

Texican would have to fight off more than ten enemy soldiers. Tall odds.

But the men of the Alamo knew it was time to stand and fight. As a strategic asset, the Alamo was better than nothing. That's because the Texicans had nothing else in place to slow Santa Anna's advance toward the eastern settlements where talk of independence had taken hold.

If Texicans didn't stop him at the Alamo, Santa Anna could very well have carved a path of destruction across the state that effectively deprived its people of the means to resist and the will to continue their struggle for Independence. Had Santa Anna made his way across Texas, there might not have been anything left to fight for.

The upshot is that conquering the Alamo appealed to Santa Anna's ego even though it did little to accomplish his military objective of suppressing the Texas Revolution. He needed to eradicate the passion for independence within every Texican, not simply defeat an army in the field.

Viewed in that light, taking the Alamo was for him an indulgence not a military necessity. He fancied himself as the Napoleon-of-the-west and he dreamed of decisive battles to elevate his standing.

And if Santa Anna had simply swept by the Alamo and pushed on to the settled fertile valleys and ranches further east, he'd have preserved the strength of his force. And if he didn't ultimately succeed in ending the dream of an independent Texas, he'd have extracted a far higher price from the Texicans he fought. So, even though all hands were lost at the Alamo, their sacrifice saved other lives that would have been lost beating back an unwounded Mexican Army of Operation.

Santa Anna himself was a dangerous and daring adversary. He wasn't anyone to be taken lightly. He'd fought his way to the top of the Mexican military through a series of wars, including the fight for independence from Spain. Santa Anna knew a thing or two about fighting. He was a charismatic and compelling leader who issued orders that he knew would be obeyed. His army was disciplined and far better equipped than any comparable units then fighting for Texas.

But we're taught that pride comes before the fall, and Santa Anna's pride was his Achilles'heel. Santa Anna did not begin his campaign with respect for his opponents. He considered the Texicans fighting for Independence as an ill-disciplined rabble that would be defeated by the first whiff of grapeshot that he sent over their heads.

Before he marched north to Texas, Santa Anna even boasted to a group of visiting Frenchmen and Englishmen that defeating Texas was just the first step in his plans for North America. He actually said he'd conquer the U.S., haul down the Stars and Stripes and hoist the Mexican flag over this very building: The Capitol. Well, that's quite a boast, and I know what ol' Sam Houston must have said when he heard about it:

"That'll be the day. He'll have his hands full right here in Texas." And so he did.

Eventually, Santa Anna did learn to respect Texas, but a lot of men had to die first.

And sitting here today, we ask ourselves: Why did they die? What were they fighting for? And is the country around us today worthy of their sacrifice? Some questions we can answer. Some will be answered for us.

They weren't eager to die. They wanted to live out their years in a free Texas. Time and again, Alamo commander William Travis appealed for reinforcements and only once did 30 men answer the call by riding through the Mexican lines to join their fellow Texicans.

In his famous letter to "the People of Texas and all Americans in the World", that he wrote with the Alamo surrounded and Santa Anna gathering strength, Travis made a last appeal for additional defenders.

This is what he told Texas:

"The enemy has demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise, the garrison are to be put to the sword if the fort is taken. I have answered the demand with a cannon shot and our flag still waves proudly from the walls. I shall never surrender or retreat. I call on you in the name of Liberty, of patriotism and every thing dear to the American character, to come to our aid with all dispatch. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due his own honor and that of his country. Victory or Death."

The men at the Alamo died because they believed that some things are more important than life itself. They knew that faith, family, and freedom were worth fighting for. And they also knew that, if they had to live without true independence, their lives wouldn't be worth living.

They wanted the protections of a legitimate Constitution. They wanted their individual rights to be honored. They believed in the idea of self-government. They insisted that government respect their right to own private property. They chafed under tariffs and demanded free trade. They fought for democracy as the surest path to freedom.

And it's true that the issue of slavery motivated some of the men at the Alamo. We must acknowledge that some of the men at the Alamo owned slaves and they were fighting for the right to keep them. History proved them wrong on that point. And that painful truth should not diminish the greater principles that all of the Texicans at the Alamo fought for. Just as our Founders did great things despite their flaws, so too did the Alamo's defenders ennoble themselves by the way they ended their lives.

The most dramatic moment was still yet to come. It happened when William Travis gathered his command in the courtyard of the Alamo and leveled with his men about the fix they were in. They had three options, he told them.

They could surrender, but they had all seen the red flag Santa Anna had flown. It meant no quarter. They would all be executed.

They could make a break for it and try to fight their way through the Mexican lines. But this option was also doomed to failure because they would be fleeing across open country and Santa Anna's cavalry would butcher them easily.

And they could instead defend the Alamo and, by dying in place, inflict enough casualties on the Mexicans to weaken Santa Anna's army. Travis chose the hard path.

"My own choice is to stay in this fort, and die for my country, fighting as long as breath shall remain in my body. This I will do even if you leave me alone," Travis said. But the choice was up to each of them, he said. Then he used his sword to draw a line across the courtyard.

"I now want every man who is determined to stay here and die with me to come across this line. Who shall be the first?"

And one by one, the men who died at the Alamo all came across.

Now, some people will tell you that Travis' last speech was fiction. They'll say it's melodramatic and too full of grand gestures. They'll say it's wishful thinking on the part of dreamers and romantics. But I believe that Travis did draw that line in the sand.

If you read his letters and consider the convictions of those men holed up with him in the Alamo, I believe you'll come to the same conclusion. Travis knew exactly what he was doing and his men knew their precise and painful destiny. And they stepped across that line in the sand and stayed just the same. Because independence is worth it.

And that's why men rode off from their families to join a motley band of committed patriots, who without training, without supplies, and without much hope for success gambled everything on God and Texas.

And they won even as they spent their lives so dearly on the walls of the Alamo.

And the debate goes on today. Some men don't believe that any principle or conviction is worth the political capital to draw a line in the sand. But other men still do. And it's with those like-minded men and women that I'll throw in my lot.

Some things are still worth fighting for, and we'd better never forget it. Because if enough of us ever do forget, we'll have squandered our birthright to freedom and we'll be the unworthy beneficiaries of those proud Americans who came before us.

The Alamo's defenders, like our Founding Fathers before them, gave everything to put unstoppable events in motion. Their deaths were the birth pains of greatness.

"Victory or Death," became Victory in Death. And that victory was the offspring of the courage needed to make the simple yet difficult choices that so often determine history. May we never forget that freedom demands sacrifice. God bless the men who died at the Alamo. And God bless America.

CITIZENS FROM THE 9TH DISTRICT
OF TEXAS

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2001

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor local citizens from the 9th District of Texas who were chosen during Black History Month for their work. While the dedication of African-American leaders is well-known throughout the United States, local citizens, right here in the Southeast Gulf Coast region, are just as important to ensuring equal rights for all Texans. Last month I asked members of the communities in the 9th District to nominate individuals for my "Unsung Heroes" award that gives special recognition to those unsung heroes, willing workers, and individuals who are so much a part of our nation's rich history. Recipients were chosen because they embodied a giving and sharing spirit, and had made a contribution to our nation.

These individuals have not only talked the talk, but they have walked the walk. They have worked long and hard for equal rights in their churches, schools, and in their communities. While their efforts may not make the

headlines every day, their pioneering struggle for equality and justice is nevertheless vital to our entire region. This region of Southeast Texas is not successful in spite of our diversity; we are successful because of it.

Please join me in recognizing and congratulating these community leaders for their support of bringing Justice and equality to Southeast Texas. It is leaders like, these men and women that continue to be a source of pride not only during Black History Month, but all year long. The winners of this year's "Unsung Heroes" award are:

Mrs. Myrtle Giles Davis, Mrs. Mattie Dansby Ford, Mr. William Andrew Harris, Mr. V. H. Haynes, Mr. Tony Johnson, and Mrs. Annie Mae Shanklin.

Mr. Speaker, the recipients of the "Unsung Heroes" award are dedicated and hardworking individuals who have done so much for their neighbors and for this nation as a whole. Today, I stand to recognize their spirit and to say that I am honored to be their Representative.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2001

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I accidentally failed to record my vote on roll call #27, to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 727, legislation to amend the Consumer Product Safety Act to provide that low-speed electric bicycles are consumer products subject to the CPSC. As I indicated in the statement I had placed in the RECORD as a part of the debate on this measure, I support H.R. 727 and intended to vote in favor of it.

A TRIBUTE TO HOSEA WILLIAMS

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2001

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in praising the work and life of Hosea Williams as a civil rights leader. For the past 40 years, he has worked with civil rights issues, helping to make a change for black people in America.

Mr. Williams came from a difficult past. At age 13 he was forced to leave his community to escape a lynching mob that wanted to punish him for socializing with a white girl. When the United States entered World War II, he enlisted in the army and became a staff sergeant in an all-black unit of Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army, working as a weapons carrier. He suffered an injury during an attack and had to spend a year in a British hospital.

Mr. Williams returned to the United States where he finished high school at 23. He proceeded to earn his bachelor's degree from Morris Brown College in Georgia, with a major in Chemistry; and then received his master's degree from Atlanta University. He then became the first black research chemist hired by the federal government below the Mason-Dixon line.

Dissatisfied with the discrimination faced by black people in his community Mr. Williams

began giving speeches in a downtown park on his lunch break. He was eventually arrested and jailed. When he was released he took a year leave from the United States Department of Agriculture to do civil rights work and never went back.

The latter portion of Mr. Williams's life was spent fighting for civil rights. He worked as a field general for the Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in the civil rights battles of the 1960's. Before joining with Dr. King he worked with National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and helped to run the Southern Christian Leadership Council's actions in St. Augustine.

Mr. Williams made sure not only to work with the issues abroad but also to work with his community. Serving on the Atlanta City Council and later as the DeKalb County commissioner he worked to improve the conditions at companies and help the poor.

Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the late Hosea Williams for his hard work and dedication on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged and for his extraordinary contributions to civil rights.

SENIOR CITIZEN PROPERTY TAX VOUCHERS

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2001

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, today I introduced legislation, along with six of my colleagues from Massachusetts, to alter the federal tax treatment of real property tax reduction vouchers received by senior citizens for volunteer work.

Approximately 42 towns in Massachusetts have implemented a program to ease the problem senior citizens, who live on fixed incomes, face due to rising property taxes. These towns have allowed senior citizens to perform volunteer work for their town in exchange for a voucher that reduces their property tax by up to \$500.

Specifically, my legislation would exclude from gross income vouchers issued by a government unit to offset real property taxes, and received by senior citizens, in exchange for volunteer work. The legislation also exempts these vouchers from employment taxes, and senior citizens who are at least 65 are eligible.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation enhances an important and creative program being implemented in many towns in Massachusetts. We devote a lot of effort around here to help make sure retirement does not sink senior citizens deep into poverty, and that they have basic health services. This very modest proposal takes a small step in helping seniors remain in their homes despite rising property taxes. A step, I hope, we can take this year.

TRIBUTE TO SHONDA RIGGINS OF SOUTH CAROLINA

HON. HENRY E. BROWN, JR.

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2001

Mr. BROWN of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the dedica-

tion and hard work of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce Employee of the Year. Shonda Riggins, a guest service representative at the Hampton Inn located at 48th Avenue North in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, has displayed over a ten year period how deserving she is of this award. Ms. Riggins is an astute employee who is known for her dependability, generosity, and great southern hospitality. The type of service that Ms. Riggins provides to the guest of the Hampton Inn goes beyond the call of duty. She has proven herself to be an asset to the tourist industry and indispensable to the Hampton Inn.

Examples of Ms. Riggins exemplified service include her handwritten personal postcards to every guest, top-scoring in professional and friendly phone-skills, and a perfect attendance that is also at the top of the charts. Her appearance is always impeccable and she wears, with pride, all of her service pins and buttons. Ms. Riggins is a team player who has shown that she is willing to help in all aspects at any time. This includes such tasks as assisting during hurricane seasons, covering shifts of co-workers, and always being able to keep her cool so that she can help out in whatever way possible.

Over the years Ms. Riggins has received numerous awards and recognition for her continuing great service to the Hampton Inn. This award, though, is an esteemed honored that Ms. Riggins is extremely deserving of. I would like to thank her for her continuing hospitality and support to the tourism industry that is so important to Myrtle Beach. As a thriving part of South Carolina, Ms. Riggins has proven herself to be indispensable to the true meaning of southern hospitality. As the Representative of the First District of South Carolina, I must say that this type of dedication and hard work is refreshing and appreciated to the utmost degree.

THE SCIENCE TEACHER SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS ACT

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2001

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I am introducing today the Science Teacher Scholarships for Scientists and Engineers Act. The bill is cosponsored by my colleague Mr. Wu, and I appreciate his support.

The bill would authorize a program of one-year, \$7500 scholarships to those with bachelor's degrees in science, mathematics, or engineering, or those nearing completion of such degrees, to enable them to take the courses they need to become certified as K-12 science or math teachers.

From a series of Science Committee hearings last year about the state of science and math education, and from talking to constituents, students, and educators at home, it has become clear to me that we need to improve science and math education in this country.

In particular, I've come to understand that poor student performance in science and math has much to do with the fact that teachers often have little or no training in the disciplines they are teaching. While the importance of teacher expertise in determining student