

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“Cretinon's Lawyer Touts DNA Evidence” The Boston Globe, June 16, 2005

Richard P. Cretinon, a former selectman, is accused of raping a 14-year-old boy in 2003. Cretinon's attorney says recent DNA test results show that Cretinon did not have intercourse with the teenager, and that test samples taken from the young man did not match Cretinon.

“Ten life sentences after serial rapist changes his plea” The Daily Telegraph (London), June 16, 2005

Petros Anthia, a 35-year-old Greek Cypriot builder, pleaded guilty Tuesday to 10 charges of rape against 6 women. Anthia had originally denied the charges but changed his pleas after hearing that a victim had been traced in France and was to give evidence. DNA evidence had been obtained and mobile phone evidence linked him to the areas on the nights of the attacks.

“Murder hearing told of guns plot” Hobart Mercury (Australia), June 16, 2005

Yesterday, Supreme Court of Hobart heard that DNA evidence linked three Eastern Shore men to the murder of Athol John Tollard, 79, last year. The men stole guns and ammunition from Tollard, bashed and shot him and set fire to his house. DNA evidence linked all three defendants to Mr Tollard's murder, with blood stains on their clothing matching Mr Tollard's DNA profile.

The Seattle Times, June 16, 2005

“‘Guilty’ ends ’88 murder case”

Joseph Glen Tice admitted the 1988 fatal shooting of prostitute Ophelia McKnight, 17. Tice has been at the Twin Rivers Corrections Center in Monroe since 1988, convicted on charges of third-degree assault and a violation of the Uniform Firearms Act. Detectives with the Seattle Police Department's 5-year-old Cold Case Squad submitted preserved evidence from McKnight's body in 2003 to the state crime lab, and last year the evidence was matched with McKnight's DNA.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri), June 16, 2005

“Man is charged in 1997 slaying Detectives with new DNA evidence trick suspect into meeting with them”

This week, St. Louis homicide detectives got a break in solving the 1997 murder of Arline Wiemann, 74, when forensic scientists found a DNA match, identifying Currie Lindsey, 37, as their murder suspect. At the time of the killing, Lindsey lived just a few blocks away, but he was never a suspect in the case. Lindsey's DNA was obtained by Department of Corrections officials from a swab of saliva, apparently taken March 1 when he was released from his last confinement, for parole violation.

“Trash Hauler Is Indicted In Truro Slaying” The Boston Globe, June 15, 2005

Christopher M. McCowen, 33, was indicted by a grand jury yesterday on charges of murder, aggravated rape, and armed burglary. The trash hauler was arrested two months ago after authorities said his DNA matched a sample taken from slain Truro writer Christa Worthington. Police investigators interviewed McCowen twice about the case, once three months after the January 2002 slaying and again two years later. After the second interview, McCowen volunteered a swab of his DNA, which was matched in April to DNA taken from Worthington's body.

“Years After Mother's Death, Teen Faces Her Accused Killer” The Boston Globe, June 14, 2005

Yesterday, Sergio Roman faced the man police say killed his mother, Noemi Roman, in their South End apartment in 1990. Kurvin Richardson, 34, was arraigned yesterday on a murder charge. He was arrested on Friday after his DNA was matched to DNA found on Noemi Roman's body. It wasn't until several months ago that detectives discovered that they could perform genetic testing on human tissue recovered beneath Noemi Roman's fingernails

“Police test knives found in dead suspect's car for link to Abigail” The Independent (London), June 14, 2005

DNA tests are being carried out on several knives found in the car belonging to a suspect in the Abigail Witchalls stabbing, who has killed himself. The weapons were found in a bag recovered from Richard Cazaly's blue Volvo 440 after his death from a pills overdose in Scotland.

“He left smoking gun, gets 25 to life” Newsday (New York), June 14, 2005

Yesterday, Eric Stevens, 40, was sentenced to 25 years to life for the rape of Deanna Witt in April 2004. Investigators broke the case when they found a cigarette butt containing Stevens' saliva and DNA in Witt's car. Investigators matched the DNA to a sample taken in a 1999 Bronx murder case in which Stevens was acquitted.

“Stable staff in DNA test for cocaine” Sunday Tasmanian (Australia), June 12, 2005

Stewards and a doctor from the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine swooped on Waterhouse's Randwick stables yesterday morning and obtained DNA samples from 10 of the trainer's stable staff after a post-race test revealed cocaine in Waterhouse's Love You Honey. Racing NSW chief steward Ray Murrphy became aware of studies by the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine where hair samples from a human could be tested for drug use over a longer period than could be detected through urine samples.

“Coast to coast; A national briefing of people, issues and events around the country” The Washington Post, June 12, 2005

In rural Shasta County, state game warden Ken Taylor got a tip last summer that a local man had bragged about illegally killing a deer on a private lot off-limits to hunters--and that he planned to do it again. So as a new hunting season began, Taylor staked out the area until he spotted the

suspect. He confronted the suspect, Clayton Bethel, and took deer meat from Bethel's freezer. Then he sent it to a state lab for forensic testing and it came back as a match.

“Morel cops plea, avoids jail time; He was facing up to 30 years for sexual assault” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Wisconsin), June 10, 2005

Former boxing champion Eric Morel pleaded no contest to sexually assaulting a 15-year-old girl in an appearance Thursday morning in Dane County Circuit Court but will not face jail time. When interviewed by police shortly after the incident, Morel denied the allegation and denied engaging in any sexual activity with the girl. Police said they had DNA evidence linking Morel to semen found on the girl and her clothing.

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

“State police crime lab set to clear backlog of DNA; Rape-kit samples have been sent from vaults in Chicago” Chicago Tribune, June 15, 2005

Illinois State Police officials are expected this summer to clear up a backlog of 1200 untested DNA samples in Chicago police evidence vaults from as far back as 1998. State police officials said they are aiming to have the backlog dealt with by the end of July. Once it has been eliminated, state officials want to process DNA samples within 30 days. Cases now can take as long as four months to be analyzed.

Expanding the DNA Databank

The Australian, June 14, 2005 All-round Country Edition
“Criminal DNA database clearing legal obstacles”

Queensland and Western Australia police are likely to be first to use a long-awaited national criminal DNA database that stores DNA samples from crime scenes and criminals. Once fully operational it will enable cross-referencing of materials across all Australian police forces. Since the system went live in 2001 150,000 DNA profiles have been stored in the system, but it is yet to be used. Matching of DNA profiles across jurisdictions has been held up for years while states and territories sorted out legislation.

“Law widens DNA tests for inmates; Police hope samples will match those left in unsolved crimes” Chicago Tribune, June 14, 2005

A new measure signed into law Monday by Gov. Rod Blagojevich closes a loophole created by an August 2002 law that required every felon sentenced after that time to have a sample of their DNA collected. The previous law called for felons who had been serving prison time before 2002 to have their DNA collected prior to being released from prison. According to the new measure, 208 felons who had been serving life sentences prior to 2002 and who are not scheduled to be released from prison will have their DNA samples collected and compared to state and national databases.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“Child murderer makes bid to get DNA retested” The Toronto Star, June 14, 2005

A janitor convicted in the 1990 sex slaying of 6-year-old Andrea Atkinson is asking a judge to release the little girl's leotards so they can be tested again for his DNA. In 1993, a jury found John Terceira guilty of first-degree murder in Andrea's death, one of the first Canadian murder convictions in which DNA played a major role. Forensic experts concluded that DNA from semen found on Andrea's leotards matched Terceira's. But now Terceira wants one or more other stains on the leotard tested to satisfy himself that the evidence was correct. DNA testing is far more advanced today than when he was convicted.

DNA Evidence and Sentencing

“SACRAMENTO; Moratorium sought on death penalty; Assembly Dems say innocent person may be executed” The San Francisco Chronicle, June 15, 2005

Assemblyman Paul Koretz, D-West Hollywood (Los Angeles County), said he would introduce a bill next year to halt executions until January 2009 -- about a year after a report is due from an expert panel established by the state Senate to scrutinize how capital punishment is applied. The debate over capital punishment has in recent years been infused with accusations of uneven implementation and has been stoked by DNA evidence testing, which has exonerated several convicts in various types of cases.

DNA Science and Technology

“New cabinet for evidence” Daily Telegraph (Sydney, Australia), June 10, 2005

High-tech cabinets which dry and preserve forensic evidence are to be installed in 19 police stations. Police Minister Carl Scully yesterday said the cabinets will be installed in 19 regional and Sydney police stations later this month. Mr Scully said evidence would be sealed in separate compartments inside the cabinets and dried using filtered air. "These drying cabinets make it safer and easier for police to recover scientific evidence such as DNA from clothing recovered from a victim or carpet removed from a crime scene," he said in a statement.