

Thornberry Once Man With a Gun

AUSTIN (Tex.) — (AP) — Homer Thornberry worked his way through the University of Texas as a gun-toting chief deputy sheriff. Now he is headed for the Supreme Court.

President Johnson nominated him for the high bench today and in so doing selected the man who succeeded him in the House. Thornberry represented the 10th District in which Johnson lives.

Thornberry said today the appointment was the greatest honor that could come to a citizen or lawyer.

"If the Senate of the United States consents to my appointment, I will be presented with a serious challenge and a grave responsibility and I will do my best to justify the confidence shown in me," he added.

'DEAR MAN'

Mrs. Thornberry said she was grateful to "that dear man," President Johnson.

She said she was proud of her husband, "as any wife would be . . . It's one of the greatest honors a man can have."

Thornberry, 59, who still must be confirmed by the Senate, is considered a liberal.

If nothing else, his membership in the "immortal 56" bloc which stopped a state sales tax in the 1930s when he was a member of the Texas Legislature put that label on him. Opposition to a sales tax is considered a liberal stand in the state.

15 YEARS

And the liberal designation stayed with him among political observers

when he was ranking member of the powerful House Rules Committee. He was in the House 15 years.

Johnson, then vice president, said of the stockily built Thornberry when the representative was nominated as a federal district judge: "No man has ever had a brother who was more faithful to me or to the people of the 10th District than Homer Thornberry."

From the district bench he went to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which has jurisdiction in much of the Old South and some U.S. territory outside the continental United States.

RAYBURN PROTEGE

Thornberry was born in Austin, the state capital, where moving into politics came easily. He is a strong Democrat and was a protege of such men as the late long-time House Speaker, Sam Rayburn.

He obtained his law degree from the University of Texas while holding down successive jobs as legislative page, newspaper salesman, deputy sheriff and assistant county school superintendent.

Thornberry was a Navy intelligence officer in World War II and returned to Austin to practice law and become mayor pro tem of the city.

He served in the legislature and spent two terms as Travis County (Austin) district attorney.

He went to Congress in 1948 and from there his career — under the guidance of Lyndon Johnson — skyrocketed.