Lindley was relentless in his study of Alamo

Thomas Ricks Lindley, 64, a dogged researcher on the Texas Revolution whose 2003 book "Alamo Traces: New Evidence and New Conclusions" debunked many of the myths about the Battle of the Alamo, died Tuesday.

A resident of Nixon, he died at the Olin Teague Veterans' Center in Temple. He had cancer.

A former Army military policeman and criminal investigator, Lindley was relentless in his research about the 1836 battle that continues to vex historians to this day.

For years, he was a fixture at the Texas State Library and Archives in Austin. Sometimes he would disappear for months, then return, often after he got off from work at the Austin State Hospital.

Unlike many historians whose interest in the Alamo stems from watching actor Fess Parker's portrayal of Davy Crockett when they were kids, Lindley had no "childhood emotional stake. He was fascinated because it was just another crime scene," said Stephen Harrigan, author of "The Gates of the Alamo," this year's 1 Book 1 San Antonio choice.

"Tom was very skeptical and very relentless and because of that, he created a lot of turmoil in the historical community but he also created new ways of looking not just at the Alamo but history itself," Harrigan said.

"I admired him a great deal and historians who had disputes with him also admired him because he was so thorough and generous with his research."

David B. Gracy II, the Governor Bill Daniel Professor in Archival Enterprise at the University of Texas at Austin and state archivist for nine years, said Lindley was a "true scholar searching for the truth."

Gracy and Lindley disagreed over the authenticity of the de la Peña diary, an eyewitness account of the battle written by Mexican army officer José Enrique de la Peña.

The diary was purchased by John Peace of San Antonio. Sold at auction in 1998, the diary was donated to UT's Center for American History.

Gracy said he was asked to look at the diary as a physical document and to give an answer about what it was purported to be.

"My conclusion was yes," Gracy said, noting that Lindley shared with him a document from Mexico that was "incredibly important to my being able to arrive at a conclusion" even though it went against Lindley's belief that the diary was a forgery.

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THOMAS RICKS LINDLEY
Born:

Jan. 18, 1943, in Nixon

Died:

July 10, 2007, in Temple

Military:

U.S. Army

Survived by:

His foster mother, Ethel Pullin Sears of San Antonio; and two brothers, Daryl Pullin of Austin and Larry Pullin of San Antonio

Services:

A graveside service will be held at the Nixon Cemetery today at 10 a.m.

Memorials:

Donations may be sent to the Thomas Lindley Memorial Scholarship Fund, c/o Finch Funeral Chapel, P.O. Box 427, Nixon, 78140, or to the charity of one's choice.