

UCSD Biomedical Library Exhibit & May 1 Lecture Focus on CSI Tools of the Trade

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CSI groupies and others with a fascination for the unique and powerful crime-solving tools of forensic DNA testing, will not want to miss a talk May 1, 2008 from 12 noon to 1 p.m. at the UCSD Biomedical Library Events Room by forensics expert George "Woody" Clarke. Following his talk, Clarke will sell and sign copies of his new book: "Justice and Science: Trials and Triumphs of DNA Evidence."

Clarke, a San Diego County Superior Court Judge who also served as a Deputy District Attorney for San Diego County from 1983-2003, will discuss the powerful impact DNA testing has had on 21st century justice. During his tenure in the DA's office, Clarke tried numerous serious felony offenses, including capital crimes. Since 1989, he has specialized in the use and introduction in court of scientific evidence, particularly forensic DNA testing results. As a result of his expertise, Clarke was "loaned" to the Los Angeles District Attorney's office and presented DNA evidence to the jury in the 1995 prosecution of O.J. Simpson. Clarke, who has published and lectured nationally on forensic DNA evidence, was appointed in 1998 by the U.S. Department of Justice to the National Commission on the Future of DNA Evidence. In 2002, he was appointed to the U.S. Attorney General's Initiative on DNA Laboratory Backlogs.

Clarke's lecture, which is part of the UCSD Biomedical Library lunchtime lecture series, coincides with an exhibit on display in the library breezeway through the end of May on "Forensic Science: Where Science Meets Law." The exhibit features historical and modern timelines that trace the development of forensic science, from the 1240 Chinese book "Washing Away Wrong," which describes how to distinguish death by drowning from strangulation to the creation of the FBI's first crime lab in 1932.

The exhibit depicts major milestones and technological advances in forensic science and the impact they've had on some of the nation's most notorious and high profile crimes. For example, small, often invisible biological material can now be successfully obtained from evidence items previously thought to be useless in criminal investigations. The development and use of polymerase chain reaction-based (known as "PCR") techniques revolutionized the ability to exclude or include known individuals as the donors of the smallest evidentiary samples.

The creation of local, state and national databases of DNA profiles of previously convicted offenders has similarly resulted in the solution of thousands of suspectless cases. Perhaps one of the greatest breakthroughs is the now-common use of DNA typing technologies to examine older cases in which inmates have frequently served length prison terms. In 1989, Gary Dotson, who had already served 8 years of a 25-50 year sentence for rape, became the first person to have his conviction overturned on the basis of DNA evidence. More than 200 inmates in the U.S. have been exonerated by modern DNA analysis of samples seized prior to the availability of DNA testing.

The exhibit showcases some of the most authoritative works on various aspects of forensic science from the Biomedical Library collections, including books on terminal ballistics, molecular forensics, autopsy poisoning, bloodstain pattern analysis and forensic entomology.

Space is limited for the May 1 lecture. Please RSVP to Vicky Anderson at vkanderson@ucsd.edu to reserve a seat.

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