

# Grand jury clears Lucas in three murder cases

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COVINGTON, La. — A special grand jury Friday threw out three murder cases involving Henry Lee Lucas, but continued its investigation of how the cases were "solved" by the St. Tammany Parish sheriff's office.

The three cases — the 1982 slayings of teenager Roxanne Scharp and motel clerk Kenneth Broyles and the 1983 murder of housewife Ruth Ann Manguno — had been "among the strongest cases we've seen," according to Texas Ranger Sgt. Bob Prince, head of the Lucas Task Force investigating the Texas drifter who

claimed to have committed hundreds of murders.

The same grand jury had refused to return an indictment in a fourth case several weeks ago — the 1978 murder of a deputy sheriff named Louis Wagner.

Sources close to the grand jury probe said that because all the cases attributed to Lucas had been re-opened, the jurors would look at how they came to be "solved" in the first place.

Central to the continuing investigation is St. Tammany Parish sheriff's detective Edgar McGehee, a veteran lawman who worked closely with the Texas Ranger task force in 1983 and 1984 and who has been praised by Prince.

McGehee invoked the Fifth Amendment against self-incrimination late last year when informed he was the subject of a criminal investigation.

Wallace Laird, chief deputy of the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's office, said he was aware that McGehee was under investigation, but said "we don't think he misled the grand jury intentionally and we're standing by him."

McGehee became somewhat of a hero in law enforcement circles in the early days of the Lucas investigation, making appearances throughout the nation at seminars and law enforcement conferences.

The evidence McGehee said he had against Lucas seemed impres-

sive. In one murder, he claimed to have positively identified a Lucas fingerprint linking him to the case. In another, he claimed a gun found at the home of Lucas' half-sister had been used in the Wagner slaying. In a third case, he claimed to have found a Lucas pubic hair at the scene of a murder. And in the Manguno murder, McGehee said he had found a hair belonging to victim in a car Lucas had abandoned.

McGehee, fellow investigator Dennis LaRocca, Prince and Williamson County Sheriff Jim Boutwell accompanied Lucas during a 1984 trip to St. Tammany, during which they claimed Lucas led them directly to all four of the

murder sites and gave them additional information about each of the crimes.

As the credibility of Lucas' confessions came into question in April 1985 after a series of investigative reports in the Times Herald, McGehee's "evidence" started to disintegrate.

McGehee had told conflicting stories about the fingerprint, the only such print claimed to be Lucas' in the more than 200 "cleared" cases documented by the Texas Rangers. In late 1984, McGehee told St. Tammany officials the print had been lost. In March 1985, he told New Orleans newsman Richard Angelico that he had the fingerprint.

Then when the Times Herald obtained a report from the Louisiana State Crime Lab at Baton Rouge saying the print was not Lucas', McGehee again said the print had been lost. He could not find it for the grand jury.

Ballistics experts testified that the gun McGehee said was used in the Wagner slaying was not. Later, the hair was proven "inconclusive" evidence, and people listed as eye-witnesses said they could not identify anyone.

Lucas told the Times Herald that McGehee and other officers showed him case files, pictures and maps, then drove him to the murder sites.