

## CHAPTER THREE

# Early Days on the Road

As the doctor predicted, my first few months back at Gallaudet were difficult. Everything was new because I had to learn ways to accommodate my disability. I lost all of my friends from the year before, especially the football players—we just ran out of things to talk about, we didn't seem to have anything in common anymore.

I worked full-time for the collection agency in Virginia the first two years, and took a full courseload as well. It was physically and mentally exhausting. In 1983, I decided to take a short break in my studies and accepted a one-semester internship at IBM.

Slowly, I figured out ways to compensate for being paralyzed. I started going out, being more active socially, and even began dating again. It was wonderful to realize I could get back into the swing of things. I often thought of Rafael, who'd finally left the hospital and gone back to Puerto Rico to be with his family. His parents had planned to sue me for his injuries, but he wouldn't let them. I wondered if his life was knitting back together, as mine was.

By the end of the fall semester, I was ready to start studying again. I registered for classes for spring, and was browsing through the campus bookstore when I ran into an old acquaintance. I had tutored Don in pre-calculus my freshman year, but we hadn't seen each other since the accident. He was looking for a roommate for the spring semester, and I readily agreed. Don was a lot of fun and we had always enjoyed one other's company. Because of my disability, we were assigned to a newly renovated dorm, in a large room with a private bathroom.

As Don was unpacking his things the day we moved in, I noticed his peddling cards. I had never seen peddling cards before and, for that matter, I had never even heard of deaf peddling. When I asked about them, he told me what they were for and explained how he peddled. He said he made a good deal of money selling his pamphlets. "They go like crazy!" he said, telling me that on good days he could earn \$170 in four hours.

Looking at his pamphlet (shown in figure 1), I found that hard to believe. It was nothing more than a small yellow brochure with an eagle and a flag imprinted on the cover, with the message, "Hello! I am a deaf person. I am selling this Deaf Education System Book to support my college expenses. Would you kindly buy one? Pay any price you wish! Thank you for your donation!" The inside pages illustrated the manual alphabet and some basic signs. On the final inside page was a list of suggestions for learning sign language. *Don must be nuts*, I thought, *to think he could make money off such an*

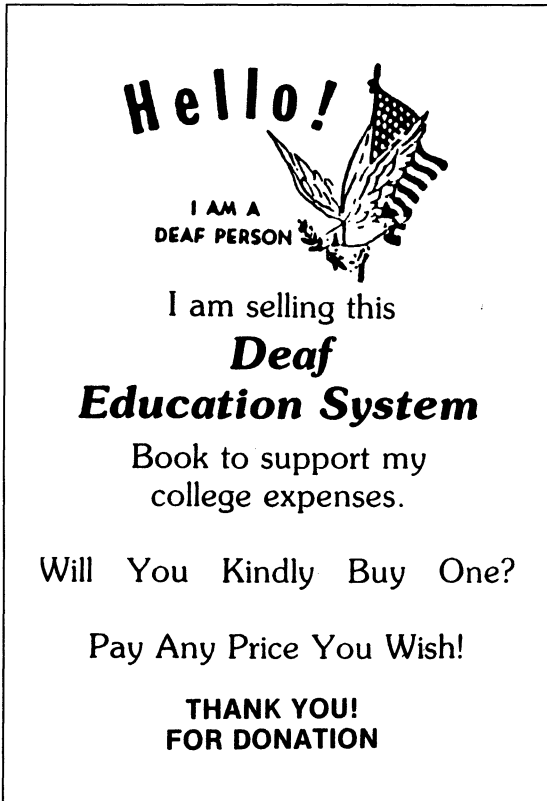


Figure 1

*item.* But then he did always seem to be jetting off here and there, despite the fact he didn't have a regular job. Despite his enthusiasm, I quickly forgot all about this sideline of his.

We were a great duo, Don and I. At that point I was working full time as a data specialist in addition to attending school and interning at IBM. I liked to work and I liked making money. Don must have decided I had what it takes to be a good business partner, and be-

fore long we launched our first business venture. We spent \$2,000 on a 52-inch television with a caption decoder, something quite unusual on campus at that time, and started hosting an all-night movie fest on Friday nights. We charged each student three dollars and offered soda and free popcorn. It was immensely successful, and we ended up making \$400 the first night alone.

Any business conducted on campus had to be a college-related promotion, so we entered into an agreement with the basketball coach, giving half our earnings to the Gallaudet basketball fund. After this first success, we decided to host a Super Bowl event using our new TV, and later bought a camcorder and videotaped students. We gave out ticket stubs inviting them to come and watch “their show” for five dollars. Every plan we made seemed to make more money than the last, and we quickly realized that these were only the first of many joint business ventures to come.

Don had to leave Gallaudet in the middle of the fall 1994 semester. He moved back to his home in Ocala, Florida with his grandmother and mother. I missed him, but we continued to keep in touch.



I knew it was important to have a great deal of experience in the field before getting a permanent job, so I decided to get as much work experience as possible. I was one of the university’s top students, and in the spring I began interviewing for a summer internship. An AT&T recruiter came to campus to interview the university’s top ten computer science students, and asked me to in-

tern for the company's information systems division. So I moved out to Denver, with all travel expenses taken care of by the company.

In Colorado I lived in an apartment with one roommate. I didn't know anybody, and it was pretty lonely. Although it was a paid internship, I still needed to earn some extra money. Then I remembered Don and his peddling cards. I called and asked him to send me one of his cards. When the sample card arrived, I took it to a local print shop and for only \$125 they printed up a thousand copies.

Now that I had made an investment, I asked Don how to proceed. It sounded easy when he explained it to me via TTY.

"Just pass the cards around," he said, "then people will give you money."

It turned out to be easier said than done, although I did earn the first two dollars easily—but only because the people at the print shop wanted to buy one of the cards they had just printed!

After that first sale, it was all uphill. I went to a mall and wasn't particularly successful. I only made one dollar after an hour of peddling. So I called Don again and complained about my bad luck. He agreed to come through Denver on his way to the Deaf World Games in Los Angeles.

Soon after he arrived, he took me along to watch him peddle at a nearby McDonald's. His method was to swiftly pass out a card to each customer, then circulate again in a few minutes and pick up money. In five min-

utes he made \$15. He instructed, “Have some guts, go into a restaurant, pass out the cards, collect the money, get out, and then go to another restaurant and do it all over again!” Simple.

Don had to continue on to California, so I soon found myself on my own again. It was easy, though, to remember his coaching. My first stop was a cafeteria-style restaurant. I followed Don’s advice and made \$38 in the first thirty minutes. I was amazed.

The next day, a Saturday, I went to the Crossroads Mall in Boulder and peddled for eight hours. I earned \$280 and I was not only amazed, I was hooked.

I tried to come up with an even better area to peddle, and realized the best place would be one where the customer base changed regularly over a period of several hours. The airport! Four hours peddling there the next day earned me \$300.

I’d always worked full time while I was a student at Gallaudet—that was the only way I knew how to make money. But now I’d discovered another way, and when I went back to school for my senior year, I peddled on weekends for my living expenses.



By the spring of 1986, graduation was approaching. I received several job offers but turned them all down—Don and I had made other plans. We were going to work together as a team, peddling across the country and making big money. He was waiting for me in Florida, so I headed south as soon as graduation was over. I owned a full-sized van, and we planned to live out of

it as we traveled. But things didn't quite turn out that way.

Once I arrived in Florida I discovered that Don had acquired a new girlfriend. He no longer wanted to go on the road. After looking forward to this trip for a long time and turning down three solid job offers, all with good pay, I was being informed that the whole thing was off. Just like that. You might say I was upset, although freaked out would be a more accurate description! Don's change of heart felt exactly like a punch in the face.

I stayed in Florida for a while, getting used to the change of plans and figuring out what I wanted to do with myself. While I was there, Don introduced me to Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). As a deaf person, I was apparently automatically eligible for SSDI.

Don explained that people who apply for Social Security benefits are always asked, "Do you want to apply for SSI?" Many applicants learn through the grapevine to enter "no," so they will then be considered as applicants for SSDI. The program isn't as strict as SSI and it usually provides a higher benefit. I had never learned about SSDI, and had always just checked the box for SSI, not knowing I was missing the opportunity to get higher benefits.

I was eligible for quite a nice benefit because I had worked a great deal during college, and SSDI benefits are based on what one has paid into the system and on one's salary at the last place of employment. Some may

consider it unfair that deaf people who are able to work can receive Social Security benefits, but the fact is that the government labels deafness as a “disability,” and deaf people are legally entitled to them.

Of course, the SSDI program includes other disabilities, but the label “deaf” carries power in the SSDI system. It almost always assures instant access to benefits. All that is required is an audiogram to prove that one is deaf. For some reason, an individual in a wheelchair is subject to far more evaluation, documentation, and red tape to determine if a real handicap to employment is present. When I first learned about the Social Security system, I was surprised at the “respect” being labeled deaf provoked. (At least in the government’s eyes!)

The SSDI program sounded ideal, and I was soon receiving about \$600 each month, double what I had received on SSI before I started working. Although I recognized how addictive that kind of income can be, it seemed like free money! I remember asking myself, why work? But I had always worked, and I wasn’t about to stop.



In June, I was anxious to get going. I decided to peddle on my own, leaving Don to the bliss of his newfound love. I set off eagerly towards New Orleans, planning to travel and peddle for a while before working on my master’s degree.

Some independent deaf peddlers starting out are lucky enough to get advice from more experienced peddlers, who can help them avoid wasting their time and



their effort. I wasn't fortunate enough to have a mentor, and began my peddling career in a pretty disorganized manner. I was weary most of the time from the constant travel and from sleeping in the van in all kinds of weather, including some nights when I had to plug in a space heater just to keep warm.

Because I had no training and no real mentor, I did things the hard way. I traveled like crazy, jumping around to different places willy-nilly. I occasionally left the airport to try my luck in a different environment. Small towns are often a good choice because the people there are friendlier and less sophisticated, more apt to make a purchase. Still, even with prior experience, it would be difficult to know how long I could work there. Perhaps a manager of a restaurant might begin to recognize me after a week or two and report my presence. Or the police themselves might notice me. Police attitudes vary considerably. Some will escort you straight to jail. Others will simply ask you to move on. In either case, you're back on the road.

One of the first things I learned is that to be successful, a peddler has to keep track of all the locations he or she has worked—which were successful, which were not, what the earnings were and how they varied at specific times and places. Many peddlers use memo books, calendars, and ledgers. Since I have a degree in computer science, I started to log this information on my computer using spreadsheet software, noting dates, locations, earnings, and hours worked.

By tracking of how much money I made at different times of the year, I learned that summer is a profitable season, with its influx of tourists. Holidays are also very good. People are in high spirits and are generally carrying extra cash in their pockets. Even the time of day makes a great difference. For example, a peddler might find the mid-morning hours poor. This might be a time for a rest. Then the midday hours, say eleven to one, might be great for business, especially near a restaurant where people are coming and going before and after lunch. In the afternoon, a university library where students are studying might be a profitable stop. Around dinner time, from five to eight, a restaurant would again be the place to go.

I quickly learned that restaurants, especially fast-food outlets, are great peddling locations. I once went into a Shoney's in Atlanta, keeping an eye out for the manager. As soon as he went into the kitchen, I circulated quickly among the tables, placing my pamphlets in front of customers. As I was making a second round to pick up money or cards, the manager came out and noticed what I was doing. He got very upset, pulled my wheelchair out of the dining area, and started pushing me toward the exit. I managed to pick up some of the money people had left on their tables on this quick trip out, and simply went on to the next restaurant once he'd pushed me out the door. For a salesman, it's always important to shake off the failures and doggedly look forward to the next opportunity.

Each deaf peddler has his or her own preference as far as location is concerned. Some peddle only in restaurants, others only in airports or bus terminals. Some peddlers decide in advance to work a set number of hours per day. Others might establish a dollar amount. Still others might take, say, one hundred cards or pamphlets and work until they're sold, hoping it will take an hour instead of an entire day. If you're lucky, customers will be in a buying mood; if you're not, it can seem as though every customer either ignores you or declines to buy.

Some peddlers prefer large public gatherings such as craft fairs, carnivals, and state fairs. I never worked those locations because of the difficulty in getting around in my wheelchair, but a friend of mine earned about \$600 a day peddling at a ten-day county fair in Peoria, Illinois. Other peddlers earn great money at the Indy 500. I think even if accessibility hadn't been a problem, though, I'd still have preferred the airport, which is protected from the weather and always air conditioned in the summer!

Obviously, airports were my favorite places to peddle. Most deaf peddlers do their peddling at airports for the simple reason that the multitude of people coming and going all day guarantees sure money. Airports provide a constantly changing customer base with little chance of repeat business, as opposed to a mall, for instance, where the customer "cycle" is completed in four to six months, accompanied by a predicted drop off in sales. In addition to an ever-changing population, there

is an abundance of places where one can choose to peddle . . . dozens of concourses and hundreds of gates.

But other locations are good for peddling as well. In malls, people are already out shopping and generally in a mood to spend money, which is always beneficial to a peddler's business. And a peddler learns quickly that weekends are the times to visit malls, while weekdays often aren't worth the trip. But then, as I've already mentioned earlier, malls are prone to customer-base problems; namely, you find the same local people returning week after week or month after month. They've seen the peddler's product, and sooner rather than later, the market reaches its saturation point.

Sometimes, however, just the opposite happens. Once when I was peddling at a food court in one of Atlanta's malls, I noticed a policeman watching me. After a while, he came up to me and asked what I was doing. I handed him one of my pamphlets and he got on his walkie-talkie, asking a supervisor what to do about me. Five minutes later he received a reply and told me there was no peddling allowed in the mall. "But just between you and me," he said, "you can continue for one more hour." Then he handed me two dollars and said he wished he could give me more, but that was all he had in his pocket! I worked as quickly as I could for the next hour to earn as much as possible in the time I had. It certainly was a different experience—a police officer who helped out with my daily income, rather than helping me out of the mall!

In addition to the motivation supplied by an overall goal, there is the day-to-day, minute-to-minute motivation a peddler must maintain. From experience, I know how easily frustrated one can become when selling is difficult and a day doesn't measure up to expectations. It's normal to feel disenchanting when a potential customer turns you down, but it's more important to shrug it off and look ahead to the next opportunity.

Occasionally, instead of being brushed off, a deaf peddler encounters a hearing customer who knows some sign language and is quite excited to be able to use it. Meeting someone with whom one can communicate and who has some knowledge of Deaf culture is refreshing, but it still doesn't deter a peddler from trying to make a sale.

At a Steak 'n Shake late one evening, I was making my usual rounds, putting a pamphlet on each table and heading back to retrieve what people had left, when a customer stopped to talk to me. Apparently he had recently seen the movie *Children of a Lesser God* and wanted to discuss it. We were communicating by writing back and forth, and I asked if he'd mind if I finished my rounds first. He told me to go ahead, and when I returned he offered to buy me dinner. I had to turn him down because I still had more work to do, and he told me he'd been inspired by the movie and asked if he could write me a check. I told him that would be difficult for me, and so he opened his wallet. All he had was two twenty-dollar bills and, after a moment of hesitation, he handed me both.

Time is money for a peddler, and although he or she may talk with a hearing signer for a minute or two, it mainly boils down to an exercise in good customer relations. Sooner rather than later, the peddler will say, "Need to go make money, will you buy a book?" Usually the hearing signer will respond, "Sure, I'll buy," and give the peddler extra money! It has often seemed ironic to me that people who have taken the time to learn something about Deaf culture will be so thoughtlessly compliant in a transaction that is basically damaging to deaf people and to the Deaf community.



Once I had picked up the peddling life, the travel, different sights, and new people were quite exciting. At first, I was so amazed at the amount of money and independence that I never stopped to wonder what I might be giving up. But despite the new experiences I was lonely, depressed, and worried about my lack of cash.

Then in Texas, I remembered a friend who lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Bud and I had grown up at the St. Rita School for the Deaf, and later we'd been good buddies at Gallaudet. I missed his easy-going, fun personality and decided to look him up over Thanksgiving weekend. Suddenly the whole trip seemed worthwhile. Bud was surprised and pleased to see me, and we spent hours catching up on each other's lives. I felt reinvigorated after visiting with Bud, and decided to continue on to California.

Don had told me about a peddler friend of his in Los Angeles, so before heading to California I gave him a

call. Mike was taking advantage of the fact that one of his deaf friends in Los Angeles lived in a subsidized apartment, and the two of them were paying virtually nothing for rent. He offered to pick me up at the airport on Friday and to let me stay with them for a short time.

When I got into Mike's car, he showed me this terrific keychain he had purchased. Mike peddled at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), and a Mexican peddler had taken him to a huge indoor flea market a few weeks before. The market was full of many different types of foreign items at a very low cost. Looking around, Mike spied a keychain that was attached to a small tool kit. The kit consisted of a small black case with a clear plastic front. It held three miniature screwdrivers, each with a different color handle—yellow, red, and green. The screwdrivers could be used for small screws on eyeglasses or watches. Although not very well made, it was a useful item, and Mike bought several cases and started selling the keychain as a novelty item.

Mike was so enthusiastic about his find that I tried peddling with it at LAX the very next day. To my surprise, I found I had never made so much money so quickly! I went back to LAX the next day, but as soon as I got there, I met a deaf Mexican peddler who told me she worked for an organized peddling ring. At the next gate, I saw another Mexican deaf peddler, and another at the next gate, and so on. There must have been ten or twenty Mexican peddlers working LAX. I would describe most of them as having “minimal language

skills," meaning that even their signing skills were below average. Their appearance was rough, and a few were even ready to fight with me, defensive of their territory and antagonistic toward any potential competition.

Since negotiation seemed an unlikely avenue, I simply left Los Angeles. My next stop was San Francisco, where I encountered yet another Mexican deaf peddling ring; different peddlers, but they were selling the same novelties as those at LAX. . . obviously, this was a highly organized and very assertive peddling ring.

This was my first real experience with peddling rings, although I had heard about them earlier in my trip. A peddler organizer, or cow, generally targets deaf people who are struggling. They may be having financial troubles or vocational problems, but they almost always have a limited education. The cow also looks for loyalty, and when he finds the right combination of trouble and fidelity, he will take a deaf person under his wing. "You want to buy a car?" he'll ask. "Well, sure," comes the reply, "but how?" He'll then take the prospective peddlers to his fine home and show them the lifestyle they, too, can acquire.

Perhaps he'll set a goal for them—a new car like his—to entice them to start peddling. For a while, he'll even let them stay at his home for free. He might supply them with a used car, telling them they must prove themselves to him over a year's time. Then, he will offer to put a portion of their earnings into a "savings plan," so they can save enough to buy that brand new car. This



type of arrangement is akin to an insurance policy for the cow, keeping the underlings working toward an incentive for the future.

A cow needs to be able to communicate well with different types of deaf people. He has to be good at gaining their trust and making them believe that the arrangement he is offering is a win-win proposition for both parties. In truth, the peddler may be expected to turn over all his peddling earnings, and may even be required to fulfill a specific dollar amount each day. To be sure there's no cheating, the cow might frisk him to be certain the peddler is not holding back money.

In a different arrangement, the peddler might be expected to turn over 50 to 75 percent of his weekly income (and maybe even a specified amount toward a "savings plan"), with the cow providing the room and board, plus the novelties or cards to be peddled—not to mention the very generous opportunity to work for him. The cow can earn as much as \$2,000 a week from each peddler.

And where does he find these peddlers? I know one man who manages deaf peddlers. He owns his own home and is deaf, but has never actually worked as a peddler. He is very involved in the Deaf community, always attending Deaf events such as softball tournaments. The reason he's so involved is that it gives him the opportunity to meet deaf people he might then hire. It's the way cows recruit.

Although some might conclude that a peddling organizer at least offers deaf people with minimal lan-

guage skills or job training a better chance at making a living, not all cows are benevolent. Any mention of deaf peddling rings wouldn't be complete without bringing up an infamous case from 1997. State and federal agents raided two apartments in Queens, New York, that summer. They discovered fifty-seven deaf, illegal Mexican immigrants living in two apartments, along with seven people who were reported to be the ringleaders.

The cows, who included both hearing and deaf people, had smuggled the peddlers into Los Angeles with false immigration papers. Once in the United States, the peddlers were transported to New York City, where they were forced each day to go into the subway system to peddle key chains and other trinkets. They were living in squalid conditions and given minimal money for food and transportation. Their immigration papers had been confiscated by the cows, and few of them were literate in Spanish, let alone English or American Sign Language.

They were trapped by their illegal status and their inability to communicate until two of them were able to communicate with someone at Newark Airport who knew how to sign. Their plight was reported to the police, who got immigration agents, with the assistance of Spanish-speaking sign language interpreters, to raid the apartments.<sup>1</sup>

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1. M. M. Cheng, "Smuggling Routes: How Mexicans Were Brought to New York," *Newsday*, 22 July 1997, 4(A); "Deaf Migrants' Families Had Feared Abuse," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 July 1997, 1(A); "For

This situation represents a worst-case scenario of the peddler-cow arrangement. While the peddlers lived in horrid conditions, the cows earned about \$21,000 per week.<sup>2</sup> The story also points out that since opportunities for deaf Americans have improved, making them less likely to peddle, cows have had to seek out others to do their work. According to an article in *The New York Times*, "the flood of new immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe in the last three decades has replenished the pool of deaf people living in isolation and need."<sup>3</sup>

After this incident, similar Mexican deaf peddling rings were uncovered in North Carolina, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The National Association for the Deaf (NAD) offered assistance to the peddlers, an act which brought accusations of hypocrisy from working peddlers who remembered the NAD's vehement anti-peddling campaign from the 1950s. I would like to think that NAD's new approach is evidence of progress, rather than a sign of hypocrisy. The NAD has turned its recent attention to matters of civil rights, ac-

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Deaf Peddlers, Both Opportunity and Exploitation," *The New York Times*, 27 July 1997; R. Kim and K. Freifeld, "Smiles This Time: Mexicans Return to House Where They Were Held," *Newsday*, 23 July 1997, 5(A).

2. "For Deaf Peddlers, Both Opportunity and Exploitation," *The New York Times*, 27 July 1997.

3. *Ibid.*

cessibility, and communication technology—proof of a broader political focus on empowerment for the entire Deaf community.



By that fall, I was slowly making my way up to Seattle. The cross-country trip didn't seem quite as glamorous as it had in the beginning; I frequently slept in my van and invented other money-saving ways to take care of my personal needs. For bathing, I would park my van in a motel parking lot early in the morning. I'd watch for motel guests to sign out, leaving the door to their rooms open. When I spotted an open room, I'd head in and take a quick shower, knowing I had some time before the maid came in to clean. It worked great and I saved a fortune. Occasionally, a maid did wander in, but I would gesture that I was deaf and hadn't heard her knock. Usually she would hustle right out, all apologies. She couldn't know I wasn't the room's official guest, just a wanderer trying to stay clean and save money.

In the beginning, many deaf peddlers find the idea of travel exciting. In the long run, however, it generally becomes mundane, boring, and stressful. To begin with, one must have a place to live. That can mean a hotel, a motel, or an apartment. When I was tired of sleeping in the van, I occasionally splurged and stayed in a low-cost motel, such as Motel 6 or Family Inn. But I got better at peddling as my trip progressed. When I started earning more money, these cheap overnight stays gave

way to better digs. After a long hard day of peddling, I felt I deserved the extra comfort of a Hyatt or a Sheraton. Plus, I could afford it. And when I worked with a partner, we'd share the costs of these finer accommodations, an even better deal for both of us.

Having one's own apartment imparts a sense of stability to the restless, vagabond lifestyle of deaf peddling. But to rent an apartment, it's often necessary to prove employment. Most landlords do not consider peddling to be employment, but almost all will accept government benefits in lieu of employment.

Many landlords check credit history, which can be a problem for a deaf peddler. One way to cope with this is to deposit money in a bank account, which is then verifiable with bank statements and receipts. This is what I chose to do. Other peddlers prefer not to deal with banks, which can provide a paper trail for the Internal Revenue Service or the Social Security Administration if a question arises concerning income sources.

Another problem with renting an apartment is that landlords often require at least a six-month lease, but peddling is an unpredictable business. It's difficult to predict when one will want, or be forced, to move on. Even if a peddler could escape the attention of the authorities for long enough to rent an apartment for a few months, he or she might be forced to move on with no advance warning.

For even the most experienced deaf peddler, unpredictability defines the nature of the game. Deaf peddlers are nomads of a sort, always moving on to fresh

areas. Some do manage to live in the same place for one, two, and sometimes even three years, but this takes experience and cleverness. One must study the area carefully and learn how to work it to one's advantage. Peddlers just starting out simply aren't sophisticated enough to do this, so they tend to travel all over, making mistakes, getting caught, and, in general, running themselves ragged.



By December of 1986, I was exhausted from my trip. By then, I'd had enough of life on the road. I arrived in Springfield, Ohio, where my parents lived, intending to pursue my master's degree at Wright State University in Dayton. Once I'd enrolled, however, I found I needed several prerequisite courses before I could enter the program I'd chosen. So I changed my mind and started thinking about an old dream Don and I had once talked about. Back in school, we'd decided to each try for a license of some sort. His goal was to become a licensed masseur. Mine was to become a licensed pilot.

I had always wanted to fly, and now I wanted to see if my disability would stand in the way of that dream. Wright State, which was named for the Wright brothers, offered a course called "Private Pilot Ground School." Nine months later I proved to myself that it was indeed possible. . . . I got my pilot's license. I called Don to chide him a bit for never having followed through on his part of the dream.

Don's situation had changed by that time. He and his girlfriend were no longer an item, and he tried to

talk me into coming back to Florida and following through on our plan to peddle together. But it was too late. I had other plans, and I wasn't anxious to take that particular risk with him again. So I stayed in Ohio and looked for a real job.

I ended up getting a computer programming job at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, where my father worked, making \$8 an hour—just over \$300 a week before taxes. The Social Security Administration lets deaf people have up to a year in a new job before terminating their SSDI benefits, so for a while it was like having two jobs.

After a year, though, the SSDI extensions ran out. My salary was a far cry from what I could make peddling, and I felt severely underpaid. So I supplemented my income by driving into Chicago on the weekends to peddle at O'Hare International Airport. I usually earned from \$750 to \$1,000 a weekend during that period. I was becoming experienced at peddling, and although I didn't realize it at the time, I was moving toward a lifestyle I would never have imagined for myself.