

DNA News
Week of February 12 – February 18, 2006
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DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“Stephanie Hummer Case; Suspect in rape, slaying could face death penalty” *The Columbus Dispatch* (Ohio), February 18, 2006

Jonathan J. Gravely was charged with the unsolved 1994 rape and murder of Ohio State student Stephanie Hummer. Gravely’s DNA was collected for an unrelated felony and placed in the Ohio DNA Databank. His DNA was later matched with DNA collected during the Hummer investigation. If convicted, Gravely could face the death penalty.

“Suspect had rape record; Florida truck driver was jailed, released” *Hartford Courant* (Connecticut) February 18, 2006

Thomas E. Hooks, a truck driver from Florida, was charged with the rape of a woman after luring her off of Interstate 84 in Connecticut. In 1988, Hook committed a near-identical rape which caused him to spend 12 years in prison. Hook’s DNA was found at the crime scene in Connecticut and has been entered into a DNA Databank.

“Guilty verdict in slaying of doctor; Jealousy cited; physician was dating man's ex-wife” *The San Diego Union-Tribune* February 18, 2006

Bilji Varghese, 31, was found guilty in the fatal stabbing of Dr. Haval Ravin, 47, who was dating Varghese’s ex-wife. Ravin was found dead in his garage. DNA evidence at the scene, including Varghese’s blood and a shoe he had left behind helped lead to his conviction. He is facing 26 years to life in prison for first-degree murder.

“Law and Order: Man is convicted of statutory rape” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (Missouri) February 18, 2006

Dominic Hogg was convicted of statutory rape for a sexual encounter with a 16 year old girl at a New Year's Eve party. The girl became pregnant and DNA testing showed that Hogg, 27, is the father.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

“State plan on youths' DNA data is blocked” *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky) February 18, 2006

Kentucky juvenile justice officials want to begin taking DNA samples from juveniles who have committed felony sex offenses and burglary. Public defenders representing juveniles, have filed suit against the Juvenile Justice Commissioner Bridget Brown, claiming that the current law does not permit authorities to take DNA samples from

minors. The results would be stored in a confidential state database and shared with federal authorities to help solve other crimes.

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

“Pass 'Riley's Law,' girl's family urges: Backlog at crime lab means DNA tests still aren't done” *Chicago Sun Times* February 15, 2006

The parents of Riley Fox, a girl whose 2004 murder remains unsolved, urged Illinois state lawmakers to quickly pass legislation that would speed DNA testing in child murder cases. Melissa and Kevin Fox are hoping that uncompleted DNA tests in their 3-year-old daughter's abduction and murder will lead investigators to her murderer. Riley's Law would provide extra funding to ensure DNA testing in child murder cases is completed within 30 days.

Expanding the DNA Databank

“Police to keep DNA profiles of children” *The Daily Telegraph* (London) February 17, 2006

Parliament ruled recently that police in Great Britain are allowed to keep DNA information on people that have never been arrested, charged, or convicted of a crime. This includes the genetic information of many British children whose DNA was collected by stealth, according to Member of Parliament Grant Shapps. In all, approximately 200,000 DNA samples are being stored that would have been destroyed under past stricter policies.

“Court: DNA-sample law for felons not retroactive” *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland) February 16, 2006

In 2005, a law was passed requiring all prisoners to provide DNA samples for the Ohio Databank. However, a new ruling states that this law is not retroactive and it was unlawful for an Akron man on probation for a 2002 DUI conviction to be forced to supply a DNA sample. Many cold cases have been solved as a result of collecting DNA retroactively, including the Ohio State rape and murder of Stephanie Hummer (see “DNA Evidence and Crime Solving”).

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“Wrongful jailing weighs on now-free man” *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland) February 15, 2006

Clarence Elkins was released from prison after spending over 7 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. DNA evidence eventually convinced authorities in Akron that another man killed his mother-in-law and raped his 6-year-old niece.

DNA Evidence and Sentencing

“Sexual predator sent down for life” *The New Zealand Herald* February 18, 2006

Leo Darin Goodwin was found guilty of the sexual assault and kidnapping of a 15 year old girl after his DNA was matched to samples taken at the crime scene. In 1996, while serving time for previous rape convictions, Goodwin was the first Waikato prisoner to be ordered to give blood so that his DNA could be stored on a police databank. The judge ruled that Goodwin was beyond redemption and sentenced to life in prison.

“Townie cops manslaughter plea in 1981 slaying” *The Boston Herald* February 17, 2006

Patrick J. Durham was sentenced to 20 years in prison after pleading guilty for the 1981 murder of fifteen year old Mary Theresa Burhoe. Durham’s DNA was matched to a bloodstain found on the victim’s jeans. Durham was 18 at the time of the murder.

“Ex-partner admits causing fatal blaze” *The Herald (Glasgow)* February 17, 2006

Alexander Munro admitted to setting his ex-girlfriend’s house on fire, causing the death of her current boyfriend as well as severe burns throughout her body leaving her disfigured and unable to use the left side of her body. Munro was sentenced to life in prison.

DNA Science and Technology

“NZ develops new DNA extraction technology” *The New Zealand Herald* February 17, 2006

ZyGEM Corporation of New Zealand has developed a new way to extract DNA samples from crime scenes. The new technology will allow DNA to be extracted from smaller samples, three times faster and at lower costs than current methods, with less risk of contamination. This new extraction technology may revolutionize the way in which DNA is used in criminology. Currently, 26% of crime solving involves DNA, though ZyGEM hopes that this will increase to 40-50% with the new technology.