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In order for people unacquainted with deafness* and its problems to know and understand deaf people, they should first become familiar with certain factors that contribute to the personal development of deaf adults. These include environment, etiology of hearing loss, education, and training. But, the most important factor of all is the persons: parents, teachers, supervisors at work, friends and relatives, clergy, social workers, rehabilitation personnel, or counselors who mold the deaf person's total development.

Since we live in a society in which hearing people are dominant, these responsible people, with a few exceptions, are hearing. The sad truth is that comparatively few of these hearing persons have either the intimate experience with deafness or the empathy for deaf people that is necessary before they can really become effective. Whatever help or advice they offer the deaf persons coming under their spheres of authority or influence is dispensed out of only a vicarious understanding of deafness. This understanding is not fully internalized and felt.

My personal life experience has contributed a great deal to this manuscript. I insert a brief autobiography here to help the reader understand my background and how it has influenced my opinions.

My story begins with the birth of my mother in San Francisco. Her parents were first cousins, and after a first child who could hear, they bore three deaf children in succession. They decided to stop

*Deafness (Deaf)—A condition in which the residual hearing, if any, is not usable; perceivable sounds have no meaning to the individual.

bearing children but two more came about 10 years later and they had normal hearing. However, those two youngest offspring died from childhood diseases. Therefore, I knew only one aunt who could hear. All three deaf children went to the California School for the Deaf in Berkeley. My grandmother and Aunt Julia learned sign language, so I was always very much a part of the family group every time we visited relatives.

My father, the oldest of four brothers, on the other hand, lost his hearing from spinal meningitis. He had no deaf siblings, and we could not communicate with his family at all except one uncle who could barely fingerspell. Although he attended the same school my mother did, they did not become sweethearts until after they graduated. They were going together when San Francisco was hit by the big earthquake and fire in 1906. I remember being enthralled by stories about the experiences that they and their families met during that devastating time. They were married in my mother's home in 1908.

Although my brother Harry was born in San Francisco with normal hearing, a bout with whooping cough at age 18 months cost him his hearing. This was indirectly responsible for my parents abandoning San Francisco for the more clement weather of the East Bay. I was born when they were living in Berkeley. However, my mother clung to her old doctor, who practiced in San Francisco. So, when she was to deliver, my mother went to San Francisco and I was born at the old Mt. Zion Hospital in that city. I was born deaf. When my parents discovered that both their children were deaf and would be going to the Berkeley school, they purchased a small house only seven blocks from the school campus. The proximity to home allowed both my brother and me to walk to school every day. However, the superintendent persuaded my parents to place me in the dormitory when I was a junior in high school, "so that I would become accustomed to being away from home." The adjustment would then be easier when I was ready to go to Gallaudet College* in Washington, D.C., as anticipated.

I enjoyed a normal childhood free of any barriers or restrictions in

*Gallaudet College became Gallaudet University in October 1986. Hereinafter, it will be referred to as "University" unless "College" is more appropriate for historical context.

communication. The Berkeley school was also an old and familiar place to me because my parents were there, too, and I was acquainted with not only the physical facilities but also many of the staff before I ever became a pupil.

An illustrious graduate of the school who later became a respected staff member was Theophilus Hope d'Estrella (see Albronda, 1985). He was a good friend of my parents and became my brother's and my friend also when we entered school. A waif of Mexican ancestry, he was found on the San Francisco streets, and became one of the first pupils of the school when it opened in San Francisco in 1860. He remained on the school campus all his life, eventually teaching art and a special class of slow learning deaf children. He only left the campus to go to a nursing home to spend the last few weeks of his life. He came back to the campus for the last rites. The large chapel was jammed full of the many alumni of the school who remembered and revered him. He was a gentle man, much loved for his wise counsel as well as story-telling hours during which countless youngsters enjoyed enchantment. I remember enjoying conversations with the old man, and going to his funeral when I was 11.

Another person of renown who was also a friend of my parents was Douglas Tilden, also a graduate of the Berkeley school who later gained fame as a sculptor whose works still grace prominent locations in the San Francisco Bay Area, including the Donohue Mechanics Statue at Bush and Market Streets. The Berkeley campus of the University of California has Tilden's Football Player Statue, and the school for the deaf campus has a magnificent statue, named the Bear Hunt. I recall being fascinated by the old maestro's mannerisms in both actions and conversation. He knew that he was a genius and subsequently displayed flashes of temperament which kept his friends and admirers in awe and at a distance. Such was his character even to the last day of his life in spite of the fact that he was virtually destitute. So proud and dignified was he that I never once saw him complain.

Such was my childhood. During those days there was extreme polarity between the "oralists" and those who enjoyed manual communication. Therefore, my parents were particularly anxious that time should not be taken from my regular academic work for oral training. Like many healthy deaf youngsters I despised the hassles with the

speech therapist, and I was delighted to have my parents intercede in this. As a result, I was ready to graduate at the age of 14 and went to Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., when I was barely 15. I had a hard time adjusting to my new life due to my young age. I did not really find myself until I reached my sophomore year, which was the third year of Gallaudet's five-year program.

I received my bachelor's degree when I was 19, in the middle of the great Depression. I was offered a counselor's job at the older boys' dormitory at my alma mater. I received my real baptism of dormitory life then, starting with the supervision of about 100 of the older boys, which included sending them to bed at specified times. Once you realize that during my first years many of those boys were older than I, you will understand that I had a rugged time. During those nine years I shared a daily 24-hour schedule with only two others, which meant that a weekly work load of 70 plus hours was common. Nevertheless, I enjoyed my work because it was stimulating to be partly responsible for the shaping of those boys' lives. I feel that those years were largely responsible for my later proficiency in handling discipline problems in the classroom.

After nine years, my superintendent assigned me to teach English in the high school department. Social studies and mathematics were added later, and eventually I decided to specialize in mathematics.

Several years later I started a program for a master's degree in special education at San Francisco State University. In those days we never dreamed of demanding interpreting help with our classes. We had to be satisfied with gazing on the professor's countenance and trying to get along with the help of notes written by hearing classmates. Naturally, our chief source of information was the class texts and other reading assignments. An incident that occurred during those days may interest you. Occasionally we would be fortunate enough to have a hearing colleague from our school taking the same course. In that case, we would rely upon his generous nature to receive interpreting help in that class. This incident happened at a seminar on special education where a different guest lecturer appeared at each meeting to talk about a particular category of disability. One evening the wife of the professor in charge of the class came to speak about cerebral palsy. As usual, our colleague proceeded to interpret. How-

ever, after half an hour the lecturer spoke to him and he suddenly stopped interpreting. When we asked him why he stopped, he whispered to us that she had told him that his moving hands were extremely distracting and asked him to keep his hands quiet! During the break we went to her and explained why our friend was so busy with his hands. The poor woman became flustered and apologized to us. But we continued to wonder how it happened that a specialist in the field should be so ignorant that she could not recognize sign language!

When there were four of us deaf students who were ready to graduate with master's degrees at the same time, it was so unusual that a San Francisco paper sent a photographer to take a shot of us marching together up to the platform to receive our degrees.

In 1954 I visited Gallaudet at Christmas time and met a young lady in her senior year. I was struck by her outgoing nature and her thoughtfulness for older visitors to the campus, which was unusual for youngsters her age. I found out that she had deaf parents, which explained her outgoing nature. The geographical difference did not stop me from courting her long-distance. I took unto myself a wife two years after I met her. I had experienced life out of school for quite some time, so I was pretty sure of my choice. But I have always wondered about her courage in marrying someone with whom she had had not much more than casual contacts during two years of long-distance courtship. However, I am quite sure that she never regretted her decision, and neither did I. Our happy union was blessed by the advent of two girls. Considering our heritage of deafness, we expected deafness in our children, and would have welcomed it, for it would have meant closer kinship in the family. As it was, the older girl, Sheila, was hearing. The younger, Lisa, was born with hearing, but contracted tonsillitis when she was a year old. The attacks repeated at monthly intervals until the doctor diagnosed that a family member must have been a carrier of the disease. After the three of us took antibiotics, Lisa became well but showed a continuing loss of hearing.

In September 1970, when my children reached adolescence, my wife, Dot, obtained a teaching position in a special program for deaf children, and she became the first deaf teacher in the Oakland City Unified School District. It was apparent that her performance was

more than favorable, for they hired another deaf teacher the next year. Dot taught for seven years before she became a victim of cancer. She died a year later in 1978.

In 1975 I was appointed to be the Coordinator of Continuing and Community Education in the San Francisco Bay Area. My work was totally different from teaching and quite stimulating. I traveled all over the area, participating in various community activities. I started an annual observance of “Deaf Awareness Month” each May. I feel that awareness efforts have been very productive because of their long-term effects. In the summer of 1979, with both children away in college, and having completed 41 years of service at my school, I decided to retire.

My own life experience has involved intimate exposure to a large segment of the adult deaf population, creating an awareness of the many and varied ways in which deaf people have been repressed, restrained, and frustrated in their search for an adequate education and an equal opportunity for a meaningful life. I have seen thousands of deaf adults who have been stopped drastically short of their full potential by unthinking, presumptuous, sometimes selfish, or even plainly ignorant people who happened to have had a hand in these deaf adults’ growth and development.

This is not meant to be a sweeping indictment of hearing professionals working with deaf persons, but rather that of hearing persons possessing traditional attitudes toward deafness. There has always been a small group of hearing educators who have been real friends to deaf people. Thus, hearing people in the field of deafness might be categorized in two different groups.

The first and traditional group seems to regard the handicap first, and deaf persons as individuals second. Thus, their efforts have been mainly to “conquer” deafness by concentrating on the normalizing of deaf youngsters so that they can “speak and listen” like hearing children, to the cost of their many other needs. They seem to be much more clinical and standoffish in their attitude, and to regard deaf people more like case studies than as human beings.

The second group has an entirely different attitude; they are more interested in deaf persons as individuals in their own right than in their deafness. They socialize much more often with deaf people, and thereby gain empathy that the first group does not seem to possess.

Modern emphasis on total communication and realistic practicum methods, which include interaction not only with deaf children but also with local deaf communities, is producing an increasing number of hearing professionals in the second category, for which we are grateful.

It is my hope to demonstrate in this book that the deaf have had to contend with handicaps beyond that of their loss of hearing, and that these additional obstructions have been much more significant than their deafness in the general retardation of their development.