

# Coroner's Creed

## Birth and death are the only two universal human experiences.

**B**irth is the most important biological event in the life of any human being. If it does not occur, there is no being. If there is no person, no legal rights and duties arise, for the law relates to the rights and the duties of living people, no inanimate objects.

Death, on the other hand, is the most important legal event for all human beings. When it occurs, all legal rights and duties devolving upon the person during his life span in a civilized jurisdiction are terminated. All persons with whom the deceased had legal relations at that moment in time are also directly affected by the occurrence of death. Moreover, both the deceased and the survivors may be greatly affected legally by **how** death occurred, **what** actually happened, **why** it occurred, and precisely **when** it occurred. Above all **who** died must be absolutely determined, and **where** death occurred is positively required for jurisdiction over the decedent is based upon a geographical location. The law becomes extremely active when a person dies. Wealth is redistributed. Contacts are altered. A wrongful death may give rise to tortious claims. Tax obligations are always present. Public social benefits and private insurance policies are paid. Criminal laws may be involved. Creditors must be

satisfied, and debtors located. Spouse and children, heirs and next-of-kin have their attachments rearranged. It is not surprising that for centuries the sovereign state has had an overriding interest in the death of its subject or citizens. The office of the Coroner, or the Office of the Medical Examiner, along with the state-licensed physician is legally charged with significant duties answering the pertinent questions relating to death: **Who, Where, When, What, How, Why**. Only when these questions have been answered correctly can all the proper legal issues arising at death be effectively handled for the proper administration of justice.

Although the legal aspects of death are most important, certainly the religious and humanitarian heritages of a civilized society also command a deep concern over the death of a human being. The spiritual faith in a religion as well as the humanitarian concern for a fellow human being demand correct answers to the questions of death: **Who, Where, How, When and Why?** Human death obligates the living to acquire accurate facts on which to apply just laws for each deceased member of the human race.

The obligation for proper death investigation is mandatory for legal and religious/humanitarian satisfactions in the human society. Let those responsible for death investigations take heed that they labor not only for the State, but also for God.