

Garrison Case Noted by Early

"Judge Recalls Pressure-Packed Week

By PAUL ATKINSON

It has been a pressure-packed week for Civil District Court Judge Thomas A. Early, and early Thursday afternoon he admitted it.

Judge Early, who only a few hours earlier had thrown out of court Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's suit to overturn his Democratic runoff defeat by challenger Harry Connick, stood in the breezeway of the City Hall-Civil Courts complex and discussed the case.

"There is no doubt this was one of my more difficult cases," said Judge Early. "It was certainly a pressure-type case. We had to do everything real fast."

He said he believes Garrison will appeal the verdict to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeal and it will be heard at 7 p.m. Jan. 2.

Judge Early said, as he sees it, the Fourth Circuit Court has three options:

—One, it can uphold him all the way.

—Two, it could rule that he was correct in throwing out the amended second and third petitions of Garrison but still the case must be remanded to him for trial.

—Or three. The court could add the second and third petitions and order him to try the case.

VEGA COMMENTS

Earlier before Judge Early rendered his decision to a



Photo by Tibery.
JUDGE

THOMAS A. EARLY JR.
Throws out Garrison's case.

packed courtroom, Minute Clerk R. J. Vega Jr. talked of Judge Early and the pressure of the past week.

"Judge Early really does his homework," said the 28-year court employee. "We were here Christmas eve, Christmas and he was in until 11 p.m. Wednesday working on this decision." Vega said, "Judge Early approaches things from a logical viewpoint."

Early, appointed by former Gov. John J. McKeithen to the bench in 1969, won his current post later in 1969 by defeating Melvin Duran (now a judge) decisively. He will serve until 1976.

At the time of his appoint-

ment, Judge Early was serving his second term in the House of Representatives from the Sixth Ward.

Vega resumed, "He doesn't mind work. In fact he thrives on it.

"In many of our divorce cases, Judge Early becomes involved personally in them. He will sit here late hours when there are children involved trying to work out a solution to get the couples back together."

HUMOR SHOWN

During the brief trial sessions Judge Early showed both humor and compassion.

At one point Wednesday, Garrison's attorney, Gibson Tucker, was talking about his client's lack of commissioners. Judge Early suggested to him that he (Garrison) could have had poll watchers.

"I remember from my Sixth Ward political days, we made sure we had them, especially in the river precincts," said Early as the spectators laughed loudly.

As he was concluding his reasons for upholding Connick's bid to throw out Garrison's suit, Judge Early apparently realized that a living legend's political career was nearly finished.

Turning to Garrison and his attorneys, Judge Early said, "It gives this court no great joy to ring down the curtain on the career of a colorful and illustrious district attorney. But this can't be a court of feelings."

Judge Early added, "I have to call them down the middle, call them as I see them. This is my decision."