

Forensic DNA News
Week of: June 11-17, 2006
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DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“Galveston police officer charged with kidnapping; Woman accuses him of handcuffing and assaulting her” *The Houston Chronicle* June 17, 2006

A Galveston police officer, Kenneth Woods, 27, was charged with kidnapping and sexual assault after a woman identified him in a police line-up after claiming she was confronted, forced into the back of his police car, handcuffed and assaulted. DNA evidence confirmed her identification and the police officer was arrested and charged.

“DNA links man with 2nd assault” *Chicago Tribune* June 15, 2006

DNA evidence has linked Benjamin Johnson, 40, who is already in custody for a May sexual assault, to a second attack of a 22-year-old woman. Johnson allegedly beat the woman and used the laces of her shoes to tie her hands behind her back. He also robbed her of her keys, ATM card and money. Johnson was arrested and held without bail for another attack when his DNA sample matched evidence from the rape kit taken when the 22-year-old went to the hospital after the attack.

“Trucker on Trial in Deaths of Four Called a ‘Monster’; Ford killed to fulfill his sexually sadistic needs, San Bernardino County prosecutor says. Defense asks jurors to consider the man's mental state.” *Los Angeles Times* June 15, 2006

Wayne Adam Ford, a long-haul trucker would comb dark roadways for women who would not be missed, according to prosecutors. He would then sexually assault them, murder them, and dismember them. Body parts were found in various waterways throughout California. His brother convinced Ford to confess to the brutal murders of 4 women from 1997 to 1998. Ford entered the Humboldt County Police Station with the severed breast of his most-recent victim in his pocket. Police found various severed parts of women in Ford’s freezer. If convicted, Ford could face the death penalty. In addition, Ford’s DNA was found on several of his victims’ remains.

“Kidnapper charged with girl's murder” *The Columbus Dispatch* (Ohio) June 13, 2006

Lindsey Bruce is currently serving a 10-year prison sentence for the 2004 kidnapping of 5-year-old Emily Rimel. At the time of his trial, her body had not been found and he was

not charged with murder. However, a skull was unearthed that was identified as belonging to the young girl, and Bruce, 25, was charged with her murder as well as tampering with evidence. The 5-year-old's DNA was found on Bruce's body, linking him to the crime.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

“Mother satisfied DNA destroyed” *The New Zealand Herald* June 16, 2006

A mother protested that the police had collected her 17-year-old son's DNA profile by stealth says that she is now satisfied that it has been destroyed. The police pulled over the 17 year-old, Richard Barnes, and threatened him with a \$400 fine that would be waived if he provided a DNA sample. He provided the sample but was never given a waiver for him to sign, releasing his sample to the police. While this case was settled, similar cases have come forward in response, including a criminal lawyer claiming police offered his clients cigarettes in exchange for a DNA sample.

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

“State official urges DNA law for criminals” *Buffalo News* (New York) June 15, 2006

The commissioner of the New York State Criminal Justice Services visited Buffalo to push legislators to pass a law requiring all convicted criminals to submit a DNA sample. Currently, only one out of every seven convicts is required to give a DNA sample. Currently, 43 other states, as well as the federal government, require all convicts to give DNA samples.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“Wrongs made right, but far too late” *Sun-Sentinel* (Fort Lauderdale, Florida) June 16, 2006

Nick Yarris spent 23 years wrongfully imprisoned in solitary confinement on death row. Dennis Maher spent 19 years imprisoned for a crime that he did not commit. Recently, The Innocence Project helped to free them through DNA testing that was not available during the original investigations.

“Justices Grant Death Row Inmate a New Hearing in 1985 Tennessee Murder” *The New York Times* June 13, 2006

The Supreme Court ruled recently that new evidence about a long-ago murder in rural Tennessee, including DNA evidence, raised sufficient doubt about who committed the crime to merit a new hearing in federal court for a man who has spent 20 years on the state's death row. This Supreme Court decision was the first that has factored the result of DNA testing in re-examining a death sentence.

DNA Evidence and Sentencing

“Judge reduces Rossum verdict; \$90 million cut from judgment in murder case” *The San Diego Union-Tribune* June 17, 2006

Kristin Rossum, a former San Diego Medical Examiner toxicologist was convicted in 2002 of murdering her husband, Gregory de Villers. A jury awarded \$104.5 million to the family of the victim, though the Judge reduced the amount to \$14.5 million. \$4.5 million was to compensate for the pain and suffering of the family, while the \$10 million was punitive damages to prevent Rossum from profiting if she were to sell her story. Rossum is serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole after her DNA was found on drug paraphernalia used in poisoning de Villers.

“Brownlow gets life in 1980 slaying; 'I'm a coward,' he tells girl's mother; he could be up for parole in 20 years” *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, CO) June 14, 2006 Wednesday

Troy Brownlow was sentenced to life in prison for the 1980 killing of 15-year-old Nanine Grimes. The case was solved after 26 years thanks to DNA technology not available at the time of the murder. Brownlow was sentenced until the murder statute existed at the time of the crime, which means that he will be eligible for parole in 20 years. Brownlow's blood was found at the scene of the crime intermingled with the victim's blood. However, until he was imprisoned for robbery, police were unable to get a DNA sample to match with the evidence.

“‘Top Gun’ rapist is convicted” *Daily News* (New York) June 13, 2006

Leroy Johnson, 39, was convicted of raping two women in their Greenwich Village apartment in 1996. Johnson previously raped “Top Gun” star Kelly McGillis when he was 15 years old in 1982. Johnson was linked to the rapes through New York's DNA



Databank. This conviction led Manhattan's District Attorney Robert Morgenthau to call for an expansion of the DNA database and an abolishment of the statute of limitations on rape cases. The conviction could lead to 50 years in prison.

DNA Science and Technology

“Cold case team turns heat on sex predators” *The Courier Mail* (Australia) June 17, 2006

In Australia, the Child and Sexual Assault Investigation Unit at the State Crimes Operation Command is taking advantage of new DNA technologies, implementing a Cold Case Team to investigate unsolved crimes. Detectives have taken voluntary DNA samples for monitoring and are also screening new samples that are collected from anyone in Australia charged with an indictable offence.