

# DARE Newsletter

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Dictionary of American Regional English

Fall 2013

## Personal Reflections: Fred Cassidy as Mentor and Friend

Robert H. Moore

*As a founding member of DARE's Board of Visitors, Robert Moore was instrumental in establishing that group almost fifteen years ago. His connection with the DARE project, however, dates back to the 1960s. While earning a doctorate at UW–Madison, he established a close relationship with DARE's founder, Professor Frederic Cassidy. As the following article shows, their friendship continued over the years, sustained by an ongoing correspondence; we are delighted to present this warmly personal reminiscence.*

Fred Cassidy officially began work on *DARE* in 1963. The next year, I arrived in Madison to begin a Ph.D. program in American literature. Born in Kentucky, I had grown up in the small coal mining and farming community of Madisonville, and my formal education was in Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

Coming to Madison in the 1960s from “down South” was like going to another planet. Fortunately, I soon came under the patient tutelage of Ednah Thomas, Bill Lenehan, Merton Sealts, and Walter Rideout. They made the department a warm and welcoming community where faculty and students could come to know each other as individuals.

Walter Rideout soon learned about my love of Southern language and oral traditions. My immediate family had lived in the same Kentucky town for decades. Maternal grandparents were local farmers and grocers; paternal grandparents were a country physician and his wife who ran a tourist home on U.S. Route #41, a major north/south highway. My childhood was filled with stories of

*Continued on page 2*



Photo credit: George E. Hall

### Also in This Issue

Funding Update . . . . .	.5
In Memoriam—Burr Angle . . . . .	.5
Upcoming Writing Contest . . . . .	.5
Staff Member Profile—Erica Kalnay . . . . .	.6
Two Honors for Chief Editor Joan Hall . . . . .	.7
Digital Version Has Launched! . . . . .	.8

## Personal Reflections

*Continued from page 1*

folk customs and sayings gathered by kinfolk from individuals they lived and worked with as well as from those who passed through town from far-away places.

In the spring of 1966, Professor Rideout, who had become department chair, said there was someone he wanted me to meet—a man who had a special interest in American English “regionalisms.” That meeting was my first encounter with Professor Frederic Gomes Cassidy. I was surprised that this distinguished gentleman seemed to have a genuine interest in why I had come to UW–Madison and what I was about.

My background was unusual, and many responded with confusion, if not bewilderment, at my presence in Madison. I explained to Professor Cassidy that I had been involved in civil rights activity in the South since the late 1950s, had gone to West Africa on a fellowship work program in 1960, been commissioned a U.S. Army officer in 1962, written an M.A. thesis on the use of the word *nigger* in Twain’s *Huck Finn*, and worked as a college admissions officer/basketball recruiter.

Instead of responding with puzzlement, Fred Cassidy seemed delighted by my checkered past and asked if I could help him with his new *DARE* project, which he expected to complete over the next decade or so.

From the earliest days of our friendship, I benefited from what *DARE* Editor Joan Hall has called Fred’s “voluminously knowledgeable, insatiably curious” mind. We discussed Southern culture, contemporary American society, and my father’s adventures as a mineral rights developer in Kentucky and Tennessee. Fred soon put me to work reading and marking various American texts for interesting, peculiar, or strange words and phrases.

When I was called to active U.S. Army duty in 1968, I left Madison and was eventually assigned as a first lieutenant to the faculty and staff of the Military Academy at West Point. The Academy’s English department had a close relationship with William Faulkner’s heirs and his Random House editor, Albert Erskine. This positioned them to undertake development of a computer-generated concordance to Faulkner’s work.

Since the war in Vietnam had polarized the country, West Point officers were reluctant to reach out to American academics whose expertise would be essential in developing a concordance. Fortunately, I was able to enlist the support of my Faulkner dissertation director, Walter Rideout,

and Fred Cassidy, as well as Faulkner scholars Jim Meriwether, Noel Polk, and Michael Millgate. (These men eventually formed the nucleus of an advisory board.)

In May 1969, Fred wrote to West Point at my request, expressing his interest in the project since “it will make accessible to critics and other students of our literature the details of Faulkner’s usage.” He noted that the novelist “was tremendously sensitive to words and their associative values” and that *DARE* “will certainly benefit if we can have this reference work to use during the editorial stage.”

In the fall of 1970, with the support of Fred and Walter Rideout, I joined the faculty of the University of Maryland in College Park and continued to work with West Point on the concordance project. When the Academy formally invited Fred in early 1971 to serve on a concordance advisory board, he responded, “I am afraid you flatter me too much in putting me on the board.” He added:

Though we are using computer methods for *DARE*, I have to depend entirely on others for anything technical. I am strictly an amateur otherwise—one very much interested in the subject but probably in no position to be of any real help. However, since you have put me there, and because I am convinced that the making of concordances as a tool for literary study is probably the most valuable service the computer can render to the humanities, I’ll be glad to stay on and will make every effort to come to the next meeting.

As the project’s executive secretary, I sent *DARE* a copy of our early work in October 1971. Fred responded:

This is to report that the box with four bound batches of print-outs constituting the concordance to Faulkner’s poetry and *The Hamlet* arrived safely. . . . I opened it up at once and began reading the first volume. . . . I can make immediate and effective use of it. I have been reading and noting all the items of a regional sort. These we will put into our computer file. Having them in the form of a concordance greatly simplifies access to them for us. We can get what we want much faster and also be sure that we are missing nothing. Even a very expert reading of the book would be slower and less accurate.

By March 1972, Fred sent me a note reporting that he had “finished reading *The Hamlet Concordance* for our files” and proudly enclosed a *New York Times* feature story on *DARE* entitled “Lexicographers Find Regional English Is Flourishing Despite TV” (February 17, 1972).

From 1972–76, Fred and I collaborated on various *DARE*/Faulkner subjects. When historian Joseph Ellis and I published *School for Soldiers: West Point and the Profession of Arms* for Oxford University Press in 1974, my relationship with the Academy became more complicated. I subsequently worked with investigations of West Point governance issues on behalf of U.S. Congress members and committees. Participation in the concordance project became increasingly difficult.

In 1977, I left a tenured associate professorship at Maryland to do policy analysis in the public and private sector. Happily, both Fred and Walter Rideout understood and supported my career change. By 1981, I had become an officer of Alexander & Alexander Services Inc. (A&A), a global risk management and human resources consulting firm which later merged with the Aon Corporation.

I was now able to support *DARE* financially and to facilitate A&A corporate support. Fred and I continued to stay in touch as we corresponded about personal and professional matters. When my schoolmarm aunt sent me two local articles, “Kentuckyspeak” and “Southern Speak Lives on in All Its Colorful Dialects,” I shared them with Fred in 1987. He agreed they were “pleasant August reading” and observed, “We have either escaped from our desks or are too warm to read anything serious! As such articles go, this is above average.”

He then asked, “Have you seen Cleanth Brooks’ recent short book, *The Language of the American South*?” He found the book to be “a sensitive, informed set of essays that should please any Southerner.” Fred confessed that after delivering a paper at the University of North Wales at Bangor, he had “contrived to stretch the trip to include Paris, London and a bit of the north of England. Very refreshing.”

At Christmas, he sent a note of thanks for financial support. “It’s the most tangible form of praise!” he wrote, and then said, “Volume II, with luck, should be out before the end of ’89. I hope it will keep up the interest of Volume I.”

In July 1988, Fred updated me, “I can report that Volume II is coming along toward completion” and added:

It should be finished by the end of next year. It was somewhat delayed by our increasing change-over to computers—but the staff are now used to them and we’re pushing along. It should cover D through H, and I’ll fit in I if there’s space. One of our continuing problems is to estimate how much space any letter

will take. Our best efforts are less precise than we’d like.

During the 1980s and ’90s, I had offices in New York and Washington, D.C., and periodically sent Fred copies of public policy research conducted by my Washington Government and Industry Affairs office. He frequently engaged the issues under discussion and provided his own take. In a response from June 1989, he found our analysis “very informative, and worrisome in some respects.” He explained:

The U.S. public—or some parts of it—seem to be in a phase of punitive thinking, with attacks on professionals (doctors, lawyers) and corporations. There are certainly some corrupt individuals, but I believe the majority of professionals and successful corporations are operating responsibly. Just now the parasites seem to be especially active. I know at least one man who has left medical practice because insurance against charges of malpractice [is] so high. The attackers have no sense of the weight of responsibility a professional has to bear—they only think of him as “rich,” therefore a good potential victim. I suppose parasitism is always with us to some degree.

In July 1990, Fred happily reported that Volume II was “now at the Harvard Press” and he felt sure that a recent A&A contribution “will be matched by the National Endowment for the Humanities.” He added that Volume II “will prove to contain quite a lot of interesting stuff—of course I’ll see to it that a copy is sent to you. I confess to a certain understandable excitement! We are now well into Volume III.”

In the summer of 1991, Fred responded to business forecasts from our Washington office. He wrote that he was “glad to get” this material “since I don’t otherwise have any light on the thinking of corporate leaders. I’m not exactly in an ivory tower—I keep in fair touch with general developments. But this gets in closer. . . . I’m glad to know there’s ‘thinking ahead.’ My education at Oberlin, though all I could have fitted in, did not include anything on economics or the foundations of business—I have had to patch that together as best I could since then.”

In the summer of 1993, Fred (who was then 85 years young) had been slow to respond to some recent correspondence. He wrote, “No excuses—but we’ve been buzzing at *DARE*, and I’ve also been to meetings and read two papers. So I saw Spring come in in Alabama, Virginia, and Nevada before it got to Wisconsin, and it hasn’t come here prop-

erly yet—much rain and cold winds, little sunlight, crops delayed—and I never got thawed out till Nevada.”

Our Washington office had recently completed a national survey of corporate risk managers, which surfaced the issues they were most concerned about. As always, Fred had studied the results and had some reflections he wanted to share:

Your Risk Management Survey is interesting as showing that your Company, at least (and certainly some others), is doing what seems the wise thing. There must be some living together between Government and Industry. You are protecting yourselves by looking ahead and putting yourselves in a sound position. I don't think the present administration is anti-Industry—Clinton is simply cautious. He's getting experience, and backing off seems to be his version of compromise—without which, nothing gets done.

Fred then proudly reported, “We are now better than half done with Volume III, which will include the letters I through O, with lots of interesting stuff.” He asked if I had seen Bill Safire's most recent comments on *DARE* in *The New York Times Magazine*. He noted, “Safire had a bit about us, and from us, in last Sunday's paper. So we are making progress. Dictionaries can't be made rapidly—they have to be right or they're no use at all.”

In the winter of 1994, he responded to our special study on emerging trends with some remarkably prescient reflections:

I keep feeling that the 21st century holds out some frightful possibilities. . . . If we can convince the fanatics that terrorism doesn't pay—but the zealot mind is hardly changeable and an immediate spectacular “success,” requiring bloodshed, is considered holy. At present, all of Northeast Africa seems taken with zealotry, Algeria is now going that way. Tunisia and Morocco are relatively stable, and Egypt is holding on.

What Fred especially feared was the terrorist mantra, which he saw as, “If I'm willing to die for the cause, don't expect me to spare you.”

Later in the year, Fred commented on what was to be our office's last risk management survey. Fred prefaced his remarks by noting that although he had “no direct contact or association with the corporate world, I try to see its problems: not be swayed by competing arguments of partisans but to try to get at facts which I can evaluate.” Once again in an uncanny anticipation of the world to come, he noted, “The media are not often uninflu-

enced or neutral: sometimes they are intentionally misleading.” He then offered this remarkable reverie:

I see a sort of paradox in democracy. In theory it's the kind of government by which the best or most capable people come to the top—and that probably is the ultimate result, but it's slow and indirect. Personal considerations come first—in a normal Darwinian world: only when survival is assured can the individual put other considerations foremost. Also, democracy gives the greatest possibility for freedom, but freedom of the individual is not always under social control.

What we need is government, but not by dictatorial individuals. How can we get socially favorable government except with leaders dedicated to it? Corporations have to see to their survival, but also to the survival of the societies in which they exist: interdependence is a law of nature.

Although he was over three decades my senior, Fred's health was considerably better than mine for several years in the mid-1990s, and we were in touch infrequently. In August 1998, I received a letter from Fred and Joan Hall explaining *DARE*'s “chronic financial woes” and asking me to meet with David Simon, who had been recently hired with support from UW–Madison's College of Letters and Science to assist *DARE* in finding new funds. They said that, despite continuing support from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), “it is clear that the future of *DARE* depends largely on private philanthropy.”

In September 1998, David Simon and I began developing private resources for *DARE*. My Davidson College classmate and colleague Bill Ferris had become NEH chairman in 1977, and I knew firsthand of his long-standing admiration for Fred Cassidy and *DARE*. However, it was obvious that NEH funding would depend on demonstrating that there was widespread private-sector support for *DARE*'s continuance.

Working with David, I championed the notion that *DARE* needed to establish an advisory board to assist in spreading the word and raising operating funds. The first Board of Visitors meeting was held in Madison in September 1999, and in subsequent years this group of men and women has been indispensable in ensuring *DARE*'s survival. In addition to facilitating essential foundation and private-sector grants, the Board has helped to attract hundreds of individual donors.

My last meeting with Fred was in the spring of 2000, when he asked if we could meet for lunch in the Washington area. On the advice of his daughter, Claire, I arranged for the two of us to meet at a French bistro in Bethesda, Maryland. Fred seemed a bit frail, but his spirit and mind were as lively as ever. We spent several hours discussing *DARE*, especially his pride in Joan's excellent work. Our focus ranged from events in Madison to issues of national and global scope. We had a delightful and memorable visit.

I was not prepared to learn weeks later that, at 92, Fred had passed away. From my years in academe through the decades that followed, Fred was a major presence in my life. I still miss his wry wit, his incisive mind, and his genial humanity. He was a man for every season. ♦

*Robert Moore is president and chief editor of the PMR Communications Group and writes occasional columns on public policy for publications in North and South Carolina.*

## Funding Update

**Toni Drake**  
**Director of Development**

I've just returned from a meeting with *DARE*'s Board of Visitors, a group of talented and dedicated people who lend their advice and expertise to ensure *DARE*'s continued success. We had the treat of seeing (and hearing!) a sneak preview of the digital version of Volumes I–VI, including original audio files. Hearing those voices connecting us to our shared linguistic past made me think about *DARE*'s future.

*DARE*'s first Word Wagons rolled out on four wheels, while the new fieldwork surveys are rolling out to an even greater audience online, something those first Word Wagon pioneers never could have envisioned. The *DARE* staff is still hard at work processing archival audio files to make them available to all those who use the *Dictionary*. It is clear that *DARE*'s future is digital, and directly linked to the support of folks like you.

To everyone who has supported *DARE* in the past, we send you our sincere thanks for all that you have made possible. We think you're splendid (see Volume V)! As the holidays approach, and with them an opportunity to reflect on all that we hold dear, we hope you will consider a 2013 gift in support of *DARE*. To make a tax-deductible donation to *DARE* by check or credit card, please

use the coupon below. If you have any questions or would like information about making a gift of securities, real estate, or appreciated property, I welcome you to contact me at <toni.drake@supportuw.org> or (608) 263-1658. ♦

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## In Memoriam: Burr Angle

*DARE* is saddened to report the death, on September 8, 2013, of Burr Angle, whose acquaintance with this project dates back to the 1960s. As graduate students at UW–Madison, he and his future wife, Dolores Kester, worked with Prof. Frederic Cassidy. Over forty years later, the couple wrote an article for the *DARE Newsletter* ("Names and Professor Cassidy," Spring/Summer 2011) describing how their association with *DARE*'s founder provided some of the inspiration for their own research project in 2007. ♦

## Upcoming Writing Contest

*DARE*'s Board of Visitors is making plans to sponsor an essay contest intended to highlight how valuable the *Dictionary of American Regional English* can be for writers. Details will be announced on the *DARE* website (<<http://www.dare.wisc.edu>>) in January. ♦



Erica Kanesaka Kalnay and Mochi

## Staff Member Profile

In this ongoing series, Beth Gardner interviews Project Assistant (and UW–Madison grad student) Erica Kanesaka Kalnay, who joined the DARE staff in August.

**Q:** What is your field of study, and what are your research interests?

**A:** I am a first-year Ph.D. student in English (Literary Studies). My primary research interests are nineteenth-century literature, body studies, trauma studies, literature and psychology, visual culture, and children’s culture.

**Q:** How did you first become aware of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*?

**A:** I first became aware of *DARE* when—as a recently accepted English Ph.D. student—I received an e-mail from Joan [Hall] informing me of my Project Assistant assignment. Needless to say, as I learned more about the project, I became increasingly intrigued. Like most people my age, I had

previously associated the acronym *DARE* only with the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program from ’90s elementary education. For a linguaphile, this was much better!

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

**A:** I do a bit of whatever is needed at the moment, but my primary responsibilities are locating original source materials and quotes, whether in libraries or online, and then entering them into the *DARE* database.

**Q:** What is the most enjoyable aspect of your work at *DARE*?

**A:** I discover fascinating new words and phrases every day. Today’s phrase: *antiques and horrors* [*DARE* Ed: see Volume I]. Also, exploring regional and historical language is sort of like being able to take a linguistic road trip across the United States through both space and time.

**Q:** What part of your work do you find most challenging?

**A:** I think the most challenging part of working for *DARE* is navigating the transition from print- to digital-based media, as we must adapt older systems to new technologies. This takes a lot of flexibility and open-mindedness. However, it is also one of the most intriguing aspects of working during this unique time.

**Q:** What aspect of working on the *DARE* project has been the most surprising to you?

**A:** Most of the *DARE* staff members have dedicated many years to the project. Just as much as any newfangled technology, my co-workers are profound repositories of knowledge, both about how the *Dictionary* works and about language in general.

**Q:** What would you like to do after finishing your graduate program?

**A:** I am interested in academic research and teaching, but I have to admit that my first love is creative writing—nonfiction, fiction, and poetry. (I have an M.F.A. from New York University.) Someday, I would love to have the time to dedicate myself to both scholarly and personal writing projects.

**Q:** When you have a bit of time to spare from your studies and your work, what are your interests?

**A:** My dog, Mochi, is the love of my life. He is a half-Papillon, half-mutt rescue dog, and his name means “sticky rice cake” in Japanese. My other interests include dance (ballet and contemporary), yoga, painting, and traveling. ♦

## Two Honors for Chief Editor Joan Hall



Photo credit: Ann Borden

Joan Hall, Emory University President Jim Wagner, and Walter M. "Sonny" Deriso, Jr., at the presentation of the 2013 Emory Medals



Photo credit: George E. Hall

DARE Editor Joan Hall greets Lachlan Story, son of an editor of the Dictionary of Newfoundland English.

### Emory Medal

Emory University, where *DARE*'s Chief Editor first heard about the fledgling *Dictionary of American Regional English* in 1968, presented Joan Houston Hall with its highest alumni honor—the Emory Medal—in Atlanta on November 12. Recognizing Hall's leadership of "one of the most significant humanities projects in the United States," the award citation also lauds the project for contributing to our nation's historical and cultural understanding and for making its scholarship readily accessible to the public. ♦

### 2013 George Story Lecture

In celebration of the completion of *DARE*'s print volumes, Joan Houston Hall was invited to Memorial University of Newfoundland in St. John's to give the 2013 George Story Lecture. This annual event honors one of the editors of the *Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, George M. Story, who died in 1994. Like *DARE*, the *DNE* is widely appreciated not just by scholars, researchers, teachers, and librarians, but by everyone who loves language. Story's colleagues have just launched an interactive *Dialect Atlas of Newfoundland and Labrador*; it can be accessed at <[dialectatlas.mun.ca](http://dialectatlas.mun.ca)>. ♦

## **DARE Newsletter**

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## **Digital Version Has Launched!**

**W**e are excited to announce that the digital version of the *Dictionary of American Regional English* was launched on December 2, 2013. *DARE* staffers have been working closely with Harvard University Press, testing successive iterations of the digital version to make this electronic resource as versatile and user-friendly as possible. Want to search for entries from particular states or regions? Find every *DARE* citation of an author's work? Hear audio clips from *DARE* Tape quotes? Search the original *DARE* fieldwork and use the results to make maps? These are only a few of the features that will delight browsers and serious researchers alike.

We hope you'll encourage your local public and university libraries to subscribe to the digital version of *DARE*. In the meantime, a video preview is available at <<http://www.hup.harvard.edu/features/dare/digital>>, and you can visit <<http://www.daredictionary.com>> to browse 100 sample entries. ♦