

CRIME: Retaliation for alleged rape potential motive in triple Mattawa killings

By Kristin M. Kraemer

MATTAWA A 24-year-old Mattawa man is suspected of gunning down three friends and trying to shoot several others in retaliation for the alleged rape of a girl.

J. Guadalupe Martinez-Lopez shot one of the men as they drove away together Monday night from a mobile home on Road 24.7 S.W., according to the Grant County Sheriff's Office. The victim tried to flee but Martinez-Lopez allegedly gunned him down, then stood over the man and fired once more.

Martinez-Lopez returned to the mobile home, "told the occupants who were seated on the living room that what they did was wrong," and then fired at least five rounds, sheriff's Detective Ryan Rectenwald wrote in a lengthy probable cause affidavit.

Two more men died as a result of the gunfire.

Martinez-Lopez was arrested about 24 hours later as he was eating dinner with his girlfriend and friends at a Sunnyside restaurant. He reportedly expected to pay for everyone's meals with money he took in an armed robbery while briefly leaving the gathering, the affidavit said.

Martinez-Lopez will appear today in Grant County Superior Court in Ephrata. A judge will read Rectenwald's affidavit in determining whether to hold Martinez-Lopez on the allegations while police and prosecutors finalize charges.

Martinez-Lopez also is a suspect in a series of armed robberies. He allegedly admitted to holding up the Hiway Fruit mini-mart Tuesday night shortly before his arrest, in addition to similar crimes in Sunnyside, Basin City and Grant County.

Pasco police also believe he is responsible for three convenience store hold-ups in Pasco.

In Monday's triple homicide, two men were found inside the home after deputies responded to a report of gunshots in the area around 9:15 p.m. One man was dead and the second died shortly after being loaded in an ambulance.

The third victim was found dead about two miles away in the middle of Road 26 S.W.

The names of all three victims have not yet been released by the Grant County coroner.

A woman in the home during the shooting described Martinez-Lopez as friends with the residents and said "there was no tension" while he visited the house before leaving with an eventual victim, the sheriff's office reported.

Martinez-Lopez, in his interview with investigators, said he went to the home "because he was mad (at the first victim) and others in this residence because they had raped a girl in the past," the affidavit said.

Armed with a .45-caliber pistol, he allegedly visited with them for a short time, then made up an excuse to leave with one of the men so he could confront him and shoot him, according to the sheriff's document.

After allegedly killing that man, he returned to the house and — before anyone could stand up — started shooting. Martinez-Lopez took off in the first victim's car but abandoned it when it crashed into a nearby field and got stuck, the document said.

Tipsters helped lead police to the El Valle restaurant in Sunnyside, where authorities were waiting as Martinez-Lopez dined with friends.

The gun believed used in the slayings was found in the trunk of a friend's car.

For more on this story, read Friday's Herald and tricityherald.com.