

World War I hero, 95, dies in El Paso

By Christine Granados

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Marcelino Serna was El Paso's most decorated veteran of World War I, but when he died Saturday of pneumonia at age 95, he still didn't have the one award his friends thought he richly deserved — the Medal of Honor.

Serna was credited with single-handedly killing 16 Germans and capturing 24 in one battle during World War I.

For his valor Serna was given the Distinguished Service Cross — his adopted nation's second-highest military award after the Medal of Honor.

Serna and his friends felt he was denied the Medal of Honor shortly after the war because he was Hispanic and didn't speak much English. In recent years they launched a campaign to get Serna the honor they believe was long

overdue.

"I'm not bitter about not getting the medal back then, but I think this time I might get it if the U.S. Army agrees," Serna said in a 1988 interview.

Manuel Villanueva of El Paso has been leading the effort to get Serna the Medal of Honor. He vows to continue the fight.

"There is a bill in Congress pending," Villanueva said. "I've been working on this for five years. I wanted to do this while he was still alive."

Serna was born in a small mining town near Chihuahua City April 26, 1896. He came to the United States seeking work after the turn of the century and enlisted in the Army in 1917.

He became a U.S. citizen in 1924 and later worked in civil service at Fort Bliss.

Visitation for Serna will be from 2 to 9 p.m. today in Sun-



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**Marcelino Serna never
got the Medal of Honor.**

set Funeral Home, with rosary at 7:30 p.m. Funeral Mass will be at 9:45 a.m. Tuesday in St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church. Burial will be in Fort Bliss National Cemetery.

Survivors include his wife, Simona; and his daughters, Gloria Serna and Margarita Lagunas.