



Tainting Evidence : Behind the Scandals at the FBI Crime Lab

John Kelly, Phillip Wearne

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Since the 1930s, the FBI's crime-fighting reputation has been built, in large part, on its forensic laboratory. In 1997 that reputation was shattered by an 18-month government investigation that upheld allegations of serious malpractice. Now, "Tainting Evidence" shows that those revelations were just the tip of the iceberg. With evidence culled from thousands of pages of FBI memos, lab reports, internal investigations and dozens of interviews, including exclusive conversations with lab chemist Frederic Whitehurst, the FBI's first whistleblower, authors John Kelly and Phillip Wearne demonstrate how the FBI lab has compromised the forensic work in some of the biggest cases of the century: the Oklahoma City bombing, the Unabomber case, the O. J. Simpson prosecution and the World Trade Center explosion. Hundreds of criminal cases may have to be reopened. The details exposed here are shocking: the FBI explosives expert on the World Trade Center investigation who repeatedly misled the jury; hair and fiber evidence not present at a multiple-murder crime scene that somehow materialized in the hands of the FBI lab four years later; crucial chemical analyses that were never recorded in the Unabomber investigation. The list of documented instances of malpractice, flawed science, doctored lab reports, posed evidence, woeful investigative work and false testimony is truly stunning. "Tainting Evidence" shows that while always denying it, the FBI was well aware of the inadequacies of its lab; how forensic science can be used to hinder rather than help the search for truth; how the FBI's famed investigators can never be trusted to investigate themselves.

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