

# Accused killer pleads not guilty

BY LISA FUSS

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KEY WEST — A Massachusetts drifter who police say confessed to abducting and strangling Herald employee Janet Acosta last month pleaded not guilty to her murder and other related charges Thursday.

Michael Anthony Tanzi, 23, did not attend his arraignment at the Monroe County Courthouse and entered his plea through his court-appointed attorneys, Nancy Rossel and Stephanie Fleming.

A Monroe County grand jury returned an indictment Tuesday charging Tanzi with first-degree murder in the death of Acosta. Charges of carjacking, kidnapping, robbery and sexual battery with a deadly weapon also were filed earlier this week.

The case will be tried in Key West before Monroe Circuit Judge Mark Jones, who set trial for July 17.

Tanzi was arrested on Duval Street



TANZI



ACOSTA

in Key West on April 27 near Acosta's 1999 Plymouth Voyager, two days after allegedly kidnapping Acosta in Miami and killing her on Cudjoe Key. He confessed to the crime, police said, and led detectives to Acosta's body in a thick mangrove cluster off secluded Blimp Road.

Tanzi has been held without bail at the Monroe County Detention Center on Stock Island since his arrest.

Assistant State Attorney Manny Madruga said prosecutors and

defense attorneys will begin the lengthy task of reviewing evidence and deposing some 40 witnesses in the case. A pretrial conference will be held July 6 in Key West, where Madruga believes Tanzi's attorneys will likely request a trial delay.

Once Tanzi is done with the charges in Florida, he could be extradited to Massachusetts on first-degree murder charges there for the slaying of a Brockton, Mass., woman in August. A Massachusetts judge issued a warrant last week for Tanzi's arrest in connection with the murder of Caroline Holder, 37, a wife and mother of two who was found slain at a coin laundry.

Monroe investigators say Tanzi bragged to them that he strangled Holder, stabbed her in the throat and stepped on her until she died. Massachusetts detectives were able to link Tanzi to the killing from handprints he provided them two weeks ago.