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Fayetteville police forensic manager co-authors crime scene staging book

Grant Graham, the Fayetteville Police Department forensic manager, has co-authored his first book called “Crime Scene Staging: Investigating Suspect Misdirection of the Crime Scene.”

“We’re introducing a new concept in investigating staging with these new terms,” Graham said.



Grant Graham, the Fayetteville Police Department Forensic Manager, is the coauthor of a book on police work, “Crime Scene Staging – Investigating Suspect Misdirection of the Crime Scene.”
Staff photo by Monica Vendituoli

Graham co-authored the book with Arthur S. Chancellor, who is a special agent with the Fort Bragg Criminal Investigation Command.

The book was published Nov.30 by Charles C. Thomas Publisher Ltd. as part of the group’s American Series in Law Enforcement Investigations.

About 10 years ago, Graham and Chancellor investigated several staged crime scenes while working together in Mississippi. Staged crime scenes occur when people alter evidence that misdirects police.

“I wouldn’t say that it is common, but it does occur,” Graham said.

National crime statistics do not track how many crime scenes are altered.

A study by the Federal Bureau of Investigation of 104 homicides found that about 8 percent of the homicide crime scenes were staged, Graham said.

However, Graham emphasized that he has investigated burglaries, robberies, rapes and traffic wrecks in addition to homicides that have been staged.

While investigating the staged crime scenes, Graham and Chancellor found three predominate motives behind why people staged the scenes - staging to intentionally misdirect police, staging to fulfill psychological needs and staging by other people such as family members to avoid embarrassment about the crime.

Once a person’s motive for crime scene staging is determined, Graham said solving the crime gets easier.

“This isn’t our first rodeo,” Graham said. “It is probably the criminal’s first time or one of a few times of staging a crime scene.”

Graham and Chancellor then decided to teach an hour-long class on the subject to Mississippi state police officers.

Graham said the class was popular and soon expanded into a four-hour lecture and then a workshop.

Agencies outside of Mississippi began asking about the class.

“People would ask us, ‘Have you written a book?’” Graham said.

About a year ago, Graham and Chancellor began writing the book.

Graham said the book is intended for prosecutors, law enforcement professionals and students.

A 20-year veteran with the Air Force Security Police, Graham joined the Fayetteville Police Department in 2011.

He brought along his life-sized skeleton replica named Dr. Leonard Horatio “Bones” McCoy after the Star Trek character.

Graham supervises 19 employees in the forensics department. Multiple employees in the department said his enthusiasm for forensics is contagious.

Graham said a book his father gave him on forensics inspired him to pursue a career in the field.

“I read the book and I kind of became fascinated with how science helps to solve crime,” Graham said.

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