

Victory in Cleveland, Ohio

March 14, 2009

I have always felt offended when someone referred to my home as a "trailer." It is my home! Trailers are not used for human habitation. It associates me with what is referred to as "trailer trash." That offends me and many others.

I was challenged last October while attending the MHOAA National Convention when I heard many others who felt the same as I. We were challenged to stop using the "T" word and to educate others who did use it rather than "home" or "manufactured home."

When I came home, I wrote a lengthy e-mail to a local newscaster. I explained the many, many amenities and benefits of a manufactured home. The e-mail had definitions from Webster's Dictionary, an invitation to visit my home and community, to a homeowners meeting, to the Ohio Manufactured Home Commission Meeting, to the Ohio Manufactured Home Association, to a manufactured home company, to a lending institution and to an insurance company. My hope was to educate the media.

Here is part of his first reply to me in April of 2008:

"For communicating with the general public, if it has wheels it's a trailer. A "manufactured home" is a much broader term that would include dwellings never intended to be pulled behind anything. The federal government may have decided all such dwellings will be called a "manufactured homes" and that's their business. Influencing what we call them is not their business, that's ours. We speak to the public in the terms we believe they use, understand and accept. To me, and most, the media resource center is still the library. News deals with what is.

We live in a time when interest groups put much effort into co-opting the language to suit their interest. For people who have the time or interest to read a lengthy thesis like yours, your term may have meaning and value. But we tell stories in 20 or 30 seconds. The term "manufactured home" is much broader than trailer.... In the limited time we have for telling a story we work hard to use the most precise and familiar language possible. Trailer."

February I sent the newscaster this e-mail: As I watched the 6:00pm news tonight you reported from somewhere that the strong winds did much damage to homes. You referred to a "manufactured home" rather than a "trailer." **Thank you** for recognizing these are "homes" rather than "trailers."

February 14, 2009 this came my way:

"Glad to have caught up with the times, Russ. Had a long discussion with someone a few years back that "mobile homes" aren't mobile these days, so "mobile home park" doesn't cut it. "Manufactured homes" doesn't roll off the tongue as easily as the former name, but IS accurate and besides, I've become tired of terms like "trailer park people" and "trailer park trash", so, just trying to do my small part. Glad you caught it."

I did not know it, but one of our local trustees has a husband who works for the same TV station. She forwarded our e-mails to her husband and he personally presented them to the newscaster and thanked him for a job well done.

Lesson learned: It pays to know your city officials for you don't know who they know. Be courteous and persistent. You can help us bring change to the media that is needed.

Russ McPherson is is secretary and member of the website and of the MHOAA Board. He lives in Olmsted township, Ohio, is the president of his local homeowners' association, and vice-president of the Association of Manufactured Home Residents in Ohio (AMHRO).