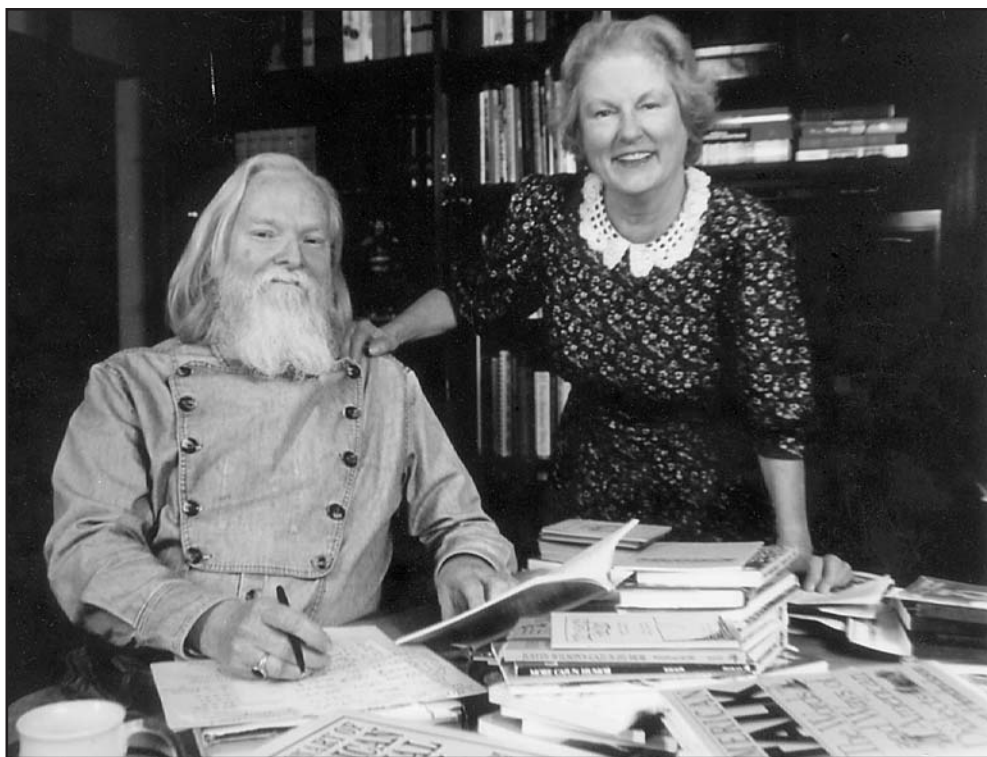


# DARE Newsletter

Vol. 5, No. 1

Dictionary of American Regional English

Winter 2002



*Robert Easton—“the Henry Higgins of Hollywood”—and his wife, June, with tools of the dialect-coaching trade. (Note the cover of a volume of DARE in the foreground.)*

## **DARE Helps Out on Broadway**

**Joan Hall, Chief Editor**

**H**ave you ever wondered how a good actor can “become” a character from Oklahoma in one play and an equally believable character from Vermont in another? Of course costumes, makeup, and mannerisms are important, but the most crucial aspect is the actor’s use of language. An innate “feel” for variation in dialects gives some performers a huge head start. But actors also rely heavily on their dialect coaches to ensure that their speech

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## **Funding Update**

**David Simon  
Director of Development**

**I**t has been a remarkable journey. Over thirty years ago dozens of young people worked as DARE Fieldworkers, traveling the country and conducting extensive interviews with DARE Informants. The Fieldworkers pushed the “record” button on their large reel-to-reel tape recorders. They began lengthy conversations with longtime residents of hundreds of communities around the

*Continued on page 2*

## Notes and Quotes

We're pleased to share some of the letters and e-mail messages we've received recently from readers of the Newsletter and users of the Dictionary. Feel free to get in touch with us either by "snail mail" at the address on the back cover or by e-mail at <jdhall@facstaff.wisc.edu>.

"When I was in library school, . . . we had extensive assignments to look up in the library. We would make ourselves do all the work before treating ourselves to our reward dinner. I remember one particular night when we were all ready to go except one. We found her pouring over a volume of *DARE* saying, 'This is just fascinating.' We finally got her to go with us!"

Michelle Hudson  
Eudora Welty Library,  
Jackson, Mississippi

"I know (to my disappointment) that your wonderful reference book hasn't reached 'T' yet, but do you have any information on the adj. or n. 'toboggan' used for a knit hat? My godson, whose parents are from W. Va., and a friend, with parents from Kentucky, both used this term to refer to a 'stocking' or 'watch' cap. We don't do this in Michigan. . . ."

Stephanie Perentesis, Librarian  
Michigan State University

[*DARE* Ed: By coincidence, the next letter came at almost the same time as Stephanie's.]

"I just wanted to thank you and the others at *DARE* for your work! I was looking for reference sites to look up different meanings for *hillbilly* and *toboggan* and stumbled across your site. As a Southern woman, I get a lot of criticism, etc. for the way I talk, not only of my accent but some of the words that I use. It's so nice to see that others realize we're all different yet the same and we come together in a wonderful mix. I will be anxiously awaiting the publication of the last volume so I may 'prove' to a former Michigan resident that not only is a *toboggan* a sled, it's also a winter hat here in the South."

Denise Reed  
E-mail correspondent

[*DARE* Ed: Volume V will show the rest of the country that a *toboggan* is indeed a winter hat in the South!]

## Funding Update

Continued from page 1

United States, recording thousands of hours of conversation. Those audiotapes were placed on Greyhound buses and sent on their way to Madison, Wisconsin.

Earlier this year a Zip disk was dropped into an overnight mail envelope in Madison, Wisconsin. The envelope was addressed to the typographers for Harvard University Press in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Zip disk contained the letters P and Q of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, and will convert to approximately 450 pages of entries, with their often unusual headwords, informative and amusing quotations, and intriguing distributional maps. A few weeks later the second half of the volume, containing R and the first half of S, was sent to Massachusetts as well.

Many of the words captured on those reel-to-reel tapes will be included in Volume IV of *DARE*, which should be on bookstore shelves by the end of this year. That will leave just one remaining volume to complete the alphabet.

I am struck by the length of the journey the information in Volume IV has traveled: from a 1960s reel-to-reel tape to a 2002 Zip disk; from all 50 states to Madison, Wisconsin, to Cambridge, Massachusetts; from Professor Cassidy's dream to the publication of Volume IV (P-Sk) of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*.

In this issue of the *DARE Newsletter* we list the names and states of our donors for 2001. We are very grateful for your support. Every donor has played an important role in the effort to finish Volume IV. Having contributors from 29 states makes it clear that this is truly a national project.

If you have not yet made a gift to *DARE*, I hope you will consider becoming a 2002 donor. All gifts are tax-deductible and will be matched on a one-to-one basis by the National Endowment for the Humanities. That doubles the value of your gift. You can make a cash or credit-card gift by filling out the form in the next column.

Please give me a call at (608) 263-5607 if you would like to discuss the easiest way to make a gift of stock or a deferred gift. It is a very simple process. Or you can send me an e-mail at <david.simom@uwfoundation.wisc.edu>. Together we can make 2002 a special year for the *Dictionary of American Regional English*.

On to Z! ♦

## Notes and Quotes

"I received a promotional flyer from the NY Public Library about their online reference services, and *DARE* was mentioned as one of the books they keep handy to answer questions. . . . So there, you are now considered an indispensable resource by the NY Public Library. Congratulations!"

Sidney I. Landau, Lexicographer  
Author of *Dictionaries: The Art and Craft of Lexicography*

"Reaching for childhood memories in the cluttered recesses of my mind, I remembered the culch pile leaning precariously against the barn wall. . . . Did I remember the word correctly? A quick check of our dictionaries failed to find it. . . . Further searching yielded the Dictionary of American Regional English. Aha! The book confirmed my belief that culch . . . is a solid, rock-ribbed New England noun. . . . There it was—the definition I was looking for. A culch pile, or drawer, or closet, is full of items considered useless today, but that may be needed tomorrow. What's more, the culch is often the treasure of the future."

Sybilla A. Cook  
*The Christian Science Monitor*, February 15, 2002

## Ask a Fieldworker

If you're curious about what it was like to be "out in the field" for *DARE*, feel free to send a query to our office and we'll pass it along to a Fieldworker.

A Madison reader has asked this question: "In doing fieldwork in an unfamiliar part of the country, did you find it an advantage or a disadvantage to be recognizable as an outsider?" **August Rubrecht**, an Arkansawyer who conducted interviews in Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, New York, and Delaware, responds:

In collecting words and expressions, outsiders gain certain advantages over insiders and give up certain others.

This first principle doesn't depend on being recognized as an outsider, but it is worth mentioning: generally it is easier for outsiders than for insiders to identify the kind of words and expressions *DARE* is concerned with—those *not* found all across the country. For example, in New York a bystander listened to the Word Wagon, which needed a tune-up, and asked, "What's the matter with your engine? It's skipping." I immediately made a word slip for *skipping*, since everyone I knew would have used *missing* in that sentence. I also made a word slip for *missing*. If I had been collecting Ozark vocabulary as an insider, I would not have known that variant regional synonyms for *misfiring* exist. Similarly, I never realized, growing up, that my standard word *chat* "finely crushed mine tailings used to surface roads" would be shown by *DARE* to be localized to the area around Joplin, Missouri. It took a query in the *Newsletter of the American Dialect Society* to let me know that the word was *DARE*-worthy.

Outsider status also made it easier to get informants responding to the Questionnaire (QR) to amplify their answers when necessary. I didn't have to pretend ignorance; if I had, the playacting would have put them on the defensive by implying that I was giving them a riddle or a grammar test. It was better just to let my natural ignorance show through and assure them I was eager to have it alleviated. The *DARE* QR is so well designed that it generally does not require follow-up questions. There were a few exceptions in every interview, however, and alert informants, aware that I was an outsider, would often go out of their way to clarify. My main informant in Lake Providence, Louisiana, was close to ideal in this regard. He restated many questions in his own words to double-check that he had understood them properly because he knew that my language (and that of the QR) might not match his African-American Southern speech

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53708, Attn: David Simon



## Coming in Volume IV

<i>rabais shop</i>	A small shop selling cheap or secondhand goods. (New Orleans LA)
<i>rabbit hawk</i>	A hawk such as the marsh hawk or the red-tailed hawk. (Chiefly Sth, S Midl)
<i>racket</i>	A snowshoe for traversing snow or soft ground. (NEast)
<i>redding comb</i>	A comb for ordering or cleaning the hair. (Esp S Midl)
<i>ribey</i>	Scrawny, emaciated. (S Appalachians, esp WV)
<i>rooster spur</i>	A small hot pepper. (SE)
<i>rummy</i>	An alcoholic. (Chiefly NEast, C Atl)
<i>sagatiate</i>	To fare, get on. (Chiefly Sth, S Midl)
<i>scarlet bugler</i>	A red-flowered beardtongue, esp <i>Penstemon centranthifolius</i> . (West)
<i>scratcher</i>	A toothed harrow or cultivator. (Esp Gulf States, TN)
<i>shade</i>	To take shelter from the sun and heat; to rest. (Chiefly West)
<i>share hand</i>	A tenant farmer who pays a share of the crop as rent. (Esp LA, MS)
<i>shirrtail</i>	A small load or amount. (Chiefly S Midl)
<i>shishi</i>	Urine; to urinate. (HI)
<i>shive</i>	A juniper needle. (ME)
<i>short pot</i>	To cheat or deceive (someone). (Esp TX, OK)
<i>side</i>	To clean up; to put in order. (Esp NEast)
<i>sink boat</i>	A small boat that can be ballasted to float nearly level with the surface of the water to conceal a waterfowl hunter. (Esp MD)
<i>siss</i>	To hiss. (Esp NEast)
<i>skitching</i>	Holding on to the back of a vehicle so as to be pulled over snow or ice. (Esp NEast, Gt Lakes)
<i>skookum</i>	Strong, powerful; good. (Chiefly NW, AK)

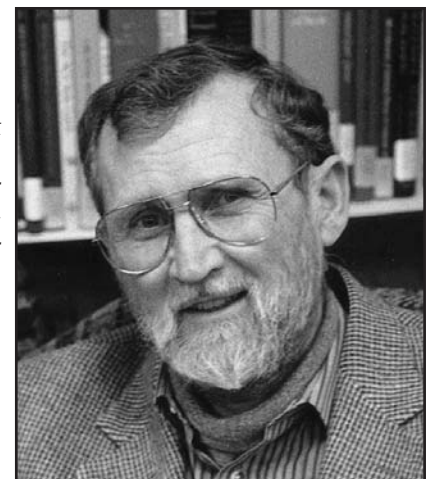
## Ask a Fieldworker

Continued from page 3

very closely. He was also careful to define words he gave if they did not quite match the categories set up by the questions.

On the other hand, because as an outsider I couldn't tell when an answer didn't quite fit the question, I no doubt missed many nuances when interviewing informants who were less aware of the potential for confusion or who were less conscientious than he was. Trouble is, I can't give examples of mistakes I am not aware of making. I can give an example of this *kind* of mistake, though; my wife witnessed it as a nurse at Shands Teaching Hospital in Gainesville, Florida. A middle-aged African-American male outpatient was refusing to take his prescribed medicine. When the doctor asked why, he replied, "It goes agin my nature." The doctor, a New Yorker, interpreted the answer as a sign of stubbornness; the man just didn't feel like taking the stuff. Fortunately, an African-American LPN from the local area was also present at this interview. With insight unavailable to an outsider, she translated the remark as "It makes me impotent." [DARE Ed: See **nature** n **B1** in Vol. III.]

One other disadvantage of being recognized as an outsider: the give-and-take during interviews skewed secondary responses slightly toward my own vocabulary. Many informants were as curious about language used elsewhere as I was, so that after telling me their words, they would often ask me mine. It wasn't fair to refuse to tell them, and sometimes when I did, especially in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee, they would say, "Oh, well, we say that too." We Fieldworkers ordinarily avoided suggesting responses unless informants were struggling to remember something, but when they indicated that my word was also natural to them, I always recorded it, with the notation that it was suggested. I feel pretty sure I didn't record any invalid responses that way, but the distribution of variants is different from what it would have been otherwise. ♦



August  
Rubrecht,  
former  
DARE Field-  
worker

# CONTRIBUTORS TO *DARE* IN 2001

*The Dictionary of American Regional English is grateful for the support of these donors in 2001. Gifts were received by the Dictionary of American Regional English Fund and the Frederic G. Cassidy DARE Fund. Because this is a national project, it is particularly meaningful that gifts were received from twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia (and our neighbor to the north as well).*

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Margaret Pearson Kailhofer, Proofreader

## Staff Member Profile

In this continuing series of interviews with DARE staff members, David Simon poses some questions to Margaret Kailhofer, who joined us to help with the final proofreading tasks for Volume IV.

**Q:** Is this job similar to any other that you've had?

**A:** No, it's quite different. I've done everything from fast food and assembly work to writing technical documentation on operating echocardiography imaging systems. Working with the DARE staff is one of the more enjoyable jobs I've had.

**Q:** Were you surprised by any aspects of the job?

**A:** I was quite surprised by everyone's emphasis that it is much more important to make sure every bit of information is correct than to be sure that it gets done as quickly as possible. Many of my previous jobs have been focused on getting the manuals out the door yesterday ("We can always send corrections to the customers later, after they've paid us"), but at the *Dictionary* everything is read and re-read and sent out to be looked up, and then corrected again to ensure accuracy. I like this system much better; everyone takes genuine pride in their work, and I enjoy coming to work each day, knowing that we're all working together to produce something of quality.

**Q:** What are your major responsibilities at DARE?

**A:** I proofread the galleys after they have been typeset here at DARE. I compare them with the original entries, making sure that everything is reproduced exactly. This is especially important in cases where we are trying to document variant spellings. I had no idea that *shrink* was spelled and pronounced so many different ways: *shwink*, *srink*, *srunk*, *surink*, *swank*, *swink*, *swunk*; and it is my job to help make sure that everything gets entered accurately, and occasionally to go check the original source just to make sure. It is very meticulous work, but I enjoy it. Plus, it's fun to tell people that my job is to "proofread a dictionary." No one really believes me.

**Q:** Do you find that you adopt any of the unfamiliar words you come across in your proofreading?

**A:** Oh, quite often. I enjoy learning new words every day, and my husband is learning to just nod and smile pleasantly when I test out new phrases on him ("And how is your corporosity sagaciating this afternoon?") or offer to make him a nice cup of sheep saffron tea (a tea made from sheep droppings and supposed to be a cure for everything from earaches to measles). Yum.

**Q:** I know that you are new to Madison; how are you liking your new home?

**A:** I like it here quite a bit. I lived in Milwaukee for eighteen years, then went to college in Houghton, Michigan ("Up dere in da UP, eh") and fell in love with the whole college-town atmosphere, where just about everyone is friendly and you can strike up the oddest conversations in elevators. Madison is much like that, but without the 212 inches of snow every year. It's a good-sized city, but not so huge that people are so busy rushing to and fro that they forget to be polite.

**Q:** How do you enjoy spending your time away from DARE?

**A:** Oh, I have more hobbies than I know what to do with. I make beaded jewelry, crochet, cross-stitch, sew, read, do some graphic design and HTML, and just generally have craft projects spread out all over most of the surfaces in my house. This is much to the delight of my two cats, who enjoy rearranging everything at three in the morning with all the grace and delicacy of a pair of drunken elephants. ♦





marks them as belonging in the precise location of the play or film. Vowels must be produced with the right jaw height, tongue position, lip rounding, and tenseness; consonants must be articulated with appropriate aspiration, voicing, and tongue placement; and the rhythm of the speech, with attention to stress, pitch, and juncture, must be unmistakably from the target community.

But how does a dialect coach know all these details? A number of prominent coaches have discovered DARE's unique collection of audiotapes, which were recorded by the Fieldworkers as they conducted interviews for the *Dictionary* between 1965 and 1970. Our collection includes recordings of 1,843 people from all across the United States. Most of the tapes include two parts: a reading of a little story called "Arthur the Rat," which was designed to include all the important contrasts in American English (such as the differences between *author/Arthur*, *horse/hoarse*, *cot/caught*); and free conversation on any topic that was of interest to the speaker. With these two components—a controlled segment that allows systematic comparison of all the samples, and a relaxed conversation that illustrates natural speech rhythms and patterns—dialect coaches have most of what they need to mold an actor's speech into a believable representation of the dialect of a particular locale.

For more than a decade Robert Easton, "the Henry Higgins of Hollywood," has used DARE tapes to help in coaching clients such as Al Pacino, Charlton Heston, Emma Thompson, and Robin Williams; Diane Keaton listened to some of DARE's Mississippi tapes in preparing for her role in *Crimes of the Heart*; Professors Paul Meier (University of Kansas) and Karen Ryker (University of Wisconsin) have called on DARE for dialect samples for their drama students; and we recently received the following appreciative letter from Kate Wilson of the Juilliard School's Drama Division:

*Dear Ms. Hall*

*Thank you for your help in locating tapes to prepare for my upcoming project, the Broadway production of Arthur Miller's first full-length play, The Man Who Had All the Luck.*

*Your tapes have been an invaluable resource in my work as a dialect coach. In researching the dialects for the upcoming Broadway revival of Oklahoma, I found that yours were the best resources available for sounds of*

*turn-of-the-century northeast Oklahoma. The clarity, diversity, and length of the recordings enabled me to make distinctions among the dialects of nearly forty characters.*

*The variety of your subjects was also invaluable for researching the dialects used in two Broadway productions from last season, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Gore Vidal's The Best Man. The latter is a political drama set in the early 1960's which centers on characters from nine different states. An actor playing a character from Wilmington, Delaware came offstage every night to enormous exit applause. He would look at me and say, "It's all about the dialect."*

*While other resources have been made available since DARE was established, they sample only contemporary dialects. As a historical reference your tapes are invaluable in preserving the authenticity of classic American plays. In short, they are a link to the past. Due to the scope of your resource and the length, clarity, and quality of your tapes, I recommend them without reservation to my students and colleagues.*

*In a time when the visual landscape of the theater is increasingly complex, it is all the more important to balance it with an aural soundscape that grounds and humanizes the world of the play. Thank you for contributing to that soundscape.*

DARE's collection of audiotapes has also been instrumental in various linguistic studies (such as one that analyzes change in pronunciation over the last three decades), but perhaps the most heart-warming responses to our tapes have come from individuals who have discovered that a relative was among those who participated in the original DARE fieldwork. We have made copies of the recordings available for their families. The following message from Shannon Casey, of Reno, Nevada, provided a cheering moment for all of us at DARE:

*Hi Joan,*

*This is Shannon Casey. We exchanged emails a few months ago about my grandfather's informant tape, and I just wanted to let you know how WONDERFUL it was for my mom to hear her dad talk again. When I gave it to her for Christmas, she looked at the tape, looked at me and asked, with tears in her eyes, "Is this Dad?" She couldn't speak for a while, she was so choked up about it.*

*Most amazingly, when we started listening to it, we realized that he was telling the most important story of his life: the story of his trip to California in the late 1920s. We have all grown up hearing this story, but no one ever knew any details except how it began (his*

## **DARE Newsletter**

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*friend asked him to leave the next morning to go across the country) and little snippets here and there. But now, we have it all on tape and in his own words.*

*When he died, we thought the story had been lost forever. Thank you so much for preserving this for our family's history, and though it's small, it means a lot to us. You'll probably be hearing from me again, since now my mom's brother and sister both want copies. Thank you, thank you for the work you do.*

It's a pleasure to be able to offer our audiotape resources to scholars, professionals, and interested individuals. We take precautions to ensure the confidentiality of our speakers, and we require that the materials be used according to specific scholarly guidelines. As a result, this magnificent collection will continue to educate and instruct long after its role in the Dictionary has been fulfilled. If you would like to hear samples from our tapes, visit the *DARE* web site at <<http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/dare/dare.html>>, where you can hear the story of "Arthur the Rat" read by speakers from nine distinct regions of the country.◆

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