

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“DNA Tests Fail In Witchalls Case” The Independent (London) June 9, 2005

Police investigating the stabbing of Abigail Witchalls, 26, in Little Bookham, Surrey, said tests on the buggy she was pushing had drawn a blank. Police will now show her a photograph of Richard Cazaly, the primary suspect, who committed suicide in Scotland days after the attack.

“Metro Briefing New York: Queens: Rapist Convicted Of 1994 Attack” The New York Times June 9, 2005

Mohammad Karimzada, 32, was convicted on Monday of a 1994 rape after investigators matched DNA from the crime with a DNA sample the man gave after another rape conviction. Karimzada faces up to 25 years in state prison. He was identified through DNA evidence obtained after a 1997 rape conviction, for which he has been serving a sentence of 8 to 16 years in prison.

“22-year-old sentenced to life for sexual assault, kidnapping; Aldo Penaflor says he is innocent in child rape case” The Houston Chronicle June 08, 2005 2

Jurors sentenced Aldo Penaflor, 22, to life in prison Tuesday for the rape of a 9-year-old girl. Penaflor was arrested after police used his identical twin brother’s DNA to link him to the rape. Penaflor’s brother, Hugo, testified that he drove the car during the rape. Hugo also accepted a plea agreement in which he will be sentenced to 15 years in prison.

“Evidence gap ends murder case; A prosecutor says she can't document for a jury where DNA swabs were stored from 1979-1981.” Omaha World-Herald (Nebraska) June 8, 2005

On Monday, prosecutors dropped all charges against Louis Walker after finding a gap in the records of the DNA evidence collected from a 1979 murder scene. Authorities cannot account for where vaginal swabs were stored during a 27-month period from June 1979 to September 1981. Because of the damning nature of DNA evidence, it would be unethical to present evidence to a jury without being able to account for its whereabouts and assure that the sample was not contaminated.

“Authorities Take DNA In Ohio Pike Killing” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania) June 8, 2005

Police used a search warrant to obtain a DNA sample from Damian R. Bradford, who is being investigated in the Ohio Turnpike killing of Dr. Gulam Moonda, a millionaire physician. Police say Bradford, 23, was in "a serious relationship" with Moonda's 46-year-old wife, Donna. Police also described a prenuptial agreement between the Moondas in a court affidavit as a potential motive for Moonda's slaying.

“Suspects get snared by a relative's DNA” USA TODAY June 8, 2005

Lab technicians in North Carolina couldn't match DNA from a 2003 crime scene to samples in the DNA database, but they did find that it was remarkably similar to that of one convict, Anthony Dennard Brown. Detectives tracked down Brown's brother, Willard, and took DNA samples from butts of cigarettes that he had smoked. Willard's DNA was a perfect match. The level of permissible familial DNA searching varies from state to state, and has significant privacy implications.

"Sex case: Doc in DNA riddle; Swab taken after formal complaint" Hobart Mercury (Australia) June 7, 2005

DNA evidence linked Ian Anthony Martin, a Tasmanian psychiatrist, and a female patient who says he had a sexual relationship with her, the Medical Complaints Tribunal was told yesterday. When the woman complained to police about Dr. Martin, she was swabbed for DNA by a doctor. Dr. Martin's DNA was taken in relation to another matter and when it was recorded on the database, as a matter of course, it came up as a match with the DNA found on his patient.

"DNA Is Linked to 1993 Slaying; A parolee who gave samples as a result of Prop. 69 is arrested in an LAPD cold-case probe." Los Angeles Times June 7, 2005

The arrest of Charles Augustus Jones, 41, for the 1993 murder of Mara Robinson, is the first in Los Angeles to result from Proposition 69. The initiative passed by voters in November requires that DNA samples be collected from every person convicted of a felony in the state. Jones, who had an extensive record of mostly drug-related convictions in California and Louisiana, had his DNA catalogued under the new law before his release from prison earlier this year.

"DNA From Torture Matches Children's" Tampa Tribune (Florida) June 7, 2005

Bloodstains, fingernails and residue on pliers found in the motor home of John and Linda Dollar match the DNA of at least three of their adopted children. The couple allegedly used the pliers and other items to torture five of their eight children over a period of several years. The Dollars have pleaded not guilty and are being held without bail.

"Rape charge from DNA" The Advertiser (South Australia) June 6, 2005

DNA evidence has led to the arrest of a man for a sexual assault which occurred near the West Terrace Cemetery in April, 2002. The Salisbury North man, 46, was arrested on Saturday by sexual crime investigation branch detectives. He was charged with rape and assault occasioning actual bodily harm.

"Wicker Park rapist gets 48-year term" Chicago Tribune June 6, 2005

A man accused of attacking four women in the Wicker Park area and found guilty in one incident was sentenced Friday to 48 years in prison. Willie Moore, 30, was convicted last month of aggravated criminal sexual assault and aggravated kidnapping in a July 2003 attack. DNA evidence linked him to the crime.

“Killings leave town anxious for answers” The Dominion Post (Wellington, New Zealand) June 4, 2005

Last week, Ted Ferguson and Margaret Walden were found dead in Ferguson’s flat. Police DNA-tested the footwear of male residents in the Rangimarie flats complex, suggesting that the search is centered on a man, but police have been reluctant to rule anything out.

“Request to collect DNA is dropped; But judge rules subpoenas of 3 Red Lake youth were proper.” Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN) June 4, 2005

Federal prosecutors investigating the March 21 school shootings in Red Lake have backed off from a grand jury request to collect DNA from three juveniles. However, Chief U.S. District Judge James Rosenbaum ruled that requests for fingerprints, photographs and testimony are still OK.

“Officer convicted of lesser sex charge” The Baltimore Sun June 3, 2005

City police officer Keith A. Jennings, 38, was acquitted yesterday of first-degree sex offense, kidnapping, false imprisonment, and misconduct in office. Jennings was convicted of one count of perverted practice, after DNA tests linked him to evidence recovered from a woman who said the officer handcuffed her, forced her into a house and sexually assaulted her.

“Man pleads guilty to sexual assault of three women” THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS June 3, 2005

Jose Elias, already serving one life term for an assault at White Rock Lake in January 2004, accepted a plea deal Thursday that will require him to serve two more life terms. One of his victims, a 32-year-old woman, was attacked as she left a bar and was later found severely beaten in her car. DNA testing during Mr. Elias' December trial found evidence on his shoe that linked him to her assault.

“New move to drop statute of limitations on sex attacks” Newsday (New York) June 3, 2005

Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau yesterday proposed a new statute elevating certain sexual assaults to "A" felonies, the same level of crime as murder and kidnapping. The proposed statute would also eliminate the five- to ten-year statute of limitations. Morgenthau’s office has solved crimes through DNA matches, only to discover it cannot prosecute because the statutes of limitations have run out.

“N.O. man is sought in 1996 rape case” Times-Picayune (New Orleans) June 3, 2005

Cold-case detectives have genetically linked 50-year-old Daniel Gordon to a 1996 rape and issued a warrant for his arrest, police said. Police matched DNA evidence taken from the scene with a stored genetic profile of Gordon. Louisiana law mandates that anyone arrested on a felony must provide a DNA sample.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

“Metro; In Brief” The Washington Post June 3, 2005

Virginia governor Mark R. Warner (D) yesterday named a state judge and former prosecutor to oversee an independent review of Virginia's DNA lab. Last month, an audit by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors criticized the lab's handling of DNA evidence in the case of former death row inmate Earl Washington Jr.

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

“Crime rise swamps forensic scientists” The Dominion Post (Wellington, New Zealand) June 7, 2005

A sharp rise in murders and sexual assaults has swamped New Zealand's forensic experts. Environmental Science and Research general manager of forensics Wayne Chisnall said the backlog was caused by a surge in homicides and sexual assaults, especially since January. Police have put about 20 cases on hold because of the backlog.

Expanding the DNA Databank

“2005 legislative session: It's a wrap; Educational and economic development measures top the list of accomplishments.” Omaha World-Herald (Nebraska) June 4, 2005

Nebraska lawmakers wrapped up a historic legislative session Friday. The 2005 Legislation's actions include a bill which would require police to have legal cause to suspect someone before that person could be required to give a sample for DNA testing.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“House OKs bill to repay wrongly jailed; Ex-inmates would also get free tuition” Times-Picayune (New Orleans) June 7, 2005

The House gave 88-5 approval Monday to a scaled-down bill that would give wrongfully jailed inmates \$15,000 a year for each year in jail up to \$150,000. The bill would also allow prisoners who have been determined by a court to be "factually innocent" based on DNA or other evidence to receive job-training costs for a year, free medical and psychological counseling for up to three years, and free tuition at state community colleges or four-year colleges. The House also voted 103-0 for Senate changes to a bill that would let prosecutors have 180 days to obtain a suspect's DNA or other "bodily samples."

“Quest for freedom is delayed; More DNA evidence found in '86 crime” Times-Picayune (New Orleans) June 4, 2005

Willie Jackson, 44, convicted of a 1986 attempted rape, is seeking a new trial based on new DNA evidence. The evidence, found in recent months on the victim's pantyhose, supports

Jackson's claim that the real perpetrator is his brother, Milton Jackson. The Assistant DA requested to stop Jackson's hearing so that an untested semen stain found on the victim's pantyhose on Thursday could be tested.

DNA Science and Technology

“UK: Lab901 sells first fast DNA analyzer” Financial Times (London, England) June 7, 2005

Lab901, a Scottish start-up company, has shipped the first of its pioneering ScreenTape systems, which allows DNA molecules to be analyzed in minutes rather than hours. The first system has been delivered to the Scottish Centre for Genomic Technology and Informatics (SCGTI) at Edinburgh University.

“Crime will tell with new DNA testing” The Press (Christchurch, New Zealand) June 4, 2005

Police announced this week that they now have a DNA "fingerprint" of the man who killed Kevin O'Loughlin in 1993. The announcement comes just before the introduction of new technology that will enable New Zealand forensic scientists to lift a DNA profile from a touch on a keyboard or saliva off a cigarette butt. This low copy number (LCN) technology is expected to be available next year, and is about 10 times more sensitive than traditional methods.