

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“Suspect's DNA found to match swab from teen slaying victim; California man details killing in videotape” Chicago Tribune April 21, 2005

Tamara Camp, a DNA expert with the DuPage County crime lab, testified Wednesday that evidence recovered from a 14-year-old student's body matched that of murder defendant Skyler Chambers. On videotape, Chambers had denied that he sexually assaulted Nassim Davoodi, but Camp said that DNA could be matched by only 1 in 695 quadrillion people.

“DNA links man to decade-old rape” Newsday (New York) April 21, 2005

DNA evidence led to the arrest of Alex Lorenzo, 31, for rape. His arrest came only four months before the 10-year statute of limitations for rape was up. Police had obtained Lorenzo's DNA when he was released on probation in 2000 after being arrested for criminal possession of a handgun.

“Neighbor Is Convicted of 4 Slayings; DNA and other forensic evidence links Alfonso Morales to bloody killings in a Whittier home. Among the family members slain was a girl, 8.” Los Angeles Times April 20, 2005

DNA evidence found in an 8-year-old girl's body was presented at a trial that resulted in the conviction of Alfonso Morales, 26. Morales was found guilty of murdering four members of a south Whittier family.

”Testimony casts doubt on defendant's claim of accidental killing; Wilson He [sic] is on trial in the shooting of his former Belleville roommate in 2003” St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri) April 20, 2005

Ramon Wilson's defense in a murder trial – that the killing of his former roommate was an accident – was cast into doubt Tuesday by the testimony of prosecution witnesses. Among the witnesses was DNA expert Jennifer Reynolds of Orchid Cellmark Laboratory, who testified that saliva found on Wilson's gun matched contained DNA that matched the murder victim's.

“Convict gets life for killing flower shop owner in '88” Chicago Tribune April 19, 2005

Michael Hughes, 44, pleaded guilty to first-degree murder for stabbing a flower shop owner in 1988. DNA evidence linked Hughes to the crime in 2003.

“25 years after teen's slaying, DNA test yields arrest; Nanine Grimes was stabbed more than 80 times at her home near Brighton. A man who was then her classmate is being held in Arizona.” The Denver Post April 19, 2005

The murder of Nanine Grimes in 1980 has been solved by DNA evidence, leading to the arrest of Troy Mark Brownlow, In June 2004 a detective resubmitted blood evidence to the Colorado

Bureau of Investigation, and Brownlow was a match. Brownlow was on parole after a theft conviction in Arizona, where prisoners are given DNA tests upon their release.

“DNA links Illinois man to sex assault; Genetic material from databank matched to Menomonee Falls case” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Wisconsin) April 19, 2005

John P. Green, in custody in Chicago, has been linked to an unsolved burglary and rape in Menomonee Falls through a national DNA databank. Since the state established its DNA databank at the crime laboratory, it has been used to solve 679 cases, according to Mike Roberts, administrator of the Division of Law Enforcement Services for the state Department of Justice.

“Worthington probe eyed higher-profile leads” The Boston Globe April 17, 2005

Christopher M. McCowen was arrested on Thursday for the murder of Christa Worthington. McCowen’s DNA was collected on March 18, 2004, but was not sent to the lab until July because of an arrangement with state scientists that only 5-10 samples would be sent at a time. The Romney administration say they want to cut wait times for processing DNA samples from 6-9 months to a week.

“DNA test results don't work out as man hoped; Lab work confirms what trial found: He raped UIC student” Chicago Sun-Times April 16, 2005

Omar Chaney learned this week that DNA testing linked him to the 1993 rape of a 17-year-old University of Illinois at Chicago student. Chaney, convicted of the woman's rape after a 1997 trial in Cook County, had requested the DNA lab work.

“Rapist sentenced to 55 1/2 years; He admitted to assault on UWM student” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Wisconsin) April 16, 2005

Dustin Shane Bumbalough, 29, was sentenced Friday to 55 1/2 years in prison for a confessed string of crimes, including a vicious sexual assault of a University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee student in April 2004. He is also linked to three rapes in Tennessee by DNA. DNA From the 2004 assault matched the Tennessee attacks, which led police to arrest Bumbalough in August 2004.

“DNA leads to arrest in 1989 rape, strangling” The Atlanta Journal-Constitution April 15, 2005

Larry Walker Jr., who was 16 when JoAnne Hankamer was raped, beaten and strangled to death, was arrested Wednesday at his residence on Iverson Street by members of Howard's Cold Case Squad. The house is just a few blocks from where Hankamer's body was found Dec. 14, 1989. A DNA sample taken from Walker in prison and entered into a DNA database of felons kept by the FBI was matched Tuesday to evidence in the Hankamer case, Howard said.

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

“Crime Lab in Limbo” The Oregonian (Portland, Oregon) April 19, 2005

A state crime lab under construction in Vancouver awaits \$4 million in funding from the Legislature. Without the second floor, the Vancouver lab will lack trace evidence testing and firearms testing, and DNA testing will be squeezed into smaller labs on the first floor. The current backlog of 830 DNA cases means an average turnaround in six months. The long turnaround time has hindered investigations into murder and rape.

Expanding the DNA Databank

“Regional crime lab measure is DOA; House member says last-minute demands by Hurtt killed his bill” The Houston Chronicle April 17, 2005

A bill that would have created independent regional laboratories to process DNA evidence from Houston and other cities will not be passed during this session of the Texas Legislature. State Rep. Kevin Bailey, D-Houston, sponsor of the bill, blamed its demise on last-minute demands by Houston Police Chief Harold Hurtt. The legislation would have created forensic DNA labs across Texas to be used by law enforcement agencies, such as the Houston Police Department, without their own accredited forensic facilities.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“Death row inmate seeks new trial based on new test” St. Petersburg Times (Florida) April 21, 2005

Death row inmate Robert Waterhouse, condemned for raping and killing a woman 25 years ago, has asked for DNA testing to prove his innocence, but the evidence was destroyed in 1988 due to a clerical error. Waterhouse’s attorney is seeking a new trial and his removal from death row. Judge Tim Peters is expected to issue an order soon.

“Time running short for wrongly convicted; Bills to extend the deadline for DNA tests have stalled” Orlando Sentinel (Florida) April 20, 2005

Defendants convicted more than four years ago only have until Oct. 1 to request genetic testing that could exonerate them. Bills that would lift the deadlines have stalled in the House and the Senate.

“Judge Rules DNA Test Fails To Clear Death Row Inmate” Tampa Tribune (Florida) April 20, 2005

Orange Circuit Judge Reginald Whitehead said new DNA blood tests fail to prove that William “Tommy” Zeigler is innocent of a quadruple homicide committed in 1975. He had been convicted for killing his wife, her parents, and a store customer. Blood stains on his shirt contained DNA that matched the customer’s, which the defense argued disproved the prosecution’s theory that Zeigler bashed his father-in-law’s skull.

“Tex. Pressed on DNA Exonerations; Group Is Urged to Probe Cause of Erroneous Murder Convictions” The Washington Post April 20, 2005

Texas state Sen. Rodney Ellis (D) proposed expanding the authority of the newly created Governor’s Criminal Justice Advisory Council. This would include subpoena power and the authority to examine the cases of exonerated inmates so they can identify the causes of the erroneous convictions. Texas continues to lead the country in number of executions; since 1982, Texas has put 340 prisoners to death.

“DNA tests sought for executed man” Chicago Tribune April 19, 2005

Barry Scheck, co-founder of Benjamin Cardozo School of Law’s Innocence Project, is requesting DNA testing on a single strand of hair in the case of Claude Jones, who was executed in December 2000 for armed robbery and murder. Scheck says Jones was convicted largely on the basis of dubious evidence, including testimony from an accomplice and a 1-inch length of hair found at the scene that was similar to Jones’ hair.