

The Texan Mystique

What is a Texan? Texans differ from one another in every way imaginable: in age, religion, ethnicity, political belief, occupation, even length of time in Texas. The West Texas cotton farmer is a Texan. So is the Gulf Coast shrimper from Vietnam, the Tigua Indian child in El Paso, the zydeco musician, the environmental engineer. Whatever their individual differences (and conflicts), citizens of Texas share an incredible history, a vibrant heritage unmatched by any other state. To be Texan is to stand tall in the saddle, to take decisive action—and to be regarded with something akin to awe.

Texans have been known to be . . .

Gruff – *There are no favorites in my office. I treat them all with the same general inconsideration.*¹ – Lyndon B. Johnson, U.S. President

Tough – *Mostly, Texas women are tough in some fundamental way. Not unfeminine, not unladylike, just tough.*² – Molly Ivins, columnist

Honorable – *It was expected of me that I was to bow to the name of Andrew Jackson . . . even at the expense of my conscience and judgment. Such a thing was new to me, and a total stranger to my principles.*³ – Davy Crockett, frontiersman and U.S. Congressman

Honest – *Son, always tell the truth. Then you'll never have to remember what you said last time.*⁴ – Sam Rayburn, Speaker of U.S. House

Brave – *I shall never surrender or retreat. . . . 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 to his own honor and that of his country—Victory or Death!*⁵ – William Barret Travis, writing from Alamo, February 24, 1836

Steadfast – *Mrs. T.M. Borland of Texas, with three children, is stopping at the Planter House. She is the happy possessor of about one thousand head of cattle and accompanied the herd all the way from its starting point to this place, giving evidence of a pluck and business tact far superior to many of the 'lords'. – Wichita (Kansas) Beacon, June 4, 1873.*

Boisterous – *All new states are invested, more or less, by a class of noisy, second-rate men who are always in favor of rash and extreme measures, but Texas was absolutely overrun by such men.*⁶ – Sam Houston, President of the Texas Republic

Brash – *It was a combination of being a Texan, being a Mexican, and being more Indian than Spanish that propelled me to take action. I don't think I ever thought in terms of fear.*⁷ – Emma Tenayuca, Depression-era labor leader

Valiant – *A born Texan has instilled in his system a mind-set of no retreat or no surrender. I wish everyone the world over had the dominating spirit that motivates Texans.*⁸ – Billy Clayton, Speaker of the Texas House

Loyal – *I am neither a black politician, nor a woman politician, just a politician . . . I am here simply because all those people in the 18th District of Texas cannot get on planes and buses and come to Washington to speak for themselves. They have elected me as their spokesman, nothing else, and my only job is to speak for them.*⁹ – Barbara Jordan, U.S. Congresswoman

Courteous – *Texas, to be respected, must be polite. Santa Anna living can be of incalculable benefit to Texas; Santa Anna dead would be just another dead Mexican.*¹⁰ – Sam Houston, victor at Battle of San Jacinto

Proud – *Some folks look at me and see a certain swagger, which in Texas is called “walking.”*¹¹ – George W. Bush, U.S. President

Partisan – *There’s nothing in the middle of the road but a yellow stripe and dead armadillos.*¹² – Jim Hightower, Texas Agricultural Commissioner and political commentator

Ardent – *Sectional football games have the glory and the despair of war, and when a Texas team takes the field against a foreign state, it is an army with banners.*¹³ – John Steinbeck, author

Friendly – *Winning has always meant much to me, but winning friends has meant the most.*¹⁴ – Babe Didrikson Zaharias, athlete

Practical – *Jack was out kissing babies while I was out passing bills. Someone had to tend the store.*¹⁵ – Lyndon B. Johnson, U.S. Vice-President and (later) President

Powerful – *Politicians learned to respect her. She could drink, cuss and connive with the best of them and outspend practically all of them.*¹⁶ – *Time* magazine commemorating Clara Driscoll, financial savior of the Alamo

Unruly – *Good thing we’ve still got politics in Texas—finest form of free entertainment ever invented.*¹⁷ – Molly Ivins, journalist

Astute – *Ginger Rogers did everything Fred Astaire did. She just did it backwards and in high heels.*¹⁸ – Ann Richards, Governor of Texas

Fervent – *Do something. If it doesn’t work, do something else. No idea is too crazy.*¹⁹ – Jim Hightower, Texas Agricultural Commissioner and political commentator

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- ¹ “Lyndon B. Johnson Quotes,” *Brainy Quote*, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/l/lyndon_b_johnson_4.html (accessed June 24, 2009).
- ² Quoted in *Quotable Texas Women*, compiled by Susie Kelly Flatau and Lou Halsell Rodenberger (Abilene, Tex.: State House Press, 2005), p. 142.
- ³ “Davy Crockett Quotes,” *Brainy Quote*, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/d/davy_crockett.html (accessed June 24, 2009).
- ⁴ “Sam Rayburn Quotes,” *Brainy Quote*, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/s/sam_rayburn.html (accessed June 24, 2009).
- ⁵ William Barret Travis, Commandancy of the Alamo, letter Feb. 24, 1836, in “Texas Treasures,” Texas State Library & Archives Commission, <http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/treasures/republic/alamo/travis-full-text.html> (accessed June 30, 2009).
- ⁶ “Sam Houston Quotes,” *Brainy Quote*, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/s/samhouston186878.html> (accessed June 24, 2009).
- ⁷ Acceptance speech for Recognition Award, 12th annual conference of National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies, Austin, 1984, reprinted in *La Voz de Esperanza*, newsletter of Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, San Antonio, September 1999, p. 8.
- ⁸ Quoted in “Quotes about Texas,” http://www.phswebclass.com/WEB/exam/texas_quotes.htm (accessed June 23, 2009).
- ⁹ Quoted in Ann Fears Crawford and Crystal Sasse Ragsdale, *Women in Texas: Their Live, Their Experiences, Their Accomplishments* (Burnet, Tex.: Eakin Press, 1982), pp. 327-328.
- ¹⁰ “Sam Houston Quotes,” *Brainy Quote*, <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/s/samhouston186878.html> (accessed June 24, 2009).
- ¹¹ Quoted in “Texas Quotes,” *Thinkexist.com*, <http://thinkexist.com/quotes/with/keyword/texas> (accessed June 23, 2009).
- ¹² “Jim Hightower Quotes,” *Brainy Quote*, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/j/jim_hightower.html (accessed June 24, 2009).
- ¹³ Quoted in “Texas Quotes,” *Thinkexist.com*, <http://thinkexist.com/quotes/with/keyword/texas/4.html> (accessed June 23, 2009).
- ¹⁴ Quoted in *Quotable Texas Women*, p. 56.
- ¹⁵ “Lyndon B. Johnson Quotes,” *Brainy Quote*, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/l/lyndon_b_johnson_2.html (accessed June 24, 2009).
- ¹⁶ *Time* magazine retrospective cited in Ruthe Winegarten, *Texas Women: A Pictorial History from Indians to Astronauts* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1986), p. 103; and in Mary Beth Rogers, Ruthe Winegarten and Sherry Smith, *Texas Women: A Celebration of History* (Austin: Texas Foundation for Women’s Resources, 1981), p. 22.
- ¹⁷ “A Collection of Molly Ivins Quotes,” *DemocraticUnderground.com*, http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=132x3089320 (accessed June 23, 2009).
- ¹⁸ From keynote address at 1988 Democratic National Convention, cited in R.G. Ratcliffe, “Cancer claims Texas icon,” *San Antonio Express-News*, Sept. 14, 2006, p. 6A.
- ¹⁹ “Jim Hightower Quotes,” *Brainy Quote*, http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/j/jim_hightower.html (accessed June 24, 2009).