

Sifting the Ashes, Spring 2020, Vol. 3, No.1



Welcome (or welcome back)

The last issue of *Sifting the Ashes* was published in December 2019, at which time I came to the realization that if I was going to keep up with my “day job,” I was going to need to cut the publication schedule back to once a quarter. There is nothing like publishing a monthly newsletter to make one understand how quickly a month goes by (and they are going by fast enough already).

So welcome to the first installment of 2020. There are some links to interesting stories and a link to a new podcast about **The Lime Street Fire**, 30 years later.

File this under “What could possibly go wrong?”

Who could have guessed there was a market for a flaming trombone?

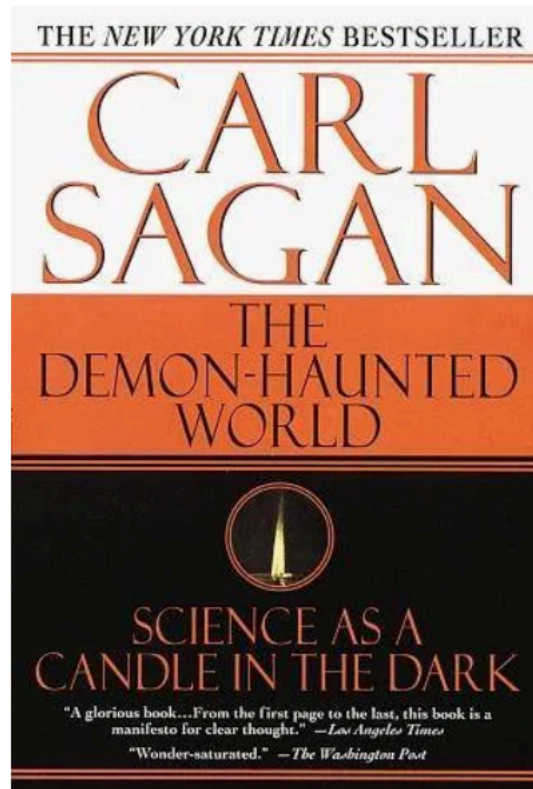
https://www.cmuse.org/valentin-guerin-pyro-trombone/?fbclid=IwAR16uQwzeSY-i1eVXuZzpLU17EthH7GLEknoLYF_i8PiIKSbRp4lioQ7bOc

*Your inability to invalidate my hypothesis is not at all
the same thing as proving it true.*

I have always been a big fan of Carl Sagan. What I admired most was his ability to make scientific principles understandable to non-scientists. As Fire Investigators and Forensic Scientists, we are required to engage in such communications every time we write a report or more importantly, every time we are called upon to testify.

Dr. Sagan's last book, and in my opinion, his best, was published in 1997 and entitled *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*. In it, he introduced the concept of the "Baloney Detection Kit." Maria Popova has distilled out the Baloney Detector in her essay located here:

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/01/03/baloney-detection-kit-carl-sagan/>



The book is still in print, and it is hoped that after reading Popova's essay on "**The Fine Art of Baloney Detection**," readers will buy and read the whole book and take its many lessons to heart. It is actually available for free in pdf at this link:

<http://www.metaphysicspirit.com/books/The%20Demon-Haunted%20World.pdf>

If you feel the urge to reward the author's contribution to your knowledge base, the book is available for less than \$10 at Amazon.com.

Maybe after 28 years, Claude Garrett will finally catch a break.

A new article in *The Intercept* by Liliana Segura describes the current state of the case of Tennessee vs. Claude Garrett. Mr. Garrett has been in maximum security confinement since 1992. The importance of getting it right the first time cannot be overstated. We can blame the courts for the glacial pace of reviews, but it is nearly always the case that what started the wrongful arson conviction process was a fire investigator not understanding fire.

<https://theintercept.com/2020/02/29/claude-garrett-arson-junk-science-updates/>

For those interested, my analysis of the case may be found at

<https://app.box.com/s/5txaqa1nhieq1yf7nc807bspne47dmsf>

Grenfell Tower Inquiry Continues

The guy who designed the “upgrade,” consisting of adding flammable polyurethane cladding to the otherwise noncombustible exterior walls, was not even an architect.

Maybe if he had been a real architect, he would have known better.

<https://twitter.com/itvlondon/status/1235943247031214080>

The Lime Street Fire Revisited

On October 15, 1990, a fire occurred at 527 Lime St. in Jacksonville, FL that would change fire investigation history forever. A March 6, 2020 podcast in the series “**This is Criminal**” describes the history of the Lime Street fire. The 30-minute podcast may be accessed here:

<https://thisiscriminal.com/episode-135-527-lime-street-3-6-2020/>

The test fire was videotaped, and in 1992, I edited the videotape down to a one-hour presentation, which I used at several arson investigation conferences, including the 1992 International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) International Training Conference (ITC). It was not on the official program, but I showed it to several people at the ITC, and had several interesting discussions. The subject of how floors in fires that have reached full room involvement can look like we imagined floors with accelerant on them would look after the fire became a major topic of discussion shortly thereafter. The videotape may be accessed here.

<https://www.firescientist.com/public-appearances>
(Scroll down to “Lime Street Fire Investigation”)

Shortly after the fire, the *Fire and Arson Investigator*, the official publication of the, IAAI, published a three-part article written by myself and my two co-conspirators in the investigation of the fire. That three-part article may be accessed here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1d_V2v8q8fkWAmsxCD3icf6Qi-LYziR47
(Scroll down to “1992, The Lime Street Fire”)

Although it has been almost 30 years since the fire, it still influences my thinking, my practice, and that of other fire investigators as well.

*Scientific Protocols for Fire Investigation, Third Edition Recognized as
One of the Best Forensic Science Books of All Time!*



I’m tickled to announce that my book, “*Scientific Protocols for Fire Investigation*, Third Edition (Protocols in Forensic Science),” made it onto

[BookAuthority's Best Forensic Science Books of All Time:](https://bookauthority.org/books/best-forensic-science-books?t=rny6g3&s=award&book=113803701X)

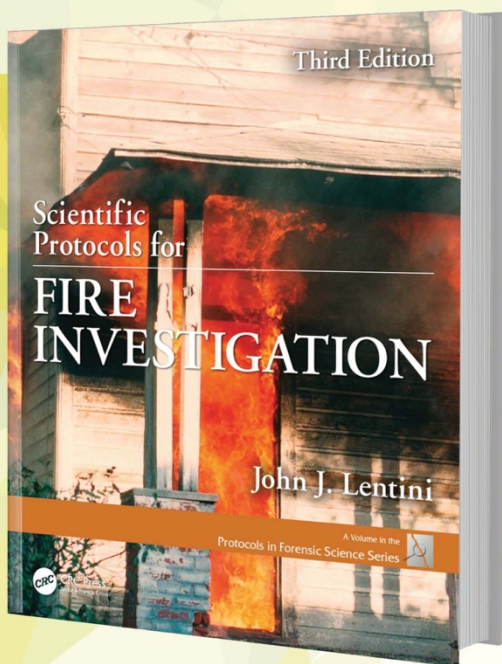
<https://bookauthority.org/books/best-forensic-science-books?t=rny6g3&s=award&book=113803701X>

BookAuthority collects and ranks the best books in the world, and it is a great honor to get this kind of recognition. *Scientific Protocols* was #6 on the list of 70, and **the highest rated fire investigation book on the list!** The next closest fire investigation book came in at #23. I also wrote a chapter in *Forensic Science Reform*, which made the list of winners at #8.

The 3rd Edition of *Scientific Protocols for Fire Investigation* is ready!

- Completely updated including the 2017 revisions to NFPA 921
- Increased focus on the importance of ventilation
- New sections on Li-ion Batteries, CSST, MOVs, and electronics
- Contains the knowledge base you need to meet the requirements of NFPA 1033

**SAVE
20%**



The book is intended for those individuals who have recently entered the field of fire investigation, and those more experienced investigators who recognize their obligation to keep up with new knowledge. In addition, insurance professionals who hire fire investigators will find this an invaluable resource. Insurance companies have sustained significant losses by hiring investigators who are not qualified, resulting in cases being settled or lost at a cost of millions. Insurance adjusters and investigators will learn to recognize quality fire investigations and those that are not up to today's standards. Lastly, this book is for the many attorneys who litigate fire cases.

Learn more at
www.firescientist.com

What your colleagues are saying:

This book should be required reading for all professional fire investigators and those seeking to broaden their knowledge of the field.

--Steve Carman, Carman Fire Investigations, Grass Valley, CA

Lentini's brilliant monograph gives us a giant leg up in approaching the challenges of fire investigation.

--Bernard Cuzzillo, Fire Protection Engineer, Berkley CA

The enhanced Third Edition must be found on the bookshelves of any educated fire investigator.

--Douglas J. Carpenter, Principal Engineer, Combustion Science & Engineering, Inc., Columbia MD

I will have copies of the book, which I will happily autograph for you, at the IAAI ITC in Las Vegas. The Expo will be on April 29 and 30 at Planet Hollywood.

We have a new vendor for the book, **The Fire Fighter's Bookstore** and they are offering a 20% discount off the publisher's list price. Go to:

https://www.firebooks.com/products/scientific-protocols-for-fire-investigation-3rd-edition?_pos=8&_sid=3b6cfbbf2&_ss=r

For information about setting up a **3-day course at your facility** that uses the book as a "handout," contact me directly at scientific.fire@yahoo.com