

Zeller Accused

Police say Zeller is cyanide culprit

By Harold Stamp

Former clerk and pharmacist-apprentice at Byrnes Pharmacies, Martin Zeller, was arrested yesterday and charged with the attempted murder and aggravated battery of his wife, Patrice Zeller. She is another apparent victim of the cyanide aspirin epidemic.

"We are not stating anything at this time other than the fact that Zeller has been charged," said Marshall City Police Chief Michael Vincent.

"We are confident that Zeller attempted to kill his wife. We also believe that the evidence will support a connection between him and the other Marshall City poisonings of July."

While searching the Zeller home after his wife was poisoned last Wednesday, police discovered a secret laboratory in the basement. There, police found several bottles of aspirin, a bottle of cyanide, and newspaper clippings on the July poisonings in Marshall City. The police said they also found mysterious notes in some kind of code. They believe these notes will provide leads to the cyanide killings. Police also found articles on the 1982 cyanide killings in Illinois.

"On one hand I'm relieved; it's about time we found some answers," said Vincent. "On the other hand it's a sad to think that Zeller not only

tried to kill his wife but might be responsible for the deaths of seven others. It just doesn't make any sense."

One detective speculated that Zeller may have concocted a scheme to poison several people first, in order to mask his responsibility for later killing his wife.

Patrice Zeller is currently in the hospital recovering from the cyanide she ingested on Wednesday. Patrice apparently bought and paid for the aspirin at Byrnes Pharmacies. Martin Zeller allegedly slipped her the contaminated aspirin tablets either at the store or later when they returned home.

Zeller reportedly watched as his wife swallowed the near-fatal pills, then tried to cover-up his crime by calling 911 to report that she had collapsed. He may have waited fifteen minutes before calling 911.

Patrice Zeller refused to comment on the matter, but is reportedly upset and angry at her husband's apparent actions.

Police are vigorously investigating Zeller's possible connection to the other cyanide-tampering cases, in which seven people have died and many more have been stricken.