Prof Compiles Dictionary

Buffington Seeks Pa. Dutch Words

Few Can Talk Dialect Today

"Kannscht du Deitsch schwetze?"

"Yes," would say Dr. Albert Buffington, professor of German, and his reply would be almost unique, for today there are only a few hundred thousand people in the world who can still speak the language of the Pennsylvania Dutch.

Realizing that this is fast becoming a lost art, Buffington for the past 14 years has been recording the songs, rhymes, and speech of the Pennsylvania Dutch years before they can be forgotten for-

The end result of these recordings will be a German dialect dictionary on which Buffington has been working for many years.

In search of new words for his dictionary, Buffington makes contacts with people who can speak the dialect in Pennsylvania. He has found that widows and older people are his best informants since "they are lonely and are flattered that they are helping someone."

While asking if they remember any Pennsylvania Dutch songs, rhymes, or holidays and how they were celebrated, Buffington takes the conversations down on tape in hopes of hearing new words. One interview lasted three hours. Some contacts have yielded no

Through his radio program "Der Nixnutz"—translated the "mis-chievous one"—which he gave weekly over Station WKOK, Sunbury, for 13 years, Buffing-ton often gained an "in" with people who might otherwise have given him no information.

"People who might have said 'no, I don't remember any Pennsylvania Dutch, recognized my name when I mentioned the program and were willing to falk to me and to try to recall incidents from their childhood."

Often, Buffington has found that many who could once speak the dialect are now too old to recall it. "Sometimes with a little priming, they're able to remember words, but often they cannot," he said.

"Many of the people that I've contacted who have given me new words have died shortly after-

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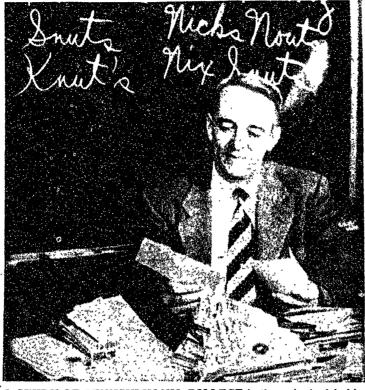
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A STUDY OF PENNSYLVANIA DIALECT is the principal hobby of Dr. Albert Buffington, professor of German. Buffington is recording the songs, rhymes and words of the Dutch to preserve the dialect.

"The compilation of these words into a dictionary may take years," Buffington ex-plained, since there are so few people who have the necessary background in standard German and the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect.

a native Dutchman of Pillow, Pa., Buffing-self, the only course of its kind ton began his work as a boy by in the country.

wards of old age," he added. "If interviewing his family, relatives and friends. From these people in the other Pennsylvania Dutch counties. counties.

He majored in German in college and taught standard German at the University of New Hamp-shire before coming to the Uni-versity. During the regular semester, he teaches a 3-credit course in the life and culture of the Pennsylvania Dutch, and also a Pennsylvania 3-credit course in the dialect it-

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NAA's On-Campus Interviews December 8, 9



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is air stiffer than steel?

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