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Feazell leads in DA race

By DARRELL DUNN

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Incumbent Attorney Vic Feazell led challenger Bill Vannatta early Saturday night in the Democratic primary race for McLennan County district attorney.

With 18 of 83 boxes reporting, Feazell had 58 percent (2,464) of the vote, and Vannatta had 42 percent (1,764).



Feazell

Despite being behind in the early totals, Vannatta said he was confident of victory.

"The boxes that have come in early are ones we felt Vic would run the strongest in. I'm very optimistic," Vannatta said.

Vannatta said he believes he will carry boxes in North Waco, West, McGregor and China Spring.

"I feel I'll take the lead. I'd be surprised if I didn't," Vannatta said.

Feazell could not be reached for comment early Saturday night.

The campaign was relatively inactive until about two weeks ago when Vannatta launched an attack on Feazell through newspaper advertisements accusing Feazell of being soft on the prosecution of alleged drug users and dealers.

Vannatta claimed Feazell dismissed the majority of methamphetamine and cocaine cases presented to his office by the Waco Police Department, but Vannatta failed to produce the actual figures used in making his claims when asked by the *Tribune-Herald*.

Feazell said Vannatta knew he was trailing in the campaign, and resorted to "desperation politics" in the final weeks. Feazell said drug cases were dismissed by his office because lab tests proved inconclusive or because of "shoddy police work."

Feazell said his office had the

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highest felony conviction rate in the state in 1984 and 1985.

In the final week of the campaign, Vannatta released ads that purported to tell the "absolute, verifiable truth" about Fezell. In the ad, Vannatta attacked Fezell's claim that a federal grand jury investigation of Fezell is retaliatory. Vannatta also said Fezell was relatively inactive in the actual investigation and prosecution of the Lake Waco triple murder case.

Three days before the election, it became known to members of the Waco media that copies of purported suicide notes left by Waco physician Anthony Quinn could be obtained from the Waco Police Department through a freedom of information request.

The notes made reference to a \$12,500 debt to Quinn's attorney, Guy Cox, and a possible connection to Fezell.

One paragraph of Quinn's notes commented that if Cox were paid \$12,500, a driving while intoxicated charge would "no longer exist ... however this must involve the D.A. who is already up to his ass in this type of problem."

Both Fezell and Cox said the only deal made between the district attorney and Quinn was to hold the DWI charge for two years while Quinn underwent alcoholism treatment.

Fezell said he thinks the timing of the release of Quinn's notes were politically motivated.

Fezell was elected district attorney in 1982, when he defeated incumbent Felipe Reyna in the Democratic primary and Paul Gartner in the general election.

Vannatta is the immediate past president of the Waco-McLennan County Bar Association. He made an unsuccessful bid for McLennan County Judge in 1982.

Gartner will again oppose the Democratic nominee.



Staff photo — Steve Earley

Bill Vannatta visits with supporters while waiting on returns