
No matter where you were in the year 2001, the events that transpired have undoubtedly changed your life. Startling events — from loaded passenger airliners crashing into monumental buildings to seemingly innocuous white powder circulating through the postal system — these events have influenced laws and lives across America and throughout the world.

In this 448-page investigative novel, David Willman assumes the role of a bulldog prosecuting attorney. Willman provides supporting evidence of the alleged actions and motives of Dr. Bruce Ivins in the anthrax attacks of late 2001. Willman also chronicles the profound impact of Ivins’ alleged actions on the nation and international relations. With strong persuasiveness, Willman attempts to lead the reader to a “guilty” verdict. The reader is rapidly immersed as a member of the figurative jury.

Throughout twenty-nine chapters, an epilogue and an appendix, Willman lays out the evidence supporting his charges of Ivins’ involvement in the anthrax attacks and the resulting injury and loss of life. The author also details mis-steps of US federal investigators which, by delaying the conclusion of the case, may have led America into an unnecessary war, and resulted in the award of $5.82 million in restitution to a falsely-accused early prime suspect and scientist, Dr. Steven Hatfill.

The author’s capacious documentation, including 65 pages containing over 830 references to personal conversations and printed sources, lends credence to his charges against Bruce Ivins. For certain, Ivins is an interesting pivotal character in this novel. Ivins’ turmoil in his personal life is also displayed for all to see. Formative experiences, from an abusive mother to inappropriate interactions with a university sorority, are all revealed. Like many people, Ivins certainly had his quirks.

This novel would be an interesting discussion-starter for many university courses. It lends itself to use in upper-level science and even criminal justice courses. The novel demonstrates the significance of accurate record-keeping and the reporting of procedural discrepancies in the laboratory, something Ivins did not do well. Voluminous users of e-mail will benefit from reading this novel as it documents the unlimited lifespan of e-mail and how interpretation by others may later incriminate.

The scientific evidence presented is not without flaw. The author, at one point, refers to an amino acid as “a building block of DNA.” Students and scientists, as they examine other scientific evidence provided, may see alternative interpretations and inconsistencies, as well. From this perspective, the novel lends itself to discussion of the importance of good scientific practices and consideration of alternative interpretation of results.

The author’s choice of title reflects his conviction that Bruce Ivins lived two personas; one a mild-mannered
— if at times peculiar — church-going scientist, and the other a psychotic calculating killer. Ivins’ apparent suicide pre-empted any formal indictments against him precluding determination of either his guilt or innocence in a court of law.

This is a book which will draw scientists and students into the world of biology and criminal justice. As you deliberate, remember the author’s quote of the 13th US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld: “The nature of terrorist attacks is that it is often very difficult to identify who is ultimately responsible.” The author provides evidence supporting his convictions. You, as the reader, become Ivins’ peer juror. The verdict is still out.

This novel is highly recommended as personal reading for anyone interested in science, biological warfare, the criminal investigative process, or the lesser-known events surrounding September, 2001. The book would also serve well as a text for supplemental reading in upper-level biology and microbiology courses. Keep in mind that students may find this in-depth case study more captivating than their regular course textbook.

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