

DARE Newsletter

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Dictionary of American Regional English

Winter 2010

From the Chief Editor's Desk

Joan Houston Hall

In the Winter issue of the *DARE Newsletter*, it is always a pleasure to recognize the organizations, friends, colleagues, and fellow word-lovers who have contributed to *DARE's* financial health during the preceding year. Because searching for new and continuing sources of funding is inevitably a major preoccupation of the Chief Editor, I am personally very grateful for every gift.

In addition to thanking our 2009 donors in this issue, I am also pleased to announce several recent grants: the Research Committee of the UW–Madison Graduate School has awarded me the funds to support one of *DARE's* Proofreaders as we prepare Volume V for publication; the UW Graduate School and the College of Letters and Science have jointly agreed to provide partial support for *DARE's* Project Assistant in the coming year; and the National Endowment for the Humanities has just announced another two-year grant that will be hugely important in our finishing Volume V, making the transition to an electronic edition, and preparing supplementary materials for presentation on our Web site (<www.dare.wisc.edu>).

If you have visited our Web site recently, you may have noticed that we have posted the Index

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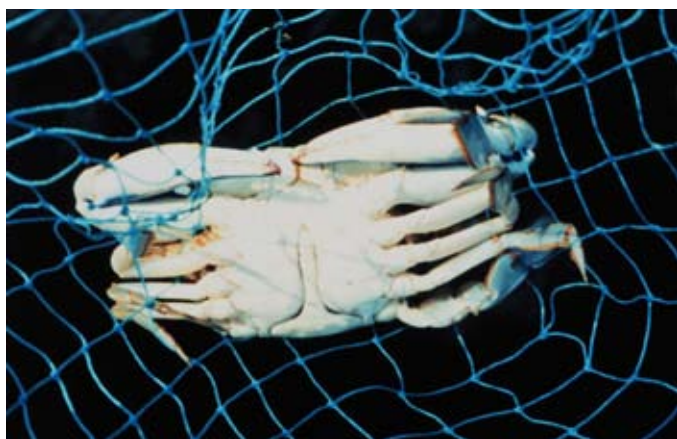


Photo: Mary Hollinger, NOAA/Dept. of Commerce

A Chesapeake Bay blue crab in a handnet

On the Road Again in Virginia

Sharon Huizenga

In past issues of our Newsletter, Sharon Huizenga has reminisced about her experiences as a DARE Fieldworker in southwestern Virginia and Kentucky. This article continues the story, as Sharon describes her return to Virginia for another round of fieldwork.

Moving on from Kentucky to eastern Virginia in March 1970 was more difficult than expected. I had adjusted to working in Kentucky and found myself reluctant to leave. The weather in Virginia was cold, and I encountered snow mixed with freezing rain. But in spite of fears to the contrary, I again found gracious and hospitable people who connected me with informants and were often excellent informants themselves.

In Kentucky I had parked my truck and camper in parking lots, campgrounds, and sometimes in informants' yards. But in Virginia, I found that

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On the Road Again

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many campgrounds were closed for the season. One state park superintendent, however, let me camp by his residence, suggested informants from the park staff, and invited me to join him and his wife for breakfast coffee and occasional evenings of conversation around the fireplace. Some informants let me park in their yards, and in one Chesapeake Bay community, I was allowed to park next to the library. Here I endured the most

“I started to find out how much language differs from region to region when, coming from north-central Washington State, I started going with this guy from Colorado. My parents and grandparents were recent arrivals from the Midwest and East; his had always lived in the Mountain States.

We should have each had a copy of the *DARE*. He called the glove compartment the jockey box. Huh? I said. When I called the refrigerator the refridge, he said: Ridiculous, absolutely stupid! It's either the refrigerator or the fridge. . . . He would use the word *ignorant* to mean rude, nasty or insulting: That Roy is just plain ignorant! (I say, not if Roy has an IQ of 147, is a college graduate, and works as an engineer!) . . . The *DARE* is something no going-together couple should be without, if they come from different parts of the country.”

Janice Davis
E-mail correspondent

“Today I was transcribing a badly handwritten 1912 letter and came upon what appeared to be the phrase ‘hotter than Dutch love.’ I thought, no, that's so odd it can't be right, the writer must have meant ‘Dutch oven’ or ‘Dutch stove.’ I consulted *DARE*, Vol. II, there it was, ‘hotter than Dutch love.’ *DARE*'s earliest citation is 1950. Now you can move it back to 1912. . . .

Since the mid-1980s, my wife Anne Meadows and I have been researching and writing on a number of South American themes, primarily Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid in South America. . . . The research requires reading period letters and newspaper accounts, which sometimes throw up strange words and phrases. As a result, *DARE* and *HDAS* [=the *Historical Dictionary of American Slang*] are my two favorite reference works.”

Daniel Buck
E-mail correspondent

powerful thunderstorm ever. The truck seemed to shake continuously as lightning slashed down all around me. The wind and rain were ferocious as the nighttime nor'easter roared through.

I expected the agricultural areas of central and coastal Virginia to be more prosperous than those in Kentucky, but those expectations were too simplistic. In one town I was referred to three bachelor brothers and their sister, who lived on a farm that had been in the family for many generations. Everyone I met said they would be the best informants, but it was too bad that they would probably not let me in the house because they were very suspicious of any outsiders. I got directions to their place, drove down a long lane, slick with wet red clay, and approached a run-down, rambling farmhouse. The woman was in the yard hanging up the day's laundry. She accosted me, demanding to know what I wanted. I explained myself and my task, and to my surprise, she asked me if I had eaten. Then she invited me inside to join her and one of her brothers for something to eat. That afternoon, I began my interviews. We sat on the front porch. Our conversation was punctuated by roosters crowing every few seconds, and the spaces between were filled with the cackles and quacks of chickens, ducks, geese, and guineas. The guineas had “gone wild,” and according to my informant, the only way to get one for dinner was to wait until dusk and then shoot one out of a tree. Much to my disappointment, guinea was not on the menu while I was there.

When the brothers returned from working the tobacco beds, I had to answer questions all over again. The youngest was a follower of the radio evangelist Herbert Armstrong, so I had to answer questions on politics, religion, and ethics in addition to those about *DARE*. I must have passed their exam, because they not only agreed to continue as informants, but also insisted that I be their house-guest. They were very poor, and their standard of living was closer to 1910 than 1970. What they had was family history.

The house itself was cluttered with at least three generations of artifacts. It was also quite dirty. The woodwork was black with fireplace smoke, the chimney behind the cookstove was hung with old pots and pans, and ancient twists of tobacco hung above the fireplace. One of the brothers showed me the Sharps rifle his grandfather had used during the War Between the States and the old McClellan saddle hanging on the wall of one of the sheds. He told me that his grandfather had killed a Union officer and had taken the officer's

horse to ride for the next four years of war. When the war had ended and he had returned home, his mother was bathing him and noticed sores on his body. She began to cry, thinking he had contracted a "social disease," but he told her that they were saddle sores from the last days of the war. All day long, ride, ride, ride, with no rest and nothing to eat. The man's mother cried and cried. As a grandchild of emigrants who left Holland around 1900, I wondered what my family history was that had been left behind. My informants had the artifacts and the stories they carried.

Another informant along the Rappahannock lived a much different life as a farmer. He worked as the manager of a 3,600-acre farm. He and his wife lived on the estate in a modern home, and they let me park my truck in their yard. His wife was a fantastic cook, and they fed me very well. I left with several recipes, including one for "batty bread" (a corn bread that has become an essential side dish whenever I make chili). [DARE Ed: See **batter bread** in Volume I.] One afternoon we drove to the main house, a large brick mansion with two wings big enough to be houses in their own right. Here, I was told, nine generations of the owner's family had been born, lived, and died. Only a thousand acres of the estate were under cultivation, and my informant was responsible for all the farm operations: tobacco, wheat, corn, barley, soybeans, and hay, along with pasture for beef cattle. The rest was woods and marshland, where there were deer, wild turkey, quail, and other game. The counties along the Rappahannock had no interest in attracting industry, so at that time, the Rappahannock was the least polluted of all of Virginia's rivers.

There were four counties in south central Virginia along the North Carolina state line where blacks outnumbered whites. Here I was fortunate in being able to connect with rural black Virginians. My contact was a black woman who was a community leader and country store proprietor. Her grandfather was a white man who could not legally marry the black woman he loved, but their children were able to inherit his land when he died. As a result, her relatives had owned land for three generations and were more prosperous than poor landless whites in the community.

In the 1960s she had permitted Freedom Riders and voter registration workers to stay in her home. At the same time, the Ku Klux Klan had tried to get more firmly established in the county. Many whites and blacks were afraid of them. No white citizens would let the Klan conduct a meeting or burn a cross on their property. Finally one person

did give permission, but word got out and scores of armed men, black and white together, showed up to confront the Klan. If the Klan wanted a fight, it could begin right there on their turf. However, when their bluff was called, the Klansmen crept away.

On another occasion, my informant went to the home of a prominent white man to secure his support for a food program that would benefit the poor, both white and black. When she knocked on the door, it was opened by a very surprised white man coming away from a group of "shocked stiff still" white men. He told her to come back in an hour. Once away, she realized that she had interrupted a Klan meeting and that the white man she needed was a Klan leader. She did return to his house, and she convinced him to help her get the food program started. Over time they developed a good working relationship, and he helped the county and the town get other federal anti-poverty programs.

Photo: Mary Hollinger, NOAA/Dept. of Commerce



The harbor at Tangier Island

Traveling farther east, I was fascinated by the tidewater communities and the watermen who made their living fishing, crabbing, or clamming. I also found them hard to understand. I camped in Gloucester Point, where I met a grocery deliveryman who introduced me to the families of Guinea Neck, an isolated fishing community. They were wary at first, but when the grandfather of the clan approved, I was in. They knew less of their history than my farming informants had known of theirs. Were they descendants of Hessian soldiers who had been paid in guineas, or indentured servants who had "jumped ship," or people who had crossed to the mainland and paid for things with guineas? Although they were not respected in the area, I found them generous and hospitable. I was invited to watch the unloading of the day's catch

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Coming in Volume V

<i>wet</i>	Of a cow: lactating, fresh. (Chiefly Sth, West)
<i>X's-and-O's</i>	Tick-tack-toe. (Esp N Midl, sAppalachians)
<i>yagger</i>	To talk excessively, noisily, or angrily; of an animal: to bark or growl threateningly. (Esp KY)
<i>Yankee bump</i>	A bump or dip in a road. (Chiefly swPA)
<i>yard ax</i>	A utility ax used for household purposes; hence fig phr <i>dull as a yard ax</i> very dull. (Chiefly SE)
<i>yard egg</i>	A fresh egg. (Esp Sth, S Midl)
<i>yee-yawed</i>	Askew, awry. (Esp nNEng)
<i>yellow-bark(ed) oak</i>	The black oak (<i>Quercus velutina</i>). (Chiefly NEng)
<i>yellowbird</i>	The goldfinch (<i>Carduelis tristis</i>). (Chiefly Atl)
<i>yellowhammer</i>	The goldfinch. (Widespread, but esp freq Sth)
<i>yellow linn</i>	A magnolia (<i>Magnolia acuminata</i>). (Chiefly WV)
<i>yellow ned</i>	The yellow perch (<i>Perca flavescens</i>). (C Atl)
<i>yellow-tailed hornet</i>	A yellow jacket. (Esp ME)
<i>yes-ma'am</i>	A bump or dip in a road. (ME)
<i>yet, (up) till</i>	Also (<i>up</i>) <i>until yet</i> : Still, to this day, even now. (Chiefly Sth, S Midl)
<i>yieldy</i>	Of a crop, field, etc: fertile, productive. (Midl)
<i>yowwun</i>	A child. (NEng, chiefly ME)
<i>yo-yo</i>	A weed cutter. (Chiefly TX, OK)
<i>zanja</i>	Also <i>sanky, zanky</i> : An irrigation ditch. (Chiefly sCA, AZ)
<i>zanjero</i>	Also <i>zanquero, sankero</i> : A local official in charge of irrigation ditches. (Chiefly sCA, AZ)

From the Chief Editor's Desk *Continued from page 1* to the regional, usage, and etymological labels in all four published volumes of text. This allows readers to look for a list of all the words having a particular label, such as "Connecticut," "Texas," or "Oregon"; or "Norwegian," "Chinook," or "Jamaican"; or "old-fashioned," "back-formation," or "folk-etymology." Volume V labels will be integrated following publication in the fall of 2011. (To use this research tool to the fullest extent, it is important to have the published volumes at hand.)

The Web site will also be home to dozens of sets of contrastive maps from the *DARE* fieldwork. So if you're curious about where people use various terms for a sandwich in a long bun, you'll find (all in one place) the maps showing where *hero*, *hoagie*, *grinder*, *Cuban*, *poor boy*, *sub*, and *torpedo* are used for a submarine sandwich; or you can find out where the strip of grass between the sidewalk and the street is called the *boulevard*, *grassplot*, *neutral ground*, *parking*, *parking strip*, *parkway*, *terrace*, *tree belt*, or *tree lawn*; or if you're feeling hungry, you can check out the nicely regional terms for various yummy pastries, including *bear claws*, *bismarcks*, *crullers*, *fastnachts*, *friedcakes*, *long johns*, and *sinkers*. We are very excited about making these materials available on the Web. Stay tuned! ♦

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On the Road Again

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and was given a large flounder for my dinner. My fellow campers told me to use the fish head as crab bait. I tied the fish head to a piece of string and dangled it in the water. When blue crabs grab the bait, they do not let go; you can pull them up and, with a gloved hand, put them in metal buckets. We soon had four dozen crabs for an evening crab boil.

One of the best questionnaires was done on Chincoteague Island. My main informant was a waterman and former market hunter who as a young man had illegally shot ducks and geese for the New York City restaurant trade. His wife offered me a crab sandwich and a beer for lunch. I accepted, thinking it would be something like tuna salad. What I got was two slices of white bread with legs sticking out. I was so surprised that I had to look at it before I could eat it, so I gingerly lifted the top slice of bread, only to discover something that looked like a large bug. My informant and his wife laughed, and I laughed with them. She encouraged me to try it. It was a soft-shelled crab she had caught that day and fried in butter for my sandwich. I did try it, and it was delicious.

As time went on, I was told to go to one of the islands in Chesapeake Bay—Tangier or Smith—where the people were mostly descendants of the families who had first settled them. I contacted Dr. Cassidy and asked to do an extra questionnaire on Tangier Island. Permission was granted, and I went to Crisfield, Maryland, where I left the truck and caught the ferry. I was the only passenger. The island had no roads, just paths. Everyone walked or rode bicycles. The only place to stay was a rooming house, and even though it was closed for the season, the owner graciously let me stay. Hilda was a famous cook, and I was quite delighted to be able to eat breakfast in the kitchen with her and the women who worked there. I had never had fish and biscuits for breakfast until then. I went with one of my informants on his boat to pull crab traps and then to Crisfield to sell the catch. Another loaned me a bicycle so I could explore the island. The people were cautious, but gracious once they realized I respected them and their island ways. I am very glad that *DARE* included Tangier Island. It is now a tourist destination, and what I experienced is no longer there. ♦

Sharon Huizenga's previous accounts of her adventures in DARE fieldwork appeared in the Spring/Summer 2005 and Winter 2006 issues of this Newsletter, which can be read on our Web site (<www.dare.wisc.edu>).

Photo: Kyla Schutte-meier



Where Are They Now?

Former DARE Bibliographer Sally Jacobs has always loved working with historical materials. This fascination led her to DARE . . . and away again, as she left in 2006 to accept a position with the Wisconsin Historical Society. She recently reminisced about her days at the Dictionary with Beth Gardner.

Q: When you left *DARE*, you described your new position as an Accessioning Archivist with the Wisconsin Historical Society as your “dream job.” Tell us a bit about what you do.

A: At some point during the hiring process, former *DARE* Editor and Bibliographer Leonard Zwilling asked me point-blank if I was taking this part-time gig only until I found full-time work. Lenny is nothing if not direct! After explaining that I ran my own business and was specifically looking for part-time work, I paused. As a straight shooter who doesn't mind putting my cards on the table, I was candid about the fact that the only full-time job I would consider was as an archivist for the Wisconsin Historical Society, located across the street from the *DARE* offices in Madison. Then I explained that nobody at WHS was going to retire before the *Dictionary* was finished, so that wasn't much of a risk. However, I forgot that state employees can retire earlier than I expected, which is why I ended up leaving while we were still in the W's and X's.

Although my title is “Accessioning Archivist,” these days I spend most of my time working on the extensive audio archive at the Society. I never imagined I would end up as an Audio Archivist. In fact, I remember scoffing at the overly compli-

cated numbering system for WHS audio during my training as an archivist at the UW–Madison Library School. Now I am charged with the task of fixing this very system to prepare for our move to off-site storage. See how that works? Consider yourself warned.

Q: Do you ever use *DARE* in your work at the Historical Society?

A: Sadly, no. But “Arthur the Rat” has come up more than once in conversations with my Audio colleagues here on the UW–Madison campus.

[*DARE* Ed: To hear *DARE* Informants reading this story designed to elicit important pronunciation contrasts in American English, go to <www.dare.wisc.edu> and click on “Educational Resources,” then “Audio Samples.”]

Q: What do you remember most vividly about your days at *DARE*?

A: I could reminisce for hours about my days at *DARE*—hearing the clinkety-clack of the typewriter I used to create bib cards, poring through books trying to verify a quotation—but it’s the people I remember most vividly. Roland Berns had an odd assortment of “I Dare You to Eat It” foods in cans. I probably shouldn’t mention what we microwaved until the last volume is put to bed. . . . Then there’s George Goebel’s incredibly deep knowledge of bookbinding and repair. Did you know it takes more tools to bind a book than it does to build a house? Crazy. Of all the characters, though, my former boss, Lenny, is the most memorable. Fluent in Yiddish as well as Sanskrit, and never afraid to share his opinion, Lenny is more passionate about cataloging rules than anyone I have ever met. Overall, *DARE* is created by an incredible group of smart, funny, and enjoyable people. I miss them!

Q: Tell us about your Practical Archivist business. Whom do you help, and how?

A: I’ve had my Archives degree since 1998, and I began helping family and friends organize, preserve, and scan their photos years before I started my business in 2004. It’s not rocket science, but there is a lot of bad preservation information on the Internet. If you’d like to become a better family archivist, I’ve uploaded oodles of free articles to my Web site (<<http://PracticalArchivist.com>>).

This spring is particularly exciting for me because of the debut of my new “Joy of Organizing Photos” class. For the record, that title is not ironic. It’s time for you to ditch the clutter and uncover the joy in your photos. And while you’re at it, why not write down the stories before you forget them? The shortest pencil is better than the longest memory.

Q: What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

A: I am a very lucky person, with a full life but not much of what you would traditionally call “spare” time. For fun I like to read, bike, garden, and cook with my kids. Someday in the not-too-distant future when my kids are teenagers who like to pretend they don’t have parents, I plan to rediscover joyful pastimes like browsing in antique shops and bookstores. ♦



UW Grad Wins Honor for Work with *DARE*

Congratulations to Alyssa Severn, who recently completed her M.A. in Applied English Linguistics and is the winner of a 2010 American Dialect Society Presidential Honorary Membership. The award recognizes Alyssa’s excellent record as a graduate student and her work for the *Dictionary of American Regional English*. She was nominated by *DARE* Editor Luanne von Schneidemesser and Professor Eric Raimy of the UW–Madison English Department.

Alyssa, who was profiled in the Spring/Summer 2008 issue of this *Newsletter*, has spent many hours evaluating and selecting audio segments from *DARE*’s voluminous tape collection; they will be posted to the *American Languages: Our Nation’s Many Voices Online* Web site. ♦

DARE Newsletter

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