

IN THE MAYOR'S OFFICE

Kaliedoscope
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El Pasoans first attempt to establish a city government with the election of saloon keeper Ben Dowell in 1873, before the railroads had made a growing city out of the dusty border village. Since then, its 41 mayors have struggled to control a booming city through more than 100 years of change.

*To commemorate El Paso's 400th birthday, Times reporters **Jeannie Kever** and **Janis Marston** talked to eight former mayors to get their perspective on some of the more recent changes. Their years in the high-back, leather mayor's chair span 30 years, from 1951 to the present.*

Four of the former mayors—Ralph Seitsinger, Bert Williams, Judson Williams and Don Henderson—met with the reporters in February to discuss city government in retrospect. Four others Fred Hervey, Peter de Wetter, Ray Salazar and Tom Westfall talked individually with The Times.

The interviews begin on this page and continue on Pages 2E, 3E and 6E. A look at El Paso's earliest political life appears on Page 13E ...

The Times will publish a special edition Thursday to celebrate the newspaper's 100th anniversary and El Paso's 400th birthday.

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Fred Hervey (mayor 1951-57, 73-75): "I first went into politics because I was dissatisfied with the manner the city was running and the way the finances were being handled The second time (in 1973), I ran because I had been really dissatisfied with the mayor at the time, Bert Williams.

"During my first term, I guess I'm proudest of the financial foundation set by my administration. We set up the 2 percent operating fund (in 1953 a provision was added to the city charter requiring 2 percent of the operating budget each year be set into a cash reserve to be used only for short-term borrowing). We had a solid surplus in the first four years (achieved by imposing drastic belt-tightening in all city departments and raising prices for city services). We had a 10 percent cut in taxes. And I'm very proud of the progress we made in the South Side, paving alleys, streets, putting in street lights, building a swimming pool there."

"You talk about abuse, I got it. I had loads of manure dumped on my porch and I had manure dumped in front of the mayor's office.

—Judson Williams

In 1955, at Hervey's insistence, the city annexed 43 square miles, including the ancient town of Ysleta, in the Lower Valley, Upper Valley and Northeast. Opposition was immediate and loud.

But Hervey felt, and still feels "it was a wise choice for the city and the area, even though it didn't sit well with a lot of people.

"Growth wasn't orderly, there was no overall plan. And water was a big problem."

Another of his accomplishments in the 1950s was creation of the Public Service Board, which consolidated six water companies serving the city into one. Hervey also is credited with getting the city to tap an underground water field near Canutillo to bring a new water supply to the developing West Side.

“The Lower Valley, of course, was the big problem. They didn’t want to be in the city, but (they needed to be because) they were paying high bond rates for their water bonds. They were concerned about their school district (Ysleta Independent School District). They wanted to keep it separate because of their pride in their schools, (YISD is still an independent entity.) They, didn't like being in a city.”

The annexation gave thousands of Mexican-Americans the right to vote in city elections, and is credited by some political scientists as helping Raymond Telles (now with the Organization of American States in Costa Rica) be elected as the city's first Mexican-American mayor in 1957.

Also during Hervey's terms in the 1950s, Mexican-Americans first held administrative positions in city government.

“There were no Mexican-Americans on the Fire Department when I took office in the 1950s. They thought the Anglos and Mexican-Americans couldn't sleep in the same dormitory. That just shows you how far we've come.”

During his term in the 1970s, Hervey's administration created the city Office of Management and Budget to oversee finances and operations. Hervey says it usurped some of the traditional city managerial role.

“We also were able to create a tourist board and set the tone for trying to attract tourists to El Paso. We created a number of boards to set the stage for an orderly growth in financial areas . . . we planned for the continuing freeway construction.”

Ralph Seitsinger (mayor 1961-63): “I'd been mayor pro tern with Ray (Telles) for

four years and I wanted to continue some of the programs we had started.

His accomplishments included “hiring a director of Public Works so that we didn't pave a street one day and tear it up about 10 days later.”

“And there were a number of other things. The North-South Freeway was our idea (the first leg wasn’t completed until Don Henderson’s administration in 1975-77). The start of the Chamizal settlement was when I made a trip to Mexico City to try to get international flights out of our airport. When I got to Mexico City, the U.S. ambassador met us at the plane and asked if I could have lunch with him. That (conversation) started the Chamizal.”

Judson Williams (mayor 1983-69): “I never really wanted to be mayor. The only reason I ran was because I had been interested in good candidates; I had talked to various and sundry ones over the years and I had been encouraged to run and I never did.

“One night, I was taking inventory and I thought, ‘Well, if you're going to tell people to run, you ought to do it yourself.’ So I ran and I got lots of satisfaction out of being mayor.

“The city was not moving ahead as I felt it should, we were turning down bond issues when we needed those things, so I decided to try to put together various types of citizen input to find out what they really wanted and how they wanted to pay for it. We passed a number of bond issues and also put together the organization of the mayors of the state of Texas (the Texas Municipal League.)

As president of the TML for two years, Williams lead the statewide fight for the city’s right to have a I-cent sales tax.

"We were the first city that passed the sales tax and today that means some \$10 or \$12 million. The penny sales tax helped property taxpayers, but not as much as it should have—and I kind of get amused when the (present) City Council says 'Let's add another penny to the sales tax, let's add 3 cents.' They don't know what (a fight with the legislature) they're talking about." I consider that to be a rather monumental achievement, not necessarily mine. but on the basis of getting the cities organized, I did do that."

During Williams' first term, two bond issues totaling \$40 million were passed for city improvements. In 1968, a proposal he supported for the Civic Center was approved by voters, who had turned it down on several earlier attempts during the late 1950s and early 1960s. How, when earlier attempts had failed, did he do it?

"The mood of the citizens was no different then, and the money flow was worse. There's much, much more money in circulation now. Then it was tough. I had a committee of about 2,800 people throughout the city and I said, 'Now, let's decide what we want and let's decide how we're going to pay for it.'"

The upcoming bond election on the Civic Center was "the only reason I stayed the third term. I had no intention of staying (and he resigned shortly before his third term was up), but the Civic Center needed to be done and I felt that maybe I was in the best position to do it."

During his first term, Williams wrestled Animal Control from the Humane Society, over considerable objections.

"Right after that (in 1964) was the horse ordinance. We had to eliminate horses and cows from inside the city, limits.

"Fred Hervey came down and he said we shouldn't do that to the Lower Valley. I said, 'We've got to do it.' You talk about abuse, I got it. I had loads of manure dumped on my porch and I had manure dumped in front of the mayor's office. And these were all good people. Their personal privilege was being infringed on. But it had to be done. This was a growth area. Those two things were very, very bitter, but if they hadn't been done, we would have much more serious problems today.

"The Chamizal had been ongoing since the time they held us responsible for changing the course of the river. (The agreement) had been worked on (during Seitsinger's administration), but very little had been done because no money was available. When (President John) Kennedy came here, I met with him in his room on the eighth floor of the Hotel Cortez, and I told him what it (the agreement) really meant. I told him, it's not just El Paso and Juarez, because to us, there's no problem. Nobody in El Paso or Juarez was really concerned about it, but it was a thorn in the side of the Mexican government because this was their land. I told Kennedy, 'This council is not going to support this if you don't properly compensate the city. And that simply means to move those people into reasonable housing'—5,600 families were dislocated.

"Nothing that I can think of happens in one administration. So when you go talking about credit, I don't want credit for anything. I just want to feel good about helping those things along."

Peter deWetter (mayor 1969-71): "I think we—the council and I—were able to pull

the community together spiritually. That's one of the real characteristics of El Paso.

“Back in those days, the Council of Social Action pulled leadership in from different segments of the community and listened to their recommendations. We tried to begin representing all the people of the city. We were the first administration to take City Council meetings to various parts of the community at night, in an attempt to make the citizens feel the city government was responsive to them.”

Peter deWetter was later remembered as the crewcut, conservative establishment candidate who ordered police to serve ice water to Kent State sympathizers storming City Hall

He formed the Mayor's Youth Council and the El Paso Youth Forum because “back in those days, the late ‘60s and early ‘70s, young people—and El Paso has the youngest median age of any major city—felt left out of government.

“We wanted them to know we were willing to listen. Those were the days of Kent State and considerable militancy on the South Side. Our administration, I think, was known as being open and receptive to the people. We tried to broaden citizen involvement and I think we had a reasonably good relationship with the community.”

DeWetter was later remembered as the crewcut, conservative establishment candidate who ordered police to serve ice water to Kent State sympathizers storming City Hall after National Guardsmen gunned down four students at Kent State University in Ohio in 1970. The Youth Council in 1969 found summer jobs for 3,000 young people (several years before the massive influx of federal money usurped that role).

Other achievements included “significant expansion (\$80 million) of public housing. There had been no new projects in a number of years.”

“And the Job .Corp Center (which was started with support from the deWetter administration) was one of the first to match the skills it taught with the needs of local industry.”

Bert Williams (mayor 1971-73): “I love politics and I had been concerned with the direction of the city. I felt there were some situations that were beginning (to be problems) such as housing, relations with Juarez, UTEP, pollution.

He noted that under the Seitsinger administration while he was serving as alderman, El Paso became “the first city in the South to pass a civil rights ordinance. I think it added great credence and respect to this community by being the first city to pass an ordinance that banned discrimination in motels, hotels, theaters and restaurants.”

As for any administration's priority, “Housing, tenement eradication, is absolutely imperative. Anytime you can legally tear down a tenement you sho. ‘I think 16 or 17 families using two johns is probably the most deplorable thing you can have exist six or seven blocks from City Hall and that's exactly what's happening.”

Williams understands Southside condition first hand. He grew up there.

“We've got to do away with all tenements if we want to do a good job, and that led to my council getting more money from HUD (the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development), for more projects for the Housing Authority. We spread them throughout

the community. (Distributing housing projects equally throughout a city is a requirement to get HUD money) We felt that the 4,000 units we acquired helped the community in many ways and I still do.

“I thought our fight with Asarco was outstanding. (Under Williams’ administration, the city sued Asarco—and won—over the pollution being spewed-out by the smelting plant.) I thought it was necessary they spend \$80 million to clean up our air, though that hasn’t happened yet because Hervey allowed the judgment to be altered. We’re talking about several hundred tons of particulate an hour that descends on the city because that judgment was changed. I think our administration (warned industry) that we’re not just here, a West Texas town where the people don’t care. I think we’ve made a giant step forward.”

Don -Henderson (mayor 1975-77): “Fred (Hervey) decided he didn’t want to run again and I felt, if anyone was going to run, why not me? It was a great, wonderful experience and I wouldn’t trade it for the world.

“1969, ‘71, ‘73 and ‘75, the city buses were the big issue, so we brought all three lines in, upgraded their franchise and allowed them to charge more money to see how long they could last. We were the last major city in the U.S. to get into public transportation. (Federal money was available for the purpose, and to subsidize the new Sun City Area Transit buses.) I knew there’d be people to wake up some day and ask what blankety-blank got us into this thing, but we had to make that decision. all three of the companies were broke.”

The city also bought the international bridges linking El Paso and Juarez during the Henderson administration.

“We pulled the Convention and Tourist Bureau away, from the Chamber of Commerce, over some objections (and increased tourism an estimated 218 percent). We set up the first police juvenile bureau (the Youth Services Division, which may soon be eliminated for lack of money).”

Henderson also was instrumental in forming the Organization of U.S. Border Cities, which led to the Title 5 Regional Economic Development Commission.

But he says, “we lost through politics and (the commission’s headquarters) went to Tucson.”

Ray Salazar (mayor 1977-79): "Principally, (I ran) because I saw the need for someone to try and help in certain areas, both economically and socially. I was opposed to what the El Paso Electric Co. was attempting to do (raising rates) and I saw the need for more jobs and for more housing for the elderly .and the poor.

From the start of his campaign against Henderson to his final day as mayor, Salazar waged a running battle with the electric company to keep rates down. During his two years, he watched \$16 million slashed from rate increases and steadfastly argued that consumers should not pay the electric company’s share of costs to build the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station near Phoenix, Ariz. It was during Henderson’s term that the state’s Public Utilities Commission ruled consumers could be charged for Palo Verde’s costs.

“I didn’t win my battle with the electric company, but I prevented them from doing what they wanted to do for two years. I still believe what they’re doing is wrong. The consumer shouldn’t take the place of the inventor.”

As a candidate, Salazar promised rent controls on substandard housing and working to reduce taxes and utility bills for persons on fixed incomes. Once in office, he learned rent controls required declaring a public emergency and that it could be only a temporary solution. Some landlords did agree to freeze rents for awhile.

“You can see the new City Hall, you can see the community centers on the West Side, in Tigua, in Northeast El Paso and you can see the nutrition centers, the public housing and, of course, there was UDAG (Urban Development Action Grant) in South El Paso.

“I’m the one who was instrumental in the airport starting a free-trade zone and my administration got the ball rolling on (widening) the Zaragosa Bridge” to alleviate congestion for motorists coming in and out of Juarez.

He promoted industry and hired a New York consultant firm to list those companies that would suit the community, especially in light of El Paso’s limited water supply. He says the list is still being used by the Chamber of Commerce and the city’s Department of Economic Development.

Tom Westfall (mayor 1979-81):“From the time I was a youngster, I had been moving around, in the Marines and with the FBI. We were always getting transferred around and we’d never really had a home. I’d always watched cities from the standpoint of a subculture—the law enforcement community—and I’d always been a spectator, never a participant.”

After his transfer to the FBI’s El Paso office, Westfall decided to get involved with the city and he immersed himself in a number of civic groups.

“I wanted to do something for my community so I decided to run for mayor and try to give the city the most honest government possible.” He thinks he’s succeeded. “I would have to say it’s been a good term. I had two goals, to give honest government and to separate every operation of the city from politics I’ve been fairly successful. I don’t give in to pressure from special interest groups,” whether the pressure from the financial, ethnic or religious community, he says.

Westfall took for himself the administrative power aldermen have in the past wielded over city departments. He defends his practice as a way to keep the single, member district representative from grabbing plums for their individual districts That’s taken political pressure off of department heads, he says.

And, he adds, he should have final say because “I’m probably the most apolitical elected official on the city council. So many decisions made by politicians are based not on what’s right or wrong for the community but on what will get them re-elected.”

Westfall also claims credit for strengthening city administration with his recently-enacted employee recognition program and a program where employees will be paid for helpful ideas.

An investigation into the Department of Human Development and the Comprehensive Employment Training Act resulted in the firing of the director, Mario A. Sanchez, and suspension of his assistant, Luis A. Barajas, earlier this year. Barajas was later reinstated. Westfall points to that as “just another example of this administration sweeping nothing under the rug.”

POLITICAL BIOGRAPHIES,



Fred Hervey 1951-57, 73-75

Fred Hervey, 71, 8000 Big Bend. Chief executive of Circle K Corporation parlayed a popcorn stand in his father's outdoor theater into the Oasis Restaurant chain, KSET radio, the Sun Shopper publication and the Circle K convenience store chain. In 1952, he was singled out in Fortune Magazine as exemplifying the newly rich. Entered politics in 1950 with a losing campaign for the 16th District Congressional seat. Defeated incumbent Dan Duke in 1951 for mayor. Served as mayor, for the first time, from 1951 to 1957; defeated Bert Williams to become mayor from 1973 to 1975.

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Ralph Seitsinger, 65, 8744 Alameda. Businessman; owner of a soft water company and part owner of a travel agency. Served as alderman and mayor pro tem from 1957 to 1961; elected mayor in 1961 but lost re-election bid to Judson Williams in 1963. Now serves on the boards of Our Lady's Youth Center and Veterans' Land Board for El Paso County.



Ralph Seitsinger 1961-63

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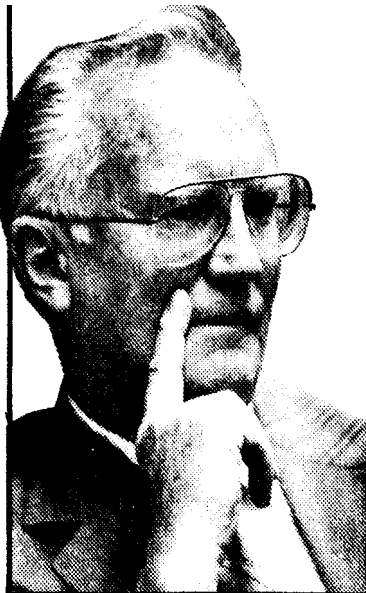
Judson Williams 1963-69

Judson Williams, 66, 4200 O'Keefe. Entrepreneur. Has been an educator, businessman and politician. Former Texas Tech regent and University of Texas at El Paso professor and administrator. Mayor from 1963 to 1969, resigning for business reasons just short of completing his third term. A founding director of the First Savings and Loan Association; now serves on several boards, including the Lee Moor Children's Home, Aero Systems Board and the Southwest Energy Board in Arkansas. Owns his own investment, corporation and works as a consultant.



Peter deWetter, 1969-71

Peter deWetter, 61, executive vice president of a national hospital group in Los Angeles. Mayor from 1969-71, then left politics to return to business. Former Chamber of Commerce president; was briefly head of a national moving van company after working for the company here for 20 years.



Bert Williams 1971-73

Bert Williams, 54, 1015 Baltimore. Lawyer. Alderman from 1961-63, ran unsuccessfully for mayor in 1969, ' elected mayor in 1971; lost re-election bid to Hervey in 1973; and was unsuccessful candidate for 16th District congressman in 1974 and 1978.



Don Henderson 1975-77

Don Henderson, 47, 716 Meadowlark. Insurance agent and member board of directors for Coronado State Bank. Unsuccessfully ran for alderman in 1971; elected alderman in 1973 and served as mayor from 1975-77. Lost re-election to Ray Salazar. Named outstanding ex-student of the University of Texas at El Paso in 1980 and belongs to 83 different organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce and State Board of Insurance advisory board. He is vice president of the El Paso Boys' Club and chairman of the State Commission for Proprietary Schools.

Ray Salazar, 49, 411 Lombardy, Certified, public accountant. Ran unsuccessfully for alderman in 1971; served as acting president

of El Paso Community College for nine months in 1916-77; defeated Don Henderson for mayor in 1977; lost re-election to Tom Westfall in 1979. Lost run-off election for the County Democratic Party chairmanship in 1980.



Ray Salazar 1977-79

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Tom Westfall 1979-81

Tom Westfall, 53, 4213 O'Keefe. Lawyer and former FBI agent based in El Paso. Mayor 1979-81. Served on various civic boards, including Goals for El Paso. Announced he would not seek a second term as mayor; instead is running for governor of Texas.

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GOVERNMENT CAN'T DO IT ALL

Hervey: "City governments are a U.S. phenomenon people in foreign lands don't understand. We have, or used to have, an independent mayor, we can issue our own bonds, levy our own taxes, have our own police departments, our own courts. There's no higher authority that can tell a mayor what to do. Other countries can't believe it because most mayors take their orders from political parties or someone else.

"There's a limit to what (city government) should do. I guess in today's picture of cities, as they get bigger they must do some planning in relation to parks and streets. But I think they go too far when they get into looking for jobs for people."

Judson Williams: "To what degree should the city be the provider of social services? Only to the extent that the people are willing to pay for it.

"I: never permitted one dime to be spent during my six years that we didn't have. I found we were in serious fiscal trouble (when he took office) so, instead of having the merit raises (for city employees), I cut them out the first year.

"Now, I think they've gone overboard—and this is philosophical. You could add 2,000 policemen to the force today and you're not going to do a whole lot to the crime situation I'm just saying we have spoiled people,

that's all. I don't believe anybody ought to go hungry, and I don't think they ought to be without some kind of housing. But I don't think it's the city's responsibility to put a burden on the taxpayer to do these things.

"Government can't do it all. The city is virtually bankrupt right now and so is the country. The federal government is obviously bankrupt in terms of the deficit. It's time to say we're not going to do it.

"You can't operate government as a business, but you'd better try."

Salazar: "City government should provide for both the social and economic realms. Economics is the bottom figure. Socially, I'm talking about everything that helps improve the quality of life.

"Other 'cities without the border can seek (a high quality of life) by themselves. We need the help of two countries."

Bert Williams: "You have to be a very conservative person to be mayor. You have to watch your help, the number of employees is absolutely the most difficult thing that you have to handle, because of the money.

"If you don't keep your city in the black, you are making a big mistake. You have no clout, you have nothing available to you to do anything with."

Henderson: "It's very easy to do things you wouldn't do in your own business. Somehow, something happens to you when you sit there. It happened to me.

"You get all these influences coming in from all sides and I think what you have to do, what a mayor has to do, is use his influence and his leadership to get a hold of these dollars, whether they're social programs or

brick-and-mortar programs, and balance it up and learn to live within that budget. If you have to say no, you say no.

"When times are hard, city government has got to do the basics."

Westfall: "A municipal government is exactly like a business or your personal home. Everything we buy we have to pay market price for. . . . Theoretically, to maintain current services, we should raise taxes every year by the inflation rate. So far, we haven't done that, but you can tighten the belt only so much before you have to start cutting services."

City councils in the future will "have to cut to essential services. The time will come when people will realize that municipal services cost money. Fire equipment is going up 2.5 percent every month. No matter what you do, you will please some people and displease others. Government, and certainly politics, are one thing where you simply cannot please all the people all the time."

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WHO SHOULD WIELD THE POWER?

Hervey: "The criterion of good government is the people who administer it. . . . A city manager is a very good form of government, provided you have a strong city council to supervise him. That's somewhat the idea behind OMB, trying to get someone that could help the council. The mayor's administrative assistant (approved in the 1968 charter amendment election) is also supposed to help" fulfill a city manager's role.

"People don't like city managers, they feel it's taking the politics out of government. They like to be able to see the mayor and

have the political clout to vote him out if he doesn't do as should. You can't take the politics completely out.

“The mayor runs the biggest business in the city, the city government. Sometimes we elect someone with no experience at running a business, with no ability to be a leader Democracy is the greatest system in the world, but sometimes it's not very efficient.”

Judson Williams: “Under a strong mayor, the mayor is chief executive and if he's a good mayor, he'll delegate responsibility to his aldermen,” giving them administrative responsibilities, but leaving them answerable to him.

City managers are “good and bad. There are times when I'm sure we'd have had better continuity and less financial problems if we had a city manager. But if you have a good mayor and aldermen, a city manager doesn't make too much difference. When you get a city administration that is so inept and so divided, a city manager is definitely the best way to go.”

DeWetter: Noting that voters have more than once turned down the notion of a professional manager to run El Paso, he said that “It's pretty unrealistic to think you can have a city the size of El Paso and get the personal sacrifice that it takes to run a city from all candidates, considering the salary that El Paso pays. You either get people who are independent, who have plenty of money—and they are not necessarily the best candidates—or you get marginal people who are satisfied with the income.

“I would hope the terms (of the mayor and aldermen) will be extended and staggered, along with pay raises. In the past, I think most mayors served out of a sense of civic duty. Whether that's feasible for a city of ½

million, I don't know. I tend to think a city manager would serve the city better.”

“If we had a city manager, with the problems this council has had with communication and lack of cooperation, all you'd do is add one more player to this mess.”

—Don Henderson

Bert Williams: “We have to continue with the strong mayor type of government. I don't see a city manager at all I think a mayor, elected properly, does a good job. So, if you could recommend any n thing to the populace. it would be: ‘Be careful, evaluate your candidates and select a good, strong, capable, understanding, tolerant, respectful leader.’ If you get that kind of man, that kind of woman, you've got a shot at it.”

Aldermen “have to have more responsibility than these (serving under Westfall) have, something more than just your districts. I think the overall concept they're working on right now isn't too bad ... the idea of having single-member districts and each alderman being cognizant of every function of government. . . . One-term mayors might be a good concept, perhaps one-term aldermen.”

Henderson: “I'm violently opposed to a city manager. I wouldn't serve (as a city manager) unless I was protected by a contract or by civil service,” which he feels would tie the city to a manager it might not be happy with. “Because of Westfall's personality, if we had a city manager, with the problems this council has had with communication and lack of cooperation, all you'd do is add one more player to this mess. I think we're always better served closest to the ballot box.”

Salazar: “I don't believe in the city manager form of government.”

THE FUTURE

He supports a strong mayor who is accountable to the voters. “We will have a professional type of strong mayor when we get the salaries up so that the job is full time, not part time.”

He also believes the mayor should be a long-time El Pasoan. “I feel there’s a need for an individual to see the needs of the community as a whole. I don’t believe an individual who’s lived in El Paso four or five years—even 10 years—can see those needs. It takes someone who’s grown up here to see the needs and to contribute to them.”

Westfall: “I’ve always been for a city manager.” And, noting that voters last rejected the idea of a city manager more than a decade ago, he explains. “El Paso was a different city then. It’s now a big, big city—a major city. I think if it were put before the people now it would pass.”

The topic was to be one of several, non-binding, items on the ballot in Saturday’s election, but City Council in March decided, on the recommendation of the city attorney, to withdraw the city manager item.

Judson Williams: “The politicians don’t want it to pass, because it reduces their power. But I like the idea of a city manager.” Judson Williams was the last mayor to serve more than one term and “that doesn’t add to the continuity. How many mayors or aldermen are formally educated for this job? I have seven years of college and I never studied municipal administration.”

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Hervey: “A working city council and a system that produce cooperation between the people of El Paso. I think we have to get rid of single-member districts.”

Seitsinger: “Naturally—with the unemployment that we have—we need to provide jobs. And, I think an international trade zone—a free trade zone—should be investigated very thoroughly. There should be an international mart for goods and services; Mexico is in dire need right now for technical services.

Judson Williams: “There are two things, but they are almost synonymous. We’ve got to have more corporate offices. We’re a payroll city, we don’t have the offices here that strengthen a city. That’s the reason Phoenix can run rings around us. And we also have to increase our industrial base;”

DeWetter: “Water and energy.”

Salazar: “It’s difficult to say just one important thing. But it always comes back to the dollar in the pocket, so I would say fiscal responsibility.” (His successor and others called Salazar fiscally irresponsible after leaving office with a \$4 million deficit).

“If there is good growth, then you have more property on the tax rolls. That takes care of tax increases. If you have a low tax base and you don’t do anything about improving it, you’ll obviously have tax increases.

“Fiscal responsibility—it’s like trying to run a household budget, and keeping within your means. And city government is just like one big household.”

Bert Williams: Unveiling a list, said, “A reduction in taxes. We must do away with

the Public Utility Commission in the state of Texas and return rate-making authority to the city councils (because) they have a better grasp of what's happening. We need to expand our freeway system. We have to do something about diverting truck traffic out of the main portion of this city. And, of course, you've got to find—if at all possible—some solution to the pollution problem. It's beginning to hurt us. It's a travesty.”

Pressed to pick a single most important need, he decides on "being able to live, so that's going to be based on being able to pay your taxes and your utilities.”

Henderson: “The mayor has to be squarely involved with the economic development of the community. . . . El Paso is like no other spot in the United States. You have to be a Henry Kissinger . . . because of our proximity to a foreign country.

Westfall: “Jobs. Whatever creates jobs. Unemployment is our single major problem. When you have more employment, many social problems disappear. There would be less crime, less blight, less welfare, less social unrest.”

GROWING AND CHANGING

Judson Williams: Claiming city government has kept up with El Paso's growth, said, “You've got to look at the boundaries. We've got a mountain that comes right down to here and we've got a border right over here, so we've got a narrow corridor. So, our police have to go from here, clear around to here (drawing an invisible horseshoe).

“Now, if you had a town like this (drawing a rectangle in the air), it would be a lot simpler for the fire department, the police department, the libraries, the schools and other things to function—not necessarily in a

more efficient way, but a less expensive way.”

Seitsinger: Asserting that local government has exceeded growth, and blasting the 1979 implementation of single-member districts: “I contend that the system where you have what I call six little mayors that owe no general allegiance to the city as a whole make it extremely difficult to form a cohesive course. . . . It doesn't work here and I'm not sure it can.”

Bert Williams: Disagreeing with Seitsinger: “I think it can (work), even though it's hard. We're still in our infancy and it's going to take a little time.

“But leadership overcomes everything. A good mayor can handle six aldermen . . . he can do his job by leading for the people.

“It's when you get someone—I think Mayor Westfall has had his problems because he's more the attacking type of mayor—and sometimes that just doesn't quite get the job done. You have to assuage, persuade, be the confidante.”

Judson Williams: “If an individual wants to be mayor, that individual honestly wants to be mayor and is not concerned about the next election—because I don't know who'd want to be mayor as a profession because, first of all, he'd starve to death or be a crook.

“I worked for Tom Westfall and I thought Tom would be a refreshing change. He very definitely wanted to be mayor.

“But he didn't turn out to be the leader that the city needs, and you sit there and engage in a bunch of little putting-downs of other people until everybody's doing the same

thing. The first thing you know, it is a—uh—colorful administration.”

Bert Williams: “The mayor has a peculiar type of job: working with individual aldermen (while) making sure the votes go the right way for all the people. It’s a big, big articulating political job. And it’s a good one.”

Henderson: “I agree, and will make a prediction: If we don't have a strong mayor and have a coalition built up, in about two more elections there'll be a major campaign by one mayor or group of alderpeople to do away with single-member districts.”

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BORDER ECONOMICS

Judson Williams: “This is an area, regardless of good or bad, where we have thousands of (unskilled) people.

“It’s like South El Paso. If you could take everybody in South El Paso, and move them out, it would fill up the next day.

“You've got to look at it this way: We are not separate from Mexico; we’re completely continuous. And I don’t think this is all bad and I’m not talking about building fences or anything else. I’m just saying that’s the way it is.

“It’s the great mass of unskilled workers here and, in many cases, they don’t speak much English. And if you can't communicate, you’re not going to develop to a great degree in the United States.

“So I think we’re always going to be blessed with low-income people—and I don’t mean blessed in quotes—and that’s why, if we

moved ourselves into another area (of the state or country), we probably wouldn’t have much unemployment. And our wage standards would be higher.

That’s why the textile industry is so great here. It’s the labor-intense situation.”

Bert Williams: “The sad thing is that it carries over into the mid-skills, in other words, the people in the \$7,000 to \$8,000 bracket. They don’t grow proportionately.

“The minimum wage is always going to be the maximum wage in El Paso. Always—that’s forever—just because of what Jud has said. It carried up into these other areas and we'll always have a low-wage town. I don’t think it will ever change.

“Wages are a big problem and I don’t think there’s anything anyone can do about them. I don't think you can do anything about pollution anymore.

In my youth, I thought that maybe there was a way and I fought hard for it, still continue to fight for it and will, forever. But I'm beginning to believe it’s just not solvable.

“As I go into Juarez and see that great used-car market over there where hundreds of thousands of automobiles that have never been tuned up buying the low-grade gasoline, I just don't see that we have a way.”

Salazar: “During my administration, I saw a lot of growth in Ciudad Juarez and here because of the twin plants. I only wish the relationship that existed between the two communities existed between the two countries.

“I hope that someday things are such that you can say, ‘*su amigo, mi amigo.*’ Here we are in an isolated area—divided by a thin river, the Rio Bravo. If we can’t live side by

side, in an isolated area, than who are we going to get along with?"

Henderson: El Paso mayors "have to deal with problems they don't have in Dallas or Omaha or Denver, because of our proximity to a foreign country.

"As every mayor knows, when you're dealing with Mexico, when you're dealing with illegal aliens and you're talking about dogs coming across (the river) with rabies, and you're talking about pollution—you talk about all these things their system is different from ours. The local government and the state government do not have the power and the autonomy that we have."

Salazar: "It isn't this community's fault—or the people who live here—that El Paso is the biggest border area (in the United States and that Juarez is the same on the Mexican side). Because our economies are intertwined, I don't think one community could function without the other.

"Congress should get the State Department involved in resolving this economic depression within the community. And the Mexican government should address the ills of Ciudad Juarez.

"But, what happens in Washington, D.C., is that—they know the seriousness of the conditions—but they're hoping they'll go away by themselves."

Westfall: "I have enjoyed my relationship with both mayors in Juarez (during his term). We get along well, although we haven't accomplished any great' thing."

His advice to future mayors dealing with Juarez? "Be candid, be friendly, be cooperative. But realize they have their problems

also and their primary responsibility is to solve their problems, not yours."

* * *

THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL CHANGE: SINGLE-MEMBER DISTRICTS

Henderson: "I made the decision to put (single-member districts) on the ballot against the wishes of my committee. I did it for two reasons: One, I was sitting there looking across the table at three lawsuits from three different groups, and (secondly) I felt 'Why not? Why shouldn't the people make that decision?'"

"I wasn't for it, but that wasn't necessarily my responsibility . . . I could see what the federal judges were doing all over the country (ordering representation by district) and the lawsuits the people had threatened the city with, so I said, 'Let's vote on it.'

"The conservative people who didn't want it, didn't vote for it. And it was voted in. But I'm saying that within two more elections, no more than that, there will be a mayor and a group run to abolish single-member districts."

Bert Williams: "I think single-member districts are here to stay.

"I think you're going to find—as it progresses through another term or two—that these people within the districts are working with their alderman and they're going to get pretty strong and everyone's going to want to keep their own man, or woman, in those certain areas."

Henderson: “I just don't think it will survive. I don't think that you can build up the ward system and a guy can be that strong.

“We have in this city the least number of appointed positions (directly) by the mayor than any other city in the United States two spots: the (mayor's personal) secretary and the executive assistant.

“I think single-member districts . . . help avoid any type. of conflict we have of a Mexican group against an Anglo group like we had so many times before—that cleavage—and I think that's critical.”

—Bert Williams

“Now you can debate whether that's good or bad: I'm not saying that. I'm saying I don't think that an El Paso alderman or mayor could ever get that powerful.”

Judson Williams: "The only thing I really dislike about single-member districts is that you don't have a right to vote for (every alderman),

“You measure them on what they are doing. If they're doing nothing, and that satisfies the district they're in, the city ought to have a chance to vote them out of office.

Salazar: “Single-member districts will change, according to geographic growth, but there should be representatives from those areas. It's very functional.”

He campaigned to implement single-member districts within the first nine months of his administration. They were drawn up during his term, but not used in voting until 1979. One suggestion he has now is to add three more alderman—elected at large—to the six elected from their districts.

This way, he says, the three at-large aldermen would be responsible to all voters and the entire city. It also would help the mayor control the council, he says. “If I want to be mayor, I want to control the council. I don't want the aldermen telling me what to do. What's the purpose of being mayor then?”

Hervey: Single-member districts “are not good. It sounds good, a lot of people buy it. But the truth is all you're doing is creating a lot of small mayors within their districts. The mayor can't do anything. It destroys all the cooperation we could have.

“We've got to get rid of them. or maybe, if a couple of areas feel they need single member districts, then maybe three or four (seats) at large. That would give a majority to the at-large seats, to be a cohesive force so they could afford to put up with a couple of minority representatives. Minorities have come forward as a real problem in the operation of America as a whole. Instead of becoming Americans, we're perpetuating minorities.”

“It sounds good, a lot of people buy it. But the truth is all you're doing is creating a lot of small mayors within their districts. The mayor can't do anything. It destroys all the cooperation we could have.”

—Ray Salazar

Westfall: “I'm definitely opposed to single member districts. I think elected officials should be responsible to the city as a whole and not to single districts. It hasn't worked other places—San Francisco tried it for two years and repealed it—and it's not working here.”

Bert Williams: “I'd like to comment on the Mexican(-American) being on City Council from a historical standpoint.

“We had a ticket. Most mayors, at least in, the last 25 years, would have a “token” type of Mexican on their council. I always put that in quotes—token—because that’s about what it was.

“Single-member districts have alleviated that. I think single-member districts address that and help avoid any type of conflict we have of a Mexican group against an Anglo group like we had so many times before that cleavage—and I think that's critical.”

Seitsinger: “When we put a ticket together, we tried to think of every major element of the community, and to select a leader of that element.

We worked diligently for months—months—trying to determine somebody that would represent and would really lead the community. First of all, you want to get elected, too. So you pick people from the different groups.

“Of course. I'm very adamant about (being against single-member districts) and point to this thin, that's happening (with Westfall and his city council) as a result.”

Westfall: “I think the ticket system makes for better government, but I don't see how you can put one together with single member districts. As a result of single districts, we don't have a City Council that works as a team. With the team system, the mayor can be assured of having support for his policies. I have not had that. Mayors have the responsibility but not the authority to carry it out.”

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CIVIL WAR FEUDS SHAPED MUCH OF EL PASO'S EARLY POLITICS

By Craig Phelon
Times staff writer
El Paso Times 3/29/81

No candidates for sainthood grace El Paso's political roster of the past.

But the city's movers and shakers from the mid-1800s—when a city political structure started taking shape—to the early 1900s were mostly well-educated, ambitious and colorful men.

A brief account of our early political climate may help put some of these politicians in perspective.

In a 1952 masters thesis for the University of Texas at El Paso, Jack Vowell Jr. said Democrats with Confederate leanings wielded most of the power as El Paso County developed a political structure in the years leading up to the Civil War.

Power brokers included rich ranchers and businessmen like James Magoffin, Simeon Hart and Judge Josiah Crosby. Republicans—especially those like William W. and Anson Mills, who sympathized with the Northerners—came under increasing pressure.

Before the 1860 county elections, some leading citizens tacked a note on the town bulletin board accusing Anson Mills of being “a damned black Republican scoundrel.” A black Republican was one who favored abolishing, slavery.

Mills denied any abolitionist tendencies and castigated his accusers, but he also refused to run for office.

The vigilance committee warned the Mills brothers about their dangerous attitudes.

Nevertheless, the brothers voted with the minority against Texas seceding from the Union. Anson joined the Union army and William found himself a prisoner of the Confederates when Southern forces peacefully took over control of Fort Bliss. The Confederate Committee of Public Safety appointed Magoffin as commissioner to receive federal property for the Southern cause.

But Northern troops, called the California Column, took over El Paso in 1862, chasing Confederate troops and civilian sympathizers into Mexico or farther east.

Union troops set up a military government, appropriated the property of Confederate supporters, freed Mills and appointed him collector of customs—the highest civilian office at the time.

The valley suffered a famine in 1862 when farmland, abandoned by its Confederate-leaning owners, was left unattended.

But a new establishment emerged—this time Northern-leaning Republicans. Many of these citizens rose to prominence quickly by acquiring the property of fleeing Democrats for low prices at public auction.

By the time military rule ended in 1866. Mills put the Republican Party in position to control the county. His chief allies were two men who controlled the Hispanic vote in the valley, an Italian immigrant named Louis Cardis and an ambitious priest from; San Elizario named Antonio Borajo.

Republicans swept the 1866 county election and a number of those on the ballot continued to be local political heavyweights. They

included Judge A.H. French, County Clerk J.M. Lujan, District Clerk Maximo Aranda, surveyor Albert J. Fountain and county commissioners J.S. Schutz, Jose Maria Gonzalez, Julian Arias and Gregorio Garcia.

The Republicans soon split into opposing camps over the treatment of returning Southern sympathizers at the war's end. Mills, Cardis and Judge Gaylord Clarke led the "moderates" who favored leniency, perhaps even returning confiscated property.

An exception to Mills' moderate position toward former confederates was his long-time enemy Simeon Hart. Mills believed Hart was responsible for his arrest at the start of the Civil War.

Fountain and French led the "radical Republicans" who thought Confederates deserved no kindness.

The showdown came in the 1869 election when people across the state voted hardliners into office. Fountain won a state senate seat. Mills won his state representative race, despite his moderate stand, but he lost local party leadership to Fountain.

Lively races and strong points of view marked early politics in El Paso. When the votes were counted in 1898's election, there were 200 more votes than the city had voters.

Some former Confederates who still had wealth or influence were able to get their land back, anyway. In 1865 Simeon Hart, who founded Hart's Mill that processed wheat from the Lower Valley, used his connections in Washington to get a presidential pardon and the return of his land. William Mills lost his \$1,800 investment in part of the Hart property. Magoffin also got a par-

don, but he died before the Magoffin property was returned to the family in 1873.

The U.S. Supreme Court returned other land to El Paso Confederates in 1868.

While Republicans squabbled, the Democrats built an organization. Newcomer Charles Howard, who became a central cause, then a victim of the Salt War, allied with Cardis and Borajo, who changed sides after disputes with Republican leaders.

El Paso's first municipal election Aug. 12, 1873, brought a good representation of Democrats to city hall. Ben Dowell, owner of El Paso's first saloon and a former Southern Democrat, was the city's first mayor. His friendship with William Mills preserved his property and status during the purge of Southern Democrats. Dowell was a large, handsome and colorful man with prematurely white hair and beard.

The first aldermen were Joseph Schutz, William Fryer, Albert Hornick, Thomas Massie, John Gillett and John Evans. Massie, Schutz, Fryer and Gillett resigned. Allen Blacker, Melton Jones. Dr. T. Thayer and Frank March replaced them after a special election Oct. 15, 1873.

El Paso's tradition of booting mayors out of office after a single term got an early start. Melton Jones defeated Dowell in his 1875 bid for re-election by a whopping 20-vote majority-out of a total of 46 votes cast.

The 1889 city election wasn't the most important political event in El Paso, but it suggests what politics were like in those days.

A heated campaign resulted in a narrow across-the-board victory for Republicans. Vowell said both political parties stuffed ballot boxes with illegal votes bought in

Mexico. The Republican mayoral candidate, Adolf Krakauer, beat Democrat Charles Morehead, 892-855. The vote total exceeded the number of eligible El Paso votes by 200.

Outgoing mayor R.C. Lightbody installed the Republican leaders, but five days after the election. the Democrats petitioned the City Council to investigate the election.

A headline on the front page of *The El Paso Times* screamed. "Black Fraud—How Krakauer's Heelers Did Their Dirty Work." The situation was to tense the Republicans, with arms and provisions, sealed themselves in their City Hall offices—only to give up the same day when Democrats obtained a court injunction stopping Republican from taking office until after the election probe.

A district judge finally ruled in favor of the Democrats. The council picked R.F. Hubbard acting mayor and filled its own vacancies with Democrats. Richard Caples soon took over u mayor.

Adding insult to injury, Democrats discovered Krakauer couldn't assume the mayor's office because he lacked his final citizenship papers.

The fiasco unraveled the Republican organization and brought a few year of relative calm in politics. But El Paso was still "Sin City" of the Southwest with its host of saloons, gambling casinos and brothels and the forces of reform were stirring.

An unsuccessful attempt at promoting non-partisan city elections in 1893 split the Democratic Party in two as non-partisan supporters—who also tended to favor moral reform—broke with hardcore Democrats.

Leaders of the Democrats-turned-independents included Dr. William Yandell and the Burges brothers.

The 10 years boiled with political change as reformer, Republicans and Democrats each surged to power, then burst as a rival group took over.

Reformers gained a solid foothold with the election of Charles Davis as mayor in 1905. Davis suppressed gambling, reorganized the police department, reassessed property values, decreased the tax rate and started a street paving program.

It took several years to eliminate gambling totally and the old-line Democrats, who opposed reform, gained power again in 1907, but the snowball was already rolling and El Paso was well on its way to becoming a respectable, modern city.

What became known as “the Ring,” led by businessman C.E. “Uncle Henry” Kelly and Judge Joseph U. Sweeney, dominated city government until 1915. Kelly and his followers wrestled leadership of the Democratic party away from Charles Morehead and got Sweeney elected mayor in 1907.

Kelly, who became county treasurer, was appointed mayor in 1910 after Sweeney resigned and won reelection in 1911 and 1913.

Historian C.L. Sonnichsen wrote that Kelly was scrupulous in handling public money. Nobody could say any city funds were spent buying votes. “But machines do not run without cash and Kelly managed to find it.” Sonnichsen wrote. “Old-time city employees will tell you that they kicked back part of their salaries to finance operations (we would say now that they contributed to the campaign fund) and expected to do so when they accepted their jobs . . . When you ask

an old-timer if Kelly was ever to his knowledge unethical, he is apt to reply, ‘No, he wasn’t crooked. He was practical.’”

Kelly’s moments of glory included a showdown with Pancho Villa in El Paso’s Sheldon Hotel. Villa appeared at the hotel bearing pistols and saying he was going to shoot Giuseppe Garibaldi, grandson of the Italian liberator and leader of a Mexican revolutionary group. Kelly didn’t call the police. He confronted Villa at the hotel and persuaded him to put up his guns and go home.

A new wave of reformers, led by Tom Lea, finally ousted “the Ring” in 1915 under Lea, a 36-year-old Missouri-born lawyer with impressive oratorical skills, became the city’s youngest mayor after heaviest voting turnout in El Paso’s history.

A popular mayor, Lea abandoned his political Career to fight in World War I. A like-minded Democrat, Charles Davis Jr., took Lea’s place and presided over two terms of relative political tranquility.

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IN THE MAYOR'S OFFICE

Kaleidoscope

El Paso Times 3/29/81

**POLITICAL BIOGRAPHIES,
GOVERNMENT CAN'T DO IT ALL
WHO SHOULD WIELD THE POWER?**

THE FUTURE

**GROWING AND CHANGING
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