

The Glamorous (hiccup!) Life of Jo Barrett



I Own a Ranch, Don't You?

I'm a Texan. You may not think it at first glance. Sometimes I wear scarves tied tightly about the neck. Or flat, sensible shoes during the day. Even worse – I don't wear makeup at the gym. Yes, I have the East Coast thing down to a tee. And I should.

After all, I've spent the past 12 years hopping around New York, Boston and Washington, D.C. Let's put it this way. When I order a bagel and schmear at Central Market, they still look at me kind of funny. But even after all my East-Coasting, I LOVE Texas. And Texans.

I love that Texans drink Red Bull before going to see Joel Osteen. (Helps the hangover.)

I love that Texans say neat phrases like, "Grandma may look old, but she's gonna keep on keepin' on."

And I LOVE that Texans have ranches. Ah, the smell of a patent leather Manolo Blahnik setting foot on a ranch.

But I have a beef, so to speak, with my fellow Lone Star state residents. OK, here goes ...

Texans are using the word ranch much too liberally.

Let me give you an example. A few weeks ago, I was invited to attend a certain "ranch" party.

"Wow, a ranch party," I thought. "This should be a blast!" I quickly pulled out my black leather weekender bag and packed all the Western wear at my disposal:

My cowboy boots – hand-stitched Lucchese – hey, this ain't my first rodeo, folks.

Jeans – the tight, slutty ones – perfect for a ranch party! I mean, what if Mr. Right is a cowboy?

A hat purchased from the Beretta gun store in Maryland – it's an old hat, back from my staffer days when I worked on Capitol Hill. (P.S. Please don't ask why I happened to be in the Beretta gun store in Maryland. It had to do with a member of Congress who needed some shells for skeet shooting, and I was sent to buy them. Because I'm *that* important.)

Mosquito repellant.

A digital camera – me as Georgia O'Keefe – taking landscape and flower shots of the "ranch."

The invitation suggested an evening around the fire pit, a real barbecue and horseback riding.

A ranch party!

Now, correct me if I'm wrong. In my mind, the word ranch evokes a certain image – an image of a large, to very large, to sickeningly large number of acres.

Roaming on this tract of land should be cattle, deer, rattlesnakes, doves and wild hogs. And maybe a buffalo. There should be game fencing, hunting vehicles and a lovely limestone house done up in that chic Texas Hill Country style, complete with antlers hanging over the fireplace.

Pulling up to the "ranch," I was greeted instead by a cottage – a cottage with a barbecue pit in the back, a quaint little swimming pool and a pony for children.

"Is this ... the ranch?" I sputtered, hoping that I'd gotten the wrong house, the wrong town, the wrong invitation.

"Yes, we just bought it last year! Tammy is thrilled because she gets to grow her own tomatoes!"

I remember swallowing hard. In the kitchen, there was a bag of Doritos. A blessing from God, I assume.

Everyone else at the ranch party was wearing regular clothes. Meanwhile, with my skintight jeans, boots and hat, I was doing my best Dolly Parton in "The Best Little Whorehouse" impression.

People stared. I tipped my hat, said "Howdy, folks!" and ate Doritos like it was my last meal.

"Some ranch," I thought. "This is more like a ranch-ette. Or ranch-ini. But it's no ranch, ranch."

So please. I beg of you. The next time you leave for your quaint little country house on 15 cute acres, please do not say: "Tammy and I are takin' the kids out to the ranch this weekend. We're throwing a party on Saturday. Wanna come?"

Instead, call a spade a spade. "Tammy and I are takin' the kids out to our other house this weekend. It sits on 15 acres in the country, and we love it because we can barbecue."

The word ranch does not mean HOUSE WITH EXTRA BIG BACKYARD. Granted, there are some large backyards in Texas. But, I ask you ...

When did Texans become the type of people who drive Toyota Tercels but carry key rings that read, "Hey, my other car is a Porsche!?" **H**



Jo Barrett is a guest columnist for H Texas magazine. Her two fiction novels, "The Men's Guide to the Women's Bathroom," and "This Is How It Happened (not a love story)" are published by HarperCollins and available at bookstores nationwide. "The Men's Guide to the Women's Bathroom" was optioned by CBS and Paramount Pictures with Hollywood actor Hugh Jackman's production company attached.

Ask the Experts



Pride of Persia Rug Co.

Persian Rugs

What is the safest way to transport a rug when moving to a new home?

Visit your rug dealer for a quick demonstration of proper folding techniques and for specific advice based on the types of rugs you own.

You don't want to bring old dirt into your new house! We suggest deep cleaning every 7 to 10 years. If your rugs aren't ready for this type of cleaning, at the very least remove the dirt from them. You can do this by shaking smaller rugs outside or by turning larger rugs upside down and vacuuming from the back. In some types of rugs, excessive dirt can cause cracks in the foundation during moving. Antique Saroukhs are especially vulnerable to this problem. For all of your rugs, please check the ends and sides for wear. Examine your rugs thoroughly for moth activity, particularly in areas that have been under heavy furniture.

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For more than a decade, Mehdi Abedi and Lisa Slappey have taught "The World of Persian Rugs" through Rice University's Glasscock School of Continuing Studies. They are the owners of Pride of Persia Rug Co., which specializes in older Persian rugs along with high-quality newer rugs from around the world.

Pride of Persia Rug Co.

1001 W. Loop North

Houston, TX 77055

(713) 684-4653

www.prideofpersia.com