

His business is Grimm one

By Bill Casper
staff writer

Donald Hasse of Redford Township has a passion for fairy tales. They intrigue him and challenge the analytical borders of his mind.

For the first time this summer, the Wayne State University professor of romance and Germanic languages will lead an intensive, five-week study seminar on "The Tales of the Brothers Grimm" that will attract 15 high school teachers from around the country.

The late brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, left western culture a wealth of fairy tales that for hundreds of years have captivated both young and old readers.

However, in this first of two biennial years marking the births of the Grimm brothers (Jacob was born in 1785 and Wilhelm a year later), they are taking some heat for allegedly perpetrating a fairy tale fraud that is no fantasy.

"LITERARY SCHOLARS don't like to say the Grimm brothers lied, Hasse said. They maintain the apparent fraud was not perpetrated with evil intentions."

But during the seminar, one of more than 50 summer seminars funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Hasse will delve into recent discoveries which hold that the Grimms' claim to have accurately recorded genuine fairy tales is false.

"By examining versions of their tales only recently made available in English, we will consider how and why they perpetrated their so-called folklore fraud," said Hasse, who holds a doctor-

ate in comparative literature from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

"The Grimm brothers claimed to have faithfully collected and recorded their stories from peasant stock during the French occupation of Germany," said Hasse, a native of Cincinnati who four years ago moved his wife and two children from Athens, Ohio. There he taught German language and literature at Miami University of Ohio.

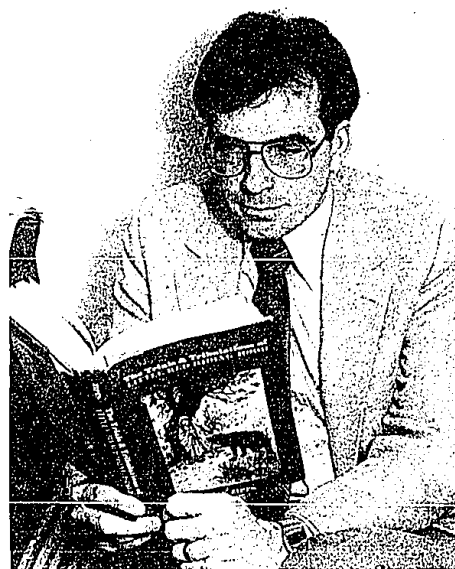
"It was a time when German nationalism was low and needed a shot in the arm," Hasse said. "Collecting the fantasy tales as supposedly told by old German peasant women became somewhat of a national movement to preserve the Germanic culture through these myths. The motivation for collecting such folk lore was to achieve greater nationalistic unity."

IN SEVEN EDITIONS OF Grimm's Fairy Tales published during the brothers' lifetimes, their manuscripts show significant changes of the characters and story lines from edition to edition.

"We also know now that the Grimms' sources probably were not German peasant women, but well educated middle class French," Hasse said. "But regardless of the sources scholars believe the Grimm brothers developed the folk tales to reflect 19th century middle class Germany."

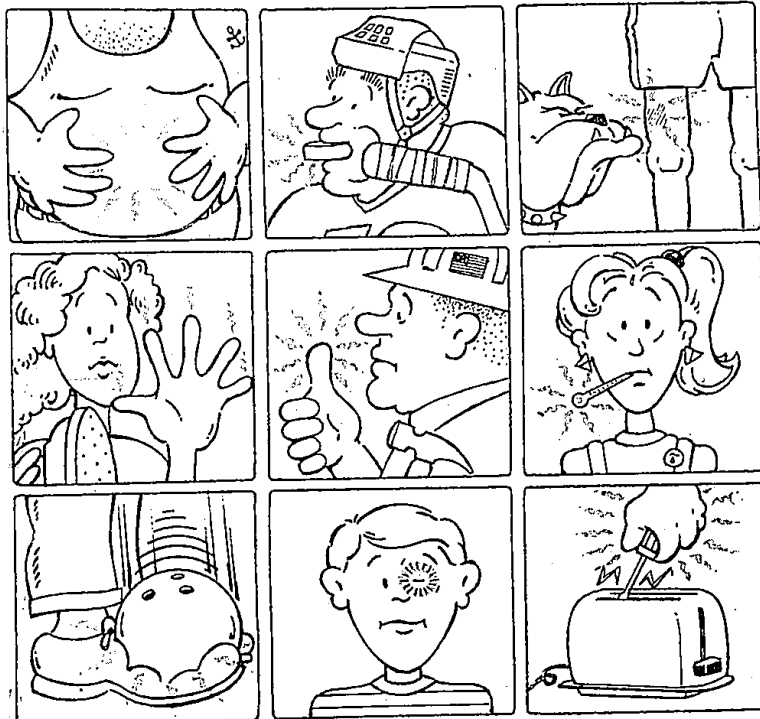
Hasse's fascination with fairy tales is partly due to their sustained popularity. The origin of fantasy stories can be traced to prehistoric times, he said. Yet their popularity continues today, according to Hasse who has taught three fairy tale courses at Wayne State.

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ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

Donald Hasse, a Redford resident and WSU language professor, says scholars are divided on how fairy tales should be interpreted.



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