

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“DNA database links suspect to rape case” The Daily Yomiuri (Tokyo), July 21, 2005

Using a DNA database compiled by the National Police Agency and brought online in December, police in Osaka solved a rape from July of last year. It was the first time that the database had helped police identify a suspect. Masato Yamada was arrested on May 2 on suspicion of sexual assault. Police obtained a DNA sample from his blood and ran it through the database, scoring a match with bodily fluid found at a crime scene where an 18-year-old woman had been forced into a car and raped in Nara Prefecture late July last year. When presented with the evidence, Yamada admitted his involvement in the crime.

“Warder denies rape charge” Herald Sun (Melbourne, Australia), July 21, 2005

An inmate who became pregnant by a prison officer was mentally ill and had not consented to sex, a court heard yesterday. The guard, Kelvin Andrew McCann, is on trial accused of raping the woman while she was on suicide watch two years ago. The pregnancy was terminated and DNA tests confirmed that Mr. McCann was the father.

“Trial begins in slaying of couple in 2003” St. Petersburg Times (Florida), July 19, 2005

Jury selection began Monday in the trial of a man accused of killing a Tierra Verde couple in 2003. William J. Deparvine was indicted on two counts of first-degree murder after the bodies of Richard and Karla Van Dusen were found lying in a dirt driveway off Old Memorial Highway in northwest Hillsborough County in November 2003. DNA evidence led to Deparvine's arrest at his St. Petersburg apartment. DNA from saliva on a spoon matched blood found on the couple's Jeep Cherokee steering wheel after the murders.

“Ex-killer to face rape rap. Attack on Hofstra student” Daily News (New York), July 18, 2005

Gregory Williams, 37, will go on trial this week for allegedly attacking a 21-year-old undergrad in June 2004. The victim had gone outside to look for her keys and was beaten, dragged off and raped by a stranger. The attacker left, but Williams was arrested a week later when cops canvassing the area recognized him from the police sketch. Williams was on parole for a 1990 manslaughter conviction and he was locked up for curfew violation. The following month, while he was in jail, prosecutors got a match from semen taken from the victim and a DNA sample Williams had given as a prisoner.

“On the trail of Russian crime gang; Blood spilled in 2004 robbery among evidence that helped lead to wide-ranging indictment of 19” Newsday (New York), July 17, 2005

A drop of blood on the floor of Michael Ashton Fine Jewelry on Madison Avenue after a robbery last summer was enough for police and FBI agents to run a DNA analysis. The DNA

was traced to Gidon Abramov, a Russian emigre with a criminal record. Abramov had been convicted on state charges in Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan, so his DNA profile was in a national law enforcement database. The clues found at the Michael Ashton robbery, as well as other evidence collected over many months, became part of a wide-ranging 2004 indictment in Brooklyn federal court of 19 men and women from the former Soviet Union known as the “Abramov” crew.

“New DNA Test in Fairfax Revives '94 Slaying Case” The Washington Post, July 16, 2005

Marvin B. Greenwell, 55, was fatally stabbed in his apartment in May, 1994. Investigators were able to extract DNA samples from cigarette butts and a towel in Greenwell’s apartment. Last year, two detectives assigned to work cold cases resubmitted the DNA samples, which allegedly matched Leslie E. Carver, 44. Carver is in the Prince William County jail after being arrested in June on drunken driving, resisting arrest and cocaine possession charges.

“6 Men Convicted in Series Of Armed Bank Robberies” The Washington Post, July 16, 2005

A federal jury convicted six men yesterday of carrying out a series of commando-style bank robberies in the Washington area last year. The star witnesses were two men who said they participated in the crimes. The case relied heavily on forensic evidence, including DNA that linked the robbers to body armor and clothing used in the crimes, in addition to the testimony of the two men who admitted their roles in the crimes.

“Man denied new trial in beating, rape, killing” Plain Dealer (Cleveland), July 15, 2005

Clarence Elkins, convicted of murdering his mother-in-law and beating and raping his niece, will not get a new trial. Summit County Common Pleas Judge Judith Hunter wrote in a lengthy opinion that new DNA tests on evidence that excluded Elkins were similar to DNA evidence presented at his 1999 trial. His conviction was based on the testimony of his niece. Hunter said even if the new evidence was presented at a trial "it would not be sufficient to change the outcome."

“Ornament damaged by 'significant force'; Scientist tells murder trial that the disfigurement to the weapon allegedly used by Nancy Kissel could not have been done by a child” South China Morning Post, July 15, 2005

Damage to a heavy metal ornament Nancy Kissel allegedly used to bludgeon her banker husband to death suggested “significant force” had been used, a forensic scientist testified yesterday. The prosecution alleges that Kissel, 41, killed top Merrill Lynch banker Robert Peter Kissel in November, 2003, having first drugged her husband with a sedative-laced milkshake. Pang Chi-ming, the government laboratory's DNA typing expert, told jurors he had tested DNA taken from blood on the ornament's base against samples taken from the deceased's spleen and the accused's saliva, and found it matched the deceased. DNA matching the accused’s was also found on a blue cord the prosecution says was tied around a sleeping bag into which the deceased’s body had been pushed.

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

“Romney to push for \$1.3b in construction” The Boston Globe, July 18, 2005

Governor Mitt Romney and Lieutenant Governor Kerry Healey plan to make appearances around the state today to lobby for a proposal to spend about \$1.3 billion on construction projects throughout the Commonwealth. In May, the administration announced it would seek money for a range of projects, including \$125 million to revamp the backlogged State Police crime lab in Sudbury and \$15 million to aid the chief medical examiner's office in Boston. The governor today is expected to revise these numbers. One goal of the proposal is to improve how the state processes DNA evidence from crime scenes.

“Court throws out murder conviction” Chicago Tribune, July 15, 2005

The Illinois Appellate Court has thrown out the murder conviction of Dawn Workman, 25. The court ordered the release of Workman, who was convicted of murder for helping her boyfriend kill his father, Gary Kubicki. The decision said that a delay obtained by prosecutors in Workman's trial because of incomplete DNA and other forensic testing was a violation of Workman's right to a speedy trial. The Appellate Court said the trial judge erred in granting a delay in the case by taking the prosecution's word that the crime lab was backlogged instead of requiring it to show attempts to get the evidence tested despite the backlog.

DNA Evidence and Sentencing

“Romney backs capital punishment bill” The Boston Globe, July 15, 2005

Governor Mitt Romney's death penalty bill faced heavy criticism yesterday during a public hearing on Beacon Hill that lasted more than seven hours. His plan requires, among other things, scientific evidence and a "no doubt" standard of guilt. But opponents challenged the governor's contention that scientific evidence, such as DNA, could ever be completely conclusive. They also pointed out that the resources spent on trying a death penalty case, often millions of dollars, would be better used to fund crime-prevention programs and more law enforcement.