

Feazell acquires attorney

*McLennan County DA
tells of re-election plans*

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District Attorney Vic Feazell, announcing his bid for re-election, said Wednesday he has hired an Austin attorney to represent him in connection with a federal grand jury investigation.

The announcement that he will seek a second term came amid speculation he soon may be indicted by a federal grand jury.

Feazell said that because of the investigation, he has hired Roy Minton as his attorney, and is referring questions about the grand jury probe to Minton.

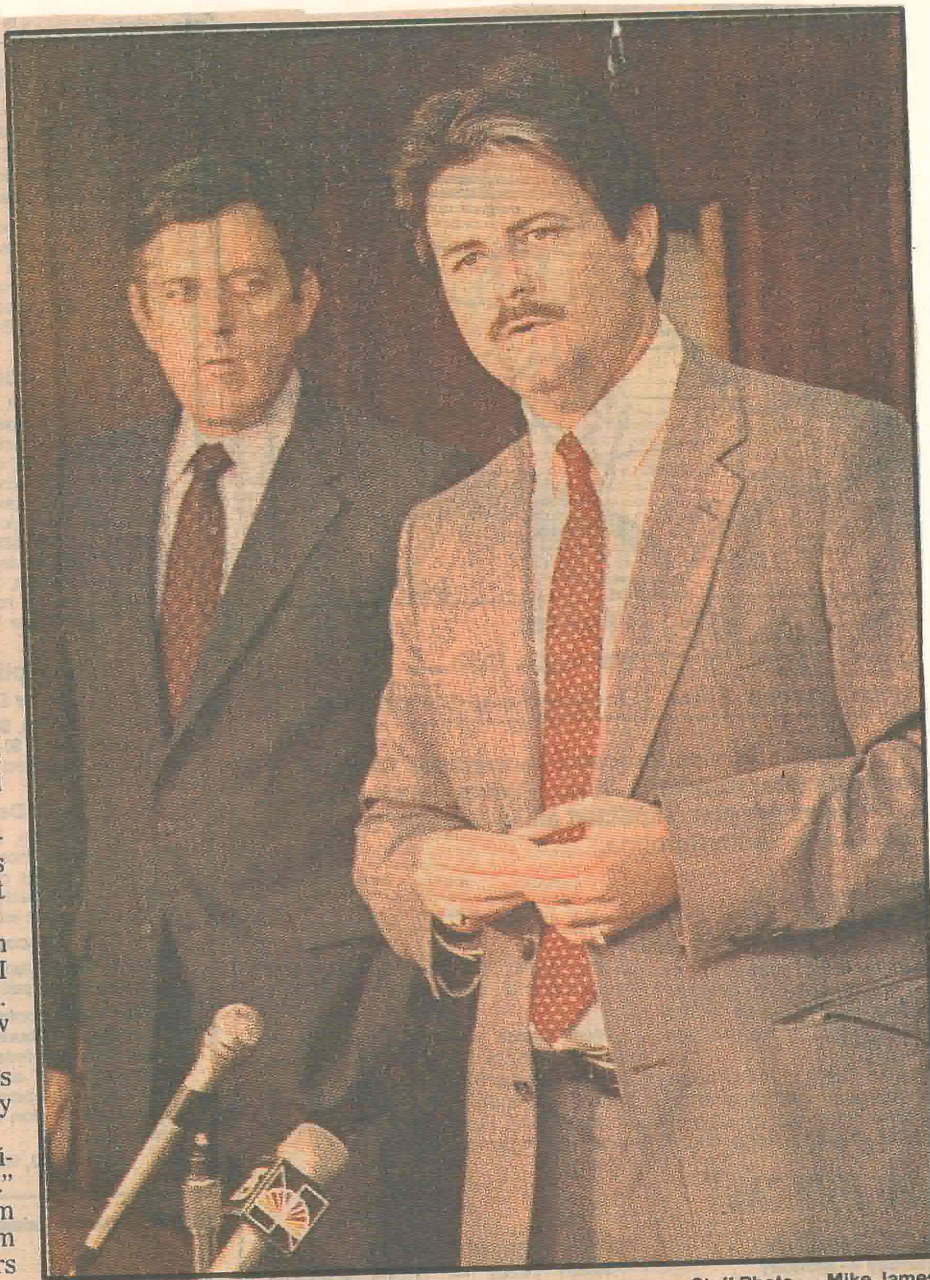
"This thing has gotten serious enough with the allegations being made, and I felt it was necessary to retain (a lawyer).

"I'm a country lawyer. I don't know about that high-level stuff," he said.

"I think everybody in this room knows an investigation exists and I think they know why this investigation exists."

He said the grand jury probe was initiated as a retaliatory "witch hunt" prompted by DPS director Col. Jim Adams, as a way of getting back at him for his criticism of the Texas Rangers Task Force's handling of Henry Lee Lucas.

Feazell said he fears he may be mur-



Staff Photo — Mike James

District Attorney Vic Feazell (right), accompanied by McLennan County Democratic chairman Gene Evans, announces his candidacy for a second term

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dered because of the Lucas probe. He said he's been followed and his telephone has been tapped. He said persons have dug through his and members of his staff's trash looking for information about him.

In announcing for re-election at an afternoon news conference, Feazell said, "I want to put to rest any rumors that, number 1, I am resigning, or number 2, that I'm not intending to run for re-election, or that I'm intending to run for any higher office at this time."

Accompanied by Milton Wilson, his campaign treasurer, and Gene Evans, McLennan County Democratic Party chairman, Feazell admitted the timing of his announcement was tied to the recent disclosure that a federal grand jury in Austin is investigating him.

"One reason I made this announcement today is so that everybody would know that I will not be run from office. If I leave this office, it will be because the people of McLennan County make that decision," Feazell said.

Feazell won election to the district attorney post in 1982, after defeating former McLennan County District Attorney Felipe Reyna in the Democratic primary, and Republican Paul Gartner Jr. in the general election.

In the past three months, reports have surfaced that Feazell is

under investigation by the FBI, Department of Public Safety and Waco Police Department.

On Monday, U.S. Attorney Jan Patterson confirmed that she has initiated a federal grand jury investigation of Feazell.

Craig Reid, McLennan County Republican chairman, said Republicans feel compelled to offer opposition to Feazell's re-election bid in 1986.

"Things have drastically changed," Reid said Wednesday. "At one time, we did not plan to challenge Mr. Feazell, but we have entered a recruitment phase now and there is considerable interest now in finding a candidate."

Reid declined to name anyone the GOP is considering, but speculation has centered on Reyna, who switched to the Republican Party last month, and former State Rep. Rollin Khoury, the first Republican to win a countywide office in McLennan County.

Reid said that since the filing deadline is not until February, he does not expect an announcement of a Republican candidate in the near future.

"We are looking at it, and we want to be ready to offer a choice," he said.

Feazell was asked if he believes the Republican Party will mount a campaign.

"Not unless they want to lose. But if they want to spend the money, let 'em bring it on. It's

good for the economy. If the election were held today, I think it would be an overwhelming victory (for Feazell). People stop me on the street to let me know that I have their support. I've never seen the kind of support I've got right now," Feazell said.

Evans stopped short of giving Feazell his endorsement on Wednesday.

"If Vic Feazell is the nominee in May, he'll wholeheartedly have my support, as whoever the Democrats choose to be their candidate," Evans said.

During the news conference Feazell listed what he believes are his major accomplishments as district attorney.

"I have a record that I'm proud to be able to run on, regardless of what some out-of-town reporters might have to say about me and my office," Feazell said.

"It's my office that successfully solved and successfully prosecuted the (Lake Waco) triple murder case to a conclusion. It's my office that was eventually successful in putting the dangerous criminal Eroy Brown back into prison.

"It's my office that looked into the problems with child abuse and child sexual abuse in McLennan County. It's my office that increased hot check collection in McLennan County to the point where our merchants are proud of the hot check collection department.

"My office looked into sexual molestation of children in the Waco Independent School District. We did something about that, where in years past that was a subject that everybody else was afraid to broach," he said.

Adams has neither confirmed nor denied the existence of a DPS probe of Feazell, but has said "the department does not conduct an investigation unless there is a sound basis for one."

A McLennan County grand jury earlier this month no-billed Lucas in three unsolved McLennan County murders.

"For the rest of my term and when re-elected I will continue to serve the people of McLennan County, whether that be protecting them from the criminal on the street or protecting them from police abuses," Feazell said Wednesday.

Waco Police Chief Larry Scott has been openly critical of Feazell, saying that Feazell's reluctance to prosecute certain drug and DWI cases has resulted in low morale among the city's police officers.

Feazell said Wednesday the chasm between him and Scott should not discourage county residents from voting for him (Feazell) in the 1986 elections.

"No more than they need to be concerned about voting for a city councilman who will keep a chief of police in office who has a conflict with the district attorney who was elected by the people to do a job," he said.

Feazell said he would not be surprised if the federal grand jury in Austin eventually indicts him, but he said he doesn't believe the surrounding controversy will adversely affect the Democratic Party's chance of retaining the district attorney's office.

"An indictment doesn't mean anything but a bunch of finger-pointing. Our (state) attorney general (Jim Mattox) was indicted and he went on trial and proved it was a bunch of bogus stuff brought by a bunch of powerful people.

"I think you remember that during the last election there was a grand jury looking into allegations made about (Sheriff) Jack Harwell. He didn't lose a single box," Feazell said.

The federal grand jury in Austin, which recessed after meeting for about six hours on Monday, is scheduled to resume on Friday.