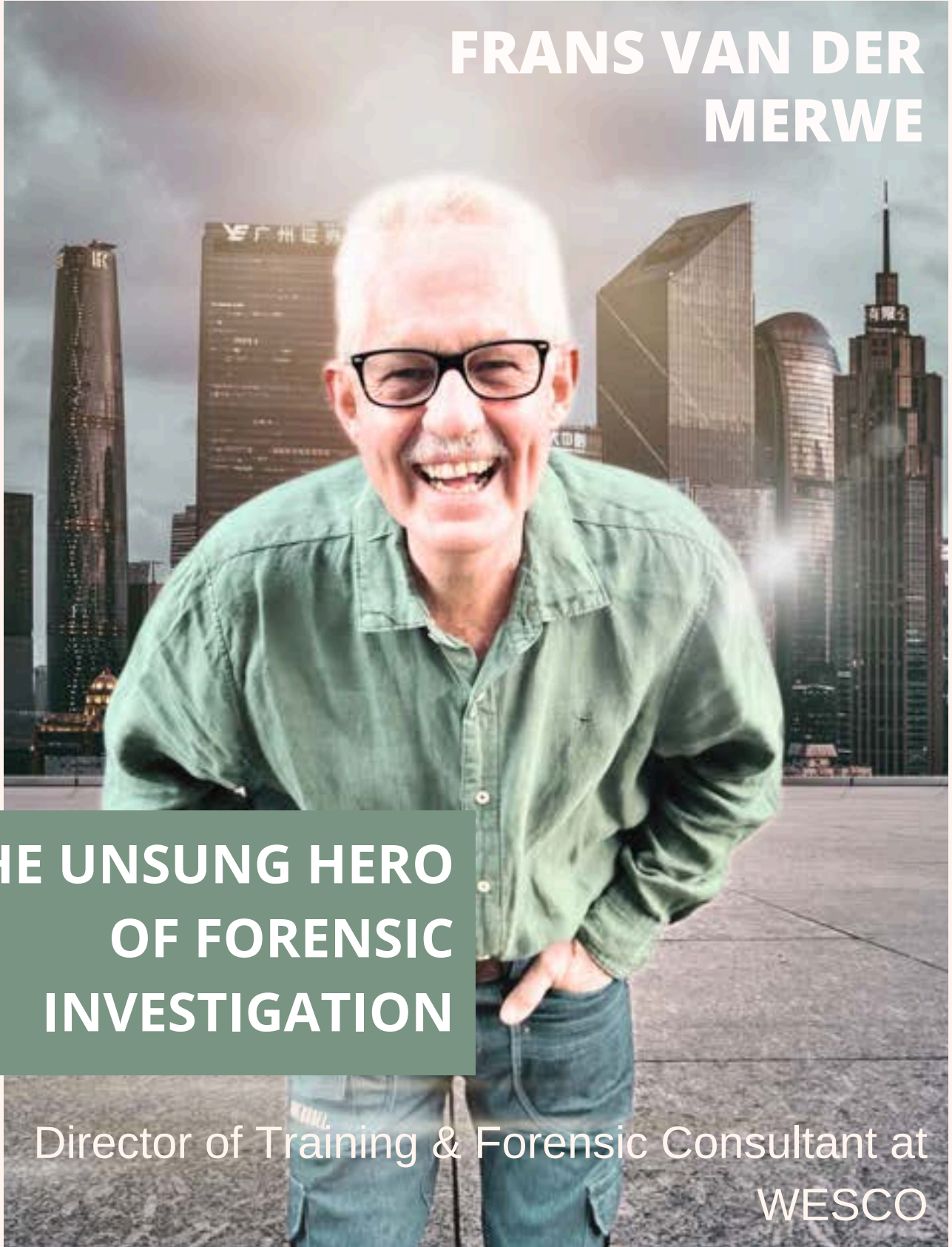




WESCO

MAGAZINE

Excuse the pun!



**FRANS VAN DER
MERWE**

**THE UNSUNG HERO
OF FORENSIC
INVESTIGATION**

Director of Training & Forensic Consultant at
WESCO

An Exclusive Interview

Frans van der Merwe reflects on his three-decade career with humility and passion, highlighting his commitment to justice, professional development, and training the next generation of forensic professionals.

PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA - MAY, 2024

Entering the home of Frans van der Merwe, one is immediately struck by the warmth and humility that radiates from this seasoned forensic specialist & consultant. With over three decades of experience in fingerprint examination and crime scene analysis, Mr. van der Merwe's journey is nothing short of remarkable.

Imagine a man with a warm and inviting smile that could light up a room. His eyes twinkle with kindness, reflecting the genuine joy he feels in connecting with others. His hair, now gracefully streaked with shades of grey, adds a distinguished air to his appearance. But it's his deep dimples that truly captivate, forming hollows in his cheeks whenever he grins, making his smile all the more infectious.

As I sit down for our interview in his cozy living room, surrounded by shelves filled with books on forensic science and memorabilia from his illustrious career, it becomes evident that his passion for justice and meticulous attention to detail have been the driving forces behind his extraordinary achievements.



Born and raised in South Africa, Mr. van der Merwe's path towards becoming a leading figure in forensic investigation was paved with dedication and perseverance. After obtaining a National Diploma in Police Science, he embarked on a remarkable career with the South African Police Service, where he honed his skills as a fingerprint examiner and crime scene investigator.

Lee: "Frans, thank you for inviting me into your home. Your career in forensic investigation spans over three decades. Could you share with us how you initially became interested in this field?"

— “ ————— “It's my pleasure to have you here. Well, I've always had a keen interest in solving puzzles and seeking the truth. Growing up, I was fascinated by crime novels and detective stories. That curiosity led me to pursue a National Diploma in Police Science, and from there, I never looked back.” ————— ” —



PASSION FOR JUSTICE

Reflecting on his extensive training and certifications, Mr. van der Merwe speaks with a sense of pride and gratitude for the opportunities he has had to learn from some of the best in the field. From counter-terrorism courses to advanced crime scene management seminars, his commitment to staying at the forefront of forensic science is truly commendable.

Lee: “Your list of certifications and training courses is impressive, to say the least. What motivated you to continually seek out opportunities for professional development?”

— “ ———— “Thank you. For me, staying at the forefront of forensic science is essential to providing the best possible service to the community. The field is constantly evolving, with new techniques and technologies emerging all the time. By investing in ongoing training and certifications, I ensure that I can offer the most accurate and up-to-date analysis to support criminal investigations.” ———— ” —

A FORENSIC JOURNEY

But it is not just his academic accolades that define Mr. van der Merwe's legacy; it is his hands-on experience and involvement in some of the most high-profile cases in South Africa's history that set him apart. From assisting in the investigation of the murder of the South African First Lady, Marike de Klerk, to providing crucial forensic support in cases like the Marikana massacre and the Oscar Pistorius trial, his contributions to the pursuit of justice have been invaluable.



Lee: “You’ve been involved in a wide range of cases, from high-profile murders to terrorist investigations. Is there one particular case that stands out to you as particularly memorable?”



— “ ———— “Every case is unique and presents its own challenges, but if I had to choose, I would say the Marikana massacre was particularly impactful for me. The scale of the tragedy and the complexity of the crime scene made it one of the most challenging investigations I've been involved in. But it was also incredibly rewarding to be able to contribute to bringing some measure of closure to the families affected by the violence.” ———— ” —

However, it is not the glamour of high-profile cases that motivates Mr. van der Merwe. Rather, it is the opportunity to make a tangible difference in people's lives and bring closure to families affected by tragedy that drives him forward. Whether it's exhuming the remains of a missing person or meticulously analyzing fingerprints to identify a perpetrator, he approaches each case with unwavering dedication and compassion.

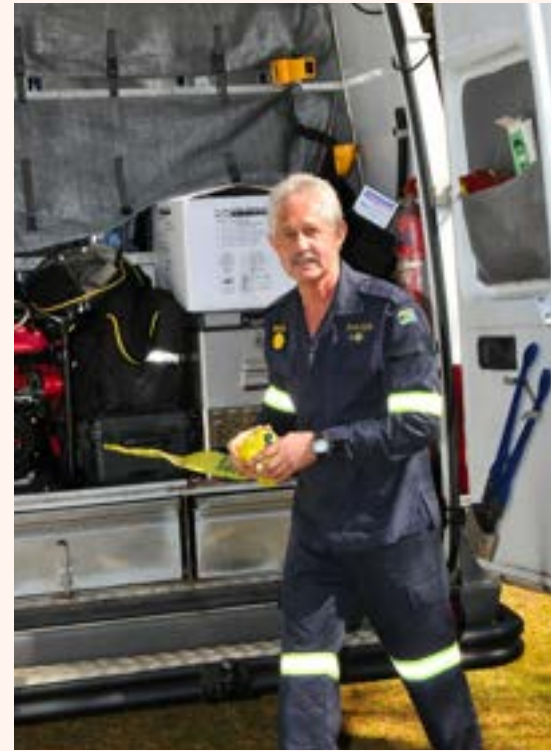
From Puzzles to Justice

Away from the spotlight, Mr. van der Merwe has also been actively involved in training the next generation of forensic investigators. From conducting workshops for law enforcement agencies to collaborating with academic institutions like UNISA, his commitment to knowledge-sharing underscores his belief in the importance of continuous learning and professional development.



Lee: "Beyond your casework, you've also been actively involved in training the next generation of forensic investigators. Why is education and knowledge-sharing so important to you?"

— “ ———— “Passing on knowledge and expertise is essential for the continued advancement of forensic science. By sharing my experiences and insights with others, I hope to inspire and empower the next generation of forensic professionals. It's a way of ensuring that the legacy of excellence in forensic investigation continues long into the future.” ———— ” —



HEART OF FORENSICS

As our conversation draws to a close, I can't help but feel inspired by Mr. van der Merwe's humility and passion for his work. In an age where justice is often portrayed in sensationalized headlines, he serves as a reminder that true heroism lies in the quiet dedication of individuals like him who tirelessly work behind the scenes to uphold the principles of truth and integrity.

Lee: "As we wrap up our conversation, what message would you like to leave with our readers about the work you do?"

— “ ———— “I would like people to understand that forensic investigation is not just about solving crimes; it's about seeking truth and justice for the victims and their families. Behind every fingerprint or piece of evidence is a story waiting to be told, and it's a privilege to be able to play a role in uncovering those truths. I hope that by shining a light on the importance of forensic science, we can foster a greater appreciation for the dedicated professionals who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that justice is served.” ———— ” —

In the world of forensic investigation, Frans van der Merwe's name will one day be as widely recognized as some others, because his contributions to the field are nothing short of extraordinary.

A hero without a cape...

but with a killer smile!



As I bid farewell and step out into the bustling streets outside, I carry with me a newfound appreciation for the unsung heroes who work tirelessly to ensure that justice is served, one fingerprint at a time.

Meet the Wesco Team @ www.wescoforensics.co.za

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