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DA testifies officials discouraged Lucas retractions

EL PASO (AP) — A district attorney who challenged Henry Lee Lucas' confessions to hundreds of murders testified Wednesday that officials tried to pressure Lucas into reconsidering his retractions.

Lucas is charged with first-degree murder in the May 1983 slaying of 72-year-old Librada Apodaca in El Paso. The former drifter confessed also to about 600 other slayings but later recanted.

In a pretrial hearing, Lucas' attorneys are asking state District Judge Brunson Moore to throw out their client's confession to the Apodaca killing, saying it is as phony as the others.

Vic Feazell, McLennan County district attorney, testified that Williamson County Sheriff Jim



McLennan County District Attorney Vic Feazell says FBI agents demanded to see Lucas before his testimony.

Boutwell visited Lucas at the McLennan County Jail before Lucas was to testify before a grand jury in 1985.

Feazell testified it was his understanding that Boutwell told Lucas he would not be able to see Clem-

mie Schroeder, Lucas' spiritual adviser while in jail, if he recanted his confessions.

Three FBI agents demanded to see Lucas the morning he was to testify before the grand jury regarding his confessions to three murders in McLennan County, Feazell said.

"That was the strangest thing I ever saw," said Feazell, adding that the agents turned down his offer to let them see Lucas after the grand jury testimony and insisted on talking to him before.

"I said no. I don't think these guys are used to hearing no, because they were pretty upset about it," he said.

Feazell said he met with Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox, who

contacted the U.S. attorney in San Antonio to complain about what he called an attempt by the federal government to "tamper with one of our witnesses." Feazell said he overheard part of their conversation.

"To say it was heated is an understatement," he said.

Feazell was indicted in September on federal charges he took bribes from defense lawyers. He predicted last year he would be indicted because his questioning of the Lucas case embarrassed the Texas Department of Public Safety. The Texas Rangers, part of the DPS, have been criticized for their handling of the Lucas investigation.

Schroeder, also known as Sister Clemmie because of her spiritual

work with prisoners through New Life Jail Ministries, became close to Lucas while he was in jail in Georgetown.

Schroeder testified that after Lucas had recanted, Boutwell asked her to convince Lucas he must "go back to confessing, to do the Lord's way." Boutwell told her if she refused, she would be sending Lucas to death row, Schroeder testified, adding that she denied Boutwell's request.

"The next morning Henry was sent back to death row," she said.

Lucas was already on death row for his conviction of the 1979 murder of an unidentified hitchhiker in Georgetown. He had been taken out of the state prison at Huntsville while he made his confessions.