

Book Review by Joseph E. Badger

Forensic Aspects of Driver Perception and Response, Third Edition.

Over a decade ago, I wrote a review of Paul L. Olson's *Forensic Aspects of Driver Perception and Response*, First Edition (Lawyer & Judges Publishing Co., Tucson, 1996).

The book, a bible on the subject, was comprised of 10 chapters covering 213 pages and it looked at the time as though Olson had written *the* definitive and comprehensive text on the topic.

Wrong.

That 1996 book was so well received that it underwent a second edition in 2003 adding authors Robert Dewar and the late Eugene Farber (d. 2006). And just when you thought the book took you through all the elements of driver perception and response, here comes Mr. Olson (yes, he has a Ph.D., but prefers Mr. to Dr.), with colleagues Dewar and Farber, who put together an even more comprehensive third edition.

Dewar and Olson first met back in the day when the University of Michigan Transportation Institute (UMTRI) was called the Highway Safety Research Institute (HSRI). The two men collaborated on a 719-page tome titled *Human Factors in Traffic Safety* (Lawyers & Judges, Tucson, 2002).

Farber worked for Ford in the area of traffic safety, driver behavior and human factors since 1965 until his death. In January 1999, he retired from Ford and began providing forensic consulting services in traffic accident cases.

If you're in law enforcement and have occasion to investigate motor vehicle collisions... or if you're in the private sector and work as a consultant or expert as an accident (or crash) reconstructionist, then both *Human Factors* and *Forensic Aspect* books are must-reads.

This latest effort contains more than twice as many chapters and nearly two-and-a-half times the number of pages as the original and over 130 more pages than the Second Edition's 372. The publisher didn't create a bigger book by using larger type. In fact, the Third Edition's type is smaller (Times Roman 10 pt) than the First Edition's (11 pt); otherwise, it would be even thicker with more pages.

You cannot tell which author wrote which chapter(s) but I have it on good authority (Olson's personal communication) that Dewar "was the primary author of chapters 14, 15, 16, 17, 19 and 21 and went over the others with great care, contributing sections here and there."

As for Farber's contributions, Olson said his chapters "... ended up as 7, 8 and 10 in this edition. He reviewed everything else and was a big help in general."

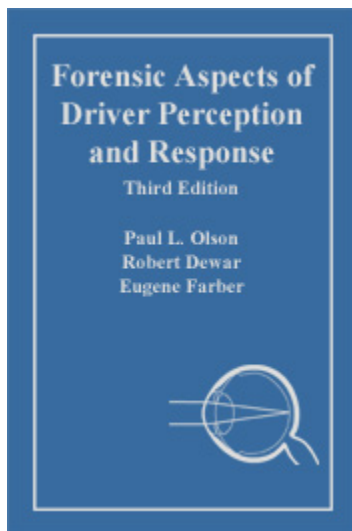
Some of you may have purchased the Second Edition but keep in mind chapters 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21 are new to this latest version that were not in Second Edition. Moreover, chapters that carry over from the Second Edition were revised and updated.

One thing. If you ever – repeat, ever – testify regarding a motorist’s PRT (perception/response time), do not do so until you have read Chapter 18, “Driver Perception-Response Time.” That chapter’s 18 pages are more detailed—and with updated statistics from newer studies—than the earlier chapter’s 11 pages.

In the section “Factors Affecting Perception-Response Time,” Olson cites a 2001 study by Jeff Muttart, which concluded that six variables were of primary importance in determining a person’s PRT. They are **C**ontrast, **A**nticipation, **S**trength of Stimulus, **E**ccentricity, **D**ecision making, and **R**esponse complexity. Following each variable are concise definitions of the terms. (The author suggests you can recall them more easily if you remember the acronym CASE DR.)

Of special note in this latest text is the material by Robert Dewar that covers Roadway Design and the Driver, Work Zones, Railroad Grade Crossings, Roadway Signage, Weather and Driving, and Driver Distraction. All new material absent in the First Edition, and updated from the Second.

For a longer list of topics – and to order the book – go to <http://www.lawyersandjudges.com/productdetails.cfm?PC=922>.



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(About the reviewer: Joseph E. Badger is an internationally known accident reconstructionist who has had over 100 articles published in such periodicals as *Law and Order* magazine, *Accident Reconstruction Journal*, *Accident Investigation Quarterly*, and others. Having retired after 20 years with the Indiana State Police, Mr. Badger resides in Bloomington, Indiana.)