

Police trial

City aide calls cop 'killer'

By JAMES TITTSWORTH

News Staff Writer

Accused of assaulting a prisoner with fists, feet and a gun, Detroit police officer Michael Worley was called "a killer" and a "racist" yesterday by Assistant City Attorney Geoffrey Taft.

Taft is prosecuting Worley and three other officers — Roger Beaty, John Pappas and Denis Southers — at a Detroit Police Department trial board hearing into their alleged assault May 3, 1979, on Carlton Johnson, 24, outside his apartment house at 2500 West Grand Boulevard.

All four are assigned to the 2nd (Vernor) Precinct, a recent target of public and departmental allegations about cellblock brutality. Each has been ordered suspended for periods of 10 to 20 days by Chief William L. Hart — but the penalties are being appealed.

REPEATING A statement made Monday, Taft told reporters yesterday that Worley has been involved in three fatal shootings as a policeman and has nearly 30 complaints of misconduct from prisoners and the public on his record.

Worley, Beaty and Pappas took the stand in their own defense to deny mistreating Johnson, saying they used only enough force to subdue him when he resisted arrest. Southers was expected to testify today.

THEY HAD pursued Johnson for reckless driving and intended at first only to issue a violation ticket until he began shoving them and "raging like a lunatic," Worley said.

Worley admitted drawing his .44 caliber mag-

num revolver. But he insisted that the handcuffed prisoner was trying to escape from the police car while the four officers were outside checking Johnson's car and the apartment building grounds for a weapon or "other contraband" that might have been discarded.

"I saw him (Johnson) getting out of the car," Worley stated, "and I said to myself, 'Lord God, what's going on?' I was afraid he might have a gun that we maybe missed while patting him down and I shouted, 'The s.o.b. is loose!'"

"THEN I grabbed him and he was flailing away, screaming and kicking and raging like a lunatic. It took all four of us to hold him down."

But nobody kicked Johnson in the groin or grabbed him by the genitals, Worley, Beaty and Pappas each testified, rebutting his accusation against them.

Sgt. Nathaniel Rucker, who interviewed Johnson later in the Vernor Precinct cellblock, said the prisoner had nothing to say until a relative who also is a police officer visited Johnson there alone.

"Then Mr. Johnson complained he had been beaten, thrown to the ground, hit with a flashlight, kicked in the groin and called racial names," said the sergeant.

RUCKER, LIKE Johnson, is black. The accused officers are white.

Detective Sgt. William T. Ford, an investigator for the police department's Internal Affairs Section, said he checked with a physician at Ford Hospital who treated Johnson that night and said Johnson had attributed his injuries to "an accident" and made no mention of police brutality.