

Forensic Follies: The Dark Side of CSI

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Forensic science enjoys an excellent reputation on television. TV shows such as *Forensic Files*, *CSI* and *Bones* laud the science and the scientists. However, in the real world forensic science is facing an existential crisis. Cases continue to come to light in which convictions were obtained by pseudo-science, by faked science or by science incorrectly applied. The victims of these miscarriages of justice have often languished in prison for decades. In one case an innocent man was executed because a fire investigator erroneously concluded an accidental fire was the result of arson. This presentation will explore examples of bad forensic science in order to identify the causes of these miscarriages of justice. It will also examine current efforts at the federal level to improve forensic science.

Professor Walter F. Rowe is currently full professor in the Department of Forensic Sciences at The George Washington University. He has been a member of the faculty of this department since 1975. Prof. Rowe received his bachelors of science degree in chemistry from Emory University and his masters and doctorate in chemistry from Harvard University. He received his forensic training in the US Army where he served in the

US Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory (then located at Ft. Gordon, Georgia) and in the US Army Europe Crime Laboratory in Frankfurt-am-Main. Prof. Rowe was a forensic drug chemist and a forensic serologist. He also graduated with honors from the US Army Military Police School's criminal investigator course and was a credentialed Army CID agent. Prof. Rowe is a Fellow of the Criminalistics Section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and a member of ASTM subcommittee 30.01. He is the president of the Council of Forensic Science Educators. Dr. Rowe participated in the recent OSAC meeting as a guest of the trace subcommittee. He has published extensively in the *Journal of Forensic Sciences* and *Forensic Science International*.

Saturday, December 12, 2015
1:30 pm

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