

Lubbock parents see

Lucas as scapegoat

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LUBBOCK, Texas — The small wood-frame house sits on a corner lot on 82nd Street on the far south side of town. It was painted white long ago, hiding the olive green color it was that terrible night in 1975.

"They were driving down the street and they asked him, 'Does this house look familiar?'" Bob Lemons recalled. "He said, 'No, not really.' So they drove him by it again and asked him again. Again, he said it didn't look familiar."

Lemons is the stepfather of a young woman who was murdered at the house on a balmy August night in 1975. The "they" to whom he referred were two lawmen. The "he" was convicted serial killer Henry Lee Lucas.

Lucas has since been indicted for the murder of Deborah Sue Williamson, the 18-year-old newlywed whose partially clad body — with 17 stab wounds in the neck and chest — was found lying in a carport.

Lubbock police refused to comment about the case, saying they do not discuss pending cases. But

they said they were sure Lucas committed the crime, and the district attorney's office said he had confessed.

And Lemons is just as sure that Lucas didn't do it.

"Somebody did kill Debbie, but it wasn't Lucas," Lemons said. "I certainly feel like he didn't have a thing to do with our situation."

Lemons' wife, Joyce Lemons, is just as adamant.

"I don't think he had a thing to do with killing my daughter," she said. "It's time for the charade to be over with."

Lucas, a one-eyed drifter from Virginia who is now jailed in Williamson County, claims to have been involved in nearly 360 mur-

ders. So far, authorities have confirmed Lucas' probable involvement in 185 murders, the majority of them involving women who were sexually assaulted. The crime spree stretches across 24 states and runs from 1951 to 1983.

But the Lemonses claim there were certain discrepancies in Lucas' confession, which Lubbock County authorities allowed them to read earlier this year. They said

they also were allowed to listen to part of the tape on which Lucas — being driven around Lubbock by a homicide detective and a Texas Ranger — failed to recognize Mrs. Williamson's home.

The Lemonses said that Lucas told officers the house was white; it was actually olive green. Lucas told the officers he entered the house through a sliding glass door; the Lemons said that at the time of the murder, the door was sealed shut and no one could enter it. Police found no signs that it had been opened.

Lucas, usually able to remember the most minute detail about his victims, gave police a description that didn't even come close to matching Mrs. Williamson, Lemons said. Lucas told police he killed the woman in the bedroom after chasing her through the house and raping her. The police report said Mrs. Williamson was killed outside her home, she was not sexually assaulted and there was no sign of a struggle inside.

Lucas failed to identify Mrs. Williamson in one photograph shown to him, Lemons said, yet Lubbock County authorities said he identified her in another photograph.

The Lemonses say it all adds up to one conclusion: Lucas didn't kill their daughter.

David Hess, the assistant Lubbock County District Attorney who may prosecute the case, said he isn't worried about convincing the Lemonses.

"I'm not sure I have to convince them. I have to convince 12 jurors," Hess said.

And he shrugged off the Lemonses' litany of apparent inconsistencies in the case.

"Unfortunately," the 35-year-old prosecutor said, "I've never tried a murder case that didn't have some inconsistencies."

Nevertheless, the solving of Mrs. Williamson's murder has become a driving force behind the Lemonses' lives. Their hours are spent following leads, talking to police officers and wrestling with their own souls, trying to figure out something no one has been able to give them: an answer for their daughter's brutal murder.

It has been an odyssey that they say has tested their faith in God, weathered their patience for authority and shaken their belief in the American system of justice.

"It's taken a toll on us financially, but it's also taken a toll on us mentally, with the pain and anguish," said Lemons, a 50-year-old retired sheet-metal shop owner. "We're going to wind up in a mental ward if it doesn't end soon."

That evening of Aug. 24, 1975, Douglas and Deborah Williamson had been married just over two months — June 14 was their wedding date, and photos of the bride and groom filled the home.

Joyce Lemons recalls that when Deborah met Doug Williamson when she was 16, the young woman had stars in her eyes.

The Coronado High School student had gotten an after-school job at McDonald's and Williamson was the manager, the mother recalled.

"She came home — it was after about the third or fourth day — and said, 'I've met Mr. Right, the man I want to marry.' She had made up her mind that that was what she wanted," Mrs. Lemons said.

He later had become manager of a Pizza Inn restaurant on Lubbock's south side. It was there that he was working on the night his wife was murdered.

The Lemonses and Mrs. Williamson had eaten together at the pizza restaurant that night and had left about 8:30 p.m. Mrs. Williamson was planning to go back about midnight to help her husband and two other employees take inventory.

"When we took her home, everything was OK," said Lemons. "About 9 p.m., she talked to Doug on the phone, and he called back at 9:30 but got no answer. Well, he just figured maybe she had left early."

When his wife failed to show up by midnight, Williamson became

concerned. He jumped in his car for the 15-minute drive across South Lubbock to see what was wrong.

He pulled into the driveway and there, in the carport, lay the body of his wife, face up in a pool of blood.

She had been stabbed 17 times by what a pathologist said was a double-edged knife, which has never been recovered. And although her clothes had been pulled up exposing her torso, she had not been sexually molested, the pathologist ruled.

Police said it appeared Mrs. Williamson had been surprised as she was coming out the rear screen door. There had been a brief but frantic struggle; skin under her fingernails and a single strand of hair clutched in her fist was among the physical evidence police gathered.

Police were baffled by what the killer took, however. Although the house contained expensive jewelry and other valuable items, the only things missing were Mrs. Williamson's blue denim purse and a photo album. It contained the pictures from their wedding. Neither the purse or the album were ever found.

The Lemons family's terror began before the family arrived home from Mrs. Williamson's funeral. When they arrived home from burying their eldest daughter, they discovered someone had broken into their home at Buffalo Lake, a private lakeside community five miles east of Lubbock.

"Someone had climbed in an upstairs window," Mrs. Lemons said. "Whoever it was went into Elizabeth's bedroom and then Pam's bedroom (the Lemonses' other daughters) and went through the photo albums. They removed every picture that had Debbie in them. They left the others."

More burglaries followed, although Lemons had a round-the-clock watch on the home. No one was ever caught. "It was just like they disappeared," Mrs. Lemons said. "I was beginning to believe they had vanished into thin air."

The family said they heard footsteps on the roof and got anonymous phone calls threatening their two remaining daughters. "I remember one of them. A man called and said something like 'we got one of your daughters and we'll get the other two,'" Lemons said. The incident was reported to police, but they were never able to find who was making the calls.

The mystery continued for nearly a month. Then one night, as Lemons lay sleeping downstairs, he heard a key slide into his front door and the lock turn. He awoke and reached for the gun he had begun keeping at his bedside. In the dark-

ness, Bob Lemons took his aim at the door. He was ready to shoot first and ask questions later, he said.

Lemons said he never got the chance. The door opened a fraction but stopped when it hit the chair Lemons had propped against it every night. Startled, the would-be intruder ran.

Lemons gave chase but, as in the past, whoever it was disappeared. It was there and then that Lemons

said he decided he'd had enough.

"The next morning I told Joyce, 'You do what you have to do and I'll do what I'll have to do, but we're going to leave here tomorrow,'" Lemons said.

They did. They packed up some of their belongings, piled everything in the car and drove away.

"One day I had a family and a business and the next day I'm sitting at an intersection wondering

which way to go," Lemons said. "I never forget that, the feeling that I had."

The family decided to go to Gainesville. Lemons had a brother there, and they found some land and built a house.

But their life would be different. Because they still feared Mrs. Williamson's killer, they kept their new address a secret from their old friends in Lubbock. They rarely

went out and made few friends or even tried to. And at night, their country home resembled a well-lit prison camp.

"We got some dogs, some junkyard-type dogs," said Lemons. "They didn't mind biting anyone."

Their lives stabilized, the introspection began.

"We dealt with Debbie's death different ways," Lemons said. "Joyce hated the world — she hated God, people, everything. I dealt with it another way. I went down to the river and talked to my maker. I spent a lot of time down there."

Back in Lubbock, the investigation of Mrs. Williamson's murder had started out slowly and then fizzled out altogether. It had become that quiet South Plains city's most spectacular murder, and the pressure was on to solve it. Keeping up that pressure was the local newspaper, the *Avalanche-Journal*, which ran stories on the progress in the investigation almost daily for nearly three months.

Police told reporters at the time that they were checking every lead that came in. Police interrogated a number of possible suspects, ranging from members of Mrs. Williamson's family to a woman police described as the lesbian leader of a devil-worshiping cult that existed in Lubbock at the time.

Eventually, however, the case — and the pressure to solve it — died down. The last entry in the police file was made in 1976.

The case looked as though it might go unsolved. Then on June 21, 1983, a drifter charged with murder in Montague County changed, perhaps forever, the way American criminologists think about crime.

The drifter was Henry Lee Lucas. At that June court hearing, Lucas told a judge that he had killed 100 women in 17 states over a 10-year period.

He soon began backing up his claims with details of the crimes, and astonished law officers found Lucas' descriptions matched scores of unsolved crimes.

Today — more than a year later — Lucas, who is now 48, has been questioned in connection with more than 3,000 cases, said Texas Ranger Bob Prince, coordinator of the Lucas homicide task force.

So far, Lucas has one death sentence, four life sentences and two 75-year sentences. There are now nearly 30 cases against him in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Colorado, Maryland and Florida, said Prince.

Lucas, who served 11 years of a 20-to-40-year sentence for killing his mother in the 1960s, had been in and out of mental hospitals and prisons most of his life. Experts said that his problems stemmed from deep-seated hatred of women.

"I know it ain't normal for a person just to go out and kill a girl that won't have sex with them," Lucas

said during one court hearing. He said mental institutions "turned me loose and told me to go back home."

"They said 'You are all right.'"

When news of Lucas' alleged crimes spread, Lubbock police began inquiring about Lucas' whereabouts on the night Mrs. Williamson was murdered. Official records of the State Prison of Southwestern Michigan in Jackson showed Lucas had been released from prison Aug. 22, said Assistant Warden Tom Phillips. That release date was two days before the Lubbock murder.

Lubbock police had Lucas brought to their city, and he was questioned about a number of unsolved murders. This spring, police Detective George White and Texas Ranger Jackie Peoples drove him around town, trying to get him to pinpoint the scene of the crime.

If Lucas' past macabre show-and-tells with the law were any indication, it should have been no problem. As a psychiatrist later testified at one of Lucas' trials, Lucas has the rare ability to remember his crimes in almost every detail. Lucas has shown he can recall the smallest detail about his victim and the scene of the crime, said Prince.

It is here that the Lubbock case gets muddled and tempers flare between the Lemonses and authorities.

The Lemonses point to what they believe are a number of inconsistencies in Lucas' recollection of the Williamson murder:

The description of the victim. The Lemonses said that Lucas described his victim as a woman with light brown hair, 5 feet 4, 135 pounds, 20 years old or older. At the time of her death, Mrs. Williamson was 18, had platinum blond hair, was 5 feet 7, and weighed 110 lbs.

The description of the house. Lucas said it was painted white when it was olive and Lucas said he entered a sliding glass door, which the police report said was not opened.

The description of the crime. Lucas said that he and his sometimes traveling companion and partner-in-crime, Ottis Toole, entered the home, chased the woman through the house, stabbing her as they struggled, and then raped and killed her in the bedroom, the Lemonses said. The police report indicated all the action took place out-

side the home. There was no blood in the home and nothing was awry.

Hess has since said he "regrets" allowing the Lemonses to read Lucas' statements and to listen to the tape recording. He declined to allow *The Dallas Morning News* to see the documents or listen to the tape.

A Lubbock County grand jury indicted Lucas June 6 on a charge of capital murder in connection with the death of Deborah Sue Williamson. They also indicted him on a charge of capital murder in the April 10, 1976, death of Elizabeth Ann Price, and for murder in the Jan. 31, 1971, death of Naomi Miller Martin, two other women who were slain in Lubbock.

There is some dispute as to whether Lucas even knew Toole in 1975, said Carolyn Huebner, head of Texas Child Search Inc., a San Antonio group that aids in finding missing children.

Mrs. Huebner has interviewed Lucas over several hours. She said she was convinced that Lucas did not kill Mrs. Williamson.

"I'd bet my bottom dollar that he was not her murderer," Mrs. Huebner said. "Reviewing the facts on her murder and knowing Lucas' travels, I know there was no way that Henry was responsible for her murder."

Mrs. Huebner said she believes White and Peoples led Lucas to the Williamson home, told him what happened and asked him if it wasn't true. "When Henry has done a murder, he doesn't need anybody to tell him anything. He can tell you

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when, how, what condition the body was in, whatever was there at the crime scene. His memory is so phenomenal."

Sometimes, Prince said Lucas has missed a few things. He described one crime in California in great detail — matching the actual crime — and then got the race of the victim wrong. In the seven pages of handwritten notes he wrote while in the Montague County jail, in which he detailed many of his crimes, he said he was married in Maryland in April 1976. Records in that state show the marriage took place at least five months earlier.

So why does he get some things wrong? Mrs. Huebner said that in some cases, Lucas just lies.

"If he doesn't like the police officer who's questioning him, he'll do one of two things. He'll shut up or he'll play games with them," Mrs. Huebner said. "If he's harassed by a police officer about a case, he'll confess just to get him off his back."

Prince won't say Lucas isn't always truthful, but he will say some of the crimes to which Lucas has confessed have not been corroborated. There are some ready examples.

Lucas admitted killing a young woman from Taylor, Texas, who disappeared in June 1982. But the woman's remains were discovered earlier this summer when her car was found sunken in a creek. Authorities speculated that she suffered an epileptic seizure and ran off the road.

Lucas' propensity for confession led one Arkansas prosecutor to declare this summer — after Lucas had confessed to a murder that took place when authorities knew he wasn't even in Arkansas — that Lucas would confess to the Lindbergh baby kidnapping if given the chance. That crime took place in 1932.

Detective White said police can't discuss the case because it is "an ongoing investigation." He refused to elaborate but said that the case is considered "ongoing" because "we haven't convicted him yet."

But with nearly 30 cases pending against Lucas across the nation, it is anybody's guess whether Lucas will ever be tried for Mrs. Williamson's murder, Hess said.

"Will the cases in Lubbock be tried? We can't tell you that," Hess said. "It's hard to tell when it's going to trial, if it's going to trial."

The Lemonses said that the failure to try Lucas would be the ultimate slap.

"We've lost total respect for the police, the prosecutors — everyone," said Lemons. "I don't think we're going to be able to rest and get this behind us until it's been solved. There just didn't seem to be any answer, and there still doesn't seem to be any answer."

Killer Lucas is arraigned in El Paso

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EL PASO — Killer Henry Lee Lucas was arraigned in El Paso Friday on a charge that he hacked a 72-year-old grandmother to death with an ax in 1983.

State District Judge Brunson Moore set bond for Lucas at \$1 million after the 48-year-old pleaded innocent to a capital murder charge.

Lucas was indicted by an El Paso County grand jury Thursday night on four counts in connection with the May 27, 1983, death of Librada Apodaca.

Lucas, who claims to have killed more than 360 people in his cross country travels from 1976 to 1982, testified before the El Paso grand jury Thursday night, said Bill Moody, assistant district attorney.

"When we notified Judge Moore that he would be handling the Lucas trial in his court, he said we should arraign Lucas right now," Moody said.

After the arraignment, officers returned Lucas to Georgetown, Texas, where he faces a death sentence for the slaying of a hitchhiker.

Lucas was arrested in Montague County, Texas, on a weapons charge three weeks after the Apodaca slaying. During his stay in the Montague County Jail, about 90 miles northwest of Dallas, Lucas began confessing to numerous slayings, officials said.

Officers said Lucas had led them to the Apodaca home when he had been brought to El Paso in September.

District Attorney Steve Simmons said Friday the grand jury returned a four-count indictment against Lucas.

In addition to capital murder, Lucas also was charged with aggravated rape, burglary and theft, Simmons said.

Lucas also has been sentenced to two life terms and one 75-year term for other crimes.

He has been held at the Williamson County Jail in Georgetown while lawmen from all parts of the nation have questioned him on unsolved slayings in their areas.