

**DEATH'S ACRE**  
**By Dr. Bill Bass & Jon Jefferson**  
**G.P. Putnam's Sons**  
**Publication Date: November 2003**

**Contacts:**  
**Mih-Ho Cha**  
**Senior Director of**  
**Publicity at Large**  
**617-764-1159**

**Noelle Murrain**  
**Senior Publicist**  
**212-366-2577**

**DEATH'S ACRE**  
**Inside the Legendary Forensic Lab**  
**The Body Farm**  
**Where the Dead Do Tell Tales**  
**By Dr. Bill Bass and Jon Jefferson**

**Foreword by Patricia Cornwell**

“The dead have much to say that only special people with special training and special gifts have the patience to hear, despite the assault on the senses. Only special people can interpret a language very few among the living care about, much less understand. . . . Years come and go, as do the dead who have been reduced to ashes and bone, and all of Dr. Bass’s patient translation adds to the fluency of a secret language that helps condemn the wicked and free those who have done no wrong.”

— **From the Foreword by Patricia Cornwell**

Nearly a decade ago, Patricia Cornwell made the Anthropology Research Facility at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville world-famous in her bestselling novel *The Body Farm*. At this unique laboratory, human bodies are hidden in the woods, buried in shallow graves, submerged in water, locked in the trunks and backseats of cars, concealed beneath slabs of concrete, burned in buildings, and allowed to decay in the open air. Yet what may seem at first to be a gruesome enterprise has helped solve hundreds of crimes, brought comfort to victims’ families, and revolutionized the field of forensic science. Now, Dr. Bill Bass — the founder of The Body Farm and one of the top forensic scientists in the world — takes readers behind the locked gates of this remarkable facility, shares his

most intriguing cases, and reveals the latest advances in pinpointing the “time since death” in murder cases, in **DEATH’S ACRE: Inside the Legendary Forensic Lab The Body Farm Where the Dead Do Tell Tales (G.P. Putnam’s Sons; Publication Date: November 3, 2003; ISBN: 0-399-15134-6; \$24.95)**. Foreign rights have been sold in Britain, France, Germany, Holland, Italy and Japan.

In 1977, Dr. Bass was one of the country’s leading physical anthropologists — an expert at analyzing and reconstructing human remains — who had been assisting law enforcement agencies and testifying in criminal trials for years. But when he misjudged the time of death of one corpse by more than a century, he realized that there was a pressing need for a systematic study of the way the body decomposes, which had never previously been undertaken. In 1980, at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Dr. Bass created the world’s first and only forensic facility devoted to research on human decomposition, which quickly became known as The Body Farm.

With journalist Jon Jefferson, Dr. Bass explains how he and his team of researchers studied and documented everything that happened to donated corpses at The Body Farm, from the moment of death right up until the time, weeks or months later, when nothing remained but bone. The researchers built a time-since-death database — still the only one of its kind in the world — by charting the processes and timetable of human decomposition. Dr. Bass’s goal was simple: any time a real-life murder victim was found, under virtually any circumstances or at any stage of decomposition, he wanted to be able to tell police — with scientific certainty — when that person was killed.

A renowned storyteller, lecturer, and teacher as well as a brilliant scientist, Dr. Bass recounts some of the most fascinating and important cases he has worked on, including:

- **The Lindbergh Baby** – Almost half a century after the execution of Bruno Hauptmann for the kidnapping and murder of Charles Lindbergh’s son, Hauptmann’s widow was still trying to clear her husband’s name. Her last hope was twelve tiny bones. Unfortunately for her, it took Dr. Bass less than an hour to conclude that there was nothing in the bones to refute the notion that these were all that remained of a Caucasoid male child, aged twenty months: a child named Charles Lindbergh, Jr.
- **Mary Louise Downing** –She lived in obscurity, but in death she has been Dr. Bass’s teaching partner for forty years. Her skeleton has journeyed halfway around the world, educated thousands of students, and helped train hundreds of forensic anthropologists, homicide investigators, crime-lab technicians, and medical examiners. In “Forensics 101,” Dr. Bass explains how he analyzed Mary Louise’s decaying remains to determine that she was a black female, age thirty-two, height five feet six inches, with poor dental health. Her murder has never been solved, but she is a forensic hero.
- **The Unsavory Uncle** – By studying a photograph of a smiling little girl for hours, and then painstakingly searching the stream where her remains had been found months before, Dr. Bass was able to recover her teeth and positively identify her as two-and-a-half-year-old Lisa Silvers. The child disappeared in 1970 while her uncle was babysitting for her. Yet the positive identification of the remains was not enough to convict the uncle, even though he had bragged in prison about killing and raping his niece.

- **The Case of the Headless Corpse** – In the most embarrassing case of his career, Dr. Bass was called to the family cemetery of an antebellum mansion, where what seemed to be a recent murder victim was found in an old grave. The headless body of an elegantly dressed young man was found sitting on top of a coffin buried in 1864. Initially, the corpse appeared to have been dead for no more than a few months — a judgment that later came to haunt Dr. Bass. Subsequent investigation revealed that the body was actually that of a Civil War soldier killed in battle, well preserved by embalming and an extremely sturdy, tight-fitting casket.
- **Parts Unknown** – Dr. Bass tells how his colleague and former student Steve Symes helped convict a serial killer with his pioneering research on saw marks. In the early 1990s, two teenage girls in Ontario, Canada, were brutally murdered and dismembered using an unknown type of saw. Steve’s analysis of the cuts in their bones identified the particular type of saw that was used, which proved to be a critical piece of evidence when the saw’s rusted blade was found at the bottom of a lake.
- **The Not-So-Accidental Tourist** – Dr. Bass used forensic evidence to show how a young financial adviser from Connecticut named Madison Rutherford traveled to Mexico and faked his own death in a fiery crash in order to collect \$7 million in insurance money. After Dr. Bass’s investigation revealed that the badly charred remains found in Rutherford’s rented SUV were those of a recently deceased fifty-to-sixty-year-old Mexican, the insurance companies declined to pay Rutherford’s wife. Later found working at a Boston dot-com under a different name, Rutherford pleaded guilty to fraud and received a five-year sentence.
- **The Bloody Beneficiary** – In 1999, Dr. Bass confronted one of the most disturbing and cold-blooded murder cases of his long career. A young father and mother had been stabbed repeatedly, and their four-year-old daughter had been strangled and possibly molested. Strong circumstantial evidence pointed to the husband’s stepfather, but the suspect’s conviction depended on an absolutely precise identification of the time of death. In the courtroom to give testimony, Bass was shown autopsy photos of the little girl he had never previously seen, and was suddenly able to identify the one tiny bit of evidence that resulted in the suspect’s conviction on three counts of first-degree murder.
- **Ashes to Ashes** – When hundreds of decaying bodies were discovered on the grounds of a Georgia crematorium in 2002, the case made national headlines. The family of an East Tennessee farmer named Lloyd “Chigger” Harden had sent his body to the crematorium in 2000 and received a brass box of cremated remains — or “cremains” — in return. Understandably, the family feared that the cremains might not be Chigger’s. When the Georgia Bureau of Investigation found the remains of a body that appeared to be Chigger’s at the site, the Harden family asked that the body be sent to Dr. Bass for examination and positive identification. After the body was properly cremated, Bass found one final piece of identifying material: a bullet that Chigger’s brother had fired into his chest twenty-five years earlier.

With interest in forensic science and murder investigations at an all-time high in our popular culture, Dr. Bass explores in depth the rapidly evolving scientific techniques featured on such hit shows as “CSI: Crime Scene Investigation.” The Body Farm serves as the world’s only setting where human corpses can be used for controlled and realistic experiments with cutting-edge forensic technologies such as ground-penetrating radar, artificial “noses” for sniffing out clandestine graves, and systems

for gauging time since death by measuring chemical markers of decomposition. The Body Farm also provides a unique training environment for FBI agents, crime-lab technicians, homicide detectives, and cadaver dogs.

The culmination of a distinguished career of forensic investigation that spans nearly fifty years, **DEATH'S ACRE** chronicles Dr. Bill Bass's groundbreaking scientific research, as well as his involvement in a series of riveting true-life murder cases.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS:**

**Dr. Bill Bass**, one of the world's leading forensic experts, is a renowned speaker at forensic conferences across the United States. Besides guiding the research at The Body Farm, he has written or co-written more than two hundred scientific publications, many of them based either on the facility's work or on murders and other mysteries that he has helped to prosecute or solve. A dedicated, lifelong teacher, he has been named national Professor of the Year by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. He has taught thousands of students, including nearly half of the forensic anthropologists practicing in the United States today.

Dr. Bass and The Body Farm have been the subjects of stories in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, *GQ*, and other publications. Dr. Bass has been featured on numerous television news and documentary programs, including CBS's "60 Minutes" and "60 Minutes II," ABC's "48 Hours," the Discovery Channel's "New Detectives" and "Forensic Files," the BBC's "Body Detectives," and the National Geographic Channel's documentaries "Biography of a Corpse" and "Anatomy of a Corpse."

**Jon Jefferson** is a veteran journalist, science writer, and documentary filmmaker. He has produced numerous programs for The History Channel, A&E, and the National Geographic Channel, National Geographic's "Biography of a Corpse" and "Anatomy of a Corpse". His writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *USA Today*, and *Popular Science*, and has been featured on National Public Radio.

To learn more about Dr. Bass and **DEATH'S ACRE**, please visit [www.deathsacre.com](http://www.deathsacre.com).

###

#### **DEATH'S ACRE:**

**Inside the Legendary Forensic Lab  
The Body Farm Where the Dead Do Tell Tales  
By Dr. Bill Bass & Jon Jefferson  
G. P. Putnam's Sons  
Publication Date: November 3, 2003  
ISBN: 0-399-15134-6  
Price: \$24.95**

#### **Foreign Rights**

**France – Le Cherche Midi Éditeur  
Germany – Bertelsmann  
Holland – Bruna  
Japan – Shogakukan  
United Kingdom – Time Warner  
Italy – Longanesi**