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DANIEL ANDERSEN EXONERATED AFTER SERVING OVER 27 YEARS FOR MURDER

Cook County State's Attorney's Office drops charges after 'compelling' new DNA evidence

CHICAGO -- Marking yet another exoneration in a Chicago false confession case, Daniel Andersen, a joint client of [Northwestern University School of Law's Center on Wrongful Convictions of Youth](#) (CWCY) and the [Exoneration Project](#), has been officially cleared of the 1980 murder and attempted rape convictions that cost him over 27 years in prison.

Today, the Cook County State's Attorney's Office formally dropped all charges against Andersen following Cook County Circuit Court Judge Alfredo Maldonado's July 20 decision to vacate Andersen's convictions based on new DNA evidence that the judge called "extraordinarily compelling."

A Northwestern Law connection led the CWCY to represent Andersen and re-investigate his case. Andersen's cousin, Bernard "Bud" Bobber, a 1987 alumnus of the Law School, is a partner in the Milwaukee law firm of Foley and Lardner, LLP. Bobber was a law classmate of Northwestern Law Professor Steven Drizin.

Bobber, a civil litigator, had tried to clear his cousin's name by filing a clemency petition on Andersen's behalf. When that petition was denied, he called his former classmate Drizin and asked for the Center's help.

"If Bud had not vouched for Daniel, I am not sure we would have taken Daniel's case," Drizin said. "It is doubtful whether any other innocence organization would have taken Daniel's case because he had already served his time in prison and was out on parole. We made an exception. It was the personal Northwestern connection that made all the difference."

Andersen's conviction stemmed from the homicide of Cathy Trunko, a young woman from Chicago's Back of the Yards neighborhood, who was found stabbed to death on the 4900 block of South Paulina Street on Jan. 19, 1980. Police believed a bloody knife found two days after her stabbing in a neighbor's yard was the murder weapon. Andersen was 19, sleep deprived and drunk when he confessed to killing Trunko with this bloody

knife after 16 hours of police interrogation. At trial, prosecutors said the blood type on the knife matched Trunko's and argued that Andersen's confession to killing Trunko with that very knife proved his guilt. He was convicted by a jury and sentenced to 55 years in prison.

The new DNA results prove that the bloody knife was not the murder weapon and that Andersen's confession was false and wholly unreliable. DNA testing on the knife showed that neither Trunko's blood nor Andersen's DNA was on the knife, proving it was not the murder weapon after all.

As Judge Maldonado concluded, "the knife was the lynchpin of the State's case" against Andersen; without it, there is absolutely no physical evidence linking Andersen to this crime. Additional testing showed that the victim had two male profiles underneath her fingernails, both of which excluded Andersen. This fingernail DNA evidence is truly exculpatory because the evidence indicates that Trunko defended herself against her attacker and that at least one, if not both, of these DNA profiles belong to her assailant(s).

Andersen, now 54, spent 27-1/2 years in prison until his release in 2007. Despite being out of prison for eight years, Andersen has been required to register as a sex offender. His lengthy prison sentence and murder and sex offense convictions have greatly inhibited his ability to find employment, housing, and move on with his life. He has continued to fight to clear his name in the eight years since his release. The July ruling overturning his conviction represented a huge step toward doing so, according to his attorneys.

Andersen is represented by Megan Crane, Laura Nirider and Steven Drizin, attorneys from Northwestern Law's Center on Wrongful Conviction of Youth, and Joshua Tepfer of the Exoneration Project at the University of Chicago.

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