

A Reprint from *Tierra Grande*

You Gotta Tawk the Tawk

By David S. Jones

A Texas appraiser once sent a ranch appraisal to some New Jersey investors. The report inventoried the property's assets right down to the cattle guards. Later, the appraiser received a letter from a New England area lender asking, "How much are the cattle guards paid?"

That story points out the role of communication in a successful real estate deal. If you are new to Texas and interested in buying some of the Lone Star State, be sure you can talk Texan. Better yet, consider having a native Texan along to translate.

Staying on the topic of rural property, there are some other Texas terms everyone should have clear in their minds before contacting a real estate agent. For example, there's the word "tank." If your agent says the property has three tanks on it, that doesn't mean it's protected by the U.S. Army. It has three ponds.

Or, if your agent tells you the property has an "all" lease, that's good. In Texas tawk, "all" translates as oil.

The road in front of that country place probably is bordered by what Texans call a bar ditch. No tavern has to be within sight. Or you might hear someone refer to their bottom land. That's low-lying property that may flood. You probably don't want your "place" (ranch or farm house) there.

If you're trying to pass yourself off as a Texan, open your mouth with care. If you ask, "How many PEE-can trees does this property have?" the answer is likely to be "None. But,



it does have quite a few pecan (pa-KAWN) trees."

Newcomers should do their homework before venturing into the wilds of Texas real estate. When I lived in Dallas, I met a woman from New York. She was proud of the new home she had just purchased. She said it had one of those "rare mesquite trees" in the front yard.

If you are interested in buying some of the Lone Star State, be sure you can talk Texan.

There are other slip-ups you might make that would reveal your non-Texan roots. That's especially true in the pronunciation of geographical locations, such as those with Spanish origins. San Antonio is in Bexar County — pronounced "bear."

While there's a city spelled Waxahachie, Texans call it Walks-a-hatch-ee. Then there's Mexia. Don't say MEX-i-ah; Texans say Ma-HAY-ah. And Refugio trips up lots of non-Texans who usually call it Re-FEWGE-e-oh or anything but Re-Fury-o.

Be careful. Just when you think you've mastered the Spanish influence in our geography, we throw a curve — such as Villa Maria Street in Bryan. Locals pronounce it just the way it's spelled (Vill-ah Mah-ree-ah), and not the Spanish Vee-ah Ma-REE-ah. I live on Angelina, which in Spanish would be pronounced as Ahn-hey-lee-na, but in College Station, we say An-ja-lee-na.

While in Hollywood, you may shop on Ro-DAY-o Drive, but in Texas, we always say RO-dee-o. Every town in America has roads and streets with pronunciations that outsiders trip over and reveal their newcomer status. For example, an Austin street is spelled Burnet, and nonlocals might be

tempted to call it Burr-NET. Nope. Say "BURN-it."

Even native Texans slip up now and then on their geography. We often refer to the Rio Grande river, which is of course redundant. Rio means river in Spanish. Rio Grande translates as the grand river. So saying Rio Grande river is saying river twice.

It isn't advisable to make fun of how a Texan talks. They may be proud of it. One of my favorite bumper stickers is the one that reads, "Foat Wuth, Ah luv yew."

We've only touched on some of the real estate aspects of talking Texan. There are numerous books and Internet sites devoted to learning to talk Texan. Obviously, Texans stand out when they travel to other states. While living in Baltimore, Maryland, I was told by a native,

"Youse sure do talk funny."

Shore 'nuff. ♣

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