



Death's Acre: Inside the Legendary Forensic Lab the Body Farm Where the Dead Do Tell Tales

By William Bass, Jon Jefferson

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Dr. Bill Bass, one of the world's leading forensic anthropologists, gained international attention when he built a forensic lab like no other: The Body Farm. Now, this master scientist unlocks the gates of his lab to reveal his most intriguing cases-and to revisit the Lindbergh kidnapping and murder, fifty years after the fact.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this memoir, Bass, a premier forensic anthropologist, recounts how a life spent studying dead bodies led to the creation of "The Anthropology Research Facility" (aka the Body Farm), a plot of land near the University of Tennessee Medical Center where Bass and his colleagues monitor the decomposition of human corpses in various environments. The book is structured around the 1981 creation of the Body Farm, and the early chapters focus on some of Bass's trickier cases to demonstrate his need for more information about the science of forensics. The later chapters take a closer look at how the scientific analysis of Body Farm corpses has helped Bass and other anthropologists solve some of the toughest and most bizarre cases of their distinguished careers. Though professional and conscientious when describing the medical facts of each case, Bass, writing with journalist Jefferson, proves to be a witty storyteller with a welcome sense of humor. He also does a nice job balancing accounts of death and decomposition with decidedly not-so-morbid tidbits from his personal life. Furthermore, the poignancy of how he reacts to the deaths of his first two wives reflects the compassion he feels for the dead and their surviving family members he encounters in his working life. Bass may deal with the dead, but he has a lust for life that comes across in his writing. While the grisly details may not make this a must-read for everyone, those who do pick it up might just be pleasantly surprised by how Bass brings death to life.

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School--Not for the "faint of stomach," this is the story of one man's quest to identify murder victims. Bass, who created the University of Tennessee's Anthropology Research Facility, which is devoted to research on human decomposition, mixes scientific and personal anecdotes in such a way that readers are hooked from the first page. Readability, however, never loses out to accuracy, and the mix is quite an accomplishment. The author explains the process of decomposition and how bones give clues to identity: approximate age, sex, height, and race, all of which are needed to bring the forensic scientist one step closer to putting a name to a corpse. He describes some of the cases he has been involved with and laughs at himself when he shares stories of mistakes and assumptions. Young adults will gain insight into the forensic process and appreciate Bass's dedication to the truth and his work.--*Peggy Bercher, Fairfax County Public Library, VA*

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From [Booklist](#)

Bill Bass' forensics lab at the University of Tennessee is like no other. At the "Body Farm," corpses are allowed to decay naturally, exposed to the elements; they are locked in automobile trunks, submerged in water, buried in shallow graves--all to help pathologists understand what happens to people after they die. In this informative book, cowritten with science writer Jefferson, Bass gives us a guided tour of the Body Farm and takes us behind the scenes of some of his most interesting cases, including his reappraisal of the Lindbergh kidnapping. Fans of the forensics-oriented novels of such mystery writers as Kathy Reichs and Patricia Cornwell (who supplies the introduction to this book), not to mention television series like *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, will make an eager audience for this one. On the other hand, readers whose queasy meter hits the danger zone at the mention of decaying flesh should proceed with caution. *David Pitt*
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Users Review

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