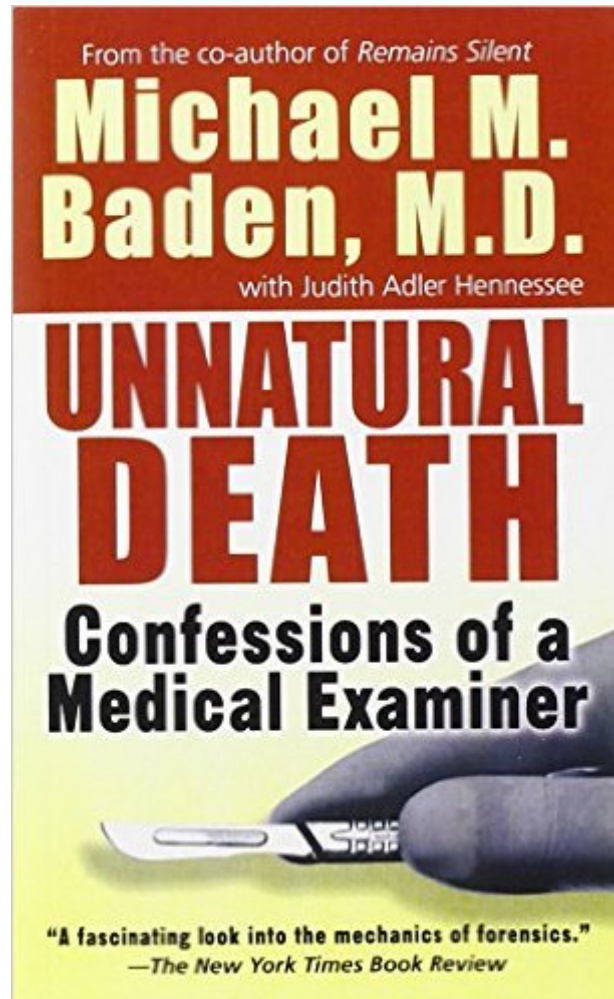


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Unnatural Death: Confessions Of A Medical Examiner



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

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Dr. Baden was the chief medical examiner of New York City from 1960 to 1985, and "Unnatural Death" is a fascinating look at some of the cases he investigated. Bronx-born and Brooklyn-bred, Dr. Baden doesn't shy away from a fight whether it was with the Mayor of New York City who fired him (Dr. Baden eventually sued Mayor Koch for wrongful dismissal and won his case) or the Warren Commission, which was charged with the investigation of President Kennedy's assassination. Baden refers to himself as "a witness to the dead," and treats the bodies on his autopsy table with what can

only be described as reverence. Forensic Pathology is both a fascinating profession and a sacred calling for him. During his forty-year career he has conducted more than 20,000 autopsies and has served as an expert witness on homicide cases that include Nicole Brown Simpson, the last alleged victim of Albert DeSalvo, "Sunny" von Bulow (included in this book), John Belushi (also in this book), and JonBenet Ramsey. Also there are those wonderful political brawls, the foremost of which in "Unnatural Death" is Dr. Baden's tussle with various government officials involved in the investigation of the deaths during the Attica prison riot. In a way, I wish there was less politics and more science in this autobiography, but Dr. Baden correctly points out that reforming the 'politics of death' and raising the status of MEs is one of his most important goals. This book also highlights cases and anecdotes where the emphasis is on detection and forensic science rather than politics. One of the most gruesome involved a New York City ME who kept a tray of feet that had been cut off at the ankles.

"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.

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