

By: Gallego

H.R. No. 893

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, In the 1950s, the golf team of San Felipe High School  
2 in Del Rio battled adversity and defied expectations to become the  
3 best in Texas, and Higinio "Gene" Vasquez was an important member of  
4 that storied squad; and

5           WHEREAS, The team got its start after J. B. Pena became the  
6 superintendent of the San Felipe Independent School District in the  
7 mid-1950s, and he and a friend introduced golf as a school sport at  
8 San Felipe High; they were surprised and pleased to discover that  
9 there were some very talented golfers among the students in the  
10 then-segregated school, including Mr. Vasquez and the other players  
11 that joined the Mustangs golf team; and

12           WHEREAS, These students had learned much about the game while  
13 working as caddies at the exclusive San Felipe Country Club, a  
14 course that they were initially prohibited from playing; determined  
15 to take part in the sport, several of these aspiring athletes  
16 decided in 1954 to build their own course, which they dubbed the El  
17 Llanito Country Club; it was, by necessity, a rather crude design:  
18 one hole surrounded by multiple tees with a "green" that was  
19 actually made of caliche instead of grass; nonetheless, the boys  
20 used the hardscrabble course to hone their skills through long  
21 hours of practice, often playing until after dark; and

22           WHEREAS, After the harsh conditions of El Llanito, the team  
23 members found that competing on regulation courses as part of  
24 school matches was relatively easy, and they quickly established

1 themselves as winners, even as they had to ignore verbal abuse and  
2 other forms of discrimination; the San Felipe Mustangs were  
3 regional champs in 1956 and finished second to Ranger High in the  
4 state championships; in 1957, the team qualified once more for the  
5 finals and traveled to the Austin Country Club to battle for the  
6 title, where they were the only minority players in the tournament;  
7 there, Mr. Vasquez and his teammates turned in an outstanding  
8 performance, shooting a combined 643; this bested runner-up  
9 Shamrock High by 35 strokes and earned San Felipe the state title;  
10 and

11 WHEREAS, Mr. Vasquez hailed from a background that was quite  
12 different from that experienced by most state champion golfers of  
13 his era; born in Del Rio in 1940, he, his parents, and his three  
14 sisters were migrant farm workers for many years during the 1950s,  
15 and he fought his way onto the Mustangs roster in 1957 despite being  
16 a left-handed player who had to learn to golf with right-handed  
17 clubs; after graduation, he went on to earn a bachelor's degree in  
18 education from Sul Ross State College and taught in the San Felipe  
19 Independent School District for more than 10 years; he then entered  
20 the real estate business and continues to work in that field today;  
21 he lives in Del Rio and still enjoys golf, crediting the sport for  
22 having had a very positive impact on his life; and

23 WHEREAS, Through talent, determination, and ingenuity, Gene  
24 Vasquez and the other members of the Mustangs golf team overcame  
25 difficult circumstances to become state champions, and their  
26 achievement is a continuing source of pride for the residents of Del  
27 Rio and an inspiration for all who have heard their story; now,

1 therefore, be it

2           RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 82nd Texas  
3 Legislature hereby honor Gene Vasquez for his contributions to the  
4 title-winning San Felipe High School golf team of 1957 and extend to  
5 him sincere best wishes for the future; and, be it further

6           RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
7 prepared for Mr. Vasquez as an expression of high regard by the  
8 Texas House of Representatives.