

DNA Current Events Week of September 12-18, 2005

Prepared by Rebecca Mitcheson

www.ASLME.org

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“LAW & ORDER,” *Tampa Tribune* (Florida) September 18, 2005.

DNA Test Points to Relative in Sexual Battery of Boy, 8

Police arrested Crescencio Beltran, 27, for sexual battery of a child on Aug. 28, after investigators linked him through DNA evidence recovered from the victim.

“CSI ADELAIDE ; Bashed, left for dead in home invasion,” *The Advertiser* September 17, 2005.

Police have been searching for the attacker of a woman who was almost murdered. The attacker escaped after he was interrupted, but left behind DNA evidence at the crime scene that has been helping investigators eliminate suspects.

“Natarus out of hospital,” *Chicago Sun-Times* September 17, 2005.

Man on trial in 2 murders

The trial of Geoffrey Griffin, 34, is set to start this Friday. Griffin is accused of a killing spree in 2000 of 8 women, but is only on trial for the murders of two of them. Police say the DNA links Griffin to all of the murders.

“Cannon jury gets a lesson in DNA,” *St. Petersburg Times* (Florida) September 17, 2005.

Gary Steven Cannon is on trial for the murder of 9-year-old Sharra Feger in 1997. The jury heard that the DNA evidence from the case is 2.9 billion times more likely to have come from Cannon than anyone else, according to statisticians and DNA experts.

“Metro Briefing: New York: Queens: DNA Match Leads to Rape Charge,” *The New York Times* September 13, 2005.

Gregory Stovall, 38, was charged with a 1997 rape based on DNA evidence from the crime. Stovall’s DNA was on record in the National DNA Databank after he was charged for burglary in Virginia.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

“Review: No errors in DNA handling,” *Chicago Tribune* September 17, 2005.

Virginia’s Governor Mark Warner’s Office has released the results of an independent review board that was formed to investigate the handling of DNA evidence at the state’s central crime laboratory that was found to have botched DNA testing in a capital murder case. The review board reported that the lab did not make technical errors in its processing of 123 cases involving DNA.

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

DNA Current Events Week of September 12-18, 2005

Prepared by Rebecca Mitcheson

www.ASLME.org

“Revamped lab aids cops; Forensic scientists, working in a better facility and with new equipment, offer police in Lake, Cook and McHenry Counties needed back up,” *Chicago Tribune* September 12, 2005.

The Northern Illinois Police Crime Laboratory has received about \$500,000 in federal grant money which it has used to move from the basement of a former court house to larger office, and buy new DNA testing equipment and fingerprinting gear. The lab is a non-profit run by the 37 police departments in the area, and is designed to process evidence quickly.

Expanding the DNA Databank

“Last week in Congress / How our representatives voted,” *Buffalo News* (New York) September 18, 2005.

The House passed a bill on Wednesday, the Children's Safety Act, that in part will nationalize the sex-offender database, and revise rules for DNA evidence.

DNA-based Post Conviction Challenges

“New trial in '75 rapes hinges on DNA tests Juneal Pratt is serving 32 to 90 years on a conviction of assaulting two girls,” *Omaha World-Herald* (Nebraska) September 14, 2005.

Attorneys for Juneal Pratt who was convicted 30 years ago for the rapes of two teenagers in Sioux City, are seeking a new trial because DNA testing of cells found on one of the victims have been found to exclude Pratt as the source. Other original DNA evidence from the rapes was lost in the Omaha police evidence storage.

“Public hearing ordered in case tied to crime lab; Court's decision could influence other appeals that question evidence handled by HPD,” *The Houston Chronicle* September 15, 2005.

After questions were raised regarding the handling of DNA evidence by the Houston Police Department crime lab, the Texas court of criminal appeals ordered a new hearing in a death row inmate's appeal. The ruling could affect many other cases involving the HPD's troubled crime lab.

DNA Evidence and Sentencing

“D.C.-area serial arsonist is sentenced to life term; Sweatt set more than 45 fires, killing two,” *The Baltimore Sun* September 13, 2005.

Thomas A. Sweatt, 50, was sentenced to life in prison for a series of arsons that killed two people in the DC area. Sweatt was linked to the fires through DNA evidence found at one of the crime scenes.

DNA Science and Technology

“Scottish Police Pioneer 'DNA' for Banknotes,” *The Scotsman* September 16, 2005

The Scottish police have been involved in creating “DNA” for banknotes, a synthetic DNA devised to help fight against bank robberies. The synthetic DNA was created by experts at the forensic science laboratory at Tayside Police.