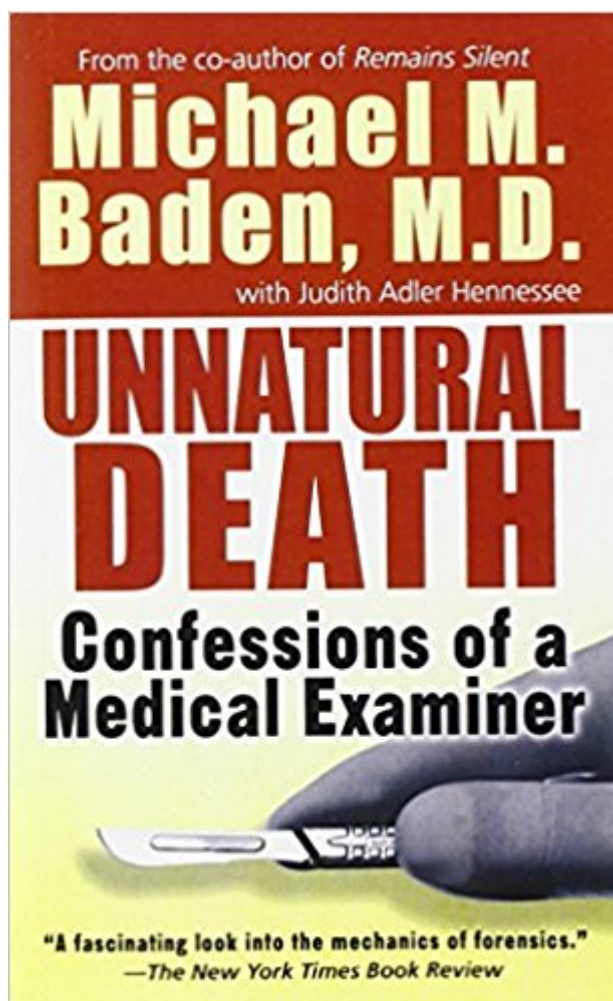


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Unnatural Death: Confessions Of A Medical Examiner



Synopsis

* JFK's autopsy failed to disclose crucial evidence.* The deaths of John Belushi and Elvis Presley were far more complex than anyone has let on.* Decisive medical findings in the von Bulow affair were consistently overlooked. These are but three of the shocking revelations in Dr. Michael Baden's first-person, no-holds-barred account of his distinguished career in forensic pathology. In determining the causes of tens of thousands of deaths, from those of presidents and rock stars to victims of serial killings, exotic sex rituals, mass disasters, child abuse and drug abuse, Baden has come to the unavoidable conclusion that the search for scientific truth is often sullied by the pressures of expediency. He produces dramatic evidence to demonstrate that political intrigue, influence peddling, and professional incompetence have created a national crisis in forensic medicine."A fascinating look into the mechanics of forensics and a disconcerting lesson in the politics of death." -- The New York Times Book Review

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Customer Reviews

Forensic pathologist Michael Baden was a medical examiner in New York City for more than 25 years. Now he works for the New York State Police and teaches forensic medicine. This engrossing book covers: (1) several famous cases, including Baden's personal re-examination of the autopsy findings for Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy; (2) unusual cases Baden had as medical examiner for NYC, such as an autopsy on a dining room table at the Plaza Hotel; (3) how medical examiners decide on means of death, with a section on poisons; (4) the history of coroners and

medical examiners since 12th century England; (5) disturbing politics involved in the office of the Chief Medical Examiner of NYC; (6) identification of the dead; (7) time of death; (8) multiple-murder cases; (9) an almost perfect murder; (10) close calls, including near deaths during sex; (11) cases of mistaken diagnosis; and (12) autopsy findings that shed light on what happened in the Attica uprising.

The function of medical examiners is to perform pk autopsies and determine causes of death; examiners must be expert in forensic pathology. Baden here "delivers a sobering indictment of a system in which, he claims, fewer than a thousand physicians nationwide are qualified to conduct this work," maintained PW. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.

After you get past this author's overweening ego, he has a great story to tell. First, he educates you that his specialty is forensic pathology, meaning that as a doctor he focuses not on the living but on the dead--and their three kinds of unnatural deaths (suicides, homicides, and accidents) and the traumatic causes thereof (e.g., drowning, asphyxiation, gunshot and stab wounds, blunt force, poisoning, overdose, etc.). He explains the three traditional signs used to determine how long a person has been dead (temperature, color, and stiffness) and gets you thinking about toxicology screenings so that you enter the main body of the book more prepared for what follows. And he tells his story as an insider, as indeed he is, being one of the most renowned MEs in the world. When he says, for example, "Where bungled autopsies are concerned, President Kennedy's is the exemplar," we listen. He goes on to give a rather definitive answer to questions that we have all wondered about, as told from the prospective of the evidence: Oswald acted alone, Claus von Bulow didn't do it, Cathy Smith did give Belushi his fatal injection, and so forth. His stories of less well-known folks are no less compelling, and Baden does a good job of leading the reader through the gory and technical details to a scientific conclusion. Ideally, however, one should read the companion volume of his friend, Dr. William Maples, in tandem with this one. He is a forensic anthropologist who does with skeletons what Baden does with "fresher" evidence. All in all, a good read . . .

I used to hate reading books, but I have so much respect for Dr. Baden, that I picked up one of his other publications one day and I couldn't put it down! He is such an amazing author, but even more amazing is his vast experience and rich knowledge of the field. To give some aspect of where I'm coming from, I am currently studying mortuary science and I hope to become a coroner technician or something similar. I don't enjoy reading anything other than nonfiction, and even then I'm *very*

picky. The reason I'm knocking off a star is because of the lack of organization in the book. Each chapter has a different focus, but there is no organization that I noticed beyond that. However, that doesn't mean it's hard to follow. Each chapter, as stated, focuses on a subject and he eloquently, interestingly, weaves his experiences into memorable stories whilst sprinkling in a fact or two, maybe a comparable experience, and sometimes famous cases (and he's personally worked on quite a few). Dr. Baden is a very esteemed professional, a very high-caliber player in the criminal justice world. If you want to know more about criminal justice, the corrupt intricacies within criminal justice, death investigation, and especially thanatology, you should get this book (and all his other books!).

This book is very straight forward about what happens after a person is sent to the medical examiner. It was very education and sometime more than one needed to know.

"Unnatural Death: Confessions of a Medical Examiner" by Michael M. Baden, MD and Judith Adler Hennessee, ISBN 0-8041-05999-5 (p/b), Ivy Books 1989 - is a 215 page disclosure by a seasoned pathologist and NYC medical examiner (25 years & Chief ME 1978-79). It is a well-written and indexed (7 pages) mind-probing study of many high-profile cases of unnatural deaths (suicides, homicides, & accidents) & some unusual but natural ones. Dr. Baden discusses some of the little known but extremely significant political intrigues he encountered, revealing facts known only to certain medical examiners, DA's, politicians in high office and prominent family members. The introduction describes the pseudo-victimization "abduction" of T. Brawley (1987) and 12 chapters follow with Chap. 1 detailing Dr. Baden's selection to head forensic pathology for the 1977 Congressional Select Committee on Assassination (JFK); Chap. 2 his studies at Bellevue; Chap. 3 some notes on Elvis Presely, the Nurses Perez & Narcisco Pavulon deaths prosecution blocked by Imelda Marcos, and the ricin death of Markov (1978); Chap. 4 with concise notes on history of coroner system and Chap. 5 details Baden's confrontations with NYC Mayor Koch, Manhattan DA Robert Morgenthau, and Health Commissioner Ferrer over handling of the David Levine, Willie Welch, Robert Soman, and Nelson Rockefeller cases, to mention a few. Chapters that follow are lucrative and revealing of forensic science at its best and politics at its worst. The accusations against Claus von Bulow of twice trying to murder his wife "Sunny" by insulin injections revealed a frightening tribunal jungle of medical & legal specialists whose main concern was (evidently) to thwart possible perceived malpractice charges. For unrevealed & appalling details of the 'preppy murder' of Jennifer Levin by Robert Chambers (discussed on the Larry King show Aug. 26, 2002)

look in this book. This is a no holds barred book, a must read for those who "thought they knew what happened" really didn't happen and vice versa.

I thought this book was better than Michael Baden's other book "Dead Reckoning." This was a very interesting read. I learned a few things about the industry of medical examiners and forensics. I wouldn't recommend this book to those who have a weak stomach, because the author doesn't hold back the details in quite a few areas of the book. For those people who love C.S.I. (you know, that popular forensic television show?) or are simply curious about the industry this book will be an interesting read! I even gave this book to some friends of mine and they enjoyed it just as much as I did. The style of writing makes the topic easy to understand for the average Joe Smoe. Good book, I like it!

I had read this fascinating book years ago and this copy was sent to my niece who enjoyed and learned just as I did years before

As a forensic buff, I have a great respect for Dr. Baden and this book did not disappoint. For all the forensic buffs out there, this is a must. I loved it. Fast shipping. Would highly recommend this read. Fast shipping. Would highly recommend.

Love this book!

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