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Simons 294 gets state award

Deputy solved triple murder

By TOMMY WITHERSPOON
Tribune-Herald staff writer

The deputy credited with solving the 1982 Lake Waco triple murder case has been named "Texas Peace Officer of the Year" by the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Truman Simons, 44, of the McLennan County Sheriff's Department, said Friday he was notified recently he was selected from 458 nominees for the statewide honor.

Simons was nominated for the honor by Waco VFW Post 8464 at 702 N. 18th St.

He will receive his award during a banquet Friday at the Dallas Hyatt Regency Hotel, he said.

"I think there are a lot of people that probably deserved it more than I did, but if they are going to give it to me, I certainly am not going to give it back," Simons said.

Simons was in Austin Friday testifying for the defense in McLennan County District Attorney Vic Feazell's federal bribery and mail fraud trial.

Sheriff Jack Harwell, who also testified Friday in Feazell's trial, said he is proud to have Simons working for him.

"I'm real proud for him. I think he is well-deserving and has proven it over the years," Harwell said. "He is dedicated to his work, and there is no one more worthy of it. There are others equally as worthy, but I think Truman is as good an officer as I have ever worked with."

Simons, who grew up in Robinson, spent 17 years with the Waco Police Department before resigning as a sergeant 4½ years ago to

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work for Harwell.

He recently was featured in Carlton Stowers' book *Careless Whispers*, a recount of Simons' investigation into the deaths of Raylene Rice, Jill Montgomery and Kenneth Franks.

The three were killed in July 1982 at Lake Waco, and Simons is credited with solving the case.

His investigation led to the arrests and convictions of David Wayne Spence, Muneer Mohammad Deeb, Gilbert Melendez and Anthony Melendez in the triple homicide.

Spence, who was tried twice, is serving two death sentences. Deeb was tried in Cleburne and sentenced to death and the Melendez brothers pleaded guilty to murder and are serving life prison terms.