

The Fascination of Forensics



Michael Baden, host of cable television's "Autopsy," speaks to the attendees at the LSUSD conference on forensics.

Americans have always been fascinated with forensics. The first recorded case that used dental forensics to identify a body occurred in 1775, one year before the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Paul Revere, American hero, silversmith and dentist, identified the remains of Major General Warren, who died during the Battle of Bunker Hill, a major battle of the Revolutionary War. In 1850, the first courtroom case involving dental forensics took place when the body of a Harvard Medical School professor was pulled from the school furnace and later identified by his dental prosthesis.

These and other intriguing facts were presented by a stellar lineup of top experts in forensics during a two-day continuing education course presented by the LSUSD Continuing Education Department. The conference drew about 250 dentists, physicians, attorneys, coroners, death investigators, medical examiners and law enforcement professionals from around the country.

The course directors were Robert Barsley, DDS, JD, and Robert B. Brannon, DDS, MSD, both professors at LSUSD, as well as Philip J. Levine, DDS, forensic specialist from Nova University in Florida. Dr. Barsley was active in the Katrina Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team, helping to identify bodies following the hurricane. In 1982, he led the dental forensic team that identified the 154 victims of the crash of PanAm flight 759.

Dr. Brannon is an internationally recognized expert in forensic dentistry. His assignments have included the infamous 1978 Jim

Jones mass suicide in Jonestown, Guyana; the 1981 Iranian hostage crisis; the terrorist bombing of headquarters of the U.S. Marines in Lebanon; Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm; and the 1993 ambush of U.S. soldiers in Mogadishu, Somalia.

The conference speakers included Henry C. Lee, PhD, who gained international renown during the O.J. Simpson trial; Kathy Reichs, PhD, author of the Temperance Brennan novels that inspired the television series, "Bones"; Michael M. Baden, MD, host of HBO's "Autopsy;" and Christopher G. Fielding, COL, DC, USA, a leading expert in the field of military dental forensics.

Also presenting were Sam Brothers, widely known for his expertise in the forensics of cell phones, global positioning systems, and computers; Robert Dorion, DDS, a bitemark expert; Joe Navarro, who has authored books on body language and nonverbal communication; and Tommy Martin, a nationally recognized speaker on crime scene investigations. Mary Manhein, director of the Forensic Anthropology and Computer Enhancement Service laboratory at LSU Baton Rouge, and Dr. Frank Minyard, coroner for the City of New Orleans since 1974, also spoke.

According to Robert Leaman, director of continuing education at LSUSD, a similar course in forensics is being planned for late August 2011. Since 1969, the continuing education program has presented over 1,000 courses that have attracted more than 52,000 attendees.

For a list of courses, go to: www.lsusdce.org/Content.aspx?topic=Home



Robert Dorion, Kathy Reichs and Robert Barsley

Mark Your Calendar for Upcoming LSUSD Alumni Events

Friday, April 15, 2011 (5-7:00 p.m.)

LSUSD Alumni Reception in conjunction with the LDA/NODA Dental Conference www.nodental.org
Harrah's Hotel, Vieux Carré Ballroom,
New Orleans, Louisiana

Considering a Reunion Celebration?

If you graduated from LSUSD in 1976, 1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, or 2006 and are interested in coordinating a reunion for your class in conjunction with the conference, please contact Candice Castro at (504) 941-8120 or ccastro@lsuhsc.edu.