

Hi Norah and Keith,

Thanks so much for providing a copy of your review of *Genetic Witness*. I love your style and I find myself reading your columns even if I'm not directly interested in the subject you're addressing. I thought it was a very fair critique of the book "through the lens" of forensic science. There was nothing that jumped out at me as being at all mean-spirited (other than the infomercial comment towards the end of the review, but your point is well-taken) and I think that most of your criticisms were warranted.

I just wanted to point out that I was a bit puzzled by your claim that because my book examines a technique that is no longer used it seems "dated" rather than "historical." History is by definition an examination of dated things. As you rightly note, it's still too early to write a good history of more recent iterations of DNA profiling, so I didn't even try. There is a very strong tendency within the sciences (forensic science included) to always be looking ahead to what advance lies just down the road, rather than to take stock of what has happened in the past. The goal of my book was primarily to ensure that the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s were not forgotten or completely whitewashed by powerful individuals within the scientific and legal communities (including, ironically, Scheck and Neufeld). I am happy that you think I did a good job on this task. Also on this note, my book documented the *controversy* surrounding DNA profiling. STR was the "nail in the coffin" of debates about the systematic reliability of DNA profiling.

I wanted to state for the record that I went to great lengths to get many perspectives on DNA profiling (which can be seen at the end of the book in my list of interviewees). Yes, Bill Thompson was instrumental in helping me understand what happened during the "DNA Wars," but I actually spent as much time talking to George Sensabaugh over the course of my research. The only major person who I did not interview was Bruce Budowle, who failed to return my emails or phone calls.

As far as my central claim that there is no strong systematic method for discovering and rooting out errors, I just wanted to point out that the scientists who discovered errors while working for the defense generally could do so only after the tremendous effort of defense lawyers to conduct successful discovery procedures. All of the defense lawyers I spoke to told me that during the period I cover in the book it was incredibly difficult to gain access to the kinds of information and documents that are necessary to carry out a good scientific review. If things have changed very recently, I am extremely happy about it and think that this is a fantastic development.

Finally, one minor clarification: the image on the cover isn't from early Cellmark publicity material. Rather, it was an image recently produced in-house that was never used for its intended purpose. Their marketing people offered it to me when they couldn't find an original piece of artwork from their first advertising campaign (which isn't at all surprising given how many times the company has changed hands).

Anyway, thanks for taking the time to read my book and critically analyze it. I look forward to continued dialogue and discussion with you in the future.

Best wishes,

Jay