



May 4, 2023

G.O.L.D. Unit Defendant Pleads Guilty and Sentenced to 10 Years in Prison for Sexually Assaulting a Nine-Year-Old Boy in Brooklyn in 1997

CLEVELAND - Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley announced that the defendant Dennis Gribble, 73, pleaded guilty and sentenced to 10 years in prison for sexually assaulting a nine-year-old boy in Brooklyn in 1997. The arrest was the result of the efforts of the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Office's G.O.L.D. Unit (Genetic Operations Linking DNA).

"Today is a victory for justice," said Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley. "Law enforcement and this victim worked together to solve this case. The victim's determined pursuit of the individual who assaulted him, along with advances in forensic science and genealogical research, were key in Gribble's apprehension and conviction."

In 2019 and 2020, the CCPO's Sexual Assault Kit Task Force (SAKTF)* was awarded grants from the U.S. Department of Justice's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI). Part of that funding helped launch the office's G.O.L.D. Unit in October 2020. The G.O.L.D. Unit contracted with genealogy vendor Gene by Gene for a pilot project that included genealogical searches for 20 DNA profiles connected to cold case sexual assaults. In 2021 and 2022, the G.O.L.D. Unit was awarded additional BJA SAKI grants to continue genealogical testing of sexual assault cold cases and additional profiles were submitted.

John Doe #147

On August 8, 1997, the 9-year-old male victim was walking alone around the woods near North Amber Drive and Plainfield Avenue in Brooklyn. The victim saw Dennis Gribble and Gribble said his son was riding around on a dirt bike and that he needed help finding a gas can. Gribble led the victim further into the woods and told the victim to lie down on his stomach. He then climbed on top of the victim and sexually assaulted him. Brooklyn Police Department responded to the scene and the victim was transported to a nearby hospital where sexual assault kit evidence was collected.

In 2013, the CCPO assembled the SAKTF to address investigative leads that resulted from the testing of previously unsubmitted sexual assault kits primarily between 1993 to 2011. The victim's sexual assault kit evidence was tested by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) as part of the initiative. However, Gribble's DNA did not produce any matches in the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) – the FBI's national DNA database. Gribble's DNA profile – unknown at the time – was then indicted as "John Doe #147" as a means to ensure that the statute of limitations did not run out.

The CCPO and the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation's DNA lab (BCI), reviewed the DNA evidence in 2021 for potential forensic genetic genealogy. The DNA profile for John Doe #147 was submitted to Gene by Gene, where investigative genetic genealogists were able to connect John Doe #147's DNA profile to that of Dennis Gribble.



Investigators then obtained Gribble's DNA and sent it to BCI to be tested. The tests confirmed that the DNA in the victim's sexual assault kit evidence matched that of Gribble. The original John Doe #147 indictment was amended to reflect his true name as the defendant.

On May 4, 2023, Dennis Gribble pleaded guilty to the following charge:

- **One count of Rape**

***SAKTF / G.O.L.D Unit History**

Since its inception, the Task Force has completed 7,900 investigations that have resulted in over 850 defendants indicted, the highest number of any SAKTF in the country. The number of indictments includes over 1,000 victims as several defendants are convicted or alleged serial offenders. Of those cases, the Task Force has secured over a 93% conviction rate with offenders' average prison sentence being approximately 10 years.

As the original 7,026 investigations neared completion, the CCPO contacted the Cleveland Division of Police (CPD) Sex Crimes Unit who indicated there was a need for further investigation on sexual assault kits that have been tested by the Cuyahoga County Medical Examiner's Office (CCMEO) between 2012 and 2019. The G.O.L.D. Unit was formed to conduct follow-up investigations and review unknown DNA profiles to determine if they may be eligible for additional testing with new technology. In 2021 and 2022, the G.O.L.D. Unit was awarded additional DOJ SAKI grants to continue genealogical testing of sexual assault cold cases and additional profiles were submitted.

The unit's work includes the Sexual Assault Kit Task Force, the Cold Case Homicide project, Genealogy Testing of unsolved cold cases and the Lawfully Owed DNA project. To date, 29 DNA profiles of indicted rapists have been submitted and five cases have been solved using genealogy.