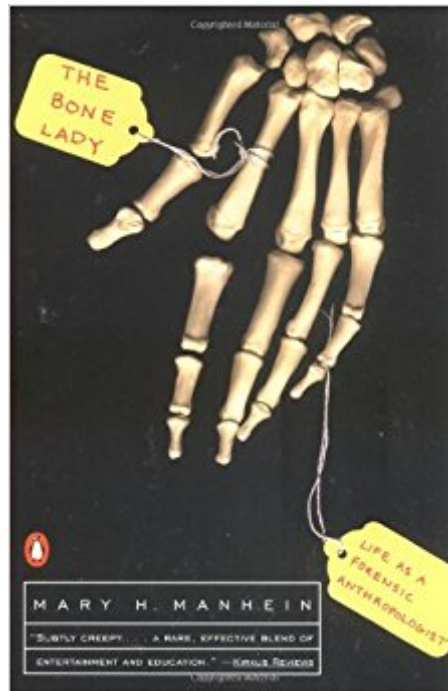




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# The Bone Lady: Life As A Forensic Anthropologist



## Synopsis

When a skeleton is all that's left to tell the story of a crime, Mary H. Manhein, otherwise known as "the bone lady," is called in. For almost two decades, Manhein has used her expertise in forensic pathology to help law enforcement agents--locally, nationally, and internationally--solve their most perplexing mysteries. She shares the extraordinary details of the often high-profile cases on which she works, and the science underlying her analyses. Here are Civil War skeletons, cases of alleged voodoo and witchcraft, crimes of political intrigue, and the before-and-after of facial reconstruction. Written with the compassion and humor of a born storyteller, *The Bone Lady* is an unforgettable glimpse into the lab where one scientist works to reveal the human stories behind the remains.

## Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; Reissue edition (July 1, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 014029192X

ISBN-13: 978-0140291926

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 0.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 79 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #405,021 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #162 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Social Scientists & Psychologists #196 in Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Internal Medicine > Pathology > Forensic Medicine #281 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Anthropology > Physical

## Customer Reviews

A subtly creepy collection of stories culled from the experiences of a leading forensic anthropologist. Manhein describes her role as an expert witness as the laying out of her analysis to the jury without a lot of unexplained scientific jargon the exact technique she employs in this account. While one of her goals seems to be teaching the public about the field of forensic anthropology, she never loses sight of her main intention, the spinning of a good story. The result is a rare, effective blend of entertainment and education. As we follow Manhein into the Louisiana bayou, where she digs up the levee to claim a five-year-old corpse, into industrial fires where victims bodies lie unrecovered, into cemeteries both old, newly discovered, and improvised, under houses, and into the forest to examine the bones of potentially mistreated horses, we learn about identifying bodies through

dental X-rays, bone composition, and facial reconstruction. It is the same combination of the desire to solve puzzles and a fascination with death that led Manhein into her field and which also compels the reader to move quickly from one story to the next. Whether she is describing a human skull being pulled up in a fishing net or her nervousness at testifying in court, she maintains a grounded eye for detail and a compassionately detached style which renders the subject matter interesting rather than gruesome. While many of Manhein's cases have attracted media attention, most notably the exhumation of the killer of Huey Long, the book primarily focuses on the much less glamorous side of the fieldthe identification of drowning victims sometimes years after their deaths, or the discovery that those bones in the yard belonged to the previous owners pet dog. Despite the morbid nature of her work, she loves what she does and communicates that enthusiasm in her absorbing narrative. (illustrations) -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

**THE RIVETING TALE OF A TRUE-LIFE CRIME-FIGHTING SCIENTIFIC SLEUTH**When a skeleton is all that's left to tell the story of a crime, Mary Manhein, otherwise known as "the bone lady", is called in. For almost two decades, Manhein has used her expertise in forensic anthropology to help law enforcement agents -- locally, nationally, and internationally -- solve their most perplexing mysteries. In this eerie book she shares the extraordinary details of the often high-profile cases on which she works, and the science underlying her analyses. Here are the fascinating details of how, from a pile of bones, she assesses age, sex, race, signs of trauma, and time of death, and how she can even use clay to re-create a face. Written with the compassion and humor of a born storyteller, *The Bone Lady* is an unforgettable glimpse into the lab where one scientist works to reveal the human stories behind the remains.

I'm one of the fortunate folks that has had a chance to work with Mary over the years. Anyone remotely interested in how forensic anthropology assists law enforcement and the loved ones of a "lost" person will love this book. The work that Mary and others have done with the LSU F.A.C.E.S lab is nothing short of amazing. Buy the book, read it, and share it with others.

Let me start this review by informing the you that I am an Anthropology student, so I am slightly biased towards the subject of the text. In a way this is good for the book and in a way it isn't. It is good, because no matter the negatives of the author or text I am going to like it since I love reading about the cases and how the investigator got to the conclusion they reached. Unfortunately I am

also more knowledgeable on the topic than the average Joe. With that being said...After reading Ms. Manhein's book I am very disappointed, upon purchasing the text I was looking forward to learning something new that only someone in the field could teach me, but after the first few chapters, I found her writing simplistic and her chapters short. I do not know if the author was attempting to dumb down her writing for the masses or if she just didn't have much to write. But her book leaves much to be desired. For someone who is a novice in the field, an avid Bones watcher who just finds this fascinating and needs to have things like "skull" and "cranium" defined individually then this is perfect for them. She tends to blend her stories with the science seamlessly and while there may have not been enough science for my tastes I cannot deny that that makes the book an easy read. If you are looking for a little to no-fluff book that describes the situation and science with little conjecture, this is not for you. I would suggest another text titled, *Dead Men Do Tell Tales* by Dr. Maples.

This book was for my daughter's college class. I did read it, but my daughter did for Forensics class. She told me it was interesting.

Good book

I got hooked on forensic anthropology when I read "*Dead Men Do Tell Tales*" when I was 13 and I bought this book as a recommendation by . It was a good book, written about Mary Manhein's personal experience in the field, but lacking technical perspective. I enjoyed the book as a look from an Anthropologist's perspective, but I was disappointed by the way the book presented the field, as if only written more as a short record of cases rather than an informative record. It wasn't very well written and rather dry reading. Over all I wouldn't recommend this because there are way too many good books out there that contain informative material that is well written. Don't get me wrong, I did like the book, to a degree, but I love to read and it was a short book that didn't take long to finish, so I am not regretting the purchase, but it is not the ideal book for someone that has not read anything else from the field... it may sour you from buying another book on the topic. I would start with "*Dead Men Do Tell Tales*" and then read this if you're still interested...

I purchased this book for my daughter who is interested in becoming a forensic anthropologist...Because she was in the middle of another book, I was able to read it before her. I am so glad that we got it. It is VERY interesting. I love the writing style and the sharing of her

experiences. I laughed; I cried; I learned so much. I think this is the perfect book for anyone who is considering going into this field. The only thing that I found frustrating were all the un-solved cases, but (unfortunately) that's REAL life, isn't it?...It's not like the so-called 'cases' you see on TV.

This is a very interesting book with accurate terminology paired with an interesting story. Manheim really captures the authenticity of being a professional in the macabre field.

"The Bone Lady - (Life as a Forensic Anthropologist)" by Mary H. Manheim, ISBN 01402.9192X (pbk), Penguin Books 2000, is a 137 page curiously enticing story-telling recount of Manheim's personal encounter and infatuation with college anthropology which led her to become a working forensic bioanthropologist and Director of Forensic Anthropology and Computer Enhancement Services Laboratory (FACES), forensics instructor (LSU), and deputy coroner. A gifted story teller, she provides an articulate recital of her childhood, then marriage, and finally 'matriculating' at age 33; and she then delves into a dozen or so intriguing cases where she is asked to help provide identification of remains, often just bones and thus she acquires rank as 'The Bone Lady,' and later fellowship distinction (FAAFS). The medley of cases provide some modicum about similarity of mammalian bones, grave sites, viewing windows in cast-iron coffins, insights into aging of bone, and differentiation of male vs. female remains. The book yields the "feeling" of field forensics by touching on the politics, stench, miseries, hazards, grief, closure, and those too few triumphs unearthed by 'The Bone Lady.' It is well written and easy to read and priced just right.

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