

AT THE END OF THE DAY

Interview with Matt Mann

by Courtney Donnell

A man with a friendly smile is the central focus. He is wearing a maroon baseball cap with a white logo, a grey t-shirt, and a brown work jacket. He is leaning his right arm on a green metal fence. The background shows a rural landscape with bare trees and a clear blue sky with light clouds. The lighting suggests it's late afternoon or early morning.

I have no doubt that when Matt Mann, owner of La Gloria Land Company, rests his head on his pillow at night, he does so knowing that he gave his absolute best that day. An inherent ethic of hard work, family and faith is evident in each and every compartment of his life, and there are many. Matt is an avid hunter, devoted father and husband, active humanitarian, proud Texan ...and oh yeah, he's an Aggie.

broker spotlight



“To most Texans, ranch ownership is the ultimate expression of what a person values: nature, family and independence.”

Your family has some history in the ranch development business. How did it all start?

Well, my grandfather, Wayne Mann, owned a welding supply business in his twenties. He liked to take his customers hunting and had quail leases all over south Texas. As a result, he developed great relationships with a lot of land owners. His first ranch deal happened when the owner of a 30,000 acre ranch asked him if he could help him sell his ranch. Wayne then went out and put a group of about 15 buyers together. They bought that ranch. His agreement with the seller and all the buyers was that for him putting the deal together, he would get first pick out of the 30,000 acres. He chose 1500 acres with 4 miles of Nueces river frontage and paid \$110 an acre. The initial seller was happy, the other 15 buyers ended up making good money on the deal and my grandfather acquired his first ranch. He quickly realized he was good at doing this, that he really enjoyed it, and that there was a huge opportunity there, he quit the welding supply business and started buying and selling ranches. In his lifetime he has probably bought and sold well over a million acres. My dad, got into it, probably fifteen years ago. He is an entrepreneur and has started and then sold several companies, mainly in the construction industry. He went in and partnered with my granddad. Now, they buy and sell ranches together.

When and how did you get started selling ranches?

I've been around land sales all my life, so when the time was right I started my own ranch brokerage firm. I got started full time in 2006. My first listing was in Jim Wells County between Premont and San Diego. It was 665 acres. And, you know, I thought I was going to starve to death. But, I sold it and I got a really big check. I thought, “Man, this is great. My hard work paid off, and I am going to work even harder.”

What is the best or most interesting deal you have ever worked on?

They have all been interesting in different ways. I love learning new things; and you learn something new on every deal. The deal I am most excited about right now, is a 300 acre ranch I bought myself last year, just outside of Quero. It is my first ranch to buy. I plan to sell it soon, but am still up in the air if I want to undertake developing it for commercial use or just fix it up and turn around and sell it. It is a beautiful place and I am quite excited about it.

What is the strangest experience you have had showing a ranch?

It's funny, I have actually tossed around the idea of compiling a book on the funny and strange stories around the industry. Because it is fun to swap stories with other brokers and we all have a list of at least ten really funny things experienced on a showing. I have a ton of them, but the one that

comes to mind, I was showing a listing and I came across two poachers carrying rifles. They were actually kind of ticked at me for disturbing their hunting. They asked me “What in the world I was doing?” Of course, I told them I was trying to sell the ranch to the folks sitting in my truck. We had a friendly visit about the incredible hunting they had experienced on the property and all the big deer they had killed. You know, they had a great sales pitch, but needless to say, I never heard back from those buyers again.

What have you learned is the most important aspect of selling ranches?

My dad always told me, “The harder you work, the luckier you get.” I have found that to be true. You know, that one late phone call, that one twenty hour day, that one showing that is eight hours away, you never know when that extra effort is going to pay off in the long run. So, I don't ever slack up. I can't afford to. It takes diligence, not only in your marketing efforts, but in creating trusting relationships with your clients. It takes work and energy to

meet the needs of my clients, which is what I strive for, whether its getting a fence builder or dozer operator out there, staying on top of surveyors,



communicating with attorneys, or spending time at a courthouse. It's not just about “selling”, it's about being the complete package to close the deal.

How has the industry changed over the years?

Having been on the sidelines of this industry for decades watching family members buy and sell ranchland, I've seen a huge appreciation in land values.

In the last 7 years as a broker, I have seen a huge shift in marketing techniques, especially online advertising. Buyers are more sophisticated. They understand the market better and its potential pitfalls. That makes selling a little more sophisticated of a business.

I have also experienced the Eagle Ford Shale, which is a real game changer for this industry. Five years ago, before the Eagle Ford was a common subject, not many buyers or sellers realized the massive impact that mineral ownership would have on their land investment.

How is the Eagle Ford changing the industry?

Mineral ownership is the dominant estate in Texas, therefore the mineral owner supersedes the surface owner. So, if you own the surface, but you do not own the mineral rights, that mineral rights owner, sitting a thousand miles away, or wherever, has the right to lease those minerals to an oil and gas company, giving them the right to use your surface to drill, produce, refine, and export their minerals. As only a surface owner, you cannot stop that

from happening.

I have met numerous people that bought land with mineral rights when there was no production. Now, they cannot spend their royalty money fast enough. There are Eagle Ford wells all over their ranch, and they may not like the traffic and noise, but they don't mind getting that check in the mail! I have also met just as many people who have had their recreational ranches ruined by drilling operations and sadly, they don't own any of the mineral rights. If you have a listing with minerals, it is a lot easier to sell. If you have a listing without the mineral rights and there is production on the ranch, it is really a turnoff to potential buyers.

Even if a property is not in the Eagle Ford Shale, mineral rights are still hugely important. You never know when the next oil play is going to hit. You never know when new technology is going to come in with the ability to get to deeper oil and gas plays.

What do you think is the greatest benefit of owning land?

For me, the number one benefit is that when I lay my head on my pillow at night, I feel that my money is safe and sound in a land investment. I know the stock market is unreliable, volatile at times, and therefore, stocks are not what I want the bulk of my portfolio in. Second, while my land asset is increasing in value, I can make memories with my family on the ranch. I have an outlet for all my hobbies on the ranch. I enjoy the land. I have never enjoyed a gold bar or an account statement I get in the mail.

Where else have you lived besides Texas?

Right after I graduated from A & M, I went to China for three years on both a work and student visa. When I was there, I worked with a humanitarian ministry to both teach and help provide resources previously unavailable to them. At the same time, I worked for an American company that brokered deals between European and American companies and Chinese manufacturers.

You speak fluent Chinese?

Yes, I do. Basically, I was put into a classroom with only one other American, and my teacher who was Chinese, of course, and didn't speak a lick of English. I was frustrated for several months until, all of a sudden, it felt like my brain grew another gear. It took off from there. Immersion is for sure the key to learning a second language.

You are still very active in humanitarian work and the ministry. How



do you feel humanitarian/ministry experience has influenced your work today?

I would say, humanitarian and ministry work is very similar to sales. There are a lot of highs and lows. Just like I trusted God for the results of my ministry, I trust him now with the rest of my business. I have always told God that I would try and have a loose grip on whatever it is that I possess in this world, whether it is a dollar, a position or role, a job or even a relationship. In that same vein of thinking, I hold each sales deal with a loose grip. I can't force people to pull the trigger and buy something. I just have to work hard and do the best job I can and trust God for the results. In ministry, I learned to sow seeds of faith very generously with a very broad target, knowing that I do not cause people to respond. I am just a messenger. It was very freeing for me to realize that. At the end of the day, the result is not up to me. That attitude helps me get through the highs and lows of selling land with a fairly even keel. I just work as hard I can, being the best at what I do as I can, treat people the way I want to be treated, and at the end of the day, I trust God with the results.

If you had to pick another career....any career...What would you do?

That is a hard question. I like a lot of different things. If I was making a career change to actually be successful, I would get into the land development business, in and around small oil towns in Texas. If it was solely for the fun of it, I would open a restaurant. I would hire an Aggie MBA to run it; and I would be the chef!



MINI BIO
BORN: July 15, 1980
WHERE: Houston, Texas
PARENTS: Ruth and Richard Wayne Mann Jr.
SIBLINGS: Richard Mann III and Clint Mann
WIFE: Kiva Mann
CHILDREN: Benaiah and Khyber Mann
COLLEGE: Texas A & M

FAVORITES
RESTAURANT: "The Taste of Texas" in Houston
ROAD: Highway 39, West of Hunt
BODY OF WATER: Aransas Bay
WATERING HOLE": "The Dixie Chicken" in College Station
DANCE HALL: Gruene Hall
SECRET SPOT: High Tide Lake, Aransas Bay

FIVE THINGS AT THE TOP OF YOUR "LEFT TO DO" LIST?
Explore Tibet
Hunt the famous "Red Stag" in New Zealand
Adopt an International Child...Most likely a girl
Go fly fishing in the Patagonia
Teach my children how to speak Chinese



What would you cook?

That is another thing about me...I don't like to be put in a box. I like to cook all kinds of foods, Asian, Indian, Moroccan food; and then of course, wild game...I love to grill. I love to eat what I kill, quail, dove, deer. We haven't bought beef or hamburger meat in five years. I just really enjoy cooking, trying new recipes and experimenting.

What is your favorite thing about Texas?

Definitely the culture! I love culture. I love learning about other cultures. But, Texas culture is in my blood. Texans understand why other Texans believe that this is the best place to be from. Texans have a lot of pride in their state, their Alamo, their football, their Tex-Mex, their industry, as they should. Texans feel at home with Texans, no matter where they hang their hats.

Rumor has it you are quite a hunter. Tell me about hunting in Texas?

Well, I love to hunt, fish...Been doing them both for as long as I can remember. I enjoy hunting a variety of game, especially dove, quail, turkey and deer.

My favorite type of hunting, hands down is for quail. Working with the dogs is half the fun. I go quail hunting four of five times a year with my grandfather, who instilled his love for the sport in me. It is something I treasure doing with him. It really is an art and I will pass it along to my boys someday.

One of the things lately, that has been really fun, has been teaching my wife, who had never seen a gun, a ranch, or a deer before she met me. I have just as much fun helping her, as I do hunting myself.

And, then when the shoulder starts to hurt from shooting, we head to the coast to wade fish. Just another one of the things I love about Texas!

How important do you feel the "Recreational Ranch" is to the real estate in Texas?

Well it is the most important to me personally, not just because I make my living selling them, but because it is a part of the Texas dream. You know, you have the American Dream and then you have the Texas dream. Everyone in Texas knows someone who owns a "big Texas ranch", whether it is 100 acres or 10,000 acres. To most Texans, ranch ownership is the ultimate expression

of what a person values: nature, family and independence.

What is the thing in life you are most proud of?

My two sons, Benaiah and Khyber. I just love them to death. Even though, they are still pretty young, I have made it my mission in life, to train them to be men of integrity. I cannot wait to teach them how to be a man. I am excited to see what they will accomplish in their lifetimes. My wife and I are just trying to be good examples for them.

Those are quite interesting names. Do they have a purpose behind them?

We wanted them to have unique names. Benaiah is a Hebrew name. In the Old Testament, he was one of David's Mighty Men and known for being a hero. On his exploits, he killed several lions with his bare hands, very brave and courageous. I want my son to be a courageous person as he grows up and to know that he can kill the lions in his life.

As for Khyber, I did some humanitarian work in Pakistan and Afghanistan and drove through the Khyber Pass, which is basically the only way you can get through the Hindu Kush mountains, along the border. For thousands of years, it was a stronghold. Many conquerors tried to get through from Genghis Khan to Alexander the Great. They never succeeded. Khyber is of Hebrew origin as well, it means "fortress".

Their namesakes were chosen to help them later, when they get old enough, to be able to look back on their names and think, "This is who I am," even when they are facing opposition in life.

