

# Linguist Drawn To Doss Residents' Talk

## *Boas Interviews Folks Speaking Unique Texas-German Dialect*

A University of Texas linguist, Dr. Hans Boas, was in Doss on Thursday, Jan. 12 to interview some of the few residents there who continue to speak their own dialect of Texas-styled German.

A native of Germany, Boas stumbled onto the historic dialect while traveling from California to Austin. During a lunch break in Fredericksburg, he heard German spoken (with a Texas twist) at a nearby table.

Since then, he has delved into the dialect's evolution and the interviews were part of his re-

search.

Assisting in setting up the interviews was Warren Hahn. Boas spent that Thursday talking with the following residents: Eloise Welge Teschner, Kathleen Geistweidt Crenwelge, Berta Ann Welge Boyce, Roy Itz, Presley Arhelger, Henry Louis Welge, Harvey Elebracht, Mr. and Mrs. Norbert Stehling, Bernard Stehling, Ralph Rode and Reuben Geistweidt.

The oral recordings were performed at the home of Heinz and Karen Roesch. She is also working toward a PhD in German at UT.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the so-called "German belt" encompassed much of the Texas Hill Country, where 95 percent of all residents were either German-born or descendants of immigrants. In 1910, German was the first language of 110,000 Texans. Today, fewer than 8,000 native Texas German speakers are left.

"The language is going extinct," Boas said. "In 30 to 40 years, it will most definitely be gone and there is nothing we can do about it."

Texas German is less formal than the mother tongue spoken in Germany. It has also borrowed liberally from English when new ideas and inventions left it speechless, resulting in words such as *das Boxsupper*, *der Cowboy*, *der Helicopter* and *der Taxcollector* -- all spoken with a German accent.

Working with a team of UT students, Boas has posted much of his research and audio clips on the Internet at [www.tgdp.org](http://www.tgdp.org), the home page of his "Texas German Dialect Project".

He has also launched an ambitious, five-year campaign for a \$500,000 endowment that would permit ongoing research.

Already, Boas has a \$40,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which has allowed him to take a sabbatical from UT to write a book entitled *Language Death in the Melting Pot*. Its anticipated publication date is late-2006 or early-2007.

For more information about the "Texas German Dialect Project", contact Boas at the following Internet e-mail address: [hcb@gmc.utexas.edu](mailto:hcb@gmc.utexas.edu).

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**INTRIGUED BY DOSS RESIDENTS** who still speak their own unique Texas-German dialect is Dr. Hans Boas, a linguist from the University of Texas, who was in the area in mid-January to record and study the quickly-becoming-extinct language.