

Lenore Barbian, Ph.D.

Acting Curator, National Museum of Health and Medicine, AFIP



I earned my Ph.D. and M.A. in physical anthropology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst where I specialized in the analysis of prehistoric skeletal remains. After finishing my Ph.D., I accepted a position at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. There I headed the physical anthropology analysis of their skeletal collections subject to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. I designed an inventory protocol and oversaw the skeletal analysis and identification of more than 4,000 individuals of Native American ancestry.

My work in forensic anthropology began when I joined the anatomical collections at the National Museum of Health and Medicine (NMHM), Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP). I am currently the Acting Curator, and in this position I work in collections management, exhibition and program development, and forensic anthropology. At the NMHM, I care for more than 13,000 skeletal and fluid-preserved specimens that document the effects of disease and trauma to the human body. The curation of these specimens includes developing finding aids, insuring that the specimens are stored in a manner that will best help preserve them for future generations, and helping researchers identify specimens that may be of use in their research. I am also active in our exhibition development process. I research specimens for possible inclusion in exhibits, write exhibit labels and scripts, and help install the exhibit components. Each October the NMHM offers a special public program in the forensic sciences that I develop, and each year I direct a short course in forensic anthropology through the AFIP's Department of Medical Education.

I serve as a forensic anthropologist for U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of Homeland Security Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team, and I was deployed to assist with the identification of the victims of the crash of United Airlines Flight 93 on September 11, 2001. I have also been a forensic anthropology consultant to the Somerset County Coroner, the Northern Virginia

VISIBLE FORENSIC VIEWS PROOFS OF THE BODY

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of Maryland. I am also a member of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists and the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, Physical Anthropology Section.

My research interests include paleopathology, health and disease of skeletal populations, forensic anthropology, and prehistoric mortuary practices. I am currently conducting research on the timing and appearance of cranial healing following trauma. Using our Civil War collection, I was able to observe bony changes on the cranial bones and compute elapsed time of healing. This has allowed me to estimate time since injury in other skeletal samples. I have conducted research on museum visitors' responses to displays of human remains. Using focus groups and interviews with actual museum visitors, I found that people expect to see human remains on display at our museum and that they find them compelling and educational exhibit components. My dissertation investigated the mortuary practices of a Northeastern Late Archaic skeletal population. The cemetery population recovered from Turner Farm, Maine contained individuals that were buried soon after death, those who had been allowed to decompose before burial, and individuals that were cremated and then brought to Turner Farm for burial. Given this range of mortuary behavior, I suggest that burial at the site is an important social event and may function to unite small bands of hunter-gatherers into a larger social unit.

