

DA's office to delay murder indictment

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The McLennan County District Attorney's office will not seek an indictment in the July 1982 stabbing deaths of three teenagers near Lake Waco until after the completion of a capital murder trial scheduled to begin Monday, a spokesman said Wednesday.

John Ben Sutter, administrative aide to District Attorney Vic Feazell, said prosecutors are "confident in the information that we have obtained and confident that we will have a secure indictment and a successful prosecution when the time comes."

However, Sutter said Feazell's "under-staffed" office cannot work on the Lake Waco case at the same time it proceeds with the trial of David Darnell Drakeford, which is scheduled to begin next week.

Drakeford is charged in the April 1982 death of Genevieve Crawford, who was robbed and beaten at the Waco Hilton gift shop. Attorneys expect the trial to last about six weeks.

"I want to emphasize that the individual or individuals that we are looking at (in the Lake Waco killings) are not going anywhere, and we are certain that the public is protected from them at this time," Sutter said.

Sutter declined comment when asked if the suspect or suspects are in jail or prison, and declined to elaborate on the statement.

"We feel that by the end of the Drakeford trial, we will be able to conclude the investigation completely, and the district attorney feels comfortable that all the loose ends will be tied together by that time," he said.

Some of the "loose ends" involve physical evidence taken from the murder scene and potential suspects which was sent to the Federal Bureau of Investigation laboratory in Washington, D.C. Sutter said the office is waiting on test results to be returned from Washington.

Two Waco police detectives have been assigned to the district attorney's office since March to work exclusively on the

triple murder investigation. Two detectives also have been assigned for several months to assist in the Drakeford investigation.

Sutter said that although Waco native James Russell Bishop is no longer considered the primary suspect in the deaths of Jill Montgomery, Raylene Rice and Kenneth Franks, he has not been eliminated as a suspect.

"We will not eliminate (Bishop) at this time, because it is important that all leads be followed thoroughly and completely," Sutter said. "We want to make absolutely certain that he either did do it or that he did not do it."

Bishop is serving a 79-year sentence in a California prison after pleading guilty April 6 in San Diego to nine felony counts of sexual assault and attempted murder in the February assault of two high school girls.

The 27-year-old former groundskeeper at McLennan Community College has been considered a suspect in the Lake Waco deaths since March, when three Waco detectives flew to California to interview him.