



Students Learn Truth Behind Forensic Medicine

By MARTIE BARBOUR
Telegram Staff Writer

When you think of forensic medicine, is murder investigation the first thing that enters your mind? If so, you've got it all wrong, according to Dr. David Paul, chief coroner for the City of London.

"Murder investigation is the most dramatic," he said to a group of North Carolina Wesleyan College students and faculty last week during a lecture on the truth behind forensic medicine.

"The whole object of this talk is to point out that modern death investigation doesn't just involve murder," he commented. "Environmental problems and problems of everyday life are just as dangerous."

Dr. Paul explained that all unexpected, unexplained, unnatural and traumatic deaths, deaths in custody (those involving inmates in prisons and mental hospitals), and deaths caused by industrial disease must be reported to the coroner in London.

Traumatic Deaths

In the investigation of traumatic deaths, he said, "it doesn't take a genius to determine the cause of death of a motorist." In such cases, he continued, "it is not our job to establish the cause of death; but to see how the deaths can be prevented."

Dr. Paul related a story about one area in his London jurisdiction which created an incredible traffic hazard. He explained that on one side of the highway where the speed limit was 70 mph, there was a walkway. On the other side there was a shopping center.

"Little old ladies used to run across the highway to get to the shopping center," he said. "This was one of the more fruitful sources of supply for me."

This rash of accident victims diminished when a walkway was constructed across the highway.

Dr. Paul also explained the importance of performing autopsies on those who have died in custody. In discussing the deaths of citizens who have been deprived of their liberty, "perhaps we are getting down to the nitty gritty," he said.

Even though these people have been labeled as "naughty little boys" and those who are "nuttie as a fruit cake" it is our job "to make sure that they do not die of brutality," he said.

Suspicious Deaths

In discussing the investigation of suspicious deaths — homicides and suicides — Dr. Paul related another story. This one involved the rumors that often accompany suspicious deaths.

"Pity she died. Of course

she died of a massive overdose," he began. "You know that she was three months pregnant. And of course you heard about the gonorrhoea."

"This is the kind of rumor that allows reports to go unchallenged," he said.

He added that on the judicial side of suspicious death investigations, in the case of suicide, which is referred to as "killing oneself" in London, there must be proof of intent. "I try to encourage suicide victims to write notes," he said. "It helps if they leave a note."

"In the case of massive overdose, we do look at it as suicide, because there is an implied intent, he explained. "You can't accidentally take 50 pills."

Three Objectives

Dr. Paul told listeners Tuesday that there were three objectives of a death investigation. These are to determine who is dead, establish a medical cause of death, and establish the circumstances of the death.

"Visual identification is one system of identifying a body," he said. "But sometimes you can't tell." In mass disasters, considering the trauma factor involved for the friends and family members called on to identify the bodies, "we never put up more than one

body at a time for identification," he stated.

"The greatest horror is to wrongly identify a victim," he added.

Fingerprints are very important in the identification process. "We can often determine the identity of a body that has decomposed through this means," he said.

Tattoos, scars and birth marks are also an important part of the investigation, he added.

A new procedure being used in this aspect of death investigation is dental identification. "With this procedure we can determine both race and age of the victim."

Looking for old fractures through X-ray can also be helpful to the coroner. As a last resort only, victims can be identified by personal property and jewelry. "It is easy to wrongly identify in this case," he explained.

The autopsy itself can determine sex, age, natural disease and previous surgeries of a victim. "All of this is to establish the 'who,'" said Dr. Paul. "There is only one way to establish a precise cause of death," he continued. "This is autopsy."

"Autopsy is the essential," he noted. "It is not a coroner's responsibility to perform an autopsy, but his duty."

Final Step

The final step involved is the inquest to determine the circumstances of the death. Dr. Paul explained that in his position, he is responsible not only for determining the cause of death, but also for determining the cir-

cumstances behind it.

"We all become completely psychotic," he commented. "We investigate and then we sit in as a judiciary in some cases. It's a different tightrope to walk on sometimes."

He explained that all of these aspects of the medico-legal system in London have gradually come about. "No medico-legal system has ever been born complete. It starts as an embryo," he stated. "Public needs change the system."

English Coroners

"The English coroner evolved very gradually," he continued. The system was first established in 1198. "I was not around then, contrary to popular belief," said the coroner.

Knighthood and land-ownership were two of the early requirements for the coroner, explained Dr. Paul. At that time they were elected officials.

"In 1926 the Coroners Amendment Act required that coroners be qualified in law, medicine or both," he said. Coroners were then appointed by the Crown.

"They constantly changed coroner's rules because of the demand by the community," he stated. "I developed (into a coroner) like the system," said Dr. Paul. "It just sort of happened."

In 1963 he became deputy coroner and was appointed to the city in 1966. In 1968 his jurisdiction was expanded to include the Northern District

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Energy Conservation Committee Formed

By Kathy Bragg
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N.C. Wesleyan has a new program in development that affects every person associated with the college. This new Energy Conservation Program is the most major physical plant change in Wesleyan's history and has high promises for success.

Wesleyan's Energy Conservation Program is being developed and is being overseen by President Pettaway's appointed Energy Conservation Committee. William Garlow (Dean of Student Affairs) chairs the committee with Ray Kirkland acting as a special consulting member from the Business Department. The other committee members consist of campus building managers who are responsible for efficient energy usage of their specified buildings. These members include Cliff Sullivan (Classroom Complex), William Garlow (Student Union), Ann Wilgus (Library), Rick Davis (Spruill), Laura Ferrel (Gymnasium), Nancy Smith (North Hall), Jerry Deringer (South Hall), Lois Howell (Edgecomb Hall), and Ed Nixon (Nash Hall).

The new Energy Program focuses around the change from one central heating system to a decentralized system that involves separate heating units for each

building. The old system of one central heating and hot water unit for the entire campus (a single gas-fired boiler) proved inefficient in many areas. However, the new system of individual heating and hot water units is much more cost efficient and provides greater flexibility.

The new system came about because of a government grant that Wesleyan was able to match dollar for dollar. The total project cost \$270,000 with the grant providing \$115,000 and the college providing \$155,000. This is a substantial amount of money, however, the savings which will surface make the project extremely cost efficient. Savings should range from \$10,000 - \$50,000 annually. This, of course, is dependent on a number of factors such as: the severity of winter and the cooperation of students and staff to conserve. But, because of automatic timers placed on the circulation pumps and frequent energy audits, the committee feels the college will place in the middle to upper end of the savings scale.

The Energy Conservation Committee is responsible for four basic functions: 1) develop and implement campus awareness (as the chairman stated, "To keep conservation in front of people all the time"); 2) develop standard energy conservation procedures as a whole and

within each building (i.e. policies for classroom and resident hall lighting) and; 3) receive ideas and suggestions from everyone (report your findings to the building manager who will take it to the committee for review).

The functions of the building managers are to see that these three points are carried out within their assigned building, plus they are responsible for onsite inspection of their building for energy deficiencies. When a problem is found, it is the building manager's duty to insure maintenance fixes the deficiency.

The Energy Conservation Committee is working hard for a successful program, but they realize "(They) can't save any more energy than just the ten people on the committee." It is each individual's responsibility to conserve. The committee is promoting awareness, however, if a student leaves his window up, door propped open or the shower dripping, then the committee's efforts are wiped out. The savings obtained from this new heating and hot water system has a direct bearing on college cost. So, it does affect students directly in relation to tuition, room and board. try to remain aware of the importance of energy conservation. It can save us all a lot of money in the long run.



Dr. David Paul, chief coroner for the City of London, explains where incisions are made in the autopsy process to preserve facial characteristics at last week's N.C. Wesleyan College lecture. (Barbour photo)