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Prison inmate charged in Bonnie Craig killing

DNA Database connects man held Outside to 1994 slaying of Anchorage teen.

By MEGAN HOLLAND
Anchorage Daily News
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A grand jury has charged a former Anchorage man with murder in the slaying of Bonnie Craig, an 18-year-old college student who was raped and savagely beaten before she toppled over a cliff into a creek in 1994.

Kenneth Dion, now 37 and in prison in New Hampshire for a series of armed robberies, has also been charged with rape in one of the most highly publicized and emotional slayings in Anchorage in recent decades.

DNA evidence that prosecutors say links Dion to the slaying was central to the solution, according to cold-case investigators.

"It's a major step in a case that was of significance to Anchorage and a burden to the family for years," prosecutor Pat Gullufsen said.

Dion was on probation on an Anchorage robbery conviction and had been out of prison for only a few months when Bonnie was killed.

"Just to know he's already in jail and there's no way he can hurt anyone else is a relief," said Bonnie's mother, Karen Foster, reached Monday morning. She said she had been told in January that charges could be coming in the slaying of her daughter, who had been a high school wrestler and had taught swimming to junior high kids.

Troopers were able to match semen found on Bonnie with Dion through a national computer database of DNA profiles. Dion was never known to troopers and wasn't a suspect in the case until the DNA match came back in November.

"There is no doubt about this one," trooper cold-case investigator Jim Stogsdill said of the match. "There's no confusion."

Dion likely did not know Bonnie, Stogsdill said, but apparently picked her up as she walked to a bus stop on Lake Otis Parkway on the way to an early-morning class on Sept. 28, 1994, at the University of Alaska Anchorage. Her body was found that afternoon by a hiker at McHugh Creek.

FORT RICHARDSON

Dion, originally from New Hampshire, came to Alaska as a soldier and was stationed at Fort Richardson, then stayed for a couple of years after he left the military. He did not have a job at the time of Bonnie's slaying and was in and out of jail on robbery and assault charges. He was 25 years old when Bonnie was killed.

He was in jail in Alaska at the end of July 1994, two months before Bonnie's death. And he

returned to jail on a probation violation about two months after the slaying.

Troopers say Bonnie was beaten and raped before she fell off a cliff near the Seward Highway. Her body was found floating in McHugh Creek near Mile 112.

Troopers have said she died of a head injury and hypothermia.

As to how Bonnie got to McHugh Creek, 10 miles from her home, or where she was raped, or whether she was struck in the head by her killer or she injured her head in the fall off the 30-foot cliff, "we can only surmise," Stogsdill said.

The hunt for her killer mesmerized Anchorage. Family and friends posted photocopies of the doe-eyed teenager who graduated from Service High School, asking for anyone with information about her killer to call troopers. She was not the kind of young woman to get in trouble. She lived with her parents and played the violin. She didn't drink.

Clues, though, were few and far between. And as the years passed, the crime remained unsolved and a reminder to young women walking alone that a brutal rapist had not been found.

As authorities kept looking, technology advanced to better match DNA, and more people were put into a national database.

DNA from Bonnie's case was put in the national database in 2000. New Hampshire authorities entered Dion's information in November 2006. Immediately, when workers with the Alaska state crime lab were conducting their weekly routine check of the database on Nov. 9, they had a hit.

Tammy Gregory, who was married to Dion at the time Bonnie was killed, broke down crying when reached Monday afternoon in Kenai. She said Dion was in and out of jail, on drugs, and generally abusive during those years. She hasn't seen or spoken to him in a decade. She doesn't want to remember that time in her life.

But still, she said, "I would never have thought he was capable of that. I would never have thought I was associated with someone like that."

NEW HAMPSHIRE RECORD

Dion, who left Alaska around 1996, made it back to New Hampshire, where he committed a series of robberies beginning in May 2002, according to authorities there and in Alaska. One robbery was of a pharmacy. He didn't have a weapon but, using his finger, pretended to, said Tom Velardi, deputy county attorney for Strafford County, N.H.

Dion ordered the pharmacy workers to give him OxyContin, a prescription painkiller similar to heroin that has become a popular street drug. "He had very serious addiction to it," Velardi said.

After the initial DNA match in November, authorities collected new DNA from Dion, which was taken back to Anchorage and matched again, Stogsdill said.

The grand jury in Anchorage indicted Dion on one count of first-degree murder, two counts of second-degree murder and one count of first-degree sexual assault. The two counts of second-degree murder are because it could have been a situation in which Dion didn't intend to kill Bonnie, Stogsdill said.

According to the New Hampshire Department of Corrections, Dion was sentenced to 15 years in

prison in February 2003 for five robberies that occurred from spring 2002 until he was incarcerated. Dion was living in Rochester, N.H., before he went to prison. According to the department's Web site, he is eligible for parole in August 2008.

Alaska troopers and New Hampshire authorities interviewed Dion recently, but Stogsdill said he revealed little information.

"This is a long-overdue resolution to the Bonnie Craig case," Stogsdill said.

Bonnie's mother said the news of the charges is a relief, but it also opens old wounds and memories of what happened to her little girl. She said she doesn't want a trial to deepen those wounds. She hopes Dion will admit to the crime and make a deal with prosecutors. That would be easier, she said.

Alaska authorities will try to have him extradited here to face the new charges, Gullufsen said. And, if he is convicted, he will likely finish out his sentence in New Hampshire, then transfer to an Alaska prison.

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Masters released from jail

By Howard Pankratz
The Denver Post
Posted: 01/22/2008 01:02:20 PM MST

Tim Masters leaves the Larimer County courtroom where he was released after serving nearly a decade of a life term in prison for the murder of Peggy Hettrick in 1987. (THE DENVER POST | CRAIG F. WALKER)

FORT COLLINS — Special prosecutors today said that DNA testing of murder victim Peggy Hettrick's clothing revealed the partial profiles of three men but that the profiles excluded Tim Masters as the source of the DNA.

Minutes after the prosecutors handed their findings to Judge Joe Weatherby, Weatherby vacated the judgment of conviction and sentence against Masters, who was immediately released from custody on a $200,000 personal recognizance bond.

Masters' next court date is Feb. 5, after the Larimer County district attorney assesses the status of the case.

A short time after Masters' release, longtime Colorado defense attorney David Wymore — who led the effort to free Masters for a crime Masters maintained he
didn't commit — praised former employees of the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, the FBI and Fort Collins Police Department for their help in freeing Masters.

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FAIRBANKS
Daily News - Miner

Man gets four years in rape of woman in Fairbanks

By Chris Freiberg

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FAIRBANKS — Late in the summer of 2000, a woman who describes herself as a proud Inupiaq Eskimo was getting a ride home from a cab driver on the Steese Highway. The driver, afraid she was going to vomit in the back of the cab, made her get out of car a few blocks from her home and walk the rest of the way.

As she approached the Steese Highway bridge over the Chena River, a man attacked her, knocking her unconscious. When she awoke a few minutes later, she was in a nearby wooded area and he was on top of her, raping her. He took her shirt and covered her face with her jacket so she couldn't see him. He tried to take her jacket too, and she had to beg to get it back so she could have something to cover herself for the walk home.

After a few minutes, the attack was over. The man — or as she called him Monday, "the thing under the bridge" — left the area. She went home and reported the crime, afraid that she could run into her unknown assailant again at anytime.

"From that day on, living in this town, at anytime, I could possibly run into my rapist," she said in court Monday, holding back tears. The News-Miner does not usually identify the victims of sexual assaults.

For more than half a decade, she waited for Fairbanks police to identify her attacker. After collecting DNA evidence from an unrelated case in 2007, they found a match. Her attacker was identified as John F. Roberts, a 26-year-old who has been in and out of jail on a variety of petty charges since he was 14 years old. Prosecutors described his juvenile record as "horrific" and said he had zero chance of rehabilitation.

On Monday, after striking a plea agreement with prosecutors, he was sentenced to serve four years in prison for raping the woman on that late August night in 2000. He also will be on probation for five years and will have to register as a sex offender. The sentence would have

been more severe, but sexual assault carried a lesser penalty in 2000 than it does today.

Roberts went to trial last year on the sexual assault charges, but a mistrial was declared after three days because of mishandled evidence.

"After the mistrial, I was advised to accept the plea agreement, which I am unhappy with to the say the least," the woman said. "I did it because I have to save my sanity."

"Too soon, a rapist will be walking the streets where you have the right to be safe with your children, your mothers, your aunts, your grandmothers," she added.

Superior Court Judge Randy Olsen empathized with the woman, agreeing that the laws do not provide for adequate punishment in a case like this.

"In other cultures or in earlier times, there would be castration or (he would be) drawn and quartered, and even then people wouldn't be satisfied," he said.

Roberts showed no emotion as the woman, her husband and her best friend each took the stand and told the court how their lives had been affected by the rape nearly nine years ago. Roberts' attorney offered no defense, only wishes that Roberts will turn his life around while behind bars.

Roberts apologized to the woman and her husband and said that he's realized he has done little with his life. He said he has found religion in jail and hopes to do something to improve his circumstances when he's released.

"Nothing I can say to you can change what I did, and for that, I'm sorry," he said.