

Week of February 25- March 3, 2005

Prepared by Rebecca Mitcheson

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“Metro; News from around the Baltimore Region,” The Baltimore Sun March 2, 2005.

After Timothy Hawkins was forced to provide a DNA sample for a parole violation, his DNA was matched to two unsolved murders from 2001. Hawkins has now been sentenced to 30 years in prison for those murders plus an additional 15 for violating parole.

“BTK killer caught,” The Advertiser February 28, 2005.

The Wichita BTK killer has been arrested in connection to a series of gruesome murders between 1974 and 1991. The suspect, Denis Rader, 59, was linked through DNA evidence found at the scenes of the murders.

“The Nation,” Los Angeles Times March 2, 2005.

After 31 years of taunting police in the serial slayings of 10 people, the BTK killer, Dennis L. Rader, has been formally charged in the slayings. Rader, a church leader and a father was arrested and charged with the crimes after evidence from a computer along with a DNA sample from Rader’s daughter, connected him to the slayings.

“Victim, suspect talked on chat line; Businessman was killed in October - DNA samples in car led police to man,” The Seattle Times March 1, 2005.

Police collected DNA evidence after the brutal murder of a Seattle businessman in his car, and ran the evidence through the state DNA database. Police were about to trace the DNA to Michael Saga Maiava, a convicted criminal whose DNA was already in the State’s DNA database. Prosecutors have now formally charged Maiava with first degree murder.

“Fake DNA worries police,” Tasmanian (Australia) February 27, 2005.

Police believe that criminals used fake DNA in at least two crime scenes to throw off investigators. Police are concerned that DNA manufacturing will become a profitable black market business for criminals over the internet.

“Man gets consecutive life terms for attacks,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri) February 27, 2005.

A 48-year old St. Louis man, Ray Jackson has been sentenced to three life terms in jail

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for 3 violent sexual attacks, including the rape and kidnapping of a 9-year-old girl. Jackson was linked to all three of the assaults through his DNA.

“DNA links man to 2001 assault,” Chicago Tribune February 26, 2005

When 49-year-old Steven A. Harvey was forced to provide a DNA sample as part of his conviction for sexual assault, his DNA was matched through the nationwide DNA database to home invasion and sexual assault in 2001.

“Molester gets 60-year term Carrollton man who posed as maintenance man attacked 7 girls,” The Dallas Morning News February 26, 2005.

Corey Hickman, 28, a Carrollton man was sentenced to 60 years in prison for molesting 7 young girls. Hickman was linked to the attacks through DNA evidence.

“Man who kidnapped, killed girl in 1986 is sentenced to death,” The San Diego Union-Tribune, February 25, 2005.

George Williams Jr., has been sentenced to death for the rape, kidnapping and murder of a 14 year-old Chula Vista girl. Williams, who had a long history of sex crimes, was sentenced to death after being convicted of the brutal crime through DNA evidence.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

“HPD crime lab accreditation denied; Panel cites problems with transferring evidence and record-keeping,” The Houston Chronicle March 2, 2005.

The Houston Police Department has been rejected by a national panel to gain reaccreditation for its crime lab. The panel rejected the bid because it found problems with record keeping of evidence from person to person within the lab.

“Texas may find a model in crime labs elsewhere; Oversight panel likely to top list of reforms in state as legislators learn from other systems,” The Houston Chronicle February 28, 2005.

Texas law makers are looking for potential models to base their plans for reforming the Houston Police Department’s Crime Labs. Law makers are looking to the Commission on Forensic Sciences, which is an oversight board in the state of New York, to model their own future oversight board.

“CSI San Antonio: Top cop gets priority DNA treatment in lab,” San Antonio Express-News (Texas) February 27, 2005.

In the Bexar County crime lab, DNA testing normally takes about two months to complete, but in the case of Assistant Police Chief Jerry Pittman who is accused of rape, it only took 7 days. This preferential treatment has given rise to debate over how the timeline is determined for which cases are pushed through DNA testing.

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

“DNA backlog tied to slaying; Killing might have been averted with prompt test, cops say,” Chicago Tribune February 28, 2005.

Chicago police believe that they could have prevented a third in a series of murders, and another attempted murder, had they had the results from DNA tests from the second murder. Police believe that the delay in the testing of DNA resulted in a third and almost fourth victim. Vincent Hudson, 32, has now been apprehended and is charged with the murders.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“Jailed man closer to release; Defense can argue wrongful conviction,” Times-Picayune (New Orleans) March 1, 2005.

The Innocence Project of New Orleans is representing Travis Hayes, 24, in a search for his freedom after he was sentenced to life behind bars in 1997 for second degree murder. Hayes’ legal representatives are arguing that they be allowed to submit DNA evidence found at the murder scene which belonged to a convicted felon, and was used to free Hayes’ codefendant, who was charged with first degree murder.

DNA Science and Technology

“Forensic science unit opens its doors,” The Herald (Glasgow) March 2, 2005.

Due to growing interest in the field of forensic science, the Centre for Forensic Science at Strathclyde University has officially been opened. The center will provide a range of education, research and consulting assistance to laboratories and police.