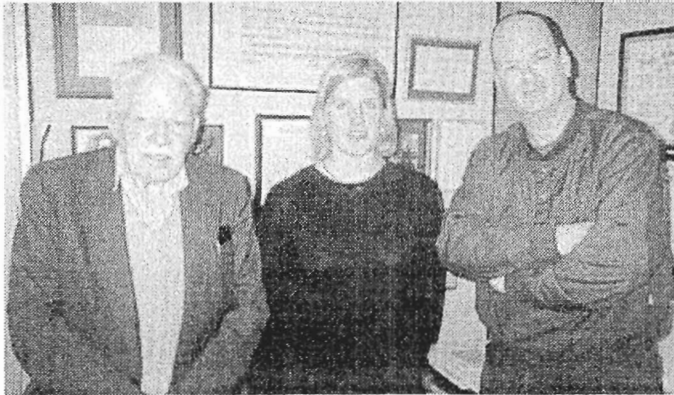


# DARE Newsletter

Vol. 2, No. 1

Dictionary of American Regional English

Winter 1999



Frederic G. Cassidy, Chief Editor; Rebecca Roeder, Research Assistant; Leonard Zwilling, General Editor, Bibliographer

## From Raw Data to Final Entry

**Joan H. Hall**  
Associate Editor

One of the questions *DARE* staffers are frequently asked is "How do you actually write a book like this?" I suspect that the corollary (but politely unexpressed) question is often "And why does it take so long?" In this article I'll briefly outline the process of writing an entry in the hope that you'll gain a better idea of the many steps that are involved and the necessity for the meticulous care that each entry receives.

In the first three volumes of *DARE* there are more than 40,000 headwords and additional senses, not to mention tens of thousands of cross-references. Each one of those headwords and senses had to go through the process described below. In addition, there are thousands of other items that started their way through the process and were then

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## Funding Update

**David Simon**  
Development Specialist

The past few months have been successful ones as far as funding for the *Dictionary of American Regional English* is concerned. Over sixty new donors have been added to the expanding list of *DARE* contributors. Support from foundations has also been a bright spot. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (a generous and longtime supporter of *DARE*) returned as a *DARE* contributor with a gift of \$100,000. We have also received support from the Charles A. Dana Foundation, the William E. Simon Foundation, and the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, among others. This support was essential in keeping our efforts alive and going forward.

The funding challenges facing *DARE*, however, are still significant. We need to be sure that the final two volumes will have the financial backing to be completed. The future of *DARE* does depend on increases in private support.

I would like to make all of you aware of two ways that you can support the *DARE* project. These are important methods of helping *DARE* that may not have occurred to you.

First, gifts of stock are welcome and very much appreciated. In the over thirty-year history of this project, a very small percentage of our contributions has been in the form of stock gifts. This is surprising, considering the tax benefits of making a stock gift to a non-profit organization such as *DARE*. With

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rejected as “not *DARE* words.” In fact, it often takes nearly as much work to decide *not* to include a term as it does to include it.

## Sources of Data

The editors start out with four main sources. The *Data Summary* is an alphabetical index to the roughly two-and-a-half million responses to the fieldwork questions; the *Main File* records quotations generated by *DARE*’s extensive reading program, which included newspapers, diaries, government documents, regional fiction and poetry, collections of local language and folklore, and the like; the *Index* leads us to sources such as glossaries, dissertations, regional cookbooks, and wordlists from the audiotapes made by our informants; and the *Latest File* is the repository for all materials acquired after the formal collecting was completed.

From this mass of material, editors must determine which words are truly “*DARE* words”—words that pattern either geographically or socially, or are part of our folk language (the language we learn from family and friends rather than from our teachers).

The analysis of words in the *Data Summary* is relatively straightforward. A computer program allows editors to map every occurrence of the word, and creates a table of “social statistics” by which we can tell if the word is used disproportionately by members of any of our social categories of age, sex, race, community type, and level of education. When our information comes only from other sources (as is true approximately 80% of the time), the decision whether to enter a word depends on a careful weighing of all the available evidence. This in turn requires an intimate familiarity with all of our copious reference materials.

## Writing the Entry

Once a word has been deemed enterable, editors must systematically investigate pronunciations, spelling variants, etymology, and regionality, then analyze the citations in order to craft a definition.

Some words are amazingly uniform in pronunciation across the country, varying only in such

expectable ways as the presence or absence of postvocalic *r* (*father/fathuh*). Others, however, are interestingly complex. Consider the peonies. For most Americans, they are /piˈəniz/. For many people, though, particularly older speakers and those who live in the Inland North and Midland, they are /paɪ(ə)niz/ (“pineys”); for those in the Central states, Mid Atlantic, South Midland, and New England, again, especially among older speakers, they are often /piˈoniz/ (with stress on the second syllable); for others, they are /piniz/ (“peenies”) or /pɪniz/ (“pinnies”). In order to determine these kinds of regional distinctions, questionnaires had to be checked for all of those informants who responded with the term *peony*.

*DARE* is careful to include cross-references for all the spelling variants we find, since many of our headwords come from oral traditions and have no regularized spelling; or, they are pronounced variously, and therefore have numerous spellings. The game *pom-pom-pullaway*, for instance, is also attested as *pom-pom-Pete-away*, *pullaway*, *pump-pump-pullaway*, and *pum-pum-pullaway*, among other forms. If you look for it under “pu-,” you’ll be glad to have the cross-reference there to send you to “po-.”

With respect to etymologies, *DARE*’s policy is to go back only to proximate sources (we’ll leave the Old Norse to the *OED*), and to include etymological information only when it is immediately useful or if we can add something new to the discussion. Sometimes our careful research is rewarded, as was the case with *bobbasheely* (see the first issue of the *Newsletter*); in other cases, the answer seems tantalizingly close, but just out of reach, as at *savagerous*, meaning “fierce, vigorous” or “fiercely, vigorously.” Although the word is usually explained as a derivative of *savage*, this is not consistent with pronunciations implied by some of the early spellings.

The regionality of words can be shown by our mapping program, but thousands of the words entered in *DARE* were found in sources other than our fieldwork; for those, regionality must be determined by discovering where the writers were from or where their characters were alleged to be living. Often this is obvious from the text; sometimes our

quote-checkers can discover the information in reference sources; and sometimes we have to proceed without knowing a location. Although most of our regional labels are couched in terms of states or larger geographic areas, occasionally we refer to other kinds of distinctions: at the entry *schnibble*, for instance, we will say “chiefly in German settlement areas.” This word, from German *Schnippel* “a scrap,” turns up in such other forms as *schnipfel*, *schnivel*, *schnuffel*, *snibble*, and *snipple*, almost always in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Along with standard dictionary definitions (when available), the quotations serve as the basis on which the editors formulate definitions. Because the writers of our sources vary tremendously in terms of time, place, background, skill, and style (and there are nearly 9,000 sources from which we have taken quotations), it is a real challenge to extract the precise meaning of a word from the snippet of context, and to align that quotation with others that are sufficiently similar. Our editors all have years of experience with language, however, and, as you will see below, we have multiple checkpoints at which we can question, disagree with, or affirm individual decisions. From the available quotations, a selection is made to indicate the chronological range of a word, its geographic spread, its social dimensions, and its essential meaning.

### Verification of Quotations

Since *DARE* is considered the authoritative reference tool on American English, every quotation is verified either by the editors or by our project assistants, against the original source whenever possible. (If it is not possible, we attribute the quotation to the source in which we found it.) By doing such checking, we have discovered and corrected literally hundreds of errors in other dictionaries, some of them resulting in radically different interpretations of the evidence.

### Review and Production Procedures

After entries are drafted, they are passed on to our review editor, who makes suggestions for changes and then passes them in turn to Fred Cassidy and to me. When we have made additional

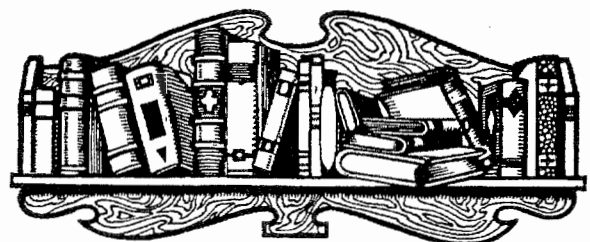
suggestions, the entries go to our production staff for a first check of cross-references and format details, and are then keyboarded and proofread in working galleys. (We will go into more detail about such matters in a later issue of the *Newsletter*, but for now it is enough to say that the several kinds of coding that are added to distinguish different type sizes, fonts, sections of entries, cross-references, and phonetic characters present a huge challenge to keyboarder and proofreaders alike.)

After being proofread, the in-house galleys are subjected to another “critical” reading, this time by an editor other than the original writer, and by our adjunct editor, Audrey Duckert. With their suggestions in mind Fred and I make final decisions, and the changes are typed and everything is proofed again. But that’s not the end.

Because additional information accumulates in our “Late Addits” file, we make a final pass right before the text is sent to Harvard University Press, adding “up-to-the-minute” quotations when we discover them in current newspapers or similar sources. At that point, all cross-references are verified, maps are inserted, and other final checks are carried out.

Once page proof has been received from the Press, our production staff members check it carefully not only for the text itself, but also for proper alignment of columns, “loose” lines (those with too much space between characters), appropriate end-line hyphenation (to avoid such oddities as “thin-gumabob” and “fun-draiser”), running heads (the top-of-the-page words indicating the first and last entries on a page), and placement of the maps. Fred reads the text again at this point, and, once any errors are corrected, we send the text back and wait, impatiently, for the delivery of bound volumes.

Yes, it is a slow process. But we believe that the end result—a book you can trust, depend upon, and read with pleasure—is worth the wait.



## Funding Update

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the rising stock market of recent years, a stock gift to *DARE* can result in your not having to pay a capital gain tax on the paper gain, and you also receive a charitable income tax deduction for the gift. I am happy to say that *DARE* received its first stock gift in quite some time last month. I hope to see additional stock gifts in the near future.

Second, deferred gifts are another important way of contributing to *DARE*. Options such as gift annuities, gifts of real property, gifts from estate plans, and charitable remainder trusts are easy to arrange. The University of Wisconsin Foundation, which manages the *DARE* financial account, handles hundreds of deferred gifts every year to various parts of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I would be happy to send you information on deferred giving options, and would enjoy discussing them further with you.

I do want to thank all of you who have contributed to *DARE* over the past few months. *WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT A GREAT DEAL.*

If you would like to make a cash gift to *DARE*, checks should be made out to *DARE/UW Foundation* and sent to 6131 Helen C. White Hall, 600 North Park St., Madison, WI 53706.

If you have questions regarding stock gifts or deferred giving possibilities, you can reach me at 608-265-9836, at the above address, or by e-mail at [davidsimon@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:davidsimon@facstaff.wisc.edu).

It is exciting to be working to ensure that this very special project is completed, and I am pleased to share with you James J. Kilpatrick's enthusiasm for the project as well (see page 6). With your help, we will literally be "On to Z" and the completion of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*.



## Notes and Quotes

Once again, we're pleased to share excerpts from letters to *DARE*.

"I read an interesting article ... on the fruit and vegetable vendors in Baltimore known as *arabbers*, and I thought to look the word up in *DARE*, which had a beautiful and full entry on it ... It brought home to me once again how important and perishable a commodity you are dealing with."

Sidney Landau, Editor-in-Chief  
*Cambridge Dictionary of American English*

"Thank you, thank you! I used the word 'nibby' the other day ... Well, my friend in Texas had never heard of this word and thinks I am crazy ... I came across your book and there it was—and *DARE* explained it exactly as I explained it."

Sylvia Garrison  
Indiana University

"I sent off to NPR for the tapes and script [of an interview with Fred Cassidy and Joan Hall], and just used them to provoke a fine class discussion."

Peter Richardson  
Linfield College

"The visit to your dictionary project is certainly one of the most wonderful and rewarding experiences I have had here in the United States."

Shiying Guo  
Fulbright Scholar from Beijing

"*DARE* is, along with Partridge, not only a most-useful reference work, but a delight to simply pick up and peruse."

John M. Williams  
Maricopa County [AZ] Librarian

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Goldye Mohr, *DARE*'s first bibliographer

## In Fond Memory

Goldye Mohr, *DARE*'s first bibliographer, died on September 18, 1998, just nine days before her 101<sup>st</sup> birthday. *DARE* was Goldye's third career. Her first, as a teacher, followed her graduation from college in 1919. At that time women who married were immediately relieved of their teaching duties, so her wedding was a secret and her honeymoon simply a weekend getaway. Her second career, after her children were grown, was as a cataloguer at the University of Wisconsin libraries. Having just retired from that job in 1965, she heard that *DARE* was in need of a bibliographer—and so began a twenty-one-year association with the project.

In addition to researching the communities to which we would send our fieldworkers, Goldye was responsible for the ever-growing bibliography and for finding and excerpting appropriate sources for the *Dictionary*. Taking the books home, she curled up in bed and read them for quotations, allowing her to remark that she had always wanted a profession

she could pursue honorably in bed!

As *DARE*'s "mother-in-residence," Goldye shared many a heartache with young staff members, and also delighted in their triumphs. She was staunchly conservative, and often shook her head at the political trends of the 1960s and 70s. But she made sure that staffers cast their ballots, even when she knew they would vote the "wrong" way. (Goldye's opinions mattered enough to her colleagues that fieldwork coordinator Jim Hartman confesses that he went home and shaved his new beard when she remarked that he looked like Judas Iscariot.)

Always a careful observer of people, Goldye enjoyed writing about what she saw and experienced. The October 1998 issue of *Reminisce*, "The Magazine That Brings Back the Good Times," has the delightful story of her first date and the beginning of a lifelong love affair. The February 1999 issue of *Reminisce Extra* carries her whimsical piece "From Washtub to Bathtub... and Back!"

After retiring from *DARE* in 1986, Goldye continued to take books to bed and look for quotes for us. When asked, about a month before her death, whether she wanted to renew her UW library card, the answer was immediate: "I'd hate not to be able to use those facilities; I may not get there often anymore, but I can't imagine not having the privilege."

## Notes and Quotes

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"The tapes themselves are a treasure trove that must be preserved and kept available for all who can make use of them. With many informants already in their late seventies and some older, the record they provided in the late 60's of regional dialect going back into the last century, is priceless. As a dialect coach, director and actor working in both theater and film, I know of no resource that can come close to providing me so rich and systematic a survey of American dialects."

Paul Meier, Theatre and Film Department  
University of Kansas

(The following article was part of James J. Kilpatrick's syndicated column "The Writer's Art," appearing in newspapers across the country on November 8, 1998. It is reprinted with permission of the author.)

## "Feeling A Little Faunchy"

Not long ago a gentlewoman in Danville, Ill., asked a question: Had I ever heard of the verb "to faunch"? She couldn't find it in a dictionary, but she remembered it from her childhood. Someone who was irritated or really angry was "faunchy."

This was a new one on me, but out of curiosity I turned to that superlative work of lexicography, the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, and there it was: "To rant, rave, rage; to fret, to show irritation or impatience." The verb is alternatively spelled as "fauch" or "fawnch." It appears chiefly in the west and southern midwest.

The researchers of *DARE*, as the dictionary is known, produced an array of citations dating from 1911. "The father fairly faunched when he found that his children had played truant." From Texas in 1984: "I want you to quit fawnchin' around this house and get out there." From Missouri in 1953: "He was poundin' on the table with his knife, just a-fawnchin' and a-slaverin' for his victuals."

I confess to an unabashed love affair with *DARE*. The massive project is now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year of research and citation. Thus far, three volumes have been published. Volume One, covering entries A-C, appeared in 1985. Volume Two, D through H, came from Harvard University's Belknap Press in 1991. Volume Three, covering I-O, appeared in 1996.

Now we await Volume Four, but we await it with a sense of trepidation. *DARE* gets gratifying support from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and it benefits from a modest matching grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, but it has operated from the beginning on a bare-bones budget. If the necessary financing can be found, Volume Four may appear by the end of 2002. It will take the project halfway through the letter S.

*DARE* depends upon a small army of devoted volunteers who supply the editors with documented citations of such regional verbs as "faunch." The citations are accumulated by a small staff under the direction of Fred Cassidy and Joan Houston Hall. Theirs is a monumental task, but it fully justifies the labor of love that goes into it.

Volume Four is far along. It will contain some delightful specimens of regional English:

To paddybass (Outer Banks of North Carolina), meaning to walk back and forth.

Pokelogan (New England, Great Lakes), an area of stagnant water connected to a lake.

Puckersnatch (Northeast, especially New England), a difficult or muddled situation.

Punkie (chiefly New York State), a biting insect.

Quandy (New England), a sea duck better known as "old squaw."

Scallyhoot (Western states), to move quickly; to gallivant.

For any person who loves the English language, and revels in its richness of idiom and word origin, the *Dictionary of American Regional English* offers a cause worth supporting. The address is 6131 Helen C. White Hall, 600 North Park St., Madison, WI 53706. Contributions are fully tax deductible. If you can't send a million dollars, send something.

## Coming in Volume IV

Response to the preview of Volume IV head-words in the first issue of the *Newsletter* was enthusiastic, so here are a few more samples to whet your appetite.

<i>pinkletink</i>	A spring peeper. (Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, MA)
<i>pinto</i>	A homemade or inexpensive coffin. (Coastal SC and GA, among speakers of Gullah)
<i>potrero</i>	A pasture or naturally enclosed meadow. (CA)
<i>poule d'eau</i>	A coot. (LA)
<i>quill pig</i>	A porcupine. (Chiefly Nth, esp NEast)
<i>quill-wheel</i>	To roam about. (Ozarks) Also, to yield, give up, collapse. (CT)

Continued on page 7

## Where Are They Now?

To keep you in touch with *DARE* colleagues, we will regularly mention several of our former staffers in this space. We'd be delighted to hear what *you* are doing.

One of **Jeff Hirshberg's** triumphs as an editor (1977-83) was to discover the truth behind *bombo*: his careful research saved *DARE* from perpetuating a lexicographic myth that North Carolinian *bombo* was a squirrel stew, when in fact it was a rum punch! From Madison, Jeff moved to Buffalo, New York, where he has worked in accounting since 1983. Now head of his own firm, he specializes in trusts and is deeply involved in community work.

Fieldworker **August Rubrecht** (1967-68) traveled the highways and byways of Arkansas, Louisiana, New York, and Delaware, sending back photos as well as questionnaires. Years later, a *DARE* editor could look in the file and see a picture of August's "Word Wagon" on a stretch of road variously called a *field road* and a *headland*, and use it to help define the terms. Some of his fieldwork adventures are delightfully recounted in a recent piece in *Verbatim: The Language Quarterly* (Autumn 1998). August is on the faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

A more recent colleague, **Sonja Ritchie**, who spent 1994-95 with us as a student assistant and helped with the proofreading of Volume III, now has an exciting job with Rockport Press in Rockport, Massachusetts. Her duties take her around the world, especially to Asia, for which she is the company's regional representative. In addition to taking two business trips there this spring, she has chosen to go to Bali for her honeymoon in May.

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### Volume IV

*Continued from page 6*

<i>rail-splitter</i>	A rustic. (Esp Sth, S Midl)
<i>rolle bolle</i>	A game with similarities to bowling and horseshoes. (Dutch and Belgian settlement areas)
<i>scaper</i>	A rascal, villain. (Chiefly FL, GA)
<i>scat!</i>	Gesundheit! (Sth, S Midl, SW)
<i>scuttle/scutty</i>	A trapdoor. (NEng, Sth, S Midl)

## Staff Member Profile

In this second-of-a series interview with a *DARE* staffer, David Simon poses some questions to Frederic G. Cassidy, *DARE's* Chief Editor.

**Q:** How did you come up with the name for this project?

**A:** The acronym *DARE* was invented jointly with Audrey Duckert, to avoid use of the word "dialect" which is so generally misunderstood. We thought that *DARE* was a clever and more accurate term. There are plenty of dictionaries of American speech, including some good ones, but none tries, as *DARE* does, to study the entire United States, with its social and regional differences of usage.

**Q:** What is it about regional English that you find so interesting?

**A:** I'd say "e pluribus unum." People of every kind have adopted the English language and made it their own, preserving some of the ancient words that Chaucer and Shakespeare used, naturalizing foreign words and expressions from every part of the world furnished by our population, and, as times have changed, inventing countless others.

**Q:** Why is the *DARE* effort so unique?

**A:** We cover differences in time, the words that survive and where they do, the kinds of people who use them, the differences in meaning from one region to another. Where maps show this best, we give the reader maps. This information was gathered on the spot by our trained fieldworkers, and is bolstered by written evidence from all kinds of published sources.

**Q:** What's your favorite entry?

**A:** I can't choose. There were some tough ones to track down, like *bettywood*, which we still are not sure of. Word-lovers from all over the country have helped us solve some of the puzzlers.

**Q:** Tell me about your experience as a fieldworker.

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## DARE Newsletter

### Postal Return Address:

Dictionary of American Regional English  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
6125 Helen C. White Hall  
600 N. Park St., Madison, WI 53706

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Madison, WI

## Staff Member Profile

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**A:** I myself tested our method of gathering the data, to make sure our questionnaire was right. Then, with very small changes, we used the same questionnaire throughout the country, which gave uniformity and comparability in all fifty states. Our personal adventures as fieldworkers were "a whole nother story," as people say nowadays.

**Q:** What do you like best about being Chief Editor?

**A:** I have a first-class staff who really love the language and are keen on getting things right. Public reception has been altogether favorable.

**Q:** What aspects of *DARE* are you most proud of?

**A:** The broad facts of American English are generally well known, the details of regional differences less well so. *DARE* gives a fuller picture, and we make it as true to the facts as we can. We're past the midway mark and our motto is "On to Z."

## DARE Staff Members

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