

SAN ANTONIO TALK

Darn it, San Antonio talk does not quite fit the cussin' patterns of the rest of the coastal southern states. We come very, very close; but *dad gum it*, we don't quite make it.

Not that cussing is a unique coastal southern thing. Few, if any, languages reveal more cultural taboos than does English. English speakers find offense in all substances that come out of the body. Just think about it a minute. Don't make me talk about spit, sweat, snot, and that other s--- word. Especially, don't make talk about some of those other body excrements, like semen and feces and so on. Bloody embarrassing it is!

Not only do we English speakers find our bodies taboo, we also find "death" and "God" taboo. So, *doggone it*, listen up when people talk. Linguistics is fun.

People especially address these taboos when they are frustrated, angry, or distraught. The resultant emotional outburst addresses, quite often, the God taboo. Even the most erudite citizen seldom remembers to be grammatically correct: *May God condemn this situation*, in fact, has never, ever been uttered in my presence. Even by me.

Yet, even when caught off guard, most folk will at least make a token gesture to the God-taboo. They'll say *God damn it*. Or they'll make more than a token gesture and pretend to leave God out of the curse: *Damn it!*

As the cultural taboo really takes over, however, the God-taboo turns into euphemisms. Throughout the south--highlands as well as

coastal--we menfolk turn into scapegoats. We become the God substitute. That's right, God the Father, becomes simply Dad: *dad binged, dad blamed, dad blasted, dad burned, dad durned, dad fetched, dad gummed, dad ratted, dad seized, dad shamed, dad sizzled, dad snatched*, and *dad swamped*, I say it ain't right.

In Texas we use all of these, plus a few more: *dad blast it, dad rat it, drats, drat it, dad skim it, dad burn it*, and (can you believe it?) *dod rosset*. We have other, non-dad, *goddam* euphemisms, also. I'm thinking of such documented ones as *gosh, golly, gol darn, gol dern, dag nab it, dang, got dang*, and (I love it!) *garden seed*.

I started this accursed discussion, however, by decrying the fact that San Antonio Talk pretty much--but not quite--fits in with the pattern of coastal (or lower) southern speech patterns. We, like they, prefer to use *damn it* about half the time. It's that other half, though, that separates San Antonio from our gulf coast neighbors.

After *damn it*, we prefer *god damn it* the most, with *doggone it* and *dad gum it* and *darn it* our other favorites. The lower south does not show our preference for *god damn it*. Instead they show equal taste for *god damn it, doggone it, and darn it*. They show slight favoritism for our beloved *dad gum it*. Dad gum it!

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