

Did Jeff Dahmer Really Preserve Human Body Parts In Formaldehyde?



THE DAHMER CASE

JUL 12, 2023



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In his confession, Jeff states that he put human body parts *in* formaldehyde to preserve them:

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Mr. DAHMER further stated he would cut off the penis and body parts, and put them in formaldehyde to preserve them and then look at them and masturbate for gratification. He further stated he had experimented with ether to put the people asleep, but it didn't

| | | | |
|--|---|-------------|---|
| REPORTING OFFICER 2472 / SEC - 5 | PAYROLL 18 | LOC CODE | SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE <i>Det. Lt. Raymond R. Smith</i> |
| PO15-B 5-89 SUPPLEMENT REPORT MILWAUKEE POLICE DEPARTMENT | INCIDENT SUPPLEMENT ACCIDENT SUPPLEMENT JUVENILE SUPPLEMENT | PAGE 2 of 2 | DATE OF REPORT 7-23-91 INCIDENT/ACCIDENT # 91-51767 / M-2472 |

It's actually not that simple. Using formaldehyde to preserve biological specimens requires specialised knowledge and skills, in mixing and applying the solution in right quantities etc.

What is formaldehyde? This [article from the National Library of Medicine](#) explains. This page from a biology dictionary provides a simple definition of [formaldehyde](#).

Formaldehyde is used in the skilled process of embalming, amongst other uses. [Embalming](#) is a specialised skill. It involves injecting the embalming fluid by a p

method. This information on the embalming process was taken from the above li

Step 4: Injection of Embalming Fluid

The embalmer temporarily preserves the body by injecting chemicals into the vessels and peritoneal cavity of the body. There are several different methods of injecting embalming (shown below):

- *Arterial embalming: Arterial embalming involves injecting the embalming fluid into carotid artery using a centrifugal pump to displace the blood, which drains through right jugular vein. Any clots present in the vessels are massaged out to ensure that the embalming fluid is evenly distributed throughout the body. Although injecting the embalming fluid can typically be achieved via a single injection, in some cases, multiple injection sites are required to ensure that the embalming fluid is completely distributed. A typical body can hold approximately two liters of embalming fluid. The fluid is pumped into the body using a specialized machine that monitors the pressure of the vessels during the process. Although the machine is typically sufficient, a hypodermic needle is occasionally required to inject embalming fluid into locations that may not have been reached.*
- *Cavity Embalming: The body cavity is performed by making an incision in the abdomen above the navel. A trocar is inserted into the incision and the contents of the organs are aspirated. The peritoneal cavity is then filled with concentrated embalming fluid and closed by suturing or the use of a trocar button.*
- *Surface Embalming: Surface embalming refers to the application of embalming fluid to the skin of the deceased body to preserve damage suffered during autopsy, the removal of organs for donation, or disease (e.g., cancer).*

Here's an extract from the University of Michigan's Department of Zoology about [use of formaldehyde in the preservation process](#):

Preserving Solutions

Formalin: If at all possible, formalin should be used for injecting and fixing specimens. Formalin is the commercial name of a solution of formaldehyde gas (CH₂O) in water. It

available at drugstores and chemical supply houses in the United States at a strength from 10% to 40%. In Latin American countries, formalin may be purchased in many drugstores under the name "Formol" or "Formolina". Formalin must be diluted with water before it is used as a preservative. A strength of 10% formalin is best for most purposes. If the original strength is 40%, it should be mixed at a ratio of nine parts water to one part formalin. The advantages of formalin over other preservatives are: it is inexpensive, it is generally available, a small concentrated stock solution may be diluted as needed, and specimens almost never decay. Its principal disadvantages are: it has a very irritating odor, it is very poisonous and may cause skin irritation or rash, it has a tendency to make specimens become brittle if the solution is too strong, and tends to fade out certain colors rapidly, and it must be stored in rustproof containers. (Buffering of the 10% solution is recommended as formalin is slightly acidic. A buffering system that may be used is a mixture of monobasic and dibasic Sodium Phosphate. 13 gm/gallon [Monobasic] and 24 gm/gallon [Dibasic]).

As you can see, it requires specialised knowledge and skills, in mixing and applying the solution in the right quantities etc. Here's some guidance on [how to become an embalmer](#).

Using formaldehyde is definitely not as simple as the confession states.

It also raises the question about how the medical examiners found, and were able to identify, [hands and genitals in Jeff's closet](#) which supposedly dated back to February 1991. Also, genitals were supposedly found dating back to March 1990. Without the embalming skills required, these body parts would have soon [decomposed](#).

Dry Stage (24+ days) - The final stage of decomposition results in the remains consisting primarily of bones, some dried skin and cartilage. There is typically no odour of decay at this point.

Table of findings at the scene from the 1994 article, [Destructive hostility: the Jeff Dahmer case. A psychiatric and forensic study of a serial killer](#):

TABLE 1. The victims' pertinent anthropological characteristics, method of identification, and location at the scene

| Case no. | Age | Height | | Weight | | Race | Last seen | Identification | | | Location of head/skull | Skeletonized torso | Visceral body |
|----------|-----|--------|------|--------|----|----------|-----------|----------------|----|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | ft/in | m | lb | kg | | | D* | F* | Other | | | |
| 91-1501 | 23 | 5'7" | 1.70 | 135 | 61 | Black | 15 Jul 91 | Y | Y | Picture ID at scene | Refrigerator in kitchen | "A" chest freezer in kitchen | Internal organs and muscle from |
| 91-1502 | 25 | 5'10" | 1.77 | 149 | 67 | White | 19 Jul 91 | Y | Y | Picture ID at scene | Chest freezer in kitchen | "B" barrel from bedroom | |
| 91-1503 | 23 | 5'9" | 1.75 | 140 | 63 | Hispanic | 6 Jul 91 | Y | N | Tattoo on left hand Postmortem photo ID family | Chest freezer in kitchen | "D" barrel from bedroom | |
| 91-1504 | 14 | 5'3" | 1.60 | 110 | 50 | Oriental | 27 May 91 | Y | N | Photo by family Forensic anthropology | Hall closet left side | | |
| 91-1505 | 31 | 6'0" | 1.82 | 165 | 74 | Black | 24 May 91 | Y | N | | Hall closet left side | | |
| 91-1506 | 23 | 5'11" | 1.80 | 160 | 72 | Black | 3 Sep 90 | Y | N | | Upper file cabinet drawer in bedroom | "E" lower file drawer in bedroom | |
| 91-1507 | 26 | 5'9" | 1.75 | 160 | 72 | Black | 25 Mar 90 | Y | N | | Upper file cabinet drawer in bedroom | | Hair and genitals |
| 91-1508 | 33 | 5'6" | 1.67 | 130 | 58 | Black | 29 May 90 | Y | N | | Upper file drawer in bedroom | | |
| 91-1509 | 19 | 5'9" | 1.75 | 150 | 68 | Black | 7 Apr 91 | Y | N | | Computer box in bedroom | | |
| 91-1511 | 18 | 6'0" | 1.82 | 160 | 72 | Black | 18 Feb 91 | Y | Y | | Computer box in bedroom | | Hall closet, hand |
| 91-1512 | 21 | 5'7" | 1.70 | 150 | 68 | Black | 30 Jun 91 | Y | Y | Photo ID family | Bottom of chest freezer in kitchen | "C" barrel from bedroom | Two hearts and muscle in refrigerator |

*Dental.

*Fingerprints.

Notice that the above medical examiner's table shows which parts were Dental and Fingerprints (see bottom left of table and then reference to 'D' and 'F' in the title). F for Fingerprints shows 'Y' against 4 victims, including the hands in the closet. Others are also rather questionable. Look at the "last seen" dates in the table.

Here's a [link](#) and extract which shows that even in 2016, identifying fingerprints at death was still proving to be a challenge:

How long do fingerprints remain usable? There isn't a lot of research on that subject, unfortunately. But a [study](#) published Dec. 22, 2016 in IEEE Xplore and described in a 2016 USA Today [article](#), usable biometric data has been obtained from corpses dead for up to 30 days in warm weather and as long as 50 days in wintertime.

Chronology of the supposed victims at the scene from the above article:

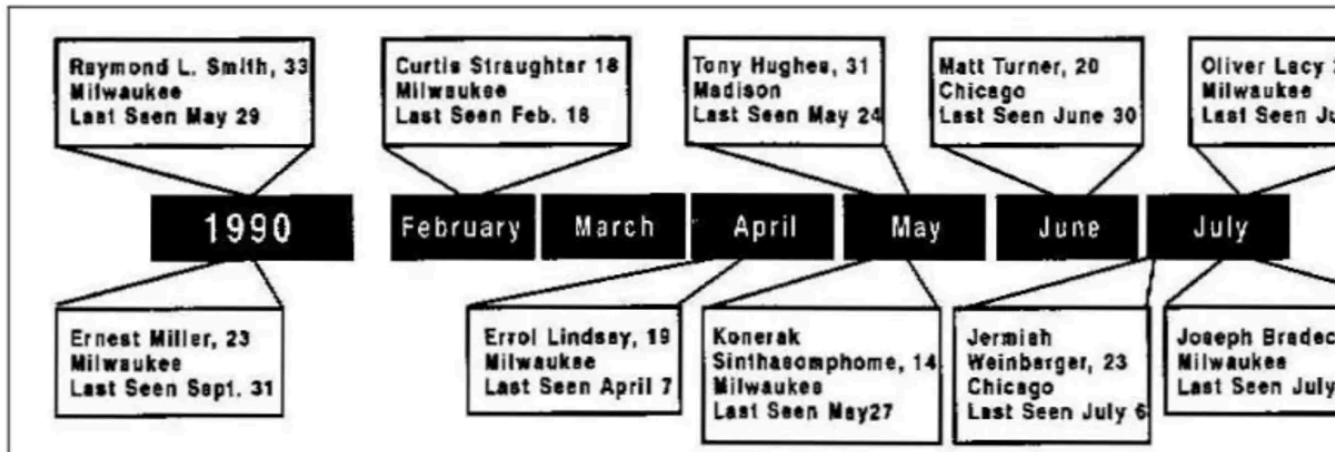


FIG. 7. The chronological relationship of the victims. (Left, 1990. Right, February-July, 1991.)



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Impossible events that did not have to be proven since the 'legal' process did away with that requirement. Convenient?

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