

digital democracy and working for nothing while beating the pros at their own game, Time's 6 is you. Lev Grossman

Fire Chief
John Herber

dent since 1927, with the exception of three, have received the title at least once.

See **TIME**, Page 8A

Time has named everyone Person of the Year for 2006.

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Linguists want last word on history of Texas German

By Winter D. Prosapio
Correspondent

TEXAS GERMAN PROJECT

Hunter Weilbacher figures about 12 or 15 years are left until Texas German is dead altogether. At that point, linguists like Weilbacher at least will have ensured it won't be completely forgotten.

Texas German is a unique dialect of German spoken by the descendants of German immigrants who came to Texas around 1830. In 2006, Texas German is a dying language, Weilbacher said, and few people younger than age 60 speak it at all. In many cases, even those people who know the language haven't spoken it in years.

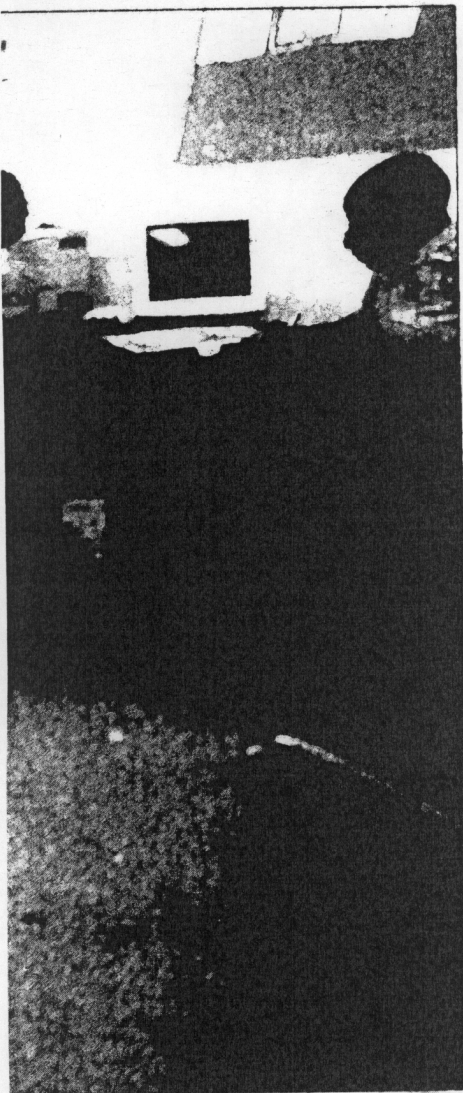
"During World War I, there were laws against speaking

■ In March, a large group of UT graduate students will come to New Braunfels to conduct a series of interviews. For information on the Texas German Dialect Project or to hear interviews from the archives, go to the Web site, tgdp.org.

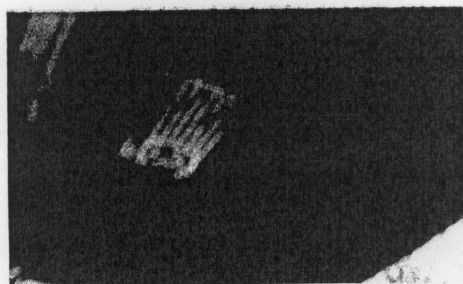
German," Weilbacher said. "Then with World War II it was considered almost impolite to speak German."

The Texas German Dialect Project at the University of Texas at Austin has set out to rescue Texas German from being lost forever. Project director and UT

See **DIALECT**, Page 5A



otos by **DAVID INGRAM**/Herald-Zeitung
h, center, before taking to the
s on things to be on the look-



COMING WEDNESDAY

Taste of the Hill Country

Readers share their favorite dessert recipes. Have one you'd like to share? E-mail it

Hill

DIALECT

CONTINUED FROM Page 1A

Research group coming to NB

assistant professor Hans C. Boas and a team of graduate students involved with the Texas German Dialect Project, or TGDP, have been interviewing more than 200 speakers in the Hill Country.

"At first, our problem was getting people to talk to us," said Weillbacher, a graduate research assistant and graduate of New Braunfels High School. "I'd call and they'd think I was a telemarketer or it was some sort of scam."

Thanks to some local publicity efforts, people came to understand what the project was about and agreed to interviews, he said.

Texas German is a melding of German and Spanish as well as a bit of English. In the old days, the German and Mexican immigrants in the area worked the fields together, and while their communities remained distinct and separate in many ways, their languages began to meld. Since neither group spoke English, much of the initial

borrowing came from their own native tongues.

"Leche," the Spanish word for milk, for example, became part of Texas German. As the world changed around them, Texas German speakers developed their own words for it. Airplanes are called "flugzeug" in standard German, which comes from "flying thing." Texas German speakers created the word "luftschiff," which is based on "air ship."

These dialect shifts are exactly what fires up linguists like Weillbacher. But even more exciting is tracking speakers who have been involved in earlier studies. In

the 1930s, Fred Eikel recorded Texas German speakers translating 300 sentences. During his last foray of interviewing, Weillbacher found a woman who had been recorded by Eikel when she was young.

"Finding someone who's been interviewed and being able to go back to them after so much time, it's like candy to a linguist," Weillbacher said.

The TGDP had been slowed a bit by a lack of available graduate students to handle the interviews. "We have more people to interview than we can get to," Weillbacher said.

The final question Weill-

bacher and others in the project ask is how Texas German speakers feel about seeing Spanish flourish as their own language disappears. Nearly without exception "they think it's fantastic that Spanish speakers are keeping their language," Weillbacher said. "But they wish they could have kept theirs."

In March a large group of graduate students will come to New Braunfels to conduct a series of interviews. For information on Texas German Dialect Project or to hear interviews from the archives, go to the project's Web site tgdp.org.

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