

# DARE Newsletter

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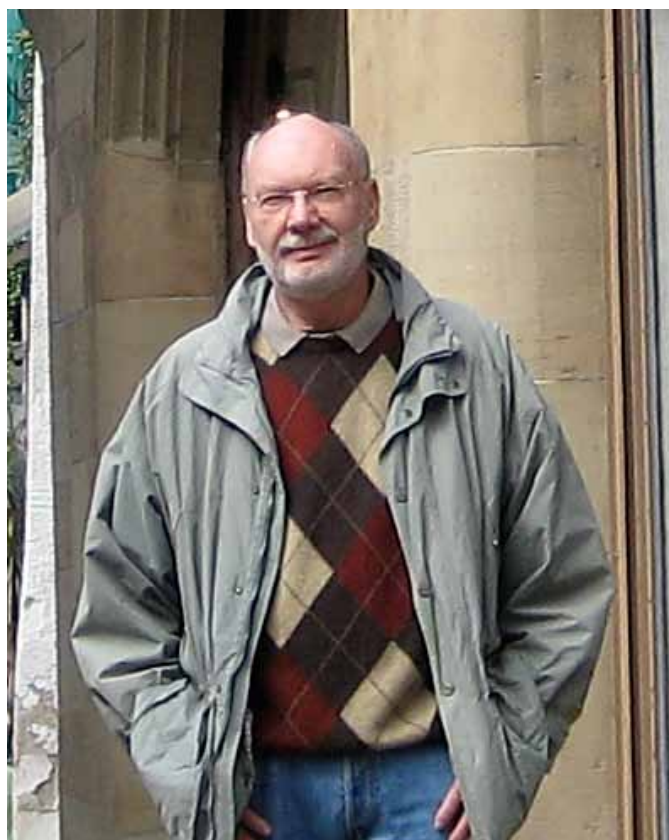
## Georgia (Still) on My Mind (Part 2)

Detlef Stark

*The conclusion of Detlef Stark's account of his 1969 stint as a DARE Fieldworker finds him traveling the northern half of Georgia, seeking out informants in small rural settlements and in the state's largest city. As Detlef recently told Chief Editor Joan Hall, "At first I wasn't sure [writing the article] would be much fun, but as I dug into my notes, books, maps, and photos, my time in Georgia and DARE became alive again." We trust that his time in Georgia will also come alive for readers of this piece. (If you missed the first installment, which appeared in our Spring/Summer 2014 Newsletter, it's available at <<http://dare.wisc.edu/dare-newsletters>>.)*

**M**y next stop was Rome, a small town sixty miles west of Ball Ground, near the Alabama line. Although I had been given the name of a possible contact there, nothing came of it. On the day I arrived, I tried several churches, the YMCA, a school, and a store, but to no avail. By 8:00 p.m. I hadn't found a single promising informant or a suitable campground. Reluctantly, I booked myself into the Pine Crest Motel, and for \$6.18 I spent a mosquito-free and cool night. The next day, people at the Rome Chamber of Commerce were a great help. I got many names and addresses and was even put on a local radio program. The most interesting address was the small Linguistic Research and Demonstration Center. The director was a friendly man, and after we had lunch together in a restaurant ("Private Club. Members Only."), he introduced me to Mr. W., the custodian of the Center.

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(Later I found out that being a White person was the only qualification needed for membership.)

Mr. W. was a very good informant. He was a quiet and somewhat shy man of about fifty, uneasy about spending time on *DARE* during work hours, even though he had been given permission. He was alert and spontaneous in his responses. We also spent many hours together at his home. Toward the end, I thanked him for his great help and his patience with me. He smiled a bit ruefully and said it had meant a lot to him that he could be of help: "You know, we live like fish in the water. We go through life and never leave a trace."

There were other informants in Rome. I managed to find an elderly African-American woman who was willing to be recorded on tape but didn't want to do the QR. Unfortunately, the tape recorder didn't work very well, and I doubt the recording was very useful later.

Except for that first night in the motel, I spent the rest of the time at a small private campground

“I found your Spring/Summer [2014] issue to be quite interesting. Amy Clark’s essay about ‘voice-place’ made me wonder where mine is. I was born in California, moved to Massachusetts when a year-and-a-half old, then to Detroit when I was three, then to South Bend when I reached 10, and, finally, to suburban Chicago when I was 15. My father lived in California for his first 33 years, and my mother grew up in suburban Boston (and you could tell it from every word she spoke). I suspect my voiceplace is Mishmash.

“Detlef Stark’s story brought to mind an experience I had in 1952 when I was going through Army basic training. A number of fellows in my barracks were from rural areas, and were a bit out of touch with the modern world. In a letter home I mentioned a ‘boy in our platoon who is too ignorant to know how to pronounce his own name. His name is Campbell but he insists it’s “Camel.”’ The ‘boy’ was from the hills of West Virginia and pronounced his name the old Scottish way, as in ‘The Campbells Are Coming.’ My mother informed me in her next letter that he may have been ignorant, but he wasn’t the only ignorant one in my platoon. (Today’s Scots pronounce it the way the soup company does.)”

Doug Downey  
Northbrook, Illinois

where I was the only guest. It was a lonely stay, but I did have all the facilities to myself. One evening, after my fifth flat tire of the trip, the family who owned the place and lived in a house on the grounds helped with a jack (mine had broken), then invited me in for a few drinks. Later that week, I was asked to have dinner with the family, and we spent a very pleasant evening together. When I finally left Rome, they refused to accept a fee for my ten-day stay.

Then it was on to Atlanta, which I approached somewhat apprehensively. This turned out to be fully justified. I spent more than two weeks there, much of it waiting for people who might help me find informants or talking to prospects who in the end didn't qualify for various reasons (mainly because they were originally from somewhere else—not too surprising in a big city). My notes on Atlanta are sketchy, and so are my memories. I spent several days just trying to find promising contacts. From the Georgia State Archives I went to the Atlanta Public Library, to Emory University, and to a number of churches and schools, but most of the names or places I was given were dead ends. I also made attempts to get in touch with members of the African-American community. Often, however, no one was interested, or my activities were regarded with suspicion. This was a year after Martin Luther King had been killed.

Getting around in Atlanta was also a problem. I couldn't use the car, because finding a parking spot in downtown Atlanta was practically impossible or prohibitively expensive. I used buses or walked, but that also consumed much time. Despite all these problems, I had been very lucky in one respect: at Emory University, the student housing office let me stay in an otherwise empty old dorm, free parking included, for \$20.00 a week.

Eventually, I found three informants. One was a young Black man in his thirties, one of only two or three Black people I interviewed during the entire trip. The second was an Emory University employee at whose home, after work on the QR, I was invited to watch Neil Armstrong step onto the moon. The third, my most valuable informant, was the owner of a grocery store. He spent many hours with me in the store after closing, often well into the night. His commitment and generosity were remarkable, especially in the larger context of my Atlanta experience.

After sixteen days, I was glad to leave Atlanta and move on to my next-to-last stop, Hogansville—a small town of about 3,000 people, sixty miles southwest of Atlanta and no longer



*Detlef Stark in Georgia  
in 1969*

part of the northern Georgia hill country. I quickly found a place to stay with friends of Pastor and Mrs. C.'s. Again I was touched by and grateful for the unquestioning openness of people who would invite total strangers like me into their house.

Finding informants in Hogansville, on the other hand, was much more difficult. One of the people I tried was a direct descendant of the man who had founded the town in the nineteenth century and given it his name. Of course, she knew everyone in town, and although she gave me some tips, she herself was not interested in doing the QR. Other people did short sections, but I hadn't yet found a really satisfactory informant. Half the population of Hogansville was Black, and I had hoped to find one or two African-American informants. I talked to several Black people, told them about *DARE*, and even had lunch with some, but no one was really prepared to get involved.

By then I knew a number of the townspeople fairly well, and they knew me. One day when I locked myself out of my car on Main Street and tried to open the door with a wire clothes hanger in plain sight of everybody who passed by, nobody asked questions or stopped me. Quite the opposite—two people offered their help, one of them a local police officer.

I was still looking for my star informant in Hogansville when I was given the name of a man from a very small place nearby, Corinth. Mr. J. was an elderly man, well into his seventies, who owned a farm but still worked part-time as an insurance agent out of a tiny two-room building. When we first got together, we didn't work on the QR; in-

stead, he showed me around his farm for hours. I was beginning to get a little restless, but I soon realized he was talking about many things that were the subjects of questions in the QR: plants, animals, farm implements, life on the farm in general, local foods and cooking, and plenty of local expressions and swear words. Much of what I knew about in rather abstract terms, I saw and experienced here firsthand.

Over the next four or five days, we would meet in his little insurance office and work on large parts of the QR. No client ever came in during my time there, but that didn't seem to bother him much. We had all the time in the world. Easily distracted though he was, it was always fun to listen to his stories and his remarks on the local people. From the first day on, he invited me to his home, where I met his wife and where we would talk for many hours in a warm and relaxed atmosphere. Mrs. J. was a marvelous cook, and long dinners with them are among my fondest memories of Georgia. In a way, they adopted me. There I had both an excellent informant and a "family."

It was obvious at that point that I wouldn't need any more informants in Hogansville, but I still had an earlier commitment with another farmer. He was an educated informant, and we did a few sections, but the atmosphere was tense. For the first time during my stay in Georgia, the relationship between the Black and White parts of the population became a topic in the general conversation, and some of the views I was exposed to I found difficult or impossible to accept.

My work there finished, I left Hogansville after nine days and headed toward my last destination, Richland, ninety miles south of Hogansville and just a few miles from Plains, Georgia. Richland was a town of about 1,500 people, and after a day or two I was under the impression that I had talked to most of them. All the places I tried—schools, churches, the town hall, the police, the general store, the post office—had yielded no usable information. The people I met were not interested, didn't know anyone who might be, or even lamented that their limited vocabulary wouldn't allow them to participate in an interview.

There was no campground near the town, so I rented a room in the Georgia Motel for \$15.00 a week and pondered what I could do. On the third day, the police chief saw me on the street, stopped his cruiser, beckoned me over, and mentioned the name of one of the oldest families in Richland: they might be able to help. I met Mr. K., a friendly, middle-aged man, prominent in the local timber industry, and he gave me the names of two or three people who might be willing to cooperate. Two indeed worked out, at least for a few sections of the QR. I went back to Mr. K., hoping he could recommend a few more informants. He couldn't, but then, rather spontaneously, offered himself as an informant. I had found my best informant in Richland. He seemed to enjoy the work on the QR more and more. He was a rich source of information, and he was by far the fastest of all my informants. He quickly grasped the questions and obviously found what I told him about *DARE* interesting. After we had completed a substantial part of the QR, Mr. K. told me he had to be away on business for four days, but also indicated that he wanted to finish the remaining questions, which was what I had hoped.

“Recently in the language world, something happened that might be described as the Super Bowl, the Olympics, the Fourth of July, New Year's, three scoops of ice cream, and a new kitten all rolled into one. . . . I'm talking about the fact that the magnificent six-volume *Dictionary of American Regional English* is now available online.”

Martha Barnette  
Co-host, *A Way with Words*

[*DARE* Ed: Thanks, Martha, and congratulations to you and co-host Grant Barrett on a recent milestone: the ten millionth podcast download of *A Way with Words*!]

This was my chance to take a break. I drove down to Jekyll Island on the Atlantic coast to spend a few leisurely days on the beach. If it hadn't been for the mosquitoes, it would have been perfect. Still, it was a very welcome change of pace. Back in Richland, we finished the QR in one long session. After almost two and a half months, my job as a *DARE* Fieldworker was done.

Georgia and fieldwork were a unique experience. I saw and learned so much that even now, after so many years, this experience is still vividly present in my mind. It was a privilege to do fieldwork for *DARE*, and I am grateful to have been a part of it. ♦

*After completing his fieldwork assignment for DARE, Detlef Stark went on to earn a Ph.D. in English Linguistics from UW–Madison and become a Senior Lecturer at Leibniz Universität Hannover. He is the author of The Old English Weak Verbs: A Diachronic and Synchronic Analysis and holds an honorary doctorate from Saratov State University in Russia.*



## Late-Breaking News—Discount on Digital *DARE*

It won't be available in time for Black Friday, but Harvard University Press will soon be offering a great deal for word enthusiasts everywhere.

Beginning December 2, check our website (<<http://www.dare.wisc.edu>>) for information about the opportunity to purchase individual subscriptions to Digital *DARE* at a discount. If you've been wanting access to the digital version of *DARE* (or wondering what to get the language lover on your holiday gift list), don't miss this limited-time offer! ♦

## *DARE* Board Member Receives Honor

*DARE* Board of Visitors member Ben Zimmer is the inaugural recipient of the Linguistic Society of America's Linguistics Journalism Award, recognizing his linguistic contributions to mainstream media. In addition to writing the "Word on the Street" column for the *Wall Street Journal*, Ben is the executive producer of two language-related websites (Vocabulary.com and the Visual Thesaurus) and chairs the New Words Committee of the American Dialect Society. ♦

## DARE Tapes and a Texas Tale

Several student interns are currently working on what we affectionately call “the bleeping project,” removing names and other personal or sensitive information from digital copies of the audiotapes recorded by the original DARE Fieldworkers between 1965 and 1970. When the project is completed, these audio files will be made available online. Scholars and casual listeners alike will find the “DARE Tapes” valuable for their linguistic and historical content.

As DARE intern Laura Peterson has discovered, the tapes provide fascinating portraits of twentieth-century life in the United States. She thought our *Newsletter* readers would enjoy this photo, given by a Texas informant to fieldworker Donald Boyd in 1967. Laura writes, “Informant TX047 built windmill water pumps ‘from El Paso to Dryden’ in the 1920s, sometimes camping for several weeks on-site to complete a project. The West Texas Lumber Company provided a materials kit that TX047 used to construct the windmill in the photo. Can you spot how many people are on top?” ♦



### From the Chief Editor's Desk Joan Houston Hall

As the temperature slides into the single digits here in Madison, we are warmed by your generosity! Our grateful thanks go out to the many friends who have made contributions to help sustain DARE's work. Although our future is uncertain, we persevere.

Updating of the digital version continues apace, and the closure on September 30 of the Online Wisconsin Survey means that we have data aglore (as some of our DARE Informants would say) to analyze. We'll share some results in the next issue of the *DARE Newsletter*.

As the year closes, please consider using the coupon on this page to make a tax-deductible donation to DARE. Best wishes from all of us for a very happy holiday season. ♦

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Pictured below interacting with the installation are (from left to right) Union Art Gallery Manager Laura Sims, Hall, Thielking, UW–Milwaukee Libraries Head of Special Collections Max Yela, and Brunnett.



## Voices Installation

An art installation inspired by *DARE* was on display at the UW–Milwaukee Union Art Gallery this fall as part of the exhibition “Bound and Beyond: Structure in Book Art.” *Voices: A Sculptural Book* was created by Keven Brunnett and Kristin Thielking, M.F.A. graduates of UW–Madison and members of the faculty of the UW–Stevens Point Department of Art and Design. On October 3, Joan Houston Hall participated in an artist panel at the exhibition.

*Voices* features over 400 polished brass and bronze tongues mounted on waist-high rods. The text of a *DARE* headword and definition is sandblasted into each tongue, and the tongues are designed to sway as viewers walk through (and interact with) the piece. ♦



## Staff Member Profile

*In this ongoing series, Beth Gardner interviews Financial Specialist Vanessa Smith, who joined the DARE staff in July of 2014.*

**Q:** What are your primary job responsibilities as DARE's Financial Specialist?

**A:** I manage the finances for DARE, some of which include federal grants, non-federal grants, gifts, and state funds. I prepare budget projections and maintain the accounting records, reconciling

these with the University and UW Foundation. I also act as the office manager for DARE, which involves a variety of responsibilities, such as putting together materials for meetings and collecting the staff's progress reports.

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

**A:** Helping the English department manage DARE's funds and learning all that goes into managing grants and gifts. This is my first time working for a university, so I also enjoy learning about the financial environment at UW-Madison.

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

**A:** Probably the most "different" part is having such a wide variety of responsibilities. My background is in finance and accounting, so I'm a huge numbers person. I work as both the Financial Specialist and the office manager, with a bit more focus on the latter.

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

**A:** How long the DARE project has been going on and the amount of work that's been put into it over the years. I had never heard of DARE before I started working here, even though I attended UW-Madison for my undergraduate degree.

**Q:** What are your interests away from the Dictionary?

**A:** I'm currently teaching myself computer programming through online courses and websites. It takes up a lot of time, but I always enjoy learning new things. I'm also very interested in health, nutrition, and fitness, and enjoy traveling. ♦



Photo credit: George E. Hall

*Chief Editor Joan Houston Hall was recently interviewed by host Jim Peck for the Milwaukee Public Television program I Remember. The episode featuring Hall will be available for online viewing (<[http://www.mptv.org/localshows/i\\_remember/](http://www.mptv.org/localshows/i_remember/)>) a few days after its November 24 airdate.*

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