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Lucas hankers for attention at Huntsville, too

By Gary Scharrer
Times staff writer

Henry Lee Lucas, who was featured in a "60 minutes" story Sunday, has eaten only milk and bread since his transfer 10 days ago to Huntsville, Texas, because of stomach problems, Lucas' private investigator Jay Armes said.

But Texas Department of Corrections spokesman Phil Guthrie disputed that claim Monday, saying Lucas has eaten regular meals since he returned to the state prison.

"They (Ellis Unit death-row prison officials) have not had any problem with his eating since he's been back," Guthrie said.

Armes said he has had one telephone conversation with Lucas since the convicted killer was transferred from El Paso County Jail to death row at the state prison. Lucas was awaiting trial on a capital murder charge in El Paso.

"60 Minutes" reporter Harry Reasoner said Lucas became "a one-man confession machine" as he implicated

himself in hundreds of murders that occurred across the country during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The confessions were accepted by the Texas Rangers' Lucas Task Force, which the state Department of Public Safety organized.

Reasoner suggested that as the Lucas murder confessions soared to 360 cases in 27 states and two countries, Lucas became the Rangers' most celebrated triumph since they captured Bonnie and Clyde.

Last spring, however, Lucas retract-

ed all his confessions after Waco, Texas, District Attorney Vic Feazell began investigating inconsistencies in Lucas' stories. Feazell concluded that it was physically impossible for Lucas to have committed many of the murders, Reasoner said.

The Texas Rangers ended up with "egg on their faces," Reasoner reported, adding that critics contend the rangers would have accepted Lucas' confession of the kidnapping in 1932 of Charles

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Lindbergh's infant son.

Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox told Reasoner he became more suspicious of the confessions when Lucas tried to claim a role in the disappearance of former Teamsters President Jimmy Hoffa, and when he tried

to take responsibility for delivering the poison that killed hundreds in the 1979 mass suicide at Jonestown, Guyana.

Department of Public Safety Director Col. Jim Adams said he believes Lucas killed "less than 100" people. Williamson County Sheriff Jim Boutwell, who was part of the task force, estimated

Lucas killed "200 and maybe more."

Mattox speculated that Lucas killed one person with "the likelihood of at least two others."

Lucas has reasserted that it was "just mom" he killed. He was convicted of his mother's murder 26 years ago.

Armes, who is investigating

the Lucas case, said the "60 Minutes" report reinforces the contention that "Henry Lucas is not guilty of any crimes that he had confessed to."

El Paso officials shipped Lucas back to the state prison after he stopped eating to protest what he claimed was inadequate medical treatment for chronic stomach

problems.

Lucas has not received medical treatment at the state prison either because "they told him that everybody was on vacation over the holiday," Armes said Lucas told him last week.

Guthrie said Lucas is scheduled to see a prison physician today.