

FERNANDO LUIS CORDOVA Korean War Veteran Distinguished Himself In 'Variety Of Occupations'

by Lenore Harris Hughes
El Paso Inc. staff writer
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Fernando Luis Cordova completed more than 30 years of service with the El Paso Independent School District in eight assignments as a classroom teacher, three as assistant principal, four as principal, one as county director for the Head Start program, and lastly as a program assistant for Region 3 in EPISD.

He also worked in the teaching department of White Sands Missile Range, as assistant principal at Gadsden High School, and a teacher at Canutillo Middle School.

When he died at age 69 he was active at Wiggs Intermediate School during his last assignment.

He was a charter member of Kiwanis Border City group and helped raise funds to buy shoes for the children of South El Paso, which is one of the club's projects.

"He was always interested in the underprivileged," said his son James.

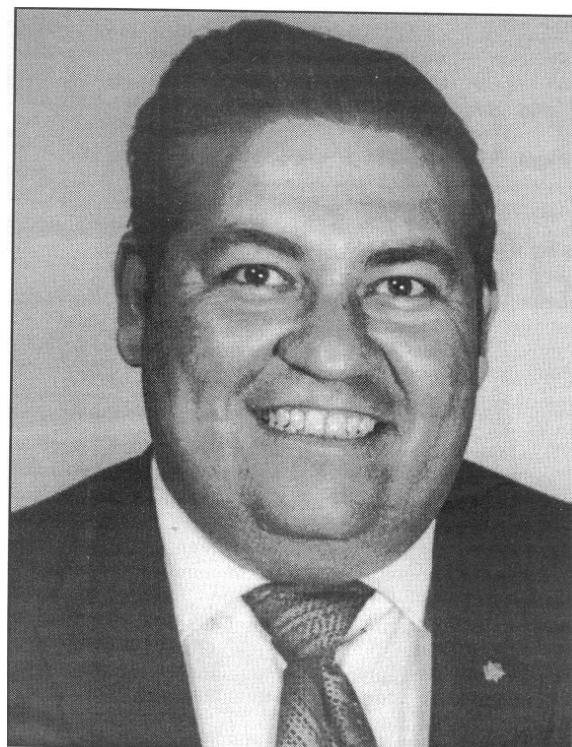
Fernando was born Jan. 31, 1931, in El Paso to Emilia and Alberto Cordova. He was the third of six sons: Albert, Carlos, Fernando, Joe, Robert and Juan (deceased). He was a 1949 graduate of Bowie High School and much interested in sports, being a member of the all-district football team. He also won an award in mathematics and science.

He enlisted in the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War and was with the 29th Bomber Wing. He was shot down twice behind the

enemy lines and was the recipient of the Korean Service Flying Cross.

When he returned to El Paso he enrolled in Texas Western College (UTEP) and earned his BA degree on May 27, 1956.

Fernando met Elizabeth Gamboa at a Thanksgiving dinner. They were married in 1956 and raised five children.



"Dad liked to take the family on trips throughout the Southwest," James said. "I remember he especially liked to vacation in Colorado. He liked to play golf and would take his clubs on trips with him. He liked to watch sports and go to horse races."

During the years following graduation from college he studied for his MA degree, which he completed in 1966. He secured his first teaching position with EPISD following his graduation from Texas Western College and went to school at nights while working his way to gain his MA degree in administra-

tion. His first position was as a teacher and coach at Aoy Elementary School where he stayed for four years. He was also a teacher at Dowell and Lamar schools and for two years was assistant principal at Rusk, Vilas and Franklin schools before returning to Aoy as principal in 1976. He was listed in the publication Personalities of the South (1972) as a person who had distinguished himself in a variety of occupations and activities. After staying at Aoy for seven years, he was transferred as principal to Henderson School.

James remembered his Dad saying that he admired J.M. Whitaker. "He ran the administration like a tight ship, my Dad always said, and Mr. Whitaker said about Dad that he could send him to any school in South El Paso and never have any discipline problems since he grew up in the area."

In 1999 he won a certificate of award for his work as program assistant of Region 3 in the EPISD. Other certificates Cordova received included one from the mayor's office, a certificate of merit signed by Mayor Don Henderson and given by the Parks and Recreation Department.

He was a member of the Texas PTA and an Honorary Life Member of the Texas Congress of Parents and Teachers, in recognition of distinguished service given to children and youth (1974).

On Aug. 30 he died after a stroke. The funeral mass was held at St. Mathew's Catholic Church. Interment was in Fort Bliss National Cemetery with military honors. He is survived by his wife of 44 years, Elizabeth Cordova; sons Fernando Jr., James, John and Paul; daughter Betty Jeanne Klein; five grandchildren; and brothers Alberto, Carlos, Joe and Robert.

When asked how he would remember his father, James said, "He always said to his children, 'Get your education and get into the business world.'"

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