

## SAN ANTONIO TALK

A recently published business report ranked San Antonio as the third fastest growing city in the United States. If true, that means that we have many a newcomer to this town; many a neophyte to the way we talk; many a beginner; a novice; or, as we say locally, a *tenderfoot*.

Well, some of us use the word *tenderfoot*; some of us who are barely more than tenderfeet ourselves. Not that *tenderfoot* belittles us: the term originally referred to imported cattle; so it began as a solid southwestern term.

The real old-timers among South Texans, though, have unique terms. Take, for example, calling someone an *Arbuckle*. *Arbuckle* was the one and only brand of coffee available in the southwest for years. And even in those days certain foods had premium stamps, which you could use to buy other items; certain foods like *Arbuckle's* coffee. A *tenderfoot* was nothing compared to someone so inexperienced that the boss must have ordered him with *Arbuckle* premium stamps: an *Arbuckle*.

Have you heard of a person being called a *lent*? *Lents* were people so unreal they had to be on loan.

How about a *greeners*? Cowboys often referred to young bulls, when the bulls just began to grow horns, as *shorthorns* or *greenhorns* or *greeners*. The terms easily slipped away from cattle to fellow humans.

A similar term came from vegetables, not cattle: a visitor often became a *green pea*.

Another term that began with cattle was the word *pilgrim*--a word John Wayne made popular in many of his western movies. When referring to cattle, a pilgrim referred to imported hot-blooded cattle.

One of the misleading terms, for me at least, was the term *pistol*. In Kansas, where I most definitely am not a greener, we referred to any energetic or temperamental person as a *pistol*. In San Antonio talk, however, a *pistol* refers to a tenderfoot. Why? Because only outsiders refer to their *guns* as *pistols*.

Two other terms that have a different meaning elsewhere, but definitely mean tenderfoot, are *punk* and *savage*.

Social context, of course, determines if these terms contain malice or if they just tag newcomers as newcomers. A subset of such terms, however, contain no neutrality whatsoever. These terms contain nothing but disdain: I refer to *urban cowboys* and the like: *mail-order cowboys*, *Monkey-Ward cowboys*, *drug store cowboys*, *skim-milk cowboys*, *a leather shop advertiser* (reference to all the leather clothing--including boots instead of sneakers)--and, really an old, old term: *a phildoodle*.

So, I guess you're wondering how I discovered all these terms, right? Well, I have been living and observing such things here in south Texas for more than a quarter of century, now. Maybe that explains my collection. Maybe not. Local old-timers like to say about the wisdom of a tenderfoot: *Any horse's tail can catch cockleburs*.

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