

Deeb said glad over murders

By TOMMY WITHERSPOON
Special to the Daily Light

FORT WORTH — The night the bodies of the three teen-agers were discovered at Lake Waco a decade ago, Muneer Mohammad Deeb knew Kenneth Franks was dead before his name was publicized and expressed glee at his death, a former investigator said.

Willie Tompkins, who met Deeb in 1981 when Tompkins was a security officer at Skaggs supermarket, testified Monday that Deeb's statements "shocked" him.

"Deeb said, 'They got what they deserved,' and that he was glad that the boy was dead," Tompkins said. "He said Kenneth Franks had come by his store and hollered at him and shot him the bird on numerous occasions. I asked him if he knew those kids who got killed, and he said he did."

Tompkin's testimony highlighted the twelfth day of Deeb's capital murder retrial.

Deeb, a Jordanian native who operated a convenience store on Herring Avenue, is charged with hiring convicted killer David Wayne Spence to kill Gayle Kelley Reyes. Deeb had promised to give Reyes a job at his store and had taken out a \$20,000 insurance policy on her.

Special prosecutors Bill Lane and David Chapman have told jurors that Deeb wanted Spence to kill Reyes to collect the insurance money and save his struggling business.

Prosecutors contend that Spence and brothers Gilbert and Anthony Melendez instead killed Jill Montgomery of Waxahachie by mistake because she resembled Reyes, and also killed Montgomery's friends, Kenneth Franks of Waco and Raylene Rice of Waxahachie.

Tompkins, a former Waco police officer and district attorney's office investigator, said Deeb came by

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a security guard

Skaggs about 11 p.m. on July 12, 1982, about five hours after the bodies were found at Speegleville Park. Tompkins said he asked Deeb if he had heard about the grisly slayings.

Deeb said he had, adding that he was glad Franks was dead, Tompkins said.

Deeb's admission that he knew Franks was among the victims was made before the teens' names were reported by any media, Tompkins.

"I was surprised that he knew them," Tompkins said. "I was shocked at what he was saying."

However, Deeb's attorney, Dick DeGuerin of Houston, questioned how taken aback by the conversation Tompkins actually was, since he waited two months to report Deeb's revelations to police.

DeGuerin asked Tompkins if he could be wrong about the conversation, suggesting that perhaps it was after the triple killings had been widely reported in the media. Tompkins held firm on the date, saying it was the same night the bodies were discovered.

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After Tompkins went to work for former District Attorney Vic Feazell, he and Sheriff's Lt. Truman Simons, aided by a confession from Tony Melendez, found a necklace and cosmetics that belonged to Jill Montgomery in a wooded area of Koehne Park.

Tony Melendez directed them in 1985 to an area of the park known as the "circle" or "loop," telling them that is where the teens were killed, Tompkins said.

Melendez's confession came after Spence's first trial in Waco in 1984 and Deeb's first trial in Cleburne in 1985, but before Spence's second trial in Bryan in 1985, Tompkins said.

Spence was convicted both times and is on death row. The Melendez brothers pleaded guilty and are serving life prison terms.

In other testimony Monday, for-

mer Sheriff's Sgt. Dennis Lukich identified photographs he took of that area of Koehne Park and a seat cover he and Simons removed from Gilbert Melendez's pickup truck in March 1985.

Lane told Judge Frank Douthitt that a forensic specialist hired by prosecutors for Deeb's retrial recently uncovered a bloody palm print on the seat cover using new technology.

Lane told the judge the three killers murdered the teens at Koehne Park, put their bodies in Melendez's pickup truck, drove them across the Highway 6 twin bridges and dumped them in Speegleville Park.

The bloody palm print is Spence's, Lane has said.

(Editor's note: This report is courtesy of The Waco Tribune-Herald.)