

Advance Praise for **WORKING STIFF:**
Two Years, 262 Bodies, and the Making of a Medical Examiner
(Scribner hardcover; August 12, 2014; \$25.00)

By Judy Melinek, M.D. & T.J. Mitchell

In this spellbinding memoir, forensic pathologist Melinek recounts everything (penis rings and all) she witnesses during the two years she trained in the New York City chief medical examiner's office. (Her husband, a stay-at-home dad and her Harvard English-major sweetheart, is her skilled coauthor)... After 9/11, she and her 29 fellow medical examiners look at 19,956 pieces of recovered remains (598 are assigned to her), including a wedding band inscribed "forever Kevin" and "a batch of nothing but feet." But before she gets to those details, she devotes most of her account to more typical deaths by natural causes as well as homicides and suicides (she autopsied many of each). **Melinek is movingly empathetic** toward the families of victims. After all, she stood in their shoes: her own psychiatrist dad killed himself... **An unforgettable story.**"
—*Booklist* (STARRED Review)

"In this **engrossing** tale...[Melinek] indulges readers' curiosity, but not at the expense of her larger story.... This cumulative experience prepares readers for... Melinek's experiences working on victims of the 9/11 attacks in New York City. She **respectfully** and **artfully** relays the kaleidoscope of emotions that she and her coworkers endured as they struggled to first comprehend what had happened and then keep up with truckloads of bodies and body parts they were tasked with cataloguing.... **well-written... inspiring and engaging.**"
—[Publishers Weekly](#)

Forensic pathologists investigate sudden, unexpected or violent deaths. In addition to conducting the autopsies, they also visit the scene of death, counsel the grieving, collaborate with detectives and testify in court. For Melinek, in whose voice this story is told, it is a match made in heaven.... **Melinek's enthusiasm for her calling is always apparent, and her writing is un-self-consciously bouncy, absorbed and mordant (though not caustic)....** The authors take us along on an **utterly engrossing** guided tour of an autopsy [and] display a fine hand at describing a host of medical mysteries, as well as the harrowing aftermath of 9/11.... A **transfixing** account of death, from the mundane to the oddly hair-raising."
—[Kirkus Reviews](#)

"*Working Stiff* is the grossest book you'll ever love. But it is also so much more than that: **Seamlessly fusing memoir, science journalism, riveting whodunit mysteries, and light humor about a dark topic, Working Stiff is a relentlessly fascinating and informative book from the first page to the last.** Judy Melinek--whether she's re-enacting assaults in a courtroom while heavily pregnant, or fighting with lazy homicide detectives, or solving amazing forensic mysteries through the ghastly things she does with her corpses--is **an unfailingly charming and even inspiring guide** to the world of medical examiners. **A remarkable achievement by Mitchell and Melinek.**"

—**Scott Stossel**, editor of *The Atlantic* magazine, and author of the *New York Times* Bestseller *My Age of Anxiety: Fear, Hope, Dread, and the Search for Peace of Mind*

Advance Praise for **WORKING STIFF** (continued):

“The morgue isn’t usually a happy place, but Judy Melinek, M.D., a former medical examiner in New York City, finds sanity-saving humor there in her memoir *Working Stiff*. Her tales of dealing with the aftermath of death give deep insights into the richness of life.”

—DR. OZ, *THE GOOD LIFE*

“Both chilling and heart-warming at the same time, Judy Melinek’s account explains how empathy and humanity are as important working with the dead as they are with the living. She strikes the balance just right in helping us better understand what we most fear, yet still fear it all the same.”

—Suzanne Nossel, Executive Director of the PEN America Center

“Far from the magic we see on TV, *Working Stiff* describes forensic pathology in the real world. The book is a compelling and absorbing read.”

—Kathy Reichs, author of the Temperance Brennan *Bones* series

“*Working Stiff* is an engrossing and revealing glimpse into the making of a medical examiner with a searing insider’s view into working at the New York Medical Examiner’s Office during and just after 9/11. The story of how the author dealt with her father’s suicide during childhood and later had to deal with suicides as part of her duties is wrenching and compelling.”

—Jan Garavaglia, M.D., Dr. G from the Discovery Channel Series and author of *How Not to Die*

“Fascinating case studies and a refreshing irreverence toward death and autopsies make *Working Stiff* a funny and engrossing read.”

—Sandeep Jauhar, author of *Intern: A Doctor’s Initiation* and *Doctored: The Disillusionment of an American Physician*

“A riveting read, at once compassionate and morbidly fascinating.”

—Todd Harra, author of *Over Our Dead Bodies*

“*Working Stiff* is an eye-opening, gripping account of the life of a forensic pathologist working in New York City. Whether dealing with routine autopsies, surviving relatives, or the catastrophe of September 11, Dr. Judy Melinek reveals the dignity of being human in the face of death.”

—Leora Tanenbaum, author of *Taking Back God*