

New science

aids police

# Sinking your teeth into crime



Story and teeth by Lucinda Chodan

## NUDE MALE BODY FOUND IN NORTH SASKATCHEWAN

Foul play suspected in connection with unidentified body

Call in the dentists.

It's not that far-fetched. The science of forensic dentistry is taking a leading role in the identification of bodies. And in some cases, dentists may provide the conclusive evidence that helps solve crime, participants at a weekend Forensic Dentistry Seminar at Lister Hall were told.

The two-day course, designed for dentists, doctors and law enforcement officers, was sponsored by the Faculty of Dentistry's Division of Continuing Education.

Dental evidence is valuable for identification, said one of Western Canada's foremost forensic dentists, because teeth are relatively indestructible, dental records are fairly common and the data are scientifically reliable. For instance, if a person has four teeth missing and four teeth filled, the chances that anyone else in the world would have the same dental chart is one in 736,281,000, said Edmonton's Dr. Carl Hawrish.

That's why teeth—or even a single tooth—are used to identify victims of mass disasters or severe fires when other

identification is impossible.

In cases like these, post-mortem x-rays and charts are compared with records existing before death. Identifications have been made with as little evidence as a photograph of the smiling victim, Hawrish said.

Although forensic dentistry is only now receiving national prominence, the science is not new. In the first recorded case of forensic detective work, an American silversmith named Paul Revere helped identify the body of an American major-general killed behind British lines in the War of Independence. The body of Dr. Joseph Warren was identified by a silver bridge Revere had made for him in 1775.

Identifying bodies and unknown victims of homicide present a different problem. While police and forensic dentists may possess complete post-mortem dental records, they don't have any ante-mortem records to compare them with. And there's the problem: How do you track down the records?

Hawrish said police send bulletins and letters provincially and nationally to alert dentists to search for similar records. But the method is woefully inadequate, he said.

"It's a long shot—it's a last hope," he said, shaking his head. For example, a survey of the British Dental Journal

showed that in 25 years, none of the notices it had ran had resulted in a positive identification by a dentist.

"Our record is zero," he said. Sometimes, though, a combination of coincidence and diligence pays off and police get a "break," said Hawrish. Then, dental records are used to confirm police suspicions about the victim and sometimes even provide clues to the killer. One example of this kind of "break" is the Valemount Murder case, which hit the headlines five years ago.

Two pieces of an unidentified female body were found in a ditch 8.5 miles west of the west Jasper Park gate in late May, 1974. The torso was badly decomposed, but the lower half of the body, lying several feet away, was wrapped in a blue blanket and a green plastic garbage bag.

Police moved the body to Vancouver and circulated a description of the woman in various publications, but no one responded. Then the victim's teeth were sent to Edmonton, where forensic dentists examined them. The only clue the dental examination yielded was a suspicion that the amalgam used in her fillings came from a country other than Canada. The dentists duly filed the woman's post-mortem charts with Interpol and waited.

Then, an interesting development came to light. The blue blanket found

swathing the lower body had been manufactured in Finland and had never been exported. Thus, police speculated, either the murderer or the victim might have been Finnish. But they were still stymied—until they got their big break.

Interpol had been contacted by the family of a Finnish woman who had been living in Canada. They were suspicious because the woman's husband claimed she had been killed in a car accident, but they had been unable to verify her death. Could Interpol help? An ante-mortem record of the woman's teeth was obtained from her dentist in Finland, and the case was clinched. In summer 1975, an Edmonton man was convicted of slaying his wife.

The unidentified male body found in a septic tank near Tofield three years ago has also been scrutinized by forensic dentists, Hawrish said. But this kind of case shows the shortcomings of the science.

The body shape of the victim has been deduced from his clothing, an American expert has reconstructed his facial features from his skeleton and his teeth, and complete post-mortem dental records are available, but no one has come forth with any ante-mortem records to compare them with.

"It's frustrating," Hawrish said. "We believe we know what the victim looks like, but we just can't track him down."

## Don't glow in the dark: join

by Hollis Brown

A group calling for nuclear disarmament and the end of nuclear weapons has been formed on campus.

U of A chaplain Eric Stephanson has spearheaded the formation of the group, which currently numbers about ten people.

"Our initial aim is self-education; we want our members to be knowledgeable on the issue," says Stephanson. "From there, we will go on to community education."

Another immediate aim for the group, which is yet to be officially named, is the collection of books and articles dealing with nuclear weaponry. The group also wants to be officially recognized by the United Nations Association, a group that promotes the aims of the UN.

"We want to affiliate with the United Nations Association to give us a broader base," Stephanson says. "This is a non-religious group totally separate

from the Chaplains' Association."

The group hopes to host annual conferences on campus similar to the meetings sponsored by the chaplains last fall, when anti-nuclear activists Jim and Shelley Douglass came to Edmonton.

"We realize that the arms question is not an immediate issue here in Western Canada,"

## Grad students consider FAS

The U of A's 2,000 graduate students will be voting next week on a referendum asking them whether they want to join the Federation of Alberta Students (FAS).

FAS, which represents 40,000 to 50,000 students, would provide grad students with a voice in a province-wide body representing student interests, according to Graduate Students Association (GSA) president Paul Fisher.

As well, Fisher says grad students could benefit by having direct access to research data

collected by FAS. Lake Sagaris, executive officer of FAS, says grad students face many of the same problems as other students, as well as many special ones—problems which FAS could help solve.

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One poll will be open in the Power Plant April 7, 8 and 9 from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. Membership in FAS will cost each student \$1.50.

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As well, he said these countries will continue to be used primarily as producers of natural resources.

However, the growth of multinationals abroad may help polarize the proletariat toward militancy, said Judson, citing the current example of stride-swept Brazil.

The 1980s will also see a growth of neo-protectionism of national industries in the United States, he said. Industries which can't compete abroad will "go screaming to the government" for regulations to protect them from market-flooding by multinationals.



Another sure sign of spring—full bike racks on campus. Don't be too optimistic, though. There are only 182 more days until next winter's first snowfall.

photo W. Christianson

## Violence in store as old meets new

Euphoria following the Islamic takeover in Iran will likely dissipate into widespread violence, according to Dr. S. Qureshi of the Department of Political Science.

Speaking at a Political Science Undergraduate Association (PSUA) forum on world development yesterday afternoon, Qureshi said the violence will arise when people discover the ancient principles on Islam are untenable in the modern world.

And, he added, this situation will prove "ideal" for the Soviet Union by creating instability in the Middle East.

The second speaker, poli sci grad student Fred Judson, began his speech by outlining some of the contradictions existing in the Third World today.

Judson said the 1980s will see an increase in direct foreign investment in the developing

The university post office has moved temporarily from the east end of the Power Plant to Room 140 of the Students' Union Building.

The move, which includes mailbox service, took place on March 31. The post office will be moving back to the Power Plant when renovations to that building have been completed.

## Last day to get exams

It's final exam time, and the Students' Union exam registry knows it.

The registry has been swamped in the last few days with requests for copies of old exams for university courses.

"It's been busy for about two weeks," says exam registry employee Dave Tharle, "and this week, it's been really jammed up."

Today is the last day for ordering exams, and students have been lining up outside the

registry office on the second floor of SUB to get their orders in.

"It's unfortunate that some people waited until the last minute," says Tharle. "It's taking up to about four days to fill an order and some people will be writing exams as early as next week."

The exam registry will not take any orders after 5:00 p.m. today, so if you're still in the dark about a certain course, you'd better hurry.

Time is running out.