

DNA Current Events, prepared by Rebecca Mitcheson
Week of November 7-14, 2005

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“POLICE & COURTS; DNA tests yield suspect in Lancaster burglary,” *Buffalo News* (New York) November 12, 2005.

Investigators of a commercial burglary used DNA from blood found at the crime scene to search the DNA database and match it to DNA from a convicted felon. Edward Schwab, 32, was arrested and charged with burglary and grand larceny.

“Avery to be charged on DNA; Homicide complaint likely next week, plus other charges, DA says,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (Wisconsin) November 12, 2005.

Steven Avery spent 18 years in prison for a rape but was exonerated after DNA evidence failed to link him to the crime in 2003. Now, Avery has been charged with murdering a woman after DNA from blood found on Avery’s property belonged to the woman. Tests also confirmed that Avery’s DNA was found in the woman’s car.

“Blood samples taken for DNA testing,” *New Straits Times* (Malaysia) November 12, 2005.

Police collected DNA from the father and brother of suspected terrorist leader Dr. Azahari Husin, to be sent to Indonesia for DNA testing to verify that the man killed in Batu, East Java was indeed terror suspect Azahari.

“‘94 RAPE HAUNTS MOM'S LIFE,” *Daily News* (New York) November 11, 2005

34-year-old Victor Torres was convicted in 2004 for raping a woman in her home and holding a knife to her daughter’s throat back in 1994. Torres was caught just before the statute of limitations ran out in the case. A team of cold case investigators reexamined evidence from the rape and found DNA on a T-shirt that had been previously overlooked. That DNA matched Torres’ genetic profile in the state’s criminal DNA Database.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

“Bungled Records of Storm Deaths Renew Anguish,” *The New York Times* November 13, 2005.

Families of victims who died in Katrina are frustrated by the flawed system that has failed to correctly identify causes of death among their relatives and failed to return personal belongings. Relatives are also frustrated that as of Friday, not a single DNA sample from victims had yet been matched to DNA samples provided by relatives. State emergency medical director, Dr. Louis Cataldie said that the DNA had not been tested because federal officials had not yet approved a DNA testing contract with a lab.

“Sex offenders' case tossed,” *Orlando Sentinel* (Florida) November 8, 2005.

The U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal by a group of anonymous sex offenders who challenged the constitutionality of two statutes which required them to register their addresses with the state and submit DNA samples.

Expanding the DNA Databank

“Killer search turns to DNA - 30 men asked for samples,” *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia) November 14, 2005.

In an attempt to find the murderer of 52-year-old Roslyn Reay, investigators are requesting thirty male associates of the woman to provide DNA samples to police. Police are hoping that they will be able to rule out possible suspects and possibly find a match to DNA found at the crime scene.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“DNA gets inmate, 71, a new trial,” *The Baltimore Sun* November 13, 2005

Robert C. Griffin, 71-year-old man who has spent 20 years in jail for murder, will be granted a new trial after new DNA testing showed that DNA from the crime scene was not his.

“Death Row case old but not forgotten; 2 decades after his murder conviction, an Ohio inmate is still trying to clear his name and save his life. The governor granted 2 recent reprieves,” *Chicago Tribune* November 11, 2005.

Ohio Death Row inmate John Spirko who was set to be executed, has once again been granted a reprieve by the Gov. Bob Taft so that further investigations could be made into DNA testing of evidence in the case.

“Convicted murderer to get a new trial; Group presents new DNA evidence in killings of two Ke-waunee County sisters,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (Wisconsin) November 11, 2005.

Convicted murderer Beth LaBatte has been granted a new trial in the double murders of two retired school teachers who were killed in 1991. The Wisconsin Innocence Project presented DNA evidence in the case from the crime scene which was recently tested and was found to contain DNA from another unidentified person.

DNA Evidence and Sentencing

“CLEVELAND; DNA match leads to prison term,” *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland) November 11, 2005.

28-year-old Christopher Berry, an ex-convict, was sentenced Wednesday for the murder and kidnapping of a 35-year-old woman in 2004. Berry was sentenced to 21 years to life after investigators were able to link him to the crime through a tiny smear of his DNA left on her body, despite his attempts to wash the body of all evidence.

“5-Year-Old Girl's Kidnapper Receives 10-Year Sentence,” *The Columbus Dispatch* (Ohio) November 10, 2005.

Convicted kidnapper Lindsey Bruce, has been sentenced to 10 years in prison for the disappearance of 5-year-old Emily Rimel. Bruce was convicted after DNA consistent with Emily's was found on his body.

DNA Science and Technology