British Columbia Provincial Police, who investigated but took no further action.

Eventually, as conditions deteriorated, Brother XII's core group of disciples revolted and filed legal charges against him to recover the monies, estimated to be over a million dollars that had been converted to gold, which they had contributed to his work. In a violent reaction, he destroyed the colony, smashing its buildings and farm equipment, and scuttling his flagship, the sailboat Lady Royal.

Wilson and Skottowe then escaped at night in their private tugboat, the Kheunaten, rather than being arrested on charges brought by their former disciples. Wilson is reported to have died in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, on November 7, 1934, though he may have fabricated his death. It appears that he subsequently rendezvoused in San Francisco with his lawyer, whose son has provided an eyewitness account of the meeting.

Here are four books that have been published on Brother XII:

The Devil of Decourcey Island: The Brother XI I — Lillard, Charles; MacIsaac, Ron; Clark, Don (1989), Victoria: Porcepik Books, ISBN0-88878-286-1

Brother Twelve: The Incredible Story of Canada's False Prophet — Oliphant, John (1992), McClelland & Stewart, ISBN978-0-7710-6848-5

Brother XII's Letters — Symons, Philip (2004), Victoria: Ruddy Duck Press, ISBN978-0-9734928-0-4

Madame Zee (novel) — Luke, Pearl (2007), Harper Perennial Canada, ISBN978-0-00-639173-9

These are interesting websites and linkages:

[**Who Was Brother XII?**](#)

[Brother XII. The shadowy past of a sailor, seducer and swindler.](#)

[Brother XII; Canadian Biographies](#)

[Brother XII - Victoria Public Library](#)

[Brother XII - The Canadian Encyclopedia](#)

Like I said... You just can't make this shit up.

* * *

International Trafficking In Arms

International trafficking in small arms and light weapons—gunrunning—is a major world business, both in legal and black markets. It's estimated nearly two billion firearms have circulated the planet with millions more produced each year. There's millions of gun-related deaths and no end in sight for reduction.

But it's not the guns, or the people, that kill. It's something else—something unchecked that drives huge profits in the global gunrunning trade.

First, let's look at the definition of small arms / light weapons. This comes right from the *International Tracing Instrument (ITI)* adopted by the *United Nations General Assembly*.

"Small Arms are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for individual use. They include, inter alia, revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns; any man-portable lethal weapon that expels or launches, is designed to expel or launch, or may be readily converted to expel or launch a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive, excluding antique small arms and light weapons or their replicas. Antique small arms and light weapons and their replicas will be defined in accordance with domestic law. In no case will antique small arms and light weapons include those manufactured after 1899."

"Light Weapons are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for use by two or three persons serving as a crew, although some may be carried and used by a single person. They include, inter alia, general purpose or universal machine guns, medium machine guns, heavy machine guns, rifle grenades, under-barrel grenade launchers and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, man-portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, man-portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of a calibre of less than 100 millimetres."

Notice something left off the list? I'll get to that. Let's look at some big-time gunrunners, current and past.

You've probably heard of the Nicolas Cage movie *Lord Of War* where he portrays a bad-ass based on the real character—Russian arms trafficker **Viktor Bout**. From what I've seen and heard about the industry, it's probably not far off the mark.

Take **Dale Stoffel**. He was a hi-rolling American mercenary / arms dealer who smuggled guns in the Middle East under the shadowy wing of a covert US agency. Predictably, he got whacked in Baghdad back in 2004 but his life was something another movie should be made on.

The current king of private arms dealers is Saudi billionaire **Adnan Khashoggi** who operates out of Monaco. He got his start supplying weapons to none other than David Stirling, the father of the British SAS, who was doing some stuff in the Middle East. Khashoggi was part of the Iran-Contra gunrunning scandal that nearly took down Ronald Reagan's presidency, but squeaked out when Colonel Oliver North took the fall. North was a gunrunner if there ever was one.

It'd be unfair to leave out **Monzer al-Kassar**. The "*Prince of Marbella*" is a Syrian who worked from Spain and was also part of the Iran-Contra deal. He went on to get caught by a US DEA sting where al-Kassar was selling weapons to the FARC in Colombia. He's now doing thirty years in an American pen.

Still operating is Russian **Leonid Minin** who's currently busy supplying to the mess in the Ukraine. Some of his previous customers were Charles Taylor of Liberia and a guy by the name of Muammar Gaddafi, a Libyan who's now dead.

These shady characters are great stuff for movies, but the real big gunrunners in the global small arms trade are legitimate companies operating under legitimate government regulations.

And their commodity's not handguns. It's assault rifles... and something else.

Russia leads the pack with its production and exports of Mikhail Kalashnikov products made famous by the AK47. Close behind is China with the Type 56, a Kalashnikov knock-off. Third is the US with the M16, followed by Heckler & Koch out of Germany with the G3 and the MP5. Belgium is a big producer of FN armaments and, surprisingly, Canada is a major world producer and exporter.

It's not guns Canada is pumping out, though. It's worse.

You have to give credit to agencies like the *Small Arms Survey* who keep track of these guys. This is a credible watchdog—an independent research project funded by the *Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies* in Geneva, Switzerland. It

puts out an annual report of shocking information and statistics as a resource for governments, policy-makers, and activists, as well as researchers on small arms issues.

Here's what the *Small Arms Survey* say about themselves.

"The Survey monitors national and international initiatives (governmental and non-governmental) and acts as a forum and clearinghouse for the sharing of information. It also disseminates best practice measures and initiatives dealing with small arms issues.

The Small Arms Survey mandate is to look at all aspects of small arms and armed violence. It provides research and analysis by which to support governments to reduce the incidence of armed violence and illicit trafficking through evidence-based analysis.

The project's staff includes international experts in security studies, political science, law, international public policy, development studies, economics, conflict resolution, and sociology. The staff works closely with a worldwide network of researchers and partners.

The project's flagship publication is the Small Arms Survey, an annual review of global small arms issues such as production, stockpiles, brokering, legal and illicit arms transfers, the effects of small arms, and national, bilateral, and multilateral measures to deal with the problems associated with small arms. Published by Cambridge University Press, it is recognized as the principal international source of impartial and reliable information on all aspects of small arms. It is widely used by policy-makers, government officials, and non-governmental organizations."

Like I said, this is a credible outfit that publishes an annual report that's publicly available. And, year after year, they've pointed out a scam in the international assault-rifle business that gunrunners manipulate.

I mentioned the big five assault weapons—the AK47, the Type 56, the M16, the G3 & MP5, and the FN lines. Well, coincidentally, there are also five major types of ammunition these weapons require before they can kill people.

The 7.62 x 54 Russian

The 7.62 x 51 NATO

The 7.62 x 39 Russian

The 5.56 x 45 NATO

The 5.56 x 39 Russian

What's going on is these assault rifles get cross-chambered for different calibers of bullets and selectively distributed to hot spots around the world. The ammunition is then brokered on the side.

It's the old law of supply and demand, folks.

Some banana-republic warlord in Sierra Leone buys a batch of AK47's chambered in 5.56 x 39 and receives cases of 5.56 x 45's to go with it. Won't work. So while he's desperate to get on with the war, in steps a guy like old Minin who sells him the right ammo at grossly inflated prices. And that's how big money's made in gunrunning. Short the supply. Supply the demand.

So who's making the ammunition? The stuff that really kills people?

Let's look at something the *Canadian Press* just dug up. It's also reported by the *CBC*. These figures are estimates, based on investigative reporting, so I can't verify their accuracy. However, I believe they've found something nasty.

In 2014, the United States imported \$995 million worth of small arms—of that \$139 million (14%) was in ammunition. The United States exported \$606 million—of that \$158 million (26%) was in ammo.

In 2014, Canada imported \$26 million worth of small arms—of that \$2.75 million (11%) was in ammunition. Canada exported \$415 million worth of small arms—of that \$320 million (77%) was in ammo, including military explosives and detonators.

Notice that ammunition was left off the UN's list?

It's not guns that kill people. It's not people that kill people. It's bullets that kill people. Guns are useless without bullets.

Canada, always claiming to be the poster-child for domestic gun control, is one of the world's largest producers of ammunition—yearly exporting twice as many bullets than the United States.

And guess who Canada's biggest customer is? Saudi Arabia. The wealthiest country, in the most heavily armed, most unstable region in the world.

Way to go, Canada. You're running with the big guns.

* * *

How Special Forces Operate In Catastrophes

Bob Mayer is a US Army West Point graduate, Green Beret Special Forces veteran, and a prolific writer, publisher, and teacher. He's also a down-to-earth guy who's mission is to help others succeed. Thanks, Bob, for sharing your experience about preparing for chaos.

* * *

Catastrophe planning in the civilian world is primarily the province of engineers and management. The problem with that is engineers and management are trained for, plan for, and work in a controlled environment (what they think is a controlled environment). So delusion events are outside their comfort zone; aberrations.

In fact, engineers and managers are often trained to be blind to cascade events. Their training and work environment normally do not reward focusing on cascade events, but rather punishes it.

West Point is an extraordinarily controlled environment. Things run almost perfectly there; so much so that graduates often have problems adjusting to the “*real*” Army they go into. But West Point also has over 200 years of experience training leaders and preparing soldiers for war. This accumulation of institutional knowledge is inculcated in cadets in a high-pressure caldron of mental, physical, and emotional stress for four years.

Of course, sometimes it doesn't take, as you'd see in one of the events I cover in [*Shit Doesn't Just Happen - The Gift of Failure*](#). This book focuses on a number of colossal failures, including West Point's most notorious graduate—Brevet Colonel George Armstrong Custer.

Special Operations soldiers train for war. War is called controlled chaos; an incessant series of cascade events. War might be considered the ultimate catastrophe and combat a final event. In order to prepare for this final event, Special Operations soldiers train for, plan for, and work in a chaotic environment every day.

Mentally, the most difficult training I went through was *Robin Sage*, the final exercise in the Special Forces Qualification Course. *Robin Sage* is where a team of students is sent into isolation and then infiltrates into the North Carolina countryside to conduct a guerilla warfare exercise.

A critical component of *Robin Sage* is to put prospective Green Berets in lose-lose scenarios. This is a training scenario where there is no “*right*” solution. Rigid minds are often unable to think creatively while under stress and lose-lose training quickly determines someone's capabilities.

Thinking outside of the immediate situation is important in preparing for and averting catastrophes.

Do you remember in the Star Trek movie (*Wrath of Khan*) when Captain Kirk talks about being at Star Fleet Academy and being the only officer to have passed the Kobayashi Maru simulator program?

The basic problem and the opening of the movie were set up this way: A Star Fleet ship which the student commands is patrolling near the neutral zone. A distress call is received from a disabled Federation vessel inside the neutral zone. An enemy warship

is approaching from the other side. It's a vessel more powerful than the one the student commands. The choices seem obvious: ignore the distress call (which violates the law of space) or go to its aid (violating the neutral zone) and face almost certain destruction from the enemy vessel. As you can see, both choices are bad.

What Kirk did was sneak into the computer center the night before he was scheduled to go through the simulation and change the parameters so that he could successfully save the vessel without getting destroyed. Would you have thought of that? Was it cheating? If you ain't cheating you ain't trying. It's not cheating when it succeeds.

A key to lose-lose training is you get to see how someone reacts when they are wrong or fail. Lose-lose training is a good way to put people in a crisis. Frustration can often lead to anger, which can lead to failure or enlightenment.

If a catastrophe struck, whom would you want at your side helping you?

A doctor? Lawyer? Engineer? MBA? Teacher? While they all have special skills, I submit that the overwhelming choice might well be a US Special Forces Green Beret or, the best in the business—a British 22SAS. Someone trained in survival, medicine, weapons, tactics, communications, engineering, counter-terrorism, tactical and strategic intelligence, and with the capability to be a force multiplier.

Most important, you want someone who has been handpicked, survived rigorous training, and has the positive mental outlook to not only survive, but thrive in chaos, and knows how to be part of a team. Green Berets have been called *Masters of Chaos*. They don't manage. They lead.

The key to dealing with catastrophes is leadership, not management.

Often, in order to deal with a cascade event, leadership and courage are needed to go against a culture of complacency and fear. In every catastrophe, fear is a factor in at least one, if not more, cascade events. This fear runs the gamut from physical fear, to job security fear, to social fear, to physical fear. Few people want to be the 'boy who cries wolf' even when they see a pack of wolves. What's even harder is when we're the only one who sees the wolf in sheep's clothing.

I've written [*Shit Doesn't Just Happen - The Gift of Failure*](#) to help individuals and organizations avoid catastrophes, but I come at it from a different direction as a former Special Operations soldier. In the Special Forces (Green Berets) the key to our successful missions was the planning. The preparation. In isolation, we war-gamed as many possible catastrophe situations we could imagine for any upcoming mission and prepared as well as we could for them. In fact, we expected things to go wrong, a very different mindset from that of engineers and management.

We were firm believers in Murphy's Law: What can go wrong, will. In other words: Shit doesn't just happen. It will happen.

Our job was to deal with it.

* * *

The Real Afghanistan From A Marine Recon's View

I was sent this piece from an author wishing to remain anonymous. From knowing soldiers who served in Afghanistan and hearing first-hand of their experiences with that country and its people, I think it's a very realistic look at a destitute situation.

I'm a Reconnaissance Marine in Afghanistan writing from the Sand Pit. I'm freezing my balls off here—sitting on hard, cold dirt between rocks and shrubs at the base of the Hindu Kush Mountains, along the Dar'yo-i Pamir River, and watching a hole that leads to a tunnel that leads to a cave.

Stake out, my friend, and no pizza delivery for thousands of miles.

I also glance at the area around my ass every ten to fifteen seconds to avoid another scorpion sting. I've actually given up battling the chiggers and sand fleas, but the scorpions give a jolt like a cattle prod. Hurts like a bastard. The antidote tastes like transmission fluid, but God bless the Marine Corps for the five vials of it in my pack.

The one ugly truth the Taliban cannot escape is that, believe it or not, they are human beings, which means they have to eat food and drink water. That requires couriers and that's where a bounty hunter like me comes in handy.

I track the couriers, locate the tunnel entrances and storage facilities, type the info into the handheld, and shoot the coordinates up to the satellite link that tells the air commanders where to drop the hardware. We bash some heads for a while, and then I track and record the new movement. It's all about intelligence.

We haven't even brought in the snipers yet. These scurrying rats have no idea what they're in for. We are but days away from cutting off supply lines and allowing the eradication to begin. But, you know—I'm a romantic. I've said it before and I'll say it again: This country blows, man. It's not even a country.

There are no roads, there's no infrastructure, there's no government.

This is an inhospitable, rock pit shit hole ruled by eleventh-century warring tribes. There are no jobs here like we know jobs. Afghanistan offers only two ways for a man to support his family; join the opium trade or join the army. That's it. Those are your options.

Oh, I forgot, you can also live in a refugee camp and eat plum-sweetened, crushed beetle paste and squirt mud like a goose with stomach flu if that's your idea of a party. But the smell alone of those *"tent cities of the walking dead"* is enough to hurl you into the poppy fields to cheerfully scrape bulbs for eighteen hours a day.

I've been living with these Tajiks and Uzbeks, and Turkmen and even a couple of Pashtuns for over a month-and-a-half now, and this much I can say for sure: These guys are Huns—actual, living Huns. They LIVE to fight. It's what they do. It's ALL they do. They have no respect for anything, not for their families, nor for each other, nor for themselves.

They claw at one another as a way of life. They play polo with dead calves and force their five-year-old sons into human cockfights to defend the family honor. Huns, roaming packs of savage, heartless beasts who feed on each other's barbarism. Cavemen with AK-47's.

Then again, maybe I'm just a cranky bastard.

I'm freezing my ass off on this stupid hill because my lap warmer is running out of juice, and I can't recharge it until the sun comes up in a few hours.

Oh yeah! You like writing, Garry. Do me a favor. Write a letter to CNN and tell Wolf Blitzer and Anderson Cooper and that awful, sneering, pompous Aaron Brown to stop calling the Taliban *"smart"*.

They are not smart.

I suggest CNN invest in a dictionary because the word they are looking for is *"cunning"*.

The Taliban are cunning, like jackals and hyenas and wolverines. They are sneaky and ruthless, and when confronted, cowardly. They are hateful, malevolent parasites who create nothing and destroy everything else.

Smart? Bullshit! Yeah, they're real smart, they've spent their entire lives reading only one book (and not a very good one, as books go) and consider hygiene and indoor plumbing to be products of the devil. They're still figuring out how to work a Bic lighter.

Talking to a Taliban warrior about improving his quality of life is like trying to teach an ape how to hold a pen. Eventually, he just gets frustrated and sticks you in the eye with it.

OK, enough. Snuffle will be up soon, so I have to get back to my hole. Covering my tracks in the snow takes a lot of practice, but I'm good at it.

Please, I ask you to tell my fellow Americans, and the rest of the civilized world, to turn off the TV sets and move on with your lives. The story line you're getting from CNN and

other news agencies is utter bullshit and designed not to deliver truth, but rather to keep you glued to the screen so you'll watch the commercials.

The worst thing you guys can do right now is sit around analyzing what we're doing over here, because you have no fucking idea what we're doing and, really, you don't want to know. We are your military, and we are only doing what you sent us here to do.

"Semper Fi" — Freedom is not free, but the U.S. Marine Corps will pay most of your share.

* * *

A Freedom Lesson to Remember

November 11th is Remembrance Day in the Commonwealth countries—Veterans Day in the United States.

The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month is observed, not just to reflect on the time in 1918 when the armistice was signed to end the First World War, but to honor sacrifices made by so many military personnel—ensuring the survival of democracy.

This story from a little classroom teaches you an eye-opening lesson about freedom that you'll never forget.

Martha Cothren is a social studies teacher at Joe T. Robinson High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. On the first day of school in September of 2005, Ms. Cothren did something to be remembered. With permission from the principal and school superintendent, she removed all the desks in her classroom.

When the first-period kids entered the room, they were shocked to find no desks.

"Ms. Cothren, where's our desks?"

She replied, "You can't have a desk until you tell me how you earn the right to sit at a desk."

They answered, "Well, maybe it's our grades."

"No," she said.

"Maybe it's our behavior."

She told them, "No, it's not even your behavior."

And so, they came and went. The first period. Second period. Third period. Still no desks in the classroom. Kids called their parents to tell them what was happening and by early afternoon a television news crew gathered to report about this crazy school teacher who'd taken all the desks out of her room.

The day's final period arrived and, as puzzled students found seats on the floor of the desk-less classroom, Martha Cothren said, "Throughout the day, no one's been able to tell me just what he or she has done to earn the right to sit at the desks that are ordinarily found in this classroom. Now I'm going to tell you."

Martha Cothren went over and opened her classroom door.

Twenty-seven Veterans, all in uniform, walked into that classroom—each carrying a school desk. The Vets began placing the desks in rows, then walked over and stood against the wall. By the time the last soldier placed the final desk, those kids started to understand—perhaps for the first time in their lives—just how the right to sit at their desks had been earned.

Martha said, "You didn't earn the right to sit at these desks. These heroes did it for you. They placed the desks here for you. They went halfway around the world, giving up their education and interrupting their careers and families so you could have the freedom you have. Now, it's up to you to sit in them. It is your responsibility to learn, to be good students, to be good citizens. They paid the price so that you could have the freedom to get an education. Don't ever forget it."

I think Martha Cothren taught us all a lesson about freedom in that Little Rock classroom. And I think her lesson needs to be shared.

Over my six decades of enjoying freedom, I've attended every Remembrance Day ceremony as far back as I can remember—two of those decades marching in the parade wearing the red serge uniform of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

But I didn't earn the freedom to march in my police uniform. That was earned by people like my father, Alan Rodgers, a World War Two air-gunner who served in a Lancaster bomber crew flying over Nazi Germany, and my mother, Lillian (Wegenast) Rodgers, who proudly served in an equally-important uniform as a Royal Canadian Air Force air traffic controller.

And today, I proudly watch as my twenty-five-year-old son (yes, also Alan Rodgers) marches in the uniform of the Canadian Army, with his earned paratrooper jump wings.

I proudly wore a peace officer uniform for a lot of years, but what I did in helping to maintain local law and order was nothing—absolutely nothing—compared to what Veterans of the Great War, World War Two, Korea, Vietnam, Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan did for our society.

And now we have ISIL/ISIS to face. Selfishly, I hope my son never has to use the skills he's been taught. Alan's skills are to employ the harsh tools of war needed to protect our freedom.

Freedom is not free. It's earned at a tremendous cost. Many paid the ultimate price to give us freedom—like the freedom Martha Cothren had to educate her kids in that desk-less classroom.

Lest we forget.

* * *

The Surprisingly Simple Clues Left Behind At Crime Scenes

This was an assigned piece that I wrote for the [Huffington Post](#) to support the debut of Esquire Network's new TV series *Spotless*.

* * *

We kicked in the seedy bungalow's back door, armed with a search warrant.

"Smell that?" Sergeant Jill Prunty, my partner on the Integrated Homicide Investigation Team, stopped short.

"Yeah." I caught it, too.

"Smells like"—Jill whiffed the air like a bear—"the morgue."

"It's Iso." I recognized it immediately. "Isopropanol. Somebody tried to clean up."

It's not uncommon for criminals to try covering their dirty deeds, but you'd be surprised at the telltale details they commonly overlook in their haste to leave the scene of the crime.

Jill and I were following information that a biker named "Zeke" had been whacked, and then taken out and dumped. No body yet, but Zeke was missing. Our source was solid. Someone murdered Zeke in this house.

"Look at that." Jill pointed to three iodine-colored spots on the tile floor. She squatted. "What's this stuff?"

I slid on my glasses and got within inches. Bloodstains. Tiny—but then all trace evidence is minuscule. And it's usually trace evidence that becomes a big deal at trial.

"Far as we go, Jill." I thumbed toward the door. "Till forensics get here."

I wouldn't say this was a typical crime scene. Criminals rarely go as far as using isopropyl alcohol (a common disinfectant), but they often try to erase what they think is glaring evidence. Trouble is, they don't know what homicide detectives and forensic crime scene examiners do, and that's what to look for in evidence.

Every experienced murder cop and forensic tech follows *Locard's Exchange Principle*.

Who, you ask?

Edmond Locard was the 19th-century pioneer of modern forensics—the real Sherlock Holmes—who held the belief that the perpetrator of a crime will bring something into the scene, will leave with something from it, and that both can be used as forensic evidence. Criminologist Paul L. Kirk summed up Locard's theory as:

Wherever he steps, whatever he touches, whatever he leaves, even unconsciously, will serve as a silent witness against him. Not only his fingerprints or his footprints but his hair, the fibers from his clothes, the glass he breaks, the tool mark he leaves, the paint he scratches, the blood or semen he deposits or collects. All of these, and more, bear mute witness against him. This is evidence that does not forget. It is not confused by the excitement of the moment. It is not absent because human witnesses are. It is factual evidence. Physical evidence cannot be wrong, it cannot perjure itself, it cannot be wholly absent. Only human failure to find it, study and understand it, can diminish its value.

Locard was dead right. Every contact leaves a trace. Minute particles easily cross-transfer from one surface or substrate to another and remain as mute witnesses long after the bad guys vanish from the scene.

In my career as a homicide detective, and later as a forensic coroner, I've not only seen the usual evidentiary suspects like blood, semen, saliva, mucous and hair, but also some creative exhibits such as food waste, lipstick smears, glove prints, printer ink, potting soil, cut wires, grease, cigarette butts, tea stains, insects, pollen and, most interesting of all, a perfect dental impression in a wad of chewing gum.

The Forensic Identification Officers—the CSI guys—arrived at the bungalow in minutes. First they photographed Zeke's entire murder scene. Then Jill and I dressed in our bunny suits (white Tyvek coveralls that are more for show than go) and began our search. First for the obvious, and then for the not so obvious.

Jill's gaze strayed to a swirl of mop marks on the kitchen floor. "Check this out." She nodded toward the sink. There was no need for *Luminol* or a *Luma-Lite* to find this blood smear.

"You don't suppose?" Jill peeked under the sink. The garbage can sat empty with its plastic liner gone. Forensics lifted a beautiful set of prints from the side.

"Could they be this dumb?" Jill had moved to the broom closet. The mop was still in the bucket, which reeked of Iso. More powder on the handle and more useable prints. It was pretty evident that Zeke had been shot in the kitchen, just as our source informed us.

But what about motive?

Our suspicion was drugs. We brought in one of the most sophisticated crime-scene weapons—a toothy German shepherd named Trooper, who sniffed his way to a desk in a back room. Underneath was a pane of glass showing white residue.

Meanwhile, we ran the prints through AFIS and got a hit. Officers scooped up the suspect, who quickly ratted out his accomplice.

In all, Sergeant Jill Prunty entered 29 pieces of incriminating evidence at that trial: 18 found at the crime scene and 11 found on the culprits, including high-grade China White heroin with a chemical signature as unique as the DNA from Zeke's blood found on their clothes.

That crime scene was anything but spotless.

* * *

The Grim Sweeper — Making A Killing In Crime Scene Cleanup

Crime scene cleaning is extremely profitable for those who can handle difficult and unpleasant working conditions. In fact, this niche market of the multi-billion dollar janitorial and restoration industry is the fastest growing segment.

Crime scene clean-up technicians are some of the highest-paid hourly workers, but they're not the ones making the real money in death's bloody aftermath. Let's find out who is and exactly how this lucrative business works.

What got me curious about crime scene clean-up is when the Huffington Post asked me to write a feature article titled [**The Surprisingly Simple Clues Left Behind at Crime Scenes**](#). The piece complimented the debut of a new *Esquire Network* TV series called *Spotless* which centers on a guy who runs a crime scene cleaning business that contracts for the Mafia to "sanitize" their hits.

I've seen some horrifically messy death scenes as a homicide cop and coroner and I've worked under unspeakably nasty conditions. But once I finished the forensic process, it was someone else's job to clean-up. I used to think "*Boy, I'm glad it's not me.*"

I never gave much thought to who was contracted, what equipment they used, what regulations they had to obey, what time it took, and certainly not how much it cost. I got my eyes opened when I looked into the business of crime scene cleaning.

First of all, it's known in the industry as *Crime and Trauma Scene Decontamination and Restoration—CTSDR*. Secondly, they clean a lot more than just homicide and other death scenes.

These professionals are handsomely paid to also remove and restore the effects of dead animals and their droppings, insects who hatched from decaying bodies, damage from police tools such as fingerprint powder, Luminol, tear gas, pepper spray, and the cutting of materials during preservation of evidence.

They deal with mold from marijuana grow-shows, deadly chemicals from meth labs, drug litter like contaminated needles, and body fluids across the spectrum.

Their workplaces are everywhere imaginable—mansions to rooming houses, schools, offices, daycares, fields, playgrounds, boats, busses, trains, factories, shops and malls, cruise ships, vehicles, jail cells, police vehicles, hotels, and even on airplanes.

You'd think a grisly murder scene would be the most difficult and expensive situation, but those experienced in clean-ups say the life-long hoarder's home is the worst—especially the animal hoarders—the crazy cat-ladies who die alone and then... you know... They call this "*Gross Filth*".

There's a fair overhead in the scene-clean business.

A significant amount of equipment and training is required—specialized vehicles for transporting hazardous biological waste, mandatory certification by government departments, licensing requirements, expensive tools like ozone machines, steam injectors, and chemical foggers to destroy odors and pathogens, biohazard suits and containers, respirators, chemical-spill boots, gloves, goggles, as well as commercial disinfectors, solvents, and neutralizers.

Employee turnover is high.

Despite the high pay, burnout is inevitable. It takes a special person to fill the role. Strong stomach. Ability to detach emotionally. And serious attention to detail.

Ever present is the danger of infection from a disease like HIV and hepatitis.

Adherence to regulations like OSHA, WHMIS, DOT, EPA, NIOSH, Workers Comp, and professional industry governing bodies—the *American Bio-Recovery Association*, the *National Crime Scene Clean-Up Association*, and the *National Academy of Crime Scene Cleaners*—is required.

There's a tremendous amount of information on the Crime Scene Clean-Up industry available online and two interesting books have been published, giving an insider's look at the business:

Aftermath Inc. — Cleaning Up After CSI Goes Home

Mop Men — Inside The World Of Crime Scene Cleaners

So, yeah, yeah... these guys have a shitty job, you're thinking—get to the point. What do they charge? How much do they make?

Well, this seems to be a fairly guarded secret in the crime scene clean-up circles. I did some more internet searching, then made some phone calls. The standard answer was:

“The cost of remediating biohazards can vary dramatically from situation to situation, so we are not able to provide phone estimates or quote rates without coming out and doing a proper assessment which we charge an hourly fee for. By the way, are you insured?”

Drilling down on the net, I found these sites which reported the average technician's wage (not the business owner's) as:

Payscale — 100K+ per year.

Wisebread — 80K+ per year.

Business Insider — \$25.00 per hour training wage, extending to \$40-50 experienced.

CNN Money — 80-100K+ per year depending on location.

Then I found an article from the *Toronto Star* reporting on Christian Cadieux who owns and operates *Crime & Trauma Scene Cleaning*.

Cadieux is 32 and charges \$300.00 per hour just to estimate. Then he bills out from there. He likes to get six to eight good insurance jobs every month that make him sixty thousand dollars. Per month. That's \$720,000.00 per year.

Christian also puts on five-day training courses on the side for \$2,499.00 per student. When this article was written, he had four in the class.

Christian Cadieux says he plans to retire at forty.

* * *

5 Ways Sherlock Holmes Shaped Modern Forensics

“In solving a problem of this sort, the grand thing is to be able to reason backward.”

So wrote Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as his literary counterpart, Sherlock Holmes, in *A Study in Scarlet*. Doyle was a scientist and a trained physician, so when he imagined the great detective, he used science to set him apart from other crime practitioners.

Where a policeman of the day would round up the usual suspects and beat a confession out of an unlucky bloke, Holmes employed deduction, the scientific method, and an acute sense of observation.

Here're five of his techniques that were ahead of his time.

1. Detective work.

“I am glad of all the details... whether they seem to you to be relevant or not.”
- *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*

The fictional Holmes reveled in tiny details and caught everyone by surprise by defining a subject with details relating to height, weight, gait, carrying a load, occupation, and other surprising summaries simply by observing a wet footprint in a garden. He also explained how the evidence led to his accurate conclusion. And when the perpetrator was finally discovered and captured, the physical description was uncanny.

In addition, his ability to “*reason backward*” (looking at the criminal act and working his way backward to lead him to evidence) helped guide him to a conclusion, a motive, and a culprit.

2. Fingerprints.

“As you may know, no two human fingerprints are ever alike.”
- *The Brass Elephant*

Holmes identified and used fingerprints initially in *The Sign of Four*, published in 1890. Scotland Yard did not adapt fingerprint recovery, comparison, and identification process until almost 11 years after *The Sign of Four* was published. He did not use fingerprints as the defining evidence, however—generally, the case was irrefutably solved by a variety of clues leading to the correct solution.

In *The Adventure of the Norwood Builder*, Inspector Lestrade thought he had his murderer when he was able to match a bloody print to John Hector McFarlane, an obvious suspect. Holmes was able to prove that MacFarlane was innocent.

Today, fingerprints are a standard method of identification for human individuals. Now stored in computer databases—analyzed and compared within seconds—fingerprints still require corroborating evidence to tell the whole story.

3. Ciphers.

“But what is the use of a cipher message without the cipher?”
- *The Valley of Fear*

In many cases in Victorian times, clues were hidden in cyphers or coded messages which required a “key” to ascertain letter substitutions. In *The Dancing Men*, Holmes analyzed 160 separate cyphers, determining the letter “e” was the most common letter in the English language and was able to proceed to the answer. In *The Gloria Scott*, he deduced that every third word in lines of gibberish created the message that frightened Old Trevor.

Many of these cipher techniques were applied during the World Wars to decipher messages from the enemy, and law enforcement in many countries have also worked through ciphers using procedures described by Conan Doyle.

4. Footprints.

“Footprints?” “Yes, footprints.” “A man’s or a woman’s?”
“Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a giant hound.”
- *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

From the very first story in the Holmes series to the 57th story (*The Lion’s Mane* from 1926), 29 of the 60 stories revealed and solved footprint evidence. Footprints were found in soil, mud, and clay. They were on carpet, in snow, ash, and even on drapes and doors—each mark was worth discussion, each print told a story that was instrumental to the outcome.

Sherlock Holmes “wrote” an educational treatise on the preservation of footprints, entitled *“The tracing of footsteps, with some remarks upon the uses of Plaster of Paris as a preserver of impresses”*. The techniques so described have become a mainstay in preserving prints of shoes, tires, tools, and other depressions by police departments worldwide.

5. Handwriting.

“We must look for consistency. Where there is a want of it we must suspect deception”
- *The Problem of Thor Bridge*

In Victorian London, handwriting was more prevalent than it is today.

Holmes was able to deduce many details from the written word. By inspecting the pressure, angle, swirls, and consistency, Holmes could tell the gender, class, and maturity of the author. He could also make determinations about the character of the person whose penmanship was under scrutiny.

In *The Norwood Builder*, Holmes determines by the timing of the imperfections in the scrawl of a will, that it was written aboard a train. Knowing that such an important document would not be transcribed in such a fashion, he correctly assumed duress.

Today, handwriting analysis is used to determine forgeries, psychological profiling, and alterations in handwriting due to the influence of drugs, alcohol, duress, exhaustion, or illness.

The ransom note left at the scene of the *JonBenet Ramsey* murder is a prime example. It was intensely scrutinized and attempts were made to tie it to one of the parents.

The results remain inconclusive.

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This article was originally published by my friends at [Forensic Outreach](#), one of the best forensic education sites on the internet. They've now launched a new site called [CASE Academy](#) which I'm proud to support.

* * *

Breakthroughs In Modern Forensics

Technology has made huge breakthroughs over the past thirty-five years that I've been around criminal and forensic investigation (CSI). Without question, the next thirty-five are going to bring mind-blowing advances. I've looked into my forensic crystal ball to come up with five things I think will be real by 2050.

But first... let's look at the top five since 1980.

1. Computers

When I started policing, the PC was unheard of.

The only computing system we had was a mammoth of a beast that filled-up many rooms at headquarters. CPIC, or the *Canadian Police Information System*, was in its infancy as was its American counterpart, NCIC or *National Criminal Intelligence Center*.

Both systems are still around but, instead of having to phone to book appointments to use the system, the information now comes straight to the patrol cars or to a detective's smart device.

Computers have affected every facet of forensic investigation.

Despite complex computerized analysis being fast and accurate, the routine is much easier. Report writing is far simpler—no more carbon paper to make multiple copies, no more white-out, and thank God for spell-check. Communications are instant with internet email and gone are the days of waiting for a report to show up in snail mail. Training is done through computerized simulation, sketching is replaced by computer-aided drawing, and administration is now done by the keyboard. Computers are what allowed the next four advances to occur.

2. AFIS — Automated Fingerprint Identification System

The science of fingerprinting has been around nearly one hundred and fifty years, but the mechanism of storage and matching prints was cumbersome. Known prints from criminals used to be rolled in ink and stored on paper and the latent prints from crime scenes were lifted in powder were stored in plastic sheets. There was no effective system to easily match the two.

Today, suspect prints are digitally scanned and stored in data bases. Latent prints are still lifted in conventional manners, but they're then scanned and put into a search engine where they can be matched right from the crime scene.

3. Photography

Today's digital photography is a tremendous time-saver compared to the days of negative and image development. It's instantaneous to share over the internet, even allowing an investigator to snap a digital photo in the field and email it to the other side of the world.

Another facet of crime fighting is the incredible amount of mobile and stationary cameras that are out and about in society which capture movements of criminals before, during, and after events. Many crooks have gone down because they failed to realize they were on camera.

4. Education

Today's forensic investigators are far better educated than in the 1980's. Much of that is due to the ease of which information can be shared. Where it used to take great blocks of time and huge resources to assemble courses and conferences, many agencies now use webinars and on-line presence to create "*virtual*" classrooms. Education and sharing information are the jewels in crime-fighting.

5. DNA

Deoxyribonucleic acid or genetic fingerprinting is probably the best crime-fighting tool ever developed. Today, thanks to the computer, the sophistication and expediency of DNA testing has led to it being commonly—and accurately—used in the majority of serious crime investigations. Many convictions have been secured on DNA evidence alone. Conversely, innocent people have been cleared of suspicion due to elimination by DNA typing.

So that's what happened over the past third century. Ever wonder what's going to happen over the next third?

Well, I'm gazing into the crystal ball and predict five things.

1. Holograms

3-D technology is commonplace in movies and on TV. Many criminal prosecutions are already presented through computer-aided reconstruction to lay out the scene, bullet paths, vehicle motions, and blood-spatter patterns.

I see a day when virtual-reality holograms are imaged in the middle of the courtroom so the jurors can watch a total recreation of how the crime went down.

2. Brain-Scan Polygraphs

Conventional polygraphs have only slightly evolved in three decades and that was by the replacement of the old ink-needle charts with laptop technology. The basics of polygraphy still depends on the ability of a skilled operator to formulate key questions and then interpret the subject's involuntary body reactions—pulse, respiration, blood pressure, galvanic skin responses, and perspiration.

I see a day when brain mapping and analysis of how a subject responds under *electroencephalography* (EEG) and *function magnetic resonance imaging* (fMRI) will replace the current polygraph. The technology is already here and research is underway towards its forensic application.

3. Laser Devices

I think lasers have phenomenal potential in forensics. Currently, laser lighting is used to amplify fingerprint and tool marking evidence. It's also used in ballistic matching where the old electron-scanning comparison microscopes are being replaced by laser/laptop examiners like the *Bullettrax 3D* which makes the peaks and valleys of a ballistic engraving show up like satellite ground mapping radar images.

I see a day when forensic investigators will map out a crime scene with hand-held laser devices to perfectly record information which will be transformed into hologram reproductions.

4. Ion-Sniffers

Detection of ions through gas chromatography mass spectrometers has been around fifty plus years and is still used daily in crime labs. What's missing are portable devices to assist in field searches of buildings, vehicles, boats, planes, and the great outdoors. Often investigators know exactly what they're looking for—a firearm, explosives, contraband, or even a dead body—but the parameters of the search area turn it into the needle-in-a-haystack scenario.

I see a day when the ionic signature of the article(s) being searched for are dialed into the device and it zooms right into the location.

5. Satellite Tracking of Dangerous Criminals

Over the past few decades, we've got a better handle on controlling violent and prolific offenders through DNA profile banks and ankle bracelets of parolees. We've also had tremendous advances in satellite technology where smart-bombs are delivered down terrorist's chimneys and GPS apps tell you exactly where you are on the planet. We have microchips in everything from our bank cards to our pet Schnauzers and there are more cell phones in Africa than people. What we don't know is where the dangerous .001 percent of the population are and have been.

I see a day that we'll ditch these guy's rights. We need to protect the 99.999 percent of the population that's at risk. Common sense will prevail and there'll be court orders mandating satellite tracking chips being surgically implanted into dangerous offenders.

I'll check back with you in 2050. It'll be interesting to see what I've missed.

* * *

Forensic Bloodstain Pattern Analysis

Bloodstain Pattern Analysis is the forensic interpretation of human blood evidence in crime scene investigations. It's used to recreate actions that caused the bloodshed.

Because blood has chemical properties that behave according to specific laws, trained analysts can examine the size, shape, and distribution of bloodstains to draw conclusions of what did—or did not—happen.

Bloodstain Pattern Analysis (BPA) applies the sciences of anatomy, biology, chemistry, mathematics, and physics to answer questions like:

- Where'd the blood come from?
- Who'd it belong to?
- How'd it get there?
- What caused the wound(s)?
- From what direction was the victim assailed?
- How were the victim and perpetrator positioned?
- How many victims and perpetrators were there?
- What movements were made after the bloodshed?

You've seen the CSI shows where investigators, dressed in their "bunny suits", photograph drops, streaks, smears, and pools of blood, then swab for DNA and *String* the room back to Area of Convergence points. Well, that's pretty much how it happens, except today most *Stringing* is done by 3D computerization.

Bloodstain pattern interpretation is nothing new. It's been around two hundred years and became increasingly sophisticated as technology advanced.

I've been involved in a number of BPA examinations during my time as a cop and coroner. One that really stands out was when Billy Ray Hennessey axe-murdered his ex-girlfriend and her new lover. The room looked like a bomb went off in a red paint factory. I'll tell you more about it at the end of this article. First, let's look at how blood behaves.

Blood has three components that are suspended in plasma.

Erythrocytes are your red cells that transfer oxygen through hemoglobin. It's what gives blood the red color. **Leukocytes**, your white cells, are your body's defenders and support your immune system in fighting infection and disease. **Platelets** are formed in your bone marrow and play a major role in hemostasis or plugging up breaches in vessels.

Blood composition is about 55% plasma and 45% formed elements, or cells, which remain suspended due to agitation caused by your circulatory system. That's called *viscosity*—it's density or internal friction. Once blood leaves your body's pressurized containment, it's subject to the forces of gravity and surface tension which dictate its resting shape. That can be in drops, streaks, or pools.

Crime scene bloodstains take different forms due to factors like velocity and distance of travel, amount of blood flow, angle of impact, and type of surface or target it lands on. There are eight categories of bloodstain patterns:

Single Drop — These stains are typically from a vertical fall and under low velocity, like when you cut your finger and blood drips to the floor. Blood molecules are very

cohesive. They attract and bind in a surface tension that makes a sphere. The drop stays in a ball until it strikes an object or a force acts on it. This is called bleed-out.

Impact Spatter — These result from forceful impacts between an object and wet blood, causing the blood to break into little droplets. Greater force produces smaller droplets. The study of impact staining provides huge insight into the relative positions of individuals and objects involved in the crime. There are three sub-categories of impacts:

1. Low Velocity Impact Spatter (LVIS)

Also called Passive Impact Spatters, these are the largest bloodstain drops with a diameter of 4mm or greater. They travel at a slow speed, no greater than 1.5 m/s. They're associated with being struck by a large, blunt instrument such as a chair or leaking from an open wound. They're also formed when a large amount of blood has been transferred to another surface and the excess drips down.

2. Medium Velocity Impact Spatter (MVIS)

These spatters are associated with an intense beating like from a club, a hammer, a gun butt, or a bag of frozen pork chops. (Yes, I once had a homicide case where a guy's head was caved-in with a bag of frozen pork chops.) MVIS drops are less than 4mm and get propelled at speeds between 1.5 and 7.5 m/s. The further from the target surface that blood is expelled, the larger the drops will be.

3. High Velocity Impact Spatter (HVIS)

This stain pattern is caused by gunshots, explosions, or contact with high-speed objects like having your throat cut with an electric carving knife. (Had one of those, too.) They're evident by masses of tiny droplets less than 2mm in diameter and occur at velocities far in excess of 7.5 m/s. There's no mistaking this type of bloodstain. The angle of impact is evident by an elongated shape—the longer the stain, the longer the angle from vertical.

Cast-Off Stains — COS are common in scenes such as Billy Ray Hennessey's axe-murders where straight and curved lines of blood are made on the walls and ceiling by the centrifugal force of back-and-forth swings. They produce tear-shaped or oblong stains with 'tails' that point in the direction of travel. By reversing the line of travel, the path can be traced or stringed to its area of convergence.

Transfer Bloodstains — These are generally patches and smears of blood deposited secondary to the main, violent event. They say a lot about sequence. It can be when a victim tried to crawl away, the body was dragged, the perpetrator placed a bloody hand on a wall, or when he hid the ax in a closet like Billy Ray did. Tell you more about him soon.

Projected Pattern — This is from arterial damage, such as severed carotids, femorals, radials, and brachials where pressurized blood ejaculates via the still-beating heart.

You'll see groups of big to small splotches, usually in an arc pattern. They're very common in stabbings.

Pooling — Usually occurs once the victim is unconscious and passively exsanguinates. That's the fancy term for bleeding to death. Something telling to a Bloodstain Pattern Analyst is where large pools of blood occur in different locations—no doubt the body's been moved.

Insect Stains — Not long after death, the bugs show up. They land in the bloodstains and make little tracks all over the place. These are easily confused with HVIS to the untrained eye and known in the industry as *Flyspeck*.

Expiration Stains — These are incidental bloodstains associated with injuries to the respiratory and abdominal tracts where a gasping victim expels through the mouth or nose. They appear diluted, more brownish in color due to mixture with saliva or mucous, and look like a fine mist.

Examination of a bloody crime scene is a slow and methodical procedure.

The area is still-photographed from wide, medium, and close-up angles as well as videoed. Each stain pattern is marked, cataloged, and a swab taken for serology or DNA typing. The patterns are then *Strung* to their *Point Of Origin*, or area of convergence and a complex application of trigonometry begins to tell a compelling tale of just what went down.

The visual absence of blood can be misleading.

Criminals occasionally clean up a scene or there may be only a small bit of blood emitted. Chemical reactive agents like *Luminol* and phenolphthalein can be applied which visualize latent stains. Light spectrum tools, such as *LumiLights*, are also used to amplify spots not visible to the naked eye.

Getting back to Billy Ray Hennessey — This guy hid in his ex's attic with an ax for two and a half days, waiting to catch her screwing a new beau. Sure enough, she brought one home from the bar. At 3:00 am, Billy Ray crept down from the hatch, snuck into the bedroom, and chopped them to pieces. Like I said, the crime scene looked like a bomb exploded in a red paint factory.

It took us three days to catch Billy Ray. He did the right thing and fessed-up, then reenacted the murders on video.

It was the coldest thing I've ever seen. Billy Ray described what he did as if he were watching *Jason* or *The Shining*, going through repeated motions of chopping, and back-swinging, and chopping some more. He demonstrated with a 2x2 stick as a prop. (We were nervous about giving him a real ax.) He showed how he modified body positions after death, where he hid his ax in the closet, and where he cleaned himself up.

Billy Ray did the right thing again. He pleaded guilty, receiving two life sentences.

During the three days that we hunted for Billy Ray, the Forensic Identification team had sealed the crime scene and independently conducted their Bloodstain Pattern Analysis. Once Billy Ray was done, we (the detective team) compared notes with the forensic team and—unbeknownst to what Billy Ray reenacted—the forensic folks got it bang-on. They'd reconstructed how many blows each victim received, various positions everyone was in, and... who fought back.

I've been sold on the science ever since.

* * *

Forensic Entomology — How Insects Solve Crime

This guest post is from Professor Gail Anderson of Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. I was fortunate to work with Gail in death investigations. She's a world leader in her field of forensic entomology.

* * *

Forensic entomology is the study of insects for medico-legal purposes. There are many ways insects can be used to help solve a crime, but the primary purpose of forensic entomology is estimating time since death.

Once a person dies his or her body starts to decompose. The decomposition of a dead body starts with the action of microorganisms such as fungi and bacteria, followed by the action of a series of insects (arthropods).

Bodies decompose slowly or fast depending on weather conditions, if they have been buried or are exposed to the elements, if there is presence of insects, or if they have a substance in their bodies that prevents their fast decomposition such as body size and weight, clothing,

The dead body goes through constant changes allowing investigators to estimate how long that person has been dead. Generally speaking, there are 5 basic stages of decomposition: Fresh, putrefaction, fermentation, dry decay, and skeletonization. Every stage attracts different kinds of organisms that will feed off the body and recycle the matter. These stages may take days or years (even thousands of years!)

It is by collecting and studying the insects that are feeding on a body that a forensic entomologist can estimate the time elapsed since the person died.

Flies have great powers of dispersal and they rapidly discover bodies, usually ahead of beetles. Although they can feed on fluid that exudes from a fresh body, the acidic tissues of a fresh corpse cannot be digested by flies.

Blow flies are the most common insects associated with a dead body. However many other species of flies, beetles, and arthropods may also be found at a death scene. Because blow flies arrive earlier in the decomposition process, they provide the most accurate estimation of time of death.

Some of the blow fly species found in Canada include *Calliphora vicina*, *Calliphora vomitoria*, and *Cynomya cadaverina*. The scientific names are used because the common names are not always consistent.

Beetles in both their immature and adult form can also be found on dead bodies. These usually occur at later stages of decomposition. As the corpse dries, it becomes less suitable for the blowflies, flesh flies and house flies that like a semi-liquid environment.

Different fly families, the cheese flies and coffin flies, are abundant as the corpse dries. Eventually, the corpse becomes too dry for the mouth hooks of maggots to operate effectively.

The hide beetles, ham beetles and carcass beetles, with their chewing mouthparts, devour the dry flesh, skin and ligaments. A few of these include *Silphidae* (Carrion beetles), *Dermestidae* (Dermestid beetles) and *Staphylinidae* (Rove beetles). Other insects that may be found include *Piophilidae* (Skipper flies), *Sphaeroceridae* (Dung flies), and *Phoridae* (Humpback flies). Finally, moth larvae and mites consume the hair, leaving only the bones to slowly disintegrate.

Estimating time elapsed since death or Post Mortem Interval (PMI) is the main function of forensic entomology.

There are two methods to estimate time since death: 1) using successional waves of insects and 2) maggot age and development. Insect succession is used if the individual has been dead for a month or longer. Maggot development is used when death occurred less than a month prior to discovery.

Insect succession uses the fact that a body (human or otherwise) supports a rapidly changing ecosystem as it decomposes. As they decay, the remains go through physical, biological and chemical changes, and different stages attract different species of insects.

Calliphoridae (blow flies) and *Sarcophagidae* (flesh flies) may arrive within 24 hours of death if the season is suitable or within minutes if blood or other body fluids are present. Other species, like *Piophilidae* (cheese skippers), are not interested in the fresh corpse but are attracted to the body at a later stage of decomposition. Some insects do not seek the body directly but arrive to feed on other insects at the scene.

Many species are involved at each decomposition stage and groups of insects may overlap with each other. Knowing the regional insect fauna and times of colonization, a forensic entomologist can determine a period of time in which death took place. They may also be able to establish the season of death (e.g. summer) according to the presence or absence of certain insects that are only seasonally active.

Maggot age and development is used in the first few weeks after death and can be accurate to a few days or less. Maggots are immature flies and *Calliphoridae* (blow flies) are the most common insects used.

Blow flies are attracted to a corpse very soon after death and lay their eggs in natural openings or in a wound, if present. Eggs are laid in batches and hatch after a period of time into first instar (or stage) larvae. The larva feeds on the corpse and molts into a second, and then third instar larva.

The size and the number of spiracles (breathing holes) determine the stage. When in the third instar, the larva stops feeding and leaves the corpse to find a safe place to pupate. This is the prepupal stage. The larva's skin hardens into an outer shell, or pupal case, to protect it as it metamorphoses into an adult. Freshly formed pupae are pale in color but darken to a deep brown in a few hours. After a number of days, an adult fly emerges, leaving an empty pupal case behind as evidence.

Each developmental stage takes a known amount of time, depending on the temperature and availability of food. Temperature is especially important since insects are "*cold-blooded*" meaning their metabolic rate increases (and the duration of development decreases) as the temperature rises, and vice-versa.

Looking at the oldest stage of insect and the temperature of the region, a forensic entomologist can estimate the day or range of days in which the first insects laid eggs and provide an estimate of time of death.

This method applies until the first adults emerge. After this, it is impossible to determine which generation is present and time since death must be estimated from insect succession.

Collecting, preserving, and packaging specimens are the vital steps in processing evidence.

Forensic investigations rely on evidence and material found at a crime scene, which must be recorded and collected carefully. This is especially true for insect material, which can be hard to find.

When approaching a scene with insect evidence, a forensic entomologist first considers the surroundings. If the scene is outdoors, they note the landscape, plants and soil types, as well as the weather. Temperature is especially important and if possible, a portable recording device is left to record long-term changes.

A soil sample is often taken since larvae may wander away from the body to pupate. If the scene is indoors, an investigator looks for access points where insects could get in. Once at the body, the forensic entomologist takes several samples from different areas of the body. If there are maggots, some are collected, placed in boiling water and preserved in alcohol. This stops development and allows the insect to be aged.

Other maggots are collected alive so that they can be kept until they reach adulthood.

At this stage, the species can be determined. Normally, eggs are only collected if there are no later stages associated with the body. Again, some are taken and preserved in alcohol while others are watched until they hatch. Empty pupal casings are also collected.

Adult flies are useful only if the wings are crumpled. This suggests they have recently emerged and can be linked to the body. Otherwise, they are not collected since they may have just arrived at the scene.

The careful and accurate collection of insect evidence at the scene is essential. Ideally, an entomologist collects a range of insect stages from different areas of the body and the surroundings (e.g. clothing or soil). Different species, or insects collected from different areas, are kept separately.

Human bodies attract two main groups of insects: flies (*Diptera*) and beetles (*Coleoptera*).

FLIES are found as eggs, larvae or maggots, pupae, empty pupal cases or as adults.

EGGS are tiny but usually laid in clumps. They are often found in a wound or natural opening, but may be in clothing, etc. Eggs are collected with a damp paint brush or forceps. Half are preserved in alcohol and half are collected alive. Eggs are especially important when maggots or later insect stages are absent. The time of hatching is vital and the eggs must be monitored every few hours.

MAGGOTS are found on or near the remains and may be in large masses. The masses generate heat, which speeds up development. The site of the maggot mass, the temperature (and size) of each mass are important. Large maggots are usually older, but small maggots may belong to a different species so a range of sizes are collected.

Since third instar larvae leave the body to pupate, the soil around the body is carefully sifted. The soil below the corpse is also checked to a depth of several centimeters. Half the sample is kept alive and half preserved immediately. Preservation allows the entomologist to see what stage the maggots were in when collected. Preserved specimens may also be used as evidence in court.

PUPAE and **EMPTY PUPAL CASES** are very important but easy to miss. Pupae like dry, secure areas away from the wet food source so clothing pockets, seams and cuffs

are likely hiding places. If the remains are found indoors, they may be under clothing or rugs etc. Pupae are dark brown, oval, and range in size from 2-20 mm. Empty pupal cases look similar, but one end is open where the adult fly has emerged. Pupae are not preserved. They won't grow and the species and exact age cannot be determined until the adult emerges.

ADULT BLOW FLIES are not as important as eggs, maggots or pupae. They are only used to determine the species of insect. However, if an adult fly has crumpled wings, it may have just emerged and can be linked directly to the body. These are collected and kept separately. Flies smaller than blow flies are important at all stages as they are used when analyzing the succession of insects on the remains

BEETLES (*Coleoptera*) are found as adults, larvae, pupae and as cast skins. All beetle stages are important. They move fast and are often found under the body, or in and under clothing. They should be placed in alcohol in preserve them.

Other information is also important. For the site, this includes:

- The habitat (woods, beach, a house).
- The site (shady or exposed to sunlight).
- The vegetation (trees, grass, bush, shrubs).
- The soil type (rocky, sandy, muddy).
- The weather at the time of collection (sunny, cloudy).
- The temperature and humidity.
- The elevation and map coordinates of the scene.
- Unusual details (like whether the body was submerged).

For the remains, it is helpful to know:

- The presence, extent and type of clothing on the body.
- If the body was covered or buried (and with what).
- If there is an obvious cause of death.
- If there are wounds on the body or body fluids (blood etc) at the scene.
- If drugs were involved (drugs can affect decomposition rates).
- The position of the body.
- What direction the body faced.
- The state of decomposition.
- If other carrion was found in the area that might also attract insects.
- If the body was moved or disturbed.

Analysis of the evidence is the next step in an entomology investigation.

At the laboratory, entomologists measure and examine immature specimens, placing them in a jar with sawdust and food. The insects are checked frequently and when they pupate they are removed. The date of pupation and emergence is noted for each specimen.

When the adults emerge, they are killed and stored. This process is important because adult flies are much easier to identify to species than larvae. Also, pupation and emergence times are used to calculate the age at the time of collection.

There are other uses for forensic entomology.

Forensic entomology is used most commonly to determine time since death. However, insects can provide other important information about a crime or victim.

For example, insects can provide details about a person's life before they died. Because development is predictable, depending on specific factors, the use of drugs can change the lifecycle timing of an insect. One such drug is cocaine, which causes the maggots feeding on affected tissues to develop much faster than they normally would.

Insect behavior can also offer clues about what happened around the time of death. Flies tend to lay their eggs first in moist places in the body like the eyes and mouth. If eggs or maggots are found on normally dry skin, like the forearms, before these other areas, it suggests that the skin was damaged in some way. This may be because the individual injured themselves in a fall or because they were trying to protect themselves from a weapon. In either case, an important piece of evidence has been discovered.

Finally, the species of insect can point to events that occurred after death.

For instance, some insects are found only in some areas. If a species that is normally found only in the countryside is found at a scene in the city, it suggests the body has been moved at some point after death. Again, this provides an essential piece of evidence that could help solve a crime.

These are some entomology clues for homicide scenes.

- The presence of insects on the body that are not found in the area suggests the body was moved, and may indicate the type of area where the murder took place.
- If the insect cycle is disturbed, it may suggest that the killer returned to the scene of the crime. The entomologist may be able to estimate the date of death and possibly the date of the return of the killer.
- If maggot activity occurs away from a natural opening, this may indicate a wound. For example, maggots on the palm of the hands suggest defense wounds.
- If maggots feed on a body with drugs in its system, those chemicals accumulate and may be detected.
- If an insect is found from a specific site, it may place a suspect at the scene of a crime.
- If insects are found on a living individual (often young children or seniors), it may indicate neglect or abuse.

These are the limitations of forensic entomology.

Time of death estimates depend on accurate temperature information, but local weather patterns can be variable and data may come from stations quite distant from the crime scene.

Forensic entomology relies on insect abundance. In winter, there are fewer insects and entomology's use is limited.

Since it takes time to rear insects, forensic entomology cannot produce immediate results.

Treatments (like freezing, burial or wrapping) that exclude insects can affect estimates.

Since chemicals can slow or accelerate growth, insect evidence may be affected by the presence of drugs in a corpse's system.

The last duty in a forensic entomology investigation is report writing.

A report is a formal description of an event or investigation. A forensic report explains what an investigator did, how they did it, and what they think the evidence shows.

A forensic investigator's report is especially important because it must be able to explain the results of the investigation to a judge and possibly a jury who would not be able to attend a crime scene and observe an investigation first-hand.

There are no agreed-upon protocols or standards for writing forensic reports in Canada, but most forensic scientists use a scientific format that includes the following:

- Report summary.
- Background (how the author became involved in the case).
- Qualifications of the author (what makes the author an authority on the subject).
- Materials, methods and limitations (what work was done, how and why it was conducted, and any barriers to further investigation/analysis).
- Results (what the evidence found).
- Interpretation of results (what the evidence means, within the area of expertise).
- Conclusions (another short summary of the case, the findings and their importance).
- Bibliography (what sources of information - professional literature, interviews etc - were used).

* * *

Many thanks to Professor Gail Anderson of Simon Fraser University in Vancouver for sharing her expertise with [DyingWords](#) followers. Not only is Gail a world leader in her field of forensic entomology, she's a great lady to pull maggots from a decomposing corpse with. Here's a bio on her.

SFU's pure research is raising the bar on solving crime. Professor Gail Anderson and her forensic entomology team have made discoveries in many pure disciplines, and law enforcement agencies all over the world are currently using them to solve crimes.

Gail Anderson's lab exclusively examines the ways insect biology can be applied to criminal investigations. She was the first full-time forensic entomologist in Canada, and is one of just 15 certified by the *American Board of Forensic Entomology*. Her research has helped to identify victims and suspects; to determine how victims died, and to solve arson and poaching cases.

Recently, Anderson's research was used to help convict Robert Pickton for the murder of dozens of Vancouver women. She has also advised on the mysterious human feet that have washed ashore in the Pacific Northwest in recent years.

One discovery at a time, Anderson and her team are helping debunk the common misconception that pure research has no practical application. They know that engaging research means mobilizing discoveries and enriching communities at the same time.

Also, thanks to Barb Winter of Simon Fraser University's museum who runs this really cool site called Investigating Forensics where you can be a coroner for a day through interactively investigating a case of found human remains by using all the modern forensic disciplines. [Click on this link.](#)

* * *

Genomics — The Future of Forensic DNA Profiling

Genomics is the scientific study of the molecular instructions encoded in your cells. It maps your entire genetic structure. Till now, forensic science has focused on only identifying your cell's nuclei signature—your inner DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) and, to a degree, your outer miDNA (mitochondrial DNA)—not your genes.

The old method of forensically profiling your biological fingerprint by DNA analysis is being replaced by a computerized 3D genome recreation of your entire being.

Genomics is a concept first developed in the 1970's. It led to the Human Genome Project (HGP) being completed in 2003.

The HGP was a massive international research venture that sequenced and mapped all of the human cell genes—together known as the genome. The HGP gave us the ability to read nature's complete genetic blueprint for building a human being. Like you.

So what's a genome?

A genome is the whole ensemble of your genetic material. It's the molecular guide of your DNA, your chromosomes, and your genes that describe how to make your cells. It's the instruction manual for your body. That book is your genome and the study of that book is termed genomics. It's pretty much a math exercise. And it's deadly stuff for identifying criminals with.

Let's take a quick look at your biology.

Deoxyribonucleic acid is the chemical compound that contains the instructions to develop and direct your life as an organism. DNA molecules are made of two twisting, paired strands, often referred to as a double helix.

Each DNA strand is made of four chemical units, called nucleotide bases, which comprise the genetic "*alphabet*". The bases are adenine (A), thymine (T), guanine (G), and cytosine (C). Bases on opposite strands pair specifically—an A always pairs with a T—a C always pairs with a G. The order of the As, Ts, Cs, and Gs determines the meaning of the information encoded in that part of a DNA molecule. It's just like the order of letters determines the meaning of a word, only DNA is written out in a barcode locus.

Every single cell in your body contains a complete copy of the 3.2 billion DNA base pairs, or letters, that code your human genome.

DNA's four-letter language contains information needed to build your physical body. A gene refers to the unit of DNA that carries the instructions for making a specific protein, or set of proteins, and there are 23,000 genes in your genome code. Each gene directs an average of three proteins.

If you could peer inside your cells, you'd see your genome contained in 46 tightly packed bundles of DNA—23 came from your mother and 23 from your father. These DNA bundles, called chromosomes, provide instructions that enable a one-cell embryo to develop into a 100 trillion-cell adult. So, every time the human body produces a sperm or an egg, 3 billion DNA letters must be copied and packaged so they can be passed along to future offspring.

Humans come in many shapes and sizes, but we're all very similar at the DNA level. In fact, the genomes of any two people are more than 99% the same. Still, the tiny fraction of the genome that varies among humans is critical when it comes to forensically identifying a particular individual. DNA variations are part of what makes each of us unique, but it's in the genes that the real difference lies. They direct what you look like.

Okay. Enough of the biology lecture. How is genomics gonna catch some crooks?

It's not just genomics. Science now has a great handle on how your DNA is formed and how your genes fine-tune your uniqueness. The problem has been in how to process a

staggering forensic workload that has bottlenecked the crime labs and the courts—and how to put a face and a name to an unidentified DNA profile.

The answer lies in genomic computerization. The good news is that technological progress is being made faster than anyone ever dreamed possible. Now the labs are looking at your entire genome package for identification, not just at that little bit of nucleic or mitochondrial DNA which is dirty, volatile, and time-consuming stuff to process.

Advancements in computerized processing are allowing crime labs to build an entire picture of you as a suspect—not just an impersonal, academic graph of the matching points in either your biological evidence sample that you left behind at the scene or your known reference sample that investigators obtained from you.

Think about how many cold cases there are where the investigators have a clear DNA profile of you as the perpetrator, but they have absolutely no clue what you look like. They have no idea whether you're young or old, black or white, have green eyes or brown. They don't know your hair color or texture. They don't know if you're tall or short. And, in some cases, they don't know if you're male or female.

Genomic profiling is going to change the game. Computers will speed it up.

Illumina Corporation of San Diego is a world leader in Forensic Genomic technology. They've developed a process called *Next Generation Sequencing (NGS)* that can simultaneously analyze every locus-point in a traditional DNA barcode using less than 1 nanogram of a sample in a fraction of traditional turn-around time that it's currently taking.

Illumina is also at the forefront of developing the new cornerstone of contemporary forensic science—being able to generate a physical description of the DNA's donor based on their genome profile.

Consider the ramifications. It's not only going to assist in solving current cases. It's going to give a physical look at the perpetrators of cold cases. Identify found remains with no names. Help in sorting disaster victims. And make accurate aging estimations for missing children.

The speed and accuracy of forensic genomic profiling will have a far-reaching effect on the costs in the criminal justice system. Faster and higher rates of identification will remove more dangerous offenders from society and the reliability of their forensic identifications will result in less trial time. It will reduce investigator workload in chasing blind leads. And it will, undoubtedly, save lives.

I think we're in a fascinating time, watching technological advancements in forensic sciences. Genomic profiling is a fantastic breakthrough. We're close to the day when your tiny biological dropping at the scene of your crime will go into a machine, the

button pressed, and not just will your virtual mugshot come out—it'll build a full-color, 3D image of your entire person right from your molecules to your moles.

Yes, science has come a long, long way in understanding how your human genome instruction book is written.

God knows who wrote it.

* * *

Police Interrogations — The 9 Step Reid Technique

The psychology of effective police interrogation is complex. Today's interrogators train in communication, human behavioral science, and legal procedures. They hone their skills through years of practice. But regardless of how smooth-talking a detective may be, the secret to success in securing admissible confessions will always lie in being a good listener, mentally manipulating the suspect, and using common sense.

In my years as a homicide investigator and dealing with suspects, I've worked with excellent interrogators. RCMP Polygraphist Don Adam was one of the best. Don was a natural in getting suspects to talk. I was fortunate to learn from guys like Don in mastering techniques which got confessions that'd stick in court. There's a point where natural talent and learned techniques intertwine. That produces a good interrogator who produces good evidence.

Courts in the civilized world have a basic criteria for admitting confessions from accused persons as evidence. This pertains to statements made to persons in authority, ie—cops:

Statements must be voluntary. Suspects can't be threatened in any way or promised a favor in return for talking.

Suspects must be aware of their legal rights and waive an opportunity to exercise them.

Their rights are to remain silent and to consult a lawyer if they choose.

The reasons for these strict rules are to avoid the chance of false confessions being used to convict people and ensuring an ethical theater in law enforcement.

Interrogations are usually done in an accusatory, guilt-presumptive process and not in an objective environment. So they begin with a definite bias—not like a court proceeding which operates with a presumption of innocence.

I've seen a lot of unscientific techniques applied in interrogations. The oldest one is the good cop—bad cop thing. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it backfires. Buddy-buddying the suspect only succeeds if there's common ground. Minimization—Maximization. Cat & mouse. Outright deception to a subject is dangerous. If the interrogator is caught lying—it's pretty much over. Torture—mental or physical—is completely unacceptable and would probably end with the cop in jail.

So what's the best interrogation procedure?

Well, it's been around for a long time since an American polygraphist by the name of John E. Reid figured out a 9 Step formula of psychological manipulation which is known as the *Reid Technique*.

The basic premise of interrogation is to manipulate the suspect into talking and then listen to what they're saying. Once they start talking, it's hard for them to stop. Once they start telling the truth, it's harder to continue lying.

In the *Reid Technique*, interrogation is an accusatory process where the interrogator opens by telling the suspect that there's no doubt about their guilt. The interrogator delivers a monologue rather than a question and answer format and the composure is understanding, patient, and non-demeaning. The goal is making the suspect progressively more and more comfortable with acknowledging the truth about what they've done. This is accomplished by the interrogator first imagining and then offering the subject various psychological constructs as justification for their behavior.

For example, an admission of guilt might be prompted by the question, "*Did you plan this out or did it just happen on the spur of the moment?*" This technique uses a loaded question that contains the unspoken, implicit assumption of guilt. The idea is that the suspect must catch the hidden assumption and contest it to avoid the trap.

But the psychological manipulation begins before the interrogator even opens his mouth, though.

The physical layout of an interrogation room is designed to maximize a suspect's discomfort and sense of powerlessness from the moment they step inside. The classic interrogation manual *Criminal Interrogation and Confessions*, which was co-written by John Reid, recommends a small, soundproof room with only two or three chairs, a desk, and nothing on the walls. This creates a sense of exposure, unfamiliarity, and isolation. It heightens the suspect's "*get me out of here*" sensation throughout the interrogation.

The manual also suggests that the suspect should be seated in an uncomfortable chair, out of reach of any controls like light switches or thermostats, furthering his discomfort and setting up a feeling of dependence. A one-way mirror and/or closed circuit TV are great additions to the room because they increase the suspect's anxiety and allows other interrogators to watch the process and help the principal interrogator figure out which techniques are working and which aren't.

Before the 9 Steps of the *Reid Technique* begin, there's an initial interview to determine guilt or innocence. During this time, the interrogator attempts to develop a rapport with the suspect, using casual conversation to create a non-threatening atmosphere. People tend to like and trust people who are like them, so the interrogator may claim to share some of the suspect's interests or beliefs. If the suspect starts talking to the interrogator about harmless things, it becomes harder to stop talking or start lying later when the discussion turns to the crime.

During this initial conversation, the interrogator observes the suspect's reactions, both verbal and non-verbal, to establish a baseline reaction before the real stress begins. The interrogator will later use this baseline as a control or comparison point. One method of creating a baseline involves asking questions that cause the suspect to access different parts of their brain.

Non-threatening questions are asked that require memory (simple recall) and questions that require thinking (creativity). When the suspect is remembering something, their eyes often move to the right. This is an outward manifestation of their brain activating the memory center. When they're thinking about something, the eyes will move upward or to the left, reflecting activation of the cognitive center. A trained, experienced interrogator makes a mental note of the suspect's eye activity.

The next step is turning to the question at hand.

The interrogator asks basic questions about the crime and compares the suspect's reactions to the baseline. This is quite an accurate determination if the suspect is truthful or deceptive. For example, if the interrogator asks the suspect where they were the night of the crime and they answer truthfully, they'll honestly be remembering so their eyes will move to the right. If they're concocting an alibi, they're thinking, so the eyes will go up or to the left. If the interrogator determines that the suspect's reactions indicate deception and all other evidence points to guilt, then a structured interrogation of the suspect begins.

The *Reid Technique* lays out a proven blueprint of 9 Steps or issues guiding an interrogation. Many of these steps overlap and there is no such thing as a "*typical*" interrogation. Here's how it should generally go.

1.Confrontation

The interrogator presents the facts of the case and informs the suspect of the evidence against them implying in a confident manner that the suspect is involved in the crime. The suspect's stress level increases and the interrogator may move around the room, invading the suspect's personal space to increase the discomfort. If the suspect starts fidgeting, licking lips, and/or grooming themselves (running his hand through their hair, for instance), the interrogator notes these as deception indicators confirming they're on the right track.

2. Theme Development

The interrogator creates a story about why the suspect committed the crime. Theme development is about looking through the eyes of the suspect to figure out why they did it. The interrogator lays out a theme or a story that the suspect can latch on to in order to either excuse or justify their part in the crime and the interrogator observes the suspect to see if they're buying the theme. Are they paying closer attention than before? Nodding their head? If so, the interrogator will continue developing that theme; if not, they'll pick a new theme and start over. Theme development is in the background throughout the interrogation. When developing themes, the interrogator speaks in a soft, soothing voice to appear non-threatening and to lull the suspect into a false sense of security.

3. Stopping Denials

Letting the suspect deny their guilt will increase their confidence, so the interrogator tries to interrupt all denials, sometimes telling the suspect it'll be their turn to talk in a moment, but right now, they need to listen. From the start of the interrogation, the interrogator watches for denials and stops the suspect before they can voice them. In addition to keeping the suspect's confidence low, stopping denials also help quiet the suspect so they don't have a chance to ask for a lawyer. If there are no denials during theme development, the interrogator takes this as a positive indicator of guilt. If initial attempts at denial slow down or stop during theme development, the interrogator knows they've found a good theme and that the suspect is getting closer to confessing.

4. Overcoming Objections

Once the interrogator has fully developed a theme that the suspect relates to, the suspect may offer logic-based objections as opposed to simple denials, like *"I could never rape somebody—my sister was raped and I saw how much pain it caused. I would never do that to someone."* The interrogator handles these differently than denials because these objections can give information to turn around and use against the suspect. The interrogator might say something like, *"See, that's good, you're telling me you would never plan this, that it was out of your control. You care about women like your sister—it was just a one-time mistake, not a recurring thing."* If the interrogator does his job right, an objection ends up looking more like an admission of guilt.

5. Getting Suspect's Attention

At this point, the suspect should be frustrated and unsure of themselves. They may be looking for someone to help him escape the situation. The interrogator tries to capitalize on that insecurity by pretending to be the suspect's ally. They'll try to appear even more sincere in their continued theme development and may get physically closer to the suspect, making it harder for the suspect to detach from the situation. The interrogator may offer physical gestures of camaraderie and concern, such as touching the suspect's shoulder or patting his back.

6. Suspect Looses Resolve

If the suspect's body language indicates surrender—head in his hands, elbows on knees, shoulders hunched—the interrogator seizes the opportunity to start leading the suspect into confession. It transitions from theme development to motive alternatives that force the suspect to choose a reason why they committed the crime. At this stage, the interrogator makes every effort to establish eye contact with the suspect to increase the suspect's stress level and desire to escape. If, at this point, the suspect cries then the interrogator knows it's a positive indicator of guilt.

7. Alternatives

The interrogator offers two contrasting motives for some aspect of the crime, sometimes beginning with a minor aspect so it's less threatening to the suspect. One alternative is socially acceptable ("*It was a crime of passion*"), and the other is morally repugnant ("*You killed her for the money*"). The interrogator builds up the contrast between the two alternatives until the suspect gives an indicator of choosing one, like a nod of the head or increased signs of surrender. Then, the interrogator speeds things up.

8. Bringing Suspect Into Conversation

Once the suspect chooses an alternative, the confession has begun. The interrogator encourages the suspect to talk about the crime and might arrange for a second interrogator in the room to increase the suspect's stress level and his desire to give up and tell the truth. A new person into the room also forces the suspect to reassert his socially acceptable reason for the crime, reinforcing the idea that the confession is a done deal.

9. The Confession

The final stage of an interrogation is all about getting a truthful confession that will be admitted as evidence at trial. Virtually all interrogations today are recorded on audio/visual and transcripts are developed. There are further evidentiary tools used during confession besides words. Having the suspect draw maps or sketches of the scene, confess to secondary parties, write letters of apology, and returning the suspect back to the scene and re-enact the crime are commonly used. It's vitally important to back-up the truthfulness of the confession with independent, corroborating evidence such as disclosing "*key facts*" of the crime which would only be known to the perpetrator and investigators, or turning over critically implicating evidence like the murder weapon.

These steps represent some of the psychological techniques that interrogators use to get confessions from suspects, but real interrogations don't always follow the textbook.

Critics of the *Reid Technique* claim that it too easily produces false confessions, especially with young people. The use of the *Reid Technique* on youths is

prohibited in several European countries because of the incidence of false confessions and wrongful convictions that result.

Although it's widely used and accepted in the USA, the Canadian courts are careful in admissibility of confessions extracted in this method, ruling that *"stripped to its bare essentials, the Reid Technique is a guilt-presumptive, confrontational, psychologically manipulative procedure whose purpose is to extract a confession, not necessarily a truthful confession."* John E. Reid and Associates, the Chicago firm that holds rights to the technique and its teachings maintains that *"it's not the technique that causes false or coerced confessions, but police detectives who apply improper interrogation procedures."*

I've seen the *Reid Technique* put into practice many times with great success.

The best example of a textbook *Reid Technique* interrogation is the case of Colonel Russell Williams, a Canadian Air Force commander who confessed to two sex-murders. The interrogator was Detective Sergeant Jim Smyth of the Ontario Provincial Police's *Behavioral Science Unit*. The skill employed by Det. Sgt. Smyth is nothing short of magic.

Here's the [YouTube](#) link to the two hour and forty minute video. If you like crime stories and techniques it's well worth the watch.

* * *

Can You Beat the Polygraph?

The polygraph, or lie detector, is a forensic investigative tool that's used as an aid to verify the truthfulness of a person's statements. Polygraph examinations—properly conducted by trained professionals on competent subjects with a clear issue—are remarkably accurate, but they're not foolproof. Yes. They've been known to be beaten.

The question is—can you?

Polygraph examination interpretation is not admissible as evidence in court. They're not a replacement, or shortcut, for a proper investigation and a thorough interview of the subject. Statistics show the majority of people who undergo polygraph examinations are found to be truthful. Perhaps the term "*Lie Detector*" should be replaced with "*Truth Verifier*".

In my policing career, I've been involved in well over a hundred polygraph examinations, including getting hooked up myself for a test drive. (Turns out I'm a terrible liar—not sure how I'm gonna make out with this new career as a fiction writer.) The subjects I'd had polygraphed were a mixture of suspects, witnesses, complainants, and victims. I'd

say that sixty percent of the subjects were truthful, thirty percent were lying, and ten percent were inconclusive.

It makes sense, when you think about it, that the majority are truthful because they know it will work to their advantage. I can't think of the number of times I've had subjects refuse to take the test, giving excuses everywhere from *"Those things are rigged to frame me"* to *"I heard you get testicle cancer from it"*.

Before giving you some tips on how to pass a polygraph when you're dead-ass lying, let's look at what the thing is and how it works.

The word **polygraph** comes from the Greek word *polugraphos* which means *"to sniff-out bullshit"*. (Go ahead—call me a liar). Polygraphs have been around since the 1920s and have evolved from clunky paper-reel with ink-pen devices to modern laptops with automated scoring systems. Clinically, the process is known as *psychophysiological detection of deception*.

The instruments are a combination of medical devices that monitor a subject's physiological responses to a set of questions designed to put the subject under the stress; the stress associated with deception. The involuntary bodily functions include heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, galvanic skin conduction, and perspiration.

Polygraphic theory dictates that a subject will show a spike in some, or all, of these functions when asked a question and forced to knowingly lie. In a criminal investigation, the examination questions are formed between the polygraphist and the subject during an extensive pre-test interview.

There are four categories of questions—all must be answered "Yes" or "No." Three categories are control questions and one is issue questions.

Category One is where the subject conclusively knows they're truthful:

- Q — Is your name Garry Rodgers? "Yes"
- Q — Are you a retired police officer? "Yes"
- Q — Did you make the Amazon Top Ten list? "Yes"

Category Two is asking the subject ambiguous questions:

- Q — Is there life after death? "Yes"
- Q — Did the chicken come before the egg? "No"
- Q — Are you going to make the Top Ten list again? "Let me tell ya..."

Category Three has the subject intentionally lie:

- Q — Were you kidnapped by aliens? "Yes"
Q — Did you ever ride a camel? "No"
Q — Are you going to try and make the Top Ten list again? "No"

Category Four deals with the issues:

- Q — Did you murder Jimmy Hoffa? "No"
Q — Do you know who murdered Jimmy Hoffa? "No"
Q — Did murdering Jimmy Hoffa help you get on the Top Ten list? "Dude... it's not how it looks..."

Only "Yes" or "No" answers are acceptable during a polygraph examination because the issue has to be clear in the subject's mind. Black and White. All clarification is worked-out in the pre-test interview. The subject is never surprised by the question, but the question order is completely unknown. This creates an atmosphere of anxiety as the subject waits to hear the questions that really matter.

The biggest concern that I've heard from people who are asked to submit to a polygraph is *"What happens if I'm nervous?"*

This is expected.

Anyone, police officers included, would experience anxiety when being examined. Part of a polygraphist's skill is to build a rapport with the subject and put them at relative ease before the questioning starts. One of the reasons in building this rapport is to get the subject to volunteer information that the investigation hasn't uncovered.

I've seen subjects give critical facts because the right questions weren't asked during the investigation and I've seen subjects fall apart and confess before being strapped into the chair.

The key to successful polygraph examinations is the skill of the examiner. The polygraph is just a tool—an extension of the examiner's mind and voice.

So—given there's proven science and skill behind polygraphs—how can you beat one?

Like I said, given a professional examiner, a competent subject, and a clear issue, polygraph results are remarkably accurate. There are always exceptions and here are some tips on how to pass the graph.

- Prepare well in advance.
- Research and understand the process so you won't feel oppressed. The examiner will take every advantage of your ignorance.
- Know the issue(s) and know what the examiner is looking for.
- Talk to someone who has experienced a test.

- Approach the test as an extreme job interview. Dress for the job. Arrive on time. Sober. Rested. Do not reschedule. Make a good first impression.
- Know that you're going to be video recorded.
- Understand the test starts right when you arrive and ends when you leave. It's not just the time you're hooked to the machine.
- Be on guard. There will be trick questions in the pre-test. It's part of the process.
- Listen carefully to what the examiner says and respond accordingly. Do not try and monopolize the conversation.
- The examiner is not your friend, despite how nice she comes across in the pre-test. Her job is to get to the truth. Remember—you're dealing with a highly trained professional who knows psychology. If her exam shows you're deceitful, she'll go for your jugular in the post-test.
- Recognize the relevant and irrelevant control questions. Focus on what's relevant and do not offer more information than what's pertinent to the issue.
- Play dumb. Don't try to impress the examiner that you've studied up. You'll only look stupid.
- Breathe normally. Shortness of breath naturally triggers the other body functions to accelerate and it will increase nervousness.
- Take lots of time to answer.
- Think of something mentally stressful when answering a control question—like the time when you were a kid and your dog was hit by the train. That will raise the “normal” graph peaks.
- Think of something calming when answering issue questions—like getting a new puppy. That will flatten stress peaks.
- Keep your eyes open during the questions. The examiner will ask you to close them because this significantly alters your sensory awareness and puts you at a disadvantage. This is very important.
- Bite your tongue during every question except the truthful control ones. This levels the playing field.

So, who's got away with taking a lie detector?

I call her *The Mother From Hell*.

I investigated a bizarre case of *Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy*—a rare form of child abuse where a parent causes harm to their child to bring attention to themselves. This woman repeatedly complained that her infant daughter was choking, then was caught by hospital staff with her hands on the girl's neck. She denied it. We polygraphed her. She blew the needles off the machine and confessed.

The Mother From Hell got off in court because they ruled her confession inadmissible due to it being elicited under oppression from the polygraph examination.

Gary Ridgway, The *Green River Killer* from Seattle, strangled over fifty women in the 1980's. He was on police radar early in the serial killing investigation, “passed” a polygraph, then got warehoused as a suspect. He went on to kill many more before being caught on DNA.

Can you beat the polygraph?

The best advice I can give is... if you're guilty—don't go anywhere near one.

* * *

Forensic Hypnosis For Memory Enhancement

Forensic hypnosis is the application of hypnotherapy as an investigative aid in the field of law enforcement. It's often used to help witnesses recall details of events and descriptions of suspects that can't be extracted through conventional interviewing techniques.

In my police career, I've been involved in a number of cases where we used hypnotic memory enhancement. Several had amazing success.

I've always been fascinated with how the human mind works. I think that modern medicine and psychiatry are just beginning to understand the complexity of how consciousness works. Hypnosis is a tool to assist in entering a person's subconscious and unlocking the vault where memory is stored. Its “*magic*” is the ability to alter the subject's state of consciousness which is what Shamanism is all about. But that's for another discussion.

The best hypnotherapist I've had the pleasure to work with is Dr. Lee Pulos of Vancouver, BC, Canada. Here's how Dr. Pulos explains it.

“Hypnosis is a natural state of consciousness that we drift in and out of quite regularly. For example, while driving along a highway and then suddenly discovering that you ‘lost’ several miles without being aware of it. This can also happen during reading when you may notice that you have ‘read’ a chapter or two without being mindful of the content. Hypnosis is basically a technique for focusing consciousness by entering a deep state of absorption. It allows you to shift from your outer to inner awareness and tap deeper levels of consciousness, so that we can re-educate and reprogram the subconscious with empowering suggestions or beliefs.”

The word “*hypnosis*” comes from the name of the Greek god *Hypnos*, who presided over sleep. In the late 1700s, Anton Mesmer brought the technique into popular consciousness in Europe and in 1843 Scottish physician James Braid coined

the term "*hypnotism*" for the experience that was passing in many circles as "*animal magnetism*".

Hypnosis places a person in a trance state that can resemble sleep, but is instead an altered state of consciousness more akin to a lucid dream. Often people in a trance are quite alert, but focused in a way that differs from their normal conscious state. Contrary to popular notions, subjects in a light trance may be well aware of everything that is going on.

I've seen a rough and tough biker-witness under hypnosis who was instructed to play "*patty-cake*" by clapping his hands on his knees. He couldn't stop laughing at the fact that he couldn't control his hands though he seemed perfectly conscious in a way that ought to have enabled him to resist the instruction. His hands changed to patting his head and stomach at the hypnotist's instruction. They looked at each other the whole time and even had a conversation with his hands patting about.

The trance-state, which has its own ebb and flow, is the result of a trusting and cooperative process between the subject and the hypnotist. It's not one person controlling another and there's no way the hypnotist can make the subject do something they would not do while they're in a normal state, such as an illegal or immoral act.

Kevin McConkey, President of the *Australian Psychological Society* and co-author of *Hypnosis, Memory, and Behavior in Criminal Investigation* says, "*Hypnosis is essentially a phenomenon that reflects genuinely experienced alterations of reality in response to suggestions administered by a hypnotist.*"

Hypnosis involves concentration that is heightened to the point where one can recall details that seemed to elude that same person in a conscious state. That's why it appears to be a powerful forensic tool for criminal investigation, although some researchers challenge the notion that hypnosis leads to significant increases in memory.

There are two basic purposes for using forensic hypnosis.

The most common is to induce relaxation when anxiety and stress may be obstructing a witness' ability to recall as much information as possible. The second use occurs when retrieval of information from witnesses cannot be acquired through any other means.

The very first court case to involve forensic hypnosis was *Cornell v. Superior Court of San Diego* in 1959. Although forensic hypnosis is mostly used by prosecutors, in this particular court case, it was the defense that used hypnosis as an aid in preparing its strategy. Since then, many famous cases have used hypnosis as an aid, including the Boston Strangler, Ted Bundy, and Sam Sheperd.

Currently, no overriding judgment has yet been handed down regarding admissibility of evidence achieved through forensic hypnosis and the use of such evidence varies from one jurisdiction to the next. Adding to the reliability problem is that solid evidence can be

devalued as a result of unprofessional circumstances surrounding the obtaining of evidence through hypnosis.

I remember one judge rejecting evidence from a witness who had been subject to hypnotic recall stating, *“There’s nothing more unreliable than an eyewitness, never mind one who is tainted by hocus-pocus.”*

On the other hand, I recall another judge who was fascinated by the process and readily accepted the witness evidence, particularly because the information obtained under hypnosis was corroborated by other facts.

As in all types of evidence, the key is reliability.

In order to ensure that solid forensic hypnosis used in the investigation of a crime is not devalued, it’s become standard and vital operating procedure that all hypnosis sessions are recorded on video and audio and that the session is witnessed by independent observers. In addition, to further strengthen the case, the hypnosis must be performed by a trained forensic hypnotist.

Before a forensic hypnotist is allowed to begin a session, one very important condition must be met.

The subject must be assured that during the hypnotic session no attempt shall be made to elicit any information that is not directly relevant to the investigation. In addition, the forensic hypnotist must also assure the subject that no information retrieved will lead to self-incrimination.

Critics of forensic hypnotism center their attacks on the accuracy and reliability of the evidence that’s obtained. The concern is that suggestion(s) implanted during hypnotism may create false memories through the use of leading questions.

One thing that a forensic hypnotist cannot do, and is never called to do, is to help a suspect confess to a crime. Not only is this nearly impossible, but any confession arrived at through hypnosis would never be admissible in court.

Here’s a true case that I investigated where forensic hypnosis for memory enhancement led to a break-through in solving the crime. It was conducted by Dr. Lee Pulos.

In April, 1986, a lady was alone in her cabin on a remote gold claim in northern British Columbia. A masked man with a handgun appeared at her door demanding that she hand over her gold stash. She refused, so he proceeded to blindfold and hog-tie her, then began torturing her by burning her hands and ribs with a red-hot knife heated on her wood stove.

Now this lady was one tough old bird, as you'd expect a gold miner to be. She later stated that she'd worked so hard to build her gold stash that *she'd "rather die than turn it over to this asshole"*.

Realizing that his interrogation technique was going nowhere, the bad guy quit in frustration, set the cabin on fire with her still tied and blindfolded, and left her to die. She was able to wiggle over and boot the door, then crawled outside where she laid in excruciating pain on the snow in sub-zero temperature until her husband returned from town and found her.

Because this was such a horrific crime, the Mounties pulled out all stops. We flew her to Vancouver to undergo hypnosis with Lee Pulos. He was able to extract two things that led to solving the case. One was that she recalled that the bad guy was using a two-way radio or "*communicator*" as she called it. The second was that he kept using the term for the gold stash as being "*squirreled away*".

Now being positive that an accomplice was involved, we focused the investigation on a neighbor who'd been involved with a gold claim boundary dispute. We identified the suspect as a Hells Angels connection who'd been hired by the neighbor, so we ran a wiretap which caught him using the term "*squirreled away*".

This led to an elaborate sting being set-up that resulted in his confession to an undercover agent.

He was convicted and got twenty years.

Like I said, I've always been fascinated with how the human mind works.

One thing I'm positive about—there's way more to consciousness than modern medicine and psychiatric professionals know—except for the Shamans.

But that's for another discussion.

* * *

The King Of Speed

The United States Air Force SR-71 Blackbird reconnaissance plane (aka The Sled) is long retired but still holds the world speed record for a fixed-wing aircraft. Officially, it's rated at Mach 3.3 but Blackbird pilots hint that it went faster. A lot faster.

Major Brian Shul shares from his book *Sled Driver* what it's like to fly a Blackbird and proudly proclaim over the airwaves that you're the King of Speed. Whether you're a fast-

jet buff or not, Brian's excerpt from *Sled Driver* will make you laugh and leave you proud.

* * *

In 1962, the first SR-71 Blackbird successfully flew, and in 1966, the same year I graduated from high school, the United States Air Force began flying operational SR-71 missions. I came to the program in 1983 with a sterling record and a recommendation from my commander, completing the weeklong interview and meeting Walter Watson, my partner for the next four years. He'd ride four feet behind me, working all the cameras, radios, and electronic jamming equipment. I joked that if we were ever captured, he was the spy and I was just the driver. He told me "*Just keep the pointy end forward.*"

We trained for a year, flying out of Beale AFB in California. On a typical training mission, we'd take off near Sacramento, refuel over Nevada, accelerate into Montana, obtain high Mach over Colorado, turn right over New Mexico, speed across the Los Angeles Basin, run up the West Coast, turn right at Seattle, then return to Beale. Total flight time: two hours and 40 minutes.

There were a lot of things we couldn't do in an SR-71, but we were the fastest guys on the block and loved reminding our fellow aviators this.

People often asked us if it was fun to fly the jet. Fun wouldn't be the first word I'd use. Intense maybe. Even cerebral. But there was one day in our Sled experience when I'd have to say that it was pure fun to be the fastest guys out there, at least for a moment.

It occurred when Walt and I were flying our final training sortie. We needed 100 hours in the jet to complete our training and attain *Mission Ready* status. Somewhere over Colorado, we passed the century mark. We made a wide turn into Arizona and the jet was performing flawlessly. Ripping across the barren deserts 80,000 feet below us, I could already see the coast of California.

I was beginning to feel a bit sorry for Walt in the back seat. There he was, with no particular good view of the incredible sights before us, tasked with monitoring four different radios. This was good practice for him for when we began flying our real missions when a priority message from headquarters could be vital.

It was difficult for me to relinquish control of the radios, as my during my entire flying career in hi-performance fighters, I controlled my own transmissions. But it was part of division of duties in this plane and I'd adjusted to it. I still insisted in talking on the radio when we were on the ground or on approach, however.

Walt was so good at so many things, but he was a navigator, not a pilot, and couldn't match my expertise at sounding smooth on the radio—a skill that had been sharply honed in fighter squadrons where the slightest radio miscue was grounds for

beheading. He understood that and allowed me that luxury. But when we were airborne, the radios were his.

That day, just to get a sense of what Walt had to contend with, I pulled the radio toggle switches and monitored the frequencies along with him. The predominant radio chatter was from Los Angeles Center, far below us, controlling traffic in their sector. While they had us on their scope (albeit briefly), we were at 80,000 feet in uncontrolled airspace and normally would not talk to them unless we needed to descend into their space.

We listened as the shaky voice of a lone Cessna pilot asked Center for a read-out of his ground speed. Center replied, “November Charlie 172. I’m showing you at ninety, nine—zero, knots on the ground.”

Now the thing to understand about Center controllers is that whether they talked to a rookie pilot in a Cessna, or to Air Force One, they always spoke in the exact same, calm, deep, professional tone that made one feel important. I referred to it as the *Houston Center Voice*. I’ve always felt that, after years of watching documentaries on this country’s space program and listening to the calm and distinct voice of the Houston controllers, all other controllers since want to sound like Houston.

And it didn’t matter what sector of the country we’d be flying in, it always seemed it was the same guy talking. Over the years that tone of voice is a comforting sound to pilots everywhere. Conversely, over the years, pilots always wanted to ensure that, when transmitting, they sounded like Chuck Yeager or, at least, John Wayne.

Better to die than sound bad on the radio.

Just moments after the Cessna’s inquiry, a Twin Beech piped up on the frequency. In a rather superior tone he asked for his ground speed.

“I have you at one hundred sixty-five, one—six—five, knots in ground speed.”

Boy, I thought. That Beechcraft must think he’s really dazzling his Cessna brethren.

Then, out of the blue, an F-18 Hornet pilot out of Naval Air Station Lemoore, came up on the frequency. You knew right away it was a Navy jet-jock because he sounded cool. Very cool. *“Center. Dusty 52. Ground speed check.”*

Before Center could reply, I’m thinking, *Hey, Dusty 52 has a ground speed indicator in that thirty-five million dollar cockpit he’s riding in, so why’s he asking Center for a readout?*

Then I got it.

Ol' Dusty here is making sure every bug smasher from Mount Whitney to the Mojave knows he's the fastest dude in the valley and wants everyone to know just how much fun he's having in his brand new Hornet.

And the reply—always that same, calm, clear voice *“Dusty 52, Center. We have you at six hundred and twenty, six—two—zero, knots on the ground.”*

And I thought to myself, *Man, is this a ripe situation, or what?*

As my hand instinctively reached for the mic button, I had to remind myself that Walt, behind me, was in control of the radios. Still, it must be done. In mere seconds, we'll be out of this sector and the opportunity will be lost forever. That Hornet must die, and it must die now.

I thought about all our Sim training and how important it was that we developed well as a crew and knew that to jump on the radio now would destroy the integrity of all we'd worked toward becoming. I was torn. Thirteen miles above the desert, a Sled pilot screamed inside his space helmet.

Then I heard it.

The click of the mic button from the back seat.

The moment Walt and I became crew.

Very professionally—with no emotion—Walt spoke. *“Los Angeles Center. Aspen 20. Can you give us a ground speed check?”*

There was no hesitation. The reply came as if it were an everyday request. *“Aspen 20. I show you at one thousand, eight hundred and forty-two, one—eight—four—two, knots across the ground.”*

I think it was the forty-two knots that I liked the best—so accurate and so proud was Center to deliver that information without hesitation—and you knew that controller was just a-smiling, ramming it up that Hornet's ass.

But the precise point I knew Walt and I would be life-long friends was when he keyed the mic again, saying in his most fighter-pilot-like voice, *“Ah, Center, much thanks. We're showin' closer to nineteen hundred on the money.”*

For a moment, Walter Watson was a god.

We finally heard a little crack in the armor of the Houston Center voice when LA came back with *“Roger that Aspen. Your equipment is probably a little more accurate and sophisticated than ours. You Blackbird boys have a good one.”*

It lasted just a few moments, but in that short, memorable sprint across the southwest, the Navy had been flamed, all mortals on the freq were forced to bow before the King of Speed and, more importantly, Walt and I crossed the threshold of being a crew.

A fine day's work. We didn't hear another peep on that frequency during the next nine minutes it took us to reach the Pacific coast,

For just one day, it truly was fun being the fastest guys above the planet.

* * *

From Amazon's Sales Page

No aircraft ever captured the curiosity & fascination of the public like the SR-71 Blackbird. Nicknamed "The Sled" by those few who flew it, the aircraft was shrouded in secrecy from its inception. Entering the U.S. Air Force inventory in 1966, the SR-71 was the fastest, highest flying jet aircraft in the world. Now for the first time, a Blackbird pilot shares his unique experience of what it was like to fly this legend of aviation history.

Through the words & photographs of retired Major Brian Shul, we enter the world of the *Sled Driver*. Major Shul gives us insight on all phases of flying, including the humbling experience of simulator training, the physiological stresses of wearing a space suit for long hours, & the intensity & magic of flying 80,000 feet above the Earth's surface at 2000 miles per hour.

Sled Driver takes the reader through riveting accounts of the rigors of initial training, the gamut of emotions experienced while flying over hostile territory, & the sheer joy of displaying the jet at some of the world's largest airshows. Illustrated with rare photographs, seen here for the first time, *Sled Driver* captures the mystique & magnificence of this most unique of all aircraft. [Get Sled Driver here.](#)

* * *

The Latest Gunfight At The O.K. Corral

The Gunfight at the O.K. Corral is the most famous event of the American Old West.

That 1881 showdown between lawmen and outlaws is re-enacted each week, pleasing thousands of people. It's a major tourist attraction in the desert town of Tombstone, Arizona.

But something in the show went terribly wrong last week when one of the performers used live rounds instead of blank cartridges, sending another actor to the hospital with a nasty gunshot wound and an aghast audience scurrying for cover.

I was surfing the net when a headline popped up: *Actor Shot in Old West Gunfight Re-Enactment*.

WTF? How the hell did that happen? I clicked the link. Here's the article:

TOMBSTONE, Ariz. 19Oct2015 — An actor staging a historical gunfight in the Old West town of Tombstone was shot with a live round during a show that was supposed to use blanks, leading officials to call for the re-enactments popular with tourists to be put on hold.

The shooting happened Sunday afternoon during Helldorado Days as two performers from the Tombstone Vigilantes group re-enacted a gunfight in the 19th-century mining town made famous by Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, and the O.K. Corral. A bystander also was hurt but declined medical treatment.

One of the actor's guns fired live rounds, hitting a fellow member of the group, the Tombstone Marshals Office said. Ken Curtis fell to the ground and was flown to a hospital in Tucson, where he underwent surgery to remove the bullet. Curtis was listed in good condition Monday at Banner-University Medical Center in Tucson, hospital spokeswoman Elyse Palm said. She declined to give further details about his injuries.

At least two bullets struck nearby businesses, hurting a bystander, the Tombstone Marshals Office said Sunday. The woman was not seriously injured, Marshal's dispatcher Dee Jackson said Monday.

Authorities inspected the weapon fired by fellow actor Tom Carter and found one live round and five casings. "That indicated his gun was filled with live rounds prior to the skit," the Marshal said. Tombstone authorities called the shooting unprecedented. The Marshals office says Mayor Dusty Escapule advised the Tombstone Vigilante group to suspend gunfight skits as the investigation plays out.

"Tombstone takes pride in the safety and security of its townspeople and tourists alike, and the citizens of Tombstone can be assured that stringent safety protocol will be enforced prior to allowing any further gunfight skits," the Marshal said in a statement.

Tombstone, about three hours southeast of Phoenix, was once a bustling mining town in the 1800s that now has about 1,500 residents and mostly caters to visitors who come to see gunfight re-enactments and historical sites. The Tombstone Vigilantes were formed in 1946 and are dedicated to preserving and passing along Tombstone's history to tourists who visit the town near the U.S.-Mexico border.

Whoa. Now there's something you don't read every day.

I bookmarked the page. Hmm... Good stuff for [DyingWords](#) followers. They'll wanna know more. Better get on this, but first I gotta find some history about the original gunfight.

Tombstone got its name appropriately. It really was the epitome of the lawless Wild West where everyone packed a gun—a good time and place to be in the undertaking business, as the *Boot Hill* cemetery proved.

There was a long-simmering feud between outlaw cowboys—Billy Claiborne, Ike and Billy Clanton, Tom and Frank McLaury, and opposing lawmen—Town Marshal Virgil Earp, Assistant Town Marshal Morgan Earp, and temporary Deputy Marshals Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday.

It came to a head at 3:00 p.m. on October 26, 1881, in a Tombstone alley near the O.K. Corral when about thirty shots were fired in thirty seconds. Billy Clanton and both McLaury brothers were killed. Ike Clanton, who'd repeatedly threatened to kill the Earps, claimed he was unarmed and ran from the fight along with Billy Claiborne. Virgil Earp, Morgan Earp, and Doc Holliday were wounded. Wyatt Earp was unharmed.

Ike Clanton later filed murder charges against the Earps and Doc Holliday, but the lawmen were exonerated by a grand jury.

The O.K. Corral gunfight represents a romantic period in the American Old West when the frontier was an open range for outlaws—largely unopposed by lawmen who were spread thin and out-numbered.

No wonder the re-enactment's so popular. I Googled some more. Who are these Tombstone Vigilantes that are so dedicated to re-creating the gunfights year after year?

And how'd they get themselves into this pickle?

I found their website at <http://www.tombstonevigilantes.com/>. The Vigilantes have been around a long time. They're a well-organized, highly-professional theater group. There are over forty volunteer members dedicated to preserving the fascinating heritage of Tombstone and they do more than entertain tourists with a play gunfight. The group hosts an annual toy drive, an Easter egg hunt, raise funds for the small animal shelter, donate to the food bank, and assist with the seniors meals-on-wheels program.

Seem like a right nice buncha folk. Certainly didn't need this mess happening to them. I picked up the phone, thinking *I'll call and see how they're making out.*

I talked with Tombstone Vigilantes Chief, Jeff Miller — Very pleasant man who was deeply concerned about the damage his organization's reputation suffered. Understandably, he declined to comment on the cause of the incident and he told me the investigation is currently waiting for a Marshal's report to the Cochise County District Attorney.

Chief Miller reminded me his group had an impeccable safety record in sixty-nine years of operation, although he conceded this was the first time they'd used live rounds in the

show. And the Chief said the wounded man's gunshot strike was in the "*lower abdomen area*" and was recovering "*best as could be expected*".

I thanked the Chief for his time and then read some more internet reports. Seems actor Tom Carter was running late for the show. He forgot to unload the live ammunition from one of his six-shooters and failed to replace his revolver's live rounds with blanks before taking the stage. One of Tom's bullets got Ken Curtis in the nuts.

Well. Not so bad... Not like Ken's a young feller with a family ahead of him. Mistakes happen. Like Chief Miller said, "*Don't overlook the impeccable safety record, till now. That's what gets lost in all this.*" He's right. I'm sure the Vigilantes will grow from the incident and the show will go on.

And there's more to the Tombstone Vigilantes show than just the gunfights.

One of the crowd pleasers is a mock hanging where they grab an unsuspecting victim from the crowd and put a lynch-noose around their neck. For ten bucks, the terrified tourist gets released with a framed souvenir photo that they can hang on their wall.

It's all in good fun.

But I hope the Vigilantes are a bit more careful with their ropes than they were with their ammo.

* * *

Beauty In Your Backyard

Nanaimo is a small city of 80,000 on the east side of Vancouver Island. It's twenty miles across the Pacific Ocean from Vancouver, British Columbia, in Canada. Nanaimo is also called *The Harbor City*. It's one of the most beautiful settings in the world and it's my backyard.

From my sunroom windows, where I love to write, I look over Nob Hill Park and Nanaimo's inner harbor. In the distance are the snow-capped Coastal Mountains, the Gulf Islands, and the happening city of Vancouver in British Columbia's crowded Lower Mainland.

This morning I took a walk around my neighborhood. It's in Nanaimo's old city section and the downtown waterfront. I do this every day that I can, but today was such a gorgeous explosion of spring that I took out my iPhone and began snapping shots. The idea popped-in that I'd share this with you.

Across the street from my front door, I cut through Nob Hill Park. It was developed in the 1800's when Nanaimo was a booming coal and lumber town. Thankfully, they preserved this little gem which is the rocky, high-point of downtown. It's dotted in huge Douglas Firs, Garry Oaks, Big-leaf Maples, and Flowering Dogwoods.

Twenty years ago this was a dangerous place where hookers turned tricks, junkies shot-up, and one vicious murder that I remember. Today there's moms pushing toddlers on swings, dogs running free, and teenagers smoking pot in the fresh ocean air.

Heading down Old Victoria Road, I passed the old fire hall. It's now a trendy grille that serves the best sushi ever. Outside, on the boulevard, a stop-in-your-tracks trio of Dogwoods were in full bloom. They're British Columbia's official tree and you can see why.

Rounding Victoria Crescent, I passed daffodils, tulips, rhododendrons, and flowering cherries. The old Cambie hotel on the left was open early and slinging beer, but the Queens on the right waited a crowd come the night.

The usual street suspects appeared.

I see them every day and nick-named some. Mister Mann is out for a stroll. Lifer was talking to Osama Bin Ladin. As a cop who put him away, I supported Lifer's early release—he's on life parole for 2nd-degree murder. I don't know Osama's story, but he looks for all the world like the guy who the Seals smoked in Abbottabad. Gary strummed his guitar and talked to himself and some new kid squatted with his cap out for money. None of them bothered anybody.

I started down the China Steps, passing The Thirsty Camel which has a Middle-Eastern bench outside made of dried straw and horseshit. Serious—it's made of dried and compressed horse manure.

There was a face I hadn't seen in a while, so I stopped and asked her what's up. Vivian had all her worldly possessions in a folded cart; two leashed cats attached. She called herself an educated poor person with a Bachelor of Science but suffered depression. I gave her 10 bucks for some breakfast.

Commercial Street made me smile. On the west are buildings from the 1800's, perfectly preserved. On the east—the new Conference Center where they did an architectural masterpiece blending new with old. The street was bustling with people. Sidewalk café's served eggs bennies with hash-browns and Serious Coffee at the museum had long lineups.

Diana Krall Plaza is tributed to... Diana Krall, the world famous jazz musician who still calls Nanaimo home. Intriguing wood and metal sculptures resembling piano key

strikers made into planters with flowers and palm trees. Tourists and locals sat drinking coffee, reading books, and scanning newspapers.

A roar of a Harley with strait-pipes turned my head. I followed him up to The Palace Hotel, wondering if he was flying Hell's Angels colors. We've got a chapter in Nanaimo, but most of the bikers are old and decrepit like The Palace itself. He parked his bike and got off. Nope, no death-head backpatch, but he swore in disgust, then picked garbage from the sidewalk and stuffed it in a black, metal trash can.

I passed the Flying Fish, where you can spend half your day and half your fortune, the Modern Café which reflects the 50's, the Elephant Room, and at the end of the street, Nanaimo's showpiece—the Great National Land Building—constructed of local sandstone and brick.

Ahead was St. Pauls Anglican church and the cenotaph which honors the dead from two world wars, Korea, and thankfully no one from Afghanistan. A block up—the old courthouse where the police and sheriffs hosted an open house. I looked at the second floor and thought back to testifying in that majestic, old room with maple paneling, stained glass, and royal-red carpets.

A hundred years ago prisoners were sentenced to death in that courtroom. I looked east and saw Gallows Point on Protection Island. No need to wonder the name.

I scooted down concrete stairs and onto the seawall. Float planes noisily came and went. Ferries busted wakes in glass-calm water with trips to nearby islands and Vancouver. Boats of all sizes and prices were there. Tugboats and seineboats. Sailboats and rowboats. Gillnetters, crab fishers, prawners, and trollers. Dragonboats practiced races. Pleasure boats headed out. A research vessel and a multi-million dollar executive yacht tied themselves a float.

The seawall gathers people. Coffeshops, nicknacks, clothing stores, and restaurants. Old couples walked hand-in-hand, dad's pushed strollers, and dogs walked bent on a purpose. Troller's fish & chips, a floating eatery, shouted the smell of deep-fried halibut, cod, and fresh salmon.

Nanaimo's waterfront experience is far more than material. It's the sights and sounds of the wildlife.

In Maffeo-Sutton Park a family of river otters gorged on Dungenous crab, looked-on by harbor seals and a big ol' Stellar sea lion who was pissed-off about something. Squawks of freeloading gulls were backed by conspiring calls of common crows. Canada geese honked from a low-tide beach, cautiously watched by a Great Blue Heron. Topping off was twitters of hundreds of songbirds and a fluttering fly-by of a Belted Kingfisher.

I circled Cameron Island, the signature waterfront residential development where condos range from 300 to a million. Across Front Street was Port Place, the new shopping plaza with all you can need. Following the sidewalk at McGregor park, I saw new sculptures near the town clock—stained glass and stainless steel in the shape of some waves. Fitting.

The Bastion was ahead. It's Nanaimo's historical prize, even ahead of Nanaimo Bars and the annual bathtub race. Built in 1853 as a Hudson's Bay Trading Company post, the Bastion was recently disassembled, refitted, and now better than new. Some jackass wrote into the local paper fearful they'd never be able to get it back together. Maybe he should've checked that they'd numbered the pieces.

Coal is what started Nanaimo.

You'd never know it from up here, but there's a labyrinth of tunnels and shafts down below, hacked by pick and shovel in 100 years of mining the fossil fuel of the day. So much of Nanaimo's history started with coal and it's still with us today—Chinatown, collieries, coffins, and certified trade unions.

I crossed the Bastion bridge over Terminal Avenue and hiked up Fitzwilliam Street to the Heritage Mews in the Old City Quarter. More coffee shops, dress stores, shoes, lingerie, and a clairvoyant named Yvonne giving readings.

Across the street was the Occidental Hotel, a beer-swilling joint with an excellent selection of wine for such a small place. I headed east, down the weeded tracks of the derelict Esquimalt and Nanaimo railroad, and up to J.H. Malpass's corner store that displays produce on sidewalk stands just like back when it was built.

Now a minute from home, I reached the crest of Prideaux Street and looked past the magnificent mansion that one of the early mine managers built and overtop of downtown—across the blue sea with freighters, ferries, and cruise ships—taking in 12,000-foot peaks of the Coastal Mountain Range.

Key in hand, and an hour later, I unlocked my front door, then stopped and looked at Nob Hill. Kids swung on swings, dogs sniffed at stuff, and a seagull shit from the sky. I laughed and went in with a cup of coffee from the Mews to write this in my sunroom.

To see photos of my beautiful backyard in Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, on the west coast of British Columbia, Canada, [just click on this link to my website.](#)

* * *

Dumb Rookie Cop

I was twenty-one when I joined the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, but I looked like I was seventeen. Not only was my teenager looks a hurdle to being a cop, I was raised in a tiny Manitoba town that didn't even have a street light. So I was anything but worldly.



In August 1978, I got transferred from basic RCMP recruit training in Regina, Saskatchewan, to beautiful Vancouver Island in British Columbia on Canada's west coast. I thought I'd won the Mountie lottery for postings.

I arrived in Courtenay, a small city of 35,000, and was immediately assigned to be trained by an experienced officer. The role was a uniformed General Duty position which attends everything from car accidents, to barking dogs, to violent domestic disputes.

In street policing, things can go from dead-boring to flat-out chaos in seconds and there's nothing like years of experience to equip an officer in responding properly and safely. So, it's standard procedure that a rookie pairs up with a vet for months before they're ready to go out on their own.

Now on my third week on the job, I was starting to feel kinda comfortable wearing the yellow-striped uniform and packing heat in my Sam Browne. One warm, summer afternoon in mid-week my trainer was called up to court, leaving me hanging around the police office. A call came in about a bicycle being found about a half-dozen blocks from the cop-shop.

My old Sarge was strapped for guys that afternoon so he throws me the car keys and tells me to go straight down, pick up the bike, and come straight back; warning me *"Whatever you do, do not get yourself into any trouble."*

I was feeling pretty proud of my first patrol alone as I drove the marked Police Cruiser (PC) down a quiet thoroughfare in residential Courtenay. About four blocks from the office, I see this guy standing alongside the street to my left.

Now you gotta remember that this was in 1978 and community policing was a dream yet to come. It was a real us-against-them mentality between the “pigs” and the “scroats” and the cool street look was long, greasy hair, zitty-faces, beards, and crude logo’d tee-shirts.

This guy was a poster-boy scroat and he was standing there with his arms folded across his chest, giving me the stink-eye as I drove past. I watched him in my mirror, waiting for him to flip me the bird or make a run for it, but he just kept standing there, staring, till I was out of sight.

I dealt with the bike thing, putting it in the PC trunk, and bungeed the lid down. As I was driving straight back to the office, like Sarge told me, I’m looking ahead and here’s this same guy, still standing in the same place. His arms are still folded across his chest and he’s staring at me with a scowl like he wants to cut off my nuts.

I figgered, *Okay. Okay. This guy’s up to no good.* So I pulled over to my right, put on my hat, and got out. As I rounded the PC hood, this guy stays standing with his arms folded, never breaking his stare.

“What the fuck do You want?” he says.

I’m standing three feet from him with my hands on my hips. “Just wondering what you’re doing loitering about the neighborhood,” I tell him.

His right arm breaks from the fold. His forefinger points straight up. And he says “Like waitin’ for the fuckin’ bus?”

I look up at the bus stop sign, then down at the ground.

“Very well. Carry on then,” I said as I got back in the car and drove off with a face the color of my brand-new Mountie Red Serge.

* * *

Sixteen Thoughts From Getting Old

It's 2016 and I'm starting a new year, just like you. I'm turning sixty this year and finally resolved to do something I've meant to do for a long, long time—before I'm too old to carry it out.

I cleaned up my hard drive, storing a half zillion documents neatly in folders, and I found this piece stuffed away. I have no idea who wrote it, or where I got it, but it made me chuckle reading these sixteen thoughts from getting old.

16. Where there's a will, I want to be in it.

15. The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on my list.

14. Since light travels faster than sound, some people appear bright until you hear them speak.

13. If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.

12. We never really grow up. We only learn how to act in public.

11. War does not determine who is right - only who is left.

10. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.

9. To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.

8. I didn't say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.

7. In filling out an application, where it says, "In case of emergency, Notify:" I put 'DOCTOR'.

6. You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.

5. I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not so sure.

4. To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first and call whatever you hit the target.

3. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.

2. You're never too old to learn something stupid.

1. I'm supposed to respect my elders, but it's getting harder and harder for me to find one now.

I hope you have many years of health and happiness—life's most precious gifts.

* * *

Please Leave a Review

Reviews are hugely helpful in promoting a writer's work.

I hope you got decent value from ***Best of Dying Words — Provoking Thoughts on Life from a Retired Homicide Detective and Forensic Coroner.***

If you did, please take a moment to click one of these links and leave a short note to let others know what you thought of this book.

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It doesn't have to be much—just a couple brief sentences are fine. It's the thought that counts!

~ Garry

* * *

About Garry Rodgers

I'm a retired Royal Canadian Mounted Police homicide detective who went on to another career as a forensic coroner for the Province of British Columbia. In my younger years, I served as a sniper on Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Emergency Response Teams and was trained by the British Special Air Service (SAS). I'm also a recognized expert witness in Canadian courts on the identification and operation of firearms.

In my second retirement, I've made #5 on the Amazon Best Seller list—sandwiched between the names Stephen King and Dean Koontz—with my debut Crime Thriller novel, *No Witnesses To Nothing*. It's based on a true story where many believe paranormal intervention occurred.

I've recently completed a second novel, *No Life Until Death*, that involves international black market trafficking in human organs, and I'm working on more in the *Sharlene Bate* series. The next is *No God Without Gold*, based on the Brother XII cult story, followed by *No Guilt Without Innocence*—a legal thriller.

I have a life-long interest in the U.S. President John F. Kennedy Assassination (sorry, no conspiracy here) and I've written a true-crime book that looks at the forensic and circumstantial evidence in the highest profile, most thoroughly investigated murder case in history. That manuscript was going to be self-published as *Lone Nuts—A No BS Guide to the JFK Assassination* but is currently in proposal as *The JFK Assassination For Dummies*.

My biggest writing accomplishment, though, was being invited by the Huffington Post to join their Blog Team as one of their signature contributors. Every Saturday morning I blog on my personal site at DyingWords.net, provoking thoughts on life, death, and writing.

Outside of crime writing, I'm a certified Marine Captain and love spending time hanging around the Pacific Ocean, near my home on Vancouver Island on the west coast of Canada.



[Email](#) [Web/Blogsite](#) [Twitter](#) [Amazon](#) [Facebook](#) [Goodreads](#)

* * *

Other Works by Garry Rodgers

If you're interested in checking out what else I've been up to, here's the link to other books and products on my website at [DyingWords.net](#).

I've got a mix of fiction, true crime, helpful guides, and lots of blog posts that provoke thoughts on life, death, and writing:

[No Witnesses To Nothing](#) is an Amazon Top 10 BestSelling crime thriller.



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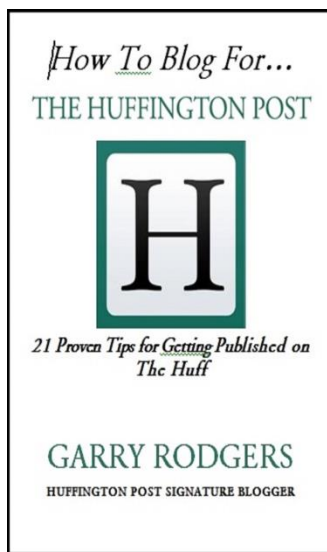
[No Life Until Death](#) is a crime thriller ready for publication.

[No God Without Gold](#) is a crime thriller at draft stage.

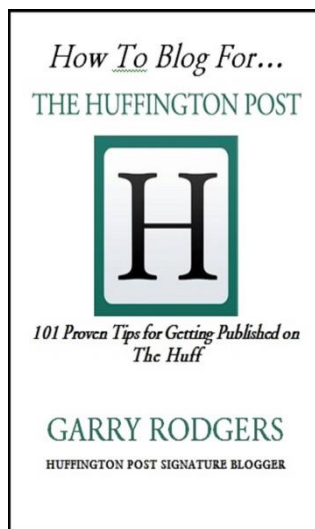
[No Guilt Without Innocence](#) is a crime thriller at the outline stage.

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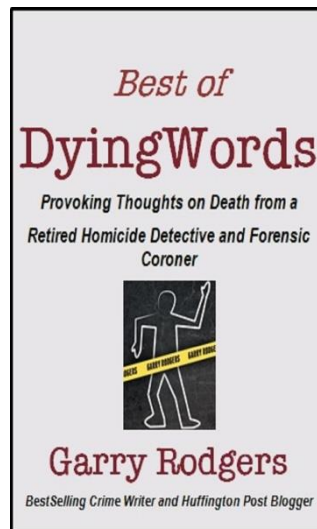
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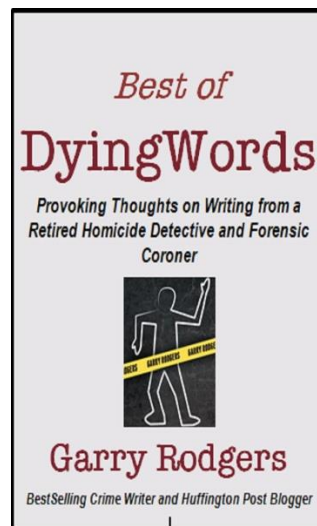
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[*Best of DyingWords — Provoking Thoughts on Life, Death, and Writing*](#) is a three-part, edited collection of my most popular blog posts. Here's the links to the other [*DyingWords*](#) blog post collections:

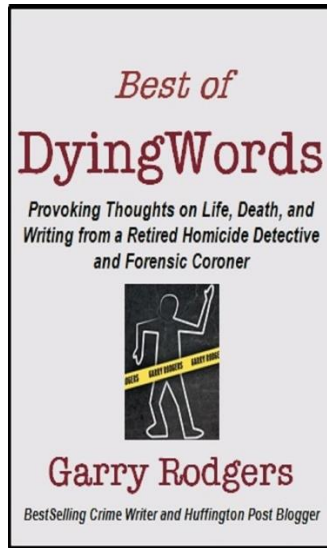
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[*DyingWords Compilation – Thoughts on Life, Death, and Writing*](#)



* * *

[**How To Write Deadly Crime Fiction**](#) is a guide series which gives 101 Killer tips on each of eight crime-writing subjects:



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* * *

And, please, feel free to count yourself onto my mailing list for updates as to what's going on at [**DyingWords.net**](#).

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BestSelling Crime Writer and Huffington Post Blogger

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* * *

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