

'I fight like Rocky Balboa,' Feazell says

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District Attorney Vic Feazell may be able to write the script for *Rocky V*. At the end of 1985, he claims to bear battle scars and puts himself in the same ring with the fighter of movie fame.

"This year has been a triumph in many areas. But I've taken some lumps. I've got my scars. I fight like Rocky Balboa. I stick my face out there and take some punches, but I believe I'll get the last punch in," Feazell said recently from his office in the courthouse annex.

The district attorney's landmarks in 1985:

- The successful prosecution of Muneer Mohammed Deeb and David Wayne Spence in 1985, wrapping up the Lake Waco triple murder case.

- The mention of his name in the past year in connection with a federal grand jury investigation.

The federal probe reportedly centered on allegations of impropriety ranging from taking bribes to ordering the burglary of offices of prominent Waco attorneys.

- The bringing to Waco, to face a McLennan County grand jury, of drifter Henry Lee Lucas, who at one time claimed to have murdered hundreds of people but later recanted.

The district attorney said he began having concerns about Lucas' confessions when Lucas said he committed the 1981 murder of Dorothy Collins, a one-time Waco prostitute whose body was found near a truck stop on Interstate 35 north of Waco.

Feazell said the county was holding a strong suspect in the Collins murder, but when Lucas made his confession the suspect stopped cooperating.

Feazell met with state Attorney General Jim Mattox and discussed the Lucas confessions. On April 11, Feazell and Mattox began a grand jury probe of Lucas' confessions in three unsolved McLennan County murders. The investigation brought attention from throughout the country to Waco.

Four months later, the grand jury no-billed Lucas in the three murders, and Lucas was taken to Death Row in the Texas Department of Corrections' Ellis II unit.

During the grand jury session, questions were raised about the validity of Lucas' confessions and about the methods used by the Texas Rangers Homicide Task Force.

At one point Feazell said that he believed the Texas Rangers may have acted unethically in dealing with Lucas. During a news conference at the McLennan County courthouse, Lucas said that the Texas Rangers had aided him in making false confessions.

In May, Feazell said that Department of Public Safety director Col. Jim Adams had ordered a Department of Public Safety investigation of Feazell and his office in retaliation for the Lucas grand jury probe.

Adams will not confirm nor deny whether he ordered an investigation of Feazell, but denies he ordered a "retaliatory" investigation.

- Beginning in mid-June, WFAA-TV (Channel 8) in Dallas began airing a series of reports about Feazell. Television re-

porter Charles Duncan questioned Feazell's handling of drunken-driving and drug possession cases.

Duncan said that he had learned that the FBI was investigating Feazell and a "half-dozen defense attorneys in Waco, looking into how they handle DWI cases."

The reports said that DWI suspects in McLennan County had gotten cases dropped after paying "about \$3,000" to particular Waco attorneys. The reports implied Feazell had knowledge of the payments, and possibly received a cut.

Feazell denied involvement in bribery, but in July, Assistant U.S. Attorney Jan Patterson confirmed that a federal grand jury investigation of Feazell had been ongoing for several months. Ms. Patterson has declined to discuss specific allegations that have been raised against Feazell.

Amid rumours of imminent indictment, Feazell on July 15 announced he would seek a second term of office in November 1986. At the same news conference, Feazell said he had hired Austin attorney Roy Minton to represent him during the federal grand jury investigation.

Curiosity about the first-term district attorney began to snowball at mid-year.

- Feazell was featured in stories in the *Dallas Morning News*, *Dallas Times Herald*, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and *Austin American-Statesman*. He was featured in television reports on Dallas television stations WFAA (Channel 8), KDFW (Channel 4) and KERA (Channel 13). The WFAA reports were subject of a *D* magazine feature that questioned the credibility of Duncan's reporting.

- In September, "60 Minutes" correspondent Harry Reasoner began interviewing people in Waco and Austin for a piece on Feazell, Lucas and the surrounding controversy. The show has yet to air, but a source in the district attorney's office said he was told by someone from CBS, the network on which "60 Minutes" airs, that the Feazell episode would be shown Sunday.

- In November, Ms. Patterson took custody of Waco burglary suspect Clyde Kelly Jr., and Feazell said that he had information that Kelly was being offered a plea-bargain agreement and money to falsely testify before the federal grand jury investigating Feazell.

Feazell said he believes Ms. Patterson is attempting to tie him to the burglary of Waco law offices, but she would not comment.

- On Dec. 3, Feazell mailed a letter to the U.S. Justice Department in Washington, D.C., formally lodging a complaint, and asking for an investigation of an alleged conspiracy to violate his civil rights.

In the complaint, Feazell alleges the conspiracy was developed under the direction of Adams, and said that Ms. Patterson, Waco Police Chief Larry Scott, DPS intelligence officer Ron [redacted] and an unknown FBI agent were involved in obtaining purged testimony from Kelly.

A Justice Department spokesman said Feazell's allegations are being reviewed and that the case has been assigned to the criminal section of the civil rights division.

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