

Justices Question Judicial Selection

Associated Press
AUSTIN — Texas Supreme Court Justice Raul Gonzalez said Tuesday he does not promote either an appointed or elected system of judges.

Gonzalez, the first Mexican-American to serve on the Supreme Court, told a Senate committee that asking him to choose between the two systems was "excess baggage" he would rather not carry when he runs for election in 1986.

He said he had benefited from both systems as he ran successfully for state district judge in Brownsville and was appointed to the 13th Court of Appeals, Corpus Christi, and the Supreme Court.

Gov. Mark White named Gonzalez to the Supreme Court in October.

The Senate Nominations Committee questioned Gonzalez briefly Tuesday and forwarded his name to the Senate for confirmation on a 6-0 vote.

He expressed concern that an appointed system would shift power from the people to a select few. If Texas went strictly to an appointed system "the judiciary ... this would not be accessible to minorities," Gonzalez said.

However, he said, with an election coming up and knowing that no Hispanic had been successful in a statewide race in Texas, "I'd rather not get that excess baggage on this particular issue to have to defend statewide."

Gonzalez said he agreed with Supreme Court Chief Justice John Hill that good judges sometimes are swept out of office simply because of the popularity of the man leading the ticket.

Hill said the Legislature needs to look at a different system than the one that has now.

Prohibiting the straight-lever election of judges is a good start, he said.

Slouch By Jim Earle



"When you said some guys were coming over to study, I didn't know you were going to study karate."

Former Cowboys owner suffers financial woes

Associated Press
DALLAS — His father was a legendary wildcat oilman who laid the foundation for one of Texas' great fortunes. And Clint Murchison Jr. carried on the tradition, until he fell on hard financial times and ill health.

Now hardly able to speak or sign his name, which appears on lawsuits running into the millions, Murchison has taken the first step toward bankruptcy.

The ailing tycoon's woes nearly landed on his front doorstep Tuesday as foreclosure proceedings were about to begin on the 25 wooded acres that surround his Dallas mansion. Murchison-owned Klimanorm Corp., owner of the land, filed for protection from creditors in bankruptcy court Monday.

Murchison, 61, who suffers from a degenerative physical condition, sold the Dallas Cowboys' football franchise a year ago because of his financial bind. Murchison's Attorney Philip I. Palmer said, "Maybe the sale of the Cowboys was the beginning of the end; when he sold the team, there were a lot of stories about his declining health. And a number of banks panicked — there was an effective run on his estate."

Murchison had planned to work out a debt repayment plan without taking refuge in bankruptcy court, Palmer said. But an El Paso bank didn't want to wait and planned to auction off the 25 acres that surround Murchison's mansion.

"That was the triggering event," Palmer said Tuesday. "And bankruptcy law halts that foreclosure."

Few in Dallas business circles would have expected the Murchison name to be on a bankruptcy protection petition. The dealings of his father, Clint Murchison Sr., were legendary, and the wealth of Clint Jr. and his family was well-known — he had even been on the cover of Time magazine.

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epitome of Texas oilman wheeler-dealer," Palmer said. "He would have fit right into the television story 'Dallas.'"

Monday's maneuvering in bankruptcy court came on the heels of last Friday's gathering of more than 30 of Murchison's biggest creditors, Palmer said.

"We made several proposals to them and invited them to investigate his assets," Palmer said. "Now I presume I'll hear from them one way or another — either in court or some other way."

Palmer said Murchison's net

worth is about \$250 million, and at one time he had controlling interest in more than one hundred corporations ranging from real estate to silver mines in Mexico to an Oklahoma company that recycled cattle manure.

Forbes magazine rated him as one of the nation's richest men in 1984. But now, more than 50 creditors are trying to wrest about \$200 million from his estate on scores of business deals that went awry, Palmer said.

Last year alone, Murchison was sued for more than \$100 million by creditors who claimed he defaulted on loans in connection with real estate and business ventures around the country.

Murchison's mind and his sense of humor are as sharp as they ever were, Palmer said. Physically, though, it is tough for Murchison to get out of his wheelchair or dial a telephone, Palmer said.

"It's poignant," Palmer said. But Murchison's declining health is just one explanation offered for the fall of his financial empire. Some attribute it to bad business investments, others to a hyperextension of his bank accounts.

Still others say it's because of family squabbling that ensued after Murchison's brother, John, died in 1979 and Murchison's sister-in-law filed suit. The resulting court battle forced him to liquidate many of his holdings.

Judge says verdict to be announced Thursday

Testimony ends in trial over priest's murder

Associated Press
TORUN, Poland — The chief prosecutor said Tuesday a slain pro-Solidarity priest invited death by his "extremism," and claimed the Roman Catholic Church turns a blind eye to militant clergymen.

In the last day of testimony, four secret policemen charged with killing the Rev. Jerzy Popieluszko made their final statements. Two wept openly, and said they were misled by

blind faith in their superiors. Capt. Grzegorz Piotrowski, the alleged ringleader who faces a death sentence, told the court "I did commit an act of madness." But he said "even in the shadow of the gallows" he could not accept the charges of premeditated murder or beg for mercy.

The chief judge said a verdict would be announced Thursday, ex-

actly six weeks after the unprecedented trial began.

The secret police officers are charged with the October abduction and killing of Popieluszko, a popular and outspoken defender of the outlawed Solidarity free trade union. The killing set off protests throughout Poland and led authorities to order the trial, the first public trial of secret police agents for actions against a dissident.

"One extremism leads to another extremism," chief prosecutor Leszek Pietrasinski said. "It has been claimed that Popieluszko's activity could have no link with the crime, but the truth is otherwise. ... There is good and bad in the history of the church."

Catholic lawyers representing the dead priest's family retorted that the prosecutor was "slandering the victim in the courtroom."

Piotrowski, his manner confident and reserved, said in his final statement: "Why did I agree to the illegal abduction? My motives were complex but never low. Death was not planned. That was not my aim."

Piotrowski, 33; Lt. Waldemar Chmielewski, 29, and Lt. Leszek Pekala, 32, are charged with kidnapping and murdering Popieluszko, who was beaten before his body was flung into a reservoir.

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