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**Subject:** : AP: Federal judge "Hippo" Garcia dies at age 76

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SUBJECT:: AP: Federal judge "Hippo" Garcia dies at age 76

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"James C. Ho" <JamesCHo@stanfordalumni.org>

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To:

cc:

Subject: AP: Federal judge "Hippo" Garcia dies at age 76

Associated Press Newswires

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Wednesday, January 16, 2002

Federal judge "Hippo" Garcia dies at age 76

By T.A. BADGER

Associated Press Writer

SAN ANTONIO (AP) - U.S. District Judge Hipolito Garcia, who rose from an impoverished childhood to become the first Mexican-American federal judge in western Texas, died Wednesday after a long illness. He was 76.

Garcia's death came only a day after he had assumed semi-retired status after serving more than two decades on the federal bench.

Friends and colleagues of the judge, known widely by his nickname "Hippo", remembered him Wednesday as a man who climbed to a prestigious and influential position, but never forgot where he came from.

"He was everybody's friend - everybody loved Judge Garcia," said U.S. District Judge Edward Prado. "He was a very humble man who always had time for his friends."

"He always treated all with the highest degree of respect, and what he got in return was even higher respect" said local attorney Van Hilley, a longtime friend.

Garcia was born and raised in a down-at-heel neighborhood just south of downtown San Antonio - the small house where his immigrant parents settled in the 1920s was only a few blocks from the federal building that housed his busy courtroom.

Hilley said memories of his early years stayed with Garcia even as he rose in stature in the legal community.

"He didn't speak English when he was young and he had to fight his way through school," said Hilley, who met Garcia while trying a case before him in 1972. "He was always concerned about the (defendant's) family. He understood people's suffering."

Garcia was educated in San Antonio public schools, where classmates who couldn't pronounce Hipolito gave him his prominent nickname.

After graduation from Brackenridge High School, he served in the Army in Germany in World War II as a tank driver. Afterward he attended St. Mary's University, where he earned a law degree in 1951.

He served as an assistant district attorney in Bexar County for 14 years before going into private law practice. In late 1964, Garcia was elected a county court judge and a decade later, he was elected a judge in the state criminal court for Bexar County.

President Jimmy Carter appointed Garcia to a seat on the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas in October 1980.

"He was quite a man, I'll tell you that," said William Putnicki, the federal court clerk in San Antonio who credits Garcia with helping him get that job in the mid-1990s. "He had tremendous judicial discretion, judgement and temprament."

Putnicki said he'll most remember Garcia's wit and his gifts as a storyteller.

"The guy had so many experiences and a way of sharing them with you," he said. "He always kept you on the edge of your seat."

Garcia, who never married, is survived by two brothers and a sister.

---- INDEX REFERENCES ----

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