



ALLYCE'S ATTIC

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I love language. It's a good trait to have if you want to be a writer. Words are fun. Words are magical. Words can be excruciatingly beautiful and unholy ugly. Words can sting like a whiplash. Words manipulate, persuade and inform. Some words just feel good in your mouth and look even better written on a page. It's the variety of the sounds humans form into words that's endlessly fascinating to me.

Regional speech is the most interesting and the most fun.

When I was growing up in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, we were all familiar with "Milwaukee-ese." People said things like "I'm going down by the bubbler where the streetcar turns the corner 'round." Approximate translation: "I'm going to the water fountain at the bus stop."

Before bedtime we were told to, "Make out the lights" instead of "Turn out the lights." "T'row me in the toaster two pieces, hey?" That one's pretty clear, aina? "Aina" was itself an ungrammatical contraction of, "Ain't that so?" as in, "Dat was one cold winter, aina?"

As a linguistics student at Purdue University, I wrote a paper on the subject of Milwaukee-ese. My main source was Gerald Kloss, longtime writer for the Milwaukee Journal newspaper. His column, "Slightly Kloss-Eyed," included examples of regionalisms heard in the metropolitan area, collected mainly from the German community and mostly from the older generations.

The consensus of the research calls Milwaukee-ese English vocabulary wrapped around German syntax. There's a "Dictionary of American Regional English at the University of Wisconsin," which is available online. I used it as a reference when a French documentary filmmaker came to Bandera and Castroville looking for examples of Alsatian German — a dying dialect as is its cousin, Milwaukee-ese. I found a Texas cowboy who said, "Oh ja. Like we used to say, 'Turn der at the white house dat's painted red.'" The documentar-

ian was delighted and for that moment I was transported back to my childhood in Wisconsin. The cowboy was from Fredericksburg, as German as my home state, ja sure, don't you know.

It was also at Purdue in Indiana where I heard "catty-corner" instead of the Wisconsin version "kitty-corner." However you say it, the expression refers to an opposite diagonal corner. I wonder what the term is in England where J. K. Rowling came up with the deliciously named "Diagon Alley," among many playfully unique turns on names for things and people in her Harry Potter series.

While living in New York City, I learned the hard way that "regular coffee" is coffee with cream. "Egg creams" in the Big Apple are a kind of a creamy soda concoction with no eggs involved and New Yorkers pronounce "Manhattan" and "bottle" with a distinctly Cokney-esque edge that become "bot'le" and "M'nhat'n." A woman's purse was always a "pocketbook," which I found charmingly old-fashioned sounding. Chutzpah, mensch and other colorful Yiddish terms are all part of universal New York-speak.

When I got to Texas, aside from the fascinating term "might could" which was unfamiliar to me, I rediscovered language and phrases I had not heard since childhood. It wasn't so much specific words as it was the way people phrased things. It was so pronounced, there was almost a time-out-of-place quality to it.

What a shame if we lose more regionalisms, as America becomes more and more homogenized. It's hard to find folks who ask where the "bubbler" is, who understand the meaning of "aina" or invite friends to "come up by us once, hey." That one was actually proposed as a Wisconsin state tourism slogan. I wish they'd gone

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- 2 cans cream of chicken soup
- 1 small chopped onion
- 2 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 cup mayonnaise

Mix all and put in a buttered 9-inch by 13-inch pan — cover with crushed potato chips if desired. Bake 350 F for 30 minutes or until bubbly.

Finally, here is a recipe I found years ago. We look forward to eating these sandwiches every spring and summer. It would be perfect to pack these sandwiches in that picnic basket (more like a cooler in Texas) along with some fresh fruit and cubed cheese when you head for the hills.



- Honey chicken salad
 - 4 cups chopped cooked chicken
 - 3 celery ribs diced
 - 1 cup raisins (dried cranberries)
 - ½ cup chopped pecans
 - 1 ½ cup mayonnaise
 - 1/3 cup honey
 - ¼ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper
- Really great served on croissants.

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for it. You "might could" try it with the folks you "hang by". In fact, "whistle me out." You bring the beer and I'll bring the "schnecks." Maybe some cheese curds and mettwurst, hey? See you on down the road.

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