



**REMEMBERING A TRAGEDY:** Longino Flores, at right in the family photo, was the great-grandfather of Ysleta Teachers Association President Arlinda Valencia. He was killed in the Parvenir massacre in 1918. The other man in the family photo, Rosendo Mesa, was Flores' son-in-law and Arlinda's grandfather. He survived because he was away from home on a supply trip the night the attackers struck. Excavation at the massacre site is underway in photo at left.

## TSTA MEMBER LEADS EFFORT TO MEMORIALIZE A DARK DAY IN HISTORY

Even now, the Big Bend region of West Texas is remote. One hundred years ago, it was even more desolate, and it was an area of sometimes violent, lawless activity along the border. One of the darkest episodes occurred in the early morning hours of Jan. 28, 1918, when a band of Texas Rangers, some U.S. Cavalry and possibly a few local ranchers rode on horse back into the tiny village of Porvenir, a community largely inhabited by Hispanics.

Perhaps in blind retaliation for a raid that had occurred on a Big Bend ranch on Christmas Day, perhaps simply out of prejudice and hatred, the intruders separated 15 men from the village's inhabitants, marched them a short distance away and shot them.

One of the victims, Longino Flores, who was in his mid-40s, was the great-grandfather of Arlinda Valencia, president of the Ysleta Teachers Association and a TSTA board member. Arlinda and her sister, Elida Tobar, a retired NEA member from Arizona, have spent a lot of time in recent years researching the massacre and contributing to a documentary about the event that is being produced by Austin filmmaker Andrew Shapter.

Arlinda also convened a commemorative program in the state Capitol auditorium on Jan. 28, the 100th anniversary of the tragedy. More than 400 people, including descendants of some of the victims, attended, and state Sen. Jose Rodriguez

and State Board of Education member Georgina Perez, both from El Paso, were among the participants.

"In order to move forward, we have to forgive, and I understand that," Arlinda said. "But that doesn't mean we can forget. We have to keep it in our memory."

Longino Flores' youngest son, Juan Flores, then about 11, was initially put in the group of men with his father, but one of the raiders spared him, saying, "I'm not going to kill the kid."

Juan ran to summon Harry Warren, a lawyer-schoolteacher who lived in the vicinity, and Warren, whose father-in-law was among the victims, documented the massacre, which nevertheless remains unknown to many Texans.

Prompted by the Porvenir killings, state Rep. Jose T. Canales of South Texas, the only Hispanic in the Texas Legislature at the time, held hearings into the Texas Rangers. No one ever faced criminal charges, but the Ranger company that had been involved was disbanded. And the Rangers were later reorganized, a development for which Arlinda gives a lot of credit to Canales.

Juan Flores, the young boy who was spared the night of the massacre, was Arlinda's great uncle. He lived to be 99, and an interview he gave several years ago will be featured in the documentary.