

# VALUATION IN A TEXAS DIVORCE – 2024

by Greg Enos

## 1. Value Can Be a Jury Question

A jury finding on the value of community property is binding on the court. *Marr v. Marr*, 905 S.W.2d 331, 333 (Tex. App.—Waco 1995, no writ). A jury is instructed:

*The value of an asset is its fair market value.*

*"Fair market value" means the amount that would be paid in cash by a willing buyer who desires to buy, but is not required to buy, to a willing seller who desires to sell, but is under no necessity of selling.*

*If an asset has no market value, its value is the value of its current ownership as determined by the evidence.*

*In valuing an asset to be received in the future, you are to find its present value as determined by the evidence.*

Texas Pattern Jury Charge, Family (2024), PJC 203.1

The value question that a jury is asked is basically the same question a judge in a bench trial must resolve:

### *QUESTION 1*

*State in dollars the value of the following item:*

*G.I. Joe Collection* \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Texas Pattern Jury Charge, Family (2024), PJC 203.3.

## 2. Fair Market Value and Intrinsic Value

It was the law in Texas, before garage sales and Ebay and the Internet, that if an item of personal property did not have a fair market value (because no one would buy it), then the property could be valued based on its intrinsic value. Intrinsic value is the actual monetary value of the property to the owner, excluding any fanciful or sentimental considerations. *Crisp v. Security Nat'l Ins. Co.*, 369 S.W.2d 326, 328 (Tex. 1963).

Now, almost anything can be bought or sold in a garage sale or on the Internet, so even bed sheets and old tennis shoes should have some fair market value; “intrinsic value” will almost never be used in a divorce anymore.

### **3. The Owner of the Property Can Testify as to its Value**

It has long been the rule in Texas that the owner of a property can testify as to the property’s value even if the homeowner cannot qualify as an expert witness. *Mata v. Mata*, 710 S.W.2d 745, 758 (Tex. App.— Corpus Christi 1986, no writ). However, some courts have held that the owner should show she has some familiarity with the market for that particular property. *Young v. Young*, 168 S.W.3d 276, 285 (Tex. App.— Dallas 2005, no pet.).

### **4. Admitting the NADA Guide into Evidence as a Commercial Publication (Not a Learned Treatise)**

The NADA Guide to Used Car Values might be a learned treatise, but under Tex. R. Evid. 803(18), it can only be discussed with or read to an expert witness who is testifying, but cannot be introduced into evidence under that rule.

However, Tex. R. Evid. 803(19) should allow the NADA Guide or similar publication that provides values of used property into evidence:

*TRE 803. The following are not excluded by the hearsay rule, even though the declarant is available as a witness:*

*(17) Market Reports, Commercial Publications. Market quotations, tabulations, lists, directories, or other published compilations, generally used and relied upon by the public or by persons in particular occupations.*

### **5. Valuing Personal Property in the Residence**

No judge wants to waste his or her time placing a value on couches, pots and pans or bathroom towels. Unfortunately, these items of personal property are often the subject of intense, emotional and irrational disagreement between spouses in divorces. Often the item is just a symbol of the anger and hurt feelings the spouses feel toward each other.

Attorneys should tell each client early on:

- “I cost \$350 per hour, so, unless the four year old Lazy Boy lounge

has gold coins sewn into the lining, it will cost more to pay me to fight over the chair than that used chair could possibly be worth.”

- “The judge will hold it against us if we take a fight over the master bedroom furniture to court.”
- “To value what is in the house, just assume you are putting it all out on the front yard for a garage sale. The value is what a stranger would pay for that used item - not what you paid for it, not what you owe on it and not what your sentimental attachment to it is.”
- “Before you move out of the house or your spouse packs and moves out, if there is something in the house of tremendous sentimental value that cannot be replaced at a store, such as that watercolor your grandmother painted, go put it at a friend’s house. This is true of important papers, like your old bank records and 401k statements we might need later for tracing separate property. Do not hide the item, just safeguard it.”
- “Walk through the house and videotape each room from each angle so that later you can remember what there is.”
- “Let him have that old dining table, you can go get yourself a nice new one.”

Here are four useful tips for divorce attorneys with cases where the parties are arguing over the value or division of personal property:

1. While it is easy to make fun of the anal retentive engineers, who for their divorces compile detailed lists of personal property (e.g. - 122 six penny nails, \$0.50), a detailed list of items in a big house can actually add up to a surprisingly large amount and can be persuasive in court.

A portion of such a detailed list of personal property follows:

<i>Room</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>How old? Purchase Price</i>	<i>Current Value</i>	<i>Who has possession of it?</i>	<i>Awarded to...</i>
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Den	Couch	6+ years old \$600	\$90.00	Wife	Wife
	Coffee table	14+ years \$110.00	\$15.00	Wife	Husband
	Stuffed moose head	15+ years shot by husband \$200 taxidermy	\$25.00	Wife	Husband (please!)

2. There are professionals who organize estate sales for a living and they would be very qualified to walk through a house and make a list of items with suggested values. Organizers of estate sales are often qualified appraisers of personal properties and are familiar with valuing all sorts of items, from pianos to painting, and can help find experts experienced with pricing any sort of property.

Roger Howard  
5004 Katy Freeway, Houston, Texas 77007  
713-869-5561  
<https://www.facebook.com/RogerHowardEstateSales/>

David Runte - Texmax Auctions LLC  
9367 Winkler A-2, Houston TX 77017  
281-380-3008  
<https://www.texmax.net/>

Maria Mozgova - Texas Estate Sale  
14027 Memorial Dr #374, Houston, TX 77079  
713-515-0945  
<http://texasstatesale.com/>

3. A lawyer can file a motion to inspect property pursuant to Tex. R. Civ. Proc. 196.7 and get a court order -usually by agreement- for the lawyer (or probably a legal assistant), the spouse who is out of the house (armed with a video camera) and maybe even an appraiser to walk through the house to make a list of what is there and get information needed to value personal property.
4. The parties can put in their mediated settlement agreement or Rule 11 settlement agreement: “the parties will work together to divide personal property, but in the event they cannot agree then

[fill in a name: e.g. - David Salinsky] is appointed arbitrator to make the final decision.” This saves money and avoids wasting a judge’s time.

**4. Valuing Art and Antiques**

There are several experienced appraisers of fine art, rugs and antiques in Houston. Rugs and antiques can be appraised by the people who do estate sales listed above.

**Alexander Appraisal & Estate Services** is another Houston art appraiser. Deborah Alexander is an Accredited Appraiser by the International Society of Appraiser. Her contact information is:  
 Tel: 281-630-3361 Fax: 713-722-9695.  
 Web site: <https://www.alexanderappraisal.com/>

**Prestige Estate Services** offers an on-line appraisal of fine art and antiques  
 945 McKinney St, Houston, TX 77002  
 Tel: 713-429-0309  
<https://prestigeestateservices.com/locations/houston/>

**ValueMyStuff.com** is an on-line appraisal service for antiques and art. The site charges \$6.80 for one item and \$22.50 for three items.  
<http://www.valuemystuff.com>

**Appraisers may belong to and be certified or accredited by one of more of these organizations:**

American Society of Appraisers (ASA)	<a href="https://www.appraisers.org/">https://www.appraisers.org/</a> The ASA website allows you to search for appraisers by area, type of property to be appraised and experience as an expert witness.
Appraisers Association of America (AAA)	<a href="http://www.appraisersassoc.org/">http://www.appraisersassoc.org/</a> The AAA website also allows you to search for appraisers by area and type of appraisal needed.
International Society of Appraisers (ISA)	<a href="http://www.isa-appraisers.org/">http://www.isa-appraisers.org/</a> The ISA website also allows searches of its members by location and specialty.

## 5. Valuing Guns

Pistols and rifles are widely sold and an experienced gun dealer would be qualified to place a value on a gun collection. Widely used references for gun values include:

The Blue Book of Gun Values, 44<sup>th</sup> edition (2023), by Zachary Fjestad

<https://bluebookofgunvalues.com>

Also sold at amazon.com

The Orion Blue Book Online:

<http://www.usedprice.com/items/guns-and-scopes/index.html>

## 6. Valuing Collectibles

Virtually every type of item humans collect, from old clothes irons to comic books to baseball cards, can be bought and sold on the Internet and there is almost always an on-line price guide. Google will help you find used prices and people who qualify as an expert in the value of virtually any collectible.

## 7. Valuing Real Estate

The divorce lawyer can look to four sources for the value of a house or other real estate: Market Analysis by a Real Estate agent - free, quick and often good enough for mediation or settlement.

1. Central Appraisal District - historically, CAD values were always low but in the current economy the CAD is sometimes higher than the number a costly real estate appraiser will provide.
2. Look at the property owner's financial statements and loan applications to see what they indicate the property is worth. This would be an admission against interest per Tex. R. Evid. 801(e)(2). If the property is owned by a company, look at its balance sheet to see what it values the property at.
3. A formal appraisal by a licensed real estate appraiser (averages \$500 for residential properties). Real estate appraisers use three methods to value real estate:

- Comparable sales approach - the key is to ask whether the comparable properties really are comparable and whether the comparable sales were close enough in time to be relevant. See the discussion in *Exxon Corp.v. Middleton*, 613 S.W.2d 240, 246 (Tex. 1981). A very subjective part of the comparative sales approach is the final step in which the appraiser adjusts the comparable sales numbers up or down depending on differences between the comparable properties (including the condition of the property to be sold).
- Income approach - if the real estate produces income (e.g. - a rent house), future income is estimated and then divided by a capitalization rate (which is a very subjective determination).
- Cost approach - if there are no comparable sales and the property does not produce income, then the appraiser can estimate the cost to replace the property.

As a practical matter, residential real estate is almost always appraised using the comparable sales approach. The lawyer who wants to cross-examine the appraiser usually focuses on: (1) the condition of the property and what it will cost to repair the house and get it in salable condition, and (2) whether the other properties used as comparables are really similar to the subject property. For example, this house is on a cul de sac unlike the Smith's home and this house was a foreclosure and this house says it has three bedrooms but wasn't one really a poorly converted garage?

**Sources of Information on Home Values:**

Harris County Appraisal District	<a href="http://www.hcad.org/">http://www.hcad.org/</a>
Galveston County Appraisal District	<a href="https://galvestoncad.org/">https://galvestoncad.org/</a>
All Texas Appraisal Districts	<a href="https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/county-directory/">https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/county-directory/</a>
HouseValues.com	<a href="http://www.housevalues.com/">http://www.housevalues.com/</a>
Zillow	<a href="https://www.zillow.com/">https://www.zillow.com/</a>

## Local Real Estate Appraisers

<p><b>Robert Abbott</b>  <b>Abbott Real Estate Co.</b>              8511 Westerbrook Ln              Humble, Texas 77396              (832) 259-4078  <a href="mailto:robert@abbottrealestateco.com">robert@abbottrealestateco.com</a></p>	<p><b>Bradley J. Page</b>  <b>APEX Appraisals, Inc.</b>              P.O. Box 890745              Houston, TX 77289              Tel: 832-643-2723  <a href="mailto:apexappraisals@yahoo.com">apexappraisals@yahoo.com</a></p>	<p><b>Russell Wayne Tucker</b>  <b>JLS Appraisals</b>              307 Pineview Cir              El Lago, Texas 77586              (713) 899-1735  <a href="mailto:russell@jlsappraisals.com">russell@jlsappraisals.com</a></p>
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## 7. Valuing Big Toys With Motors

### Automobiles

<b>NADA</b>	<a href="http://www.nadaguides.com/">http://www.nadaguides.com/</a>	Use “clean retail” value
<b>Kelly Blue Book</b>	<a href="http://www.kbb.com/car-values/">http://www.kbb.com/car-values/</a>	Use “suggested retail” value
<b>Edmunds</b>	<a href="http://www.edmunds.com/used-cars/">http://www.edmunds.com/used-cars/</a>	Use “dealer retail” value
<b>Yahoo Used Cars</b>	<a href="http://autos.yahoo.com/">http://autos.yahoo.com/</a>	Finds used for cars of same year, model in your area

### Classic or Vintage Car Appraisers

The American Society of Certified Auto Appraisers  
<https://www.certifiedautoappraisers.com/>

AVR Group Auto Appraisal Services  
 P.O. Box 310596, Houston,  
 TX 77231 281-914-9760  
 Fax: 713-456-2332  
<http://www.avrecovery.com/>

Houston Appraisal Service  
 PO Box 41111, Houston, TX 77241  
 713-882-0950 Fax: 281-897-0950  
<http://www.texahas.com/>

Houston Auto Appraisers  
 2500 W. Holcombe, Houston, TX  
 281-424-6466  
[www.houstonautoappraisers.com](http://www.houstonautoappraisers.com)

**Motorcycles, ATV's, Jet Skis, Trailers,  
Utility Vehicles, Snow Mobiles**

NADA

[http://www.nadaguides.com/Motorcycles?gclid=CI\\_lg7rsl6wCFYtR7AodnxlOIQ](http://www.nadaguides.com/Motorcycles?gclid=CI_lg7rsl6wCFYtR7AodnxlOIQ)

Kelly Bluebook

<https://www.kbb.com/motorcycles/atv-sport/>

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**Boats, Trailers, Motors**  
NADA

<http://www.nadaguides.com/Boats>

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**Yachts, Large Sailboats**

- Sea Lake Yachts  
1500 Marina Bay Dr, Bldg. 112  
Pier 2, Kemah, Texas 77565  
Tel: 281-549-4724  
<https://www.sealakeyachtllc.com/>
  - Gulf Coast Yacht Brokers Association -  
lists all area yacht brokers  
<http://gcyba.com/>
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**RV's, Campers**  
NADA

<http://www.nadaguides.com/RVs>

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**Manufactured Homes, Mobile Homes**  
NADA

<http://www.nadaguides.com/Manufactured-Homes>

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**Airplanes**

Aircraft Bluebook

<http://www.aircraftbluebook.com/>

Lone Star AvGroup, Inc.  
7700 Eagle Lane, Spring, Texas 77379  
Tel: (281) 205-4902  
Fax: (281) 251-3641  
Email: [mike@lonestarjet.com](mailto:mike@lonestarjet.com)  
<https://www.lonestarjet.com/>

Certified Aircraft Appraisers Association  
<https://certifiedaircraftappraiser.org/>