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the way from Johnstown to bear witness to the memory of those who were lost.

Longino's great-granddaughter, Ophelia Espinosa, along with her daughter, Desiree Kruiise, and her granddaughter, Alyssa, left Johnstown to attend the Centennial Remembrance in Austin. Once there, they met up with Espinosa's cousin, Arlinda Valencia, who had organized the event.

Espinosa had met her great-uncle Juan once; before his death in 2007. He kept his experiences in Porvenir a secret for much of his 101-year-long life.

"He was very sharp," Espinosa said. "A very sharp mind." But he had had nightmares all his life, she added. "Because he had seen the bodies, and had seen his dad, and they were unrecognizable."

For much of history, any recognition of the tragedy had been denied to those it impacted. The Rangers had long claimed that the villagers of Porvenir had in fact attacked them, and the killing of those 15 men and boys had simply been in self-defense.

A published account by Harry Warren, the schoolteacher, describing the atrocity had little effect. Neither did any attempt at prosecution. Jose Canales, the sole Mexican-American in the Texas State Legislature at the time, managed to bring about an investigation into the Rangers, which resulted in a reorganization of the group, but none of those involved in the Porvenir Massacre faced any legal repercussions.

The reorganization of the Rangers is not insignificant though, and Valencia considers her ancestor a martyr, and Canales an unsung hero in the struggle against mass death on the southern border.

"What you have to understand," Valencia said, "is that there were killings every single day on the border. The Texas Rangers were killing people if they looked at them cross-eyed. By that time, we're talking close to 5,000 dead."

Usually they killed people in ones and twos, Valencia said. But 15 all at once had been the straw that broke the camel's back.

"The family believes very strongly that our great-grandfather and all the other men, they didn't die in vain, because they ended up reorganizing the Texas Rangers," Valencia said.

That 400 people had gathered, 100 years later, in the same room in the Texas State Capitol where Canales had fought for justice, was a surprising and overwhelming experience for Valencia, who

had worried that she would be able to get even a quarter of that number.

"There were a lot of people with tears in their eyes," Espinosa said, particularly when a trailer for an upcoming documentary about Porvenir was shown.

Many of those in attendance were descendants of those who were killed, but others were simply citizens who felt the event was worth remembering. For Valencia, Espinosa and the other relatives of the dead Porvenir villagers, this was a sign that perhaps Texas, and the United States, was beginning to confront its violent treatment of Mexican-Americans, particularly in the early 20th century.

There were other reasons to be hopeful. The Texas State Senate issued a proclamation confirming that the massacre had taken place, where previously it had never admitted its existence. The modern-day Rangers now admit to the violence committed against as many as 5,000 Mexican-Americans in the early 20th century on their website, calling it "a black chapter in the history of the organization."

An archaeological study conducted in 2002 found that all the bullets on that hill were fired from government-issue weapons, effectively disproving the old Ranger story that they had been ambushed by villagers.

Valencia and her family want more though. Most Americans have never even heard of Porvenir, nor the state-sponsored killing of Mexican-Americans in the 1910s.

"We'd like to have our history told," Espinosa said. "There isn't much history for Hispanic kids, Mexican-Americans."

"Especially in this area too," Alyssa Kruiise, who is a student at Roosevelt High School, said. "There are no Mexican-American studies [classes] at all."

"How many stories can you tell about Martin Luther King?" Valencia asked, comparing the legend of the 1950s civil rights icon to the relative obscurity of Mexican-American struggles. "We're just barely getting this story out."

It's important to the descendants of the tragedy not to blame the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the perpetrators, or the members of the modern organization. Valencia was asked by a news outlet in Austin what she would say to someone whose ancestor may have killed hers.

"Uhh, I'd say hello," she said sarcastically. "They are not at fault. You cannot be held accountable for what your great-grandfathers did."

In fact, a modern Texas Ranger whose father had been in the organization at the time of the massacre attended the remembrance and appeared to be both interested and sympathetic to the descendant's cause. He didn't show any hostility, Kruiise said, and mostly just wanted to hear the story of what had happened.

Modern politics didn't come up during the remembrance, but Valencia said that she sees parallels between the beginning of the last century and this one.

"We do have a tone in government right now," Valencia said. "It's 'get all the Mexicans out of here.'" She said it is very similar to what Mexican-Americans were hearing in the 1910s and '20s. "Some of the rhetoric in our government, it echoes that," she said.

Mostly though, she and her family just want her ancestors' stories told. Much like Harry Warren, the schoolteacher who suffered abuse for publicizing the atrocity at Porvenir, and Jose Canales, who was mocked and threatened for insisting on holding the Rangers accountable, the descendants of those who died said they will continue to tell their story until it gets the respect it deserves.

"We're bringing it back up," Valencia said. "We're not going to let anyone forget it."

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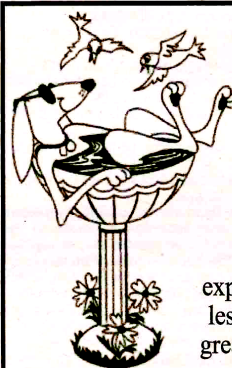
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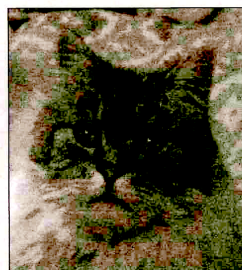
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