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How State Crime Lab Aids Local Police Investigations

By MAURIE WALKER
PLYMOUTH

A single strand of human hair, or a licked stamp, may sound insignificant to the layman, but to scientists at the Michigan State Police crime laboratory in Plymouth, these items can tell a great deal.

"From one strand of hair we can tell the person's blood type. The saliva on a stamp also will reveal the type of blood the user has."

This explanation of the exacting crime lab work was given by Sgt. Ken Christensen, the man in charge of



AIMING — Trooper Merlin Mowery, latent print specialist, photographs a gun to look for prints.



BULLET TEST — Trooper Robert White, one of the lab specialists, peers through the Forensic Comparison microscope for bullet comparison.

training their education by attending various colleges and universities. Police work today requires well-trained men."

A look at the seemingly complicated equipment, test tubes and charts at the Plymouth lab supports this statement.

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THE SPECIALISTS' working in the lab are experts in narcotics, ballistics and analyzing fingerprints, blood, or in fact any evidence found at the scene of a crime, be it murder, theft or a fire.

"All the evidence compiled in the John Norman Collins case is assembled here," Christensen said. "Although his second trial is being held in California, we are obliged to testify in the case."

Christensen said his department is currently working with the Wayne County Sheriff and Novi police in the January murder of John Milton Keyes and the disappearance of his companion, Kathy Radke, of Novi.

EVIDENCE OF the crime lab's efficiency is revealed in a Federal Bureau of Investigation report which states that Michigan is the lowest contributor of case work to the FBI lab of any state in the union.

In addition to blood examinations, latent prints, analyzing drugs and tracing evidence through hair, fibers, and fire arms identification, the

laboratory has bomb disposal experts.

"Our men are called upon to examine packages suspected of containing bombs as well as destroying bombs," Christensen explained.

for local police departments in the area.

The Plymouth lab was originally set up as an experiment. A second satellite lab is located in Warren and a third is being planned for Holland this summer. It will serve the western and southwestern parts of the state.

Plans under consideration for moving the Plymouth lab to larger quarters in two vacant dormitory buildings on the Sheldon Rd. Child Development Center property in Northville Township are being watched closely by Sgt. Christensen and his staff.

"We are all looking forward to the possibility of moving to larger quarters," the sergeant said.

"I feel that if the Northville buildings do become available, we could develop the best crime laboratory in the county. This proposed site would triple the space we now have and we certainly could use it."

THE LABORATORY works free of charge to other police agencies.

And the men testify at trials at no cost. The lab serves all police agencies and is available to 80 different police jurisdictions in Wayne, Washtenaw, Monroe counties and part of Oakland County, during their "spare time," the men conduct seminars

Hearthside Is Retailing Finalist

The Hearthside furniture store, 15700 Middle Belt, Livonia, is a finalist in the 23rd annual "brand name retailer-of-the-year" competition, sponsored by the national Brand Names Foundation of New York City.

This year's 237 finalists are top firms in 24 categories of retailing. They were selected from hundreds of retailers nominated by manufacturers, media, and association members of the Brand Names Foundation, according to H. Ford Perine, foundation president.

Walter F. Emig, president of the Hearthside, said, "As Michigan's largest Ethan Allen dealer, we asked our entry on our consistent promotion of this fine line of American traditional furniture."

Winners will be honored at the annual meeting of the Brand Names Foundation in New York early in April.

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