

Palm prints link Bowman to death scene

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SANTA CRUZ — Edward Bowman's palm prints were on the back door of the Greek Orthodox church and in the hallway where Father John Karastamatis was murdered, an expert testified Wednesday.

"The identifications were positive," said Martin Collins, a latent-print analyst for the state Department of Justice in Sacramento.

Collins said he worked some 300 hours on the case after Father John's battered and stabbed body was found on May 19, 1985.

He said he compared some 100 latent prints lifted from the murder scene with ink prints of some 60 to 70 people obtained by police.

The fingerprints were taken to both find a suspect and rule out those people who would be expected to have been in the church.

Bowman's prints were sent early on. Not only had Father John's son, Foti, visited Bowman the night of the murder, but Bowman's wife, Anna, was a volunteer secretary for the priest.

But, because police did not send his palm prints, Bowman did not come up a match.

Charles "Stoney" Brook, an investigator with the District Attorney's Office, conceded to Public Defender Jerry Christensen that that was an error.

He explained that an officer checked and found Bowman's prints on file with the Police Department for Bowman's taxicab driver's permit. He sent those, but the card contained fingerprints only.

It was not until the middle of December when police focused in on Bowman as a suspect that they obtained a warrant, picked up Bowman at the Yellow Cab Co. and took him to the Police Department for new prints.

This time they took a palm print. About Jan. 12, four days after Anna Bowman committed suicide and Edward Bowman was arrested in connection with Father John's murder, Collins matched that palm print with one lifted from the pushbar on the rear door of the church.

"The print on the pushbar was

made by the right palm of Edward Bowman," Collins told Judge Richard Kessell.

Collins said two other experts in his lab confirmed the match.

The news excited investigators, who had Bowman in custody but little physical evidence to link him to the scene.

But, even though that palm print was on the rear door and bloody footprints led from the murder scene out that door, District Attorney Art Danner said he felt more evidence was needed. Danner knew there was no way of saying the palm print was made the night of the murder.

Collins confirmed that in his testimony Wednesday. He said he could not tell how long that palm print had been on the pushbar.

On Feb. 7, Collins came to Santa

Bowman-

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Cruz, where he met with Danner, Brook and Santa Cruz Police Det. Ron Truhitte.

They went over all the evidence collected at the church, including a piece of the hallway wall on which Collins had found a bloody palm print.

Collins told Danner that the print was not real clear, but there was a chance that spraying a chemical, ninhydrin, on the wallboard might enhance the print.

Latent-print analysts, Collins testified, use that chemical to bring out prints on paper by interacting with body fluids on the prints. He said he used it once under similar circumstances and it worked. But, he said, it's tricky and the print can easily be lost.

Danner authorized the attempt and, Collins said, he sprayed the panel. Ninhydrin takes many hours to work, Collins said, so he left the piece of woodwork overnight.

The next day, he said, he found more of the print had developed. "I found the enhanced print was made by the right palm of Ed Bowman," said Collins. He said he was convinced "beyond any doubt." Three other technicians agreed, he said.

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