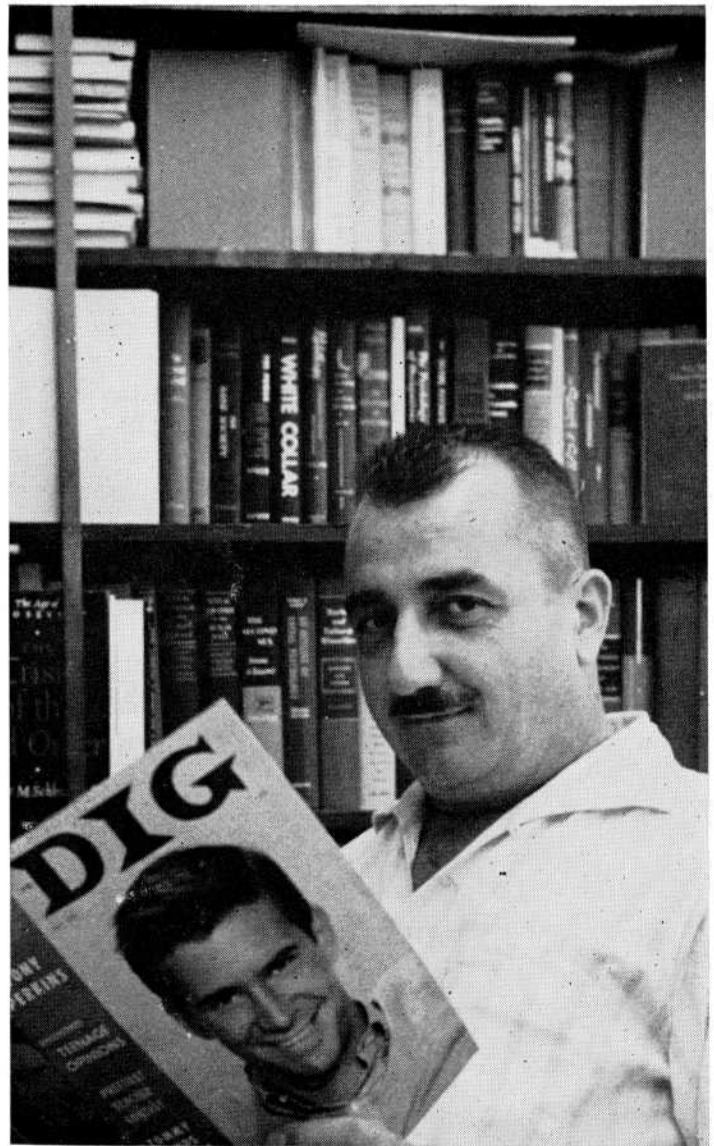


An education professor is compiling an unusual dictionary. It may result in a better understanding of juvenile behavior. His book deals with

Slang: Teenage Method of Baffling Adults

By BILL FRYDAY, '57ba



Professor Henry Angelino scans a teen-ager's magazine for new slang words.

A GRADUATE STUDENT in sociology sat in the Union the other day, reading a red-backed, letter-size book while she drank coffee. Her eyes seemed unusually wide; she was fascinated, carefully studying each word on every page. Often she burst out laughing, and sometimes she placed a hand over her mouth in slight embarrassment. At other moments she bit her lower lip, a little shocked.

She was reading a dictionary.

No ordinary dictionary, this. It is titled *The Argot of the American Adolescent*, and its compiler is Dr. Henry R. Angelino, associate professor of education at the University.

"Fantabulous" might be the word to describe Angelino's book, were the reader to take its value lightly: it is, after all, a collection of about 3,000 slang words and phrases used by adolescents, and some of them are howlers. But during the time in which Angelino has pulled together his

work, he's kept a more serious purpose in mind. For him, the *Argot* is "another aspect of understanding adolescent behavior."

In its present form, the book is mimeographed and stapled. The contents are divided into alphabetical sections like all dictionaries. A quick glance through it, say, choosing at random one word, phrase or sentence from each section, might run this way:

Ankle down to the fizz parlor: walk down to the drugstore.

Bought the farm: generally blundered in an attempt to do something, goofed.

Bad dad from Baghdad: fellow who is, or thinks he is tough.

Come in, world: said when something is very simple and one doesn't understand.

Dead president: a dollar.

Earth pads: shoes.

Flick: movie.

Great gobs of goose grease, dig that crazy phyistoric: look at that person over 21.

I'll never tell: it's none of your business.

Jailhouse: school.

King cat: head of a gang.

Later: goodbye.

My, how sanitary: expression of approval.

Nowhere: no good.

O'd shoe: well-liked person.

Push the panic button: turn on the television.

Quaint: a person so "square"—or old-fashioned—that he "has corners."

Rendezvous with death: dental appointment.

Sky juice: water.

That's Davy Crockett: that's wonderful.

Vast: anything worth mentioning at all.

Yo-yo: someone who is a little crazy.

Zilch: a mistake.

What prompts a man to compile a "different" dictionary? Amusement?

"No," Angelino corrected, "when I first came to Oklahoma I got into adolescent

psychology work, and I found that one way to understand the adolescent is to understand his slang. Since he sometimes uses a lot of it, you can work with him better if you understand what he is saying.

"When I was a teen-ager, we had slang words, too, of course. And a lot of these"—he indicated the contents of his book—"are old ones that we used."

Some of the "old ones" which Angelino has recalled are such veterans as "booze," "chippie," "catty" and others.

Then some of the new ones disturbingly point to worship of certain entertainers. For example, "big orange drink" (beer) could only have come from Andy Griffith's popular recorded monologue about football. "All shook up," or excited, is the name of a fairly current recording by Elvis Presley, pop singer. "Marlon" (a real cat, or a motorcycle rider) refers to actor Marlon Brando, a teen-age idol who appeared in a motorcycle opus called *The Wild One* a few years ago.

The new terms differ extremely from their forebears.

"What we see today," said Angelino, "is a completely new language made up of slang series of words, whole slang sentences, even whole slang paragraphs. When I was a youngster we used just an occasional word. Today kids use these slang groupings, which is something I don't remember ever doing. That's the difference.

"Why do they do it? They just want a method of talking which adults can't understand, I think."

The *Argot* is an honest book. Some of the entries, too vulgar for inclusion here, are improvisations on old themes once expressed by other, four-letter words. Obviously, understanding the young person's lewd language is just as vital as the rest.

Angelino is the first to admit that he didn't do all of the work on his book. He believes that the most help he received came from students in adolescent psychology classes which he has taught. The students racked their memories for terms which they used in past years, and they listened to other younger people for the ever-appearing creations in slang expression. After recording several words or sentences, they turned them over to Angelino.

Meanwhile Angelino himself was talking to teen-agers whenever the opportunity came, and reading any printed materials which seemed promising. In the course of his quest he even wrote to some of his former students, now teaching, and asked them to keep an ear cocked toward the conversations of their own students.

"Also, I've gotten voluntary contributions from people who've read publicity about

the collection," he said.

The *Argot*, as it now stands, represents some of the sayso of youths most of whom hail from Oklahoma and Texas. Very little is representative of other areas, but Angelino is eager to make up the deficiency as the work grows; he wants some "universality" in the book.

"I've been working on it for about two years now," he said, "*Newsweek* magazine said that I'd been at it for three years, but that's a mistake. It took about a year to compile the terms."

Since *Newsweek* tipped off the nation as to what Angelino was up to, the professor has been contacted by a number of interested parties. The National Broadcasting Company interviewed him on their weekend marathon program, Monitor. More than one publisher has exhibited interest in handling the completed work, and the publisher of a teen-age magazine would like to collaborate in bringing the work to completion.

But the collaboration needed, said Angelino, is that of everybody. He wishes that every person who has heard about the *Argot* would drop him a card with the one or one hundred strange new words they've heard come from the mouths of their children or friends.

Tanned, stocky and possessed of an Eastern accent now beginning to mellow Southwestern, Henry Angelino is the sort of man who wears Bermuda shorts when he feels like it. Constantly on the go, he hurries across the campus with eyes that are interested in everyone, everything. His vitality belies the fact that he was born December 21, 1910—"I was almost a Christmas baby"—in Carlstadt, New Jersey.

After attending New York University and the Universities of New Mexico and Nebraska, he stayed on for a time at the latter as a graduate assistant and instructor. In 1950 he began teaching in O. U.'s College of Education, liked it and decided to settle in Norman with his family. He and Mrs. Angelino have two children, a son, 10, and daughter, 13.

"Yes, I've picked up a few slang terms from my daughter," he said, "but she doesn't use very many. Some kids use a lot more than others, and one of our problems is to find just how universal this slang is. Since some use a lot and some very little, you can see that the "language" isn't really typical of all."

The majority of his daily hours are spent in classrooms or at related tasks. But when Angelino finds a spare moment, he climbs three flights of stairs up the modern education building and uses it to further a pet project like his dictionary. There, with

only the whisper of the air conditioning to distract him, he pulls up to a desk laden with paperwork; surrounding him are hundreds of reference volumes, some of them containing the quotes which visitors see typed on white cards and tacked to his office door:

"Each conscience seeks the death of the other."—Hegel.

"Laws are like cobwebs, which may catch small flies, but let wasps and hornets break through."—Jonathan Swift.

"Man is something that shall be surpassed."—Nietzsche.

If Angelino has come to his office to work on the *Argot*, he'll pull a card file to him. It is divided alphabetically and by states and regions, and he can slip fresh entries into their proper places without trouble. Thus week by week the *Argot* grows and changes.

This isn't the first such work to be tackled by Angelino. After hearing of an underworld dictionary which is larger than Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, he decided that the formation of such works was a very good idea when they seemed to be needed in fields as dynamic as education and psychology.

"Then, before the War, I did my master's work in shoplifting," he said. "I studied criminality and found that each segment of it has its own special jargon. Drug addicts especially, so I made up a *Glossary of Drug Users' Slang*, taking the terms from periodicals and other literature. A lot of these terms came from a book called *Really the Blues*."

His drug glossary is a thicker book than the *Argot*. Some of the alphabetical divisions are so large that practically an entire paragraph can be made up from key words taken from each. Here is a sentence composed of fragments gathered from the "c" section:

A carpet walker, caught in a snowstorm, went cold turkey, had the chuck horrors, then pitched a circus in order to get Cadillac; he chilled, and later a croaker charged him in the channel with Charley.

Translation: An addict decided to cut himself off from drugs, then had such fierce reactions that, in order to secure drugs again, he feigned a spasm in public; he submitted to arrest without struggling and later was given a cocaine injection by a prison physician to temporarily relieve his suffering—just what he'd hoped for.

Language such as this is more than merely colorful: below it lie questions—and answers—that deal in society's toughest problems. Dictionaries of such language, prepared by men like Angelino, may serve as guides in tackling the problems.