

Dear colleagues, dear friends of John Nerbonne, but mostly importantly today of course:

Dear John, dear Ellen, dear Eamon and family, dear Brendan!

The idea of combining your retirement celebration with the 30th anniversary of the Information Science, formerly the Alfa-Informatica, Department at the University of Groningen is simply brilliant. It is a tribute and a token of deep appreciation by your Groningen colleagues and students. You have shaped the research agenda and the direction of this department for many years. Your leadership is evident not only from your publications, but also from the impressive number of top-notch researchers who received their Ph.D. in your department over the years. My own department has greatly benefitted from this, with currently three computational linguists working in Tübingen who received their degrees from Groningen.

Thank you also for your inspiring valedictory lecture *Humanities, exactly! / Letteren, exact!* You could not have chosen a better title and a better theme for this farewell lecture since it characterizes your approach to linguistics, to humanities computing, and to computational linguistics so well. This is true of your early work in Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar, Categorical Grammar and Montague Grammar, your contributions to computational morphology, and your most recent contributions to language variation and the Groningen School of Dialectometry.

When looking at your vita and your many publications, some colleagues may wonder how your more recent research on Dutch dialects relates to your early work on temporal semantics, the passive construction, and Poltergeist constituents. Actually, the connections are obvious: it is the language under investigation: it all centers on different dialects of Dutch. Your early work focussed on dialects of Dutch spoken in a country east of here, dialects sometimes subsumed under the confusing term *German*. But when you moved west from Saarbrücken to Groningen almost 25 years ago, it was, of course, all too natural that your subsequent work concentrated on Germanic dialects spoken in The Netherlands.

You and I organized a symposium here at Groningen about ten years ago in honor of David Dowty on the occasion of **his** retirement. David brought us together in the first place when he recruited both of us as graduate students to The Ohio State University in the early 1980s and when he became our Doktorvater there. Out of the Groningen retirement symposium for David Dowty emerged a book that we co-edited entitled *Theory and Evidence in Semantics*. At that time, neither of us really thought seriously yet about our own retirements. But all of a sudden: the time has come. I will refrain from citing one of the most well-known example sentences in computational linguistics that involves the movement of time and a comparison with arrows. Rather, I want to make reference to a German compound that is customarily invoked on occasions like this. We say that a colleague has earned the right to enter an *Unruhestand*, rather than their *Ruhestand*. *Unruhestand* in the sense that scientific inquiry is never finished and is as much a life-long process as learning itself. You have already found a new academic home as a Honorarprofessor at the University of Freiburg as a perfect setting for **your** *Unruhestand*.

This move to Freiburg is, of course, one of the ways in which are showing your appreciation and gratitude to Ellen, your wife and partner in life who has supported all your endeavors for so many years and who, like me, speaks a dialect of Dutch spoken in a country east of The Netherlands, namely Badisch. In the Sprachcontinuum of Dutch and German dialects, Badisch is, of course, much more distant from standard Dutch than Plattdütsch, my own mother tongue. Proving this would be an easy task thanks to the dialectometric methods that you have championed. So we can leave this as an exercise to the next generation of students.

I want to conclude my remarks with a wish that I received from a Tübingen colleague earlier this week when I told her where I was travelling and on what occasion. When I informed her

that you are moving to Freiburg, she simply replied: „Does that mean that we will finally see more of John in Tübingen?“ I replied to her in Tübingen, but I am now saying it to you here, John:

„I certainly hope so!“

Thank you, John, for many years of professional collaboration and cooperation, but even more importantly, for many years of friendship.