

# TOMBSTONE BY TOMBSTONE

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## Henry “Hairless Hank” Mims

During the night of August 19, 1858, Hank Mims, Bill Corey and John Latham, all upstanding citizens and ranchers in the town of Prairie View, Texas, were crawling slowly and without sound through the tall grass approximately five miles outside the town.

The herd of cattle was clearly visible in the moonlight from 100 yards away and the men stopped crawling. Mims said, “We’ll wait here and if the Comanches (sic) come. We’ll let them have it.” Corey was not quite as sure as Mims and said, “It’ll be three against twenty or more, maybe the odds will be uncomfortable.”

Mims responded, “Its hit and run for these varmints. If they hear rifle fire, they will disappear.”

For several months the Comanche had been raising cane with the cattle herds around Prairie Village. Their typical method was to suddenly appear out of nowhere and cause the herd to stampede and then pick up the strays that wandered away. The Texas Rangers made a valiant attempt to protect the herds, but they finally just gave it up and advised the ranchers to put the herd in a corral at night. It was next to impossible to conform with that bit of advice. So Mims and his two companions had decided that if the herds were to be protected, it was up to them to do it.

All of a sudden, out of the shadowy moonlight a single Comanche appeared, moving like a ghost. Mms whispered, “Wait until we see others.” Corey protested, Hell, one Indian can stampede the herd.”

“Killing him won’t stop the others,” Mims said. We want to give these damned savages a good lesson.”

The lone Comanche disappeared and the herd continued to graze peacefully. Mims motioned for his companions to follow him. They crept forward until they came to some logs lying in the grass.

Another Indian made an appearance in the moonlight, and he was joined by three more warriors. They surrounded the herd and Mims yelled, “let ‘em have it.” The four Indians were clearly visible in the moonlight and the three muskets roared into fire. Two Indians fell from their horses. From behind the white men came the roar of many savages and Comanche were coming from everywhere. There had to be over fifty of them closing in on the men hiding behind the logs. They had no time to reload the muskets, and Mims yelled out for them to run for it.

Corey and Latham abandoned their guns and jumped up as ten Indians were around them. They both dove into the high grass as arrows whizzed over their heads. They crawled through the high grass and managed to get beyond the ring of Comanche. Then they made a mistake by coming up too quickly, rather than to keep crawling. Three Indians saw them and began firing arrows. One arrow ripped through Corey’s shirt sleeve. They dove back into the grass again.

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Corey told Lathan, "Crawl back towards the Indians, they won't expect that."

Lathan was crawling back toward the Comanche with Corey right behind him and in so doing they saved their lives. The Comanche spread out around the two men and passed them by. When they were a safe distance away Corey and Lathan crawled to the right until once again they were outside the ring of Indians. When they were safely clear of the Indian ring they fled back to Prairie Village and safety.

Things weren't going quite as well for Mims. In the first flight of arrows from the Indians, one caught him in the shoulder, inflicting terrible pain. He buried himself deep under the log, and gritted his teeth in an effort to keep crying out under the pain. He could hear the Indians riding through the grass searching for his two companions. Then the sounds got dimmer as consciousness began to ebb. He struggled against it and the struggle was what gave him away.

He tried to roll over and this caused the arrow to penetrate deeper into his shoulder and create another extreme spasm of pain. This time he was unable to control his groan. Two Comanche warriors on foot heard the sound, ran toward the sound and discovered Mims. One of the Indians quickly inserted an arrow into his bow and dispatched the arrow into Mims' body.

Mims body gave a tremor and then lay still. The other Warrior grabbed his knife and Mims' long hair, and with a war whoop and an expert slice of the knife, Mims was completely scalped.

The Indians then rode away. The herd had been stampeded and all the Indians were gone. The silence of the night was broken only by chirping crickets and a lonely meadow lark that was happily singing his song nearby. The hours passed slowly for Mims before the sun finally rose and burned off the haze to the east. Mims stirred, opened his eyes and a gurgling groan came from his throat as he made an attempt to groan.

Blood had run down his face and neck from the scalping wound. Then with the arrows still sticking in his back, he crawled on his stomach. He managed to gain several yards before stopping and screaming with pain. After resting for a few minutes he crawled on a little further. The sun beating down on his raw scalp wound brought swarms of flies to annoy him even more.

He fought unconsciousness by shaking his head and then crawled forward some more, until complete exhaustion prevented him from going farther. This time when he stopped, he heard horse hoofs. With the last little bit of strength that he had, he rolled over on his side and yelled as loud as he could. He didn't know if he would be heard by white men or red men, and by now didn't really care.

Philip Morton, local cowboy from a nearby ranch, heard his call and jumped off his horse and spotted the wounded Mims. He jumped back on his horse and racedz back to the ranch and within 20 minutes had Mims in the wagon and on the way to the ranch. A cowboy from the ranch had been dispatched to Prairie Village to fetch Doctor Murphy.

The good doctor removed the two arrows, treated those wounds and then the scalp wound. A month later Mims walked out of the bunkhouse a completely healed man. But,

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he didn't have, nor would he ever again have, any hair. His friends began calling him Hairless Hank. He did not mind and joined in the laughter. He was just happy to be alive.

He lived to become a wealthy Texas cattleman. In 1900, he decided to move to Arizona with his sons. His hair never grew back and he let the fringe hair grow long to cover it. And he was never seen without wearing a hat.

None of his injuries ever affected his overall good health. At the ripe old age of 106, he died in Tempe, Arizona in 1925. He is buried in the Globe Cemetery in Globe, Arizona in an unmarked grave. Two contemporary obituaries listed his age as 109. They both reported a sister preceded him death by two months and she was 112. A descendant of a very close friend of Mims says that her grandfather said he was still in his 90s when he died. No substantiating proof is given, so I tend to go with the older age.



Picture taken of Henry Mims when he was 100.