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# Guilty 294 verdicts delivered

## *Triple murder cases resolved*

By **DARRELL DUNN**  
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Three of four men involved in the grisly murders of three teenagers at Lake Waco in July 1982 were sentenced for the crimes during 1985.

Muneer Mohammad Deeb and David Wayne Spence were sentenced to die by lethal injection.

Convictions in two capital murder trials and the receipt of a second guilty plea in 1985 practically have brought to an end the triple murders case.

"The convictions have helped us to reach a community catharsis as far as that heinous crime. It doesn't ensure the community against violent crime, as we saw in the murder that occurred recently in West. It does ensure our community will not be subjected to violent crime committed by David Wayne Spence, Muneer Deeb or the Melendez brothers," said McLennan County District Attorney Vic Feazell.

In March, a Cleburne jury deliberated about two hours before finding Deeb, a Jordanian national who operated a convenience store in Waco, guilty in the stabbing death of 17-year-old Jill Montgomery of Waxahachie. Deeb was sentenced to die by lethal injection.

"The Spence trial in Bryan was a cakewalk compared to the Deeb trial," Feazell said. "The Deeb trial was almost entirely circumstantial. And in order to find Deeb guilty, the jury had to believe that Spence committed the crime. In essence, we had to prove two cases in one: that Spence did it and that Deeb hired him to do it.

"We had to prove our cases against Spence, without the jury ever even seeing Spence. Technically, as far as putting that case together, it was a monumental task. That's just to get a guilty verdict. To actually get a death sentence on someone who was not at the scene of the crime, who did not actually wield the knife, is quite a case," he said.

In October, a Bryan jury found Spence guilty of murdering 18-year-old Kenneth Franks. Spence, who in 1984 was convicted of killing Miss Montgomery and sentenced to die, again received the death penalty.

Franks, Miss Montgomery and 17-year-old Raylene Rice, were found stabbed to death at Speegleville Park the afternoon of July 14, 1982.

The three teenagers were killed in Lake Waco's Koehne Park the night of July 13, 1982, and their bodies transported to Speegleville Park where they were dumped.

In January, Gilbert Melendez pleaded guilty to murdering Franks and Miss Montgomery, and was sentenced to two concurrent life prison terms.

Melendez's brother, Anthony Melendez, in 1984 had pleaded guilty to murdering Franks and Miss Montgomery, and also had been sentenced to two concurrent life prison terms.

The Melendez brothers testified during the two capital murder trials in 1985, helping to establish a scenario that Deeb had hired Spence to murder his girlfriend, Gayle Kelly, so that that Deeb could collect on a \$20,000 life insurance policy he had taken out on Miss Kelly.

On the night of the murders, however, Spence mistook Miss Montgomery for Miss Kelly. Franks, Miss Montgomery and Miss Rice, a Waxahachie acquaintance of Miss Montgomery's who had traveled to Waco for a one-day visit, all were repeatedly stabbed.