# Military forensic pathologist's facial sculpture techniques lead to identification of victim

*By Michele Hammonds*
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One of the military's top forensic experts used the art of facial sculpting to help identify an Indianapolis murder victim.

The victim, a black male, approximately 6 feet in height, was found lying on his back in a vacant building on the north side of Indianapolis on March 31, 2000. He was wearing an expensive designer sweater and pants, but did not have identification on him and had been burned beyond recognition.

US Air Force Major (Dr.) Steven Campman, chief deputy medical examiner of the Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner (OAFME), created a sculpture of the victim's head at the request of the Marion County Coroner's Office in Indianapolis. The victim was later identified as a 38-year-old Indianapolis man, after a caller recognized a photograph of the facial sculpture on a television news program. "The sculpture led directly to the identification," Dr. Campman said. (OAFME—like all AFIP departments—accepts outside civilian cases for a fee to provide staff members with continuing training opportunities to strengthen the Institute's capabilities for the Department of Defense).

Dr. Campman, who has 3 years under his belt with the Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner in Rockville, Md, refers to forensic sculpture as "art using science."

Relying on his artistic ability, Dr. Campman used clay to reconstruct the face on the victim's skeletal (skull) remains.

"When I found out there was an identification, it really made my day," said Dr. Campman, a forensic pathologist. Originally, the body was taken to the Indiana University Department of Pathology in Indianapolis. Dr. John Pless, medical examiner for the Marion County Coroner's Office, performed an autopsy on the remains in April 2000.

"The body was extremely charred beyond recognition, with stab wounds on the neck, back, and arms," said Dr. Pless by telephone. "It was clear that an accelerant had been poured on the body in an attempt to destroy it."

Dr. Pless was unable to identify the victim based on dental exams or by other methods, because dental comparisons, just as DNA or fingerprint comparisons, require that investigators have some idea of the victim's identity in order to make the comparison. "He had no skin to do fingerprints," Dr. Pless said.

A short time later, Dr. Pless, a member of the AFIP Scientific Advisory Board, asked Dr. Campman to make a facial reconstruction (forensic sculpture) with clay of the victim's face in hopes that someone might recognize him. "What they sent me was a clean skull and the anthropologist's report," Dr. Campman said. "And that is all I needed."

When Dr. Campman received the skull late in May 2000, he went to work on it. The anthropologist had already determined the age, race and sex of the victim by using various measurements of bone structure and density. Later, a citizen recognized the photograph and provided authorities with the victim's name. Police

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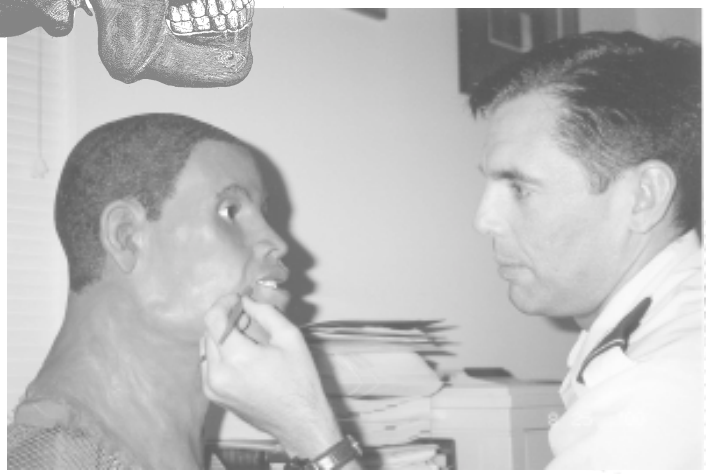

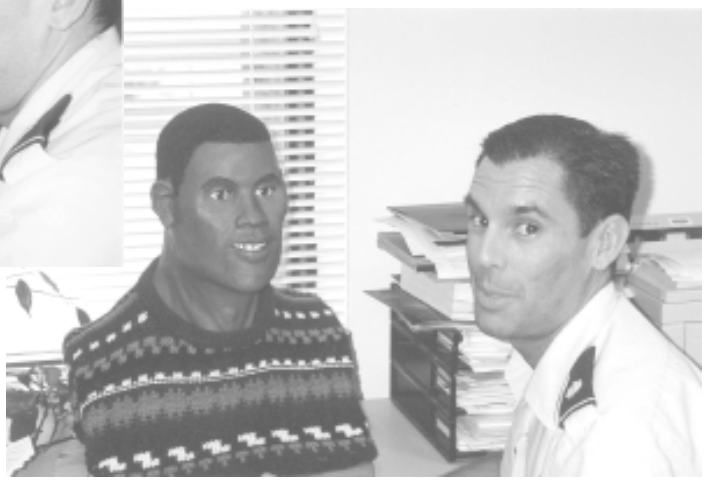

*Above: US Air Force Major (Dr.) Steven Campman, chief deputy medical examiner of the Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner (OAFME), works on a sculpture he created of a murder victim's head at the request of the Marion County Coroner's Office in Indianapolis.*

*Right: Dr. Steven Campman shows off the facial reconstruction he completed of an Indianapolis murder victim. The victim was later identified as a 38-year-old black man from Indianapolis, after a caller recognized a photograph of the facial sculpture on a television news program.*