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DSNA

NEWSLETTER

Frederick G. Cassidy 1907-2000



The world of words lost one of its most enthusiastic and dedicated scholars with the death, on June 14, 2000, of Frederic Gomes Cassidy. Best known as Chief Editor of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, which he had directed since 1963, Cassidy had cut his lexicographic teeth on the Early Modern English Dictionary project in the 1930s, had served as an advisor to the Thorndike Barnhart school dictionary series, had consulted for other publishers, and had also edited, with Robert B. LePage, the *Dictionary of Jamaican English*. His interest in language, however, was not limited to lexicography, as the Festschrift dedicated to him on his eighty-fifth birthday in 1992 indicates: it was divided into four sections, each representing one of his areas of research – Early English, Creoles, Lexicography, and American Language.

Fred's love for language resulted in large part from his exposure to both standard and Creole varieties of English in Jamaica, where he lived for his first eleven years, and his introduction to yet another dialect when he moved to Akron, Ohio in 1918. The realization that it was he rather than his new classmates who sounded "funny" was the stimulus to learn all he could about this varied language of ours.

At Oberlin College, where he received both a B.A. (1930) and an M.A. (1932), Fred was introduced to the formal study of language and literature, as well as science, history, and philosophy. He was also introduced to a young Frenchwoman, Hélène Lucile Monod. They were married on December 26, 1931 and remained devoted to one another until her death in 1980. Both Fred and Hélène went on to earn Ph.D. degrees from the University of

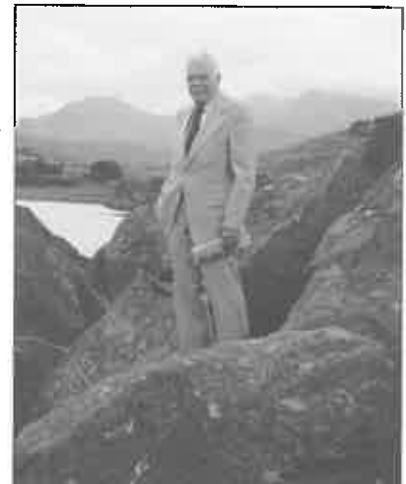
Michigan, and both had distinguished teaching careers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

When they came to Madison in 1939, Fred was an instructor in the Department of English, hired to fill in for Miles Hanley. Sixty years later, having moved through the ranks of Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor, and having retired as Emeritus Professor in 1978, Fred was still in Madison, one of the city's and the university's greatest boosters.

Fred was a well known fixture in Madison, in large part because of the success of *DARE*. It was a project that captured people's imagination, and he was a charismatic promoter of it. Reaction both to the project and to Fred was so positive that he found himself on the Today Show, the Tonight Show, and in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *USA Today*, among many other popular publications; he was also frequently and admiringly mentioned in William Safire's "On Language" column in the *New York Times Magazine*. Though he ultimately seemed to enjoy his notoriety, he confessed that it had taken some getting used to: when he was growing up, he said, it was only those accused of a crime who found their names in the paper.

Throughout his career, Fred was active in many professional organizations, including the Linguistic Society of America, the American Dialect Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Society for Caribbean Linguistics (which he helped to found) and, of course, the Dictionary Society of North America. He served as an officer of most of those organizations at least once, and in doing so became friends with many of the active participants in each. Fred Cassidy seemed to know everyone! And everyone knew – or wanted to know – him. Formally or informally, he served as mentor to dozens of students and scholars. He read their work willingly, bestowing genuine praise as well as gentle and constructive criticism.

Fred is remembered by students, colleagues, and



Fred on the rocks in Wales in 1987, during the Methods VI conference. Photo by N. Maynor.

Continued on page 3

David Guralnik: A Story

The following account was written by P.K. Saha of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, who had worked with David as a language and etymology consultant on Webster's New World dictionaries, about an extraordinary experience P.K. had in 1980, as the new Director of Graduate Studies in the English Department at CWRU. It was too long to include with the other tributes in the last issue of the Newsletter, but seems an important addition, giving us, in P.K.'s words, "a measure of David Guralnik, the human being."

In my first month as director I was surprised by a formal request from someone in California named Irwin Blacker. He said that he had heard about my new appointment, and he wanted me to review an appeal of his that had been denied back in the forties and also in the following three decades. He had completed all his coursework for the Ph.D. and passed the Comprehensive, but was then denied permission by the chairman to write a dissertation to complete the requirements for the Ph.D.

This chairman was no longer alive, and Blacker claimed that the sole reason for not being allowed to continue working toward the Ph.D. was the fact that he was Jewish. He said that the chairman had said to him in his office that he did not think a person of Jewish background could be qualified to teach English on the college level. Blacker went on to say that he left the university after that meeting and over the next 35 years appealed to the department several times, only to be turned down on each occasion.

I was shocked by the story, even though it hardly seemed believable. In 1980, many of the prominent faculty members at the university were Jewish, and discrimination was not part of university policy. In any case, Blacker's statute of limitations for completing Ph.D. work had obviously expired decades earlier. Nevertheless I checked with older colleagues who had worked with the chairman to see if any of them might corroborate claims about his anti-Semitic behavior. They were all stunned; they said they never had any reason to suspect that he had such tendencies. I also asked the university archives to send me Blacker's file and discovered that he had a fine record, with A's in all courses. It was also clear that not having a Ph.D. had not prevented him from obtaining a teaching position or from becoming a successful writer.

His intense voice on the phone haunted me: "I don't need a Ph.D. now. I have had bypass surgery and my heart may collapse any day. The Ph.D. is now the only unfinished business of my life. I really need to take care of it before I go." I told him I would consult with the graduate committee. There was no precedent in the history of the department of any graduate student being invited to write a dissertation after an interval of so many years, and even after weeks of checking I could not find one person who might offer any evidence to support Blacker's claim.

Finally I remembered that David Guralnik had also been a graduate student in the same department, earning his M.A. in English at about the same time as Blacker. Over a cup of coffee, I told him everything. He looked troubled and tried hard to remember anything that might be relevant. He certainly remembered the chairman but could recall no instance in which he witnessed anti-Semitic conduct or comments by him.

I returned to my office and decided that over the weekend I would write to Blacker, saying that I had been unable to find any confirmation of his story of 35 years ago. Before the weekend arrived, I got a call from David. His voice was tense. Could I join him and a friend for lunch? The friend turned out to be a retired English teacher, Sidney Vincent, who received his M.A. in English in 1933 from the same department.

Sidney was a soft-spoken man with receding hair, thick glasses in a heavy frame, and a neat mustache. He explained that what happened to Blacker was exactly the same thing that had happened to him in 1933. David had not experienced the same rejection because he had not tried to work toward a Ph.D. after getting his M. A. Apparently, the chairman felt concerned only when Jewish students aimed at the highest degree, that is, when they tried to be his potential colleagues.

Back in 1933, Sidney had felt so outraged and humiliated by the chairman's anti-Semitic remarks that he went home and in an intense pitch of emotion wrote a dramatic sketch describing the confrontation. The sketch was 17 pages long and was titled "We're Very Sorry." His wife happened to be one of those people who never threw anything out and Sidney found the papers from 47 years ago in a breadbox in his basement. His hand trembled as he took the brittle, yellowing papers out of his pocket and gave them to me.

Later I also telephoned Ben Zevin, a retired publisher living in Florida, who, I discovered, had known the chairman in the 30s and 40s. Ben Zevin told me that he and the chairman used to be members of the same club and that one day he had told Ben over lunch that he did not think a Jewish person could be qualified to teach English literature at a university. The language was now chillingly familiar. Ben Zevin also gave me the name of another person who could testify about the chairman's anti-Semitic feelings.

I called a meeting of our graduate committee and presented all the evidence I had gathered. We voted 6-0 to set aside the statute of limitations in this case and to invite Irwin Blacker to write his dissertation.

When I telephoned Irwin in California to give him the news, he wept. Finally he said: "I've waited, I've waited 35 years for this day."

He did write the dissertation, but by the time he completed it he was too weak to travel to Cleveland for the defense. We set up a speaker phone, and he defended his dissertation successfully by telephone. Shortly after being awarded the Ph.D. degree, he died. Sidney Vincent wrote about his experience in the opening section of a book titled *Personal and Professional*. He might have been one of the few persons who knew that if it had not been for David's patient, determined search, Irwin Blacker's story would never have had the ending it did.

During the weeks that it took to sort out this matter, David worked quietly behind the scenes, and the story seemed at times to be the story of the chairman and Blacker only, but that was the way David worked, efficiently, without thrusting himself into the foreground. In the background, though, he never lost track of his principles or methods. David was devoted to individual words, and even more devoted to individuals. □

Cassidy *Continued from page 1*

friends as a wonderfully warm human being who loved words and wordplay, dancing, playreading, gardening, good food, and, most of all, other people. Those other people sorely miss Fred's eternal good cheer and his unquenchable optimism.

Frederic G. Cassidy is survived by four children, seven grandchildren, many colleagues, and hosts of friends.

The above was contributed by Joan Hall, who has succeeded Fred as editor in chief of DARE. A more detailed obituary will appear in the forthcoming issue of Dictionaries. Following are personal memories contributed by two other DSNA members who were longtime associates and friends.

John Algeo: Fred Cassidy was a major influence in my life in two ways.

(1) I first met Fred, appropriately enough, through the printed word. When I began work on an M.A. at the University of Florida in 1955, the first course I signed up for was History of the English Language, in which we used Cassidy's textbook. That experience seduced me into choosing English language history as my major field. When I started going to MLA and ADS as a graduate student, Tom Pyles (who made it clear that attending such meetings was the thing to do), introduced me to Fred.

In those days, senior professors mingled cordially with beginning graduate students at the former English 13 sessions of MLA and the associated ANS and ADS meetings, not to mention the late evening whiskey and conversation bouts in New York and Chicago hotel rooms. So began a long-distance, but nonetheless warm friendship.

(2) Some years later, as I was about to move from an assistant deanship at the University of Florida to an honest professorship at the University of Georgia, I got a phone call from Fred asking if I would like to take on the editorship of *American Speech*. He was chairing a committee trying to save the journal, then several years behind in publication, by bringing it under the sponsorship of the American Dialect Society and appointing the first ADS editor. His invitation to me was a touching act of faith, as I had no experience whatever in editing. But I rashly accepted.

It has been a privilege to have been associated with Fred in those ways and especially through *DARE*, from his first proposal for the dictionary at an ADS-MLA meeting through the appointment of his very worthy and accomplished successor, Joan Hall. Fred Cassidy was a distinguished scholar, a great gentleman, and a warm friend.

Audrey Duckert: It was the fall of 1947. I had just turned 20 and Fred was about to turn 40. In the summer just past I had been his student for the first time in a course on the history of the English language. He had taught us about the phonetic alphabet and he told us about the field work he had just finished for the Great Lakes section of the Linguistic Atlas.

But that was just the beginning. He really hit his stride when he got started on the American Dialect Society. We looked at some of the collections already published. Harold Wentworth's *American Dialect Dictionary* had appeared in 1940. Fred had been pleased with it at first, but then had realized how much was missing.

He obtained a Rockefeller Grant to hire student help

to expand the collection of data to cover the entire U.S. His enthusiasm was contagious and I was thrilled to work on a real live dictionary. We set to work on composing a questionnaire that was published as a *Publication of the American Dialect Society (PADS)* in 1953. In the 1962 meeting of the ADS, Fred read a paper titled "The ADS Dictionary — How Soon?" His enthusiastic impatience got through to the group and when he had finished reading it, I stood up, was granted the floor by President Albert Markwardt, and moved that Fred Cassidy be appointed to lay the plans for the society's official dictionary. That was that. The motion carried. DARE I say, the rest is history. □

DSNA Responds to NEH

The following is excerpted from a letter from the DSNA executive board to the National Endowment for the Humanities, in response to an invitation from NEH to comment on proposed changes to their policy for support of long-term scholarly projects.

We feel that it is crucial that the NEH continue to support long-term projects. We are also aware that such projects, when completed, are national or indeed international treasures, resources which will endure and be used by generations to come. . . . NEH should not lightly abdicate its mission of supporting national projects, projects such as the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, which serve not just scholars but the American public as a whole.

James A. H. Murray took over the editorship of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1879; the last volume appeared in 1928, almost 50 years later. The Grimm brothers' *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, started in 1854, was finished 100 years later. Ladislav Zgusta, in his 1971 *Manual of Lexicography*, cites statistics on the Dutch, Swedish, and Danish national dictionaries: they actually took 65, 65, and 49 years, respectively, to complete (349).

Sidney Landau says in his highly regarded book *Dictionaries: The Art and Craft of Lexicography*, that "Dictionaries take so long to do not because they are done by perfectionists but because there is so much to be done" (230-31). None of the above-mentioned national dictionaries could have been completed without federal funding. If public funding agencies like NEH do not fund such long-term projects, serious work on such projects will gradually come to an end, and the nations will be culturally poorer for it.

. . . You ask if NEH should limit its support for long-term projects to a specific number of years or grants or cumulative funding amount. . . . We emphatically oppose any of these limitations. If a project has shown that it is making good progress and that it is a valuable addition to our national life, it should not be arbitrarily cut off. . . .

Your final question is if the Endowment should maintain the status quo by continuing to support long-term projects the way it currently does. Our question to you is this: If you don't, who will? . . . How many agencies are capable of long-term, sustained financial help for lasting projects? Please don't remove such possibilities. NEH has been admired for its ability and willingness to fund large scholarly undertakings. . . . We realize that the Endowment has been facing serious financial restraints and we appreciate the review of its policies. We strongly encourage its continuance of support for large, long-term visionary scholarly projects, including dictionaries. □

Publications of Lexicographical Interest

Publications Received by DSNA

April - November 2000

BOOKS

- Helile, Mohamed H., Saad Masluh, and Hashan Al-Ajmi, eds. *International Symposium on Linguistic & Specialist Dictionaries*. Kuwait: Kuwait University, 2000.
- Meyers, Carol, ed. *Women In Scripture*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000.
- Random House Webster's College Dictionary*. New York: Random House, 2000.
- Rohmann, Chris. *A World of Ideas. A Dictionary of Important Theories, Concepts, Beliefs, and Thinkers*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2000.
- Terminometro no. 4 - La terminologie en Roumanie et en Republique de Moldova*. Union Latina, 2000.
- Winokur, Jon, ed. *Advice to Writers. A Compendium of Quotes, Anecdotes and Writerly Wisdom from a Dazzling Array of Literary Lights*. New York: Vintage Books, 2000.

Houghton Mifflin

- The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th Ed. New York, 2000. [Print and CD-ROM]
- The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*. 2nd Ed., rev. and ed. by Calvert Watkins. Boston, 2000.
- Metcalf, Allan. *How We Talk: American Regional English Today: A Talking Tour of American English, Region by Region*. Boston, 2000.

Oxford University Press

- Abate, Frank, ed. *The Oxford Desk Dictionary of People and Places*. New York, 2000.
- Apresjan, Juri. *Systemic Lexicography*. Oxford, 2000.
- Carvajal, Carol Syles & Jane Horwood, eds. *El Diccionario Oxford, Español-Inglés/Inglés-Español, Nueva Edición Internacional*. New York, 1996.
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- A Dictionary of World History*. New York, 2000.
- A Dictionary of Biology*, 4th Ed. New York, 2000.
- A Dictionary of Physics*, 4th Ed. New York, 2000.
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- Oxford American Dictionary and Language Guide*. New York, 1999.
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- Wheeler, Marcus, Boris Unbegaun, Paul Falla, & Della Thompson, eds. *The Oxford Russian Dictionary*, 2nd Ed. New York, 2000.
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- International Journal of Lexicography* Vol 13 No 1, 2. Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2000.
- Lexicon* No 30. Tokyo: Iwasaki Linguistic Circle, 2000.
- English Today*. Vol. 16 No 3. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 2000.

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- Nesi, Hilary. *The Use and Abuse of EFL Dictionaries. How learners of English as a foreign language read and interpret dictionary entries*. Series Maior 98. 2000.
- Bray, Laurent. *Matthias Kramer et la lexicographie du français en Allemagne au XVIIIe siècle. Avec une édition des textes métaléxicographiques de Kramer*. Series Maior 99. 2000.
- Wiegand, Herbert Ernst, ed. *Wörterbücher in der Diskussion IV. Vorträge aus dem Heidelberger Lexikographischen Kolloquium*. Series Maior 100. 2000.
- Kramer, Undine, ed. *Lexikologisch-lexikographische Aspekte der deutschen Gegenwartssprache*. Symposiumsvorträge, Berlin 1997. Series Maior 101. 2000.

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- Apresjan, Juri D. Tr. by Kevin Windle. *Systematic Lexicography*. OUP, 2000.
- Bejoint, Henri. *Modern Lexicography*. OUP, 2000.
- Cambridge Dictionary of American English*. NY: CUP, 2000.
- Deutsches Fremdwörterbuch*. Bd. 4. De Gruyter, 1999.
- DK Illustrated Oxford American Dictionary*. Dorling Kindersley, 2000.
- DK Merriam-Webster Children's Dictionary*. DK, 2000.
- Falileyev, Alexander. *Etymological Glossary of Old Welsh*. Buchreihe der Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie, Bd. 18. Niemeyer, 2000.
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- Reh, Mechtild, comp. *Anywar-English, English-Anywar Dictionary*. Nilo-Saharan Linguistic Analyses and Documentation 14. Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 1999.
- Spears, Richard. *NTC's Compact English Dictionary: The Core Vocabulary for Learners*. NTC, 2000.
- Spears, Richard. *NTC's Dictionary of American Slang and Colloquial Expressions*. 3d and CD-ROM eds. NTC, 2000.
- Spears, Richard, and Linda Schinke-Lland, eds. *NTC's American Idioms Dictionary*. CD-ROM ed. NTC/Contemporary, 2000.
- Szende, D., ed. *Dictionnaires bilingues. Methodes et contenus. Etudes de lexicologie, lexicographie et dictionnaire* 1. Paris: Editions Honoré Champion, 2000.
- Oxford Russian Dictionary, The* 3d ed. OUP, 2000.
- Watkins, Calvert, ed. *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*, 2d ed. Houghton Mifflin, 2000.
- Webster's Third New International Dictionary*. Software ed. Merriam-Webster, 2000. □

Calendar 2001

- March 26.** JACET Workshop on Dictionaries. Seisen University, Tokyo.
- March 27-29.** InterLex course. Seisen University, Tokyo. Info: Prof. M. Ohsugi, Seisen University, 3-16-21 Higashi-Gotanda, Shinigawa-Ku, Tokyo 141-88642 Japan. E-mail: <ohsugi@seisenu.ac.jp>.
- April 23-27.** InterLex course. University of Exeter, England. Info: Prof. R.R.K. Hartmann, Dictionary Research Centre, School of English, University of Exeter, Queens' Building, Exeter EX4 4QH U.K. E-Mail: <rrkhartmann@exeter.ac.uk>
- July 2-4.** Sixth International Conference of the African Association for Lexicography (Afrilex), U. of the North, Pietersburg, South Africa. Conference theme is "Computerized Lexicography and the Development of Corpora." Papers on any aspect of lexicography also invited. Send abstracts of 500-800 words (to be received before 31 March 2001) to Prof. D.J. Prinsloo, African Languages, U. of Pretoria, Pretoria, 0002, South Africa. E-mail: prinsloo@postino.up.ac.za Fax: (012) 420-3163; international 27-12-420-3163 Tel: (012) 420-2320; international: 27-12-420-2320

August 8-10. The second biennial conference of the Asian Association for Lexicography (Asialex), Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea. Conference theme is "Asian Bilingualism and the Dictionary." The host will be the Center for Linguistic Informatics Research, of which Prof. Sangsup Lee, current president of Asialex, is director. Languages used will be Korean and English. Abstracts were to have been submitted by 30 November 2000. Info: Asialex 2001, Center for Linguistic Informatics Research, Yonsei University, Seoul 120-749 Korea. E-mail: <asialex@lex.yonsei.ac.kr>

September 10-12. The Fourth International School in Lexicography will be held 10-12 September 2001 at Ivanovo University, Ivanovo, Russia on the theme "Language, Culture, Dictionaries." The guest lecturer will be Prof. Dr. Svetlana G. Ter-Minasova of Moscow University. Plenary lectures will be given by other prominent scholars from Moscow and St. Petersburg. Sessions will be held on problems of intercultural communication, lexicography in the 21st century, computer dictionaries, new dictionary projects, and user needs and demands. Head of the organizing committee is Prof. Dr. Olga Karpova, Ivanovo State University, Yermak Street 39, 153025 Ivanovo, Russia. E-mail: <karpova@interline.ivanovo.ru>. □

Recent Conferences

The Euralex Newsletter reports an international colloquium on the theme "From paper dictionaries to electronic dictionaries" at l'Université de Cergy-Pontoise on 22 March 2000. It was accompanied by exhibitions of electronic and CD-ROM dictionaries and of Quebec-French dictionaries and related works.

A conference on the present and future of bilingual lexicography was held 4-5 May, 2000, at the Università del Piemonte Orientale, Vercelli, Italy. Problems of print and electronic bilingual dictionaries of French, English, Spanish, and German were discussed. More details can be found in the report published in the Euralex Newsletter in *International Journal of Lexicography*, September 2000. □

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Publishing Information

The *DSNA Newsletter* is published two or three times a year: Spring and Fall; or Spring, Summer, and Fall. The editor is Victoria Neufeldt. News of members and other items of interest to our readers are welcome. Please send **all *Newsletter* correspondence**, copy for ads, items for publication, etc. to the editor.

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