

Gary Michael Hilton suspected in 2007 decapitation

He killed Buford hiker Meredith Emerson

By CHRISTIAN BOONE

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Thursday, June 18, 2009

Convicted of one murder, charged with a second and implicated in two others, Gary Michael Hilton has now emerged as a “person of interest” in the 2007 decapitation of a central Florida stock clerk.

Like Hilton’s other victims — acknowledged and alleged — Michael Scot Louis’ body was dismembered. A fisherman discovered the 27-year-old’s torso and legs, placed in plastic bags, in the Tomoka River in Dec. 2007 — less than a month after Hilton killed Buford hiker Meredith Emerson in the north Georgia mountains. Louis’ head has never been located.

Investigators in Ormond Beach, Fla., are awaiting DNA evidence from a California lab that might link Hilton, 62, to Louis’ murder, though officials say at least two additional “persons of interest” remain.

Hilton is being held in Leon County, Fla., where he’s charged with the murder of Tallahassee Sunday school teacher Cheryl Hodges Dunlap. Her decapitated body was found Dec. 15, 2007, in the Apalachicola National Forest — roughly 200 miles from where Louis’ remains were found.

“We know [Hilton] was in the area at the time, and dismemberment is very uncommon,” said Sgt. James Gogarty with the Ormond Beach Police Department. Their evidence “links with what they [Leon County investigators] have on [Hilton],” he said.

Investigators would like to interview Hilton, but he’s not talking. The erstwhile subcontractor and drifter is a prime suspect in the murders of an elderly North Carolina couple but has not yet been charged.