Seeking out Texas German speakers

UT language department wants to preserve stories, culture, language

By Ken Esten Cooke
Standard-Radio Post editor

The Texas German Dialect Project wants you — if you speak Texas German and want to help keep the language alive.

The TGDP gave two programs last week at the Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site, including an overview of the project and soliciting help from German speakers.

Between 2001 and 2019, the TGDP has recorded more than 1,200 hours of conversation with 700 Texas Germans. The project, part of the University of Texas Department of Germanic Studies, then analyzes and edits the interviews to compare and contrast language and how it was used over the generations between German migration and today.

Margo Blevins, a Ph.D student with the TGDP, said the project was started by Hans Boas, a German native who got the idea to study the Texas German dialect in 2001 after driving through Fredericksburg and hearing locals speak a Texas version of German in a local bakery.

“He quickly became acquainted with the Texas-German culture and he wanted to do his part to try and preserve the stories and the dialect as it is spoken for future generations,” Blevins said.

Blevins said the project is still looking for people to help contribute by sitting for an interview.

“Texas German is a mixture of dialects,” she said. “They
were from a lot of German and they settled in a lot of different areas in Texas. Texas-German is a mixture of German, English, and other dialects.

Margie Bevin, Ph.D. student in the University of Texas Department of German Studies, speaks to local audiences about the influence of the language and its persistence in Tejas from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Lyndon B. Johnson State Park Historic Site. Bevin hopes to inspire people to keep the language alive, much like the Texas language, a mix of English, German, and other dialects.

TEXAS GERMAN

Online

You are invited to interview and sign up to be interviewed on the Texas-German Project. Visit www.texasgerman.org for more information.

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Louisiana such is the word

Texas-German is a word

The first man to come to Texas-German was a man named Joseph, a German who came to Texas in 1840. He was one of the first Germans to settle in Texas. The language was spoken in many places in Texas, including in small towns and on farms.

There are still many people in Texas who speak Texas-German. Many of these people were born in German-speaking families and grew up speaking the language. Even today, some families still refer to each other using German words.

Texas-German is a language that has been part of Texas for over 150 years. It is a unique and important part of Texas's history.

Margie Bevin
Ph.D. student in the University of Texas Department of German Studies

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