

Text file for Maine1.mp3

Full Biographical Text & Points of Interest

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The participant is an 86-year-old Caucasian man, and farms for a living. He was born in Willimantic, Connecticut, but moved to Moody in York County, Maine at the age of 3 by way of Ellsworth, Maine. His Regionality Index (Chambers 2000) of 1 (highest score possible) indicates on the basis of his subjective answers to a series of questions that, on the whole, he is an excellent representative of working-class rural Downeast Maine. Included are recordings of "Comma Gets a Cure" and an edited conversation in which the participant talks about some of the places he has traveled. These samples were collected over an analog telephone patch December 2002. Running time: 00:05:45.

The listener may notice, especially:

PROSODY

Loud, abrupt punch on stressed syllables.

Reduction of syllables (*veterinary, normally*).

CONSONANTS

Varied realization of the letter 'r' after a vowel. The letter 'r' at the end of a syllable is silent or pronounced like the neutral vowel 'schwa' (e.g., *north, force, and tower*). After a close or mid-close vowel, the schwa is especially noticeable (e.g., *near* and *square*). However, /r/ is pronounced when the letter 'r' begins a syllable. There is one example of 'r intrusion' in the interview (*Chinar and Japan*).

Usually, 'w' and 'wh' are distinct for this speaker, but, at times, he pronounces 'w' as though it were a voiceless 'wh' (e.g., *was*).

In the final consonant clusters in *district* and *different idea* the final /t/ is not heard. This is also the case for many word-final /d/s. When heard, /t/s and /d/s are flapped as in words like *beautiful*, (and even the first 't' in *sentimental*). A stressless second syllable contributes to the pronunciation of *futile* as [ˈfju.DI].

'Liquid u': While yod (the 'y' sound between the initial consonant and vowel) is present in *futile*, as it is in *huge* and *cure*, it is absent after tongue-tip consonants ('t', 'd', 'n', 's', 'l': e.g., *Duke, new, tune*).

Active use of the tongue-tip in some '-ing' endings (*paying*).

Dental 'th' (*there; stuff like that*).

VOWELS

The speaker produces several vowels that are not often heard in American accents, or that are often distributed differently in lexical sets. Especially noticeable are:

The vowel in the NURSE lexical set words is very rounded and fairly close and fairly front (*nurse, superb, work, first, confirmed*). The ‘r’ we see in print tends not to be pronounced as a consonant in any of these words.

START has no /r/ sound and a rather long, front open vowel without lip rounding. This is the famed “Park your car in Harvard Yard” lexical set, and immediately places this speaker as do the PALM words which are similarly fronted.

Porridge. Note the vowels in *porridge* and *sorry* pronounced ‘ah’.

NORTH/FORCE. NORTH is more open: *north, warn, form, normally*. The ‘r’ we see in print tends not to be pronounced in any of these words.

GOOSE and CURE: A very back and rounded monophthongal vowel.

Open front vowels are complex. A split of the historical lexical set TRAP has given some words (e.g., *managed, back*) a mid-open front vowel that rhymes with the vowel in DRESS words, rather than an opener vowel as in *trap, happy*. For this speaker, the BATH words are long or diphthongal and also rhyme with the vowel in DRESS. In this respect, the speaker’s accent conflicts with the Hollywood stereotype of a Downeast accent. Before ‘r’, the open front vowels are equally complex. SQUARE words and TRAP words before the spelling ‘r’ are inconsistent. Sometimes the vowel is mid-open front as in DRESS (*square, Mary, rare*) with more or less of a schwa offglide, but sometimes the vowel is more open as (*Sarah, unsanitary, Harrison*). The present passage is too short to allow a full analysis of the mergers and splits in these vowel categories.

A low, back vowel in the LOT, THOUGHT and CLOTH lexical sets, but, in the present sample, variable in lip-rounding, even from instance to instance of the same word. *Odd, job, dog, long* and have lip rounding and a longer vowel; *off, cloth* and *lot, got* and *thought* are produced with without lip rounding.

The mouth is very open during the vowel of stressed STRUT words (e.g., *much*). *Hurry* rhymes with NURSE, not STRUT, for this speaker, opposite the pattern found in prescriptive American stage speech, Southern-British-based accents or traditional New York City speech, for example.

happY is said with a very close final vowel.

PRICE: As in ‘Canadian raising’, the vowel is higher before a voiceless consonant (*right*) than a voiced one (*surprising, side, five, times*). We cannot say much more about this pattern based on the present sample. A parallel pattern may also pertain to the MOUTH lexical set.

The speaker’s pronunciation of the name *Comma* is best regarded as a speech error.

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[back](#)