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MARCH 9, 2019





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# Letter from the President

Texas Heritage and Independence Celebration Association, Inc. (THICA) is proud to present the 12th Annual Happy Birthday Texas Event. Join us as we travel back 183 years to 1836 and recreate the events that led to the battles of Gonzales, (the Lexington of Texas), the Alamo and San Jacinto. Relive History. Bring your relative and friends to see and hear about the valiant efforts of Tejanos and Texians as they fight for Texas Independence. As you hear the roar of the cannons and see the clouds of smoke from the flint-lock muskets on the battlefield, history comes alive again.

It is our belief that now more than ever, we should reflect on the proud history of the birth of Texas and honor all of the brave men and women that sacrificed everything to give us this proud heritage. Help us educate more people about the wonderful history of Texas.

Participate in our activities. Our tents and re-enactors will be in full dress and welcome visitors to view their muskets, attire and camp surroundings. There will be arts and crafts vendors and food vendors. Our school children will perform some Texas songs. Music will be provided by a country singer and a conjunto band. Become a judge at our Texas Independence Bar-B-Que and taste some of the best Bar-B-Que in South Texas. Visit our art show. There will be artwork created by the school children of San Benito area schools.

Celebrate as we finish the day with the battle of San Jacinto and mark the birthday of Texas. Music and festivities will be plentiful. So Come Out To the San Benito Fairgrounds on March 9, 2019 as we explore our rich history and celebrate and honor the courage of our Texas and Tejano heroes.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TEXAS!**

FEDERICO V. GARZA  
*President*



Federico V. Garza,  
*THICA President*

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Texas Heritage and Independence Celebration Association, Inc.  
402 E. Harrison, Suite B, Harlingen, Texas 78550  
[www.happybirthdaytexas.com](http://www.happybirthdaytexas.com)





**Texas Heritage and Independence Celebration Association Committee**

*Front Row: Nina Garza, Christine Kidd, Diana Bates, Letty González, Veronica Rodriguez, Aaron Govea, Julio Guerra*

*Back Row: Gerry Carrillo, Joseph Govea, Jack Ayoub, Wayne Powell, Daniel Fleischmann, Bruce Kidd, Fred Garza, Jose Jaramillo*

Texas Heritage Independence Association, Inc. is an organization dedicated to promote the participation of Tejanos in the Texas Independence. Our vision is to bring awareness and acknowledgement to Tejanos who participated in the Independence of Texas and in U. S. history. We (THICA) want to educate and promote Texas Independence by reenacting events of the Texas Revolution leading to Texas Independence.



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# Texas Independence Celebration 2019 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS



## SATURDAY - MARCH 2

**\$10 General Public**

(SBCISD Administration Bldg. School Board Room)

### Texas History Symposium Agenda

- 8:30 - 8:55 AM Welcome and Pre-Registration
- 8:55 - 9:00 AM Elizandro Muñoz,  
Master of Ceremonies
- 9:00 - 10:00 AM Dr. Joseph Chance, PhD:  
"Lorenzo de Zavala and the Texas  
Declaration of Independence"
- 10:00 - 11:00 AM Dr. Trinidad Gonzales, PhD:  
Texas War for Independence  
"The Start of Tejano History"
- 11:00 - 12:00 AM Manuel Hinojosa:  
The first mayor of San Antonio under  
Spanish rule.
- 12:00 - 1:00 PM A Tejano Lunch of Pan de Campo  
and Chile con Carne
- 1:00 - 2:00 PM Leo Lopez: "The Missions & Tejanos"

For more information visit our website:

[www.happybirthdaytexas.com](http://www.happybirthdaytexas.com)

Please bring your own lawn chairs to watch the Battle Reenactments.

## SATURDAY - MARCH 9

**\$5 Parking Per Vehicle** (San Benito Stock Show Fairgrounds)

- 8:00 AM LIVE Music: DJ Franko & Cooker's Meeting
- 9:00 AM Market Days, MUSIC: Ed Downs Elementary
- 9:30 AM STEAM Academy Rockettes
- 10:00 AM Lone Star Dream Musical performed by  
Ed Downs Elementary students
- 10:30 AM Art Show Awards
- 11:00 AM Commencement Ceremony & Presentation  
of Colors - The San Benito Naval JROTC
- 11:15 AM Invocation - Pastor Dillon Vanderford
- 11:20 AM Proclamation - Cameron County Judge  
Eddie Treviño, Jr.
- 11:25 AM Key Note Speaker: Elizandro Muñoz
- 11:30 AM Re-signing of Texas Declaration of  
Independence
- 12:00 PM Battle Reenactment: Battle of Gonzales  
Narrated by Jack Ayoub
- 12:30 PM Fred Booth Elementary Choir
- 1:00 PM BBQ Cook-off Judging begins
- 2:00 PM Battle Reenactment: Battle of the Alamo  
Narrated by Jack Ayoub
- 2:30 PM LIVE Music: Roy Solis
- 4:00 PM Battle Reenactment: Battle of San Jacinto  
Narrated by Jack Ayoub
- 4:30 PM LIVE Music: Ruben De La Cruz y Su Conjunto
- 5:30 PM BBQ Cook-off Winners Announced





# Texas History Symposium 2019

## Keynote Speakers

### Elizandro Muñoz

*(Master of Ceremonies)*

Elizandro is an Asst. Professor of History at South Texas College, and an avid historian, focusing on South Texas History. He has been recognized with a South Texas College Jaguar Excellence Award for Excellence, and a NISOD (National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development) Excellence Award by the University of Texas. He has served as a consultant for the Teaching American History grant, and a United States Dept. of Labor Community based Training grant, as a panelist at symposiums at the collegiate level, and featured speaker at museums, and special events, as the keynote speaker at the Texas Independence Day Celebration event. Elizandro is proud to be a founding Board member of THICA (Texas Heritage and Independence Celebration Association) and the work it does in promoting Texas and Tejano history.



years documenting the Ancient Camino Real, starting in Guanajuato, Mexico and crossing into Texas at Eagle Pass to the battle grounds of San Jacinto. At San Jacinto, he was part of the 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2008 archaeological teams funded by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department grants to dig up battlefield artifacts that helped interpret the last battle for Texas Independence. At the 2009 Battle of San Jacinto Symposium, he was the featured speaker, presenting findings of the latest archaeological investigation of the battle site. Manuel has also participated in 2001 in the archeology investigation at the Fannin Battleground State Historic Park and various archaeological surveys at the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Park. He has appeared in the Discovery Channel's hour-long documentary "Unsolved History, The Alamo".



### Manuel Hinojosa

*Speaker*

Manuel Hinojosa grew up in Mission and currently resides in Port Isabel. Manuel earned his B.A. in Art at Pan American University and a degree in Architecture at the University of Southwestern Louisiana. He has spent the last 25



### Trinidad Gonzales, PhD

*Speaker*

Dr. Gonzales earned his doctorate from the University of Houston and received a Center for Mexican American Studies Graduate Fellowship and a Smithsonian Predoctoral Fellowship. His areas of research include Borderlands, Chicana/o, and Civil Rights histories, specializing in early 20th century Lower Rio Grande Valley history. Dr. Gonzales' most recent publication is "The Mexican Revolution, Revolucion de Tejas, Matanza de 1915." In *War Along the Border: the Mexican Revolution and Tejano*

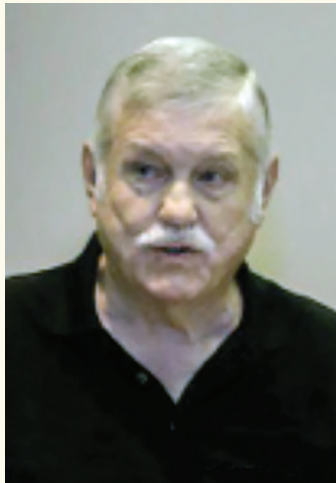


# Texas History Symposium 2019

## Keynote Speakers

Communities, edited by Arnolde de Leon and published in 2012.

Dr. Gonzales helps coordinate the South Texas College Mexican American Studies Program, and his leadership role within the division includes being involved in policy-making decision for the AHA and providing standards for the profession of history. Gonzales also advocates for the highest degree of respect for the importance of history to the nation's educational policy makers. His topic for the Texas History Symposium: Texas Constitution in Perspective - Rights and Race.



**Joseph Chance, PhD**  
*Speaker*

Dr. Chance earned a PhD in mathematics at UT in Austin in 1974 and has taught at Pan American College in Edinburg from 1969 – 2005 where he served as chairman of the math department for 12

years. He wrote a Texas history column in the Valley Morning Star, "History by Chance" and has authored 10 books: 2 of which were self-published and 8 that were published by the University press that included "The Regimental History in the War between the States and the Mississippi Rifles led by Jefferson Davis in the Mexican-America War." Dr. Chance's great-great-grandfather came to Texas with Stephen F. Austin and became a Mexican citizen, making Chance a true Mexican-American. His topic: The Battle of Bexar (San Antonio).



**Leonel (Leo) Lopez**

Leo Lopez is a life-long resident of Edinburg, Texas. He graduated from St. Anthony Catholic High School (San Antonio) and received a B. A. Degree in Social Studies from Pan American College (Edinburg) in 1966.

After college, he spent 2 years in the Peace Corps in Barranquillia, Colombia (S.A.) where, with the Colombian Red Cross, set-up the first lifeguard team on a public Colombian Caribbean beach and Physical Education.

After the Peace Corps, he taught in the Edinburg CISD schools for 32 years teaching elementary P.E., coaching tennis and outdoor and environmental education. He attended continuing graduate classes in conservation and environment education classes at Texas A&M and Kingsville A&I. In 1982, he was awarded the Texas Environmental and Conservation Teacher of the Year by the Texas Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Texas.

Leo works with and teaches at the annual Texas Outdoor Education Workshop every year and was president (1988) of the Texas Outdoor Education Association.

Retired since 2000, he does presentations on Native American history and culture, primitive skills and crafts for the outdoor workshop, college programs, schools, teachers, museums and cultural events.





The San Benito CISD Board of Trustees proudly support the Texas Independence Celebration.



Trustees include, seated from left, Secretary M.L. Garcia, President Michael A. Vargas, Vice-President Angel Mendez Back Row - Orlando López, Sonia Weaver, Janie G. Silva, and Victor Eloy Rosas.

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**-Juan Seguin**



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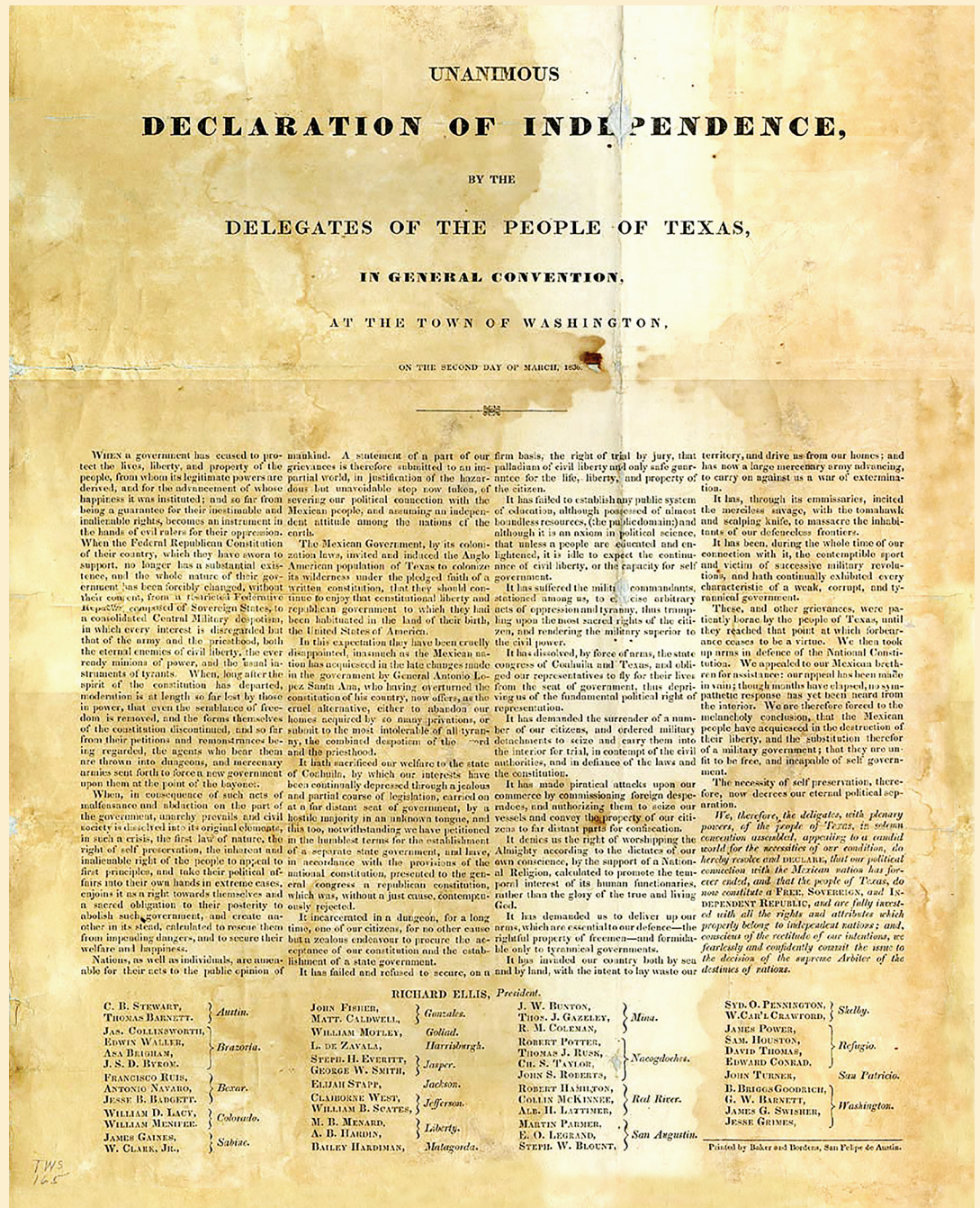
# Texas Declaration of Independence

by Jack Ayoub

On March 2nd, 1836, 59 delegates all across Texas including two Tejanos, Jose Antonio Navarro and Francisco Ruiz, from San Antonio as well as a Mexican national, Lorenzo de Zavala, from Mexico City, met at Washington-on-the-Brazos in a half-built barn with glassless windows and open doors in nearly freezing conditions.

George Childress, an ancestor of Dr. James Childress, a San Benito surgeon, came to the convention with 5 handwritten copies of the Texas Declaration of Independence modeled after the American declaration of independence. This famous document declared Texas independence from Mexico because President Santa Anna was establishing himself as a dictator when he did away with the Mexican Constitution of 1824, denying basic rights and liberties to the citizens of Mexico as well as doing away with the state governments and the local militias. This political act by Santa Anna would centralize all political and military power to the federal government in Mexico City. His government would now be named the centralists, while the followers of Stephen F. Austin would be called the Federalists with the belief in state rights and the right to keep and bare arms to maintain a local militia.

While General Santa Anna's cannons were pounding the walls of the Alamo, our brave Texas patriots were signing their names, their lives, and their sacred honor to this famous document, knowing full well that this declaration could be their death warrant if Santa Anna won the war... VIVA TEJAS Y VIVAN LOS TEJANOS!





# Reenactors depict battles for Texas Independence Celebration



The sounds of firing muskets and cannon blasts fill the air each year during the month of March in San Benito as part of the annual Texas Independence Celebration.

Battle skirmishes and reenactments by living historians detail the Battle of the Alamo, Siege of Béxar and finally the final clash, the Battle of San Jacinto, where Texas was born as a republic, free from Mexico.

Reenactors staged as both Texan and Mexican soldiers dress in period attire, ride on horseback and marched in make-shift formation for the battles. Defenders at the Alamo readied their muskets and cannon in anticipation of the looming battle. Many crouched behind the fortified wooden walls and hay bales, watching the Mexican troops in crisp blue coats moving towards them.

Founded in 2007, Texas Heritage & Independence Celebration Association, Inc., (THICA), produces Texas Independence Day. The organization is dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of Texas, from the natives who first settled here to the numerous flags that have flown over Texas.

The group works to bring the story of the Alamo to life in celebration of Texas Independence Day. The San Benito community comes together in an effort to remember the bravery of the Texans and Tejanos for our independence.

It was on March 2, 1836, when Texas severed ties with Mexico and became a free and independent republic, when at the Town of Washington, 59 representatives voted into existence a sovereign nation: the Republic of Texas. Both Anglo and Tejano delegates declared to the world that they were different: Neither Mexican or American, but to be known as Texans.

The Independence Day reenactments honor the independent spirit of those early Texans and the sacrifices made for the independence that was won at the Battle of San Jacinto where the battle cry that day was “Remember the Alamo” and “Remember Goliad”; The battle lasted only 18 minutes and ended with the unconditional surrender of General Santa Anna to General Sam Houston in a victory that secured Texas’ Independence.

We honor the heroes of the Texas Revolution such as Sam

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Houston, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie and William Barrett Travis; and we honor the influential Tejanos such as Jose Antonio Navarro, Gregorio Esparza, and Juan Seguin who proudly risked death with the other signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence.

An emotional portrayal of the Battle of the Alamo over the years has been performed for increasingly large number of spectators coming from across the Valley to witness the historic depiction. In one performance, the audience watched in disbelief, and awed silence, as Davy Crockett was executed. In apparent disbelief at seeing the legendary hero gunned-down, the crowd remained reverently silent until the announcer asked for applause for the reenactors.

The reenactors themselves come from across the Valley, and sometimes across the state, to participate in the memorable events.

Event moderator described the scene where the defenders were holed-up in the Alamo in preparation for the advancing Mexican troops under the command of Gen. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna.

“The general ordered that no prisoners would be taken, which only deepened the resolve of the Alamo defenders to fight to the end,” moderator said.

The event has grown significantly over the years, moving from Plaza de San Benito on Stenger Street, to the San Benito Fairgrounds to accommodate side attractions and a more appropriate area to support an increasing audience base.

In recent years, the organizers have added a sanctioned cook-off for a variety of dishes, an art show is featured and arts/crafts/corporate vendors join with food concessions to service the attendees.

THICA endeavors to retell these stories and honor the memory of those who came before us, shaping the Texas we enjoy today. Texas Heritage & Independence

Celebration Association, Inc. (THICA), helps educate and celebrate Texas culture and to encourage participation by promoting the history of our state through symposiums and community events that recreate this area’s rich and colorful history.

For more information, please contact visit our website at [www.happybirthdaytexas.com](http://www.happybirthdaytexas.com).



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## THE BATTLE OF GONZALES

In 1835, with tensions rising with the Texans and Tejanos against the central Mexican government of General Santa Anna, the military commander of San Antonio began taking action to disarm the region. When his request for the return of a small cannon from the citizens of Gonzales was refused, Lieut. Francisco Castañeda was dispatched with 100 calvary men to seize it. Lieut. Castañeda and his soldiers were eventually attacked while they were resting at their camp about 7 miles from Gonzales, by Col. John Henry Moore and 150 Texas militia with the battle cry, "Come and take it". Outnumbered and outgunned, Castañeda ordered his troops back to San Antonio. Although the only casualty of the skirmish was a Mexican soldier, the Battle of Gonzales, sometimes called "the Lexington of Texas", symbolized the beginning of the Texas War for Independence, on Oct 2nd, 1835.

Tensions were increasing between the Texas settlers and the Mexican government ever since General Santa Anna became president. Santa Anna had Stephen F Austin thrown into prison for personally requesting statehood. The Mexican

Constitution of 1824 was done away with and all the state governments were closed, transferring all political power to Mexico City. Santa Anna was now making himself, a dictator and wanted to disarm all the citizens of Mexico.

Col. Domingo Ugartechea, the highest ranking officer in San Antonio, decided to disarm the settlers of Gonzales of their 6 lb. cannon that was given to them by the Mexican government 4 years earlier. The cannon barrel was no longer

**"Come and take it."**

than a man's arm and was not even mounted on carriage wheels. Also, the cannon didn't

even fire half the time and the other half was used to only scare off the Indians and start the horse races. The Mexican army saw a piece of junk, but to the citizens of Gonzales, the cannon was their symbol to keep and bare arms for their protection. Lieut. Francisco Castañeda rode out of the Alamo with 100 calvary men with written orders for Andrew Ponton, the mayor of Gonzales, that ordered he give up the cannon to the Mexican calvary. Castañeda's calvary men were met by Col. John Henry Moore with 18 militia volunteers, guarding the road.





## THE BATTLE OF THE ALAMO

**O**n Feb 23rd, 1836, General Santa Anna and his Mexican Army nearly caught the defenders of the Alamo by surprise, but these brave Texans and Tejanos would hold out for 13 days against impossible odds. As these defenders saw it, the Alamo was the key to the defense of Texas, and were ready to defend their fort rather than surrender to General Santa Anna. Among their leaders were Lieut. Col. William Travis, commander of the Alamo, Col. James Bowie, famed knife fighter, and Davy Crockett, famed frontiersman and former congressman from Tennessee.

The final assault came before daybreak on March 6, 1836, with the calls of “viva Santa Anna and viva Mexico”, on each side of the Alamo. Small arms fire and cannon blasts beat back several attacks, but the 3rd assault finally overran the north wall. Once inside, the Mexican army turned

## “Remember the Alamo”

the captured 18-pounder cannon on the southwest corner on the defenders behind the barricaded doors of the Long Barracks and the chapel. Their desperate struggle continued until all the defenders were overwhelmed. By sunrise, the battle of the Alamo had ended, as General Santa Anna

entered the compound to survey the bloody scene of his military victory.

While the facts and legends of the Alamo continue to be debated by Texas historians today, there is no doubt that the Battle of the Alamo has come to symbolize a heroic struggle and the supreme sacrifice for freedom and liberty when brave Texans and Tejanos (Texas-born Citizens of Mexican and Spanish ancestry) fought and died together.

## THE BATTLE OF SAN JACINTO

**O**n April 21st, 1836, General Sam Houston led his 900 Texans and Tejanos to a decisive victory over General Santa Anna and his 1300 Mexican soldiers in just over 18 minutes. Battle cries, such as “Remember the Alamo and Remember Goliad” could be heard all over the battlefield. About 630 Mexican soldiers died and 730 captured, while only 9 Texans died. Santa Anna was captured the following day and held as a prisoner of war. About 3 weeks later, the Mexican general was forced to sign the Treaty of Velasco ordering his armies to leave Texas and cross over the Rio Grande River; allowing the Republic of Texas to become established as an independent country.



# The "COME AND TAKE IT" Spirit:

## A brief look at the Battle of Gonzales

By Luis H. Loza

The most famous battles of the Texas Revolution are arguably the battle at the Alamo and the Battle at San Jacinto, but the Battle of Gonzales is another battle worth remembering and retelling.

Unlike the battles at the Alamo and San Jacinto, which were clearly defined as direct intentional war conflicts with Mexico for the independence of Texas, the battle that took place in the small town located approximately 75 miles northeast of San Antonio, was a result of failed attempts by the Mexican government to take back a small cannon that had been given to settlers in Dewitt County, which Gonzales served as the capital city.

The six-pound cannon which historian Timothy Todish described as "a small bored gun, good for little more than starting horse races," was given to Gonzales in 1831 in order to help settlers defend themselves against attacks Indian tribes such as the Comanche.

According to historian Stephen Hardin, on September 10, 1835, a Mexican soldier bludgeoned a Gonzales resident, which outraged and public and led to protests. The attack on the Gonzales resident along with political tension caused by Mexican states revolted during the early 1830s, raised fears among Mexican authorities, who came to suspect Texas might want to break away as well. Colonel Domingo de Ugartechea the commander of Mexican forces in Texas began to be suspicious and thought it would be unwise for Mexican government to leave the residents of Dewitt County with the cannon.

Ordered by the Mexican government to avoid using force if possible Col. Ugartechea sent six soldiers to retrieve the cannon. The request was denied. Ugartechea sent 100 soldiers in response. On September 29, news of the Mexican troops approaching the town of Gonzales forced the residents of Dewitt County to use several excuses to keep them from the town and the cannon. One of excuses was demanding Ugartechea be physically present to make the request for

the cannon. Tactics such as this one delayed fighting and allowed the Texans to covertly relay messages to surrounding towns for support. During the next two days approximately 140 Texians and Tejanos (Texas-born citizens of Mexican and Spanish ancestry) gathered in Gonzales. With a larger number of volunteers poised to do battle, the Texas settlers voted on October 1 to delay the battle no more.

Although women were excluded from physically participating in the battle, they were still able to contribute in a special way. The women created a home-made flag from a white bed sheet and charcoal which featured the black silhouette of

the disputed cannon placed horizontally in the center with the muzzle pointed to the right. A black star was placed above the cannon and the words "COME AND TAKE IT" in capital letters were written below it. The rally cry evoked by the flag led to the controversial piece of artillery to become better known as the Come and Take it Cannon.

Hoping to draw first blood, the Texas fighters approached the Mexican

camp during the early hours of October 2, but they were spotted and the Mexican Army fired at them. After several hours of firing the Mexican troops retreated. According to several historians the skirmish had little military significance; however, the Texans and Tejanos had made their intentions clear with their actions. The war for the Republic of Texas had officially begun, and like the controversial cannon that had led to the Battle of Gonzales, Mexico's Army and its infamous dictator Antonio López de Santa Anna would have to "COME AND TAKE IT", by force because they were not going to give up the land without a fight.

Although the Battle of Gonzales took place more than 180 years ago, the spirit of the colonists and fighters who helped birth the Republic of Texas lives on through the efforts of the proud Tejanos of today.

*(Information from various authors and historical sources was used in this article.)*





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# Victory or Death The Travis Letter

by Jack Ayoub



**T**he Victory or Death letter, written by Lt. Col. William Travis, is considered to be one of the most heroic letters every written. Just one day into the Siege of the Alamo, Feb 24th, 1836, Travis, besieged by several thousand Mexican soldiers under the command of General Santa Anna, sent out a urgent plea for men and supplies “to the People of Texas and all Americans in the World”.

Facing almost certain death, Travis vowed “to never retreat or surrender and to die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor and that of his country. VICTORY OR DEATH”. The town of Gonzales was the only one who sent 32 brave men to come to the aid of the Alamo. After 13 days of siege, the Alamo was attacked in the early morning hours by Santa Anna’s army on all four sides and fell on March 6th, 1836. All 189 Alamo defenders died, including Lt. Col. Travis, Col. Jim Bowie, and Davy Crockett, for the Republic of Texas, only 4 days old. And true to his word, Travis never surrendered or retreated.





IN MEMORIAM

# Jon Arthur Caldwell

April 1, 1957 - May 1, 2018

The last time I saw Jon was at my home, just one short week before he was gone. He came by to visit us and to give me another small “gift” ---- seems he was cleaning off his shelves and trying to fill up mine!! To him, I was his “little sister”. I don’t know if it was because he was 10 months older than me, or because I was a lot shorter than him. Either way, I loved him like an older brother.

School kids in the area knew this tall, mustached man as “Cowboy Jon”. He enjoyed participating in the Harlingen Library’s summer reading programs, dressing as an old-time cowboy and teaching

children about cowboy life in the Old West. He had worked at a sign company and later was a long-time employee of HEB, where he was known as a friendly, out-going man, ready to talk to everyone and regale them with stories about history and about THICA.

Jon was caring and generous and was a very

talented artist. He loved history, and almost as soon as he attended his first THICA meeting, he was ready to become a re-enactor and participate in our events.

Jon’s artistic skills were beyond normal talent. Anyone who saw his paintings and/or drawings would agree that Jon could have become a well-known artist, but he was such a humble man, and he was content to share his art with his family and friends.

He designed the art for our first powwow t-shirt, which was a big success. People still ask for this shirt to this day. He donated several prints and other items that he made to the organization in order to raise funds for our events.

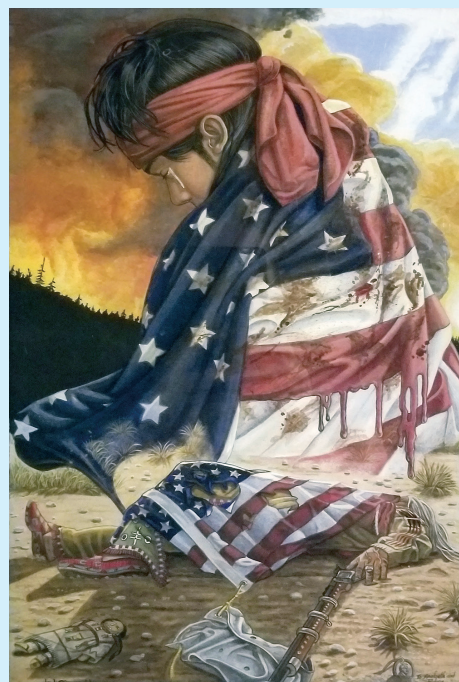
One of the last paintings that I knew he did was for the cover of a fantasy comic book he was working on. It was a really beautiful painting and when he asked for my opinion,



I told him that I loved it and that it invoked a lot of emotion for me and my Native American roots. Being Jon, and true to his nature, he gave me (his little sister) and my husband the original. According to what he told me, he made only one print

of this for his comic book cover and was not yet ready for public view.

If you never met Jon, you missed not knowing a wonderful human being. If you did, then you know we lost a true cowboy, a true gentleman, and a true friend. We love you Jon, and we miss you.



Anabeth  
Molina-Cordova  
THICA Member





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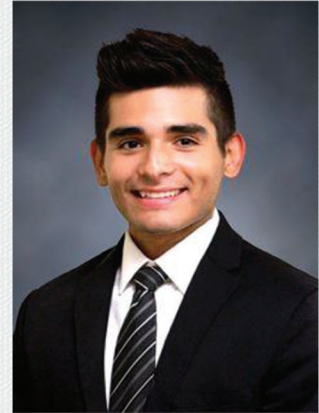


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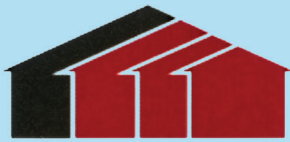
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