

SAN ANTONIO TALK

A couple of weeks ago I discussed one of the unique features of Texas Alsatian-English speakers--their insertion of the tag *yet* (with variations *yet still*, and *already yet*) at the end of sentences.

I believe one of the examples I gave was "I've got to have that part real bad, *yet!*"

I also mentioned that I had found this type of speech near two towns, Castroville and D'Hanis, both west of San Antonio on Highway 90. A third town, Hondo, separates Castroville and D'Hanis--and, I observed, people in Hondo claim that they do not use that "German-*yet.*"

Recorder-Times readers responded immediately and with relish.

Typically, Mary Ney Gilhooly wrote, in a letter postmarked in Dallas: "Greetings from D'Hanis, Texas, *yet!* My husband is a native of Rhode Island. He is also an attorney, a member of another profession for whom language is important, and he, like you, heard many of the local idioms."

The first reader to respond, Darrell Kempf, phoned me at home at 8:00 in the morning on the day the paper appeared. "Are you the Scott Baird that writes that column on San Antonio Talk?" he asked.

Feeling a bit safe from telephone attacks, I admitted I was indeed that writer. "You missed one!" Darrell chortled.

You can imagine my relief! I had only missed one! I totally relaxed. Imagine! If we were playing baseball or basketball and I only missed one, I'd be a hero.

"LaCoste!" Darrell brought me back to reality. "You missed

LaCoste. It's about five miles south of Castroville on Farm Road 471--and the people there also use that Alsatian 'Let's go there, yet' talk." Darrell then enthusiastically told me lots of confirming anecdotes about the use of *yet*, *yet still*, and *already yet* and gave me instructions on how I might contact him for further information. Which I intend to do.

Chris Binker, of San Antonio, and Ted Gittinger, of Austin, wrote to the Times, with confirming anecdotes of "Talkin' dat Alsace"--as Ted remembers the oldtimers calling it. In addition, both men suggested a linguistic explanation: a carry-over into English of the German words *noch*, *doch*, or *jetzt*--all of which (depending upon the context) may mean in English *yet*, *already*, *anyway*, or *for sure*.

Scott Peden, a former student of mine, made a similar argument in a term paper that he wrote almost ten years ago. Scott, however, discovered that not even the native speakers of German he contacted (including one of his German language instructors) knew of any dialect of German that ended sentences with *noch*, *doch*, or *jetzt*. Therefore, Scott concluded, a direct language interference argument lacks much conviction. Add to that lack of conviction the fact that Non-Alsatian German speakers in Texas do not use the *yet*--as Scott Peden calls it "The verbal period"--and we still have a mystery. But the mystery remains an affectionate one; if I read correctly the tone of all these readers, *yet*.

-#-

Scott Baird
05/13/96