

DNA Evidence and Crime Solving

“Serial Rapist Eludes Detectives,” St. Petersburg Times (Florida) November 29, 2004.

A man suspected in at least four attacks still remains at large even after his DNA was found. Authorities have been running the attacker’s DNA profile in the Database of felons, but have not yet had a match. It is possible, police say, that the reason for the lack of the rapist’s DNA on file is that he has never been convicted of a felony offense or was, but prior to DNA testing.

“Twins' DNA is at root of slaying case; Identical material could complicate brother's murder trial,” The Dallas Morning News, November 27, 2004.

As the murder trial in the murder of Leon Martin Jr. approaches, prosecutors are facing the problem of the man accused being a twin. The case hinges on an eye witness, whose testimony may prove to be unreliable. Prosecutors are facing the prospect that they may have to rely upon the DNA evidence found at the crime scene. Because the twins share the same DNA it will be difficult to prove on the basis of DNA evidence alone, that the brother on trial is the one who committed the murder and not his twin.

“DNA Match in Sexual Assault,” The Toronto Sun November 26, 2004

After a Halloween-night sexual assault, the rapist was arrested after his DNA was matched within the DNA databank

“DNA Tests Yield New Clues to Identity of 'Bike Path Rapist' Sought Since 1990,” Buffalo News (New York) December 2, 2004.

DNA tests have linked two murders to the “Bike Path Rapist.” The attacker’s DNA has led to clues in his identity, pointing to a 30% chance that he is a Native American.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

“Omaha plans to keep DNA until trial,” Omaha World-Herald (Nebraska) December 2, 2004.

The Omaha Police Department will destroy all DNA profiles of those exonerated in a serial rape investigation, according to Police Chief Thomas Warren. The samples, however, will not be destroyed until the person responsible for the crimes has been arrested and convicted. This news comes after several black men were asked to provide DNA samples voluntarily in connection with the rapes of 4 young women, and were told that they were eliminated as suspects, but would not receive their DNA samples back until after an arrest and conviction of the rapist.

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

“Expanded DuPage Crime Lab Boosts Capabilities, Cops say,” Chicago Tribune November 26, 2004.

The DuPage County crime lab has been doubled in size after a \$5 million addition was completed this week. The Federal government provided \$250,000 for the laboratory upgrades. The county used \$1 million of its own funds, to be later reimbursed by the state.

Expanding the DNA Databank

“Mother Pleads for DNA-Testing Bill; Woman wants state to mandate checks of partial remains recovered by police,” Columbus Dispatch (Ohio) December 2, 2004.

A mother of a murder victim whose body has never been found, testified yesterday in favor of a bill that would require the county coroners to extract DNA from partial remains that are unidentified, to be included in the state missing persons Database. Currently the law requires DNA be extracted from bodies, not partial remains.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“Deal to Allow DNA Tests in Murder Conviction,” Chicago Tribune, December 2, 2004.

In the reopened case of Juan Rivera, who is serving time for rape and murder in 1992, of an 11-year-old girl, attorneys have agreed to send DNA evidence to two separate labs, one private and one state run.

“Convict Seeks New Trial in Rape-Murder Case,” Plain Dealer (Cleveland) December 2, 2004.

Clarence Elkins, a 41-year-old man serving life in prison for the murder of his mother-in-law and the rape of his niece, is seeking a new trial to clear him of the charges. Elkon’s attorney claims that new DNA testing shows that another man committed the crimes. Elkon’s supporters raised \$15,000 this year to send DNA evidence to Orchid Cellmark Laboratory in Texas; Elkin’s DNA does not match the DNA on either of the victims.

“Pardoned in slaying but rape confirmed,” Chicago Tribune November 30, 2004.

After former Governor George Ryan pardoned Stanly Howard for murder, removing him from Death Row, he said that he had reservations about the other convictions that have kept Howard behind bars. Now, new DNA testing shows that Howard was in fact the perpetrator of the rape of which he is convicted and currently serving time.

DNA Science and Technology

“DNA breakthrough links the crime to the time; Future world,” The Herald (Glasgow) November 27, 2004

Week of November 26-December 2

Prepared by Rebecca Mitcheson

New advances in forensic science may one day be able to say what time a suspect was at a crime scene. The test, developed at West Virginia University at Morgantown, puts DNA samples within a time frame by indicating the age of the genetic material. The test measures the breakdown of two forms of RNA.