

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“2nd Slaying's DNA Spurs Charges in Pr. William,” The Washington Post February 7, 2005.

The murder of 40-year-old Paul Domaszek would have remained unsolved had not the murderer killed again, but this time he was caught. Brandon M. Crawford, 20, was convicted in the second killing and forced to provide a DNA sample. The sample was linked through the DNA database to evidence left at the scene of Domaszek's murder.

“Man pleads guilty to assaulting girl,” Chicago Tribune February 6, 2005.

A 31-year-old Chicago man who stands accused of assaulting a 14-year-old girl in 2003 has pleaded guilty in exchange for 18 years in prison. Another man was initially charged in the assault but was later cleared through DNA evidence.

“Digest,” Sun-Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL) February 6, 2005.

DNA left on cigarette butts found inside the apartment where Rita Bado, 45, and her daughter Lisa Bado, 20 were murdered 12 years ago, has been linked to a man in Wisconsin who was serving time for attempted murder. James Anthony Frederick, 44, has been charged with two counts of murder based on DNA evidence left at the crime.

“Review of killings,” Sunday Times (London) February 6, 2005, Sunday.

In the largest “cold case” review in British history, 50 detectives are being enlisted to reexamine over 2,100 killings during Northern Ireland's Troubles that ended in the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. The investigation will cost an estimated 25 million pounds and will examine 1,800 terrorist murders and 320 killings by security forces. The detectives will hopefully be able to advance the investigations with the use of DNA testing that was not available at the time of the Troubles.

“Law & Order,” Plain Dealer (Cleveland) February 5, 2005.

A DNA sample taken from a 27-year-old Ricky Townsend who was incarcerated for burglary, was matched through the DNA databank to the unsolved rape of a 13-year-old girl from 1997. County prosecutors believe that this is the first of many open rape cases in Cuyahoga County to be solved using the DNA from prison inmates.

“Arrest in trio of sex assaults,” The Toronto Star February 10, 2005.

Paul Anthony Demarco, 34, has been charged in 3 sexual assaults that have occurred over

the past 14 years. Demarco is also being investigated in similar cases in Canada and the U.S. Police used DNA evidence to link the 3 attacks to the assailant, one of which was on a 7-year-old girl.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

“Backlog in DNA testing reduced; ‘Dramatic’ drop omits some rapes,” Chicago Tribune February 7, 2005.

Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich announced the reduction of untested DNA samples in the state’s backlog from nearly 1,000 old criminal cases to only 158 untested cases, the lowest the backlog has been in five years. However, Chicago police say that that number does not include more than 1,000 untested DNA rape samples that are still waiting to be analyzed. The state numbers were generated in response to a new law that requires state police to report each year to the state legislature and the governor on the status of the DNA backlog and the plans for solving the problems.

“Baby DNA confusion; Parents unaware of gene bank,” Herald Sun (Melbourne, Australia) February 7, 2005.

In an effort to remove the secrecy and confusion regarding DNA testing, Health Minister Bronwyn Pike will supervise new regulations to guarantee parents are informed of their rights regarding DNA sampling of infants at birth, in samples called Guthrie Cards. The DNA of most Victorian babies since the 1960’s is stored in a privately owned gene bank, however, the uses of the gene bank are quite controversial and many parents are unaware of how the genetic information is used.

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

“Crime-Fighter Federal Funds Can Unlock the Power of DNA,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania) February 9, 2005.

President Bush has proposed \$ 236 million next year to increase federal funding for DNA testing and \$ 1 billion over the next five years.

Expanding the DNA Databank

“Suspect Arrested in 2001 Slaying,” Los Angeles Times February 9, 2005.

Through the passage of Proposition 69, police now have a suspect in the 2001 slashing death of 20-year-old Christina Burmeister. James Winslow Dixon, 32, was arrested for the murder after his DNA profile was submitted to the DNA database on December 30, 2004. Dixon was forced to provide a DNA sample before his released from prison in 1993. However, the DNA profile was not entered into CODIS because prior to the passage of Proposition 69, only DNA from certain felonies like rape and murder were entered. Since the passage of Proposition 69, about 10,000 names have been added to the database.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“Police lineups' flaws spur new approach; Standing suspects in a row has come under fire; Illinois is testing an identification method that may help avoid falsely imprisoning people Chicago Tribune February 7, 2005.

Since 1989, according to the Innocence Project, mistaken identification of suspects has been a factor in over 75 % of the 155 DNA exonerations in the US. This number could be reduced by half or more with the use of sequential lineups.

“Charges in '84 rape case dropped; No retrial for man exonerated by DNA,” Times-Picayune (New Orleans) February 5, 2005.

Prosecutors have dismissed charges against Denis Brown, 37, who spent 19 years in prison for a rape new DNA evidence says that he did not commit. Brown's case was brought to the attention of the New Orleans Innocence Projects, which used a 2001 Louisiana statute to secure DNA testing of evidence which excluded Brown as the rapist.