

The Family Heritage Series

A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom. Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency.



Volume II

Lesson Fifty-Six

Remember The Alamo!

LESSON IDEA

To portray the valor and self-sacrificing courage of the men at the Alamo, and to show how their bravery inspired other Texans in the battle for independence.

PREPARATION

Have a map of Texas available, so that family members can locate the cities mentioned and better understand the strategic importance of San Antonio and the Alamo.

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THE TEXANS standing watch on the north wall of the Alamo blew on their chilled fingers, cold from grasping the metal barrels of their guns, cold from the raw bite of the north wind. It was February 27, 1836, the fifth day of a war of nerves being waged by the Mexican Army of over five thousand against the Texas Volunteer Army, which numbered less than two hundred. When the siege had begun, every Texan in the Alamo was confident that Santa Anna, the viciously brutal Mexican commander, would be forced to retreat within the week. Now they were not as sure. Couriers — more than a dozen — had ridden out of the Alamo to spread news of the Mexican threat and seek reinforcements; but none had returned, and no help had arrived.

Gun powder was running short, and the Alamo itself — originally built as a missionary post, not a military fort — offered its defenders little help. There were no moats or ditches, no bastions. The outer wall, three feet thick and from nine to twelve feet high, was not strong enough to withstand continued bombardment nor high enough to dis-

courage scaling. Riflemen had to stand with head and shoulders exposed and fire over the wall, since there were no slits through which a gun barrel could be poked. Obviously the Alamo could not be held for long by 150 men, no matter how expert their marksmanship. Reinforcements must arrive, and soon.

For the first four days, the men inside the Alamo buoyed their spirits with discussions of victory, when couriers would return with men and supplies; they imagined Sam Houston riding to join them, leading an army of volunteers. But the fifth and sixth and seventh day passed with no troops and no news from the outside world, and an uneasy feeling began to gnaw at their confidence. Even Davy Crockett, one of Texas' newest citizens and the Alamo's most experienced fighter, began to get edgy. Davy had come to Texas to earn his fortune; he enrolled as a volunteer in the Texas Army for six months, bringing some of his Tennessee boys with him, because they "liked a good fight" and had heard the Texans were having trouble with "old Santy Anny." But the delay and the silence made Crockett restless. "I'd rather go through the gates and shoot it out with the Mexicans beyond these walls," he declared. "I hate to be hemmed in."

In the beginning, none of the Texans had been hemmed in. Had they wanted to slip away and join Colonel James Fannin's troops in Goliad, eighty-five miles away, they could have done so. The road to freedom and allies had been open for two days after the Mexicans arrived in San Antonio. Now that escape route was blocked.

