



8 charges dropped against Feazell

Associated Press 294

AUSTIN — A federal judge dismissed eight mail fraud charges against McLennan County District Attorney Vic Feazell Thursday as three weeks of testimony ended in a federal racketeering and bribery trial.

Feazell, 36, was indicted on charges of racketeering and conspiracy after being accused of accepting bribes to dismiss or reduce charges filed in drunken driving and drug cases.

He also was charged with eight counts of mail fraud. But his attorney, Gary Richardson, renewed a motion Thursday that those be dismissed because of a U.S. Supreme court decision Wednesday.

U.S. District Judge James Nowlin agreed to the request, saying he understood that the Supreme Court held that a scheme to deprive a person of certain rights could not be considered fraud by mail.

"The indictment (on mail fraud) apparently concerns these intangible rights," Nowlin told the attorneys.

After both sides rested Thursday, Feazell, who has denied all charges, said, "I feel good. I'll save anything else I have to say until after the verdict."

Final arguments were scheduled for Friday before the case goes to the jury.

Feazell testified at the start of the trial in an unsuccessful motion for dismissal that the charges originated after he called a grand jury probe

into the handling of cases involving Henry Lee Lucas, who claimed to have committed hundreds of murders.

Lucas later recanted his confessions, saying he was trying to embarrass law enforcement officials.

Much of the government's case was built around testimony of two Waco law partners, Don Hall and Dick Kettler, who said Feazell wanted one-third of the legal fees they received from cases that he dismissed or reduced.

The last government witness Thursday was Randy Roberts of Waco, who identified himself as a bookie and professional gambler. He testified that he and another man each gave \$1,000 in cash in 1982 as a campaign contribution when Feazell

was running for district attorney. He said he got no receipt.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jack Frels introduced campaign finance records for 1982 that did not show any report of the two \$1,000 contributions.

Feazell testified that he never took bribes to dismiss cases and said federal authorities exploited legal, physical and emotional weaknesses of Hall and Kettler to get them to testify.

Both lawyers testified they have federal income tax charges pending against them.

Feazell testified that he also had been harassed by state and federal law enforcement investigators by having his home telephone tapped and his office and car burglarized.