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Newsman's Death Termed Murder

The mysterious death of Times Herald reporter James F. Koethe was tentatively listed in police files Thursday as a case of murder.

An information sheet containing details of the newsman's death was rewritten Wednesday night, listing the case under the offense of murder after a preliminary autopsy report indicated the possibility of death by strangulation.

Homicide Capt. Will Fritz claimed Thursday, however, that the listing of Mr. Koethe's death as murder was "unauthorized" by his office.

"Although it looks bad, we cannot say it is murder yet," the head of the Homicide Bureau said.

Capt. Fritz said a full autopsy report would not be complete "for several days" and an official verdict on the death of the newsman would not be made until that time.

"But even with the report we may need additional information of the circumstances surrounding the death to support a verdict of murder," Capt. Fritz added.

The bureau chief said his detectives are continuing their attempts to locate persons who might have seen Mr. Koethe later than 11 p.m. last Friday night when he was seen at Love Field covering the departure of the Beatles from Dallas.

Justice of the Peace W. E. Richburg has withheld an official verdict in the baffling case pending the final autopsy report.

A new aura of mystery was added to the case Wednesday when a medical report was handed to police which indicated the 30-year-old newsman may have died of strangulation.

Capt. Fritz, however, has his doubts.

"He could have been killed by a karate blow to the neck or have fallen and struck his neck on a table or a bedstead in the room where his body was found," Capt. Fritz said.

The medical report said internal bleeding was found in the newsman's neck muscles and a small bone in the throat had been broken.

The reporter's body was found sprawled under a blanket in the bedroom of his apartment at 4115 San Jacinto.

Investigators said the apartment had been ransacked and bore signs of an apparent struggle.

Detectives later learned that the man's automobile, three guns, a wrist watch and money from his wallet were missing. The English-built car was found Tuesday beside Buckner Park at Worth and Carroll some 10 blocks from the apartment.

Detectives continued their exhaustive search Wednesday and Wednesday night for anyone who had seen the whereabouts of the newsman between Friday night when he was last seen by fellow workers at The Times Herald and Monday morning when his body was discovered.

Capt. Fritz said there were indications that a party had been held at the East Dallas apartment before Mr. Koethe died.

"We'd like to know who was at that party and just what happened," the veteran police captain said.