

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“Rape trial dilemma: DNA points to two men; As the second of identical twins heads to court, prosecutors focus on his confession” The Houston Chronicle June 02, 2005

Prosecutors are facing a rare challenge this week as they try to put a man behind bars in the abduction and rape of a 9-year-old girl. A trace of DNA evidence from the 2001 sexual assault points equally to two men - Aldo Rene Penaflor and Hugo Adrian Penaflor, 22-year-old identical twins. Both men were charged with aggravated sexual assault and aggravated kidnapping in the attack on the girl.

“Couple given new hope of finding son's killer” The Press (Christchurch, New Zealand) June 2, 2005

Nelson police announced yesterday a breakthrough in the 1993 murder of Kevin O’Loughlin. They said that the killer’s DNA profile had been identified by Environmental Science and Research from exhibits resubmitted by police in 2003.

“Creep guilty of park rape try” Daily News (New York) June 2, 2005 Thursday

Tito Rodriguez, 33, of the Bronx, was found guilty yesterday of assault, attempted rape and sexual abuse. Rodriguez attacked former model Carina Schlesinger, who managed to crawl away when her 48-pound mutt, Cookie, attacked Rodriguez. Cookie’s bites drew blood, and DNA from bloodstains on Schlesinger's clothes led cops to Rodriguez, who was in jail on charges that he had tried to rape another woman four days later.

“Prison confession clears '86 homicide; Already serving a life term, inmate gets 20 years more for killing woman” The Houston Chronicle May 28, 2005

A man already serving a life prison sentence was handed an additional 20-year sentence Friday after pleading guilty to murdering a young woman nearly two decades ago. Harold Wade Fain Jr. was in prison in October 2002 when DNA evidence linked him to the unsolved murder of Leah Nanette Nunley. Nunley, 22, was beaten and shot to death in her apartment on Sept. 16, 1986. At the time of the murder, DNA was not widely used, but in 2000 investigators reopened the case and found scrapings taken from underneath Nunley's fingernails during her autopsy.

“Blood Evidence Bolsters Fears” Tampa Tribune (Florida) May 28, 2005

Investigators have found the blood of several people inside Steven Lorenzo's home on Powhatan Avenue. Continuing to build a case against the man accused of drugging and torturing seven men and suspected of killing at least two others, authorities disclosed in court papers that investigators who searched Lorenzo's house found blood with numerous DNA profiles.

“Park murder victim's hubby testifies: ‘She was all cut up’” The Boston Herald May 27, 2005

An 84-year-old Foxboro man testified yesterday how he found his wife mutilated body in a serene Walpole park. Thomas Kennedy testified yesterday because his health may prevent him from taking the stand when Martin G. Guy is tried for the Dec. 1, 1998, murder of Kennedy's wife, Irene, in Bird Park. Guy, 43, who is already serving a life sentence for a 1999 murder in Norwood, was charged with the Walpole murder in June after his DNA allegedly matched evidence recovered from Irene Kennedy's body.

“15 old slayings may get break Fort Worth: Convict's DNA being compared with killings from '80s” THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS May 27, 2005

Curtis Don Brown was charged Wednesday with the 1985 sexual assault and murder of Terece Gregory. He is also a suspect in 15 other slayings in the mid-1980s. Gregory's murder remained unsolved until January when Fort Worth police were told of a possible match from the FBI's CODIS.

“Charges Filed in 1994 O.C. Slaying” Los Angeles Times May 27, 2005

Brian Zumbado, a 26-year-old construction worker, is suspected of fatally stabbing 18-year-old Eddie Alexander Young of Anaheim during a fight in a Cypress parking lot. Law enforcement officials say DNA samples taken from Zumbado after a 2004 conviction for spousal battery linked him to the stabbing.

“CRIME & JUSTICE” The Washington Post May 27, 2005

Rigoberto Ramos, 26, and Jose D. Bonilla, 27, recently convicted of an afternoon attack and sexual assault on an Alexandria woman last summer in Holmes Run Park, were sentenced yesterday in Alexandria Circuit Court. The victim identified her assailants during separate trials, and DNA evidence linked both men to the crime, prosecutors said.

Expanding the DNA Databank

“Homolka is 'nervous' about her freedom” The Toronto Star May 31, 2005

On Thursday, convicted murderer Karla Homolka will appear in a courtroom in Joliette, Que., where lawyers for Attorney General Michael Bryant are expected to bring an application asking for restrictions on Homolka's release. Bryant said yesterday that the Ontario government wants Homolka to provide a DNA sample to be kept on file because of concerns she might commit a crime.

“DPP calls for new legislation to set up DNA database” The Irish Times May 30, 2005

James Hamilton, the Director of Public Prosecutions, has called for new legislation to establish a DNA database. Hamilton pointed out that the Law Reform Commission would publish a report on the issue in the autumn, and said he hoped it would be followed by the necessary legislation. Although DNA evidence has already provided a powerful tool in a number of cases in this country, it has its limitations in the absence of a DNA database.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“DNA doesn't match woman convicted in 1991 murders; Wisconsin Innocence Project takes on case of sisters' deaths” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Wisconsin) June 2, 2005

DNA evidence from the 1991 murders of two elderly sisters in Kewaunee County does not match the DNA of Beth LaBatte, the woman convicted of the slayings. The new test results could signal another victory for the Wisconsin Innocence Project, which is seeking a retrial for LaBatte, who is serving a life sentence for the murders of Ann and Ceil Cadigan.

“‘Murder’ evidence found 12 years later” The Toronto Star May 31, 2005

Missing forensic tissues that could exonerate William Mullins-Johnson, jailed for murdering his 4-year-old niece, have been found in the office of a Toronto pathologist. The tissue samples were discovered in an envelope on top of Dr. Charles Smith's desk during an ongoing review of all exhibits from autopsies conducted at the lab since 1991. The probe was ordered in April after the Toronto Star reported Smith had lost tissue samples that lawyers for Mullins-Johnson were seeking so they could arrange for an independent evaluation of the evidence introduced at his 1994 trial.

DNA Evidence and Sentencing

“Governor signs public safety bills; But hard-won measure on witness intimidation lacks bite, prosecutor says” The Baltimore Sun May 27, 2005

Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. signed 171 bills in yesterday, including a measure allowing the collection of DNA samples in circuit court buildings when a criminal is sentenced.