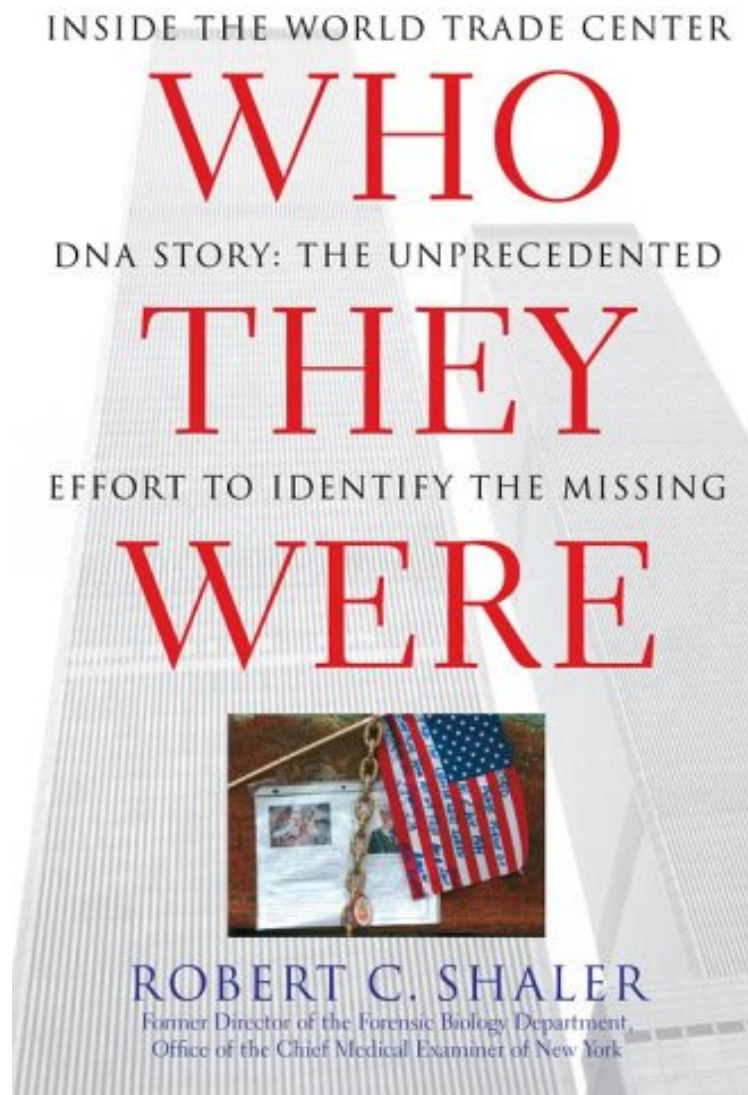


[Ebook pdf] Who They Were: Inside the World Trade Center DNA Story: The Unprecedented Effort to Identify the Missing

# Who They Were: Inside the World Trade Center DNA Story: The Unprecedented Effort to Identify the Missing

*Robert C. Shaler*

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**Robert C. Shaler : Who They Were: Inside the World Trade Center DNA Story: The Unprecedented Effort to Identify the Missing** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Who They Were: Inside the World Trade Center DNA Story: The Unprecedented Effort to Identify the Missing:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Insight into the medical examiner's DNA department during the

WTC crises  
By Maude I found this book at the same time to be fascinating and a bit long-winded. When it is at its best, it is both touching and informative, and I found it relevant as a biography of a manager handling an organization during a crises as well as insightful into how DNA was used to identify people after 9-11. Overall though, I had to discipline myself to finish it as it is not written by the most eloquent writer, I think. I give it 3 stars for its honesty and its relevancy and the way that it deals with 9-11 in a touching but sober way.  
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent reading on the subject  
By NJ Book Lover I think this book is first rate...gives an insider's view on that recovery efforts of the victims on 9-11. Mr Shaler did an excellent job of giving his first hand experience during that awful time during and after the attacks of 9-11-01.  
11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Thenody for Bagpipes  
By Kevin Killian Once again, stalwart Free Press comes through with another incredibly in-depth, in fact slightly overlong, inquiry into recent history. In fact, given the substance of the investigation, and its current limbo, this isn't really history at all, but reather current events of the most pressing nature. Who was it said that reading such and such a book was like holding lightning in your hands? Reading this book is like reading human blood.  
Dr. Shaler gives us a no hold barred accout of what it was like trying to deal with the innumerable scraps of human remains found at the site of the Weorld Trade Center disaster on September 11, 2001, in New York, and in the days, weeks and even months afterwards. Scientists and doctors, some who had never spoken to each other before, strangers, and some who were outright enemies, found themselves standing shoulder to shoulder trying to use forensics to fight back, fight against prejudice, fight against violence and terror and fight against the cloud of uncertainty by trying to match easch scrap, be it of brain or liver, with an actual human being believed to have died in the attacks. He even describes the chill with which his team came to understand that, even among the morass of human material, some of these body parts were probably those of the hijackers as well. It's not all high science either. Dr. Shaler has the vocabulary of an average New Yorker, and he is given to a descriptive obscenity when the drama of his story calls for it. "Don't tell me we f--ked up the identification!" I said' is a typical comeback from him. But in general, the science is paramount and it helps us understand the complexity of the work involved. By and by the forensics scientists found themselves invited to the funerals of the vitims they had matched, through DNA or otherwise. The families were grateful. There must be a primitive urge to want to preserve the scraps of your own loved one's bodies, even miniscule ones, for there were funerals for mere fingers. Reminds me of the the way Catholic churches in my youth were erected around mere "relics" embedded in the tabernacles. Dr. Shaler's writing is simple and moving on such occasions, as though Hemingway had willed his genes to a top scientist and bureaucrat. "We stood around the grave site and waited. Soon, the bagpipers began playing and there was a short ceremony. The sun was shining and it was warm. I felt like I belonged."

In "Who They Were," Dr. Robert C. Shaler, the man who directed the largest and most groundbreaking forensic DNA investigation in U.S. history, tells with poignant clarity and refreshing honesty the story behind the relentless effort to identify the 2,749 victims of the attacks on the World Trade Center. No part of the investigation into the 9/11 attacks has taken as long or been less discussed than the daunting task of identifying the victims -- and the hijackers -- from the remains in the rubble of Ground Zero. In *Who They Were*, Dr. Robert C. Shaler, former director of the Forensic Biology Department at the New York City Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, tells the inside story of the relentless process of DNA identification and depicts the victories and frustrations that he and his team of scientists experienced during more than three years of grueling work. On September 11, 2001, New York City was unprepared for the mass-fatality event that occurred at the World Trade Center. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner had to completely reconfigure itself to process and identify the nearly 20,000 remains that would eventually come through its doors. Facing an astonishing array of obstacles -- from political infighting and an overwhelming bureaucracy to the nearly insurmountable task of corralling personnel and supplies to handle the work -- Shaler and his team quickly established an unprecedented network of cooperation among public agencies and private labs doing cutting-edge research. More than a story of innovative science at the frontiers of human knowledge, *Who They Were* also tells the very human story of how Dr. Shaler and his staff forged important and lasting bondswith the families of those who were lost. He shares the agony of mistakes made in the chaos and unintended misidentifications resulting in the excruciating difficulty of having to retrieve remains from families of the lost. Finally, Dr. Shaler shares how he and the dedicated team of scientists who gave up more than three years of their lives when the rest of the world had moved on had to face the limits of science in dealing with the appalling level of destruction at Ground Zero and concede that no more victims would be sent home to their families. As of April 2005, when the process was suspended, only 1,592 out of the 2,749 who died on that fateful day had been identified. With compelling prose and insight, "Who They Were" reveals the previously untold stories of the scientists determined to bring closure to devastated families in the wake of America's largest disaster.

From Publishers Weekly While there can be no question that the staff of the New York City Medical Examiner's forensic lab, under the leadership of Shaler, did heroic work in trying to identify those who perished in the Twin Towers on 9/11, this book will frustrate and disappoint many. Despite having a fascinating story to tell interagency turf

battles, the analysis of DNA data, families' frustration while waiting for information Shaler spends time on trivia and on his own emotions, and fails to make memorable any of the numerous dedicated scientists involved, apart from himself (an approach epitomized by the penultimate chapter title, "Again, Why Me?"). The book's greatest failing is its inability to make the technical aspects of the work accessible to the lay reader, who will be befuddled by jargon and detailed descriptions of competing technologies. Clichéd descriptions of the biologists ("Petite and perky, her ponytail bobbing and swaying as she briskly walked through the lab...") fail to bring fellow scientists to life. Given the significance of the accomplishments of Shaler's team, one hopes that someone else will give them the narrative they deserve. 8 pages of bw photos not seen by PW. (Oct. 3) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

About the Author Robert C. Shaler was the director of the Forensic Biology Department of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner of New York City from 1990 until his retirement in 2005. He is currently professor of biochemistry and molecular biology and director of the Forensic Science Program at Pennsylvania State University. He divides his time between State College, Pennsylvania, and Flemington, New Jersey.