

**SUNDAY**

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# Vic Fezell

*DA says he wants  
out of the limelight*

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As stories surrounding the controversial McLennan County district attorney snowball, Vic Fezell says he would prefer to return to the anonymity of his pre-Henry Lee Lucas days.

"Vic Fezell would like to get out of the media," he said last week from his office in the McLennan County Courthouse annex.

"I would like the FBI to pack up and go home. I would like the DPS to leave me alone. I would like to just do my job for a while and be able to pick up the paper without reading my name," he said.

His comments come in the wake of a *D* magazine proclamation of "War in Waco" in a 10-page story, and Harry Reasoner's interviews for a "60 Minutes" story.

For the past six months, Fezell frequently has been the focus of media attention. The state's three largest newspapers have printed stories featuring Fezell, and two Dallas television stations have aired series about him.

Fezell, serving the final year of a three-year term, also has been under the scrutiny of a federal



Staff photo — Rod Aydelotte

**District Attorney Vic Fezell says he would like the FBI to pack up and go home**

grand jury investigating allegations of impropriety in the district attorney's office. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jan Patterson initiated the examination of Fezell, saying "there's a serious crime problem" in McLennan County. However, she will not com-

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# District attorney says he wants out of the limelight

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ment on the progress of the grand jury. "Investigations are not public," she said.

Reportedly, Feazell also has been investigated by the Department of Public Safety and Waco Police Department.

But Feazell says the situation may not be as bad as some believe.

"I don't think there's a war in Waco," he said. "There's a conflict, but I don't think it involves all of Waco. I think anyone who reads (the article) will realize they're talking about a political conflict. No one has to worry about being gunned down at the airport."

Feazell says the investigations are in retaliation for his initiating the McLennan County grand jury probe of Lucas. The panel looked into methods the Texas Rangers Homicide Task Force used to gain confessions from Lucas, a drifter who at one time claimed responsibility for hundreds of murders.

After a three-month investigation, the McLennan County grand jury decided to no-bill Lucas in three unsolved McLennan County murders. A report on the grand jury findings is forthcoming from the state attorney general's office.

Feazell says Col. Jim Adams, director of the DPS and a former FBI agent, ordered an investigation (of Feazell) after he (Feazell) said the Ranger task force may have acted "unethically."

"Any allegation that I ordered an investigation that is retaliatory in nature is absolutely false," Adams said last week. He would neither confirm nor deny that the DPS has investigated Feazell, but said that "retaliation is not a criterion" for a DPS investigation.

Tom Pauken, owner of Waco radio station KRZI, has been critical of Feazell in daily broadcast commentaries and said he believes the Lucas investigation may have

been used to sidetrack the federal examination of Feazell.

"To me it strains the credibility to suppose all this has happened as the result of (Feazell) investigating Henry Lee Lucas. I just find that hard to accept. As I understand it, the allegations (against Feazell) arose well before Henry Lee Lucas came to town," Pauken said.

"The problem I have with the Feazell operation is, number one, I think the way he handled the Lucas investigation was not from the standpoint of 'Let's find out the truth,' but 'How does it help Vic Feazell?'" Pauken said. "I don't think that should be the role of the district attorney."

Ms. Patterson has not said when the Feazell investigation was begun, but last July she said it had been "ongoing" for months. And while the grand jury's work has unfolded in secret in the basement of the Austin federal courthouse, questions surrounding Feazell have continued in the media.

Last summer, Dallas television station WFAA (Channel 8) aired 10 reports by reporter Charles Duncan that were critical of Feazell. The reports questioned Feazell's dismissal of driving while intoxicated cases. Duncan said that some Waco attorneys had been paying as much as \$3,000 to have DWI cases dismissed by Feazell, implying that Feazell was receiving payoffs.

"My law license means more to me than that," Feazell said.

The *D* magazine story by Carlton Stowers (a Dallas-based author writing a book about the Lake Waco triple murders) asks the question "Libel at Channel 8?" "In a 10-part series, Channel 8 systematically ripped apart the Waco DA. Investigation or inquisition?" the story asks.

"There was nothing libelous in anything I wrote," Duncan said from his Dallas home. "I haven't

read all of the *D* magazine story, but apparently Carlton Stowers is trying desperately to sell his book, and it's unfortunate he's used this as a way.

"Like Marty Haag (Channel 8 news director) said, 'It's not over until the fat lady sings.' The fat lady hasn't sung yet," Duncan said.

Pauken said, "I was not impressed with the objectivity of the (*D* magazine) piece. It made a superficial effort to claim to be objective, but in fact, it was clearly...designed to put Feazell in the best possible light, and Channel 8 and Charles Duncan in the worst possible light...Obviously (Stowers) has got a book contract involving the lake murders, and I imagine (Feazell) is portrayed favorably in that."

"I think the media itself has come into play in the situation," Pauken added. "I think it's gotten to the point where some folks in media are defending their position rather than finding out the truth."

Feazell said, "Contrary to what (Pauken) might think, I don't tell the newspapers, television stations, radio, '60 Minutes' or *D* magazine what to publish or broadcast," Feazell said.

The Feazell-Duncan controversy will be addressed in a live media panel discussion broadcast by KERA-TV (Channel 13) in Dallas at 8 p.m. Oct. 27.

Modeled after ABC-Viewpoint, it will include a panel of six media representatives and a moderator who will discuss media accountability in such cases as the Channel 8 reports about Feazell.

"I've caught quite a bit of flak, but I've tried to do what's right, and I know I have not done anything wrong or anything illegal," Feazell said.

"It's been like Chinese water torture," he said. "Even though I know there's nothing there, it concerns me. People tell me, 'If they want you bad enough, they can get you.'"