

SUNDAY

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EDITORIALS

Is screen big enough for 'Vic Feazell Story'?

The resignation of District Attorney Vic Feazell poses major problems, most of which will surround how his life will be portrayed on the silver screen.

As director Martin Scorsese has found out in recent months, the matter of portraying on film a historic figure — a man deified by some and decried by others — can summon great wrath.

Among the dozens of authors and moviemakers lining up to do the Feazell story — I hold Number 46 — each will have his own notion of how the district attorney's life should be depicted.

Some will embellish the truth in an attempt to come to artistic grips with Feazell's impact on each of their lives. Some bouts of poetic license likely will inflame the many followers of the much-loved prosecutor.

What will ensue, of course, will be heated debates over how the Feazell story should be told. Covers on news magazines will ask the question, "Who was Vic?"

Feazell might have thought he solved the problem by guaranteeing movie rights to an as-yet-undefined filmmaker — assuring an authorized version of his life story. However, such is the nature of free expression that any number of filmmakers could offer their own versions — their interpretations of the second-greatest story ever told. (The first, of course, being *Pride of the Yankees* with Gary Cooper.)

Already several unauthorized Feazell biographies would seem in order, each based on diverging interpretations. Waco Police Chief Larry Scott no doubt is rushing his unauthorized Feazell biography into print and to the studios. It is tentatively titled, *No Comment*.

Also awaited are the Feazell biography by former Texas Department of Public Safety Chief Jim Adams (with forward by the Texas Rangers) and a much-anticipated multivolume novel by Henry Lee Lucas.

Here are just three of the upcoming releases that will be the first on the market to deal with Vic Feazell — the man and the myth:

The Last Temptation of Vic

This film offers to stoke flames of controversy, portraying Feazell as a mortal man who likes the idea of immortality but isn't sure his voice can hold up.

Beset by his accusers and his conscience, he faces a personal crisis about his mission in life. Should he stay on as D.A.? Or should he run for



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governor? Or should he be an astronaut? Or should he open a Chinese restaurant? Or how about that curio shop at Fort Fisher? Or, maybe he should make that trip to Nashville. Or maybe take his music on the road — Willie and Waylon and he.

In the most controversial segment, as Vic agonizes over his decision, he fantasizes about a life as manicurist to the stars.

In the end he accepts his calling as a corporate attorney.

Careless Whiskers

In a tell-all account written by Feazell's barber, this unauthorized biography attempts to portray Feazell as a man who likes it close around the ears, not too shaggy in the back but full up on top.

"He never let another man touch his mustache," says the studio promotional packet.

As to that splotch of gray on Feazell's scalp and the much-discussed question, "Does he or doesn't he?" moviegoers will be left guessing until the final rinse.

D.A. Dearest

This unauthorized biography hits the screen portraying Feazell as a consummate thespian who wins juries' hearts but who brutalizes his staff members by making them wear heavily starched clothing and shoes with buckles.

Termed a no-holds-barred account of life in the Feazell inner sanctum, in its climax the D.A. resigns in a rage when the county orders plastic-coat hangers in an economy move.

Thus just a sampling of the cinematic attempts to bring personal meaning to a story for the ages. In the end each person will have to decide for himself.

Expect pickets at nearby theaters. Expect the debate to rage: How best to portray the Feazell story?

If only Cecil B. De Mille were here . . .

John Young's column appears Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday.