

Murder weapon linked to previous UT attack

BY MICHAEL D. SALLAH
BLADE STAFF WRITER

The gun that was used to kill University of Toledo student Melissa Ann Herstrum was almost certainly the same weapon from which six shots were fired at a UT dormitory room a week earlier.

But police still don't know who pulled the trigger of the 9-mm handgun in both attacks.

According to sources, ballistics tests performed on the shell casings gathered from the Jan. 20 dormitory shooting and the murder this week show strikingly similar markings.

So far, the tests indicate the bullets were more than likely fired from the same pistol.

The markings appear on the shells from where the firing pin struck the cartridge as the weapon was fired.

In nearly every case, guns leave an individual signature on a fired cartridge case as well as a bullet, police say.

"They're a match as far as we can see," said one source close to the investigation, who spoke to The Blade on condition of anonymity. "They have enough right now to



Herstrum: UT friends attend her funeral in Rocky River, O.

show the similarities [of the markings]."

Police are still searching for the killer of Miss Herstrum, who was shot more than 10 times Sunday. Her body was found the next day lying face down in the snow in a remote corner of UT's Scott Park campus.

Several bullets and casings from

the gun were collected from where the young victim's body was found.

A UT policeman discovered the body early Monday morning, about 20 hours after Miss Herstrum was reported to have left her off-campus apartment.

Sources also say there were abrasions on the young woman's wrists, suggesting she may have been restrained.

Detective Phil Kulakoski said media reports that police were searching for Miss Herstrum's missing green coat prompted a citizen to turn it in yesterday. He said the coat was found Sunday in the 2000 block of Westwood Avenue.

The murder occurred while UT police were still investigating the attack on MacKinnon Hall a week before, when someone fired a volley of bullets into a room at the women's dormitory on the main campus.

Two of the bullets struck inside the room during the Jan. 20 attack, and one of the bullets missed a sleeping freshman by a few feet. Miss Herstrum had never lived in that dormitory, officials said.

"I'd say there's a real nut out

Turn to Page 5, Col. 2 ▶

carefully conduct tests and inspect the bullets and cartridges, though the police division's laboratory technicians are not finished with their own tests.

However, ballistics experts, including Robert Hawkins of the Los Angeles police department's firearms lab, said experts do not need a weapon to link the same gun to

David Bell looked out over the sea of mourners that filled Rocky River United Methodist Church and overflowed into the outer hall.

"What an outpouring of love for Melissa," he said.

He was speaking to nearly 1,000 family members and friends of Melissa Anne Herstrum. They had come to pay their last respects to

mourners.

The family was seated in pews in front of the closed, mahogany casket, which was covered with a spray of flowers. Fellow Pi Beta Phi sorority members filled nearly half of one side of the church.

Mr. Bell said that Miss Herstrum displayed more love, compassion, and enthusiasm in her 19 years than