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Defense in murder trial raises questions about 28-year-old evidence

FARMINGTON -- With less than a month before trial the defense attorney in a 28-year-old cold case murder trial has raised new questions about a pair of panties from which DNA evidence was extracted.

A blood spot from those panties once worn by 25-year-old victim Karin Strom contained DNA belonging to Edward Lewis Owens, 58, of Kaysville, and prompted the current first-degree felony murder charge against him.

Strom was strangled in the Woods Cross home she once shared with her husband on June 6, 1980. Strom was wearing the panties at the time of her death.

Defense attorney Michael Studebaker said his DNA expert has raised questions about the integrity of the panties. Specifically, that expert says two holes were cut from the panties for which no report indicates what was found, whether and when the samples were tested nor what was discovered, Michael Studebaker said Friday.

"I want to know what it is and what's on them," Studebaker said.

Davis County Attorney Troy Rawlings said during the pretrial hearing that an explanation for those holes could be found in the 1,600 pages of discovery documents provided to the defense, but did not provide specifics.

Studebaker said after the hearing that perhaps an explanation can be found in the discovery, but he hopes to receive more specific explanations in the near future.

Questions prompted by Studebaker's DNA expert derailed the prosecution of Owens in 2007, prompting prosecutors to dismiss the murder charge that year. They refiled the charge in 2008 based on new DNA evidence that had never previously been tested.

At this time, a trial is scheduled to begin March 23.

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