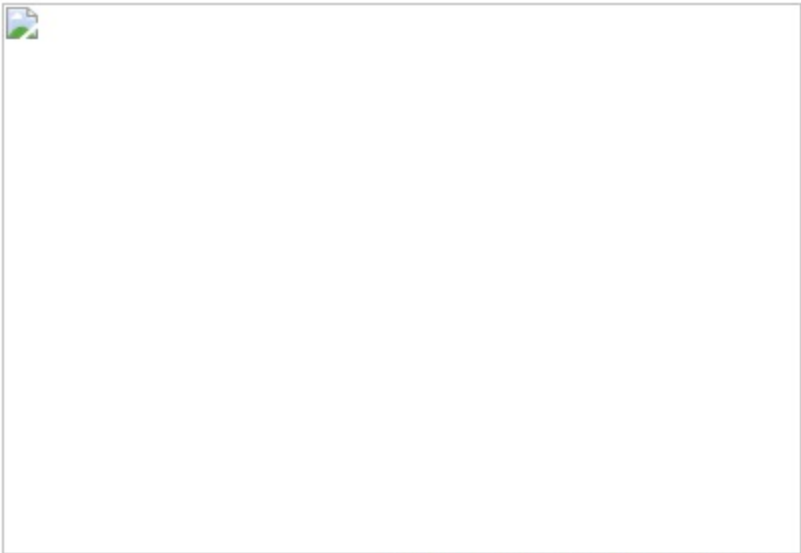


S. A. Life

Linguist's book will capture 'der Cowboy'

Web Posted: 12/30/2005 12:00 AM CST



(J. Michael Short/Special to the Express-News)

University of Texas linguistics researcher Hans Boas interviews New Braunfels resident Dianne Moltz in January. Boas is studying a dialect known as Texas German, commonly spoken in the Hill Country at the turn of the 20th century but destined to die out in 30 to 40 years.

David Uhler
San Antonio Express-News

Original story

UT linguist strikes gold with Texas German Dialect Project

Hans Boas, a linguist at the University of Texas, was busy last January interviewing and recording some of the few remaining speakers of Texas German, a unique language they learned from ancestors in the Hill Country and immigrants from the old country.

Now, he's also writing a book.

Tentatively titled "Language Death in the Melting Pot," Boas' scholarly work will track the rise and fall of the once-popular dialect.

At the turn of the 20th century, the so-called "German belt" encompassed much of the 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," says Boas, an assistant professor in the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. "It's basically inevitable. In 30 to 40 years, it will most definitely be gone and there is nothing we can do about it."

A native of Germany, Boas stumbled onto the historic dialect four years ago while driving from California to Austin for his new teaching job at UT. During a lunch break in Fredericksburg, Boas' ears perked up when he heard some people speaking German — with a Texas twist — at a nearby table.

Since then, Boas has delved deeply into the dialect's evolution. Texas German is less formal than the mother tongue spoken in Germany.

It 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* —spoken, of course, with a German accent.

Working with a team of UT students, Boas has posted much of his research and audio clips of many of their interviews on the Internet at www.tgdp.org, the home page for his "Texas German Dialect Project."

Always enthusiastic, the 34-year-old Boas has launched an ambitious, five-year campaign for a \$500,000 endowment that would permit ongoing research. A \$40,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities has allowed him to take a sabbatical from UT this year to write his book.

"I'm done with chapter two," Boas says. "I'm working on chapter three and four and hope to have the manuscript done by April of next year."

The anticipated publication date is late 2006 or early 2007.

For more information about the "Texas German Dialect Project," contact Hans Boas at hcb@gmc.utexas.edu.

duhler@express-news.net

Ads By Yahoo

How I Lost 55 Pounds

Amazing Chinese Weight Loss Secret. Seen On CNN, NBC, CBS & Fox News.
(www.Wu-YiSource.com)

food restaurant lexington ky

Find Lexington, Kentucky Restaurants in the Windstream Yellow Pages.
(WindstreamYellowPages.com)

Cafe Des Architectes

Offering a chic & urban atmosphere with delicious French cuisine.
(www.CafeDesArchitectes.com)

Story Tools

Instant Msg.

Email Story

Print this Story

Mobile MySA

News Feeds

add to YAHOO!

Local Alerts

Most E-mailed

[Money doesn't buy his way out](#)

[Dan Cook 1926-2008: Journalism legend dies](#)

[Hospital vision for Brooks will come true](#)
[Game on!](#)

[Edinburg celebrates an industry's return](#)

View: **24 Hour** | 7 Day