

DARE *Newsletter*

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Dictionary of American Regional English

Winter 2011

From the Chief Editor's Desk

Joan Houston Hall

As is our tradition, we use the Winter issue of the *DARE Newsletter* to recognize and thank the many generous friends who have helped to keep this monumental project afloat. We are grateful both to the individuals who have dug deep into their pockets and to the foundations that have continued their giving through straitened economic times. As always, we extend special thanks to the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, and the University of Wisconsin–Madison for their critical support.

As is not traditional, this Winter issue is an abbreviated version of its usual form. The photo at right gives a taste of what some *DARE* staffers are currently absorbed in: with more than 15,000 cross-references and see-references to be checked in Volume V, sometimes it's easiest to sit smack in the middle of things! (Computers make it easy to list and sort the cross-references, but only human beings can tell if they make sense.)

Other staff members are making last changes to the text, doing final proofreadings, preparing *DARE*'s signature maps, and putting finishing touches on the approximately 15,000 bibliographic entries.

We look forward to bringing you up to date in our Spring/Summer issue, which will be full of the news from Lake Mendota. In the meantime, if you are able to assist in keeping *DARE* financially healthy, we welcome your gifts. (Copy the coupon on page 2 if you prefer not to cut up your *Newsletter*!) Jon Sorenson, *DARE*'s UW Foundation Director of Development, would also be pleased to talk with you about other ways to contribute. He can be reached at <jon.sorenson@supportuw.org> or at (608) 262-7211. ♦



Review Editor George Goebel checking cross-references

DARE Was There: The 1940s

Landon Risteen

Over the years, we've enjoyed catching up with former DARE staffers and student workers in the pages of this Newsletter. We're pleased to share this reminiscence from a UW–Madison alumnus who was one of Prof. Frederic Cassidy's students before the DARE project officially began.

There were folks in our class that did not talk about a "potluck dinner." They spoke of a "covered-dish" or "coverdish," and one fellow said it was a "kivvered-dish." There were others who had never heard of a "bubbler" and only drank

from a “water fountain.” Most of us thought the space between the street and the sidewalk was a “tree bank,” but some called it the “boulevard”; others said it was the “parking,” as odd as that sounded.

This was the University of Wisconsin in the winter of 1949, and the class was English 124, taught by Frederic Cassidy. The course was called Language and Literature for Teachers, and it was about linguistics, phonetics, and the history of English. And it agreed with me big-time. Professor Cassidy had the right stuff, the subject matter was fascinating, and on top of that, we spent a lot of time discussing regional variations in American speech. Cassidy had been compiling information on that subject for a couple of years, he said, and gave the impression that it was very, very important to him. I’m not sure he and his colleagues knew then that their research would grow specifically into *DARE*, but, in fact, it did.

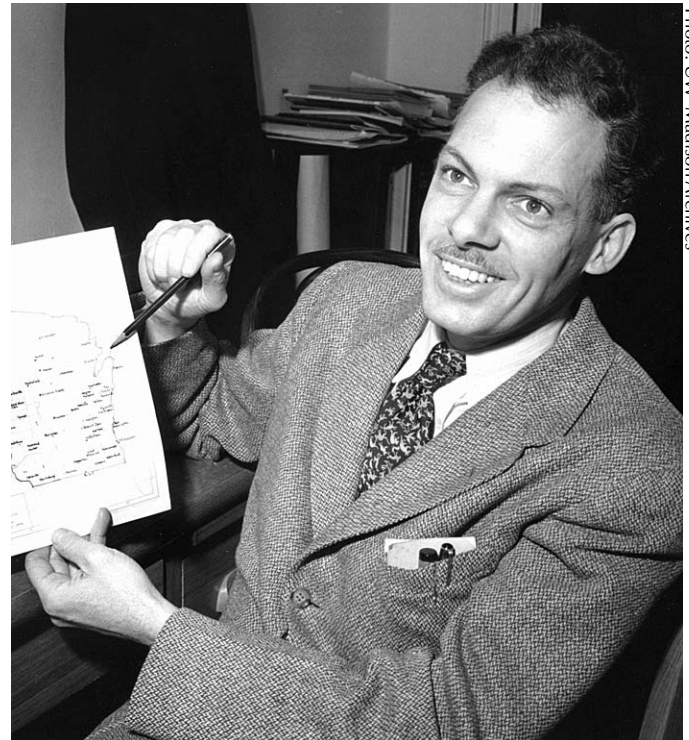
Many on the UW faculty were renowned in their fields, and people like “Wild Bill” Kiekhofer (Econ 101), Harry Harlow (Psych 1), Helen White (Shakespearean Drama 37a), Ricardo Quintana (English Literature 33a), and Karl Bottke (French 10a) were at the top of their game. So was Frederic Cassidy.

He taught us about the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and how much more accurate and descriptive it was than most dictionary pronunciation keys then in vogue. This was so, he said, because in the IPA there was a symbol for each sound in English—that is to say, 43 symbols, not 56 or 58, as in many dictionaries. He was a great proponent of the schwa symbol—the “upside-down e”—to represent the unstressed vowel sound. Most of this was new to our class of potential English teachers, but it made great sense, seemed eminently practical, and stuck with me for the rest of my life.

In fact, when I returned from service with the U.S. Army Medics in the Korean War, I got a job teaching English at Stoughton High School. I felt the things we had learned in English 124 were so important that I should try to share some of them with my students. So I introduced them to the IPA and to a few ideas pertinent to the history of English. A few days later I was called to the superintendent’s office and reminded that the Stoughton curriculum did not include either of those concepts, and they should not be part of my instruction.

So I left Wisconsin and went to work for Scott Foresman Publishing Co. for the next fifty years. It was a place that believed in the IPA, the schwa, and linguistic history as important and essential

to the study of English and to instructional materials. As the years passed, it turned out Professor Cassidy’s language research was not only on target but in the bull’s-eye, and we were all the better off for it. ♦



Frederic Cassidy in 1949, showing off plans for the Wisconsin English Language Survey, a precursor to the DARE project

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Because this is a national project, it is particularly meaningful that gifts were received from supporters in thirty-two states and the District of Columbia (and friends in Canada and France as well).

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