



Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

Ramon Garcia
County Judge

David L. Fuentes
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Joe M. Flores
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Joseph Palacios
Commissioner, Precinct 4

Public Affairs Division
Julia Benitez Sullivan
Director

100 E. Cano St., 1st Floor
(956) 292-7026 P
(956) 292-7766 F
www.co.hidalgo.tx.us W
public.info@co.hidalgo.tx.us E

Contact: Julia Benitez Sullivan
Phone: 956.292.7026
Email: julia.sullivan@co.hidalgo.tx.us

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, December 3, 2018

Hidalgo County ADA Michael J. Garza Lone Star Prosecutor of the Year

EDINBURG – Assistant District Attorney Michael J. Garza has received the prestigious Lone Star Prosecutor of the Year award for his work on the case of a former priest accused in the 1960 Holy Week rape and murder of a parishioner.

John Feit was found guilty of murder with malice aforethought on December 11, 2017 in the death of Irene Garza, a 25-year-old second-grade teacher and beauty queen, who was last seen going to confession at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in McAllen where Feit served as a fill-in priest.

“This is a case about betrayal, murder and a cover-up,” Garza said in his closing argument, describing Feit as a “wolf in priest’s clothing waiting to attack.”

The Texas District and County Attorneys Association awards the Lone Star Prosecutor Award to prosecutors and prosecutor office personnel whose tireless work in the trenches advances justice in their communities. Garza, who serves as Chief of the Intake Division of the Hidalgo County Criminal District Attorney’s office, received the award at the Association’s annual Civil Law Update in Galveston in September. Garza, who is not related to the victim, also presented a case study titled “A Wolf in Priest’s Clothing” at the Civil Law Update.

Criminal District Attorney Ricardo Rodriguez Jr. presented the case against Feit to the grand jury, which handed down the indictment and led to the arrest and prosecution of the former priest.

“After nearly 60 years, justice was served for Irene Garza and all those who loved, cared, and remembered this remarkable young lady,” Rodriguez said. “As lead prosecutor Michael Garza did an outstanding job and deserves the statewide recognition.”

###

Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility.