

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“DNA tests rule out suspect in Abigail Witchalls case” The Independent (London) May 26, 2005

Bloodstains found in a car belonging to a prime suspect in the attempted murder of Abigail Witchalls did not come from the 26-year-old mother, DNA tests have found. The results appear to rule out the suspect, and detectives are increasingly sure that the man responsible was 23-year-old Richard Cazaly, a part-time chef and gardener. Cazaly died, apparently from an overdose, in Edinburgh on 30 April.

“Crown adds to death list; Pickton now faces 27 murder charges” The Toronto Sun May 26, 2005

Robert Pickton, 55, was charged yesterday with 12 counts of first degree murder, bringing his total count to 27 murder charges. The Crown said that it expected to add another seven counts before the trial and that DNA samples of nine additional women were identified on Pickton’s pig farm.

“Man Freed After DNA Tests in Series of Rapes” Los Angeles Times May 25, 2005

Quintman Patterson, a 20-year-old man arrested on Thursday in connection with nine sexual assaults, was released when tests showed that Patterson’s DNA did not match samples recovered in several of the assaults being investigated.

“Murder--accused in court” The Press (Christchurch, New Zealand) May 25, 2005

Jule Patrick Burns, 36, was charged yesterday with the murder of prostitute Suzie Sutherland. The Press understands that DNA evidence has allegedly been linked to Burns, a native of South Africa who has been in New Zealand since 2003.

“BRIEFING” Rocky Mountain News (Denver, CO) May 25, 2005 Final Edition

John Allen Ricks, 31, has been charged with first degree sexual assault with force. The 1992 case was solved last month, when DNA evidence that had been submitted to a national database was matched to Ricks, who was on parole for robbery.

“Husband Charged in 1978 Va. Slaying; New Interviews, DNA Tests Bring Indictment in Case From Tysons Hotel” The Washington Post May 25, 2005

Police arrested Wilbert Abney yesterday for the 1978 murder of his wife, Mona Lisa Abney. DNA evidence recovered at the scene was recently reexamined and determined to be his. Abney turned himself in to authorities when he learned that he had been indicted in the slaying.

“DNA Leads to New Suspect In Killing of Indiana Girl” The New York Times May 21, 2005

Prosecutors charged Anthony Stockelman, 38, with the murder of 10-year-old Katie Collman. Stockelman was arrested on April 6 after a DNA sample he provided matched semen found at the crime scene and saliva on a cigarette butt found at the creek in which Katie was drowned. Forensic

analysts this week also connected fibers from Katie's body to carpet from Stockelman's mother's home, and Stockelman's DNA to the material that bound Katie's hands.

"Name mixup jails wrong guy" Daily News (New York) May 20, 2005

Wayne Thompson, 38, was arrested May 10 in his hometown of Port Charlotte, Florida, after New York authorities put out a warrant for a man by the same name. DNA evidence from burglaries on June 20 and 24 was linked to a convicted felon named Wayne Thompson, but the Wayne Thompson who was arrested has never been convicted of a felony. Thompson was released yesterday.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

"DNA fails foolproof test, says scientist" The Courier Mail (Queensland, Australia) May 20, 2005

Forensic biologist Simon Walsh said that as the DNA pool increased, so did the chances that an innocent person would be convicted through a coincidental match. Walsh said the only known case of a coincidental DNA match between two individuals had occurred in the UK, which had more than 2.5 million DNA profiles.

"Defense attorneys raise concerns about DNA sample mix-up" Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN) May 20, 2005, Metro Edition

A DNA sample in an Anoka County rape case accidentally got mixed into another sample during testing by the state Bureau of Criminal Apprehension lab, and some defense attorneys have raised concerns about how frequently that happens. Hennepin County public defender Pat Sullivan brought in a BCA scientist in a murder trial two weeks ago who said five cases in the last year had problems similar to the Anoka County rape case. Because it's difficult to do DNA testing without contamination, he believes the BCA should establish an error rate that could be presented to juries.

Expanding the DNA Databank

"Prop. 69 DNA Samples Lead to Two Arrests" Los Angeles Times May 20, 2005

DNA samples collected as a result of last year's passage of Proposition 69 resulted in arrests of Ian James Thomas for burglarizing 10 cars at a dealership, and of Jimmy Del Willis for a Victorville bank robbery in August 2003.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

"Weighing science of false confession" Newsday (New York) May 24, 2005

Richard Ofshe, a sociology professor at Berkeley, explained during a pretrial hearing yesterday how police persuade suspects to give confessions. The hearing was to determine whether Ofshe and other experts can testify for the defense in the retrial of John Kogut. Kogut confessed to the 1984 rape and murder of a 16-year-old girl, but his conviction was set aside when DNA evidence excluded him from the DNA found on the victim's body.