

Officer may be linked to fires

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TOLEDO

The University of Toledo police officer accused of killing Melissa Anne Herstrum may have set nine fires in three university buildings on Labor Day weekend, according to university officials.

The fires broke out in a 24-hour period from Aug. 31 to Sept. 1. Campus security officials were checking payroll records yesterday to see whether the officer, Jeffrey Hodge, worked those hours.

UT spokesman Fred Mollenkopf said two fires were set at University Hall, one in the campus library and one in the biology-chemistry building.

Hodge was arrested Saturday in the shooting death of Herstrum at a remote campus parking lot on Jan. 26. Herstrum, who had been shot 14 times, was found the morning of Jan. 27.

Police also were trying to connect Hodge with shots fired into McKinnon Hall, a women's dormitory, Jan. 20. In that incident, six shots were fired at a room and barely missed a student.

Yesterday, bond was set at \$1 million for Hodge, who is charged with aggravated murder in Herstrum's death. Hodge did not enter a plea in his brief appearance before Toledo Municipal Court Judge Denise A. Dartt.

Hodge, 22, was being held in a private cell on the medical floor of Lucas County Jail for his own protection.

Hodge, a University of Toledo graduate, had been a dispatcher for the campus police force and Lucas County Sheriff's Department. In March he became a campus police officer.

Sgt. Art Marx, a Toledo police spokesman, said police had not recovered a 9mm weapon, which would help them link the dormitory shooting and Herstrum's death.

Hodge had investigated the dormitory gunshots and was on the scene when Herstrum's body was found.

Suburban Ottawa Hills police were interviewing victims of a Jan. 26 accident at which Herstrum and Hodge probably met.

Police said Herstrum, a nursing student, stopped to help at the accident and that Hodge was at the scene.

Her coat, which police said was



MELISSA ANNE HERSTRUM:
Her coat was found 1½ miles from where she was shot to death.

missing Friday, was recovered after a viewer saw a sketch of it on a Toledo television station.

"We had it 45 minutes after the newscast," Marx said. A passer-by found the coat near the accident scene, 1½ miles from where Herstrum was shot.

The coat was not far from Herstrum's driver's license, found in a snowbank Thursday night.

Further court proceedings against Hodge were continued until Tuesday to allow him more time to consult with his lawyer, Alan S. Konop of Toledo.

After yesterday's arraignment, Konop said his client had been through a "traumatic experience," being arrested for murder. He said Hodge had no prior arrests, was a good student in high school and in college and came from "a good, hard-working family."

Hodge's father is a longtime factory worker, and his mother works at a Toledo hospital, Konop said. "They consented to a search of their home" and did not ask to see a search warrant, the lawyer said.

The house where Hodge lived with his wife, a Norwegian exchange student, was searched Saturday.

Konop said he would seek a change of venue in the case because



AP/JOHN COMES

Jeffrey Hodge, 22, right, stands next to his lawyer, Alan Konop, in Toledo Municipal Court yesterday as a judge sets Hodge's bond at \$1 million for the fatal shooting of Melissa Anne Herstrum.

it had already been tainted by "one of the most irresponsible acts of journalism I've ever seen."

Konop said he was referring to Thursday's editorial in the Toledo Blade and an accompanying cartoon.

The editorial, under the headline "Find this killer . . . now," said police were not doing enough to find Herstrum's killer and chided police for al-

lowing key investigators to attend an unsolved-murders seminar in nearby Perrysburg.

The editorial cartoon is of an electric chair and has the caption "This seat reserved for Melissa Anne Herstrum's killer."

Bob France, a free-lance writer from Findlay, O., contributed to this article.