

"Fingerprints Still Have Final Word"

By Sylvia Terrell Buffington

Prior to 1903, many had great confidence in the identification system devised by Alphonse Bertillon. However, that method was proven fallible with the Will West-William West case. Well, again fingerprints have set the record straight when the identities of two men, with similar names and features, were questionable. In this progressive age of forensic science, as DNA is fast becoming so familiar to everyone, I personally am proud to be a latent print examiner and know without a doubt that "fingerprints still have the final word." The following article appeared in, "The Richmond Times Dispatch," Friday, June 5, 1998:

Suspect wrong Robert Lewis, fingerprints show

by JIM MASON
TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

It was a case of mistaken identity.

Police thought bearded and burly 21-year-old Robert Anthony Lewis, brought to court Tuesday from the City Jail, was bearded and burly 28-year-old Robert Lee Lewis, charged with abduction, rape and robbery in attacks on three city women.

Standing before Richmond General District Judge D. E. Cheek, however, Robert Anthony Lewis protested he wasn't the other Lewis.

A quick fingerprint check by police proved he wasn't.

In court Tuesday, after the discovery that Robert Anthony Lewis wasn't Robert Lee Lewis, a prosecutor moved to dismiss the charges against Robert Lee Lewis.

Cheek did.

A short time later, however, police obtained new warrants charging Robert Lee Lewis in the three cases.

He's charged with abducting, raping and robbing one woman on Feb. 2, robbing another woman on January 3, and raping a third woman on March 11.

As of last night, Robert Lee Lewis hadn't been arrested.

Meanwhile, Robert Anthony Lewis is being held in jail without bond on different charges of abducting and attempting to rape a woman on May 18 in South Richmond.

"We weren't trying to railroad this guy," police spokesman Bill Chomey said of Robert Anthony Lewis. "They just appeared to be the same person. But after we did the fingerprints, we found out they weren't."