

# What Sets the ITLA Apart?

## PART ONE

### WORDS AND ACTIONS BOTH SPEAK LOUDLY

At the church where my family worships we often say that we should use Bible terms for Bible things, and do Bible things in Bible ways. Language is important. The words we choose can paint a beautiful picture, or over time they can erode a beautiful reality. How we conduct ourselves is equally important. Our actions have the ability to both honor our traditions, or shade them with contempt.

In this first of a series of articles detailing what sets the ITLA apart from the competition, we'll examine the language of the ITLA and the importance of our words and deeds to this Western lifestyle that we cherish. From the outset, let me give credit where credit is due: I have borrowed *heavily* (and at times blatantly and unashamedly) from two of our founders: Mr. Darol Dickinson and Mr. Stan Searle. I appreciate their wisdom and application of lessons learned from history – but I repeat myself.

How is the ITLA different in its language? Let's begin with the biggest event of the year: it is called the "International Championship Show." It is not our "World Show." It is not "Nationals." Could you call it "Champ Show" among ITLA friends when in a hurry? Perhaps – but let's not ignore the importance of our International members by leaving out that critical part of its name. When we refer to our International Championship Show, we are reiterating the fact that the ITLA is *truly* an *international* organization with active, vitally important members in 15 different countries and growing. And we are stressing that our biggest event of the year is truly a *championship* – with the finest Texas Longhorn cattle being judged by the most qualified Texas Longhorn judges in the world. To publicly call it "Champ Show" lessens the importance of it a bit; and it paints an incomplete picture for those not familiar with our biggest event of the year. Words matter.

Another example is the use of the word "producer." Stan Searle tells me that about 40 years ago he noticed that Darol Dickinson started referring to ITLA members as Texas Longhorn "producers" rather than "breeders." Darol did so, recognizing that the term "producer" encompasses a vast array of activities integral to the production of Texas Longhorn cattle, whereas "breeders" only make up a relatively small part of the industry. The farmer-member who raises the crops that feed his small handful of Texas Longhorns and thousands of others is a producer, more than a breeder. The diesel supplier, the marketer, the seller of ranch equipment, the fence builders: these are producers. ITLA members are ALL producers; not all are breeders. Vocabulary matters.

A final example of our ITLA language is the most basic of all: in the ITLA we produce Texas Longhorn cattle. We do not produce “longhorns,” nor “Texas longhorns.” Being from God’s country, I can tell you that the Texas longhorns are my alma mater who used to play Texas A&M in football every year. But I especially appreciate how Stan Searle puts it:

“The term ‘longhorn’ without any further descriptor, can refer to any sort of Mexican corriente or crossbred mongrel with horns wider than its ears.” -Stan Searle

Do you raise those? Neither do I. So, in the ITLA when we are referring to our beautiful registered cattle, we are speaking of majestic Texas Longhorns - capital “T”, capital “L.” Nothing less.

You may be wondering to yourself: “Why the high horse, Brad? It’s only words!” To repeat: words matter. Not only do they paint a mental image in the mind of the hearer, they also have a direct effect on our actions...though sometimes those sneaky effects can take years to be seen; and by then it’s often way too late to correct the damage. Politicians know this well. Most lawyers worth their salt do too. Keep in mind that as Texas Longhorn producers, and proud ITLA members, we daily come in contact with an ever-increasing population that knows sadly little about anything related to agriculture. Thankfully, for many of them the Texas Longhorn remains a critter of mystique, and the cowboy or cowgirl are beings of mystery. The language that we use around these folks should honor what we do and the cattle that we are blessed to own. Likewise, it should reflect our pride in the ITLA and our very valuable Western traditions, which are oh-so-easily lost if repeatedly cheapened with careless words.

After all, for many of us, part of the enjoyment of owning Texas Longhorns is being identified with the ranching or the cowboy lifestyle. It is a thing of pride that *should* bear with it a deep respect for history, tradition, and personal integrity. That integrity should not only be heard in how we speak, it should be seen in how we act. Men should treat women with respect and honor. Women should carry themselves with pride. Children should be cherished. We should *all* work hard. Even our clothing can say a lot about whether (or not) we truly respect this lifestyle. My daily boots are not for show – they are tools I work with. My cap keeps the sun out of my eyes and rain off of my head. But when it’s Show time, or when representing the ITLA to the public, let’s clean up a bit and dress appropriately Western and let’s carefully guard our speech.

Ronald Reagan said that “Freedom is only one generation away from extinction. It has to be fought for and defended by each generation.” Folks, likewise the ranching and cowboy lifestyles haven’t yet died: but in many ways we are their last true vestiges. It is this generation who are the keepers of our great traditions. Let’s try to protect our Western heritage and our unique Association with thoughtful words and actions.

-Brad Westmoreland  
ITLA President

# What Sets the ITLA Apart?

## PART TWO

### The Crown Jewel of the ITLA

BY: LARRY P. SMITH II

The debate would not last long if time was spent trying to figure out what the ITLA's greatest achievement has been in its 36 years of existence. Without a doubt, the ITLA Headquarters easily wins the debate as the ITLA's greatest achievement. Not only is the ITLA the only Longhorn registry to own its Headquarters, but at one time the American Quarter Horse Association and the International Texas Longhorn Association were the only livestock associations to own their respective Headquarters. That is exclusive company, and something to be proud of.



The ITLA Headquarters' story begins in the fall of 2006 with Larry P. Smith wanting to give something back to the Texas Longhorn breed that had been good to him. Larry contacted ITLA President John Hodges to inquire if the ITLA would be interested in a Headquarters residing in Glen Rose, Texas, provided that land was donated for that purpose. President Hodges took that proposal to the Board, adding that as a General Contractor he would be willing to build the

Headquarters at his cost. After lengthy discussion, the Board agreed to accept the 2.69 acres of beautiful hilltop prime land in Glen Rose to construct an Association-owned Headquarters. The Board quickly approved a set of plans submitted by John Hodges and voted to initiate fund raising efforts to pay off the survey, title search, construction cost, etc.



**Larry P. Smith, center, deeded 2.69 acres of land in Glen Rose, Texas to ITLA on November 7<sup>th</sup>. The land will serve as the site for the Associations's permanent Headquarters. Accepting on behalf of the ITLA were ITLA President Larry Smith II, left, and Immediate Past President John Hodges.**

As soon as the construction loan was in place in the early spring of 2007, John Hodges approached the Board as Past President and presented a set of plans. The Board unanimously approved the building plans, and John went full speed in getting the construction underway. It was a lofty goal to have Headquarters completed and open in time for the October convention and Championship Show; but John worked tirelessly to make it happen.

While John Hodges was overseeing construction through the summer of 2007, fundraising efforts to pay off construction costs quickly got underway. Wooden tiles were sold and branded; and to this day they remain on the Boardroom wall of the Headquarters as a monument to those who supported the Headquarters' construction. Cut limestone rocks were sold that had brands sandblasted and painted black to form

a wall that still greets visitors at the Headquarters entrance today.

During construction, many more contributions were made including Stan and Sandi Tidwell donating the kitchen cabinetry, Larry P. Smith donating the natural limestone from his



rock quarry located directly behind the Headquarters to provide for the attractive exterior, and Past President Joe Valentine donating the beautiful Boardroom table that is being used today.

Many others have provided funding and donations so that the ITLA could have a Headquarters that is not only beautiful, but functional in serving the membership. It was a great day when Past President Gary Bruch, on behalf of the Best of Trails Affiliate, signed the check that paid off the Headquarters loan and placed the deed in the ITLA's hands.

John Hodges worked tirelessly to complete construction of the ITLA Headquarters prior to the 2007 Convention & Championship Show. He made it with a couple weeks to spare; and the Headquarters was quickly prepared to host Convention & Championship Show attendees so they could view the ITLA Headquarters for the first time.

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the ITLA threw the biggest party it could and hosted the Headquarters' Grand Opening during the Convention & Championship Show. Many attended the Grand Opening, including ITLA members and local leaders who toured and welcomed the area's new business.

Just as in 2007, many still marvel at the ITLA Headquarters when seeing it for the first time. It does not take long to realize that the Headquarters is more than just a place to perform registrations and transfers. The Headquarters



**The Boardroom table and the brand tiles adorning the walls of the Boardman have for many years set an inviting tone for in-person Board meetings.**



**John Hodges performing the final inspection before turning the keys over to the ITLA in early October 2007. Today the John P. Hodges Memorial Scholarship is presented annually to a deserving youth in memory of John's contributions to the ITLA.**

is a place to be proud of that has gone off in directions never dreamed of, including sharing and housing enough Texas Longhorn history that it could be considered a museum in and of itself. Some of the historical items on display inside Headquarters include the skull of Texas Ranger JP who changed the Texas Longhorn breed. T.D. Kelsey selected the ITLA to graciously donate the skull of Texas Ranger JP and many more historical items. Also adorning a



L to R - Larry P. Smith, 1991 President Bill Anthony, and 1992-1993 President Stan Searle on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007, enjoying the Headquarters Grand Opening during the 2007 Convention and Championship Show

wall is the skull of the first female registered from the Fort Niobrara Wildlife Refuge where the Texas Longhorn herd originated in 1936 to preserve its purity. Standing in the corner are the running irons of legendary Texas Longhorn breeder Wes Watson who used the irons to brand tiles during the Grand Opening to help pay off the Headquarters. John and Helen Stockton donated the 102.5" horned skull of the famous King of the Road steer which is seen upon entering the front door. Born in 1986, King of the Road hit the 100" mark when that was only a dream.



Mr. John Stockton and King of the Road

The ITLA Headquarters came forth from a dedicated effort by many who worked together towards a common goal. The Crown Jewel of the ITLA deserves to be visited, admired, and a bit of time spent remembering those that gave the ITLA this special gift – and gifts within that gift. If you are ever in Glen Rose, Texas, please stop by and visit for awhile. All ITLA members will be invited to do so during a special Headquarters Open House during this year's Championship Show and Convention in Glen Rose. Don't miss this chance to tour a piece of Texas Longhorn and ITLA history!

# What Sets the ITLA Apart?

Part III of the series.

## A LOOK AT ITLA JUDGING *With* TRAVIS J CASEY



Has anyone ever been to a cattle show and all the cattle look exactly the same no matter what breed? Have you ever been to a Texas Longhorn Show where horn or color didn't matter? How about a cattle show where the Judge just picked the fattest animal even if that animal couldn't walk properly? Do we really want to take our Registered Texas Longhorn Cattle to a Show where the Judge may be an expert goat Judge, sheep Judge, or some other kind of Judge, but may have never Judged or been around Texas Longhorns? Some of the Texas Longhorns winning at these kinds of Shows would have a hard time bringing \$1200-\$1500 at a Registered Texas Longhorn sale.

Here at the ITLA we have established Breed Standards, and Approved Texas Longhorn Judges. No other Texas Longhorn organization has this combination--and it sets us apart. These Breed Standards are a list of specific criteria and breed characteristics that identify Texas Longhorn cattle AS Texas Longhorn Cattle! Because our cattle have many characteristics and traits unlike other cattle breeds, they have to be judged accordingly in order to keep our breed from looking like every other breed of cattle. For example; horn, color, and hooks to pins angle. We sure wouldn't want to give up our calving ease, would we? Therefore, we have Approved Judges who are specifically trained to judge Texas Longhorn cattle based on these established Breed Standards. Each prospective Judge has to train under an Approved Training Judge, attended a judging clinic, and also has to have judged a Youth Show before they can even apply. The application must then include letters of recommendation from current Approved Judges. Once the ITLA has received a completed Judge's application it is then reviewed by the Judges Selection and Approval Committee before it is ultimately brought before the ITLA Board of Directors for approval. So you can trust that our ITLA Judges have the training, knowledge, and experience to Judge Registered Texas Longhorn Cattle.

