

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“Serial rapist promised stardom to lure victims” The Atlanta Journal-Constitution May 12, 2005
Home Edition

Raymond Clark was convicted Friday of six counts of rape, seven counts of kidnapping, five counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, and three counts each of aggravated child molestation and armed robbery. Evidence scrutinized by the jurors included DNA that connected Clark to two of the assaults.

“Cold case program launched” The Dallas Morning News May 12, 2005

Dallas police launched the Sexual Assault Cold Case Program yesterday in an attempt to solve sexual assaults that occurred between 1970 and 1990. Victims can request that their cases be reviewed if based on several criteria, including whether DNA evidence exists. Cases before 1990 can't be prosecuted because of a statute of limitations, but police believe solving the cases can provide closure to victims.

“Guilty verdict in child's rape” Daily News (New York) May 10, 2005

Jurors took only five minutes yesterday to convict Jerome Brown of sexually assaulting a 9-year-old girl in a Brooklyn rooftop 12 years ago. Jurors said the case was essentially over once prosecutor Eric Rosenbaum introduced DNA evidence that implicated Jerome Brown.

“Warrant for suspect in assaults in store” Chicago Tribune May 7, 2005

A Cook County judge Friday issued an arrest warrant for Lenard Fitzpatrick, 49, who is accused of armed robbery and criminal sexual assault at a Palos Heights dress shop. DNA obtained at the scene matched DNA taken from Fitzpatrick, who is at Stateville Correctional Center for a parole violation.

“Father gets life for rape and murder of pregnant girl, 14” The Daily Telegraph (London) May 07, 2005

A married man who abducted, raped and murdered Amy Williams, a pregnant 14-year-old, was jailed for life yesterday. Philip Powell, 43, was arrested after DNA samples taken from Williams' body were matched with his profile, held on the database after he was convicted of possessing an offensive weapon in 1999.

“After 20 years, man jailed for peace activist's murder” The Independent (London) May 7, 2005

Andrew George was convicted yesterday of killing Hilda Murrell, the anti-nuclear campaigner. The conviction brings to end two decades of conspiracy theories surrounding Murrell's murder. George was arrested in 2003 because of advances in DNA testing that made it possible to match a sample taken from semen stains on Miss Murrell's underwear with his genetic profile.

“DNA sample leads to man's arrest in 2002 rapes” The Oregonian (Portland, Oregon) May 6, 2005

David Feder Guerrero Jaramillo, 23, was arrested on Wednesday for the 2002 rape of a 15-year old girl and her 16-year old half-sister. Jaramillo had pleaded guilty in 2003 to a weapons charge, and as a felon he was required to provide a DNA sample. His identity was confirmed by one of the victims in a photo lineup.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

“Top lab repeatedly botched DNA tests; Audit: Errors pass reviews in Virginia Death Row case”
Chicago Tribune May 8, 2005

One of the nation's premier crime labs repeatedly failed to catch botched DNA testing in the case of Earl Washington Jr., a mentally retarded former farmhand from rural Virginia who spent more than nine of his 17 years in prison on Death Row before being exonerated of the 1982 rape and murder of Rebecca William. An independent review released Friday also found that the Virginia state crime lab failed to detect the errors when the testing was reviewed by another lab analyst and then failed to detect them yet again in an internal audit last fall.

“Taylor wins blood sample court case” The Dominion Post (Wellington, New Zealand) May 6, 2005

The High Court at Wellington ruled that a blood sample taken from alleged escaper Arthur Taylor for inclusion in the national DNA database was not taken “as soon as reasonably practicable.” Justice Ron Young ordered that the sample should be destroyed.

“DNA Review in Va. to Include Executions; Audit Critical of State Lab Prompts Reevaluation of Death Row Cases Past and Present” The Washington Post May 11, 2005

Virginia will for the first time review DNA evidence in cases involving inmates who have been executed and those on death row as part of a broad response to an audit critical of the state's crime laboratory. The review will determine whether scientists who handled the evidence followed proper procedures, and will be restricted to cases with evidence that is particularly difficult to test because only a small amount of DNA was present at crime scenes

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

“Crime lab earns partial approval; HPD facility is accredited in all divisions but DNA” The Houston Chronicle May 12, 2005

The Houston Police Department crime laboratory has received accreditation for all divisions except DNA, which remains shut down and was not reviewed by inspectors. The department hopes to reopen the DNA division, after hiring new staff members and buying equipment and supplies, by the end of the year.

“Gifts help authorities sift DNA” The Oregonian (Portland, Oregon) May 12, 2005

Over the last nine months, the Oregon State Police crime lab has received more than \$14,000 in donations, enabling authorities to crack open more than half a dozen unsolved crimes using DNA

samples. The money is spent on processing DNA samples and matching them against evidence collected from unsolved cases in Oregon. Each sample costs \$30 to process.

“Public safety at stake; Backlog in DNA testing leaves violent criminals free to roam streets.”
Omaha World-Herald (Nebraska) May 10, 2005

The Associated Press reported recently that DNA laboratories across the country have enormous backlogs, interfering with the legal process. Although samples of human DNA obtained at crime scenes can be processed and possibly matched in just a few days, the backlog means that results can take several months. The federal Bureau of Justice Statistics suggested in a February report that the nation needs nearly 2,000 more full-time laboratory workers at a cost of some \$70 million merely to shave the backlog to 30 days.

“ROMNEY SEEKS \$1B FOR STATE PROJECTS; PROPOSAL TARGETS DNA LAB, COLLEGES” The Boston Globe May 7, 2005

Governor Mitt Romney has proposed that the state borrow nearly \$1 billion for a range of construction projects, including \$125 million to rebuild the backlogged State Police crime lab in Sudbury. Last month it was disclosed that authorities took more than eight months to process a DNA sample that led to the arrest of a trash hauler in the 2002 slaying of Christa Worthington. The lab has barely enough space to hold its current roster of 12 DNA analysts.

Expanding the DNA Databank

“Crims caught by DNA” Herald Sun (Melbourne, Australia) May 12, 2005

Victoria Police's DNA database has produced 3046 matches between genetic evidence taken from crime scenes and offenders since the database was created five years ago. Since the police were given powers to take DNA samples from prisoners, the database now contains the genetic profiles of 10,233 people.

“Passing through” The Dallas Morning News May 10, 2005

The House on Monday approved HB1068, which would give the Texas Department of Public Safety more authority to inspect and audit police crime labs. It would establish two state DNA databases and expand the list of people required to submit DNA samples to include all convicted felons on probation and serving time. It now heads to the Senate, where it has no sponsor.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

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The Herald (Glasgow) May 10, 2005

“DNA evidence clears Scot of rape charge”

Craig Orr, a Scot held in a French prison for more than eight months after being accused of rape, is due to appear on a reduced charge today. Orr is being charged with sexual molestation after DNA evidence cleared him of having sex with the alleged victim.

Sun-Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL) May 7, 2005

“Convicted murderer denied DNA test; Judge rules all evidence already has been tested.”

Larey Cray, 57, of Fort Pierce, convicted of first-degree murder and sexual battery in July 1998, was denied a DNA test after a judge ruled that all evidence had already been tested. Circuit Judge Gary Sweet denied Cray's request for a DNA test, saying the evidence showed there was nothing new to be tested that had not already been checked.