

Uncle Bill's

Bathroom Reader

The More You Go, The More You Know

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The Case Goes Cold, but The Trash is Gold

In June of 1993, Jeanne Ann Childs was stabbed to death in a Minneapolis apartment. At the crime scene, DNA was located and collected on places that included the comforter on the bed, a towel in the bathroom, and a washcloth on the toilet seat. But, the case had gone cold. Authorities were unable to match the DNA to any suspects, and for 26 years the DNA evidence has been filed away.

Since, more than 15 million people have offered their DNA to be used for genealogy services. Those services provided the clue that authorities needed. One of the popular genealogy services had collected DNA from a client that was consistent with DNA found at the crime scene. Either Jerry Westrom, himself, a current suspect for the crime, or a relative, provided Mr. Westrom's DNA to the genealogy service. But that evidence was not enough. Authorities needed an additional DNA sample from Mr. Westrom to tie him to the crime. The clue would come from the trash. Authorities collected a thrown away napkin, that Mr. Westrom had used to wipe his mouth after eating a hot dog at a hockey game. And while Mr.

Westrom denies involvement and intends to plead not guilty according to one of his lawyers, the use of DNA evidence from genealogy services raises serious concerns.

What most people are unaware of is that many popular at-home genetic testing companies share data with federal investigators. Others such as GEDmatch, an open-source ancestry site, has updated its privacy policy to inform users that DNA evidence may be shared with law enforcement to solve murder and sexual assault cases. But even if



genealogy companies do not willfully share DNA information with law enforcement, court orders often force the production of such information, the legality of which legislatures and courts will have to consider. This is sure to be yet another situation where the lines between privacy and access to information by authorities will be tested.

A Lawyer Joke

A lawyer's dog ran away from home, and headed straight for the local butcher shop. The dog ran inside and

grabbed a choice portion of steak and sat outside the butcher shop eating the steak. The butcher noticed the dog had a collar tag, and used the information on the tag to locate the owner of the dog. Angrily, the butcher went to the lawyer's home, knocked on the door, and when the lawyer answered the door asked, "If an unleashed dog runs into my butcher shop and steals a piece of meat, do I have a right to demand payment from the dog's owner?" The lawyer answered, "Yes, that is what the law provides." The butcher then replied, "In that case, you owe me \$10 for the steak your dog stole today." The lawyer promptly wrote the butcher a check for the full amount. Three days later, the butcher receives a bill from the lawyer stating "\$40 dollars due for consultation."

