

DNA Evidence and Crime-Solving

“METRO; News from around the Baltimore region,” The Baltimore Sun March 31, 2005.

Anne Arundel County prosecutors are pursuing the death penalty for Alexander Wayne Watson Jr., 35, who was recently linked to the murders of 3 women in 1988. DNA matches linked the cold cases to Watson.

“Neighbor is charged in fatal stabbing of Haltom City teen,” The Dallas Morning News March 31, 2005.

A 44-year-old man, Laverne Pratt, was charged with capital murder for the death of a 14-year-old girl. DNA evidence and statements by Pratt led to his arrest.

“Man sentenced for woman's rape,” Omaha World-Herald (Nebraska) March 31, 2005.

Ezekial F. Burr, 27, was sentenced to 12 ½ - 20 years in prison for raping a woman in 2004. Burr was convicted after police matched a DNA sample from the crime scene to a sample of Burr's in the state DNA database from a previous sexual assault on a child.

“Police Arrest D.C. Man in Death of N. Va. Teen; Victim's Family Fled Violence in Algeria,” The Washington Post March 31, 2005.

Prince George's County police have arrested a suspect in the 2000 murder of a 15-year-old girl. Irving Winslow, 22, was identified as the suspect through DNA evidence and cell phone records.

“Peabody woman tells of in-flight assault,” The Boston Herald March 30, 2005.

Deepak Jahagirdar, 56, is charged with sexual abuse and abusive sexual contact aboard an aircraft, after assaulting a woman in the seat next to him while she slept. The woman's DNA was found beneath Jahagirdar's fingernails, if convicted Jahagirdar could spend up to 20 years in jail.

“Child-rape suspect's image released,” The Guardian (London) March 30, 2005.

Police investigating the rape of a primary school girl as she slept, released a sketch of the man. Police are awaiting the results of forensic testing and will decide then whether or not to consider mass voluntary DNA testing of people matching the sketch.

“Man's Struggle Helped Solve Murder, Police Say,” Sun-Sentinel (Fort Lauderdale, FL) March 30, 2005.

Thomas Clark was 60-years-old when he was found strangled last month with blood smeared all over his shirt. Police reported that the blood was not his and DNA from the blood has led them to the man who now stands accused of the murder, 36-year-old Michael Merchison.

Murder Suspect No. 2 Convicted; Husband's ex-bandmate killed Pataskala woman, jury decides Columbus Dispatch (Ohio) March 29, 2005

Christopher Williams, 38, was convicted of the murder of Rhonda Boggs after DNA evidence from the murder was linked to Williams.

“Man charged in killing of prostitute in 1988,” The Seattle Times March 29, 2005.

Joseph Glen Tice, 47, has been charged with the 1988 murder of a prostitute. DNA evidence preserved from the young prostitute's body was submitted to the state's crime lab in 2003 and was matched to Tice who is currently serving time in prison for rape, burglary and assault.

“DNA Test Leads To Charges in 1996 Rape The Boston Globe March 26, 2005.

Reggie Edge, 36, has been charged in a 1996 rape after DNA from the victim was matched to his after a sample of Edge's DNA was uploaded into the state's DNA database as a result of a prior conviction.

“DNA links Akron man to series of rapes; Ex-probation officer in jail for unrelated violation Plain Dealer (Cleveland) March 26, 2005.

Nathan C. Ford, 37, has been linked to a series of attacks spanning from 1996 until last year, after DNA linked all the rapes. Ford's DNA was eventually matched to the rapes after he was forced to provide a DNA sample for a probation violation not connected with the rapes.

“DNA match leads police to suspect,” Petersburg Times (Florida) March 25, 2005.

George Sanders, 36, was arrested for the murder of a woman last July after DNA evidence from the crime was matched in the DNA database to a sample taken from a 1994 sexual assault case in Louisiana, which belonged to Sanders.

“Guilty Plea in 4 Sexual Assaults; SE Man, 21, Eluded Supervision of Probation Officers,” The Washington Post March 30, 2005.

21-year-old Anthony Barber pleaded guilty of committing a series of sexual assaults while he was supposed to be under the supervision of probation officers for a prior sexual assault charge. After Barber’s previous charge, a superior court clerk failed to note that probation was part of Barber’s sentence, which resulted in Barber not meeting with his probation officers on a regular basis and failing to submit a DNA sample to the sex offender registry.

Controversies Concerning DNA Databanks and Laboratories

“HPD lab probe gets new set of eyes; Council selects ex-federal official to head review,” The Houston Chronicle March 31, 2005.

Houston City Council approved Wednesday the hiring of Michael R. Bromwich to conduct a review of the work done in the Houston Police Departments Crime Labs dating back to 1987. Bromwich will be paid as much as \$2.2 million to carry out the investigation.

“Tighter DNA law sought; Police would need legal cause to take a sample,” Omaha World-Herald (Nebraska) March 31, 2005.

Under a new bill advanced Wednesday in the Legislature, Police could not force people to provide a DNA sample for a criminal investigation if there is no legal cause to suspect them. The bill was introduced in response to an Omaha Police Investigation into a serial rapist last year of some black employees at the Omaha Public Power District who were required to provide a DNA sample. The bill would also require that DNA samples of people cleared as a suspect be destroyed.

DNA Database Funding and Backlog

“Migrants' anxious kin finally may get answers; Mexican government is paying for DNA tests by Baylor prof on victims in paupers' graves,” San Antonio Express-News (Texas) March 30, 2005.

The Mexican Foreign Affairs Department is creating a contract with a second year science professor, Lori Baker, from Baylor University, to finance her crusade to unearth the identities of immigrants whose bodies lie unidentified in paupers’ graves. The System of the Identification of Remains and Finding Individuals is a program developed by the Mexican Government in response to inquiries from family members trying to find family members who disappeared after trying to illegally cross into the US. This action to finalize a \$150,000 one year grant with Lori Baker will greatly increase chances of producing matching DNA.

“DNA Test Buoys Rob Busts,” March 29, 2005 Daily News (New York).

A DNA testing program that has been used to catch burglars in Queens is going citywide according to Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly. The DNA work was paid for by a grant from the National Institute of Justice.

Expanding the DNA Databank

“Police inaugurate two new forensic labs,” The Jerusalem Post March 29, 2005.

The Israel Police team of forensic experts has inaugurated two new laboratories and an innovative advanced microscope. The laboratory will house a DNA database to identify perpetrators in the future. Police are awaiting the passage of legislation to allow the database to operate.

DNA-Based Post Conviction Challenges

“Officials: DNA tests clear man convicted of girl's '92 murder; Found guilty by 2 juries, he'd claimed confessions coerced,” Chicago Sun-Times March 27, 2005.

New DNA tests have now ruled out 32-year-old Juan Rivera of the rape and murder of an 11-year-old girl in 1992. Rivera is currently serving a life sentence for the murder after having confessed to the crime shortly after its occurrence. Rivera claims that the confession was coerced. A new trial is being sought based on the test results. Rivera's defense will ask the state's attorney's office to submit the genetic profile from the evidence to the National DNA Database.

“Risking freedom to argue innocence,” St. Petersburg Times (Florida) March 27, 2005.

14-year-old twins Brett and Blake, who have just finished serving sentences for allegedly raping a 19-year-old man with disabilities two years ago, are seeking to now prove their innocence. At the time of their trials, the court appointed attorneys entered into a plea bargain with the prosecution, stating that they boys would plead guilty in exchange for a two year sentence. The defense attorneys entered into the bargain without waiting to see the outcome of DNA testing of evidence. The twins' new lawyer is working on a motion to get the DNA testing completed in order to withdraw the twins' plea.

DNA Science and Technology

“City to Speed up Hospital Aid for Victims of Sexual Assault,” The New York Times March 31, 2005.

The City of New York is planning to expand a program to expedite treatment at city hospitals for victims of sexual assault. Last year the Sexual Assault Response Team was formed by the administration to treat sexual assault victims within an hour of their arrival.