

County bills mount following Deeb trial

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Deeb acquittal will bring more than \$410,000 to prosecutors

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Special prosecutors may have failed to win a conviction in the capital murder retrial of Muneer Mohammad Deeb, but they spent a lot of money trying.

State District Judge George Allen has approved bills totaling more than \$410,000 in connection with the Deeb prosecution in Fort Worth, according to records at 54th state district court.

Deeb was acquitted Tuesday of charges that he plotted the 1982 Lake Waco triple slayings to cash in on an insurance policy.

The biggest chunk of the money is going to special prosecutors Bill Lane and David Chapman of Fort Worth and Andy Shuvalov of Austin. A printout provided by the auditor's office showed Lane was paid \$158,777, Chapman \$94,465 and Shuvalov \$24,241 through Jan. 5 for their skills.

Chapman said bills for hotel and transportation, as well as some trial and billing costs, will continue to trickle



State District Judge George Allen said advances in technology are one reason for increased expenses at 2nd trial.

in to McLennan County. He said he still has to bill the county for his copying and telephone expenses he incurred on the Deeb case.

The Deeb capital murder trial is backwards in at least one respect. When Deeb was first tried, in Cleburne in 1985, then-McLennan County district attorney Vic Feazell led the prosecution while the county paid for the defense. In Deeb's Fort Worth trial, the county paid for special prosecutors while Deeb's family paid for his defense.

But Chapman said his cost and Lane's cost will come out about the same as if the county had paid for Deeb's defense. "If you hired a defense team like ours, it would cost at least that and maybe more. \$250,000 for experienced lawyers

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Tribune-Herald
Waco, Texas

JAN 16 1993

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in a capital case is not an uncommon fee," Chapman said. "In fact, of the few capital murder defendants that have been able to pay their own defense, that's on the low end."

Chapman also said the meter will be running — albeit at a much slower pace — while he and Lane dispose of loose ends for the case, including finding storage for evidence and exhibits that might be needed for future appeals by Lake Waco defendant David Wayne Spence. Spence was convicted on two counts of capital murder in the case.

Deeb was convicted on murder-for-hire charges in a Cleburne courtroom in 1985 and spent six years on Death Row before his conviction was overturned.

Prosecutors said Deeb offered Spence \$5,000 to kill Gayle Kelley Reyes so he could cash in an insurance policy he had taken out on her.

They said Spence mistook Jill Montgomery for Reyes when he and the Melendez brothers killed Montgomery, Kenneth Franks and Raylene Rice in Koehne Park on July 13, 1982.

Allen, who has been overseeing disbursements from Waco to pay the bills in the case, said the cost of Deeb's prosecution exceeded the cost of his first trial in Cleburne.