Funding Update

David Simon
Development Specialist

One of the more enjoyable aspects of this job is the opportunity for me to talk to many DARE supporters around the country. I have been impressed with the warm feelings that exist for the Dictionary, and the wide range of people who are interested in DARE is truly remarkable. Over the past few weeks, I have been asked a number of good questions that I thought I would answer in this column.

1. Can I charge a contribution to DARE to my credit card?

Yes, you certainly can. Gifts to DARE can be charged to your Visa or your MasterCard. On the bottom of page 4 of this newsletter, you will find a form that you can fill out to charge your contribution to DARE. Simply fill out the form and mail it back to us. Your gift will be matched on a one-to-one basis by a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Your contribution is fully tax-deductible and will be appreciated very much.

2. Why is it particularly important that I contribute to DARE now?

This is a critical time in the history of the DARE project. We are working on Volume IV of the Dictionary, which will take us through the middle of the letter S. Once Volume IV is finished, we will have only one volume left to complete the alphabet. When Volume IV is published (anticipated in 2002), we will truly be on the “home stretch” of finishing

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In the Field

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I entrusted a Word Wagon to me and I set out to do interviews in Washington and Oregon in late August 1966—it would be easier to remember now. I had seen an ad on a bulletin board at the University of Minnesota, where I was a graduate student. I wrote a letter to DARE explaining that I knew little of dialectology but loved language, and to my surprise I was invited to join the Dictionary project as a fieldworker. I divided my summer between a course in linguistics, practicing phonetic transcription, and a crash course with Dick the Driving Teacher (as a New York City boy I had never driven a car, let alone a Dodge van outfitted with every convenience). I presented myself in Madison at the end of summer. When Prof. Cassidy handed me the keys to a Word Wagon and asked me to drive him across campus, I quickly made a sloppy turn and drove us up on the curb. The Editor-in-Chief expressed polite support and confidence rather than the surprise I read in his face as he explained a little more to me about how to drive.

I did interviews all over the state of Washington that fall. The names of the towns I worked in still have an exotic ring to me: Walla Walla, Pullman, Okanogan, Malo, Snohomish, Skykomish, Snoqualmie, Port Townsend. I drove down to Berkeley to see friends late in December and spent New Year’s Eve in San Francisco’s Filmore Auditorium listening to Janis Joplin and Big Brother and the Holding Company. New Year’s Day I drove back to Oregon to do eight more interviews before I headed east in early spring. I remember marveling at spring as I started the drive up White Bird Hill in Idaho and getting stuck in a blizzard by the time I got to the top. When I got back east, I did interviews in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania: Collingswood, Whitney Point, Hogansburg, Pottsville, Gloversville, Beaver Falls.

Every week of that year I was welcomed in the homes of unusual, bright, often delightful people I could never have imagined. We worked our way through part or all of the 325 pages of questionnaire. “Whadyacall...?” Sometimes an interview was a businesslike exchange, sometimes we enjoyed it like a game of Scrabble; often it also became a personal exchange involving mutual curiosity, laughter, and surprising warmth. I also remember my impulse to become guarded in the course of even the most congenial exchange when Vietnam was mentioned. I expected or recognized unbreachable political disagreement, and I did not want to lose the informant that I had spent time tracking down through the library and the coffee shop and the city hall, so I was often afraid to speak of things that were awfully vivid in my mind that year. Outside of New York City, in that respect, I was not always comfortable in America.

I liked the older people best. It never hurt that an informant was alone and happy to have company. Living in the Word Wagon, sleeping in state parks or at the edge of town beside fields or orchards, or—worst-case scenario—in truck stops, I was grateful for company, too. Looking over a random selection of “character sketches” from my questionnaires, I remember names and conversations, parlors and kitchens, and more than anything, personal exchanges and a sense of connectedness to history:

_Marge L.,_ on land her farms had farmed since 1804; outspoken, smart, enthusiastic for everything: making things, running her farm, discovering again and again that “whatever is, is right.”

_Westley W.,_ one of New York City’s first African American firemen, so proud to have moved as far as he had in the “white man’s fire department,” and so aware of his family in history. His grandparents were escaped slaves who had settled on Manhattan’s 14th Street—close to where I live today.

_Eva D.,_ 85 years old, living in a house built by her grandfather; my notes say, “wonderful sense of humor, wonderful.”

My friends who drop by in a steady stream as ‘my young man.’

Most of my informants were “ordinary folks” who sat through an hour or an afternoon or a day of questions and then more or less graciously sent me packing. Some offered instant coffee or lunch, others broke the interview up around their meals or had me leave and return after naps or chores. In Gloversville, New York, a former glove maker and organizer of the local branch of the Fur and Leather Workers Union showed me how to pick dandelion greens, which he then cooked us for lunch. We ate them with vinegar. I don’t remember whether he was any good as an informant, but boy, I loved that lunch.

There were some real eccentrics, too: _Gladys H._
who actually consulted a Ouija board (was she kidding?) to see if I should return for a second afternoon of questions. The board said “YES.” Her house was surrounded by an overgrown lawn and concealing hedges and filled with stacks of newspapers and magazines. Her davenport was covered with paintings she had made, all unfinished. She collected Jew’s harps, and for some reason, refused to let me make a tape of her reading “Arthur the Rat” [DARE Ed: the story devised to elicit all the important pronunciation variants in American English].

Meeting informants was never uninteresting: Byron S., 62, insisted that I stay and push forward, though his lovely “swamp Yankee” dialect, as he called it, froze with every question and left us both miserably frustrated. In the character sketch I called him a fieldworker’s nightmare. At one point, my notes record him saying, “Mister—you’ve almost come to the right place.” He had that tight on the money.

And there was Walter J., retired carpenter, now tool-sharpener and sidewalk-supervisor (arriving, I was told, with his camp chair at construction sites, before the work crew, and sitting there in silence much of the day). I became a player in internal and local dramas that I never quite understood. He insisted that I do the entire interview with him and to speak to no one else in town, but about two-thirds of the way through the questionnaire he accused me, in a shocking explosion, of “using” him. I suppose I was using him, but I had thought our interest in probing his language mutual.

Not everyone I met accepted the idea of dialect research at face value. In an Idaho town where I got caught up in an expression of protest in response to police brutality against some African American Job Corps workers, it required surprising effort to convince a district judge that the University of Wisconsin had indeed sent me to Washington and Oregon to record how people spoke. The story’s too long for telling here, but suffice it to say that the court was skeptical about my real intentions in visiting the Northwest.

Without looking at my notes I remember three informants as if I had just met them. Only two were actually informants. K.G. was incapable of answering questions; he was barely verbal. I’m not sure how my usually effective route to interesting, talkative, approachable, and long-standing local residents led me to him. The last link in that chain of referrals was the only Jew that I remember meeting in Oregon: he was the owner of a furniture store whose peddler grandfather had put down roots in that town seven decades before. I couldn’t convince him to do an interview, but accepted his offer to introduce me to K.G. K.G. was a junk collector and a maker of wind rattles: he hung pot tops, washing-machine lids, bedsprings, and brass bowls all around his yard so he could listen to the sounds the wind played on them as they knocked against each other or just shook. I never even took the questionnaire out of the Word Wagon, but I did do a tape of him improvising an earnest, wacky song about “ten thousand years ago.”

And there were Dale and Sally B., big Scrabble players. He was a shake maker: he cut wooden shingles off a block with a file—a knife-like wedge fastened on a perpendicular handle—and a hand-finished hardwood maul. I liked watching him work, and I still use the maul he gave me as a bookend for the dictionaries on my desk. The striking end is chopped up from slapping thousands of times against the wedge, and the handle is as polished as fine furniture from the year it spent in Dale B.’s hand. There were a dozen mauls under the house where he threw them when they were too worn to use. I slept in the yard in the Word Wagon for a week, and the questionnaire became the basis of lively family-style evenings together. When the interview was done, Dale and Sally B. gave me a huge bag of hickory nuts from a tree in their yard, and I cracked the shells with the maul and fed on them for morsels.

The third of my maybe-most-memorable informants was Ethel R., 70, retired teacher of retarded children in a town in Pennsylvania. Her mother’s family had come to the county in 1759. She had a remarkable peacefulness about her, and it seemed to go way beyond the deep religious faith that she explained to me—and that I could barely fathom. I was pretty closed-minded about her beliefs, actually, but I couldn’t ignore the fact that she was...sort of glowing. I always told informants that I’d be happy to help cut around the house if they liked; they were, after all, giving me so much of their
time. Ethel R. was the only one who ever seriously took me up on my offer. She gave me a bucket of soapy water and a sponge and sent me out to clean her car, which looked like it had just driven in from the Dust Bowl with the windows down. Once is the middle of the interview she looked at me and leaned all the way back in her La-Z-Boy and seemingly out of the blue smiled this beatific smile and said, "Look, It’s this easy.” And I imagined that I knew exactly what she was talking about. Then we went back to the questionnaire as if nothing had happened.

I set out in the Word Wagon a provincial Mantuantea who loved words and enjoyed people but hadn’t seen too much of America—except for a train ride across country with my family when I was twelve, and a lot of newsreel footage about middle American indignation over college kids’ outrage about the war in Vietnam. I collected language for DARE for two or more years (in my own car after that first year in the Word Wagon). I recorded pronunciations and regionalisms and corroborated information laid out in the questionnaire, and often I had the feeling that I was maybe a generation late—too many people seemed to speak generic TV Guide American English. Then in almost every town I would find someone, or hear a word or an expression in the course of an interview, to prove that regional dialects were there if I would only listen. I also found a welcome and a straightforwardness in almost every informant that moved me in ways that I never expected.

A few weeks ago I flew over eastern Washington on the way to a conference, and looking out the window I realized I was probably somewhere near a small town where I once spent days with an octogenarian named R.M. He had arrived in Washington Territory as an infant in a covered wagon, little knowing that the settlement would one day carry his name. My notes just say “a little man in a big chair,” (he was small), but I remember being thrilled to realize that what I had thought was distant history was alive and right in front of me.

(David Goldberg went from DARE to work on the Great Yiddish Dictionary and to get a Ph.D. in Yiddish literature. He is now Associate Director of Foreign Language Programs for the Modern Language Association and a weekend potan farmer.)

Funding Update

DARE. So it is critical that funding be obtained to complete Volume IV.

3. Who is supporting DARE?
   DARE is supported by a combination of individuals, foundations, and government agencies. The National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Gladys Kriehl Delmas Foundation, and the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation have been among the key supporters of the Dictionary. A very exciting development has been the strong increase in donations by individuals during the past year. Over one hundred new individual donors have contributed to DARE over the past nine months. Your gift does make a difference—it allows our unprecedented work to continue. I urge all of you who care about DARE to contribute to this special effort.

4. How can I make a contribution to DARE?
   If you would like to make a cash gift to DARE, checks should be made out to DARE/UW Foundation and mailed to DARE, 6131 Helen C. White Hall, 600 North Park Street, Madison, WI 53706. If you are interested in making a gift of stock or a deferred gift to DARE, please call me at 608-255-9836 so we can discuss the easiest way for you to make that type of contribution. If you simply have a question about the Dictionary, please call me at the above phone number or e-mail me at davidsimon@facstaff.wisc.edu. The form that you can use to charge your gift to DARE on a credit card is below. Thank you in advance for your support of the Dictionary of American Regional English.

We would like to join other supporters of the Dictionary of American Regional English and make the following contribution.

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Please use this gift to support the Dictionary of American Regional English.
My/Our contribution of $________ is enclosed.
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Please return this form to DARE, 6131 Helen C. White Hall, 600 North Park Street, Madison, WI 53706, Attn: David Simon.
Coming in Volume IV

Of the thousands of entries to come in Volume IV, here are a few tempting appetizers:

**packsaddle worm** A saddleback caterpillar (one with stinging hairs). (Especially Southern Appalachians)

**panguique** A card game similar to rummy. (AK, NW, CA)

**parrot-toed** Pigeon-toed. (Chiefly Mid and S Atl)

**pipjenny** A pimple. (Especially Delmarva, S Atl)

**pot cheese** A dry form of cottage cheese. (Chiefly NY, NJ, nPA, CT)

**quitting stick** A toothpick. (Especially S Midl)

**ragged robin** A farewell-to-spring in the NW, a cornflower in the Sth and Midl, and other flowers in other places.

**ramada** An open-sided, freestanding shelter. (Chiefly SW)

**rippet** A noisy disturbance, dispute, or fight. (Chiefly S Midl)

**rivel** A small lump of dough often added to soup. (PA German area)

**roär** (Pronounced “ro-day.”) To roar, growl about. (LA)

**rolliche** A dish made of seasoned beef wrapped in triple, then boiled, pickled, and cut into rounds. (NY, NJ)

**rommegrot** A porridge or pudding with cream as the main ingredient. (Especially MN, WI)

**seaturt** A wind off the ocean, often accompanied by fog or rain. (NEEng)

**sendero** A path; a clearing. (TX)

**shakedown** A makeshift bed, usu one made up on the floor. (Chiefly Nth)

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**Notes and Quotes**

Here, once again, are some excerpts from our correspondence files.

"I have known Fred Cassidy for many years ... and I am impressed with the marvelous on-going accomplishment that is the DARE."

John Hamer

National Humanities Alliance

"I hope that you will give DARE a thoughtful hearing. It is, in my humble opinion, one of the greatest American academic ventures of our time. And wait until you see the delightful thank you cards that they send to contributors!"

Gary S. Duesbar

New York State Historical Association

"Oh, indeed, yes this does help! And it makes perfect sense in the context of the poem in which I incorporated the quotation. Not only that, but your information reached me in time to add the explanation to my note section in my poetry book."

Patricia Ransome

Poet

"I left a lengthy voicemail message [at the Rockefeller Foundation] explaining that DARE is essential to the survival of civilization as we know it."

Stanley Katz, Former President

American Council of Learned Societies

"Thanks [for quotes for y'all]; that's awesome. DARE is wonderfully useful and y'all are so helpful!"

Walt Wolfram, Director

North Carolina Language and Life Project
The cost for each volume of the Index is $20. Postage/handling within the U.S. is $3 for the first copy and $1 per additional copy. Outside the U.S., postage is $3 for each copy. (All American Dialect Society members will automatically receive it as part of their membership benefits. What a bargain—membership for individuals is only $35 a year, and you receive PADS and four issues of American Speech plus the newsletter.)
Staff Member Profile

In this continuing series, David Simon poses some questions to Catherine Attig, DARE’s Production Assistant and Technical Typist.

Q: What are your responsibilities at DARE?
A: I was originally hired as a typist to enter the Dictionary text, with markup codes, into computer files. In the fourteen years that I’ve been with the project my duties have expanded greatly, and now include hiring, training, and supervising our student help; training and supervising our volunteers; assisting with computer hardware and software maintenance; and working on other projects (such as audio tape content indexing and evaluation, and assisting with running a conference) as they come up. There is always plenty of work to be done, and prioritization of tasks is a constant challenge.

Q: What do you like best about working at DARE?
A: The variety I just mentioned is something I enjoy about working at DARE. I don’t just sit and type entries into a computer all day long. Some days I look forward to the chance to sit down and do just that! Meeting and getting to know the students and volunteers is a very rewarding part of my job. They are all interesting people and all share a fascination with words. We get to follow some students for the four years of their undergraduate careers, and grow quite fond of them. Some, who’ve been mentioned before in the Newsletter and in this issue, have kept in touch with us after they’ve left Madison.

Q: What is the most memorable experience you have had at DARE?
A: One year ago I was honored by the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as one of the five recipients of the 1998 Classified Employee Recognition Award. I was both surprised and deeply touched by this show of appreciation for my work.

Q: Why are you interested in regional English?
A: My interest comes from the human geography and history side—how people’s manner of speech and word usage reflect their interests, the way they make their living, and where they live. I was an anthropology/archaeology major in college and have always been fascinated by how people have dealt with their surroundings. For me, DARE represents one facet of this study.

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Staff Member Profile

Q: What is your favorite DARE entry?
A: One of the things I enjoy about my position here is that while typing in all the entries for the entire Dictionary, I get to read them all. Some of them make me smile, others make me shake my head incredulously. While I can't say that I have one favorite word, it is fun being the only staff person to have grown up in New England. Occasionally during coffee break we'll all be chatting, and someone will grab a piece of paper and write down something I've just said.

Q: What activities are you interested in away from the Dictionary?
A: My greatest love is for the outdoors, especially wilderness areas. My husband and I spend as much time as we can outside, whether it is gardening in our suburban yard, or on trips to northern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, or in Alaska. Perhaps someday I could have a little battery-run computer out in my remote cabin, receive entries every few months delivered by float or ski plane, and beam the completed files back to the DARE offices via satellite.

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