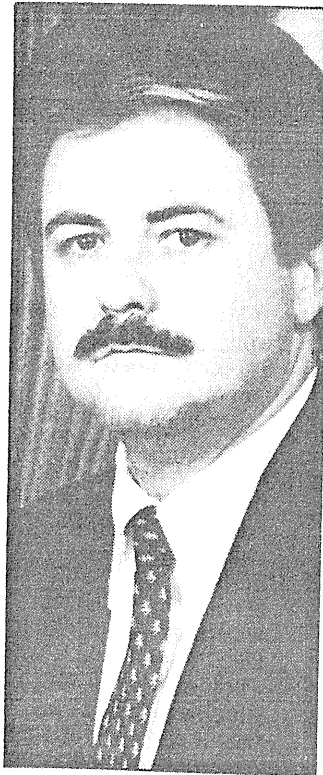


THURSDAY

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Book to describe Lake Waco triple murders



Vic Fezell



Paul Gartner

By **DARRELL DUNN**
Tribune-Herald staff writer

District Attorney Vic Fezell's campaign for re-election could gain momentum in October with the national release of a book by Dallas author Carlton Stowers about the Lake Waco triple murders case.

The 456-page hardback book is expected to be available in bookstores by late September or early October, but Fezell is offering autographed advance copies to people willing to contribute \$250 to his re-election campaign.

"I knew I was going to be able to purchase advance copies, and I thought this would be a nice way to thank people for making a large contribution," Fezell said Wednesday.

The book — titled *Careless Whispers* — is being published by Taylor Publishing of Dallas and will sell for \$16.95.

Three teen-agers — Jill Montgomery and Raylene Rice, both 17 and from Waxahachie, and Ken-

neth Franks, 18, of Waco — were found stabbed to death at Lake Waco's Speegleville Park on July 14, 1982.

After a lengthy investigation, David Wayne Spence, Muneer Mohammad Deeb, Anthony Melendez and Gilbert Melendez were arrested and charged with the murders.

Spence was found guilty of the murders of Miss Montgomery and Franks and was sentenced to die for both. Deeb was found guilty of planning a murder-for-hire scheme and sentenced to die. The Melendez brothers turned state's evidence, pleaded guilty and each received two concurrent life prison sentences.

Fezell said copies of *Careless Whispers* given to his campaign contributors will be signed by himself, Stowers, McLennan County Sheriff's Department investigator Truman Simons, Ned Butler, and "as many as 15 other people involved in the case."

"I'm not trying to sell the book.

It's just a way of saying thank you. Some politicians might not consider anything under \$1,000 to be a large contribution, but I think \$250 is a sizable contribution," he said.

Fezell said he spent \$85,000 in his 1982 campaign, and has already spent \$20,000 in 1986.

Fezell said the timing of the book's release is not political. The Democratic nominee for district attorney, Fezell faces Republican Paul Gartner in the November general election.

"Anyone who knows anything about publishing knows the author has no input on when a book is published," Fezell said.

Gartner said he is not sure how the release of the book might affect the district attorney race.

"It might give (Fezell) an advantage, but I don't know if I would classify it as an unfair advantage. It may help, but I don't think one case will control the campaign," he said.

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Lake Waco murders to be book's topic

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Stowers said the release of the book was not politically timed.

"Taylor Publishing doesn't know Vic Fezell from Adam, except what they've read in the book, and they are not going to work their schedule to get Vic Fezell re-elected," he said.

Stowers said he attended high school with Butler who, along with Simons, was a primary investigator in the triple murders case. Butler also aided Fezell in the prosecution of Spence and Deeb.

"I sat in on the first Spence trial in Waco to see Ned Butler and to see if there was a story. The more I saw, the more interested I became," Stowers said.

"I'm pleased with the book and I'm anxious to see the public's reaction. It's the most difficult project I've ever been involved with. There were so many people involved and it's a very strange story. I think it will be even stranger to those people who think

they already know the whole story," Stowers said.

Freddie Goff, an editor for Taylor Publishing, said *Careless Whispers* is the lead title in the company's fall line. She said the company has "extremely high hopes" for sales. She said Taylor Publishing already has received a "five figure offer" for the paperback rights, and has begun discussions on movie rights.

Ms. Goff said Taylor Publishing did not consider Fezell's re-election campaign when deciding to release the book in October.

"It is a very unique campaign fund-raiser, but our decision was based strictly on our publishing schedule," she said.

"It's such a tragic story, but it's a good book and surprisingly upbeat. The story in the book is one of justice triumphs. Everyone who has read the manuscript said they couldn't put it down. As the book's editor, I'm not objective, but I think we have a hell of a book," she said.