

Remember the Alamo



By Dennis Kelly

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Do kids have heroes today? If so, are they real people or are they animated fictitious action figures of some sort? Who were your heroes growing up? As a youngster growing up in the late fifties and early sixties in Detroit I vividly remember cowboy singer Marty Robbins singing “Ballad of the Alamo” in 1960.

The song tells the story of the 185 Texans and Tennessee Volunteers who in late February 1836 held out against all odds for 13 days to defend Fort Alamo against several thousand Mexican soldiers led by General Santa Anna, but on the morning of March 6 Mexican forces finally breached the outer wall and overpowered the small force of brave defenders killing all.

During the final battle the Mexicans suffered heavy casualties losing 600 – 1600 men. The fighting was so intense in the end that reloading was not possible by the defenders and it came down to swinging muskets and knives. Such a thing is hard to imagine in this day and age.

March 6th 2023 marks the 187th anniversary of the Siege of the Alamo. These courageous men who died that day were my childhood heroes. They were told by Santa Anna he would give no quarter, meaning no prisoners taken. Knowing this, every man there was given an opportunity to leave. Not a single man took that option. They absolutely knew violent death was a certainty. They literally went down swinging.

True to his word General Santa Anna killed all of the maimed

and wounded where they fell. He did not allow any of the bodies of the defenders to be buried but stacked them up and burned them.

Today these brave men are forgotten. Men like James Bowie, Colonel William Travis, (who we named my son Travis after). Davey Crockett also died at the Alamo, along with 60 of his Tennessee Volunteers. And what did they give their lives for you might ask. They were defending the territory of Texas for independence from Mexico.

Shortly after that battle Santa Anna was attacked and defeated by 800 Texans led by Sam Houston, their rally cry, REMEMBER THE ALAMO! Santa Anna who was taken prisoner came to terms with Houston ending the war and Texas won its independence.

Sorry for the brief (and incomplete) history lesson but I doubt you will find this piece of our history in any school curriculum today unless perhaps it's to point out the imperial nature of America, stealing land from our Spanish speaking neighbors to the south.

So on March 6th remember that there was a time not too long ago, when truly brave men walked this land. They sought independence, liberty and justice. And yes, they carried guns. Remember the Alamo!

You can listen to Marty Robbins Ballad of the Alamo with Lyrics (HERE): <https://youtu.be/CnptKCH44CQ>

Ballad of the Alamo Lyrics

In the southern part of Texas – In the town of San Antone –
There's a fortress all in ruins – That the weeds have
overgrown

You may look in vain for crosses – And you'll never see a one
– But sometimes between the setting – And the rising of the
sun – You can hear a ghostly bugle – As the men go marchin' by

– You can hear them as they answer – To that roll call in the sky

Colonel Travis, Davy Crockett – And a hundred eighty more –
Captain Dickinson, Jim Bowie – Present and accounted for

Back in 1836, Houston said to Travis, “Get some volunteers and go – Fortify the Alamo”

Well the men came from Texas – And from old Tennessee – And they joined up with Travis – Just to fight for the right to be free

Indian scouts with squirrel guns – Men with muzzle-loaders –
Stood together, heel and toe – To defend the Alamo

“You may never see your loved ones” – Travis told them that day – “Those who want to can leave now – Those who fight to the death let ‘em stay”

In the sand he drew the line – With his army sabre – Out of a hundred eighty five – Not a soldier crossed the line

With his banners a-dancin’ – In the dawn’s golden light –
Santa Anna came prancin’ – On a horse that was black as the night

Sent an officer to tell – Travis to surrender – Travis answered with a shell – And a rousin’ rebel yell

Santa Anna turned scarlet – “Play degüello!” he roared – “I will show them no quarter – Everyone will be put to the sword!”

One hundred and eighty five – Holdin’ back five thousand –
Five days, six days, eight days, ten – Travis held and held again

Then he sent for replacements – For his wounded and lame – But the troops that were comin’ – Never came, never came, never

came

Twice he charged then blew recall – On the fatal third time –
Santa Anna breached the wall – And he killed them, one and all

Now the bugles are silent – And there's rust on each sword –
And the small band of soldiers – Lie asleep in the arms of the
Lord

In the southern part of Texas – Near the town of San Antone –
Like a statue on his pinto – Rides a cowboy all alone

And he sees the cattle grazin' – Where a century before –
Santa Annas' guns were blazin' – And the cannons used to roar

And his eyes turn sorta misty – And his heart begins to glow –
And he takes his hat off slowly – To the men of Alamo

To the thirteen days of glory – At the siege of ALAMO

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