To be shim

EZEQUIEL D. SALINAS
JUDGE
HITH DISTRICT COURT OF TEXAS
LAREDO

OFFICIAL REPORTER;
OLGA B. GUERRA

PERSONAL

January 7, 1961

Dr. Hector P. Garcia, 3024 Morgan Corpus Christi, Texas.

Dear Doctor:

Referring to your telephone call last night, I am enclosing a memorandum which was compiled here this morning containing a not-yet-too-complete picture of the situation.

Last week I called Reynaldo Garza to tell him I wanted him to know I did not hold him against him if he was making a bid for the judgeship but that I hoped it would all be open and above board without back-stabbing, etc., and that when it was over we would all be good, sporting friends like good Americans of other racial strains... He told me definitely ("te juro por mi madre que esta enterrada") that he WAS NOT making any bid for it, that it was only his friends that had been writing, sending him copies, and pushing him because he was a good friend of Lyndon Johnson and Yarborough. He said during the campaign Lyndon had told him: "You carry the county (Cameron), and it will be good for me and good for you"--but that was all, he never talked about the judgeship. That he had also talked to Yarborough, who had told him "anything I can do for you in Washington, just let me know"--but that was all.

H. A. Garcia also told me some three weeks ago that he was not making any bid for him, that his name was just being bandied about ("me lo traen bailando, como traen otros").

Both of them were very friendly, although we all understood that if it were "offered to them in a silver platter", they would be damned foolem to say no.

The enclosed confidential memo indicates they are out now, and that in our struggle for recognition the issue is clear when the list of prospects was narrowed down to three. At first it looked as if it would be SALINAS or BURNEY; then the name of LOONEY was added.

Naturally and logically, in justice and fairness, on qualifications and from every possible justifiable angle it looks as if we have the odds in our favor, unless whims and capriciousness or hidden interests brush us aside again. We will see January 20 or very soon thereafter.

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Either J. C. Looney or possibly Burney were to call Lyndon to ask him how he wanted the names submitted, and possibly to whom.

Politically experienced leaders present at the meeting have faith and trust in Looney, say he is very fair, and that he will do the correct thing. They add that he cannot afford to antagonize this end of the district, because there will be other things coming up.

Looney is said to have shown not too much interest in the judgeship. And that Burney did not give the appearance of too much interest either. It may be they wished to create the competition, so that they could offer to withdraw later in return for voting help in the coming senatorial race later. Or it may be that Burney feels he can have the cake and eat it too—by having the filling of this vacancy delayed until much later, until after the senatorial elections, and then clamber in; or that by that time another judgeship is created, and they can then bargain for solid support to my appointment for Brownsville and Laredo in return for this end of the district giving him solid support for the judgeship in Corpus and Victoria.

The possibilities are challenging.

Our struggle should be to push for a QUICK, EARLY appointment to FILL THIS VACANCY which needs to be filled because it has been without a regular judge since September 1959.

And the deciding factors will probably be the Kennedys wanting to give recognition to our people NOW, since they are NOW recognizing negroes, Jewish, labor groups, etc.

Politically they have justification by following the recommendations of the local (Texas) Democratic National Committeeman.

Word was let out at the meeting that Senator Blakley might not be consulted on these appointments because he was an interim senator, and that he would not want to antagonize any voting group by selecting or pushing one of several prospects. Apparently a Senator other than Yarborough will not be consulted until after he is elected for the six-year term--which will not take place until after the run-off which will be around the middle of May.

In early December Faul Nye and Blake Gillen of Corpus, Skaggs of Brownsville, and J. C. Looney of Edinburg personally contacted leaders in South Texas counties as to coming political appointments in the zrea. They had lists of prospects, apparently compiled by them. They had 12 for the wacant Allred judgeship. They said Lyndon wanted these leaders to "get together" on the recommendations. The contacts were exploratory. The only result was not to make commitments on the U. S. senatorial race. They agreed to meet again on January 5, in Edinburg, at Looney's home—a 21-county leaders' meeting.

In late December, Wan Kennedy of Corpus was known to have sought the endorsement of the Democratic National Committeeman for Texas in behalf of Burney. He was told firmly the Committeeman was endorsing Judge Salinas all the way. He again requested it in case Judge Salinas was "eliminated", but the Committeeman said he did not expect this, but expected Salinas would be appointed. Kennedy then sought the endorsement of the Committeeman for a second judgeship for Burney in case one was created.

There was much rumor and hearsay about maneuvers during December: that Reynaldo Garza was encouraged to make a bid for the judgeship, being told he was on "the list"; that Judge H. A. Garcia's name was being "bandied about"; and that others were being "encouraged"—Tom Hartley of Edinburg, Allen Wood of Corpus, etc.

Reminders by letter were mailed to South Texas political leaders in South Texas counties, from Maverick, Lasalle, to Brownsville and presumably all counties in between, for the January 5 meeting.

There were 28 present. Some were county chairmen, others were leaders having much say-so about their county vote.

The meeting was informal, friendly. Judge Wale was made chairman.

They had 8 names for the judgeship on "the list", and the first vote was taken on it. All the counties in the Western side of the area went solid for Judge Salinas, after Joe Martine, County Judge Benavidez and Philip Kazen and others had spoken, and Salinas was "in". Either before or about this time, it was suggested to submit 3 names for each possible appointment to "the Big Boys" (in Washington) and let them select.

There was much disunity in the Valley and the vote on their names was sploit. The Western county "delegates" declined to wote on them, arguing they already had their name (Salinas) and now it was up to the Valley to narrow down their own competing prospects to two, which would be added to the name of Judge Salinas, and make the three.

There was some wrangling here because Jack Skaggs was pushing for a Brownsville name, there were others in the Valley, and there was Burney of Corpus. Burney was at the meeting, and held a private conference with Looney. The procedures are

Geographically, the position also appears strong.

. . . .

If Laredo in Webb County (which produced an 8,200 vote margin) does not get the judgeship, it stands to get nothing because Vicars of Brownsville and Macmanus of Raymondville are said to be very close friends of Lyndon's and Yarborough's and either of them are likely to get the Collector of Customs position; while the Laredo prospect is only a brother of Philip Kazen who is a friend of Lyndon's. And, further, if need be, the Senators could offer the Laredo Postmastership which is vacant, subject of course to the approval of the other local leaders.

Corpus is already getting a top position recommendation, through that of Gillen for the U. S. Marshal job.

The U. S. District Attorneyship is a fight where Webb County does not figure, between LaSalle, Hidalgo and Cameron.

Politically, the picture is improved.

Neither Burney, Looney, Vann Kennedy, Paul Nye or other leaders in Corpus of this group can now assert the argument that the Latin Americans are divided; nor personally object to Judge Salinas, since the agreement at the meeting was that all those three names recommended were ACCEPTABLE; they would have to betray their binding agreement. This was that the names were to be submitted on an equal basis—not as 1st, 2nd, and 3rd preference even though Salinas was voted on first and came first on the list of three; and that either one selection was acceptable to all.

Of course they can all work individually for any one of the three names. That is, the Corpus Christi people can work for Burney; and the Walley people can work for Looney.

But Judge Salinas has strong supporters in the Cecil Burney county, and also strong supporters in the Looney county; whereas, neither of them have any support in Webb County, nor in the whole Western portion of the meeting's delegate area.

Judicial experience, qualifications, etc., also looks good.

While Looney is a good lawyer and Burney is said to be primarily a good public relations man, neither of them have had judicial experience; and so far neither of them have the endorsement of their local Ear associations where they practice, whereas the Laredo-Webb County Bar Association has unanimously adopted a Resolution endorsing Judge Salinas.

There was no agreement reached nor seriously attempted in the U. S. Senatorial pending race April 4 on any one candidate because it was said each county has its own peculiar problems with its own electorate, given the diversified ticket, and each is to go its way but always looking to maintaining its unity; and, if need be, a future meeting may be held on it. unclear, but Reynaldo Garza and H. A. Garcia were dropped; Skaggs insisted on Gilbert Sharpe, but the pressure was to get Cecil Eurney and J. C. Looney in (both of whom were at the meeting). Skaggs then insisted that flour names be submitted for the appointment, adding Sharpe's; but the Western people said "then, let's make all the submissions in four names instead of three". — This squelched Sharpe's inclusion, and it was suggested the name of Gilbert Sharpe not be left out but shifted to the U. S. District Attorney position.

The name selection, for the warious positions, was this:

For U. S. District Judge

Judge E. D. Salinas of Laredo (voted on first) Cecil Burney of Corpus Christi J. C. Looney of Edinburg

For U. S. District Attorney

John Wildenthal of Cotulla (West counties solid) Bryan Odom of McAllen Giltert Sharpe of Brownsville

For U. S. Collector of Customs

Wicars of Brownsville

Macmanus of Willacy county

Charles Ezen of Laredo

For U. S. Marshal

Blake Gillen of Corpus (He is unknown in this western area, but was presented by the Corpus people as an "intimate personal friend of Lyndon's" and, since there were no serious prospects other than <u>Porfirio Flores</u> of Laredo, Sheriff of Webb County, he was recommended alone.

Note the following:

Salinas is the only one out of ten names recommended off
Latin American background and Spanish surname—in an area where
the population is preponderantly Latin American and Spanish—named.
If Salinas is not selected by the Senators (and Lyndon), the
recognition for the Spanish—speaking people in South Texas is
gone, because the others are all anglos and Kazen is Syrian; and
Latin American again are subject only to assistanceships, crumbs.

And the selections most probably will be made from the above only; otherwise Lyndon and Yarborough would be putting aside recommendations of such leaders in the various counties as Judge Bibb of Eagle Pass, Judge Vale of Starr, Judge Medina of Zapata, Judge Parr of Duval, Judge Barrera of Jim Hogg, etc., and the three faction leaders of Webb County. In other words, both Garza and Garcia are "out" now, probably not to be even considered.