

**ALEX CANDELARIA
Helped Many**

By Lenore Harris Hughes
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Alejandro "Alex" Candelaria, former city tax assessor\collector, benefactor of the Tigua Indians and manager of the bracero program for Lower Valley farmers and ranchers, died Aug. 5 at the age of 87.

"He was a jack-of-all-trades," said his son, Dr. Luis Candelaria. "In spite of his limited education, he had no limit as to his interests and would enjoy the enterprise he was involved in at the time. Then, as he mastered one, he would jump to another.

"He would be involved in two or three things at a time. Nothing seemed to be insurmountable. He lived day-by-day and lived it to the fullest."

Alex Candelaria was born Feb. 1, 1909, to Luz and Josefa Candelaria, the first of eight children. The family lived on a farm near Socorro and the children sold vegetables to neighbors. As a boy, Alex traveled with his grandfather to the Salt Flats to gather salt that they would sell.

"He had an 1894 shotgun that he took with him so he could shoot game along the trail. I have that gun," Luis says.

Alex attended Ysleta High and went to work at an early age. His first job was at Alexander's Grocery, where a coworker was the

young Esther Alderete. Her family owned the well-known Alderete-Candelaria house built by Benigno Alderete in 1845, when he was a part-time Texas Ranger and Ysleta town mayor. The historic old house was willed to Esther Alderete.

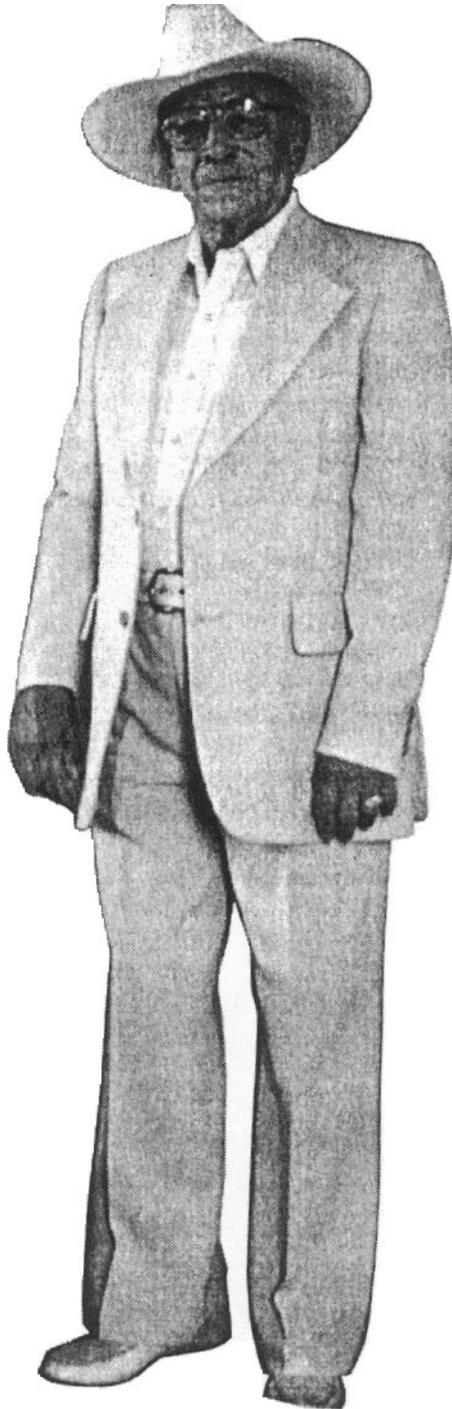
Alex and Esther were married Feb. 22, 1933. They had three sons and two daughters.

When Esther was killed in an auto accident in 1963, questions arose over ownership of the home. Alex eventually sold it to the state of Texas. It is now the Tigua Museum.

In 1942-43 Alex was a justice of the peace in Ysleta in 1942-43, the same post his great grandfather, Pedro Candelaria, had held years earlier. Alex and Esther also ran The American Cafe in Ysleta.

From 1950 to 1958, Alex worked at the El Paso tax office. He discovered then that many Tigua Indians were in danger of losing their homes because they couldn't pay their taxes. Nor did they receive governmental aid since they were not formally

recognized as an Indian tribe.



“If it had not been for my father's efforts in getting interested persons together, nothing would have been done,” said son Ruben, a former US Customs collector.

“He secured the services of (attorney) Tom Diamond, who set the ball rolling. My father never did feel that he got credit for instigating help from the national government in getting the Tiguas recognized as a tribe.”

During the 1950s, when farmhands were in short supply in the Lower Valley, some cotton farmers and ranchers approached Alex for help.

He- was well-known in Mexico, where he often sold secondhand farm equipment. So Alex became manager of the bracero program locally, contracting migrant workers to work for Lower Valley ranchers and farmers.

Alex, by then a widower, married Soledad Silva on Dec. 13, 1965. The couple had two daughters.

After Alex retired from most of his enterprises, he invested more time in his role as a notary public. He was able to track down - and translate - lost property titles for hundreds of area Hispanics. His research took him to several states in the Southwest and as far north as New Jersey and Illinois.

“He was a wonderful man,” Ruben said. “People went to him for help and he never turned them down.”

He is survived by his wife, Soledad; sons Luis, Robert and Ruben; daughters Sofia, Veronica and Maria; a sister, Cecilia Fresquez; 19 grandchildren; and 11 great grandchildren.

“I admired my father most for continuing to educate himself as he went through life,” Sofia said.

“He loved to read and when he came across a word he did not know, he would look it up in a dictionary he kept by his side. He insisted that we learn a new word everyday.”

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