

**Controversies Surrounding
Communication/Educational Methods and Educational
Placement Regarding the Interpretation of “Least
Restrictive Environment” in Utah**

Part III

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Note

After working on “The Evolution of Deaf Education in Utah” project, I have gained deep respect and appreciation for the Utah Association of the Deaf and their campaigning vigorously, tirelessly for the better education and services of the Deaf. The key people are included in the document so their names can be remembered and honored. My hats off to UAD and the key people!

It is not intentional to make Utah School for the Deaf or particular parties look bad, but to help give a clear picture of what happened historically from the eyes of the Utah Deaf community and their allies, including hearing parents of Deaf children. *The History of Deaf Education in Utah* has never been recorded from a Deaf perspective and it should be a very valued perspective. Additionally, it is intended to highlight Utah Association of the Deaf and Utah Deaf community members’ fierce ongoing struggle to protect and preserve sign language and Utah School for the Deaf. Notably, Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, Ned C. Wheeler, W. David Mortensen, Lloyd H. Perkins and other Utah Deaf leaders are commended for their bravery and vigilance in protecting the deaf educational system from oral and mainstreaming influence.

To those who have concerns about this manuscript, I do not think we can attempt to hide, ignore or deny the profound effects of Dr. Grant B. Bitter and oral advocates on our *Utah Deaf History*. After all, it is part of our history.

As Robert Heinlein stated, “A generation which ignores history has no past and no future,” it is vital for us to be aware of a long history of political controversy over the circumstances surrounding the inequality of Deaf Education that existed in Utah to become better advocate for Deaf children’s rights to language and communication.

Acknowledgement

I am highly indebted to a number of people who were integral to the completion of this *Deaf Education in Utah* project. I am grateful to all of them for their support and contribution to make this project happen. First and foremost, I want to thank my husband, Duane and my children, Joshua and Danielle for their endless patience with my obsession throughout this project over the years. This project has been a long time in the making and would not have been possible without the help of many people.

I would like to show my deep sense of gratitude and appreciation to my father-in-law, Kenneth L. Kinner for sharing the fascinating *Deaf Education History in Utah* with me. Without his encouragement and

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Apart from my own efforts, I wanted to extend my sincerest thanks and appreciation to Valerie G. Kinney and Minnie Mae Wilding-Diaz for donating their time revising and editing this document. My heartfelt appreciation goes to my editor, Bronwyn O’Hara’s contribution to editing. This manuscript has been ten years in the making.

Ironically as it may sound, I wanted to thank Dr. Grant B. Bitter for saving and donating his papers to the J. Willard Marriott Library at the University of Utah. This manuscript would not have existed without his donation.

Finally, I wanted to thank Doug Stringham for sharing the version of the manuscript with Dr. Bryan K. Eldredge and making a senior level "special topics" class called "Deaf Education in Utah" possible at Utah Valley University in 2011 and again in 2016. I wanted to thank Dr. Eldredge for teaching this course in order to increase awareness of the deaf educational system in Utah and to become a better advocate for ASL/English bilingual education.

Jodi Becker Kinner

***"Dr. Grant B. Bitter's oral and mainstreaming ideology has had a lasting impact on all aspects of the Utah Deaf community." ~
Jodi Becker Kinner***

Before we delve into the history of communication methods used in the past at the Utah School for the Deaf, it might be surprising to note that a similar controversy continues today. Jeff W. Pollock, a Deaf individual who has been a long-time Utah Deaf Education advocate and has served on the Advisory Council of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB) from 2011-2013, rightly observed the ongoing contentious nature of the communication choices used in the education of the Deaf, not only in Utah but in the nation. He said, “Between the dominant society that views Deaf people as defective hearing people and the Deaf minority that continues to fight for the right to be educated in an accessible language, the education of the Deaf continues to be an area of immense debate” (Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005). The history of Deaf Education in Utah can clearly show this to be true. The controversy began even before 1909 when the Utah Association of the Deaf (UAD) was founded. One of the goals of this organization has been to protest, influence, and improve educational access since its earliest years.



Jeff W. Pollock

An Introduction of Combined System

Under the leadership of USDB Superintendent Frank M. Driggs (1901 - 1941), the school for the Deaf implemented the Combined Method, which used the manual alphabet, signs, speech and speech reading. In 1902, a statement on the methods of teaching language skills was published:

The method employed in the School for the Deaf and Dumb is what is called the 'Combined System.' This system is in vogue in most of the state institutions for the Deaf in America. It is the combination of the oral and manual method of instruction. It is the



**Frank M. Driggs, USDB
Superintendent
UAD Bulletin, Summer 1963**

system that brings the greatest benefit to the greatest number. Speech and lip reading are considered very important and are taught whenever the measure of success justifies the amount of time and labor expended. Mental development and acquisition of English are thought to be of greater importance, therefore, whenever a child fails to acquire satisfactory speech the manual method is employed.... Speech, the manual alphabet, writing and sign language are used, simply, as tools, to further [the child's] attainments (Roberts, 1994, p. 61-62).

As the guiding force of USDB, Superintendent Driggs was in a position where he had to determine what methods to include in the education of the Deaf and hard of hearing children. This determination of policy required carefully considering what would benefit the children. He became the prime target for every emotionally overwrought parent who, pointing to their young Deaf child, asked, "Will my child be able to speak and read lips?"

Although Driggs emphasized the teaching of speech to Deaf children, he acknowledged the violent conflict between strict Oralism which allowed for no signing whatsoever and the Combined Method as described above. This conflict plagued the two philosophies from the very beginnings of educating the Deaf (UAD Bulletin, April 1959).

At the turn of the 1900's, the Utah School for the Deaf (USD) would hire a teacher, who was trained in the Oral methodologies, to help the Deaf children with

speech and listening skills. Some of these teachers were also proficient in the use of sign language. When any of the Deaf students had difficulty with speech or language production and couldn't communicate vocally, then the orally skilled teacher who also knew sign language could fill in the gap for that student with sign. This arrangement worked well (Roberts, 1994).



Utah School for the Deaf and the Blind
Photo courtesy of APH Callhan Museum

However, gradually over the years, there was an increase in the number of hearing parents who preferred their children not learn any sign language at all. These parents wanted their children to learn to speak, to rely on lip-reading, and amplify their residual hearing for their primary communication mode. The Deaf community spoke loudly

against such a state of affairs (Roberts, 1994). Rather than explain to parents how their Deaf children needed sign language, USD established an Oral program in 1943 to satisfy these parental demands. All instruction in the Oral program was taught via lip-reading, spoken language, and written language (Pace, 1946).



Standing at left was Frank M. Driggs, Superintendent of the Utah School for the Deaf, 1903

Did You Know?

USD Superintendent Frank M. Driggs is quoted below:

“I love the sign language. I know how to use it well. It was a great boon to the Deaf. They loved it dearly, too dearly sometimes. I wished every Deaf child could be taught to speak well and read the lips well. These things were wonderful accomplishments and much to be desired” (The Silent Worker, June 1927, p. 335).

Did You Know?

Arthur W. Wenger, 1913 USD alumni, provided an example of Superintendent Driggs’ emphasis in learning new words among the deaf pupils:

“The walnuts shake up and the beans ‘shimmy’ down,” responded Ralph to Superintendent Driggs’ question during chapel services. The space occupied by the word ‘shimmy’ had been left open for the children to fill. This was one of the Superintendent’s methods of introducing new words and their proper application. In the word ‘shimmy’ the boy stated his opinion of the conduct of the beans through the simile of the dance. Of course, the accepted word was “rattle,” but this was only an illustration of the general use of judgment. The full text of the chapel talk was seldom forgotten. It was easily remembered as a container of a new word and as a model of its use” (Wenger, *The Silent Worker*, January 1921).

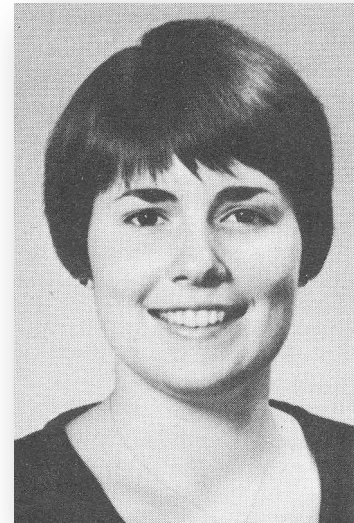


Arthur W. Wenger

Communication Methods of Instruction at the Utah School for the Deaf

Once the Oral program was in place, during the rest of the 1940s and into the 1950s, most of the Deaf students started in an oral class where signing was not allowed until the 9th grade. However, the students were allowed to sign after school hours and in the dormitories. Celia May (Laramie) Baldwin, a USD alumnus, remembered many students were hit with erasers or yardsticks by their teachers for signing. It was strictly forbidden in the classroom (Celia May Baldwin, personal communication, April 15, 2012).

The Deaf students who graduated from the Utah School for the Deaf (USD) became the next generation of Deaf community leaders. They knew first-hand what the oral instruction was doing to the



Celia May Laramie Baldwin
UAD Bulletin, Fall 1969

Deaf children. They knew that the use of the oral methodologies in the Deaf classrooms was destroying the educational standards for the students. As these new Deaf leaders became involved in the educational issue at hand, they found they could speak out against these practices through the Utah Association of the Deaf (UAD).



Dr. Robert G. Sanderson
Photo courtesy of the
Gallaudet University Archives

Dr. Robert G. Sanderson and Joseph B. Burnett, both USD alumni, explained that during the 1950s, three basic methods of instruction evolved at the Deaf school:

the manual method, the oral method, and the combined method. The exposure that the USD alumni had to each of these three basic methods of instruction created a large number of UAD members who actually supported the combined method. Support was seen on a sizeable scale when the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), at its convention in July of 1955, published a reaffirmation of its support for the Combined Method of Instruction for Deaf children (Burnett & Sanderson, *The UAD Bulletin*, 1955-1956).



Joseph B. Burnett

During the administration of USD Superintendent Harold W. Green (1954-1959), the deaf school, between 1955 and 1956, reported to the public that its elementary classes were to be taught in the Oral Method. This would be followed by a gradual switch



**Harold W. Green, USDB
Superintendent
The Utah Eagle, October 1959**

over to the Combined Method, occurring during the later intermediate grades. In 1956, Joseph B. Burnett, president of Utah Association of the Deaf, headed up a bitter battle to stop this advancement of the oral instruction into the education of the deaf. He was helped by the rest of the UAD officers. They wanted to preserve what they felt was most valuable at the Utah School for the Deaf: The Combined Method of Instruction. Because of this conflict, UAD came out strongly against Superintendent Green's plan, stating that they believed there were inherent drawbacks in early

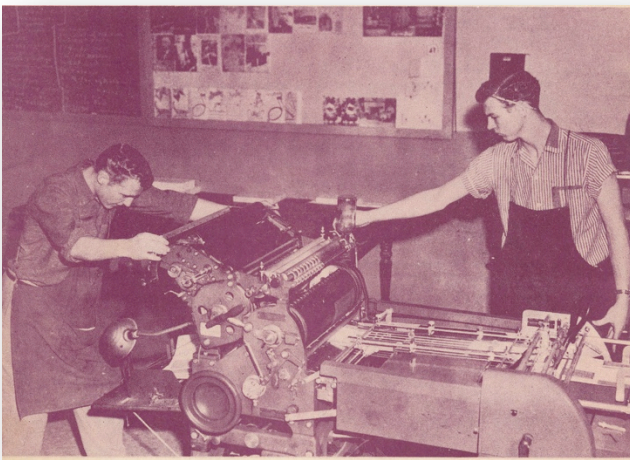
oral instruction for Deaf children. They said that the oral philosophy unduly interfered with the equality of education for each Deaf child and impeded their academic progress (Burnett & Sanderson, *The UAD Bulletin*, 1955-1956).

At around the same time, the Utah State Board of Education appointed a committee of eighteen citizens to investigate the educational methods in use at the Utah School for the Deaf. The chairman of the committee was Elmer H. Brown of Salt Lake City. Ray G. Wenger, Utah's outstanding champion of the Deaf, was one of the committee members (Burnett & Sanderson, *The UAD Bulletin*, 1955-1956). The UAD supported this investigation, with the caveat that it be conducted with an honest, fair, and impartial attitude. There were great misgivings among the Deaf group that the investigation.



Ray G. Wenger

The UAD requested that all opinions be given equal opportunity to be heard. In this way UAD wanted to prevent prejudice or bias from influencing the investigation's outcome. The USD alumni and the UAD Deaf adults teamed up to present their views on educational methods for Deaf children to the members of the investigating committee. Educators, parents and the general public were also invited to these presentations. For the benefit of the investigation committee, the



The USD Printing Department
The Utah Eagle, March 1955

Deaf adults explained that the Utah School for the Deaf, as the state's official residential school for the deaf, was the best possible place for Deaf children to acquire their education. As the Deaf children grew into teenagers, they could enroll in a fine vocational training program at the residential school. This gave them an advantage over a hearing child

because they were able to prepare themselves for future jobs. Many Deaf students who took this route found immediate jobs upon graduation. Additionally, the Deaf adults felt a residential school

provided a better social life for Deaf children. From their own experiences in having been shunted into an inadequate oral program, the Deaf



**Jerry Taylor, teacher and his class
Utah School for the Deaf Program Book, 1960s**

adults felt the parents should be aware that the purely oral method was inadequate to educate their Deaf child in so many ways.

The USD Alumni and the UAD individuals emphasized that Deaf children could receive adequate education by developing their academic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic. They explained that once these three basic subjects were mastered, then lip-reading and speech could more easily be learned, primarily as valuable social arts. Lastly, they expressed their concern that the Utah School for the Deaf's educational program lacked a positive direction for their students. In their opinion, USD was not developing tangible goals for the students in the form of college preparation. Not only were the Deaf high school students not being prepared to enter college, but they were also not being informed of the benefits of higher education. The Deaf adults suggested that USD begin college preparation at the first year of high school and the entire high school academic program should be planned around college entrance requirements (Burnett & Sanderson, *The UAD Bulletin*, 1955-1956).

These UAD officers and USD alumni, as Deaf adults, recognized how difficult it was to explain to hearing people a truth that was fundamental to Deaf people. They wanted the hearing people to believe that the Deaf really could be educated in academic

subjects. The Deaf *wanted* a real education. The adults expressed this thought as simply and as clearly as they could to those on the investigative committee. They emphatically stated:

*“EDUCATION IS MORE IMPORTANT TO THE DEAF
THAN THE MERE ABILITY TO SPEAK AND READ LIPS!
And the most efficient and quickest way to educate Deaf
children is competent application of the Combined Method”*
(Burnett & Sanderson, *The UAD Bulletin*, 1955-1956, p. 3).



Kenneth C. Burdett in Algebra class, 1954
Left to right: Kenneth L. Kinner, Kay Kinner, Donna Mae Dekker, Shanna Christiansen, Carol McFee and Clara Bosshardt

When the investigation drew to a close, the results were unknown. After all the rhetoric and time taken by Deaf adults and leaders in the Deaf community to present material to the educators and the committee, nothing happened. Nothing changed. The Deaf leadership were shocked. In fact, in the aftermath, they saw USD gradually shifting over to provide two communication methodological programs at the school: an Oral program and a Simultaneous Communication program (voice and sign used at the same time). There was definitely no one listening to the Deaf or taking their suggestions seriously.

Ray G. Wenger, USD alumni of 1913, having served on the Governor's Advisory Committee for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind since 1945, was reappointed to this committee in April 1958. The UAD welcomed Wenger's appointment since he was

an ardent advocate for the Combined Method in the educational setting (Burnett & Sanderson, *The UAD Bulletin*, 1955-1956). He is believed to be the first Deaf person appointed to the Advisory Committee.

On March 19, 1959, the UAD Committee on Deaf Education visited the Utah School for the Deaf for the purpose of meeting with school officials. The members of this committee were Ned C. Wheeler, G. Leon Curtis, Gladys Wenger, Arthur W. Wenger and Robert G. Sanderson, all USD alumni. Arthur was not in attendance that day. The



A new completion of the Main Building at USD campus in Ogden, 1954. The old 1896 Main Building was demolished.

committee didn't have time to fairly assess the academic results being achieved by the school's programs. They couldn't determine the value of the various methods nor whether the overall education for the Deaf children was satisfactory. However, as alumni, the committee members felt they had a right to ask the USD administration officials to keep them informed of the

academic and vocational progress of the students. Even though the small oral day schools were growing larger and presenting a bit of a concern in UAD's eyes, the UAD Committee for Deaf Education all agreed that the Utah School for the Deaf was still the best place for a Deaf child to acquire a well-rounded education and gain sufficient vocational skills to become a useful member of the community (Sanderson, *The UAD Bulletin*, April 1959).

Ray G. Wenger Addresses Congressional Committee

On July 16, 1960, Ray and Arthur Wenger paid their way to Los Angeles, California to attend a very important meeting. Ray was slated to testify before a U.S.

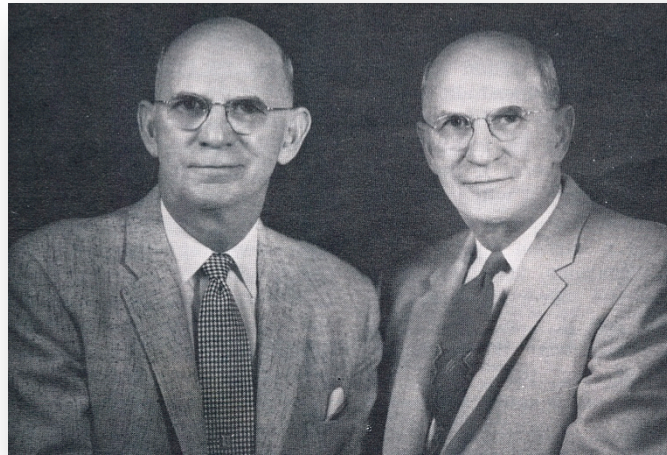
House of Representatives Committee hearing regarding a federal bill designed to provide training for teachers of the Deaf.

The original bill did not include safeguards to prevent discrimination against Deaf persons who wanted to become teachers of the Deaf. Officers of the Utah Association of the Deaf campaigned to have this bill amended. Ray's testimony added a forceful and effective presentation in defense of the Combined Method. His remarks were included in the congressional hearing's report. The members of the House Committee were greatly impressed by Wenger's testimony (UAD Bulletin, Fall 1960).

Did You Know?

In January 1921, Arthur W. Wenger wrote this for *The Silent Worker* magazine:

School work was hampered in its progress at one time by a group who thought that it was not necessary for the deaf to be educated: but when our boys and girls began to see that they were drifting on a raft without even a paddle, there came a speedy change and in the last few years the pupils had shown their realization of the value of high education by entering public high schools, college, and the State university with a desire to be on the same social and business plane as the hearing people.



Arthur W. Wenger and Ray G. Wenger
UAD Bulletin, June 1973

Last June [1920], three of our pupils were graduated from the public high schools; one from the high school at the School for the Deaf; and, one finished his second year at the University. This year we had one public high school entrant who was a senior and

the principal's office girl; three entrants at the Utah Agricultural College; and one at the University. Last summer there were three at the University summer school. Next year we expected at least three new entrants at the University and five elsewhere.

With the exceptions, classroom lectures in the public schools mean little to the Deaf, but our aspirants kept up and succeeded in the end, through the use of books and questionings that more than offset their disadvantage in being unable to read the lips of the rapid speaker (Wenger, *The Silent Worker*, January 1921).

Robert G. Sanderson Defends the Utah School for the Deaf

William Smiley wrote an article called "*It's Leave Home or Education Ends*" in the April 20, 1959 edition of the Salt Lake City newspaper. His article advocated for setting up a day school in Salt Lake City for Deaf children using the Oral approach. On May 2, 1959, Robert G. Sanderson responded with his own article entitled "*Ogden School Best for Deaf Children.*" In his article, Sanderson defended the Utah School for the Deaf's use of the manual alphabet and signs for communication against Smiley's unfavorable representation. Sanderson understood that parents of Deaf children had the

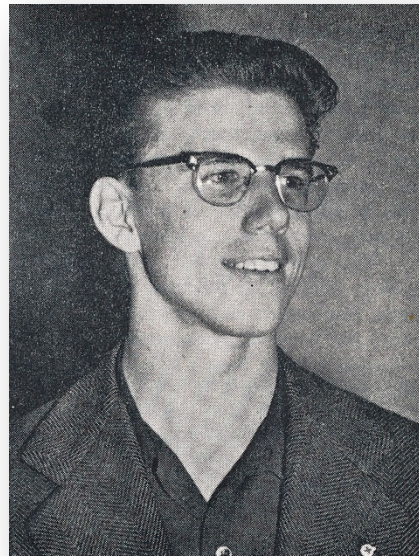
right to request special classes for their children going to school in Salt Lake City. However, Sanderson spoke plainly in opposition to the idea of parents being tricked and misled by oralists who valued lip-reading and speech production more than education. Sanderson emphasized that a Deaf child at the residential school in Ogden got a better education than if that same child attended an oral day school. He made the comparison between the School for the Deaf and a regular public school where hearing children went for school. Sanderson added that USD provided excellent academic instruction and vocational



Robert G. Sanderson
The UAD Bulletin, Winter 1965

training. This was in addition to the time the children spent learning the art of lip-reading. He suggested that parents think first about their child's education and last about their own emotions when trying to decide where their Deaf child should go to school. In concluding his retort, Dr. Sanderson highlighted that sign language is the Deaf child's natural and normal means of communication and it was ridiculous for parents to deny their Deaf children the use of it. To paraphrase, he said: The sooner you both [parent and child] learn to spell the manual alphabet, the sooner you both will be able to communicate with each other and bridge the language barrier. Speech and lip-reading will come, sooner or later, each according to the child's ability.

G. Leon Curtis and Ray G. Wenger, both USD alumni and UAD members, backed Sanderson up in writing. Their newspaper articles were in response to William Smiley's article (above) and Elizabeth H. Spear's counter-response to Sanderson's article, "*The Case for Oral Education of Deaf*," where she disagreed with Sanderson. In their articles, Curtis and Wenger clarified that both speech and manual methods were offered at USD. They suggested that any interested persons should pay a visit to the Utah School for the Deaf in Ogden, Utah (Curtis, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 5, 1959; Wenger, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 12, 1959). Superintendent Robert W. Tegeder could arrange a tour around campus. The happy faces of the students would be evidence enough to show that the USD was doing an excellent job in producing happy, independent Deaf adults (Sanderson, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 2, 1959).



G. Leon Curtis
The Utah Eagle, April 1955

Utah School for the Deaf Forms an Extension Division for Deaf Students in Aural/Oral Deaf Education Placements

One of the driving forces behind the establishment of a ‘neighborhood deaf oral day school’ was the parents of the Deaf students themselves. The parents came from Salt Lake City. Most, if not all, of these parents had already been sending their Deaf children to the Stewart Training School which was housed at the University of Utah during the 1950’s. The Stewart Training school was a laboratory school and provided early education for Deaf children who were being trained via speech and listening skills but did not incorporate sign language. This method of encouraging speech and listening is called aural/oral training or just oral deaf education.

Back in the 1950’s when a Deaf child reached the age of 5 years, that child could attend USDB (The Utah Eagle, October & November 1960; Jonathon Hodson, personal communication, May 29, 2011).



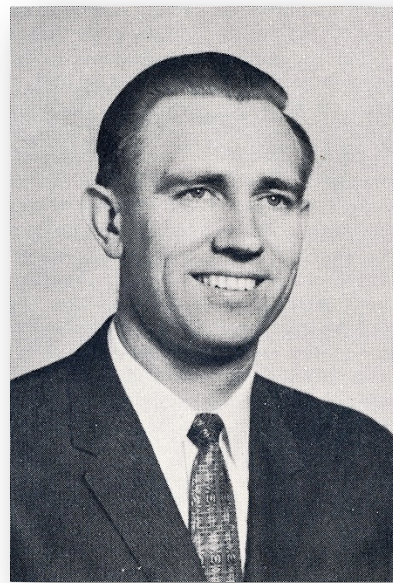
**Dr. Allen E. Bateman, State
Superintendent of Public Instruction**

Unfortunately, during the late 1950’s, the Utah School for the Deaf was filled beyond normal capacity, especially with children of kindergarten age. What was to be done with all these children ready to be their schooling at USD? The Salt Lake City parents were eager to have their children live at home rather than attend the residential school in Ogden (The Utah Eagle, January 1968). The big question was: if the children were not going to the Deaf School in Ogden, then where would they go? When the proposal of

an extension classroom was made, it seemed to be the only logical solution to the overcrowded conditions. This became a way of, figuratively speaking, taking a piece of the main USD campus in Ogden and setting it up in another city in the state. In effect,

this 'extended the reach' or serviceability of the State Deaf School (The Utah Eagle, October & November 1960). Because the Stewart Training School was already using the aural/oral approach to teach these children, the extension classroom(s) started out aural/oral and were to remain so for many years.

Through the cooperative efforts of the Utah School for the Deaf and the Salt Lake City School District, with support from Dr. Allen E. Bateman, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Extension Division of USD was established (The Utah Eagle, October & November 1960; The Utah Eagle, January 1968). Superintendent Robert W. Tegeder (1959 - 1978) was the Superintendent of the Utah School for the Deaf at the time. It was through the efforts of Superintendent of USD, Robert W. Tegeder that the first extension classroom was ready for Deaf aural/oral students in September of 1959. Tegeder agreed that the Extension Division of USD allowed Deaf students to attend school classes in their neighborhoods where they could live at home. When it was clear that the extension classroom in Salt Lake City was successful, more were eventually established in the heavier-populated areas of the state (The Utah Eagle, October & November 1960).



**Robert W. Tegeder, USDB
Superintendent
The Utah Eagle, October 1959**

Originally, the extension program was confined to the elementary school years. For high school, the students were to transfer to a regular public school or transfer to the USD in Ogden. At the Ogden campus the students received the necessary academic and vocational training for high school graduation (The Utah Eagle, October & November 1960). Between 1961-1970, the Extension Division grew from one classroom to over twenty classrooms in Salt Lake City, Ogden, Provo, Brigham City, Logan, and Vernal, to name the most prominent cities. The Extension staff included teachers of the Deaf,

nursery teachers, teacher aides, consultants, volunteers, and a curriculum coordinator. Classes were taught at all levels: preschool, kindergarten, elementary, junior high school and senior high school (The Utah Eagle, January 1968; Utah School for the Deaf 100th Year Anniversary Alumni Reunion, 1984).

The teachers in these oral extension classrooms followed the curriculum of the Utah School for the Deaf in the elementary grades. But in the upper grades the curriculum was gradually adapted to parallel the curriculum of the Salt Lake City School District (The Utah Eagle, January 1968). Students in the Extension Division were moved to the curriculum of their hearing counterparts as early as possible. Many of these Deaf students were able to integrate into regular public school at some point during their



**The USDB Oral Extension Program at the Riley Elementary School in Salt Lake City, Utah
Utahn, 1960**

education. This integration was carefully planned and allowed the student to move through a gradual transition from intensive work in speech, speech-reading, and listening skills to

public school classes--

first at lunch and recess and then in low-academic subjects such as Physical Education, Art, Industrial Arts, Homemaking, and then, gradually, into the higher academic subjects, one or more periods of the day (The Utah Eagle, January 1968). USD funded the program and rented space from the local public-school district.

The Extension Division was accepting all educable handicapped children in the Salt Lake area at two-and-a-half years old. After their preschool years, the Deaf child would either continue their schooling in the Extension Oral Program or would be

transferred to the campus in Ogden. The placement decision would be determined cooperatively between curriculum coordinator, teachers, and parents. The student's performance at school, the home environment, and the social maturation of the child were all factors in making this education decision. Generally, the child proceeded from the preschool to the kindergarten class. If the child progressed satisfactorily in all areas of concern, he/she remained under the guidance of the Extension Division until graduation from high school. However, if he/she required more intensive training in speech, speech reading, and amplified sound discrimination than the rest of the group of oral Deaf children with whom he/she was placed, he/she could be transferred to the Ogden campus because "there are not, at the present time, enough sections at each grade level in the Extension Division to allow for wide deviation in performance" in these aural/oral skills (The Utah Eagle, January 1968).

USD Helps Create A Teacher-Training Program for The Aural/Oral Deaf Education Program

During the decade of the late 1960s and the late 1970s, a shift was seen nationally from the aural/oral methods for educating Deaf students towards an approach that incorporated sign language and other visuals. However, it wouldn't be until Dr. William Stokoe declared that American Sign Language (ASL) was a legitimate language in 1984 that Deaf schools would begin integrating ASL into their schools as the language of instruction (Wikipedia: William Stokoe). At this time as the USD Oral Extension Division was getting off the ground, there were many Utah professionals in the field of Deaf Education who continued to advocate the oral/aural approach as a valid instructional method.



Dr. William Stokoe
Source: Wikipedia

Mary Burch had been persuaded to come out of retirement to teach the first extension classroom when it opened in Salt Lake City in September 1959. She was from



**Mary Burch,
USD Extension Teacher
Utah, 1960**

Kentucky and was a graduate of The Clarke School for the Deaf, a private aural/oral deaf school in Northampton, Massachusetts. The school year from Sept 1959 to May 1960 was taken as an experiment and the extension classroom was rated a success (Tegedar, *The Utah Eagle*, October 1959; *The Utah Eagle*, October & November 1960). The aftermath of that one short school year was an increase in these classrooms.

In 1960, the Utah School for the Deaf expanded and added two more extension classrooms at the Riley Elementary School in the Salt Lake City area. There was a desire to assess the effectiveness of teaching Deaf children via speech and listening skills. The teachers in this experiment were Grant B. Bitter, Tony Christopulos, Bruce Wallace, Duane Harrison, Thomas VanDrimmenlen, Albert Thurber, and Mary Burch, who stayed on. All of these educators advocated an oral/aural approach, which trained the Deaf students to use their residual hearing with amplification while learning lip-reading skills. The goal was to have the Deaf students comprehend spoken communication and develop their own intelligible speech skills.



**Standing is Mary Burch, teacher and the oral class.
Front row, left to right: Paul Anderson, Sandra Kwawegen, Bryan Monson,
Debra Hale, Barbara June Clay and Jonathon Hodson
The Utah Eagle, October 1959**

These educators wanted to pull in parental support in order to keep the program going. To that end, they marketed the experiment to parents by inviting them to come in and observe the classrooms. In this way the aural/oral deaf educators hoped to gain the support of the parents, using ‘the power of the parents’ as leverage with USD to continue on with their agenda (Ronald Burdett, personal communication, 2009).

For the first time in the State of Utah actual certification standards for teachers of the deaf became effective in 1958 (The Utah Eagle, April 1958). Through the cooperative efforts of the University of Utah and the Utah School for the Deaf, the aural/oral teacher-training program was established in 1961 under the Department of Speech Pathology and



USD Oral class
Utah School for the Deaf Program Book, 1960s

Audiology (Tony Christopulos, personal communication, November 5, 1986). This training program was later moved to the Department of Special Education in 1967-1968. Their goal was to supply the USD with future oral teachers of the Deaf (The Utah Eagle, February 1968; Bitter, *Utah's*

Hearing Impaired Children...At High Risk, 1986). Later, a disparity was noticed because there was no planning for a similar teacher-training program for prospective teachers of the deaf who would teach the Deaf children through signs using the simultaneous communication style (Utah State Board of Education, 1973; Campbell, 1977; Bitter, *Utah's Hearing Impaired Children...At High Risk*, 1986). It wouldn't be until 1984 that this inequality would be rectified.

Back to the Aural/Oral educational history, from 1960 to 1962 Grant Bitter was teaching deaf students in the USD Extension-Salt Lake City program (Utahn, 1963).

When the University of Utah began their teacher-training program mentioned above, he coordinated this program on a part-time basis from its inception until 1971, when he became a full-time faculty member there (Utah Eagle, October 1967; Bitter, *Summary Report for Tenure*, 1985). He continued to administer and supervise this education major. As the University of Utah provided certified teachers for the Deaf with emphasis in Aural/Oral skills for the school for the Deaf, USD provided them with student teaching facilities, internships, and daily on-site supervision for their student teachers (The Utah Eagle, February 1968; Bitter, *Summary Report for Tenure*, 1985).

However, Dr. Bitter allowed his personal beliefs to set the tone of the teacher preparation course at the University. He wanted his Deaf daughter, Colleen, to learn to speak. This is one reason he became a strong proponent for the oral teaching method. At this time this was the only program that addressed training teachers for the Deaf in Utah (Bitter, *Summary Report for Tenure*, 1985; Palmer, 1986; Baldwin, 1990). The main focus of this program was to teach prospective teachers how to get the Deaf children to speak and how to get them to hear their lessons like a hearing child. The teachers did not learn to sign. Hence this program could only produce teachers who were trained in the oral/aural method. There was no other choice available.



USD teacher is giving student speech training
Utah School for the Deaf Program Book, 1960s

Dr. Robert G. Sanderson noted in the UAD Spring 1964 *Bulletin* that “the University of Utah, under its Special Education program, was orally oriented” towards Deaf Education. He observed that the USD was building up a reservoir of teachers trained in oral method instruction. Many of the older teachers came from the well-known

oral Deaf schools such as The Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, Massachusetts and The Lexington School for the Deaf in Jackson Heights, New York (Sanderson, *The UAD Bulletin*, Spring 1964). But soon the University of Utah's Deaf Education program began churning out teachers too.

Dr. Sanderson was not the only one who recognized the impact of having so many oral/aural teachers of the deaf at USD's disposal. Dr. Jay J. Campbell, Deputy Superintendent of Utah State Office of Education and Dr. Stephen C. Baldwin, Curriculum Coordinator of the Total Communication Division at USD, also observed the effect this would have on the school. The parents were pulled in as proponents of the oral/aural movement because 90% of Deaf children had hearing parents. Hearing parents were generally not familiar with sign language and most parents of that era wanted their Deaf children to learn to talk (Baldwin, 1975, p. 1). In contrast, most of the adult Deaf community supported the simultaneous communication because it incorporated signs into classroom instruction. The Utah Deaf community wanted to see the simultaneous communication pedagogy included in the Deaf Education program at the University of Utah (Campbell, 1977). In the early years of this program, signs were never part of the teacher training classes.

Did You Know?

In 1959, 97% of the Utah School for the Deaf teachers were members of the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf (Christopulos, *The Utah Eagle*, November 1960).

Who is Dr. Grant B. Bitter?

Dr. Grant B. Bitter graduated from the University of Utah with a bachelor's degree. Before working for USD his teaching had been exclusively in religious education. He taught in the Latter-day Saints Church Seminary Program from 1950 to 1958. During 1961-1962, Dr. Bitter received a scholarship to the Lexington School for the Deaf affiliated with Columbia University, both in New York City. There he completed his

master's degree and Special Education Certificate to teach children who are deaf. He returned to Utah and joined the staff at the Salt Lake City Oral Extension Division from the fall of 1962 to 1964.



Dr. Grant B. Bitter
Utahn, 1961

Dr. Bitter had taken three years off to obtain a Doctorate from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan in the area of audiology and administration and returned to Utah during the summer of 1967. In addition to his job at the University of Utah, he was the director of the religious program for Deaf children of his church throughout the state of Utah (Obituary: Grant Bunderson Bitter, *Deseret News*, July 2, 2000).

The Creation of the “Y” System

Since 1902, Utah School for the Deaf had been utilizing the Combined Method with both manual signing and speech/listening in the classroom until the 1950's. Then as the Extension classrooms became more numerous it seemed that more parents wanted their children to learn the oral/aural skills of speaking and listening. Oral classrooms prohibited the use of signing. It was during this early time that the Deaf students in the oral classrooms were not allowed to sign until they entered 9th grade. This restriction only applied to the actual time spent in class. The children were allowed to sign after school and in the dormitories. Hearing teachers were hired to teach the elementary students so as



Speech training
Utah School for the Deaf
Program Book, 1960s

to model good speech. Deaf teachers were only allowed to teach high school Deaf students (Celia May Baldwin, personal communication, April 15, 2012).

In 1962, the USD announced a new policy called The Dual Track Program. This was nicknamed the “Y” system because all the Deaf children attending the residential



Standing is Wallace Bruce, an oral teacher with students, Ronald C. Burdett (left) and Thomas Rulon Osmond (right) listening to the music, 1959

school had to start in the Oral Division (the stem on the “Y”). Speech would be the primary mode of communication in the classroom and more oral teachers of the deaf would be needed. It wouldn’t be until the child was 11 years old or entering 6th grade when the parents and/or Deaf student could choose which communication mode to use

for the child’s instructional language: either maintain the enrollment in the Oral Division where speech and listening were done or enter the Simultaneous Communication Division where both sign and speech were used (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011). The old Combined Method became the new Simultaneous Communication Method.

This policy had been pushed through USD by the Utah Council for the Deaf. This Council was formed by parents who advocated the oral/aural approach, one of whom was Grant Bitter. This was a fateful shift that happened to the Utah School for the Deaf as the oral/aural approach took precedence over the sign language approach. It seemed that Superintendent Tegeder supported this shift away from early exposure to signs (The UAD Bulletin, Fall-Winter, 1962). The Special Study Committee on the Education of the Deaf also lent its support to this policy change (Wight, *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, October 19, 1970). On June 14, 1962, the Utah State Board of Education (USBE)

approved the two-track educational system (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, June 14, 1962).

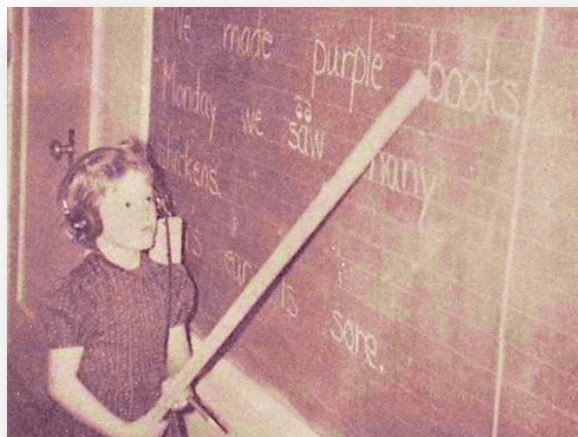
The USD felt the Dual Track Program provided certain advantages that a single track could not offer. The school administration felt this program gave the parents the ability to select the type of education for their child that would best meet his/her total needs. USD emphasized that the Oral Division must be “pure oral” in philosophy. In 1968, the USD was one of a very few residential schools that offered an entirely oral program in the elementary grades (The Utah Eagle, February 1968).

This decision ‘crossroad’ was the branches on the “Y.” A Deaf child went from preschool to completion of 6th grade in the Oral Division. Then a committee met to determine whether or not the student

should continue in the oral program or be transferred into the

Simultaneous Communication (Sim-Com) program. This decision was based on school performance, test results, and family environment (The Utah Eagle, February 1968; Wight, *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, October 19, 1970). It was not surprising that the Extension

program in the Salt Lake area was nearly as large the residential school in Ogden since all of the children were required to enroll in the entirely oral program, either on the Ogden campus or in the Extension classrooms (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, October, 19, 1970; The Utah Eagle, February 1968). This policy changes negatively impacted the residential school in Ogden for years to come.



Lisa Richards Roush reads the group news to the rest of the faculty in the USD oral class at Lafayette Elementary, 1964

At this time, teachers were now required to complete a bachelor’s degree in the education of the Deaf by accredited teacher center and become certified. Simultaneous

Communication teachers must have preparation in sign language and finger spelling (The Utah Eagle, February 1968). The teacher training program for teachers of the Deaf at the University of Utah supplied oral teachers for the sudden shortage (The Utah Eagle, November 1962), a shortage of which was artificially created by the new policy at USD. While the University of Utah served the Oral Division, Gallaudet College served as a source of information and as a guide for teachers who worked in the Simultaneous Communication Division (The Utah Eagle, February 1968). Is it possible that Dr. Bitter got this new policy idea from the Lexington School for the Deaf when he worked on his master's degree? One can only speculate.

By 1973, USD was the only state in the nation to offer both methods of communication in the Dual Track System to parents and its Deaf students (Laflamme, *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, September 5, 1973).



Barbara Bass
Photo by Robert L. Bonnell

Here was the rub. All Deaf and hard of hearing children had to start in the oral program at the age of 3 years. There was no other option from which parents could choose. If the oral education failed or in other words, if the Deaf child did not learn to speak or listen well enough to get passing grades, then the child was transferred to the simultaneous communication program. The child was given every chance to succeed at the oral skills and was generally kept in the oral program until the ages of 10-12 years (First Reunion of the Utah School for the Deaf Alumni, 1976). However, if parents really wanted their Deaf child to learn sign language in the classroom, they could decide to have their child switched to the simultaneous communication division at these same ages (Kenneth L. Kinner, Bonnell, 1987. personal communication, May 14, 2011).

Barbara Bass, a former Deaf teacher for USD explained, “This physical and methodological separation of the students created wide and painful repercussions: classmates were isolated from one another; many teachers lost friendships with colleagues over philosophical disagreements; and administrators found it difficult to divide their loyalties” (Bass, 1982).

Did You Know?

Two well-known Utah families who advocated for the aural/oral method were the Osmonds and the Winegars.

The two oldest sons of George and Olive Osmond were George Virl, Jr. “Virl” and Thomas Rulon “Tom”. They were Deaf. The Osmond family were in the entertainment business and, by their very notoriety, having their Deaf sons in the oral program sent a powerful non-verbal message to other parents in Utah.



Olive Osmond home-schooling her son, Thomas (left) and George Virl (right)
The Hearing Fund UK website

Did You Know?

“Marjorie Parkin Winegar organized groups to further oral education for the Deaf. She was appointed by Governor Cal Rampton to the Board of Education for the Alexander Graham Bell Association to develop and integrate oral curriculum for Deaf students in public schools. She also served as the first PTA president for the Deaf schools in Salt Lake City.” She lived in Bountiful, Utah (Obituary: Marjorie Parkin; Winegar, *Deseret News*, October 21, 2001).

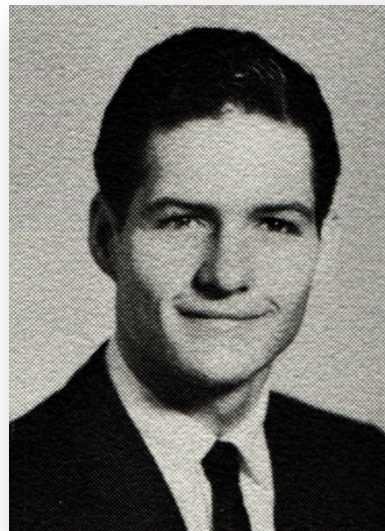
The 1962 Student Protest

Backing up to the end of the 1962 school year, remember, the Utah State Board of Education had just approved the Dual Track Program. Over the summer the Ogden campus was quickly divided into an Oral Division and Simultaneous Communication Division, each with its separate classrooms, dormitory facilities, recess times, and extra-curricular activities (The Utah Eagle, February 1968; Wight, *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, October 19, 1970). The only exception was the athletic program. Because each division did not have enough students for their own athletics, it was necessary to combine the students for their competitive sports schedule (The Utah Eagle, February 1968).

All these changes had been done without the Deaf students' awareness of what would be happening for the 1962-63 school year. When the first day of school dawned that seemingly normal August day, the students were surprised with what had taken place at their school (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, June 14, 1962; Diane Williams, personal communication, 2007). The changes created an intense protest among the older USD students. In addition, there arose a great deal of controversy between veteran teachers at USD and the Utah Deaf community.

More than half the high school students held a spontaneous strike that very day on the USD-Ogden campus (Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005).

Johnny Murray emerged as a leader in protesting the changes. Looking back, he remembered a strange visit from Tony Christopulos, principal of the Utah School for the Deaf and oral advocate, to his home shortly before school started. Tony asked Johnny's parents if they would like to place him in the oral program. Apparently, Johnny's parents didn't give Tony an answer







Johnny Murray

because, after Tony left, they asked Johnny if he wanted to enroll in the oral program. He said, “No.” They probably conveyed that information to Tony as they respected their son’s decision. The reason behind this unusual visit became clear to Johnny only after school had started (Johnny Murray, personal communication, August 14, 2009; Ronald Burdett, personal communication, 2007). Because the new policy change included the criteria of parent-preference-for-placement, it seemed that the administration contacted all the parents to find out their preferences. Those who were naïve or ignorant regarding their Deaf child’s learning style or best instructional choice for their Deaf child were willing to follow the administration’s lead and put their children into the Oral program. It seemed most of the parents did not ask their children what *they* wanted, like the Murrays did.

Following these hastily-gathered parental permissions prior to school start-up that fateful August of 1962, the students were compelled to be or, to use a bolder word, forced to be separated into the Oral and Simultaneous Communication Divisions. An invisible wall was immediately imposed upon the students that had not existed before. Now Deaf students in the oral division were not allowed to interact with Deaf students in the signing division. Best friends, who were unlucky enough to be in separate programs, were denied access to each other during class time or recess. One high school sweetheart was placed in separate programs, they were forbidden to interact with each other on the school campus.

To add to the concern over what else the dual track program would mess up, the students feared they would also lose their well-respected and well-loved Deaf teachers: Donald Jensen, Jerry Taylor, Kenneth C. Burdett (father of USD sophomore, Ronald Burdett) and Dora B. Laramie (mother of USD sophomore, Celia Mae Laramie Baldwin) (Johnny Murray, personal communication, August 14, 2009; Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).

			
Donald Jensen	Jerry Taylor	Kenneth C. Burdett	Dora B. Laramie

Senior, Johnny Murray, president of the Student Council, spearheaded a protest among the students. He had the backing of the twenty-five high school students who were in the Simultaneous Communication Program (The Ogden Standard Examiner, September 14, 1962). For a week, Johnny and the other students worked diligently to make protest posters. They used shoe polish to write their message and wooden sticks to hold them up. None of the USD teachers, including the four Deaf teachers, were aware of their plan to strike (Nellie Sausedo, personal communication, 2007).

The secret preparations were completed. The students did not show up for classes on Friday, September 14, 1962 at 8:30 A.M., after attending the seminary class of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints taught by G. Leon Curtis. The students wanted the teachers to know they were there, so they appeared in their classroom doorways for a moment and then left (The Ogden Standard Examiner, September 14, 1962). They went to the old gym where they picked up their posters and marched onto the USD campus. Some of the placards asked for a meeting with the State Board of Education (The Ogden Standard Examiner, September 14, 1962).



Kenneth C. Burdett

During the protest, Ronald spotted his father, Kenneth C. Burdett, standing off to the side. Kenneth smiled a little because he understood the reason for the protest, but he didn't feel he could actively participate because he wanted to protect his job (Ronald Burdett, personal communication, 2009). Some hearing teachers were disgusted and astonished at the students. They thought the high schoolers were being silly to go on



Thomas Van Drimmelen

strike. One teacher, Thomas Van Drimmelen, was so upset that he attempted to pull Celia May Laramie Baldwin out of the march. Her mother, Dora B. Laramie, ran to stop him, yelling, "Don't touch C.M.! Let her go!" (Nellie Sausedo, personal communication, 2007).

Around noon, nobody knew where the students were (The Ogden Standard Examiner, September 14, 1962). The students left the USD campus and walked to Lorin Farr Park. They hid behind trees while two teachers drove around looking for them. The students thought to escape to a movie theatre but, at 10 am, it was closed. The group then went to hang out in the Burdett's backyard. Being hungry, they chipped in their money and sent someone to the local grocery store on 26th and Quincy Avenue to buy cookies and punch for their lunch (Nellie Sausedo, personal communication, 2007; Ronald Burdett, personal communication, 2007).

When Kenneth C. Burdett returned home from work, he was astonished to find the students at his home. Concerned for their safety, he quickly brought them back to USD. The students went home from there for the weekend (Ronald Burdett, personal communication, 2007).

The following Monday, Johnny and a few other students were called in to meet with Superintendent Tegeder. When he asked why they went on strike, the students countered with questions of their own: "Why do we have two departments on the school

campus?” and “Why does the Oral Department have more students than the Simultaneous Communication Department?”

The Superintendent, who privately was not supportive of the change, was obligated at the time to endorse the new policy. He had no other answer for them than "Oh well!"

The students expressed to him their deep distress and disappointment over this policy where the oral and simultaneous communication students were being split up into separate dormitories, dining rooms, physical education classes, cooking classes, sewing classes, printing classes, workshop classes, and school events. The students missed the old way where everyone was all together. The students explained they were protesting the restrictions on their signing. They felt the situation had become intolerable.

No one listened. Who were the Deaf ones (Nellie Sausedo, personal communication, 2007)?

After the student strike and protest, USD principal, Tony Christopoulos, told the Ogden Standard Examiner newspaper that he thought the strike was the result of some unhappy parents. He felt the parents had influenced the students to pull that stunt. He told the reporter that the 52 Deaf students of the same age group who were in the Oral Program did not participate in the strike. It was the smaller Deaf student group from the Simultaneous Communication program who were dissatisfied with the changes (The Ogden Standard Examiner, September 14, 1962). The latter group of students wanted everyone together as before and had not acted under the direction of any disgruntled parents.

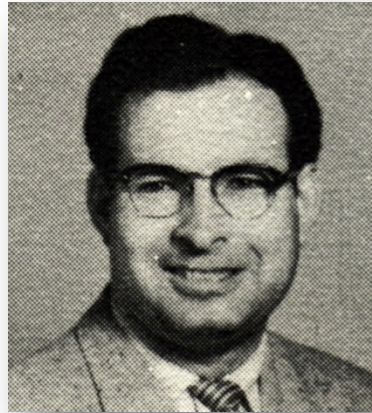
The oral advocates also suspected that the UAD was behind the student strike. The Utah State Board of Education investigated the suspicion but found no connection between the students and the UAD (Sanderson, *The UAD Bulletin*, Summer 1963). Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, UAD president (1960-63), denied having anything to do with the

protest. He stated the strike was a spontaneous reaction of the students against the conditions, restrictions, and personalities, which they felt, had become intolerable (7).

The implementation of the Dual Program constituted one of the dark chapters in the education of the Deaf in Utah.

Did You Know?






At the 2005 Reunion for the Utah School for the Deaf, held in the gym at the Sanderson Community Center of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Ronald Burdett and Celia May Baldwin briefly shared with the alumni about the 1962 Student Strike. Duane Harrison, a retired hearing USD teacher, heard Burdett announced that Johnny Murray was the leader of the strike. All those years ago, the teachers could not figure out who was behind the strike because the students refused to say. Harrison said, "Now I know who started the strike" (Johnny Murray, personal communication, September 2007).

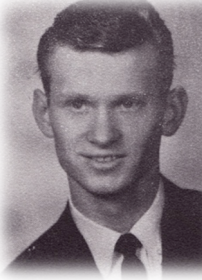

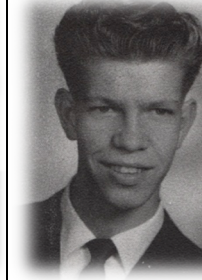

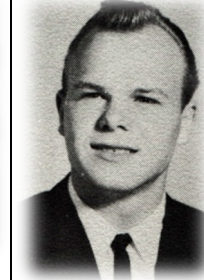


Duane Harrison





The students who participated in the strike were:





Senior Class

				
Johnny Murray	Robert Gillespie	Brent Skelton	Connie (Perkins) Curtis	Diana (Quinn) Williams






				
Eric Przybyla	Clarinda (Jack) Weston	Lorenzo (Veldon) Haddon	Rhonda (Hurst) Christensen	Ronald Perkins

Junior Class

			
Dennis Calley	Lou Ann Collier	Clyde Fowler	Renee Hallet

			
Ronald Koss	John O'Neil	Beth (Sabey) Mankin	Nellie Sausedo

Sophomore Class

				
Ronald Burdett	Celia May (Laramie) Baldwin	Gaye (Collins) Berg	Merla (Coles) DeGraw	Marsha Thurston

Limited Educational Choices

Because Salt Lake City had the oral/aural day schools to provide educational placements for those parents who wanted their Deaf children to speak and use hearing aids, what was done for families in the Salt Lake area who preferred simultaneous

communication for their Deaf child?

Remember, all the children began in the oral program until 6th grade. When their child hit this age, parents would have to send their older Deaf child to the residential school in Ogden, no matter where the family lived, in order

to access the simultaneous



The Main Building of the Utah School for the Deaf where the "Y" Program is held. The Oral Department is on the left side and the Simultaneous Department is on the right side
Utahn, 1957

communication program. These children could not live at home. To these parents, living

at the school was a big negative. The only other choice for them would be to pull the children out of USD and enroll them in a public school. When a parent took this direction, sometimes requests for a sign language interpreter at the public school were denied (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).

It wasn't long after the dual program, with its "Y" routing, were in effect and the student protest over, that USD teacher, Tony Christopulos, called the high school Deaf students into a classroom. Tony decided he wanted to see if he could get the students' buy-in. He wrote "Deaf World" and "Hearing World" on the blackboard. He pointedly told them that they should not go into the Deaf World. He made an X on the "Deaf World". Then he circled the "Hearing World" and emphasized that they must go

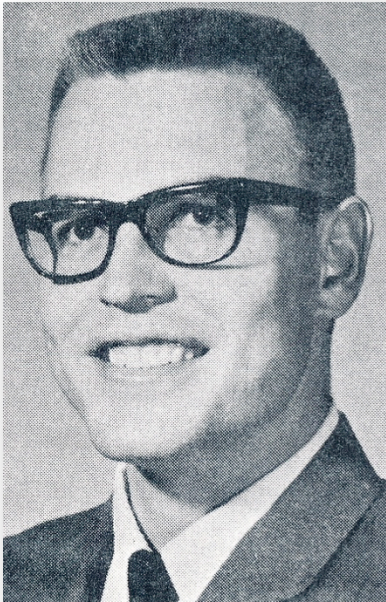


Tony Christopulos
The Utah Eagle, October 1959

into the Hearing World (Ronald Burdett, personal communication, 2007). Maybe Tony's higher education had an influence on his perceptions of how Deaf students should be channeled into the Hearing World. He received a bachelor's degree in Speech and Hearing from Brigham Young University. He attended the University of Utah and Washington University in Missouri where he received an Administrative Certificate and studied the education of the Deaf. He then went on to get a master's degree in Special Education from Columbia University in New York City (Obituary: Tony T. Christopulos, *Deseret News*, June 16, 1994). These areas of coursework would have influenced his outlook on the purpose of Deaf Education.

It seemed that the overarching philosophy of these oral educators was their desire to provide the Deaf children with tools; the tools they felt the Deaf student needed for lifetime success in the hearing world. In their view, in order to get jobs, the Deaf youth could need to know English. In order to learn English, the young person had to be able to speak and hear. It made perfect sense to them that speech training and listening skills

would become mandatory for success. To them, success was intimately tied to imposing the oralist philosophy on Deaf students. These educators didn't see their actions as oppressive or discriminatory. At the time, there were no studies or research done on sign



J. Boyd Nielson
The Utah Eagle, October 1969

language, showing how American Sign Language definitely helps the Deaf student learn English. This oral/aural philosophy might have been well intentioned, but it was totally misguided in accomplishing lifelong 'success.'

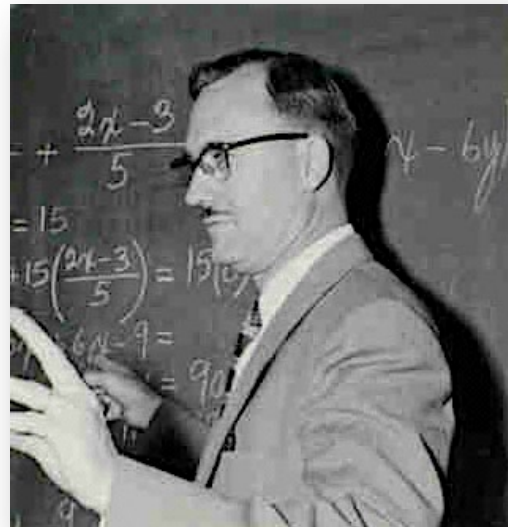
In the mid-1960's it became obvious that the percentage of Deaf students with multiple disabilities was increasing. The residential school in Ogden was eventually taken over by these students.

The Deaf children with normal minds and normal capabilities were pushed into oral day schools, because, the oral/aural philosophy believed that oral skills needed to be drilled early in life to determine if the child had any talent in these areas. The problem was the perceived length of time it took to determine oral/aural skills. It shouldn't have taken 8 years to find out that certain students did not have the ability to hear or speak. But the program did take 8 years and these 6th-graders were labeled 'oral failures' and finally moved into the signing program. It's incredible that the advocates of this Y-system did not feel responsible or guilty for the wasted time for these Deaf students (The UAD Bulletin, Spring 1965). As a result, the students lost out on those early years of language acquisition which the brain was naturally wired for. The child couldn't acquire spoken English and were denied access to sign language. As they entered middle school, they had no language.

There was a false belief among the oral educators that it wasn't too late for a Deaf teen to learn sign language. They could learn sign in high school. The oral proponents

used this persuasion so as not to mar their carefully constructed public image. However, there is an optimum time for children to acquire proficiency in a language and these ‘oral failures’ had been forced to try to learn the wrong language first. Because their natural language was sign language and it was withheld until middle school, they never achieved their academic potential. The saddest fact was that no one was interested in figuring out why they didn’t. The assumption was that it was the Deaf student who just wasn’t smart enough when, in reality, it was the educational system that was set up on faulty logic and was causing the academic failure.

Kenneth C. Burdett, a 1929 USD graduate who became an USD teacher, was appointed as a Curriculum Coordinator of the Simultaneous Communication Program under the direction of Tony Christopulos. His counterpart in the Oral Division was J. Boyd Nielsen.



Kenneth C. Burdett teaching math, 1960

It wasn’t long before Kenneth could see the inherent fallacy of the “Y” system. He could not work with the more promising students to achieve their highest academic potential because they were initially placed in the oral program. They were not in his program. Instead, he worked to serve those who had failed the oral program. By the time these Deaf students were ready to graduate, their educational achievements fell below appropriate grade levels. The students ended up not being proficient in any language, English or Sign Language. This was anecdotal proof that the fault lay in USD’s damaging “Y” structure (Ronald Burdett, personal communication, 2009).

Did You Know?

When the Utah School for the Deaf split the deaf educational program into two groups (oral and simultaneous communication), it caused students like Rosa Marie Flores Rathbun traumatic experiences. She wasn't the only one who was separated from classmates and friends. The students didn't understand what the school was doing. She thought they had set up groups, depending on how good or stupid the children were.

Rosa became a Deaf Mentor in October 1993. As an adult looking back, Rosa wished the Deaf Mentor Program had existed years ago. She believed such a program would have eased the pain and frustration brought on by the program split.



Rosa Marie Flores Rathbun



Ronald C. Burdett
Photo courtesy of the Sorenson
Communications, Inc.

Through mentoring hearing parents, she came to understand how much they need guidance and support so they can be at ease with their Deaf children. Deaf Mentors also help teach parents how to communicate with their children at a very young age (Rathbun, *UAD Bulletin*, December 1994).

Student Successes Among Those Who Used Sign Language

During these years of upheaval, Celia May Laramie and Ronald Burdett were finishing up their junior year of high school. Celia May and Ronald were curious about Gallaudet University and attended its 100th year reunion in 1964. Gallaudet is the only liberal arts university for the Deaf in the United States. From that visit they were

“sold” on attending college (Celia May Baldwin, personal communication, April 15, 2012). They both enrolled in the college preparatory course at Gallaudet that would prepare them for college-level work the following year. After passing their entrance exams, the two headed off for Washington, D.C. and Gallaudet in the summer of 1965 (UAD Bulletin, Fall 1966). They both received encouragement from their parents to “take the plunge.”

They graduated from Gallaudet in 1970 and went on to complete their master’s degrees at other universities in the nation. They had successful careers:

Ronald Burdett became professor and dean of Deaf Studies and Special Services at Ohlone College, Fremont, California. He later became Coordinator of the Sanderson Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in St. George, Utah. Later he became Vice President of Community Relations at Sorenson Communications in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Celia May Laramie Baldwin was a teacher at the Utah School for the Deaf. Later she became teacher, principal and dean of Student Life at the California School for the Deaf in Fremont, California. She also served as the interim chairperson of the Gallaudet University Board of Trustees.



Celia May Baldwin (left) and Carol Padden (right) serving Gallaudet University Board of Trustees, 2005

Both Ron and Celia May are fabulous examples of what potential possibly lay dormant for Deaf students who had not been allowed to sign. In effect, here were examples of successful signing students who went on to higher education. They were outstanding role models for young Deaf students, showing what they too can achieve when given access to the Deaf-compatible language of signs!

Utah Association of the Deaf Meets With Wilburn N. Ball, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

During this time of crisis regarding the oral/aural philosophy taking over the classrooms at the Utah School for the Deaf, what was the Utah Deaf Community doing in



**Dr. Wilburn N. Ball, State
Superintendent of Public
Instruction
Utah, 1961**

response? The officers of the Utah Association of the Deaf decided it was time for a meeting with the State Superintendent. The group from UAD consisted of Robert G. Sanderson, G. Leon Curtis, Ned C. Wheeler, Robert L. Welsh, W. David Mortensen, Joseph B. Burnett, Kenneth L. Kinner, and Gladys Burnham Wenger. They met with Dr. Wilburn N. Ball in an attempt to intervene with the changes that had already taken place in Ogden. They wanted to make known how important sign language was for Deaf children.

Gladys Wenger served as interpreter for the group since she was hard of hearing. These adult Deaf community members expressed their concerns about the Dual Program where *all* children were started out in the Oral Program. They wanted to convey to Dr. Wilburn how they felt about maintaining the signing environment on campus unchanged. In rebuttal, Dr. Wilburn showed them a stack of letters from parents of Deaf children. He picked one out at random and read. The parent expressed a desire to place his/her Deaf child in the oral program. In the face of these parents' explicit wishes, the UAD officers didn't know what more to say.

It was found out later that the USD teachers who worked in the oral/aural program had asked parents to write letters-of-request to State Superintendent Wilburn. These letters were used to effectively defend, via Superintendent Bateman, the changes that had

been made at the USDB campus (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011). There were plenty of unhappy feelings at this form of political intrigue from the USD oral teachers.

Members of the Utah Association of the Deaf



Robert G. Sanderson



G. Leon Curtis



Ned C. Wheeler



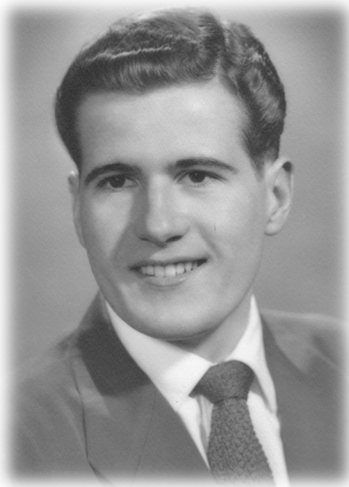
Robert Welsh



W. David Mortensen



Joseph B. Burnett



Kenneth L. Kinner



Gladys (Burnham) Wenger

What the Oral Deaf Education Major Did to Utah Deaf Education

The University of Utah was churning out oral/aural-trained teachers who were then hired by USD for their ever-expanding Oral program. The Oral program now included the Ogden campus as well as all the Extension classrooms. This overload of

orally trained teachers of the deaf resulted in relegating sign language to non-academic applications such as dormitory life. This communication change was upsetting to Deaf Education professionals and families who favored sign language.

The Utah School for the Deaf wholly embraced the oral/aural philosophy which stated, in part, that a student's success in attaining intelligible speech and adequate listening skills depended on exposure to oral/aural training in the early years of life. Ironically, in 1963, the Oral Deaf Education program at the University of Utah received a commendable review by the Conference of Executives of American Schools for the Deaf (Survey of Program for Preparation of Teachers of the Deaf at the University of Utah, 1963). This was during the time when the oral/aural methodology had a stranglehold on the education of Deaf children, not just in Utah, but throughout the United States.

Did You Know?

In 1985 Dr. Grant B. Bitter reported in his Summary of Tenure Report that his teacher training-oral program at the University of Utah was a very respected program both nationally and internationally. Since its beginning in 1962, there had been approximately 145 graduates for the job market. It was a small program compared to some, but Bitter felt they had quality. The average number of graduates was 5-7 per year.

Dr. Bitter continued to report that approximately a third of the teaching/supervisory personnel of the Utah School for the Deaf and many in Utah school districts were graduates of his program. They were employed in about 25 states and had taught or were teaching in Africa, Australia, Canada, Finland, Japan, and Mexico (Bitter, *A Summary Report for Tenure*, 1985).

Attack on a Different Front

In October 1962, several parents drew the Utah Association of the Deaf's attention to a letter that was being circulated by a group who favored the Oral program at the USD. The letter was entitled "Utah Council for the Deaf" and seemed to be written to parents of Deaf children in Utah who were in the oral/aural

UTAH COUNCIL FOR THE DEAF

program. The letter appears below in its entirety as taken from the UAD *Bulletin*, Fall-Winter, 1962, p. 3. Looking back historically, there is no way to find out who actually wrote this 'Open Letter' to parents or who were members of this council.

UTAH COUNCIL FOR THE DEAF

Dear Parents,

After several years of work, the Utah School for the Deaf finally inaugurated this year a dual program which gives parents a choice as to the type of education their children are to receive at the school. For the first time, parents who chose the oral program have found their children in an oral environment not only in the classrooms but in the dormitories, playgrounds, and dining rooms.

The staff has made a sincere effort to encourage oral communication at all times.

As a parent who has indicated an interest in having your child receive a strong oral program, we are sure that you are alarmed at recent events which have transpired at the Utah School for the Deaf in Ogden.

It is apparent that certain individuals in the adult deaf groups and some of the older group of students who are long-time trouble-makers in the non-oral department at the school have dedicated themselves to killing this program before it has a chance to prove its merits. To many parents who are somewhat undecided, they have made an aggressive campaign in order to cloud the issues. They make no attempt to hide their plan to foment disunity at the school and press for dismissal of the administrators and some school personnel who are trying to help us with the program. From information we have obtained, it is clear that they intend to make it impossible for Riley School to develop its present program.

If there is a change of administration at the State School, there is serious doubt whether any orally-trained or -inclined replacement teachers would be willing to come into a state where the education of the deaf is in the hands of a few antagonistic deaf alumni and a few disgruntled parents. Through control of hiring replacement teachers, an

unsympathetic administration would be able to destroy the program without coming into the open.

After having planned and put into operation the present fine program, we will not willingly nor quietly lose what we have put forth so much effort to accomplish.

The State Board of Education is being subjected to tremendous pressure from the adult Deaf. One board member wants to eliminate or seriously hamper efforts to maintain the oral department at the State School for the Deaf. He has made no secret of his dislike for the day school program in Salt Lake City and any further expansion in oral education.

If we are to save the present oral program, it is imperative that you make your feelings known individually to the following board members:

(Names and addresses of nine board members, plus Dr. Marion G. Merkeley and Dr. Marsden B. Stokes are listed).

It may be necessary for us to appear in person before the board to demand that the adults deaf terminate entirely their efforts to control and administer the education program of our children in the Utah Schools and that the administration be left in the hands of those trained and hired for that job.

Trained oral teachers and administrators will not and cannot remain in our schools when they are subjected to continual harassment, personal attack, and degradation.

Once again, we are fighting for the survival of the present program. Write your letter **now**!

Sincerely yours,
Utah Council of the Deaf

The UAD expressed serious concern regarding this letter and could foresee it causing severe damage to the entire Utah School for the Deaf. The UAD officers mailed copies of this letter to the Utah State Board of Education and to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The UAD felt it was unnecessary to make points refuting the letter because they felt the Board was aware of all the facts. However, to satisfy some parents, the UAD decided to publish the letter with their own answering article called 'Who's For

the Deaf?’ in the same issue of the UAD *Bulletin* where the letter appeared (see above reference). The UAD felt the Utah Council for the Deaf was being overly hostile towards them. If the UAD responded to this Open Letter from this Council and share the Deaf perspective, the members of this Council might gain a better understanding of UAD’s policy in regard to Oral/Aural education.

The first point the UAD made was the fact that the members of the Utah Council of the Deaf were unable to understand the reality of living with a hearing handicap. As far as could be determined, there were no Deaf members on the council to give valuable Deaf feedback to the group. The Council stated objectives for all Deaf, young or old. However, the UAD felt that the reason the Council was founded was solely to discredit and disparage any ideas on education that were in opposition to their own Council views.

Then UAD pointed out that, as an association made up of Deaf and hard of hearing adults, it had gone ‘on record’ in support of a fair test, *in the classrooms*, of the “two-track” or dual program at the Utah School for the Deaf. This included giving the Oral/Aural program a chance. However, the UAD deplored the school totally segregating the children

all of the
time, just
because of
the strict

The logo for 'The UAD Bulletin' is displayed on a yellow rectangular background. The word 'The' is in a black script font, 'UAD' is in a bold black sans-serif font, and 'Bulletin' is in a black script font.

‘rules’ of no signing among or in front of the oral/aural students. This segregation, based on communication methodology, interfered with religious activities, crippled the sports program, and put extreme pressure on the children in the oral department not to ever sign inside or outside of the classroom. This was so difficult to enforce.

The Utah Council of the Deaf calling the Deaf students who had to live in such an uncomfortable segregated environment ‘trouble-makers’ was blatant name-calling and an insensitive emotional tactic; unbecoming behavior if they wanted to be taken seriously.

Saying that the Deaf adult community was leading an aggressive campaign with the purpose of clouding the issues was an outright falsehood. The UAD explained that the Deaf adults with higher education had simply shared educational pointers with parents who were making choices for their children, being unaware of educational ramifications of those choices.

Calling the Deaf community “antagonistic” and hearing parents who didn’t agree with them “disgruntled” was, again, name-calling. Why did the Utah Council of the Deaf label those who didn’t agree with them with such negative trigger-adjectives? The Utah Council of the Deaf didn’t seem interested in understanding the position of the UAD Deaf community nor the signing parents. They didn’t seem interested in working together to find solutions.

The accusation of an attack on the Riley Elementary School’s oral day school program by the UAD was a surprise and a lie. The Utah Association of the Deaf explained that the Deaf adults of Utah – meaning the UAD – did not oppose the Riley school Deaf day program, nor any other school for the Deaf *that is adequately staffed by trained teachers of the deaf*. The UAD did oppose any day school for the deaf that was lacking in proper staff, grade progression, vocational training opportunities, and social activities. The UAD had proof of many oral programs in the Utah day schools which were lacking in trained personnel. The UAD had voiced that they hoped it would not happen at Riley. This warning had been misconstrued by the Utah Council for the Deaf as saying the Deaf community wanted to shut down the oral program at the Riley School. This was a twist of the facts. The UAD did not threaten the oral program at the school.

UAD was stunned by the remark that “Trained oral teachers and administrators will not and cannot remain in our schools when they are subjected to continual harassment, personal attack, and degradation.” The UAD was aware of a number of teachers *who taught sign language* who had experienced that kind of persecution but were unfamiliar with oral teachers having the same problem.

To conclude, the UAD answered the Council's dictatorial paragraph telling parents to "demand that the adult Deaf terminate entirely their efforts to control and administer the education program of our children..." The Deaf answer was to quote the UAD policy which had been at work in the state for 54 years up until then. "...To work for the welfare of all of the deaf; to work for the best possible education for the deaf children in our schools that they might become self-supporting and useful members of the community. We believe that it is our duty and our right as citizens to provide the public with information on deafness gained through our experience; and to provide, when it is not otherwise available, progressive and stimulating information on the education of the Deaf...." Seeing students step out of the Utah educational system and into becoming a Welfare recipient was not the UAD's goal for Deaf USD graduates. The Deaf adults in the community knew a better outcome was possible for young Deaf people and, if the Deaf community could help make that happen, they were willing to share their knowledge with the State Office of Education and USD.

The UAD had no problem agreeing with the Council that it was the State Board of Education who controlled and administered the educational program for the School for the Deaf and that it was Superintendent Robert W. Tegeder who was charged with putting that program into place. The Deaf community was not controlling or administering the educational program as was stated in the Utah Council for the Deaf's letter (The UAD Bulletin, Fall-Winter 1962, p. 2-3).

UAD President, Robert G. Sanderson, Responds to a Parent's Letter

On April 25, 1963, D'On Reese, a parent of an oral Deaf son living in Smithfield, Utah, felt that the Utah Association of the Deaf was trying to get rid of oralism. She wrote to Robert Sanderson, UAD President, to express her views. Her letter and Robert's reply were published in the UAD *Bulletin*, Summer 1963. Below are their letters:

Dear Mr. Sanderson:

I really enjoy reading your UAD *Bulletin*. I've never seen so much nonsense put together. It really makes for funny reading.

Why don't you put your time to good use, instead of just trying to find ways of get rid of oralism?

I have a son in the oral department of the Utah School for the Deaf. And I have not heard one parent that has a child in that school say anything against oralism. It's just you adult Deaf.

I don't know what satisfaction it gives you to try to stop oralism. As long as I'm alive, (I'm a lot younger than you) you'll have me to fight, if you expect to get rid of oralism.

The only time that I feel bad about my son being deaf is for fear he might meet up with ignorant people like you.

When you wrote to Dr. Greenaway at the Yorkshire School for the Deaf, did you inform him that the parents at our school are perfectly satisfied with what they have?

Did you tell him that it's just you meddling outsiders, that are afraid that our children might be getting something better than you did, that are upset?

Did you tell him that you went to the school board members last fall and tried to stop our oral program?

Did you tell him that you got ahold of our students last fall and staged a walk -out to get rid of oralism?

Did you tell him that you circulated a letter to our legislators to try and get our budget for the school cut so that we can't have qualified teachers?

Where has all of this gotten you?

Our oral department is still there and I think it will be there after you're long gone.

Do you see us oral parents going around trying to chop

your fingers off so you can't sign?

I'm perfectly willing to let the simultaneous dept. stay at our school.

Those people who are too lazy to learn to talk need it.

We're not bothering you so why don't you leave us alone?

We are the ones that brought these deaf children into the world. We are the ones who have stayed awake at nights trying to decide what's best for them. We've looked at both sides of the ways to teach our children and we have come to the conclusion that oralism is best.

Are you willing for me to tell you how to educate your hearing children?

According to you I have every right to because I can hear and you can't.

We have a wonderful administration at our school and very good teachers. Now if you'll just leave them and our children alone, we'll be most grateful.

When we need your help, we'll ask for it.

Sincerely yours,
D'On Reese
Smithfield, R.F.D. #1 Utah
(The UAD Bulletin, Summer 1963, p. 2 & 14)

Dear Mrs. Reese:

Thank you very much for your letter of April 25. As you requested, we shall publish it in full, verbatim.

The UAD welcomes expressions of opinions from parents, teachers, professional educators, and individuals of every philosophy. The pages of the UAD *Bulletin* are always open to those who wish to be heard.

Membership in the Association entitles one to attend

meetings, propose and discuss policies and actions. Where a majority of the membership does not agree with the policies and actions of the officers, they may exercise the American right of “voting them out” at regularly scheduled elections. We would welcome your attendance at our forthcoming convention and would give you and any other parent an opportunity to be heard at the proper time and in proper order; the same privileges are extended to all registered members.

Contrary to the belief of oralists that the adult deaf oppose **oral instruction**, we certainly do not. It has its place in the curriculum, for those who can benefit from it, along with reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography, science, and all of the other subjects a school must teach. What the adult deaf do oppose is **disproportionate attention** to speech and lip-reading aspects, to the extent that the assimilation of subject matter becomes so difficult and so delayed that the total education of the deaf child suffers.

We adult deaf are interested in seeing deaf children acquire the best possible **education** as well as seeing them learn to speak. As we have learned in our personal lives, covering in the aggregate hundreds of years of experience in coping with the multitudinous socio-economic problems of deafness on a day-to-day basis, speech and lip-reading, while useful, **solve no basic problems**. The quality and the amount of education received, academically and vocationally, are what count.

I sincerely hope that your deaf son can profit by total oralism. Some children can and some cannot and any professional educator, if he is honest, will tell you so. If it should become apparent to you that your boy’s progress is not what it should be or what you expect or that his happiness (which is so close to your heart) is at stake, then perhaps your love for him would suggest another approach – one that guarantees to him an immediate means of expressing himself. The satisfaction of early and full self expression cannot be overestimated in its value to a well-adjusted child.

It should be remembered that we deaf adults had parents, many of whom once felt as you do, so we understand and appreciate your position.

Where the official position of the Association is concerned, I would suggest that you ascertain the facts with reference to other matters you mention in your letter. However, any member of our association, regardless of his office, may act individually as his conscience so dictates since he is also a taxpayer with those certain rights and privileges we value here in America. If any of our members choose to petition legislators against further spending on education, building, or any other phase of government and has his reasons, he is a free agent. His personal stand is not necessarily that of the association.

I must deny, publicly and categorically, in the strongest possible terms, that the Utah Association for the Deaf had anything to do with the student strike at the school last fall. The strike was spontaneous – a reaction of the students against conditions, restrictions, and personalities, which they felt, had become intolerable. The State Board of Education investigated and failed to turn up any connection between the students and the UAD. Severe pressures brought to bear on student leaders also failed to establish any connection. There was one coincidence: A member of our association happened to be at the school on a business matter (verifiable) and out of this coincidence some rather wild rumors grew.

I honestly believe that the adult deaf and parents of deaf children should work together closely toward the better education of deaf children. Working at cross-purposes merely ensures continuing and futile disputes.

Sincerely yours,
Robert G. Sanderson
President
(Sanderson, *The UAD Bulletin*, Summer 1963, p. 14)

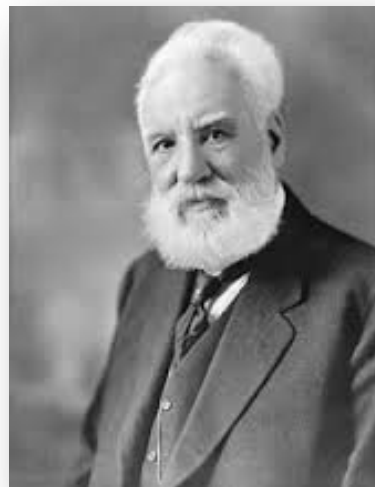
Did You Know?

When the deaf visitors from out-of-state would find out about the Dual Program offered at the Utah School for the Deaf, they often reacted in disbelief and asked why the Oral Program was not administered by the school district instead of by the state; after all, if the parents wanted their children to be 100% like themselves, their deaf children should be placed in public schools without any extra support from the state school (UAD Bulletin, February 1996).

The Alexander Graham Bell Association And Its New Oral Deaf Adult Component

The mission of the Alexander Graham Bell Association (AGB) was to encourage, help, and inspire all those concerned with deafness that Deaf children and adults may improve their educational, vocational, and social opportunities in the hearing world through the cultivation of their vocal speech, by the use of lip-reading, and by amplifying their residual hearing.

When the biennial meeting of the Alexander Graham Bell Association was held in Salt Lake City, June 1964, they inaugurated a new component to their association just for orally-trained Deaf adults. The plan was to have Deaf adults who were schooled in the oral/aural methods share their experiences and provide advice for parents who had their children currently in any of the oral programs in the state. This was a unique concept in the national AGB Association. In fact, Utah became the first state to implement this.



Alexander Graham Bell
Source: Wikipedia

Interestingly enough, the new component was made up of oral deaf adults *outside* of Utah. They were Dr. H. Latham Breunig, who was elected chairman of the Oral Deaf Adult Section, Dr. James C. Marsters, the meeting's keynote speaker, Dr. Richard Thompson, and H. William Bernstein. This new Section of AGB gave adults who were deaf or hard of hearing and chose to communicate through spoken language, speech reading, and amplification a place to share their experiences.

At a panel discussion, arranged during the Alexander Graham Bell Association convention, six oral deaf adults who told their stories and then discussed their problems

in front of the large audience. Parents of Deaf children who attended had the opportunity to talk with orally trained deaf adults during the luncheons.

G. Leon Curtis, president of Utah Association for the Deaf, also attended this meeting. He was the younger brother of Kenneth C. Burdett's wife, Afton Curtis. The other UAD members who joined him were Eugene Petersen, Robert Sanderson, and Ray Wenger. They spoke with the oral deaf founders.



G. Leon Curtis
UAD Bulletin,
Winter 1964

Breunig, Marsters, Thompson, and Bernstein. Each one gave credit for their success in their careers to their oral education. The Utah Deaf leaders could not agree with these four men. There was concern that these oral Deaf adults would unduly influence parents in supporting the oral/aural methodology.

In addition, the UAD leaders were surprised to find out that the oral Deaf adults had the impression that the UAD members were trying to hold back the Deaf children's education by teaching them sign

language. 'Hold back'? The UAD representatives tried to convey that this impression was not true. President Curtis pointed out that there were outstandingly successful Deaf people who received their education under the combined method, which supplements oral instruction with fingerspelling and signs. Curtis went on to clarify that the UAD did not object to the oral/aural method if a Deaf child could progress satisfactorily under their pure oral instruction. The problem came, however, when a Deaf child did *not* progress well with the oral method. When this happened, the situation should be faced promptly and honestly. This was not happening at USD. The



Eugene Peterson
The Utah Eagle, April 1955

UAD felt prompt action should be taken before educational years were wasted on prolonged oral-based instruction that was not successful (The Utah Bulletin, Summer 1964, p. 2).

The Controversy Between Two Giants

As the oral teaching method gained popularity and spread throughout the state, Robert Sanderson noticed a decline of the use of sign language in the educational system in Utah. Robert G. Sanderson, former president of UAD, had just been elected president of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) in 1964. It wasn't until one year later when he began working as a Deaf service counselor, that he began to battle with Dr. Grant B. Bitter in earnest. Sanderson wanted to increase public awareness regarding the



**Robert G. Sanderson is running for president
at the 1964 National Association
of the Deaf Conference**

importance of preserving sign language and of promoting quality education for Deaf children. It was a challenge to make a public impact contrary to Dr. Bitter's momentum. Bitter had influence and leverage already in motion at the university level and in the legislature, promoting the oral approach in Deaf Education. He had hundreds of oral parent-advocates on his side. These advocates were so agitated with Sanderson's activity against Bitter that they demanded his boss, Dr. Avaad Rigby, fire him. Sanderson had just

been hired as a brand-new state Vocational Rehabilitation counselor. Dr. Rigby did not fire Sanderson. It seemed Dr. Rigby was not bothered by his heavy political involvement outside of his employment (Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, personal communication, 2006).

In 1969, Dr. Bitter felt he was not able to serve as the full-time Extension Division Curriculum Coordinator in Salt Lake City any more. He had too many job responsibilities. In addition to being Curriculum Coordinator for USD, he was Director of the Teacher Training Program (Deaf Education endorsement) for U of U and also the Coordinator for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Seminary for Deaf high schoolers. He gave up his job at USD and was replaced by Charles Peters as Extension Division Curriculum Coordinator, another oral advocate (The UAD Bulletin, Summer 1969).

Dr. Stephen C. Baldwin, the Curriculum Coordinator of the Total Communication Division at the Utah School for the Deaf, commented that no one could top Grant Bitter for pushing along his hard-nosed oral/aural philosophy. Baldwin remembered at every opportunity Bitter attacked residential schools and staunchly opposed the use of sign language in the schools (Baldwin, 1990).

During this phase of Dr. Bitter's career, he was involved in state-level and national-level projects. On a state level, he founded the Oral Deaf Association of Utah in 1970 and the Utah Registry of Oral Interpreters in 1981. He chaired a committee on advocacy for oral Deaf persons through the Utah chapter of the Alexander Graham Bell Association (AGB). And as mentioned before, he directed the teacher preparation program with an emphasis in Oral Deaf Education at the University of Utah from 1962 to 1987 (Bitter, *Summary Report for Tenure*, 1985; Bitter, *Utah's Hearing Impaired Children...At High Risk*, 1986).



Dr. Grant B. Bitter
The Utah Eagle, October 1962

Grant Bitter made a formidable legislative lobbyist. His passion made him effective with lawmakers. He never grew tired of explaining the need to better prepare Deaf and hard of hearing students to live in their English-speaking environment. Bitter said the Deaf needed skills to live a “normal” life and it was necessary to teach them these skills (Bitter, *Summary Report for Tenure*, 1985; Baldwin, 1990). Just as Alexander Graham Bell was the most influential oral advocate in America in the 19th century, Dr. Bitter was as influential in Utah. He was determined to promote the full assimilation of Deaf people into hearing society. As he saw it, the way to accomplish this assimilation was to find ways to teach Deaf people to talk (Baldwin, 1990).

On a national level, Dr. Bitter became involved in speaking engagements. He presented information at workshops for oral interpreters at the University of Cincinnati and the University of Utah. He served on the committee to develop the Curriculum Guide for the Instruction of Oral Interpreting published by the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf. From 1974-1978, he served as chairman of the Governmental Relations Committee of the AGB. This committee worked directly with the Utah Congressional Team. This team included Orrin G. Hatch, United States Senator from Utah and the Chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources committee. From 1974-1978, Bitter served as president of the International Parents’ Organization of the AGB (Bitter, *Summary Report for Tenure*, 1985).

Bitter tirelessly created numerous publications, audiovisuals, and videotape materials on oral education. He published a book in 1987 called The Hearing Impaired: New Perspectives in Educational and Social Management.

Did You Know?

Dr. Grant B. Bitter wrote his Summary Report for Tenure on March 15, 1985 for the Tenure Review Committee at the University of Utah. In his summary, he shared his experiences struggling to decide what was best for his Deaf daughter in social, religious, and educational systems.

Dr. Bitter stated that his daughter, Colleen, was born on November

5, 1954 with a profound hearing loss. She was the fourth child in his family of nine children. At the time of her birth, he had left public education as an English teacher and assistant administrator in a junior high school to become an instructor in the religious educational system of the



Colleen Bitter Addie
The Salt Lake Tribune Obituary,
July 24, 2003

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When Colleen was 2 ½ years of age, her hearing loss was detected. Dr. Bitter and his wife began searching for answers and help. Thirty years ago, there wasn't much professional or family support available. They began to urgently search for meaningful educational and social programs for deaf children. They found that they would have to create and build these programs and wanted to connect with other professionals and parents who were struggling with the same issues.

Dr. Bitter became a vigorous parent/family advocate for rights and options. His family gave him the motivation to give presentations, create publications, and conduct workshops.

His philosophy of advocacy included the rights of deaf individuals to live productively, free from intimidation and discrimination in educational programming, the job market, religious and social environments. He felt his expertise in the field of deaf education helped him in his conferences, workshops, and classes.

Dr. Bitter lamented the inadequate intervention strategies and the inappropriate educational placement of the time. He and his wife were painfully aware of the extent of human inadequacies in dealing with disabilities. He could not even guess at the audiological, educational, medical, technological interventions that were just beginning to surface at that time. He said institutionalizing of the deaf child/youth was still the most commonly recommended placement. In his perspective, this meant the deaf school where, in his opinion, the children were confined to a very restrictive environment.

Bitter felt that, with the founding of the first deaf school in Hartford, Connecticut in 1817, the deaf were isolated from a dynamic learning environment. They were left 'deaf and mute' in a silent world. He recognized the work of the National Association of the Deaf in being a

champion of sign language and state residential deaf schools. He said sign language users and advocates formed a strong alliance against spoken language advocates. The spoken language advocates created private schools where they could develop their programs unmolested.

Bitter said that some people advised him and his wife to teach their daughter sign language. He was told that teaching Colleen to talk was impossible and would be denying her deafness. He said that advice almost persuaded *him* to take the signing route. He said it would have been easy to turn over Colleen's educational, religious, and social training to the deaf community and their advocates. But, in the end, they were not persuaded that the "beautiful language of signs" was feasible.

Even though they admitted to being novices and not knowing what to do, they continued searching. Colleen came from a large talkative family and her parents wanted her to enjoy the advantages of spoken language. Bitter and his wife knew her training would not simply be a matter of devoting time and energy to give Colleen the appropriate educational programming.

They were not convinced that institutional (i.e. deaf school) placement was best for their daughter. Thoughts of introducing her to a "deaf world" provided no incentive for them. They did not turn to the deaf community for answers. They were appalled at the absence of any kind of professional support for parents in a time of crisis like this. They were shocked by the cruel judgments made by professionals who came across as knowing all the answers. They were appalled by the passivity of some religious leaders and teachers who ascribed the causes of disabilities to the supernatural, i.e. disabilities were given for a special reason by a kind and loving God. These attitudes did not provide a way for them to make life better for their daughter (Bitter, *A Summary Report for Tenure*, 1985).

Controversy at Parent Teacher Association Functions

In the 1969-1970 school year, the Utah School for the Deaf Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) faced a unique challenge of which regular education parents wouldn't even dream. As the parents of Deaf children gathered for their PTA meetings in Ogden, Utah, there surfaced clashes regarding how to communicate at these meetings. Linda C. Harrop, PTA president and parent of a Deaf child, Troy, was an example of parents who agreed with the tenets of the strict oral approach. Kenneth L. Kinner, PTA Vice-President and parent of two Deaf children, Deanne and Duane, was an example of parents who

agreed with the tenets of the simultaneous communication approach. There erupted disagreements about how to conduct the meetings. At that time, Deaf parents were not



Kenneth L. Kinner

allowed to sit on the front row. They were told to sit along the back row with their sign language interpreter so as to make sure the sign language would not be seen by others, especially the young children who were oral. As a precaution, the oral/aural Deaf children were covered with their parents' coats so the children wouldn't see any sign language. Also, the parents who favored simultaneous communication were not able to express their concerns about educational issues.

They were definitely suppressed in that regard. The Deaf students were not the only ones who had to deal with these communication and ideological barriers. Their parents suffered as well (Dr. Jay J. Campbell, personal communication, July 1, 2007; Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).

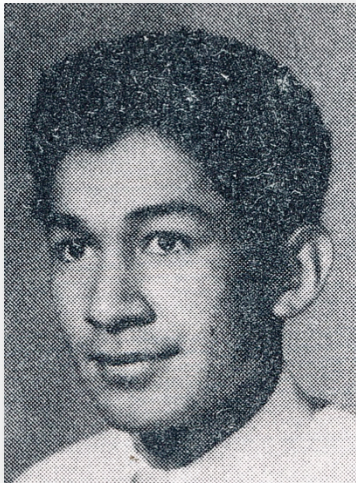
The 1969 Student Walkout

Since the Dual Track program (Oral/Aural Program and the Simultaneous Communication Program) was implemented at the Utah School for the Deaf in 1962, the system became quite complex. USD explained in the February 1968 issue of *The Utah Eagle* that the Dual Track program required endless hours of difficult and exacting work. The complete cooperation of both teachers and administrative personnel was essential for it to succeed. The deaf school emphasized that parents, teachers, and administrative personnel *must* believe wholeheartedly in the Dual Track Program at the school for it to turn out well for the students. To accomplish this, it was necessary that the parents and staff fully cooperate with the program (The Utah Eagle, February 1968).

After that fateful day in 1962 of setting up the Dual-Track program, separation of the oral/aural and simultaneous communication students continued. At that time, the Oral/Aural Division and the Simultaneous Communication Division each occupied different wings of the U-shaped building on the USD Ogden, Utah campus. The most challenging aspect for the administration and staff in operating a dual track program was in scheduling classes and activities in an environment conducive to the development of the students' respective communication skills (The Utah Eagle, February 1968). To this end, the students in the two distinct programs were forbidden to interact with each other on campus. There were separate dormitories, separate eating areas during meals in the dining hall, and separate play areas during recess. The goal in providing these separate facilities was for the



Paul Arthur, the Student Council president for the Oral Department
The Utah Eagle,
April 1968



Smiley Briseno, the Student Council president for the Simultaneous Communication Department
The Utah Eagle, February 1969

maximum development of speech and listening skills for the oral/aural students and proper manual and oral skills for the simultaneous communication students. This separation included the extra-curricular activities with the exception of competitive sports (The Utah Eagle, February 1968). The athletic program didn't have enough students from each Division to make up full teams. So, the student athletes were pulled from both the Oral/Aural and Simultaneous Communication Divisions (The Utah Eagle, February 1968; Dale R. Cook, Paul Arthur, and Linda Snodgrass James, personal communication, May 29, 2011).

Many students from both divisions could no longer tolerate the social segregation and the strict adherence to the ‘no signing’ aspect of the oral method. Tony Christopulos, the principal at the time, was a strong advocate for oral/aural education. From 1966 to 1968, a period of two years, a group of students met with Mr. Christopulos and attempted to negotiate a merger of the two divisions back into one program. They felt the segregation as an unnecessary burden on them. Christopulos might have listened to the students as they vented their frustration and desires, but he did nothing to change the situation (Raymond Monson, personal communication, November 9, 2010). Was it any wonder that the students eventually rebelled?

It was in May 1969 that a plan was hatched for a ‘walkout.’ The two key students who spearheaded the

‘walkout’ were Paul Arthur, the Student Council president for the Oral Department and Smiley Briseno, the Student Council president for the Simultaneous



The student protest is held at the flag outside of the Main Building at the Ogden campus

Communication Department. Both student presidents corroborated with other USD students to draw up a plan for the strike (Raymond Monson, personal communication, November 9, 2010). They wanted to pattern their revolt after the infamous 1962 Student Strike that most of these students remembered watching when they were young.

Three weeks before the 1969 high school graduation both the oral and simultaneous students secretly made protest signs in their dorms. After the early morning Seminary class of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, more than 100 students from both middle school and high school bravely walked out of the school campus and held a protest at the flag outside of the Main Building on the Ogden campus. Unlike the 1962 protest, there were a greater number of oral students participating in this

demonstration. Tony Christopulos, principal, and Kenneth C. Burdett, a Total Communication Coordinator, attempted to stop them. They were not successful in breaking up the students. Later the students walked an masse to nearby Liberty Park to



Simultaneous Student Council Officers, left to right, Dora Laramie, Advisor; Bridget Laramie, Treasurer; Smiley Briseno, President; Maria Garcia, Secretary; Thomas Van Drimmenlen, Advisor and Henry Armijo, Vice President, discuss Christmas decorations for the Simultaneous wing of the school building
The Utah Eagle, December 1968

discuss a new plan. Their discussion was interrupted by Christopulos, an unwelcomed intruder. The students suspected the principal was alerted to their location by neighbors (Raymond Monson, personal communication, November 9, 2010; Dale R.

Cook, Paul Arthur, and Linda Snodgrass James, personal communication, May 29, 2011).

Mr. Christopulos was not pleased with the student 'walkout' and laid down the law, threatening the seniors that he would take away their high school diplomas if they continued. This was a totally unfair tactic, but it worked in subduing the students. The seniors were terrified. They needed their diploma to move on into higher education or into the working world. It was a one-sided conversation since the principal would not budge to end the social segregation on the campus. USD Superintendent Robert W.

Tegeder added to the seniors'

punishment by cancelling their graduation dinner. He also would not listen to the



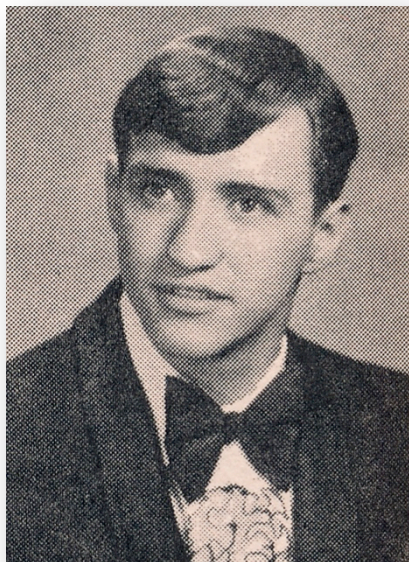
Oral Senior Student Council members, are left to right, Laura Fisher, Pete Mazza; Kathleen Allen; Miss Starr, Advisor; Paul Arthur, Mr. Andersen, Advisor; Rebecca Call, and Tedi Ann Ercanbrack
The Utah Eagle, February 1969

students' request to end the segregation on campus (Dale R. Cook, Paul Arthur, and Linda Snodgrass James, personal communication, May 29, 2011).

Even though the 'walkout' didn't achieve the results that the students were aiming for, they still found ways to continue their protest. The signing students frequently walked through the Oral Department hallway and the oral students would walk through the Simultaneous Communication Department hallway. Generally, these areas were 'off-limits' in order to keep the communications 'pure' in these areas. Some of the students got into fistfights with their oral teachers for oppressing and dominating them. They felt like puppets on a string. Eventually Superintendent Tegeder realized he could not handle the situation and he contacted the Utah State Board of Education for intervention (Raymond Monson, personal communication, November 9, 2010). Dr. Jay J. Campbell, a Deputy Superintendent of the Utah State Office, came in to supervise the Utah School for the Deaf. He had developed an interest in the welfare of the Deaf students there (First Reunion of the Utah School for the Deaf Alumni, 1976; Utah School for the Deaf 100th Year Anniversary Alumni Reunion, 1984; Raymond Monson, personal communication, November 9, 2010).

Raymond Monson's Drawing of Dr. Grant B. Bitter

Raymond Monson, 1971 USD alumni, got a job in the summer of 1969 working for Don Glen's construction company. Don Glen's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Glenn, were Deaf.



Raymond Monson
Utahn, 1971

Raymond found that his Deaf friend, Jonathan Hodson, was also working for Don Glen. They were good friends. Often their conversation turned to the recent student walkout and how it didn't work. During lunch they also discussed the negative impact of Dr. Grant B. Bitter. Raymond

remembered Bitter's forceful influence, not only on the Utah School for the Deaf but also on the Seminary Program of the Deaf under the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Raymond was angry that Dr. Bitter strongly supported the policy to separate the USD Oral and Simultaneous Communication Departments. It seemed to Raymond that not only Grant Bitter but that the oral teachers of the Deaf had a negative attitude toward the signing students in general. What happened on the USD campus and in Seminary class affected the Ogden LDS Branch for the Deaf?

Raymond recalled saying that Dr. Bitter was like the obstinate, unmoving wall that divided West Berlin from East Berlin in Germany during the Cold War. Raymond felt that Dr. Bitter never realized or refused to recognize that some Deaf students, who could not speak and were forbidden to sign, struggled under the oral system. Raymond compared the limitations of the strict oral Deaf Education to the East German victims who lived under communism while the Deaf students who had freedom to communicate in sign language were compared to the West Germans who had much more freedom in a democratic country. Raymond felt that Dr. Bitter did not have the right to force Deaf children into the oral system which later created divisions among the Deaf adult in later years.

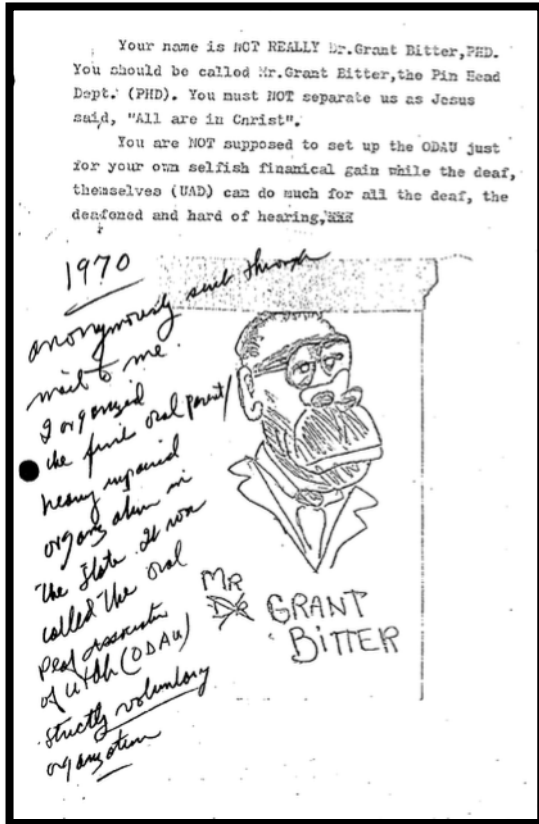


C. Roy Cochran
Utahn, 1960

Looking back, Raymond felt that the teachers from the Oral Department did not realize the discrimination that was in place against the signing students by prohibiting them from interacting with oral students on campus. Raymond felt the atmosphere created a negative situation for the students. That discrimination was in many ways like the discrimination between the white people and the black people of that same time.

Raymond suffered in the autumn of 1962 when the program changes were encountered on the first day of school (see previous story). That year Raymond was placed in the Oral program. He didn't know why. He missed his friends who were in the

Simultaneous Communication program. He was not allowed to chat with them. Nor was he allowed to sign. His mother, Marjorie, who was also Deaf, found out later that Tony Christopulos called her husband, Fred, who was hearing and asked if he wanted his son, Raymond, enrolled in the oral program. Fred didn't consult with Marjorie and gave his permission for the change.



Source: Dr. Grant B. Bitter Paper. J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah

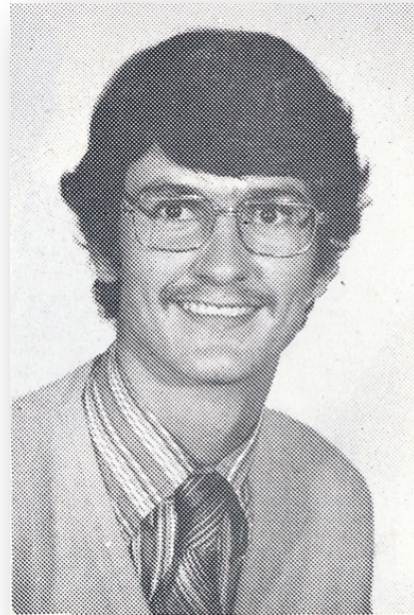
Raymond rebelled against the strict oral method. He was unhappy in that program. Marjorie tried to convince him to remain in the oral program to please his father. So even she did not understand Raymond's frustration regarding

communication limitations. Raymond recalled looking at the student strike in 1962 through the school window with the other oral students. He was eleven years old at the time.

As Raymond grew older, he found that other Deaf individuals felt the same way he did about Dr. Bitter. He and his friends would make fun of Bitter. One of the funniest guys was C. Roy Cochran, 1961 USD alumni. Cochran came up with the idea of renaming Dr. Bitter, PhD, as Mr. Bitter, Pin Head Department. It was his way of using humor to diffuse the anger among the Utah Deaf community as they continued battling with Dr. Bitter. Roy "commanded" Raymond to name Dr. Bitter as "Mr. Grant Bitter, Pin Head Department." He thought it was so funny.

When Raymond was between his sophomore and junior year during the summer of 1969, he drew a cartoon of Dr. Bitter as a way to release his anger. He showed the drawing to his mother and Brian, his hard of hearing brother. They both thought it was funny. He also showed it to Jonathan Hodson at work the next day. Raymond told his mother and brother that he was going to mail the picture to Dr. Bitter's home. His mother was worried that Raymond would get into trouble because he was still in high school. They made a deal that he would not put his name on the picture. Raymond typed a letter with the picture, with his mother helping to correct his grammar, and mailed it to Bitter, using the local phone book for the correct address.

A week later, Jonathan Hodson told Raymond that a copy of Raymond's drawing was on his family's dinner table. Jonathon promised he would not tell anyone about it. Raymond's mother begged him not to boast about his drawing. As school resumed in the fall of 1969, the UAD leaders made an announcement that Dr. Bitter was very upset about this picture drawn by an anonymous artist. It seemed that Dr. Bitter blamed some of the Deaf leaders for the picture. Dr. Bitter called a meeting of his Oral Deaf Association for Utah and asked the members if they knew who drew the picture (Raymond Monson, personal communication, November 1, 2010). He was determined to find out who the artist was. Dave Mortensen, a leader in the UAD, told him to let it go (Jonathan Hodson, personal communication, May 29, 2011). Bitter didn't want to give up but it seemed he never found out who drew that picture of him (Raymond Monson, personal communication, November 1, 2010).



Jonathon Hodson

Dr. Grant B. Bitter's Views of the Deaf Community

In 1970, just a year later, Dr. Bitter expounded on his philosophy of keeping the signing deaf separated from the oral Deaf. His explanation included a recommendation of genetic counseling for Deaf parents and recommending counseling for the Deaf to develop proper behavior “attitudes and expectations” (Grant B. Bitter Papers, personal communication, 1970). In response, the Utah Deaf community anonymously sent him a disparaging note, accusing Dr. Bitter of establishing the Oral Deaf Association of Utah purely for financial gain.

Led by Robert G. Sanderson, the Utah Deaf community began making their support for Total Communication known to Bitter. The label of ‘Total Communication’ was replacing the label of ‘Simultaneous Communication.’ In January or February of 1970, Sanderson wrote to Bitter expressing concern over the lack of guidance counseling for the hearing-impaired and the “history and problems of deafness” (Robert G. Sanderson, personal communication, 1970). Bitter responded with an offer to “confer with [Sanderson] in an effort to provide opportunities for [Sanderson] to give some meaningful presentations to the University students” (Grant B. Bitter, personal communication, March 3, 1970). In his reply, Bitter did not mention that total communication could be included in the presentation.

It seemed that Sanderson was concerned about the students in the University of Utah Teacher Training Program/Deaf Education with Oral emphasis being taught that the signing Deaf community was a divergent group, with multiple problems, who all needed counseling. Perhaps Dr. Sanderson was simply clarifying to Dr. Bitter that Deaf parents didn’t need genetic counseling and that the Deaf didn’t have to conform to the ways of the hearing majority. Sanderson may have offered to make a presentation to the university students to correct these misconceptions (Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005).

Did You Know?

Grant B. Bitter included in his Summary of Tenure report a sharing of his feelings regarding how the philosophy of Total Communication was being promoted throughout the deaf education system in America between 1968 and 1989, and in particular from 1970-1978. He felt it was a really tragic era because parents in most states lost the right to have oral instructional (spoken language) programs for their deaf children unless they enrolled them in regular education school classes where they didn't receive a great deal of supportive help. In Bitter's view, many deaf children simply 'lost out' and were placed in sign language classes. Most of those students who used some spoken language initially, did not now have the environment nor the incentive to continue their aural/oral communications. Their speech and listening skills deteriorated. To Bitter, this situation consigned these children to a "silent world." From reading what he shared in his report; it is safe to say that Bitter did not understand the true needs of deaf children.

Dr. Bitter also mused on the deaf education profession in his report. He felt that many professionals and parents were either too tired to resist the promotion of sign language "with all of its glittering generalities" and/or became convinced that signing would succeed. He bemoaned the fact that these professionals and parents ceased to cooperate in working for what he saw as quality educational options, i.e. oral/aural deaf education programs. Some very competent deaf education professionals left that career. Others who couldn't leave the deaf education field were "destroyed" professionally when their oral education skills were no longer required. He felt his life's work was being betrayed and supplanted by something that wouldn't work (Bitter, *A Summary Report for Tenure*, 1985).

The Parent Teacher Association Divides

In the spring of 1970 a group of parents, Deaf representatives and the Utah School for the Deaf staff met during a Parent-Teacher Association meeting to discuss taking out-of-state Deaf school tours. It was proposed to visit either Missouri or California. Most of the oral proponents voted to tour the Central School for the Deaf in St. Louis, Missouri and the Missouri School for the Deaf in Fulton, Missouri. Total communication proponents wanted to visit the California School for the Deaf in Riverside, California, the Santa Ana Program for the Deaf in Santa Ana, California, and/or the Buena Park Program for the Deaf in Orange County, California. When the group couldn't agree on where to

visit, they handed the problem over to Dr. Walter D. Talbot, State Superintendent of Public Instruction. He would make the final decision. After looking over the budget, Talbot selected California because it was closer to Utah and cheaper to travel there.

The group selected to go consisted of Deaf individuals, Dave Mortensen, Lloyd Perkins, Jack and Harriett Hendrickson, Don Brubaker, and Kenneth Kinner. They were accompanied by two USD staff members, Boyd Nielson, USD Oral Coordinator and Robert Nielson, Assistant USD Oral Coordinator. There were parents who went too, however, Linda C. Harrop, PTA president, was unable to go due to her pregnancy.



Dr. Walter D. Talbot
The Utah Eagle, April 1970

While visiting the California School for the Deaf in Riverside, they toured the high school algebra class taught by Dr. Lawrence R. Newman. He was the president of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) at the time. The Total Communication group was hoping that Mr. Nielson, Mr. Nelson, and the oral parents

would keep an open mind and see value in sign language. The oral parents asked Dr. Lawrence if any students were in the oral program. He said, "Don't ask me. Ask the students." One of the students responded by saying he had attended the Mary E. Bennett Oral School in Los Angeles, California but didn't get the education he needed. He said he found greater happiness and received a better education at the Riverside School for the Deaf.

The Utah Oral proponents returned home after the tour of the California School for the Deaf in Riverside while the Total Communication members of the group remained an extra day to go on an unofficial tour of the Santa Ana Program for the Deaf in Santa Ana Unified School District, California. Interestingly, an oral program was utilized in

that school from 1948 until September 19, 1968 when it changed to the Total Communication approach. This happened during the Total Communication ‘movement’ (Educating Deaf Children by Total Communication, 1970). Dr. Roy K. Holcomb, the “Father of Total Communication” was their tour guide. The group was extremely impressed with the program and wished the oral group had stayed with them to see what could be accomplished academically with the oral approach.

Back home in Utah, the group met to discuss their impressions and observations from the trip. Mr. Nielson stood up and said, “I think Deaf children can talk.” The advocates of the oral approach clapped their approval. That statement indicated to the signing advocates that the oral proponents hadn’t been receptive to anything they had seen in action at the California School for the Deaf. No dent had been made as a result of this trip. The oral proponents maintained the ‘iron-clad’ view of Deaf Education that they’d had before this trip.



Dr. Lawrence R. Newman
Iowa Association of the Deaf
website

As the PTA strove to discuss how USD parents could get involved in the affairs of the deaf school, the educational controversy continued to impede parents from working together. A group of parents met with Della Loveridge, State Representative for the 8th District, to express their concern over the difficulties encountered in the USD PTA. She suggested they establish a separate PTA group for the Total Communication parents (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).

There was enough controversy among the parents that the story got into the local Ogden newspaper on May 28, 1970. The story read, in part, about a group of parents and teachers, supporters of sign language, who met in Ogden to discuss their experiences of being left out of decision-making at the USD’s PTA. This not only happened at the

Ogden Deaf School location but also in Salt Lake City. One Deaf parent said, “We are not opposed to teaching [the children] to speak. We are opposed to the Salt Lake [extension] schools refusing to teach sign language.” Another parent recounted the opposition he encountered when trying to switch his child from the oral program into the manual or Simultaneous Communication program at the end of his child’s elementary school years.

On June 25, 1970 a meeting was held to form a new PTA organization for those parents and teachers who were in the Simultaneous Communication Division (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, May 29, 1970).

Another Powerful Advocate Is Added

May 1970 was a turning point in Dave Mortensen’s life. It was the year he became active as a member of the Utah Association for the Deaf. He started having significant interest in politics and advocacy. From this beginning he was able to play a huge role in changing the Deaf Education system in Utah.

One day in early May Dave Mortensen and Helen Foy were picking up their Deaf daughters, Kristi and Claudia, outside the Extension classroom at Dilworth Elementary School. Dave caught part of a conversation between the girls. He asked them to repeat what they were saying to each other because he didn’t like the looks on their faces. He wanted to know what was bothering them. Finally, Kristi and Claudia began sharing horror stories of physical abuse that had been going on in their classroom for quite a few years. Behind closed doors the oral teachers were treating the students unfairly. Helen asked Dave if he was going to do something about



W. David Mortensen

it. He replied, “Oh definitely, I am.” Helen took the girls home with her while Dave rushed over to the Utah State Board of Education. He grabbed Beth Ann Stewart Campbell to interpret for him and stormed into State Superintendent Dr. Walter Talbot’s office. He asked if the State Superintendent was aware of what was going on behind closed doors in the deaf classrooms (Dave Mortensen, personal communication, March 27, 2009; Kristi L. Mortensen, personal communication, June 17, 2011).

The events of that day brought back troublesome memories surrounding another visit the Mortensen’s had previously with four USD employees, including Kate Fenton, an oral teacher, and Mr. Nielsen, the school’s audiologist. The four were intent on convincing Dave and his wife, Shanna, to enroll Kristi at the Ogden campus. She was



Kate Fenton
The Utah Eagle, 1965

already enrolled at the Riley Elementary School Oral Extension Classroom in Salt Lake City. Dave asked why Kristi should be sent to the USD in Ogden. They were told that Kristi would be a great example for the entire state of Utah of what a Deaf child could achieve. Dave and Shanna flatly refused. They did not want their daughter to experience segregation, that is, the language segregation that was occurring on campus. Later, when Kristi turned 8 and was fitted

with a body hearing aid, the school again sent representatives to beg her parents to reconsider. The school proposed a weeklong trial. Dave and Shanna agreed but Kristi did not like it from the very beginning because she was put into the Oral program, thinking she would enjoy it. After that one week, Kristi never returned to the USD-Ogden campus (Kristi Mortensen, personal communication, June 17, 2011).

Dave took the same energy he displayed that month of May 1970 into his new role as president of the Utah Association for the Deaf in October 1971 (UAD Bulletin,

October 1971). He was full of determination to rectify the Utah Deaf Education system. He felt the Deaf were missing out on many things. This belief spurred his activities with the Utah State Legislature. He took his leadership to a whole new level. He wanted to work on the problems of language segregation at the Ogden campus and the prohibition of sign language use in the extension classrooms in Salt Lake City (Dave Mortensen, Renae M. White, Don M. Mortensen, and Kristi L. Mortensen, personal communication, April 17, 2009).

Dave Mortensen and A Group of Parents Make A Plea

From 1962 to 1970, both oral and simultaneous communication methods were in use in the elementary grades at the Utah School for the Deaf in Ogden, while only the oral method was used in all grades in the Salt Lake City Extension Division housed at 1415 California Ave. Salt Lake City, Utah. The Extension Division included students who were of high school age (Deseret News, May 19, 1970).

On May 18, 1970, Dave Mortensen was joined by eight parents of Deaf children to petition for a change in the pure oral teaching method in USD's Salt Lake City Extension classroom. These parents wanted their children to be taught via the Simultaneous Communication Method of Instruction. They wrote a letter to the Governor's Advisory Council for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind to make their request known. They contended that the Oral/Aural Methods used in the extension classroom were not meeting the scholastic and individual needs of their children (Deseret News, May 19, 1970; The Salt Lake Tribune, May 19, 1970). In addition, the parents included a protest regarding the campus segregation of the students at the Ogden main campus (Deseret News, May 19, 1970).

The Legislative Subcommittee #4 Established

As a result of storming into the State Superintendent's office, Dave decided to gather his Deaf leaders and meet with State Representative Della Loveridge, D-Salt Lake City. Della was Dave's mother's best friend. The leaders who were invited were Robert G. Sanderson, Ned. C. Wheeler, and Lloyd H. Perkins. These Deaf leaders wanted to share information with Ms. Loveridge about the incidents that Kristi and Claudia mentioned and talk about Utah Deaf Education in general. This initial meeting occurred in June 1970. Madeline Burton Perkins served as their interpreter. As a result of this meeting Rep. Loveridge promptly set up a Sub-Committee on Education of the Deaf that was approved by the Utah State Board of Education. Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, Deaf Advocate, Dr. Robert Erdman, Chairperson of the Department of Special Education at the University of Utah, David Mortensen, Deaf Advocate, and Dr. Jay J. Campbell, Deputy Superintendent of the Utah State Board of Education, were key participants on this committee (Subcommittee #4 Minutes, 1970).

This was the beginning of the political battle with oralism (oral/aural method). For years Sanderson and Wheeler tried to effect changes in the Deaf Education system but they needed a parent of a Deaf child to join their cause and speak up. Dave Mortensen, while Deaf himself, was the father of a Deaf child and was just the person they needed (Dave Mortensen, personal communication, March 27, 2009).

It was a busy summer as the Utah Deaf community, consisting mostly of graduates of the Utah School for the Deaf, reported to the Utah State Legislature that the University of Utah did not include total communication pedagogy in their Teacher for the Deaf Preparation Program (Subcommittee #4 Minutes, 1970).

This Subcommittee received letters from the community in support of both pedagogy methods. Dr. Bitter solicited letters from legislative leaders in support of the oral program. The Utah Deaf community received support from Dr. Britt M. Hargraves, Director of the Teacher Training Program at Western Maryland College, in support of the

Simultaneous Communication program (Britt M. Hargraves, personal communication, August 17, 1970). Dr. Hargraves' evidence lay in the fact that there were only two graduates of USD attending the nationally funded liberal arts college for the Deaf, Gallaudet College, in Washington, D.C. This highlighted the failure of the oral program at USD to produce high school graduates who were able to go on to higher education.

A little-known fact was a letter sent to the Utah Deaf community from the Utah affiliate of the AFL-CIO. The letter supported the establishment of a Total Communication Teacher's program at the University of Utah. However, in a twist of events, that support was retracted three months later (AFL-CIO, personal communication, September 2, 1970). The AFL-CIO--Utah chapter's reason for changing from a supportive position to a neutral position was their desire for all their members to fully understand the issue (AFL-CIO, personal communication, December 9, 1970). The reason behind this retraction deserves further exploration, however, it shows the intensity of the controversy at the time.

One issue that the Subcommittee discussed was establishing a Total Communication program at Utah State University (Subcommittee #4 Minutes, October 28, 1970). However, it was moved, and seconded by Dr. Robert Erdman, U of U Special Education Chair, that such a program not be established (Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005).

Oral/Aural Methodology Is Defended

On June 15, 1970, approximately 250 people crammed into one of the meeting rooms at the University of Utah's Milton Bennion Hall. They had come together for the general meeting of the Oral Deaf Association of Utah founded by Dr. Grant B. Bitter.

The Utah School for the Deaf was under attack. There were accusations that the school favored and gave priority to the oral/aural methodology in the placement of Deaf students while also making it hard to move the students into the signing methodology.

The parent petitions also told of physical abuse by oral teachers upon manual students; failure of the oral teachers to teach the Deaf students; oral students not vocationally prepared; oral students not taught the difference between right and wrong, and assertions against the Deaf Education Program at the University of Utah. The petitions were submitted to Utah's governmental and educational officials (The Salt Lake Tribune, June 16, 1970; Deseret News, June 16, 1970).

Dr. Bitter denied all of these accusations. He said the assertions made against the oral system were "unfounded and unwarranted." His printed handout stated, as follows:

"In my judgment...the accusations made against...the educational system...and the teacher education program at the University of Utah is completely unjustified" (The Salt Lake Tribune, June 16, 1970; Deseret News, June 16, 1970). Tempers flared when several total communication proponents suggested the merger of the oral method into the simultaneous communication method. At that time Dr. Bitter stated, "Any meeting of the oral method with the manual alphabet and the system of signs as proposed by some would be totally incompatible with oral education – in fact, it would cease to be oral education" (Deseret News, June 16, 1970).

Public Controversy Continues During the Summer of 1970

In June 1970, the communication controversy continued to spark at meetings. There were more petitions to state governmental agencies and letters to the press. About 400 parents and friends signed a petition endorsing the oral/aural system. Below is an excerpt.

"The best hope for a hearing-impaired child to learn to communicate adequately and compete successfully in the modern world is through early and continued oral education. Since the inception of the Extension Division of the School for the Deaf, instruction has been purely oral. As a result of employing the oral method, students in the Extension Division have learned to communicate in a

normal environment with the result that integration in classes of normal students start at or complete at the high school level.

Now therefore, be it resolved by parents and friends of the Extension Division, School for the Deaf, that the oral method offers the best hope for hearing-impaired children to adjust to a normal environment and to compete successfully in society.

Be it further resolved that the Extension Division of the School for the Deaf is commended for its progressive and successful program and is urged to continue teaching by the oral method” (Heinrich, *Deseret News*, June 26, 1970; Wight, *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, October 20, 1970).

Margaret Heinrich, a parent of a Deaf child and an educator at USD, expressed in her Letter to the Editor (above) that, while the majority of parents realized there was a small minority of parents in the Salt Lake City area who disagreed with them, they hoped that the Governor’s Advisory Council and the State Advisory Committee for the Handicapped would recognize the wishes of the majority of parents who desired to maintain status quo at the deaf school (Heinrich, *Deseret News*, June 26, 1970).

Not to be repressed, about five months later, the same old debate bubbled up again. This time it was coming from the students in the oral program at the Ogden campus. They wanted to know if they could be permitted to socialize with students who were in the simultaneous method of instruction (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 12, 1970). Dr. Bitter stuck to his guns and continued to advocate the prohibition of free association of all USD students because the oral method would cease to be an oral method if signing was allowed in its presence.

Parents of Deaf Form Separate PTA Organization

Because of the philosophical differences regarding education, over 100 parents and members of the Utah Deaf community voted to form a new PTA organization. This

historic moment occurred at a meeting in Ogden on June 25, 1970. This would be USD's third PTA organization, separating themselves from the two already formed at USBD, which were the Total Communication PTA in Ogden and the Oral/Aural PTA in Salt Lake City among the Extension classrooms (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, June 26, 1970). When this third PTA was formed, the original USD PTA went back to its original name of Extension Oral PTA.

The name of this new group was The Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA). Its home base was in Salt Lake City, Utah. The first president of the PTSA was Jack W. Hendrickson. Dave Mortensen and Norman Foy were chosen as vice-presidents. Kenneth Kinner was voted treasurer. Harriet Hendrickson was elected secretary and Karen Williams was chosen as historian (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, June 26, 1970; (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).

The PTSA was a mixture of parents of Deaf children, teachers - students of USD, and supportive friends. The group comprised Deaf and hearing people who were interested in the objectives of PTSA which were the linguistic, educational, and social needs of the Deaf students (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).

It wasn't long before the Parent-Teacher-Student Association made an impact. They spoke out about reforming the Dual Track Program. They wanted the choice of oral or total communication methodology at the very beginning of their children's school career. It had been nearly ten years that the Utah Association for the Deaf and parents who supported sign language fought against the "Y" system. Up to now no one had listened. Finally, the new PTSA organization was able to influence policies at the school (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011). The fact that many parents did not believe in the quality of USD's Dual Track Program was emphasized in *The Utah Eagle* article entitled, "New Developments in Utah's Educational Programs for the Deaf" dated February 1968.

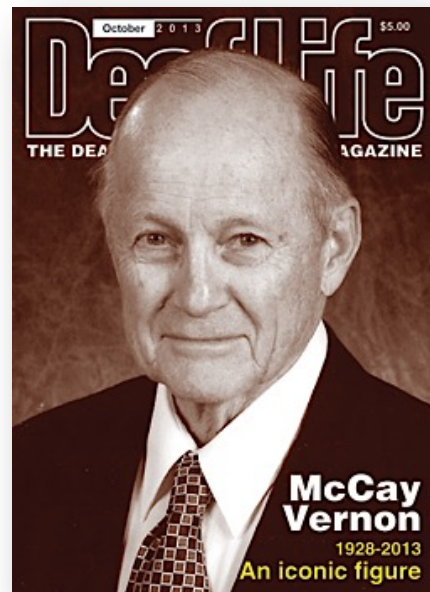
Deaf Teaching Method Debate at the State Capitol Auditorium

A month later at the State Capitol auditorium, on July 27, 1970, approximately 200 persons heard presentations by Dr. McCay Vernon, a Deaf Education expert, and Dr. June Miller, a professor at the Kansas State Medical School. This event was a debate on the successful ways to educate Deaf children, sponsored by the Governor's Advisory Council which was another legislative subcommittee which focused on Deaf, Blind, and Socio-Economically Handicapped Children.

Those in attendance represented members of the State Board of Higher Education, State Board of Education, Governor's Advisory Council, along with the state superintendent of public instruction, USDB administrators, USD PTA presidents, the State Senate President, and Speaker of the House (The Salt Lake Tribune, July 27, 1970; The Deseret News, July 27, 1970). Deaf people such as Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, Ned C. Wheeler, W. David Mortensen, Lloyd H. Perkins, Joseph B. Burdett, C. Roy Cochran and Kenneth L. Kinner were also present (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).

Dr. Vernon, an advocate for the total communication method, boldly asserted, "An overwhelming number of Deaf people fail educationally or are forced to fail because of the way they are taught.....The Deaf are just as bright...they have just as high IQs as hearing people.....But theproportion of Deaf high schoolers going to college has decreased" (Deseret News, 1970, p. 2B).

Dr. Miller defended the oral method as having advantages. She told the assembled group that proponents of the two methods agreed on many things, such as early



Dr. McCay Vernon
Deaflife website

identification, education of the parents, and the need for successful job placement. However, she explained, the disagreement between the two methods was in the area of communication. She said, “We must concentrate on ways to improve oral instruction” because several aspects of the oral method did not consider students’ individual differences, the problem of teacher motivation, how to deal with large class sizes, and the inconsistencies in the general oral program (Deseret News, 1970, p. 2B). Despite these failures, Dr. Miller’s ardor could not be suppressed. She hailed Utah’s oral program as “distinctive.” As she put it, “[The program] made it possible for each [Deaf] child to enter the adult [hearing] world” (Deseret News, 1970, p. 2B).

Dr. Vernon cited several scholarly studies that showed the total communication method was superior to the strictly oral method. He warned that the educational method must take into account the Deaf person’s needs (Deseret News, 1970, p. 2B).

Dr. Vernon’s rebuttal has been proven in the years to come. Research has consistently shown that Deaf children of Deaf parents have significant academic

achievement, reading and writing abilities, and greater social development than Deaf children of hearing parents (Israelite, Ewoldt, & Hoffmeister, 1989).



Utah Governor Calvin L. Rampton
KSL.com

As a follow-up to that important day, Dr. Grant Bitter sent the Legislative Subcommittee #4 a letter in opposition to Dr. Vernon's presentation. He stated that there was no research showing that total communication was a viable method. He said that, in fact, it was not a method, but a vague philosophy which only served to

confuse students (Grant Bitter, personal communication, August 5, 1970; Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005).

Though Bitter was wrong, the members of the subcommittee believed him. Representative Loveridge, chairperson of the Advisory Council's subcommittee, knowing that USD started every Deaf child in the oral program until completion of 6th grade, said the subcommittee would make recommendations to the committee and to Governor Calvin L. Rampton. The questions the subcommittee were to answer were:

- #1. Should the total communication method be taught to Utah Deaf children at an earlier age than the current 7th grade and
- #2. Should Utah colleges upgrade the deaf education degrees in the state (The Salt Lake Tribune, July 27, 1970; Chaffin, *Deseret News*, December 12, 1970)?

The State Advisory Committee for the Handicapped, chaired by Senator Ernest H. Dean, D-American Fork, and the Committee for the Study of Programs of the Deaf, chaired by Dr. Moroni H. Brown, a chairman of the Utah State Board of Education and an associate professor of psychology at the University of Utah, had a challenge in deciding what changes, if any, should be attempted at USD. During the fall of 1970, these committees conducted extensive studies of the educational program at the Utah School for the Deaf. These studies would be the backbone of their report to the Utah State Board of Education (Utahn, 1961; Wight, *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, October 20, 1970).



Dr. Moroni H. Brown
Utahn, 1961

Did You Know?

Research indicates that all school children must master two types of communication skills in order to achieve their educational goals: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS includes the social and conversational communication skills that are attained through daily interaction with family and peers. CALP requires BICS as a foundation and is acquired through explicit learning. The setting, context, and

conversational partners, which are found in the K-12 environment, assist with the development of CALP.

The majority of deaf and hard of hearing students lack exposure to sign language in their early developmental years and are often lacking in BICS. Therefore, when they enter elementary school, their lack of BICS impedes their ability to fully participate in the classroom and interact with their peers. Hence, their ability to acquire CALP is delayed. This is shown with the lower reading scores and the generally poor performance scores that are reported (Cummins & Swain, 1986).

In other words, many Deaf children never fully acquire BICS and CALP, which constitute the foundation for academic success, because they are not exposed to a viable sign language in their earliest years.

UAD Board of Directors Gives a Presentation At the Committee for Study of Programs of the Deaf

On October 5th, 1970, Ned C. Wheeler, a member of the Governor's Advisory Council and chairman of the Board of Directors for the Utah Association for the Deaf, invited the UAD board members to his home for a special meeting. The group wanted to formulate a presentation for the Committee for the Study of Programs of the Deaf. They

had ten days to pull this together as the Committee for the Study of Programs of the Deaf would be convening on October 15th.



Ned C. Wheeler

It was decided that Dennis Platt, UAD president, would give the main presentation. Joseph Burnett would speak about the potential learner's situation at the deaf school. Lloyd Perkins would take the topic of newspaper propaganda.

The following statements were incorporated into the presentation:

The UAD would like the school to include trained counselors in dormitories in their budget. It would have to be with adequate pay.

USD needs trained guidance counselors for *all* their Deaf students. At present the simultaneous (total communication) students have Gene Stewart. The oral students do not have a trained guidance counselor. Gary Suttlemyre is filling that role though he doesn't have the training.

The children at USD Ogden campus, especially in the upper grades, are unhappy. Proof of this is seen in the number of petitions to the State Board of Education and by the increase in strikes the students have had on and off campus. "Unhappy children are poor learners. This in turn leads to behavioral problems" (UAD Bulletin, Spring 1971).

In the state of Utah, there is no trained clinical psychologist for the Deaf. There is a need for one to administer I.Q. tests, psychological evaluations, and counsel any emotionally disturbed Deaf children. Dr. Melvin Nielsen is an audiologist and not a psychologist. He shouldn't be functioning as one, not even a part-time psychologist.

Deaf students in the simultaneous communication/total communication department were forced to accept verbal instruction, without sign language, in some of the vocational courses they undertake. Some of USD's vocational teachers are not qualified to teach the Deaf. By the same token, some teachers in the oral department are poorly trained in speech and are not qualified to teach speech.

Now for the learning potential within every student:

USD is ignoring the basic psychology behind student success. The school forces a Deaf pupil to accept a situation which he/she neither wants nor understands. There is evidence that parents join forces with the USD administration to keep the child in a situation that is not a good learning environment. This is seen most prominently when the student is kept in the Oral Program when he/she is failing or doesn't want to be there. The

child is left feeling helpless, with his/her needs not being met. Being forced into a program that does not promote educational learning can develop into student misbehavior later on. What is needed is an evaluation to determine what is the best learning environment for the student.

When a child first enters USD, an evaluation should be given in all areas – hearing loss, I.Q. level, home background, etc. – to identify his educational potential. Then a program should be set up to fit the child. At present the Deaf child is the one who is fitted into the existing programs. These programs may not meet his/her needs. These evaluations should be done annually, and educational programs changed as needed. Annual evaluations should be made by a group of professionals – not by one person. Clinical psychologist, guidance counselors, and dormitory counselors should be included in the evaluations (UAD Bulletin, Spring 1971).

UAD objects to the mixing of potential grade-level students with slow learners. This is seen especially in the simultaneous communication/total communication department because of its small number of students. It seems that teachers focus on the potential learners, yet such students are held back because of the slower classroom pace that has to be adopted. Doing appropriate evaluations could help solve this problem.

There is evidence that parents who advocate for the oral/aural program have too strong an influence on school administration. There are times when some children should be transferred to the simultaneous department, but their parents won't allow this (UAD Bulletin, Spring 1971).

Onto the items for the newspaper propaganda topic:

The news media has a definite bias. The oral method is given a greater number of positive press, especially in the Salt Lake *Tribune*. Parents are very vulnerable to this kind of propaganda because many hearing parents don't have an understanding of what their Deaf child can achieve in their goals of education and vocational training.

People who represent USD in lectures to the general public demonstrate a bias towards the oral/aural method. Also, when parents speak with USD administrators, the parents are urged to immediately place their child into the oral department without the benefit of an evaluation (UAD Bulletin, Spring 1971).

UAD would like to see a program set up at the University of Utah for all the Deaf Education teachers-in-training so that all methods of communication are taught and learned, not just speech and speech-reading. At present, most graduated teachers of the Deaf from University of Utah are unable to communicate with the adult Deaf citizen adequately. Because these graduates cannot sign, the Deaf adult is forced to speak in order to communicate. This puts the adult Deaf person into an awkward position, especially if they are unable to speak clearly. UAD would like to emphasize that adult Deaf people depend on both lip-reading and signs to communicate. They do not depend on signs alone nor on lip-reading, which strains the eyes.

This summed up the concerns and observations that the UAD wanted to present to the Committee for the Study of Programs of the Deaf. The full article can be read in the UAD Bulletin, Spring 1971, under Minutes of UAD Board Meetings.

Two Committees Compile Seventeen Recommendations

The State Advisory Committee for the Handicapped and the Committee for the Study of Programs of the Deaf compiled a list of seventeen recommendations after lengthy meetings.

On December 11, 1970, they both sent a delegation to appear before the Utah State Board of Education to make oral presentations. The Board adopted the recommendations, which, in part, were already existing policy at the USD (Subcommittee #4 Recommendations, 1970). That day the State Board listened to the reports from the two committees' and their studies of the deaf school issues. They also listened to the

proponents of two instructional programs for Deaf children (Chaffin, *Deseret News*, December 12, 1970).

Dr. Moroni H. Brown, a former state board member, reported for his group's subcommittee on Deaf, Blind and Socio-Economic Handicapped. This subcommittee was headed by former Representative Della L. Loveridge (Chaffin, *Deseret News*, December 12, 1970). This subcommittee interviewed Deaf students at the Ogden campus. The report recommended that socialization between all the Deaf children, regardless of mode of communication, be enhanced (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 12, 1970). See Appendix A of seventeen recommendations on Policy for the Utah School for the Deaf.

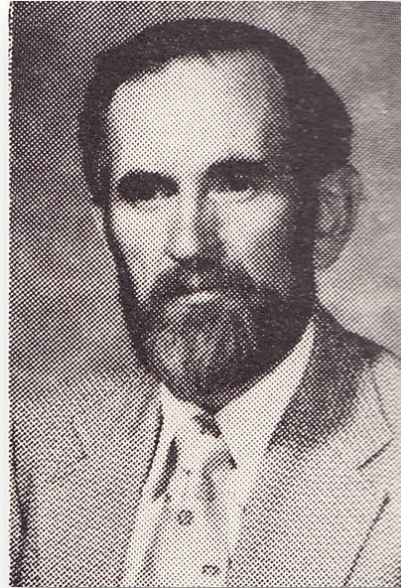
Senator Dean's committee recommended greater socialization while Dr. Brown's committee urged separation of the two methods until high school (Chaffin, *Deseret News*, December 12, 1970). Dr. Brown's group further recommended the students housed in the school's dormitories be separated during the junior high school years but allowed to socialize when they reached high school age (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 12, 1970).

Dr. Brown's committee recommended that the Deaf students who could succeed orally should continue their education in the public-school system. Because some parents of the oral group felt their children should be separated to ensure they were not exposed to sign language while parents of the signing children felt the separation was discriminatory, Brown's committee recommended that USD should decide what was right for each child. The committee felt there couldn't be a rigid line (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 12, 1970; Chaffin, *Deseret News*, December 12, 1970).

At that time, all students received oral instruction through the sixth grade in the "Y" system and their instruction was separated when it was determined whether the child was successful in the oral program. If not, the child could transfer to the simultaneous communication program. Dr. Brown's committee recommended a change to this

procedure. They recommended both programs (sign language and oral/aural) would be available as soon as a child was identified as Deaf. They felt the two programs should encompass pre-school-to-high school graduate and be continuous through all grade levels. They also recommended that the child could transfer from one program to another, as needed (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 12, 1970).

Keith Winegar, Bountiful spokesman for the Oral Deaf Association of Utah, told the Utah State Board of Education members, “We have taken a firm stand that the oral program is a necessary and proper approach to the education of our children. We don’t want to take anything away from the simultaneous-trained students, but we do not want the programs intermingled. It has to be one thing or another. Parents should be able to choose.”



Dr. Thomas C. Clark

He criticized the outside pressure which was deteriorating the oral program at the Ogden Deaf School. He warned that his group would take “extreme measures” if the oral program was chipped at and weakened (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 12, 1970). Dr. Thomas C. Clark, assistant professor of the Communication Disorders Department at Utah State University, spoke for Deaf parents. He declared that settling on one method “denies individuality. Some children must have [the] opportunity to learn by the simultaneous communication method and that it must be available at a very early age” (Chaffin, *Deseret News*, December 12, 1970). Dr. Clark suggested that the decision be made by parents or parents together with diagnosticians as early as 2 ½ years old (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 12, 1970).

The committees agreed on three points:

- The deaf children be identified as early as possible.
- Their parents should be counseled to understand both their responsibility and the programs which were available.
- The Utah School for the deaf should offer both the oral program and the

simultaneous program at all grade levels and that parents should be able to choose the method of instruction to be used with their children (Chaffin, *Deseret News*, December 12, 1970).

Urging the state of Utah to declare its policy on teaching Deaf children, Vera M. Gee, chairwoman of the Governor's Advisory Board for the Utah School for the Deaf and Blind pointed out, "We went through this [controversy] 10 years ago and we are saying the same things again" (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 12, 1970).

Sheldon Allred, a fellow board member, urged the members of the Governor's Advisory Board to have a special meeting and declare its policy (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 12, 1970). This took place and brought about a compromise solution (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 29, 1970).

Some of the seventeen recommendations supported the continuance of the oral and simultaneous communication tracks, adding more formal procedures.

Other recommendations included:

1. Implementing an orientation for parents that would include the different communication methodologies;
2. Requesting that the vocational placement program be expanded and function in harmony with both oral and simultaneous communication programs;
3. Establishing procedures to hear from concerned citizens and ways to take action on those concerns; and
4. Setting up certification requirements for teacher preparation programs for the Deaf with the inclusion of some form of training in sign language. The final recommendations were adopted for the continued operation of USD (Subcommittee #4 Recommendations, 1970).



The Governor's Advisory Board of the Utah School for the Deaf

Front row, left to right, Verda Hayes, Ned C. Wheeler, chairman of the board, Vera Gee, former chairman

Back row, left to right, James E. Ferguson, Norman T. Foy, Fern Leigh and Dr. Jay J. Campbell
UAD Bulletin, June 1974

Dr. Bitter objected to these final recommendations. His grounds included:

1. The study from which the recommendations were crafted was not undertaken properly as to guidelines, procedures, and conditions;
2. There was no representation by some groups;
3. Some persons spoke as authorities on the topic but were not;
4. There was a delay in the selection of members to the committee;
5. The committee became a grand jury which was not their purpose; and
6. Information was released that should not have been (G.B. Bitter, December 18, 1970; Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005).

Did You Know?

Vera M. Gee served on the Governor's Advisory Board for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind for 16 years. Vera was a life member of the Utah Association for the Deaf and had associated with the Utah Deaf community for many years (UAD Bulletin, June 1974).

A New Dual Track Program Emerges with Choices

The Parent-Teacher-Students Organization (PTSO) proposed to the USDB Governor's Advisory Board that a Dual Track Program of the "Y" System be replaced with a new program. The new program would provide options for parents to choose between oralism and simultaneous communication.

Ned C. Wheeler was chairperson of the Governor's Advisory Board, now called Governor's Advisory Council. Upon approval, the proposal was then submitted to the Utah State Board of Education for final approval.

Utah State Board of Education Adopts A New Policy for the Utah School for the Deaf

On December 28, 1970, after nearly 10 years, the Utah State Board of Education halted further dispute by adopting a new policy to help the Utah School for the Deaf resolve its educational controversy (Recommendation on Policy for the Utah School for

the Deaf, 1970; Deseret News, December 29, 1970).

Based on the seventeen recommendations, Dr. Walter D. Talbot, state superintendent of public instruction, presented the new policy. This new system, called the 'Two-Track' or 'Dual-Track' instructional system, allowed Deaf students to transfer from one program to the other while providing professional evaluations on the students (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 29, 1970). The State Board of Education ignored Dr. Grant B. Bitter's objections to the seventeen recommendations.

The second major change in the policy impacted the junior high and high school students. The signing students would be in separate academic programs so that they would not contaminate the oral students with their signing, even though there was



Dr. Grant B. Bitter
Utahn, 1963

integration at athletic events and other Deaf social gatherings (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, December 29, 1970; Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 29, 1970; Utah State Board of Education Report, 1973; Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005).

Dr. Robert W. Tegeder, superintendent of the Utah School for the Deaf, said the total

separation of the two programs was based on reports from the two committees (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 29, 1970).

Crafted out of the seventeen recommendations, School Policy Number One stated that both the oral/aural program and total communication program should be made available to each student. School Policy Number Two defined the parameters of

placement of the children within the programs. It stated that the student and parent should be important factors in determining placement (Campbell, 1977, p. 49).

Tegeder received instructions from Dr. Jay J. Campbell, Assistant State Superintendent, and the Utah State Board of Education in what these changes would mean for the Deaf school (First Reunion of the Utah School for the Deaf Alumni, 1976; Utah School for the Deaf 100th Year Anniversary Alumni Reunion, 1984; Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, 2006).

Tegeder called the board decision “nothing really earthshaking.” He said it was a compromise of guidelines which was not really much different from what had been in operation at the school. He did not see a clear-cut victory for either side in the dispute though the signing advocates now had something in writing to back up the changes for which they’d been working. Tegeder said the arguments on the best way to educate the Deaf had been going on in America for more than 100 years and in the state of Utah for about 84 years. In his opinion, the new policy changes would not stop the controversy (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, December 29, 1970). See Appendix B of Recommendations on Policy One and Policy Two for the Utah School for the Deaf.

“Two-Track” Education System

The “Two-Track” Education System at the Utah School for the Deaf would take effect in the 1971-1972 school year (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, December 29, 1970). There were now available at the residential school and at the extension program in Salt Lake City both the oral/aural program and the simultaneous communication program. They would be maintained as separate departments to keep their programs apart (First Reunion of the Utah School for the Deaf Alumni, 1976; Utah School for the Deaf 100th Year Anniversary Alumni Reunion, 1984). Parents would now enjoy having the choice of teaching methods for their children beginning at 2 ½ years old until the age of 21 (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).

The students in either of the oral program or simultaneous communication program continued to be separated on the Ogden campus. Eventually the oral students on campus were transferred to mainstreamed placements in nearby public schools.

Since the day that Dave Mortensen spoke up during the early summer of 1970, he carried the torch in fighting for Deaf children's rights to appropriate education. His Deaf daughter, Kristi, inspired him to become a true advocate of Deaf children's right to equal access to education, i.e. receiving the same opportunities to education as their hearing peers (Dave Mortensen, Renae M. White, Don M. Mortensen, and Kristi L. Mortensen, personal communication, April 17, 2009).

Utah School for the Deaf Leads Parents Into the Oral Program

Despite these recent changes, parents were encouraged, by the deaf school personnel, to place their children into the oral program and to reserve the simultaneous communication program only if their child was not making any academic progress (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, 2006; Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, June 1975; Campbell, 1977; Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005). In effect, the deaf school was not complying with the new policies. Dr. Jay J. Campbell noticed the two programs were not presented equally to parents. Additionally, the placement of students was not based on professional evaluations of students' needs. He was concerned that the USD Parent Infant Program (PIP) was persuading parents to promise that their child would stay in the oral program while, at the same time, not offering the simultaneous communication program for parent consideration (Campbell, 1977).

What a surprise to find out that it was the PIP program, not the parents, who started the Deaf children in the oral program. PIP only recommended the total communication program to parents if their child was not making progress in speech skills. Historical records corroborate that the PIP program and the USD's general student

placement procedures tended to place Deaf students who had no multiple disabilities into the oral program while Deaf students with multiple disabilities were placed in the simultaneous communication program.

Dr. Campbell realized that the Deaf children who went into the simultaneous communication program were often transfers from the oral program. When the children were not successful with listening and speech skills, the oral program administrators considered them ‘failures.’ Lane (1999) said the label of ‘oral failures’ undoubtedly had a deleterious effect on the students. As the students understood the label of ‘failure’, they didn’t want to be part of the signing program. Their reaction to the label sabotaged their acceptance of the simultaneous program. These oral students had been sensitized to the propaganda in the oral program that simultaneous communication was no good. Being put in the Sim-Com program damaged the students’ self-image and motivation to achieve because the oral philosophy had closed the minds of the students to real academic learning with its prejudice against signing (Campbell, 1977; Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005).

Dr. Campbell also discovered that most of the USD staff assumed that signing inhibited verbal language development. This widespread misconception caused the staff to recommend Deaf children be initially placed in the oral program so the children could learn to speak. The only time this was not recommended was if a Deaf child had additional disabilities or if the parents preferred the total communication program (Campbell, 1977). Campbell’s opinion was that when a program offered only one communicative system for all Deaf children then parents were denied knowing other important educational alternatives that could meet the needs of their Deaf children (Campbell, 1977, p. 82). A staff conference was called to discuss alternative placement if a child was not making adequate progress in the oral program. The conference consisted of one or both curriculum coordinators, the principal, the audiologist, and the teacher. Parents were seldom invited to these meetings and students never were (Campbell, 1977).

Because School Policy Number Two allotted the responsibility of which program

to place Deaf students under the jurisdiction of the USD professional staff, Dr. Campbell saw this policy create interminable conflicts between staff and prejudiced placement decisions. He was concerned that there was no uniform assessment of the children nor objective test data to determine the best educational placement. As a result, Dr. Campbell recommended that placement decisions for the students not be the responsibility of the USD staff or administration. He also recommended that the running of the oral and total communication programs be completely separated and not combined under a common principal (Campbell, 1977). Ironically, this question would be asked again in 2004. Janet Cannon, a member of the Utah State Board of Education, asked the USDB Institutional Council if USD should have one administrator or should each program have its own principal (Cannon's Paper Given to the USDB Institutional Council, 2004)?

It was not Dr. Campbell's wish to abolish either program. He understood both distinct educational methodologies were coexisting on the same campus. He knew there would continue to be problems as long as this situation persisted (Jan Langley, personal communication, October 20, 1971). His final recommendation was for the "two track system" to be completely separated in order to stop the internal/external strife between the Oral and Simultaneous Communication Programs as well as reducing competition among them. Each program should have its own dean, its own supervisor, its own principal, and its own teachers.

The teachers supported the recommendation of hiring two principals: one each for the Oral Department and the Simultaneous Communication Department. Everyone felt it was a near impossible job to supervise the completely different philosophies at the residential school and in the extension division. Feedback from the USD teachers indicated that it could be difficult for the principals to do a good job with such broad accountability. The principals were spread so thin that they would have a difficult time developing personal rapport with the faculty members. Their duties to the various extension programs and the two campus divisions claimed their time and commitment (Campbell, 1977).

State Board of Education policy prohibited separate programs. To follow Utah Code and conform to the recommendation by Dr. Campbell, USD decided to house the students at two separate locations. This way the oral program could be in a total 'oral' environment and the simultaneous communication program could be in a totally signing-speaking environment. This was important to the Sim-Com staff since they felt their present principal was not fully committed to their educational philosophy and would not help them with their goals (Campbell, 1977).

A Revolutionary Notion of Total Communication

At the end of the school year, on May 18, 1970, USDB Superintendent Robert W. Tegeder reported to the Governor's Advisory Council that about 90 percent of the nation's schools for the Deaf used the oral method for instruction for children 10-12 years of age (Deseret News, May 19, 1970). This trend had been noted. For years state schools for the Deaf implemented the oral method for preschool and elementary school children (Educating Deaf Children, 1970).



Dr. Roy K. Holcomb
Deaflife website

Then came Dr. Roy K. Holcomb. Holcomb was a Deaf teacher and a member of the Leadership Training Program in the Area of the Deaf at the San Fernando Valley State College at Northridge, California. Dr. Holcomb had devised the Total Communication Approach (TC) in 1967 while on staff at the Indiana School for the Deaf in Indianapolis, Indiana. Previously he saw the narrowness and rigidity of oralism in the education of the Deaf in the nation. He saw the frustration

that was being endured by students. The Total Communication Approach advocated for all means of communicating with the Deaf; whatever would reach the student. Holcomb first took his idea to Dr. Ray L. Jones and Dr. Lloyd Johns, both faculty members at California State University--Northridge (CSUN). Dr. Holcomb felt that good

communication was the key to a Deaf child's success in the learning process. The Total Communication Approach was put into operation in the 1968-69 school year at the Deaf and hard of hearing program in the Unified Santa Ana School District, Santa Ana, California (Educating Deaf Children, 1970).

This was a revolutionary notion in 1967. The goal of Total Communication was to promote the right of a Deaf child to access all modes of communication in developing language competency (Educating Deaf Children, 1970; Hawkin & Brawner, 1997). The adoption of the Total Communication Approach restored some use of American Sign Language (ASL) in many state Deaf schools, not seen since the early 1900's (Hawkin & Brawner, 1997; Gannon, 1981). This approach quickly caught on and became the fastest-growing movement in the history of Deaf education.

Holcomb's original idea was to incorporate all possible means of communication to be used with Deaf students in the classroom. Interestingly, the rapid rise of Total Communication in the 1970's and 1980's took place during a time when there was a sudden increase in the development of artificial, non-language-based manual codes for representing English (Signing Exact English <S.E.E.>, Manually Coded English <M.C.E.>, and Conceptually Accurate Signed English <C.A.S.E.>). Many teachers who taught Deaf children in the signing program could not sign well and made little or no effort to learn. Those who knew sign language utilized spoken and written English. In actual use in the classroom, the teacher would speak English while simultaneously signing the prominent spoken words in English word order (Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996).

This sounds like Simultaneous Communication where the teacher signed and spoke at the same time. However, Total Communication included other ways to communicate. It incorporated pantomime, gesturing, drawing, pointing at pictures, and any other methods of communicating.

American Sign Language, the full language of the Utah Deaf community, was rarely used in the classroom, unless the teacher happened to be Deaf. At this stage in the

education of Deaf children it was definitely not the language of instruction in use at USD.

Utah resisted this national trend to embrace Total Communication. While USD did eventually transition into the use of Total Communication for its signing students, the school continued its primary endorsement of the oral approach in its guarded use of limited funds and resources (Baldwin, 1990).

Did You Know?

Dr. Roy K. Holcomb became known as the “Father of Total Communication.” The Total Communication philosophy was an important development in the educational history of American Deaf students (Hawkin & Brawner, 1997).

An Inequality Education in the Total Communication Program

Parents of the Deaf children, which included Dave Mortensen, requested that the Total Communication Program be implemented in the Salt Lake City Extension program. They felt that their Deaf children had a right to use sign language. Dave pointed out that the Oral program had classes in the Salt Lake City area. It was only fair that the Deaf students have sign language in that area as well. He got the USD to agree with his perspective and USD said they would provide sign language in the classes at Glendale Junior High School for the Deaf students (Dave Mortensen, Renae M. White, Don M. Mortensen, and Kristi L. Mortensen, April 17, 2009).

1971 was the first year for the implementation of the Total Communication



**Kristi Mortensen
The Utahn, 1973**

program at USD. Administrators, Superintendent Robert W. Tegeder and Principal Tony Christopulos, placed four Deaf students, including Kristi Mortensen, at Glendale Junior High School in the Salt Lake area. Problems arose when USD failed to arrange the sign language interpreting service for the Deaf students in the mainstream classes. Kristi remembers struggling to lip-read and depending on other students' notes so she could keep up with the educational content. She remembers the Deaf students couldn't take much of an active role in class because of this broken promise.

The location of the Deaf classrooms also became an issue. In the early 1960's it was the oral students who attended the Glendale Junior High School. Later USD moved the oral program to Clayton Junior High School and East High School. These schools were in better socio-economic areas of the city, being in the upper-middle to upper class tier. These schools also had a reputation of being two of the top schools in the state of Utah.

By contrast, Glendale Junior High School, where the four Deaf Total Communication students were, was in the poorest section of South Salt Lake City neighborhood in Salt Lake County. This included the Rose Park area. Parents began noticing this inequality. Some thought that USD was showing some kind of favoritism by pairing up the Oral Program with top-notch public schools while the Total Communication Program was relegated to being matched up with the poorer and potentially dangerous area of the city. Kristi and the three other Deaf students were dissatisfied with the programs and classes available at Glendale Junior High School.

Conditions got worse. Glendale Junior High had housed USD's oral Deaf students for years. These Deaf students participated in school activities without the need for sign language interpreters. The principal and teachers did not want sign language because it was deemed a distraction to the hearing students. Dave found himself sitting down with the Glendale Junior High guidance counselor justifying the need for sign language interpreters. The counselor referred to the USD oral kids to which Glendale was used. Dave's points were not getting through.

When the school counselor finally realized the importance of having sign language interpreters, he convinced the Glendale Junior High School administration to let the TC Deaf students participate in the monthly talent show, the Christmas program, and the Spring/The End of the School Year plays/chorus, all made possible with the presence of sign language interpreters. Dave Mortensen had a harder fight to convince USD to pay for interpreters for school assemblies, special presentations, field trips, and school plays. He pointed out that interpreters for these special events would benefit the Deaf students. USD finally gave in and paid for the interpreters.

Despite the Total Communication students' objection, the USD moved them to the Northwest Junior High School in Rose Park. In the 1970's, this school was located in a bad area of town. Not only that, it was felt that the education quality was low. As a result, student morale was very low. The parents of these Deaf students and the Utah Deaf community had won 'the battle' by establishing the Two-Track Program, which gave parents placement choices. But 'the war' was far from over. Inequality continued for the Total Communication students in educational services. By comparison, the students in the Oral Program received everything they needed in the form of oral interpreters, note takers, and teacher attention. The goal of the Oral Program was to provide whatever was needed to make sure the Oral students succeeded. Kristi Mortensen remembered a social event where she gathered with her oral friends and was shocked to hear them say they could get anything they wanted when they made a request to Superintendent Tegeder and Principal Christopulos. The Total Communication program, on the other hand, had to stay right on top of issues and advocate unceasingly for equal rights to USD services and resources in order to get anything from the Deaf school. Kristi shared these disparities with her father. She secretly wondered if Dr. Bitter and Tony Christopulos wanted to increase enrollment in the Oral Program by showing parents the better services it provided for the Deaf students. Because of their limited budget, USD refused to give the Total Communication students what they needed, especially in the first year of the TC Extension program (Kristi L. Mortensen, personal communication, June 17, 2011).

Dave pulled Kristi out of the TC Extension program and enrolled her in her neighborhood school, Riverview Junior High. Dave met with the principal of that school and requested that a sign language interpreter be provided for his daughter. The school agreed. Funding came from the United Way and the Murray School District. Dave found both Riverview Junior High School principal and Murray School District easy to work with. They understood the need for the interpreter so Kristi would have full access to all programs in the mainstreamed setting. No more refused requests. Things settled down for Kristi and her parents.

The parents of the other three TC Deaf students wanted to know why Dave pulled Kristi out of that program. Not only did he explain the interpreter issue, but he reminded them that USD was not helping to pay for mileage. The Deaf school had agreed to reimburse the parents for shuttling their children to school twice a day. This was a 30-35-mile round trip multiplied by two. The freeway wasn't in operation until 1974 which impacted the parents' driving routes. These parents were upset and wrote a letter to USD Superintendent Tegeder and Principal Tony Christopulos. They demanded that their son and daughters be transferred to Riverview Junior High. Additionally, that school was much closer to where they lived – Riverton, West Jordan, and Kearns. It took a month or two but finally the students were transferred. Superintendent Tedeger and Principal Christopulos would not budge regarding the parents' request for interpreting services for these three students. These kids were under the USD system while the interpreters that Kristi had was under the Murray School District. In retrospect, Dave remembered Riverview Junior High School and Murray School District writing letters to USD Supt and Principal, demanding that they help pay for interpreters to offset their own costs. As a result of this extreme pressure, USD complied.

Did You Know?

On September 1, 1970, Dr. Grant B. Bitter made a statement directed at the Utah Deaf community. He was taking issue with the community's philosophy on Deaf education. Here is what he said:

“You [say] that “education is a thousand times more important to us [the deaf] than the mere ability to speak.” My friends, the ability to manipulate the mother tongue wisely and effectively in service to one's fellowmen is an integral part of education.

[Speaking] is basic to the development of competencies and saleable skills whereby individuals may find meaning and purpose in life. Therefore, may we do nothing that would prevent and/or limit any child's opportunity to give to the world that which only he can give as a person, worthy to take his place at the side of his fellowmen. Let us not relegate [a deaf child] to second class citizenship through isolation, causing him to become unnecessarily apprehensive, fearful, jealous, insecure and unproductive. Rather may we inspire excellence in living – allowing him to give to the world something which only he can give in his uniqueness as a worthy person” (Grant B. Bitter Papers, September 1, 1970).

Bias toward Communication Modes and Methodology

While the Total Communication Program was available at the Utah School for the Deaf, many parents continued not to be aware of it. Dr. Bitter recruited local oral Deaf adults and hosted an Oral Demonstration Panel at the University of Utah. Dr. Robert Sanderson, Dave Mortensen, Roy Cochran, Kenneth Kinner, and other Deaf individuals attended. The oral Deaf adults spoke to the group, sharing their experiences of growing up in an oral environment. Bitter opened up a Question-and-Answer time. Dr. Sanderson stood up and asked, “Have you heard the other side of the program?” Bitter quickly closed the meeting and the audience left without knowing the answer (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).

Despite the controversy at the Utah School for the Deaf, Dr. Sanderson pointed out that he supported the right of parents of Deaf children to decide which program would be best for their children. However, the information given to parents must be fair. He opposed improper, biased, or one-sided information that lacked a research base (Sanderson, *UAD Bulletin*, March 1992).

For example, a father of a 14-year-old Deaf student met with Dr. Jay J. Campbell in his office at the Utah State Office of Education. The dad was concerned that his son, in the oral program, could barely read and write. He asked Dr. Campbell what to do. Dr. Campbell asked the father if he knew about the Total Communication Program. The father said he had never heard of such a program (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).

This example of parental ignorance convinced Dr. Campbell that there was a need for a pamphlet that explained both programs and their different communication methodologies. He emphasized that this brochure should be updated periodically to include summaries of empirical research (Campbell, 1977). However, Dr. Bitter stringently objected to the plan. He said that the total communication methodology was merely a philosophy, not a real educational method (Dr. Grant B. Bitter, personal communication, February 4, 1985). The plan for the informational brochure collapsed.

Did You Know?

Over the years, the animosity between Dr. Grant B. Bitter and Dr. Robert G. Sanderson grew. Dr. Bitter frequently hosted Oral Demonstration Panels at the University of Utah and other locations such as the McKay-Dee Hospital in Ogden. Whenever Dr. Bitter noticed Dr. Sanderson in the audience with his interpreter, Beth Ann Campbell, he would speak fast. He did this on purpose so that Dr. Sanderson would get lost and not get involved with the questions after the demonstration. Beth Ann didn't want this to happen and signed equally fast. Dr. Sanderson concentrated on his interpreter, grasped the information, and was able to successfully participate (Beth Ann Campbell, personal communication, July 1, 2007).

Did You Know?

For his Oral Demonstration Panels, Dr. Bitter recruited Deaf oral students who spoke well. Instead of using his own daughter all the time, he showcased another girl, Colleen Johnson Jones, to demonstrate her speaking ability to the audience. Her mother, Legia Johnson, felt uncomfortable with this situation. Eventually Legia quit her job at the Utah School for the Deaf's Extension Program so as to stop Dr. Bitter from using her daughter for his demonstrations (Lisa Richards Roush, personal communication, April 14, 2009).

Did You Know?

Georgia Hendricks Walker (USD Alumnus 1930) had her article, "Deaf Group Aims Rapped" published in the Deseret News on June 23, 1970.

"Recently I attended a meeting of the Oral Deaf Association of Utah at the Milton Bennion Hall at the University of Utah. It was better than a three-ring circus, and just as amusing, and I have been laughing ever since!

First thing I am laughing at is the name. Who runs it? Hearing teachers and parents – not the oral deaf themselves. The Utah Association for the Deaf is run by the Deaf themselves, not their parents or teachers.

Second, 90 percent of the young adults and older students on display can and do use sign language when they know their parents and teachers are not watching.

Third, one of the students said that she preferred to speak and read lips so that she would be able to get a better job and earn more money than one who couldn't. I have one question: Do employers pay for the ability to speak and read lips or do they pay for the ability to work? It is my observation that employers would rather that those they employ would shut up and get to work. Of course, speech and lip-reading make things a bit easier but what is wrong with a pencil and paper? At least you get the message correctly.



Georgia Hendricks Walker

I do know what I am talking about, I am totally deaf and have been

for 49 years. I am not belittling the ability to speak and read lips. I acknowledge that life would be harder if I couldn't do it. But what counts with me is "EDUCATION" in capital letters, and I see precious little of it in the oral Deaf I meet after they leave school" (Walker, *Deseret News*, June 23, 1970).

Lloyd H. Perkins Submits a Letter to the University President

The chairman of the UAD Education Committee, Lloyd H. Perkins, the Utah Association of the Deaf, and the Utah Deaf community had clearly expressed their views on the University of Utah's decision to not include the pedagogical approach known as total communication into their Teacher for the Deaf Preparation Program (L. Perkins, personal communication, no date). The Special Education Department, under which was the Teacher for the Deaf endorsement, strongly believed that Deaf students should be



Lloyd H. Perkins

educated orally and that sign language should be discouraged. However, the voice of the Utah Deaf community was strong enough to convince UOU to require teachers who were preparing to teach all Deaf students to master the basic manual communication competencies. Not long afterward, the controversy returned when it wasn't clear *how many* total communication courses would be required in the teacher preparation program. Lloyd Perkins sent a letter to Alfred C. Emery, University of Utah President, asking for a review of the Teacher for the Deaf Preparation Program.

On December 6, 1971, Dr. Robert Erdman, U of U Special Education Chairman, responded to Perkin's letter and, at the same time, sent a private letter to the Special Education faculty, asking that they discuss the Teacher of the Deaf Preparation Program

during their December 13th faculty meeting (Dr. Erdman, personal communication, December 6, 1971). Dr. Stephen Hencley, Dean of the Graduate School of Education, also responded to Mr. Perkins, affirming that there would be changes to the curriculum, incorporating a sign language component to the Teacher Preparation Program (Stephen Hencley, personal communication, December 16, 1971; Stephen Hencley, personal communication, January 7, 1972; Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005).

Sign Language Instructors Needed in Utah

On July 13, 1973, the Utah State Board of Education voted to encourage teaching both oral skills and sign language skills at the Utah School for the Deaf. They urged the USD to recruit nationwide for sign language teachers. The Board decided that recruitment would be more practical than setting up its own sign language teacher's program in Utah. Dr. Jay J. Campbell noted that, as the University of Utah was the only college in the state that was training teachers to teach Deaf students and as USD heavily focused on oral skills, that the UOU graduates were only trained in oral education methods (Dean, *Deseret News*, July 14, 1973).

Dr. Jay J. Campbell Asked the University of Utah for a Report

Dr. Jay J. Campbell gave UOU a year to incorporate these changes into the Teachers for the Deaf Preparation Program. On July 23, 1974 he asked Dr. Robert L. Erdman, UOU Special Education chairman, for a report on their progress (Dr. Campbell, personal communication, July 23, 1974). Dr. Erdman replied that, in 1972, Mr. Gene Stewart was hired to teach a sign language course (SPA 782, Basic Communication and Counseling of Deaf Adults) and a counseling course (SP ED 624, Guidance and Counseling of the Hearing Impaired) as a required component of the Teacher Preparation Program (Dr. Erdman, personal communication, August 15, 1974).

Dr. Erdman also explained to Dr. Campbell the department's new policy: "All

students who are preparing to become teachers of the hearing impaired are required to master the basic manual communication competencies through involvement in one or both of the above described classes or be able to demonstrate those competencies if they have already had previous manual communication experiences and/or coursework in that area” (Dr. Erdman, personal communication, August 15, 1974, p. 2).

While this was a step forward, the Utah Deaf community had thought the university would put in a complete program that would prepare teachers of the Deaf with full Total Communication skills. It was clear from this report that the university did not see itself as guaranteeing a full program. With the inclusion of these two classes, it was a modest start, to say the least.

The University established a Committee to Study Personnel Needs on Programs for the Deaf. The committee’s final report contained a conclusion that to establish a Total Communication program would “not be economically feasible, since new staff would have to be employed and additional administrative costs would be incurred” (Committee to Study Personnel Needs in Programs for the Deaf, June 6, 1974, p. 3).

The Utah State Board of Education also studied the feasibility of establishing a parallel teacher preparation program in total communication at the University of Utah. They agreed it was not economically feasible to add a complete total communication program to the Teacher for the Deaf Preparation Program. The State Board approved funding to recruit Total Communication teachers from outside the state. It was also agreed to include some total communication experiences in the oral training program already in place at the UOU (Committee to Study Personnel Needs in Programs for the Deaf, p. 3, June 6, 1974). The next three years, 1974 to 1977, were non-controversial (Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005).

State Board of Education Implements Segregation

On December 28, 1970, the Utah State Board of Education adopted a policy for the USD, in part which said, “Students in the Oral and Total Communication programs conducted at the School and its students who attend public schools [mainstreamed] shall be separated through the junior high school years” (The Salt Lake Tribune, December 28, 1970).

UAD President Dave Mortensen had assumed that segregation had been abolished by the United States federal government. Despite the civil rights political gains, the Utah State Board of Education maintained a devastating policy of segregation for the Deaf in the residential school, day classes, and mainstreamed placements (Dave Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, June 1975).

Dave Mortensen, as UAD President, wrote in the June 1975 *UAD Bulletin* that these Deaf children were caught in a double-standard bind. They could not be expected to function in such a confusing and distracting educational environment. It would be like have two bosses, each giving opposite instructions. This kind of structure was harmful to the children.



W. David Mortensen

Educational Placement Has To Do with Status

Mortensen looked at the USD system and believed that, when students were placed in the programs, the placement reflected the administration’s belief in the student’s ability to learn to speak. The greater the talent to speak meant the higher the status for that student and better services provided for that student within the program.

That student would see a difference in the way he/she was treated and would begin to feel a degree of prestige and pride. This would definitely not happen if he/she were placed in the signing program.

To explain what 'status' meant, UAD President Mortensen gave an example in TV commercials. If a commercial said "8 out of 10 doctors recommend Anacin!," then a person who bought that product would feel they have status because they have the popular brand. Mortensen made a list of status symbols that were meaningful and important to people, providing a personal ego boost:

1. a new car, 2. a college degree, 3. The right kind of friends, 4. Name-brand clothes, 5. Wealth, 6. A high-paying job, 7. a muscular or shapely body, 8 a title (president, queen, chairman, etc), 9. a truck and camper, 10. a new, spacious house, 11. Lots of books (possession of books show you're smart).

Mortensen's examples showed that every human being desire to feel important. On this premise and based on testimony of former oral USD alumni, he gave an example of an oral student who was told by school officials that, although he has been in the oral track for 13 years, he hasn't been successful and should be transferred to the signing track program. Is it possible to understand how this young person feels? This youth has been in the Deaf school's oral department for 13 years and has learned to appreciate the following status symbols that relate to degree of deafness:

1. Good speech, 2. Speech reading, 3. Hearing, 4. Integration, 5. Understanding hearing people, 6. Never signing or gesturing, 7. Going to a public school, 8. Having a hearing girlfriend or boyfriend.

Now suddenly that oral student is being sent to the other program- the signing program- the program where the administration puts all the speech failures and multi-disabled students. This was the program that his parents never wanted him to be in! Not only does the youth have to give up the status symbols he/she has come to identify as part

of being a success, but he/she also carries a feeling of disappointing his parents and family. It might be a relief to the student to finally be able to sign in public and not in secret. However, as the teen realizes the social and psychological aspect of a change in programs, there are too many churning emotions for this young person to handle!

Mortensen felt that the dual-track system of education at USDB was not good for the students although it was unique in the nation. He was concerned for the Deaf children and teens and their self-esteem. The children and teens wanted acceptance. In the dual-track education the children and teens were pulled to be more like a hearing person for their parents, teachers, administrators, audiologists, speech therapists, friends and relatives. They were told repeatedly that they could hear *better*, they could understand *better*, they could lipread *better*, they could talk *better*, they could integrate into the hearing world *better* if they would use their hearing aids and speak. However, saying it didn't make it so and these deaf children and teens grew up into deaf adults who were still Deaf. Mortensen pointed out that it was time for the deaf not to look to the status symbols of speech and lipreading (hearing values) in order to have pride in themselves. Deaf people could develop pride in being deaf. His vision was to start now and turn the psychological tide of hearing-values oppression.

Mortensen concluded his article by noticing that the students in the TC track were a minority within a minority and gaining 'status' from an administration that leaned towards the oral program's needs was difficult! He drew attention to the fact that the Deaf school's Dual-Track system caused animosity between the two programs – a feeling of hostility and resentment between the Oral and Total Communication programs as they vied with each other for the limited resources and funding (Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, June 1975).

Did You Know?

One day in 1975, Roy Cochran, USD Alumni 1961 and Deaf father of two Deaf children, Don and Lisa, visited the Utah School for the Deaf and ran into Superintendent Robert W. Tegeder. The superintendent asked Roy to come into his office. They chatted in sign language. The

superintendent admitted to Roy that he missed the ‘good old days’ when there was no controversy over the Deaf school’s communication methodologies (C. Roy Cochran, personal communication, May 5, 2011).

Mainstreaming and Least Restrictive Environment

The Utah School for the Deaf used its Extension classes in the 1960’s to promote the mainstreaming of Deaf students into neighborhood schools even before the federal government passed Public Law 94-142 in 1975. This law, PL 94-142, is also known as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). After the law was passed, this trend towards mainstreaming Deaf children into public schools increased steadily in Utah (Baldwin, 1990).

Dr. Jay J. Campbell observed that much of the push for mainstreaming came from the University of Utah and Dr. Grant B. Bitter (Campbell, 1977). Dr. Bitter argued that residential schools were too isolated from society and kept the Deaf students cut off. He advocated for day schools for the Deaf where the children could live at home among their neighborhoods and mainstream into local public schools (Baldwin, 1990). Despite Bitter’s influence, other educators and parents were greatly concerned about how IDEA would affect USD as a “special school.” The fear surrounded whether USD would have to be closed to comply with the new federal law (Campbell, 1977). Dr. Campbell reassured those who feared by saying, “The residential school is essential and should not be closed. There are many students who can best be served in special schools because they would not receive an adequate education in the local districts. The residential school and local districts need to cooperate in the overall program and students need to be evaluated and placed where their needs would best be served” (Campbell, 1977, p. 142).

The intention of Public Law 94-142 was little understood when it was passed by the United States Congress. However, across the country, the law quickly devolved into the automatic assumption that *all* handicapped or disabled children would be mainstreamed into public school classrooms. This included Deaf and hard of hearing children. It was little known, at the time, what the linguistic and social needs of Deaf and

hard of hearing children were. Because of this gap in knowledge and the slowness of research in this field, most deaf and hard of hearing students were shunted into their neighborhood schools. Educators thought they were following the law by championing the mainstreamed placement for Deaf and hard of hearing students at their yearly Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting. Educators had interpreted the law as mandating placement of all handicapped children into the “least restrictive environment” (LRE). As more and more of these children were placed in the public school’s problems started cropping up which had not been anticipated.

Dr. Richard C. Brill, Superintendent of California School for the Deaf-Riverside, was quoted in Dr. Campbell’s book, *Education of the Deaf in Utah, A Comprehensive Study*, written in 1977. Brill said that the term “least restrictive environment” was generally thought of in terms of physical placement – such a concept assumes that if one is physically placed within a group that the individual is automatically part of that group



Dr. Richard G. Brill
UAD Bulletin, Summer 1971

but, he pointed out that “communication and psychological relatedness were essential for integration or lack of restriction in the environment” (p. 2). Lastly, Brill clarified that “because a child is placed in a regular classroom with many other children rather than in a special class, it does not mean that this child is automatically in a LRE” (p. 3). In support of this last statement, Lawrence Siegel (2000) added that under IDEA most environments that are communication-compatible, and therefore fundamentally “least restrictive” for Deaf and hard of hearing

children, have no legal imprimatur (p.18). To go along with this, Thomas (1986) states, “PL 94-142 apparently supports mainstreaming, but it does not support quality of education or a rich language and social environment [for the Deaf], factors which mainstream program directors neither understand nor feel compelled to consider” (p. 16).

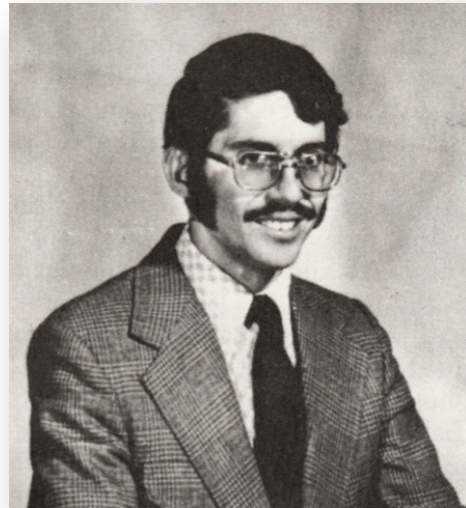
Public Law 94-142 did not define ‘appropriate educational setting’ nor ‘least restrictive’ in regard to the placement of Deaf and hard of hearing students into public schools or state schools.

This is what Section 612 (5) [later renamed IDEA 2004 612 (a) (5) (A)] did state:
“...special classes, special schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes, with the use of supplementary aides and services, cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (p.1).

Is Mainstreaming the Deaf Really Justified?

It’s an interesting historical fact that mainstreaming has been controversial since the end of the Civil War in 1865. This principle did not originate in the 1965 and 1971 Education Acts which, in turn, led to the 1974 law which led to Public Law 94-142 in 1975 (Baldwin, 1990). Dr. Stephen Baldwin tells us that a precedence for the mainstreaming programs of today was set in 1852 by David Ely Barlett. That was the year Barlett opened “Mr. Barlett’s Family School for Young Deaf-Mute Children” in New York City. This was America’s first integrated school open to both Deaf and hearing students (Baldwin, 1990, p. 14).

When the U.S. Congress passed the Handicapped Act of 1974, they did not consult the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) nor Deaf citizens. Dr. Baldwin felt the whole Act was blatant discrimination (Baldwin, *The Utah Eagle*, April 1975).



Dr. Stephen C. Baldwin
The UAD Bulletin, December 1974

Dr. Baldwin explained in his article, “Mainstreaming in Retrospect”, that people like Alexander Graham Bell, Sarah Fuller, Robert C. Spencer of the 19th century and Dr. Grant B. Bitter of the 20th century advocated for day schools and classes in the public schools. Their reason was that residential schools were cut off from society. These advocates strongly espoused the strict tenets of the oral/aural philosophy and attacked the traditional residential Deaf schools and the use of sign language (1990, p. 14). Baldwin explained they gained the support of ignorant legislators and imposed their educational and philosophical viewpoint onto Deaf and hard of hearing students under the guise of preparing them to live in the dominant English-speaking society. It became a ‘methods’ war when the American Deaf community rose up in protest. To help the deaf cause on a national level, the National Association of the Deaf was established in 1880 (Baldwin, 1990). In like manner, the Utah Association for the Deaf, in the form of people such as Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, W. David Mortensen, and Lloyd H. Perkins engaged in intense arguments with Dr. Bitter.

On the cusp of passing PL 94-142 in 1975, Dr. Stephen Baldwin, USD Curriculum Coordinator of the Total Communication Division at the time, observed the circulation of many books and articles showing a highly optimistic picture of the mainstreaming of Deaf children into public schools. He felt these views of the law’s impact Deaf children were misleading and refutable. He became concerned as he saw the mainstream advocates portray mainstreaming as making Deaf children into ‘normal’ school children. He questioned, “Can such as assertion as providing a normalizing mainstreaming setting be truly justified in view of the whole matter (Baldwin, *The Utah Eagle*, April 1975)?

Dr. Baldwin sensed that the advocates for mainstreaming, particularly in the form of the integration specialist for the deaf, had great visions of entering the Deaf students into the public schools in various degrees. The vision was that the Deaf will talk, behave, think, and act like a hearing person and become ‘normal.’ He wondered why Deaf community input was left out of making such a law. To this he asked, “Has the mainstream advocator tried standing on a soap box in front of the Deaf at their club

meetings, Frat meetings, or state association meetings” (Baldwin, *The Utah Eagle*, April 1975)?

One example of pertinent deaf input, that could have been used to shape PL 94-142, might have been this survey informally taken in February 1975 at an Utah Association for the Deaf workshop. Baldwin asked 48 Deaf adults who were products of residential deaf schools, deaf and hard of hearing day schools, and/or public mainstreamed schools. Regardless of whether they were orally or manually taught, he asked if they would favor the general mainstreaming of Deaf children. 40 of the 48 opposed mainstreaming, 4 supported, and 4 were undecided. That’s a whopping 83% against the trend of mainstreaming deaf and hard of hearing students into the public-school system. The reasons given by the deaf as to why they were against mainstreaming were their feelings of value given to the residential schools. These schools were seen by the deaf as more reliable in comparison to the public schools. They saw scant educational and social benefit coming from mainstreaming. They thought the mainstream educators were despicable for not taking the time to solicit their opinions and feelings regarding mainstreaming. These educators did not ask the Deaf people for suggestions either (Baldwin, *The Utah Eagle*, April 1975).

Once Public Law 94-142 was enacted in 1975, most of the educators who endorsed mainstreaming of the Deaf focused only on the current students. They weren’t interested in how Deaf students were taught in the past. Dr. Baldwin explained that Deaf adults, who had experience with educational methods tried on them, were powerful resources and should be invited to share their insights into effective methods of teaching the current students. He observed that several controversial issues had surfaced and the state’s advisory boards, who counseled state action regarding the Deaf, had moved forward on decisions without deaf input. He believed it was very hazardous to ignore the Deaf adults’ former educational experiences. He was earnest when he said it was a grave error to believe that the mainstreaming of Deaf children make these children into hearing individuals (Baldwin, *The Utah Eagle*, April 1975).

The picture that Baldwin painted was of Deaf students being completely overwhelmed in the mainstream environment. The public-school setting did not meet the educational, social, mental and emotional needs of these students. The public school failed the children and the children failed in school. Not all public-school teachers were professionally qualified to handle the problems of teaching the Deaf, he cautioned. He was alarmed to discover that it was common for these teachers to feel sorry for the Deaf students, knowing they couldn't teach them, and give them passing grades when the student didn't earn them. While checking on some mainstreamed Deaf students, he found them in a group by themselves, clinging to each other socially and emotionally. There was a total neglect of the social adjustment necessary to good educational practices (Baldwin, *The Utah Eagle*, April 1975).

To add to the confusion, Baldwin believed the parents who had a Deaf child were not as informed as they should be when mainstream proponents said that it was the parents who asked to have their child mainstreamed. He honestly wondered if the parents were even informed of the potential educational pitfalls in store for their children. In his opinion, some of these parents had fallen for the propaganda that held lofty educational goals, propaganda that had not been endorsed by Deaf people nor by a majority of leading educators of the Deaf. In his job as USD Total Communication Program Coordinator, Dr. Baldwin was in the position to hear what parents expected from the mainstreaming of their child. They looked forward to having a normal child who could function in the hearing world, skilled in listening, speech, and lip-reading. However, these parents did not notice the educational strangulation of the child (Baldwin, *The Utah Eagle*, April 1975).

Dr. Baldwin noted that, when an alert special educator recognized the academic failing of the mainstreamed Deaf student, they were quick to move the student out of the mainstream before educational damage was done. The Deaf student was either placed in a self-contained Deaf classroom or placed at the state residential school for the Deaf. However, there were some mainstream educators who were strongly opposed to the residential school for the Deaf. They seemed to have a sheer dislike for residential

schools. Instead, the advocates for mainstreaming continued to push Deaf students into the public schools while hoping to close the residential schools (Baldwin, *The Utah Eagle*, April 1975).

Baldwin had experience with mainstreaming as a deaf child himself. After leaving the Horace Mann School, which was a forerunner for mainstream integration in 1956, he became fully “integrated in the public schools for seven years” (Baldwin, 1990). He excelled academically and athletically with no support services, but he also experienced the loss of essential intangible qualities such as emotional gratification and feeling the complete acceptance of his deafness on the part of his hearing classmates and teachers. He looked back and said his mainstreaming was a sad experience in terms of educational attainments and human relationships. Because of this, he did not personally consider mainstreaming the best placement for the majority of Deaf children. It took Dr. Baldwin 30 years to reflect on his experience. His soul-searching convinced him that the educational system should not take three more decades to feel the same way he did about mainstreaming. He didn’t want to waste the learning opportunities of the children (Baldwin, *The Utah Eagle*, April 1975; Baldwin, 1990).

As it happened, Baldwin’s article, “Is Mainstreaming of the Hearing Impaired Really Justified?” which was published in the April 1975 *The Utah Eagle* magazine, caused an upset among parents who had enrolled their children in mainstream classes. Robert W. Tegeder, USDB Superintendent, stood by Baldwin when he announced that parents should know that mainstreaming was not the cure for deafness that the idealistic vision portrayed it to be. The article cautioned parents not to assume that mainstreaming would have a certain result for their Deaf children. He advised parents and educators alike to carefully consider the ramifications of placing Deaf and hard of hearing students into the public-school setting. He felt, if federal legislators had consulted with Deaf adults, this situation would not have happened (Baldwin, 1990, p. 17). Regardless of these cautions, mainstreamed placement of Deaf students increased rapidly so as to meet the parents’ desire to ‘normalize’ their child in learning how to talk, behave, think, and act like a hearing person (Campbell, 1977; Baldwin, 1990).

Prior to 1975 the criteria for a Deaf student to be mainstreamed was not how well they spoke or heard. The only criteria were excellent social skills, above-average reading ability, and good writing skills. Ironically, after PL94-142, Dr. Baldwin saw a shift in the oral advocates' stance. The oral advocates believed the oral Deaf students should be completely blended into the public-school setting (Baldwin, 1990). Richard Stoker (1990), Director of The Central Institute for the Deaf (CID), a private oral school for the Deaf in St. Louis, Missouri, echoed Dr. Baldwin's concern about placement. Stoker clarified his view by saying "mainstreaming doesn't make you 'normal,' whatever that is." He emphasized that Deaf children should be placed into the appropriate school society where they could handle the demands given them. He said parents should not try to force the children into a mainstreamed school setting if they would suffer hardship as a result (Williams, 1990).

Total Communication and the Deaf Teacher

In April 1976, Dr. Robert G. Sanderson published an article entitled "Total Communication and the Deaf Teacher" in the *UAD Bulletin*. Bringing to the fore the suggestion made by Dr. David Denton, that speech would be required of every teacher in the Total Communication program, Sanderson saw discrimination set up against Deaf teachers and Deaf candidates for the teacher-training program. Sanderson pointed out that a Deaf child who is ready for speech should be given the very best speech instruction taught by a speech teacher. His view was that a teacher who taught math, geography, or history should not be required to give speech lessons too. That would not provide the best speech lessons or subject lessons. By the same token, a Deaf teacher shouldn't be expected to teach speech if the real focus is on algebra, social science or chemistry.

In regard to the teacher training programs that emphasized speech, Sanderson felt that teacher candidates should develop the ability to communicate in sign language so

they could facilitate language competency in Deaf children who learn visually. Then these teachers would gain necessary knowledge in psychology and have skills to teach the academic subjects required by the state.



**Robert G. Sanderson, 1941 Gallaudet
College Senior**

Dr. Sanderson noticed that prejudice against teachers who were themselves deaf was still ‘alive and well.’ What a contradiction! He saw many parents appear to dislike deafness and deaf adults. Didn’t parents know their own deaf child would grow up to become a deaf adult? And these children would exhibit similar characteristics of present-day deaf adults. Did

they consider that their own child might want to become a teacher for the Deaf? How ironic the prejudice would be then?

Dr. Sanderson pointed out that the Deaf teacher had an essential role to play in any school for Deaf children. The Deaf teacher should be a model for the children; someone with whom they could identify. He also reminded that ‘Total Communication’ wasn’t limited to speaking and signing at the same time. It meant that *every* mode or means of communication would be made available to the child when he needs it or wants it. The Deaf child could be and should be encouraged to develop speech but not by force. Forcing speech when the child neither wants it nor is ready for it is bad psychology. That practice could lead to resistance and problems later on. The Utah Deaf community was not opposed to speech development. They recognized its value. But they were very much against the use of force in the form of intimidation, anger, physical violence, or punishment, in either the Oral program or the Total Communication program.

In looking back at the use of physical punishment, it is remembered that on November 12, 1970, the Utah State Board of Education made the decision to keep Deaf students in the oral programs and TC programs separate up to junior high school to allow oral teachers to enforce the basic practices of lip-reading and auditory training through physical punishment (Utah State Board of Education's Committee Meeting Minutes, November 12, 1970; Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005). The forms of physical punishment were: students told to sit on their hands, hands slapped with a ruler, teachers throwing chalk at the student, putting soap in the student's mouth, putting the student's head in the toilet bowl, taking away lunch and/or bending down the student's ear. Sanderson argued that these were very poor teaching techniques. The American Deaf community had no respect for teachers who did it, administrators who permitted it, or parents who condoned it. They believed that the children learned best when they were relaxed and happy (Sanderson, *UAD Bulletin*, April 1976).

Changes Occur in the Gallaudet's TRIPOD Parent Association of the Deaf

In 1976, the USD Parent-Teacher-Student Association became one of Gallaudet's TRIPOD Parent Associations of the Deaf. Gallaudet College began a program on May 17, 1970 called Operation TRIPOD.

TRIPOD stands for Toward Rehabilitation Involvement by Parents Of the Deaf. It was a collaborative effort between vocational rehabilitation provides, parents, and schools to improve the quality of Deaf education. This program was set up in the states who wanted to take part. In Utah, Kenneth L. Kinner was its first president and Carol White Mathis was first vice president. The members of the group took turns driving to meetings either in Salt Lake City or Ogden every three months (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).



Carol White Mathis

After a few months, the long commutes reduced attendance so towards the end of 1976, the TRIPOD members voted to split into two groups: The Salt Lake TRIPOD and The Ogden TRIPOD. The results of their elections were:

Salt Lake TRIPOD:

President-Carol White Mathis	4 th Vice President-Nora Snarr
1 st Vice President-Bea Lang	Secretary-Shaunna DeWaal
2 nd Vice President-Steve Baldwin	Treasurer-John Mathis
3 rd Vice President-Pat Prischak	Historian-Connie MacKay

Ogden TRIPOD:

President-Kenneth Kinner	Secretary-Margaret Gale
1 st Vice President-Darlene Cochran	Treasurer-Carol Atkinson
2 nd Vice President-Stephen Baldwin	Parliamentarian-Don Jensen
3 rd Vice President-Jean Welling (UAD Bulletin, December 1976; Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).	

These two groups remained active from 1976 until into the 1980's. As the mainstreaming trend increased, the parents of the Deaf children joined the public school's PTAs if they wanted to participate. As the Deaf children of the parent officers left the programs, due to graduation or transfers to an out-of-state residential school, the TRIPOD organization eventually fizzled out.

A similar fate was seen in the demise of the PTA of the Oral Program's Extension Department. Since the majority of oral Deaf students were placed in a neighborhood public school, the parents were able to join that school's PTA (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).

C. Roy Cochran Resigns

In March of 1976, C. Roy Cochran was asked to serve on The Self-Study Advisory Committee at the University of Utah, specifically set up to study the teacher of

the Deaf training program. He represented the parent interest. However, eight months later, on November 17, 1976, he resigned. He found himself disagreeing with many of the standard practices of the program. Below is Cochran's letter:

Dear Dr. Bitter and Members of the Self-Study Advisory Committee,

I do not wish to stay on the Committee any longer. May I list the reasons why I am leaving the Committee for good?

1. The U. of U. program for teachers of the Deaf is ORAL and will always be ORAL as long as Dr. Bitter is there;
2. All the course requirements for those in deaf education concentrate heavily on speech, speech reading and auditory training. Yes, they are important but not at the expense of other important subjects like science, history, and so on;
3. The Board of Regents may wish the U. of U. to have a Total Communication in a small way such as the sign language or a course under Dr. Sanderson, but the program under Dr. Bitter IS strongly ORAL/AURAL.



C. Roy Cochran

UNFAIR!

4. Dr. Bitter is a nationally known ORAL advocate and an active Alexander Graham Bell Officer. In Utah, most of the deaf adults believed in Total Communication for most Deaf children. So, Dr. Bitter is one of the symbols of Oralism in Utah and his program at U. of U. will always be ORAL/AURAL. If I must make recommendations, then I would first change the whole program inside down and make it a real Total Communication program. But again, I say I am wasting my time, as long as Dr. Bitter is here (Mr. Baldwin may wish to make some recommendations and I wish him luck).
5. Mrs. Dorothy Young is a friend of mine. She is deaf and an active member of the Salt Lake Valley Ward for the Deaf. Recently she dropped out of the U. of U. program where she hoped to receive her teacher's certification

in the education of the deaf. While I may not have all the details as to why she left,I can only say that the U. of U. is NO fair place for a deaf person or a hearing person who wants to be a real Total Communication teacher. DR. BITTER IS KNOWN TO OPPOSE THE DEAF COMMUNITY AND THEIR ACTIVITES. Furthermore, Oral deaf adults do NOT speak for the real deaf community. Mrs. Young is living proof of most of my reasons for leaving the Committee.

6. Recently I learned that West Jordan school is privately controlled by Dr. Bitter. These deaf children are vegetation.

I am leaving in very good conscience. It is not worth my efforts or time.

Sincerely,

Charles Roy Cochran
Representative of a Parent Whose Children are
enrolled in Total Communication at USD
(C. Roy Cochran, personal communication,
November 17, 1976)

Dr. Bitter responded to Mr. Cochran's letter on December 3, 1976. He said it was most unfortunate that Cochran resigned from the Self-Study Committee. His input was very much needed and desired.

Bitter wanted equal rights and opportunities for all persons who have differences. One of the goals of the teacher-training program for the deaf at the University of Utah was to make sure student teachers developed basic skills in manual communication. They were encouraged to be involved with the Utah Deaf community in order to develop manual competence and increase their understanding and tolerance among the community. He was not opposed to the Utah Deaf community. In fact, he asked that Gene Stewart, director of the Utah



Dr. Grant B. Bitter
The Utah Eagle, October 1967

community Center for the Deaf teach the class ‘Special Education 580’ and encouraged students to take the SPA 789 class which Dr. Robert G. Sanderson taught. He declared that he had no private control over the West Jordan school or any school. He said if he did have personal control, he would reassure Cochran that those Deaf children would not be “vegetating” (G.B. Bitter, personal communication, December 3, 1976).

In the case of Dorothy Young leaving the teacher-training program, Bitter clarified that it was a result of a discussion Dorothy had with himself, Dr. David R. Byrne, Assistant Dean of College of Education, and Jeannette Misaka, Clinical Instructor. Dorothy was a former teacher of USD from 1960-1967. She had provisional teaching credentials that had expired in 1968 and were deemed outdated. Her secondary teaching certificate was valid until 1981. She had enrolled in some classes at the UOU to ready herself to meet the new certification requirements. Dr. Bitter explained that he was concerned about Dorothy’s future difficulty in the teacher-training program. She was totally Deaf and had limited oral communication skills which were a problem because of the way the teacher-training program was structured. Bitter also believed the sign language interpreter would not be able to convey the necessary information. Dorothy was disappointed with this situation and decided not to work towards renewal of her teaching certification. There was little she could do to overcome the current structure of the teaching program (G.B. Bitter, personal communication, December 3, 1976).

Lastly, Dr. Bitter asked Cochran to reconsider his decision to resign from the Committee. Bitter cordially invited Cochran to come to their next meeting on December 17th (G.B. Bitter, personal communication, December 3, 1976). Cochran did return briefly to finish a specific assignment. But he decided to enroll his Deaf children, Don and Lisa, into the Model Secondary School for the Deaf in Washington, D.C., where they would have Deaf peers and receive a better education. He was done battling with oralism in Utah (Roy Cochran, personal communication, April 22, 2011).

Utah Association for the Deaf Appeals for Better Education

In Salt Lake City on February 18, 1977, under UAD President Dave Mortensen's leadership, more than 100 Deaf people, associated with UAD, were packed into the Utah State Board of Education meeting room. They were there requesting improvements in Deaf education (The Salt Lake Tribune, February 19, 1977). Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, Coordinator of Services for the Deaf, was spokesman for the group. He said, "Tomorrow's world, with its incredible technological advances even over the vast changes we see today, will require even more education for Deaf people to compete in the market place jobs.....As we look around us at the world and at the millions of people who hear and speak normally, we note that it is not their speech but their education that enables them to achieve" (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, February 19, 1977, B5).

Dr. Sanderson explained UAD's concerns and listed three recommendations for the board to consider implementing, as follows:

- The Utah School for the Deaf at Ogden should be divided into two separate schools, one for total communication and one for oral communication. The Total Communication Division should be located on the present Ogden campus and the Oral Division should have another site. Conflicts in philosophies and teaching approaches were given as reasons for this recommendation.
- Each deaf child should be evaluated by a professional team, which would recommend a specific program for that child.
- The State Board should develop a long-range research program to determine the needs of and the best method of instruction for the Deaf children in the state (The Salt Lake Tribune, February 19, 1977).

Dr. Sanderson pointed out that Deaf students who were not multi-handicapped were graduating from high school with reading levels of 0 to 5th - 6th grade. He wanted the State Board to emphasize reading, writing, and arithmetic in deaf classrooms. He felt, if these academic basics were covered, the Deaf students could absorb and understand the

rest of the curriculum. He said the most important element for a Deaf person's advancement in their life is education.....real education. Speech is only one of many educational subjects a Deaf child might need. Dr. Sanderson tried to impress upon the State Board how important was the ability to understand, use, and apply academic basics. This was 10,000 times more important to a Deaf person than the mere ability to speak (The Salt Lake Tribune, February 19, 1977).

Sanderson addressed his parting comment to the oral program advocates when he said, "The use of sign language does not retard nor prevent the development of speech. A Deaf person will not lose his speech if he learns sign language, and it is a big lie, a monstrous falsehood and deliberate deceit, to tell anxious parents otherwise" (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, February 19, 1977, B5).

A Scathing Indictment Against the Utah School for the Deaf

On March 17, 1977, Gene Stewart testified before the Utah State Board of Education in Moab, Utah and gave a scathing indictment against the Utah School for the Deaf in Ogden. Stewart, a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor and hearing son of Deaf parents (Wayne and Georgie Mae Bass Stewart and brother-in-law of C. Roy Cochran), charged USD with not providing adequate education for the state's Deaf children. He said Utah already had programs to identify and diagnose the needs of Deaf adults. The state school fell short in educating the young. He then reported on a nationwide model Deaf program. Stewart reiterated what Sanderson told the previous State Board meeting. He said, "Very few deaf children go on to college. In fact practically none, and



Gene Stewart
UAD Bulletin, Winter 1970

by the time I get them at the postsecondary level, they won't have anything to do with any more schooling. We keep turning them out up there [at USD], and yet [the students] don't even know the language of English." Stewart read letters from Deaf pupils to demonstrate their lack of language training. He asked, "How can you read lips if you don't know the words, or how can you learn to write English if you don't know the language?" He denounced the program at the Ogden main USD campus. Stewart declared, "There is something wrong with the system" (Peters, *Deseret News*, March 18, 1977).

The Board accepted his report as an information item. It was Board policy to not act upon any issue or new business that was brought to their Board meetings during the public comment portion of their meeting. If any new issues were presented for discussion and action was required by the Board, those items had to go through a process of getting on the Board's agenda and then further action could be taken. Stewart's report was in the 'information' stage of this process. If he wanted the Board to act upon his presentation, he would have to work this issue through the agenda procedure outlined.

Accusation Stirs Debate

On March 25, 1977, USD Superintendent Robert W. Tegeder responded to Gene Stewart's charge (above) by saying that students on the Ogden campus were being moved from one teaching method to the other because the two educational philosophies were always in conflict and wouldn't work together. In addition, he said, "The ultimate decision to teach Deaf children via the oral method or total communication method belongs to the parents."

However, Gene Stewart quickly retorted, “The philosophy of the school is oral. If the kid fails in the oral program, they will shift him to the other.” He continued, “We’re



**USDB Superintendent Robert W.
Tegeder**

living in the dark ages in Utah. Many schools throughout the nation are using the total communication concept alone.”

Superintendent Tegeder said the charge that the school’s overall philosophy is oral “simply can’t be substantiated....Kids have been shifted from oral to total communication, but that is natural when a child is not progressing in the oral program. If his speech is not developing satisfactorily, he is shifted to where emphasis is less on speech.” He added that the total

communication concept is “hard to define because there’s never really been an agreement as to [what] total communication includes” (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, March 26, 1977).

The State Board was gathering information to decide whether to establish two separate campuses at the Deaf school, one for each teaching method. Dr. Sanderson and Gene Stewart had presented an endorsement of the total communication philosophy. The Board was scheduled to hear from backers of the oral philosophy in April (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, March 126, 1977).

Dr. Jay J. Campbell’s Education of the Deaf in Utah, A Comprehensive Study

On April 14, 1977, Dr. Jay J. Campbell, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, presented his 200-page report on educating the Deaf to the Utah State Board of Education (USB E) at the Utah School for the Deaf (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, April 15, 1977).

Dr. Campbell was an ally of the Utah Deaf community and, in 1966, had been appointed by the Utah State Office of Education to oversee the Utah School for the Deaf. In the intervening years he witnessed the constant controversy between the two methodologies, personified by Bitter and Sanderson. In 1975 USOE and the Office of Administration and Institutional Services authorized Campbell to do a comprehensive study of Deaf education in Utah for the purpose of strengthening USD's programs (Campbell, 1977; Dr. Jay J. Campbell, personal communication, July 1, 2007).



Dr. Jay J. Campbell
UAD Bulletin, June 1973

The report addressed the gap between the educational training provided at the Utah School for the Deaf and the vocational training available for Utah Deaf adults. The information included:

1. An analysis of research on communication methods used in educating the deaf,
2. A study of deaf children in Utah school districts,
3. A sample of opinions of parents of older students at the Utah School for the Deaf,
4. Comments from professional staff,
5. Letters/materials received from national leaders and educators of the deaf,
6. Perceptions and recommendations from former USD students,
7. Professional interpreters for the deaf, and
8. Professional counselors for the deaf.

The report made policy recommendations for USBE to consider implementing at USD (Campbell, 1977).

This was a two-year study (1975-1977), based on data gathered between 1960 and 1977 from impartial researchers outside of Utah. The study included deaf mainstreamed

students and Deaf students at USD. The report made note of the poor educational achievement of the students, saying this was due to conflicts between the two educational philosophies. The needs of the Deaf child were getting lost in the controversy. Other problems that surfaced were: teacher's aides and tutors were in short supply at USD and teachers felt the burden of teaching children of varying ages, language proficiencies, and cognitive skills in one classroom. One teacher expressed, "In most classes, there is a marked difference in ability levels between students. Often a teacher must teach at two or more levels at the same time. A competent aide can help the teacher utilize the student's time efficiently by carrying out certain instructional activities with part of the class while the teacher instructs other students. Besides increasing the actual amount of instruction time for teaching students, utilization of aide personnel can also increase the amount of language input received by each student during the day" (Campbell, 1977, p. 78).

Campbell's report uncovered the fact that many Deaf students were not prepared to earn a living and did not have the basic skills necessary to function in general society. To make matters more difficult, USD's ability to provide quality education had been negatively impacted by the higher percentage of children with additional disabilities over the seventeen years of the study. In many cases, the school districts did not have the administrative commitment nor the trained personnel to adequately educate the Deaf. In the mainstreamed setting, interactions between Deaf and hearing students were extremely limited. The study found that Deaf students were happier and better socially adjusted when they had other Deaf students with which to associate (Campbell, 1977).

In his study, Dr. Campbell included a letter from one respondent. He felt it had significant observations and recommendations.

"After observing the "two track system" as used by the Utah School for the Deaf, I believe its operation offers Utah the greatest flexibility in individualization and yet its operation creates intense in-house and in-state strife that significantly impairs the effectiveness of the school.

I believe that a state that offers only one communicative system for all deaf children is denying children the MOST

important educational alternative that a deaf child needs. There is no question that there is a loss of potential and a great deal of inappropriate placement of deaf children when only one communicative system is offered. I would strongly support the continuation of a two-track system if the internal and external strife can be eliminated. However, at this point, I believe the strife has reached catastrophic stages and the whole education process is endangered.

I would like to first point out what I feel to be the source of this strife, then the results of the strife, and lastly, some suggestions for dealing with the problem.

I believe the source of the strife is in two completely separate programs. Each program has its own dean, its own supervisor, its own teachers, students, parents and, of course, supporters and enemies.

Strife is inherent in such program division. Each program is threatened by the other and when a person is threatened, he fights and attempts to put down the source of the threat. For example, the entrance of a new child into the school has become a battleground for the two programs. The competition is fierce, and children and parents are solicited by each program. Movement from one program to another is very difficult because of the competition. If children are transferred from one program to another, it reduces the number of students a teacher has and often threatens the [teacher's job] because there are no longer enough students. Children and parents are seen as vehicles to support a program. Thus, I would suggest that the two-track system is not providing the individualization it was created to do and at the same time it is creating strife. I have sensed a great deal of mistrust and suspicion among the staff of the school supervisors and administration.

The strife and competition generated among staff is spread to the parents. The parents soon "join one camp or the other," become strong advocates of a method, and then try to "win converts to their cause." We have found parents of children in the PIP [Parent-Infant Program] that are already so biased, they cannot accept communicative and educational recommendations from the PIP staff.

.....There must be structure which allows for a fluid system permitting the movement of children and staff to maximize

the education for each child. I believe the school must hire educators of the deaf not oralists or manualists. These teachers should be able to teach all deaf children in their particular area of expertise, not total communication or oral. I believe the teachers and supervisors must be concerned with children not with methods. The method should be used only as educational (communicative) alternatives.

I realize this would be very difficult to achieve but I believe it must be done or TWO separate schools established. If the state establishes two separate schools for the deaf, they will eliminate the in-house strife, but the external strife will be escalated and the competition for children will become even greater. I believe the state should do everything possible to develop a functional two option communicative program. I believe the 'two school' notion would create more problems than it would solve.

I would suggest the place to begin is to change the current infant, pre-school, and 1st/2nd grade programs into an "Early Childhood Program" with one person over the whole program. The teachers would work with either "TC" or "Oral" children or both. Those teachers who could not do this could be moved to another level. Children in the Early Childhood Program would not be placed in an "oral" or "total" program but would receive whatever training is recommended and appropriate. By the time a child leaves the Early Childhood Program, a complete communicative evaluation could have been completed and he could then be placed in a "total communication track" or "oral track." As this system develops and becomes functional, it could be slowly moved to the other areas of the school.

I realize I am suggesting you open a huge "can of worms." This would take a great deal of planning and commitment to implement" (p. 82-83).

As a result of agreeing with this letter, Dr. Campbell recommended the "two track system" be continued in completely separate programs in order to solve the internal/external issues, reduce the competition, and relieve the tension between the two programs. He also supported the idea that each program has its own dean, supervisor, principal, teachers and students.

During the two years of Campbell's study, the Utah State Office of Education appointed Dr. Robert G. Sanderson to survey the USD alumni to flush out their feelings about the education they had received at the school. The survey compared graduates from the USD prior to 1948, those who had graduated 1948 to 1959, and those who graduated 1960 to 1977. The results showed a marked difference, especially between the first and third groups. Those who graduated prior to 1948 liked school, understood the teachers, and liked the administrators to a greater degree than those who graduated from 1960 to 1977. The results of the students graduating between 1948 and 1959 fell between the two other categories (Sanderson, 1977).

As a result of the study, Dr. Campbell developed these recommendations:

1. Restructure and strengthen the programs to reduce the competition and tension and meet the children's educational needs through a fair placement process,
2. Improve the evaluation of each student in relation to communication methods used in educating the deaf,
3. Provide periodic evaluations of all students and, if needed, recommendations for transfer,
4. Provide aid and education to parents as they make decisions regarding placement,
5. Set up an early intervention program for deaf toddlers and preschoolers,
6. Improve curriculum and offer vocational courses for skill-building targeted to obtain employment,
7. Encourage teachers and parents to become involved with the deaf community and have the right attitude towards the deaf,
8. Include the state evaluative process for deaf children in school districts under the direction of USD and make recommendation along the spectrum of placements,
9. Keep up with the research on services and education trends,
10. Coordinate the educational research of USD with research from other states, and
11. Reconsider and rewrite USD policies to clarify their intent and ensure that they reflect a coherent and consistent policy (Campbell, 1977).

Education of Deaf Stirs Debate No Educational Action Taken

For the past three months, The USBE had heard speakers arguing over the best methods for Deaf education and recommendations to separate the two programs (Peters, Deseret News, April 15, 1977). The State Board was reminded of all the energy spent on arguing over the oral or total communication approaches. It would be better to channel energy into improving both programs (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, April 15, 1977).

On the same day that Dr. Campbell shared his report, Dr. Grant Bitter also made a presentation to the Utah State Board of Education. More than 300 parents of oral deaf children were in attendance. Bitter scolded both groups for constant arguments over which method was the best. He urged that they stop arguing and unify to improve the quality of Deaf Education available (Peters, Deseret News, April 15, 1977). Because parents had the right to decide concerning the education for their children, Bitter stressed that they were entitled to know the educational options for their deaf children (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, April 15, 1977).

Part of Dr. Bitter's presentation was a rebuttal of Dr. Campbell's study. Bitter claimed Campbell's report contained inaccuracies regarding the Teacher Education Program in the area of the Deaf at the University of Utah (G.B. Bitter, personal communication, March 6, 1978). Bitter told the Board that he respected the input of Dr. Barnett and Dr. David Nelson. Their reports could be of value as part of the present study. However, he felt much of the data collected did not reflect current needs, issues, trends, and solutions to the problems and concerns found in Utah. Bitter challenged that some of Campbell's recommendations lacked appropriate input from the field and adequate documentation. Furthermore, he insisted that unfair assumptions had been made regarding deaf mainstreamed students enrolled full time in several school districts.

Much of Bitter's criticism was aimed at a prior report made by Dr. Sanderson in February 1977 to the State Board. He questioned the validity and reliability of the

population and sampling procedures used by Sanderson. There was confusion. Some said that Sanderson advocated operating separate schools for the two educational approaches while retaining the Ogden USD campus for the TC department. Others said the two previous reports implied that the orientation program for parents of students entering the Ogden campus was biased in channeling parents to choose the oral approach (Cummins, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, April 15, 1977).

In conclusion, Bitter requested USBE delay acting upon Campbell's report and recommendations (G.B. Bitter, personal communication, April 14, 1977).

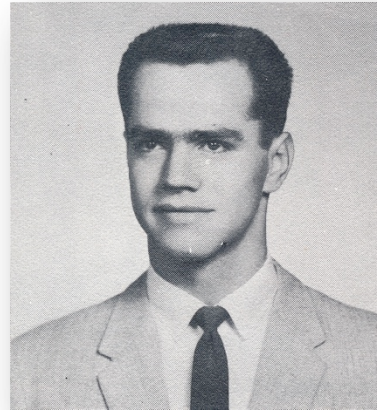
Peter Vlahos, an Ogden attorney and father of a Deaf daughter, told the USBE, with strong emotion, that Utah "is fortunate to have both methods of instruction, but it is unfortunate that we have almost continual conflict. I'm very proud of every achievement my daughter makes. Why try to prove one method is better than the other when we should be concerned with educating our children" (Peters, *Deseret News*, April 15, 1977)? Vlahos finished by saying two-thirds of the deaf school students' parents, whom he represented, "requested that Dr. Campbell and Dr. Sanderson not be allowed to continue in influential positions over oral students" (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, April 15, 1977) At that, Dr. Bitter and Mr. Vlahos received cheers and a standing ovation from those parents in attendance who advocated oralism (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, April 15, 1977).

Under Dr. Bitter's influence, these parents urged the State Board to suspend Dr. Campbell's comprehensive study as inconclusive. The oral parents were so distressed with Campbell's study results that they demanded the Board fire him. Instead, USBE decided to replace Dr. Campbell with Dr. LaRue Winget. Campbell was assigned to a different position within the State Office of Education (Dr. Jay J. Campbell, personal communication, July 1, 2007).

The Board accepted the reports and the supplementary literature provided. Despite Campbell's study which included facts from neutral researchers, no action was

taken by the State Board on Campbell's recommendations (The Ogden Standard-Examiner, April 15, 1977). In the end, the information Campbell gathered and shared was buried and forgotten. As a result, USD continued their trend of inappropriately placing deaf students into programs that did not meet their needs (Dr. Jay J. Campbell, personal communication, July 1, 2007).

It was not until 2010 when the Parent Infant Program Orientation at Utah School for the Deaf was formed to give fair, balanced options to parents of Deaf children. The new changes that were finally taking place in the PIP after being recommended by Dr. Campbell, to establish an orientation in the 1970s that Dr. Bitter rejected.



Norman Williams
Utahn, 1962

Did You Know?

Norman Williams, USD alumni 1962 and father of two Deaf daughters, Penny and Jan, remembers finding Dr. Campbell's Comprehensive Study in the trash can as he was cleaning in the State Office of Education a few years after that fateful presentation (see story above). He had heard so much about this study. He was thrilled to have the book in his hands (Norman Williams, personal communication, January 20, 2010).

Did You Know?

Jay A. Monson, a former USBE Chairman, figured that the University of Utah's oral educational proponents created many of the personnel problems at the Utah School for the Deaf during this time of controversy (Cole, 1977).

Dr. Grant B. Bitter's Recommendations for Improving Educational Programs for the Deaf and Establishing a Statewide Comprehensive Plan

The other half of Dr. Grant Bitter's presentation to the Utah State Board of Education was given on April 14, 1977. It was his own recommendations for improving the educational programs of the Deaf. Bitter represented the Utah Council of Parents of Hearing Impaired Children.

Bitter began by applauding the high level of achievement that Utah enjoyed; achievements which other states desired:

1. The development and preservation of parents' rights, opportunities, and responsibilities for the education of their deaf children,
2. The right to educational alternatives or options, i.e. an oral track or total communication track in separate and adequate facilities,
3. The opportunities available for the placement of deaf children into regular public school classes, Extension Day Classes, or the Residential School in Ogden. The Utah School for the Deaf makes day class placements in the public schools available – a unique option in Utah. The school districts in Utah are to be commended for their willingness to cooperate with parents and the USD for day class placement or full time placement in district schools.

Below are the recommendations that Bitter proposed for USD. These were suggestions to assist in implementing the new Public Law 94-142 as it dealt with the rights of individuals with disabilities in the educational system.

1. The right to due process,
2. Protection against discriminatory testing during diagnosis,
3. Placement in an educational setting that is the least restrictive environment,
4. Individualized Education Plans.

Bitter felt that greater efforts had to be given to the development of adequate support personnel to meet merging needs of the Deaf students under Public Law 94-142. This would include appropriate diagnostic procedures and tracking systems. In this process, parent involvement was essential. The creation of the State Advisory Council for Hearing Conservation, he felt, would give added strength in all areas of concern to improve educational excellence. Bitter was supported in these proposals by his alliance of oral communication parents.

Bitter proposed that appropriate representation be assigned to groups, agencies, organizations, and institutions. He recommended that the state look at the current educational, social, and vocational services and change them as follows:

1. A review of the usefulness of the presently constituted Governor's Advisory Council to the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind.
2. The feasibility of developing a long-range cost benefit study analyzing the costs per pupil per year of education in the
 - a. Utah School for the Deaf, Ogden,
 - b. Extension Day Classes, Salt Lake City,
 - c. Multiple handicapped facilities,
 - d. School districts that provide full time enrollment of deaf children in regular school classes.
3. The employment of at least one well-qualified professional rehabilitation counselor with a background in oral/aural skills to help oral/aural Deaf individuals who seek assistance from the Division of Rehabilitation Services for the Deaf.
4. The organization of statewide Comprehensive Advisory Council for Hearing Conservation.

Lastly, Bitter said that "None of us can allow ourselves to dissipate tax dollars, human energy, and resources on the historic, destructive, and extremely divisive conflict over philosophy and methodology among diverse groups of the hearing impaired....; the question is not of 'either-or';.....but rather "How can we improve the quality of existing programs for the hearing-impaired to make them more efficient and effective?" We must safeguard equal educational rights and opportunities and educational alternatives in the

least restrictive environment” (Bitter, April 14, 1977).

George D. Wilding Speaks Up

On July 4, 1977, George D. Wilding, a Deaf individual, wrote to Dr. Orlando Rivera, Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of Utah. He wanted to share the experience he had in Dr. Grant Bitter’s classroom.

Wilding said he walked into Dr. Bitter’s Special Education 502 class, accompanied by his interpreter, Wilma Powell. It was ‘Introduction to Special Education’ held in the Summer Quarter of 1975 and the first day of school. This college class



George D. Wilding

happened to be required for his employment. Wilding reported that Bitter was not happy to see him and told him to “go to the back of the classroom.” He had the distinct impression that Bitter didn’t want classmates to see his interpreter. To Wilding, this smacked of prejudice and discrimination. Wilding thought of the Jim Crow laws of the South. It seemed that Wilding was like a black person being ordered to the back of the bus. Wilding was denied his right to sit wherever he wanted; the other students were denied the opportunity to see an interpreter in action as she conveyed the course material to him. After that first

day, Wilding refused to go to the back of the room and sat in front where he wanted to be.

Wilding wrote that it was shameful that the University of Utah would tolerate that kind of bigotry and bias from one of their professors. With his actions, this professor came across as not liking those deaf individuals who did not agree with him. He also

seemed against deaf adults becoming teachers for the deaf. Wilding explained to Riveria that if a professor didn't like or accept sign language interpreters then he didn't understand the basic needs of the majority of deaf people and their use of interpreters.

Wilding went on to show that the curriculum for training teachers of the deaf demonstrated Bitter's total bias towards oralism and its negative influence that bias had on deaf individuals. The University forced Bitter to set up sign language classes for the teacher of the deaf candidates. He set up only one three-credit hour class. Compared with other languages which were offered on campus and the number of their classes, the teacher candidate could not achieve any kind of competence by taking just one class of sign language for one quarter at three hours a week. Then compare the sign language requirement with the requirement for speech classes, the teacher candidates had to take fifteen or more credit hours of speech classes. This inequality of requirements exposed the oral-training bias of the curriculum.

The higher number of speech classes that the teacher of the deaf candidates had to take did not transfer into better speech production from the deaf students. The majority of the students who learned to speak from these trained teachers quickly realized that practically nobody understood what they said except for their teachers and parents. When this awareness dawned on the students, they switched to using sign language as soon as they were free from the oral program and could drop speech. In Wilding's complaint over Dr. Bitter's program, it seemed that Bitter advocated teaching skills to deaf children who would eventually not use them (speech and listening) and ignored teaching sign language skills which would be used during their lifetime.

It was clear, in Wilding's view, that Dr. Bitter's priorities were confused. Wilding thought that sign language should be the primary language of deaf students. English could be taught as their second language and speech could be taught as a third language. This was the way it worked in the real adult world of deafness. Wilding had a sense that Bitter didn't want it to be that way but that's the way it really was. This was the way deaf adults lived and worked and played in the real world.

Can you imagine how the Spanish-speakers would feel if Bitter took away their Spanish language? Would they resent him and rebel? This was how the Utah Deaf community felt about Bitter's attempts to get rid of sign language. The deaf were exactly like any other minority race with their own language and culture (George Wilding, personal communication, June 4, 1977).

On July 11, 1977, Bitter responded to George Wilding's comments in a letter to his boss, Dr. Donald R. Logan, chairman of the Department of Special Education. He denied forcing Wilding to sit in the back of the room. He stated Mr. Wilding was among 60 students in his class and there were no seats available except those near the back of the room. Wilding's sign language interpreter came in late and had to sit beside Wilding. He assured Dr. Logan that he had consulted with Wilding and his interpreter after class regarding his future needs. They mutually agreed that Wilding could sit in any appropriate location suitable for him and his interpreter. Bitter stated that when Wilding said that he was forced to go to the back of the room and that he couldn't sit where he wished, that he had not presented the facts accurately and felt the accusations towards himself had no merit (G. B. Bitter, personal communication, July 11, 1977).

Bitter couldn't understand Wilding's accusations of prejudice. As far as he knew, Wilding was a respected member of the class. He had every opportunity to speak out on issues, problems, trends, concerns, knowledge, and experiences. Bitter felt the members of the class appreciated his participation. Every effort was made to help him, and his interpreter feel welcome and comfortable in the class. This effort was consistent throughout the quarter (G. B. Bitter, personal communication, July 11, 1977).

Dr. Grant B. Bitter's Additional Recommendations for the Improvement of Statewide Services for the Deaf

As soon as Dr. Jay J. Campbell was out of the picture in April 1977, Dr. Grant B. Bitter made three additional recommendations to revise the statewide services of the deaf. He presented his recommendations to the Utah State Board of Education on August 19, 1977.

Bitter asked that the following needs be met:

1. He recognized the fragmentation, lack of communication, and proliferation of services in Utah to meet the needs of the deaf. Often various agencies and organizations in Utah did not have all the data necessary to make appropriate referrals nor could they provide accurate, unbiased information regarding deaf services. This situation needed to be corrected.
2. He reported the growing number of deaf and hard of hearing children going into public school classes. He recommended that USD administrators and all 40 school district administrators establish a cooperative and efficient plan for the referrals and the tracking of these students. There was a need to evaluate their progress and develop support systems to assist those children so they could have success in their educational placements.
3. Because of Public Law 94-142 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Bitter felt it was necessary for the State Board of Education to cooperate with various professional agencies, clinics, hospitals, schools, parent groups, and universities. He could see the evolution of the future role of USD working alongside the Utah school districts to provide appropriate placement of deaf children and youth. He emphasized the urgency of orderly transition. He felt there would be shifts in school populations. He wanted the professional staff members to be appropriately utilized. He could see there would be future needs of deaf children in both urban and rural areas of the state as well as at the Utah School for the Deaf in Ogden and its extension programs. He wanted those future needs to be prepared for now and not wait till later.



Dr. Grant B. Bitter
The Utahn, 1973

Bitter viewed the Governor's Advisory Council to the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind as limited in power and restricted in scope. He correctly observed that this Council had become a battleground for arguments over the oral method versus the manual method. Precious little positive effect had come out of this council regarding the efficiency of programs serving the children. He heard the Council's work put in these

words: “an exercise in futility.”

Bitter described the need for a broader-based committee to deal with the emerging trends in Deaf Education. This committee would provide assistance to the Advisory Council in accomplishing its mission for the deaf and hard of hearing children in the state. He recommended that the Utah State Board of Education approve the formation of a statewide Advisory Commission for Hearing Conservation. This Commission would have the following mission:

1. Prepare a comprehensive plan to assure the education all deaf children and youth in Utah – utilizing the expertise of a broad-based commission as a vehicle for study, review, analysis and evaluation of programs for the Deaf and minimizing the possibilities of bias, contention, and inaccuracies/inadequacies of data.
2. Consider as a part of the plan, the relationship of education, rehabilitation, and the deaf-related problems of aging. Recommend ways the needs of deaf citizens can be adequately met through birth-to-death continuum of services. The Parent Infant Program (PIP) would continue as a necessary part of this continuum.

Bitter reported that parents and oral deaf young people who sought help from the Utah State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation – Division of Services for the Deaf, were often bewildered and disappointed with the bias, intimidation, and lack of professional attitudes which they encountered there. Because the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRs) was under the State Office of Education, Bitter recommended that the Board instruct the OVRs to hire a professional counselor who understood the workplace needs of the oral deaf individuals.

As a direct result of Bitter’s opposition to Campbell’s 1977 Education of the Deaf in Utah Comprehensive Study, he recommended to the Board that systematic procedures be established for the study of, orientation to, and evaluation of philosophies and methodologies concerning the habilitation, education, and rehabilitation of the state’s deaf population (Bitter, personal communication, August 19, 1977).

Whether the State Board of Education approved Bitter's recommendations is not known. However, if these items were presented during the public comment period of the Board meeting, his recommendations could only be received as information and not as action items.

A Protest at the University of Utah

On August 12, 1977, Myrna Burbank, former president of the Parent Teacher Association of the Oral Department at USD, received an unsigned letter written against oralism and in support of total communication (M. Burbank, personal communication, August 12, 1977). The anonymous author stated that Burbank was "trying to hurt Jay J. Campbell and Dr. Robert G. Sanderson because they are for total communication." The letter boasted that Burbank's daughter would become convinced that total communication "is the best way..." The letter implied that Ms. Burbank was being paternalistic in telling the deaf what would be best for them. An 8.5 by 11 sheet of paper was also printed and distributed with the words: "Jay J. Campbell will put Burbank down. Power is UAD." See Appendix C and Appendix D.



Pickets outside state board of education protest teaching methods for Deaf
Deseret News, November 19, 1977

Boyd Nielsen had a similar experience. He was a graduate of Dr. Bitter's teacher training program in 1966. He was also a staff member of USD's Oral Department. He received threatening letters, one explicitly from UAD and one anonymous. The first, dated August 15, 1977, said "J.J. Campbell and Dr. Robert Sanderson will throw Boyd

Nielsen out of job in Utah, in America, and out of this world. UAD is deaf power.” The other was a drawing of Mr. Nielsen with a noose around his neck. It appears to be dated around 1970 and has not direct reference to the oral versus total communication controversy. See Appendix E and Appendix F.

Either in late August or early September 1977, official representatives of UAD met with Dr. Pete D. Gardner, Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University.

They wanted to present a 10-point list of concerns regarding the Teacher for the Deaf Training Program. They hoped a meeting would be better than anonymous letters. See Appendix G.



Arnold Moon
The Daily Utah Chronicle,
November 29, 1977

The meeting didn't go well and the UAD representatives wanted to take their concerns to Alfred Emery, president of the University of Utah. In response to their request for a meeting, Dr. Gardner sent a letter (See Appendix H) explaining to Lloyd H. Perkins' wife, Madalaine that meeting with President Emery would be unproductive because Dr. Bitter had not violated any of the university's academic standards (Pete D. Gardner, personal communication, September 14, 1977).

On September 27, Lloyd H. Perkins wrote Dr. Pete D. Gardner, Vice President for Academic Affairs, expressing his disappointment with its content. He felt Dr. Gardner missed the important points that UAD was attempting to make. Again, he requested for a meeting. See Appendix I.

Preemptively, Dr. Bitter prepared a lengthy response to the “slandorous” charges made by Lloyd Perkins (See Appendix J). He carefully listed the individual charges and

provided ample material to support each of his responses (G.B. Bitter, personal communication, October 10, 1977).

Cedric I. Davern, Vice-President for Academic Affairs at the University of Utah, Dr. Davern was given responsibility of dealing with this situation and wrote to Perkins to let him know the Utah State Board of Education was conducting hearings on the Oral method versus the Total Communication method. A report on this controversy would be available soon (See Appendix K). He refused to make any changes in the Teacher Training Program until that report became available (Cedric I. Davern, personal communication, October 28, 1977).

Perkins felt Davern didn't truly understand the nature of the problem. What did Davern know of the Teacher for the Deaf Training Program? Prior to this discussion of the Teacher Training Program, the Deaf had general concerns. But this program revealed specific problems that UAD hoped to convey to Davern (See Appendix L) Perkins reiterated that the UAD would like to meet with administrators of the University (Lloyd H. Perkins, personal communication, November 7, 1977).

Things finally reached a head in November 1977, when UAD President Dave Mortensen coordinated members of the UAD in protests outside the Utah State Board of Education office (Chaffin, the Daily Utah Chronicle, November 19, 1977, p. 30 A) and in front of the Park Building on the University of Utah campus (UAD letter, 1977; UAD Flyer, 1977). See Appendix M and Appendix N.

Dr. Bitter's devotion to the Oral method was brought up in the course of the protest. Bitter continued to be seen as against the Utah



Zelma Moon is one of the approximately 20 Deaf people who gather in front of the Park Building November 28 to protest what they see at the University's treatment of their concerns The Daily Utah Chronicle, November 29, 1977

Deaf community because of his position on how Deaf children should be educated. He responded to the UAD protest with these words: “we are endeavoring to be fair and meet individual needs” (Hunt, *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, November 29, 1977, p. 1; Hunt, *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, December 2, 1977). He explained why he favored the oral-only approach. In his view, it was the best way to help the Deaf children become functional members of society (Hunt, *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, November 29, 1977, p. 1). He honestly believed that oralism was the best way to give Deaf children a healthy self-concept and prepare them for a normal life in society. He felt the oral method freed them from dependence on an interpreter and gave them the independence they would want as an adult.

In referring to the UOU Teacher for the Deaf Training Program, he reminded UAD that a class in basic sign language skills was part of the curriculum as well as contact with the Utah Deaf community through its practicum. Bitter showed the protesters that the University of Utah had fulfilled its obligation to the Utah State Board of Education by providing experiences in total communication within their oral curriculum (Graduate School of Education, November 28, 1977; Hunt, *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, December 2, 1977).

The *Deseret News* printed a Letter to the Editor from M. J. Lewis who was convinced that “Dr. Bitter has so brainwashed and put fear into parents, that their children will never be able to function as normal human beings” (Lewis, *Deseret News*, November 28, 1977; Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005). *The Daily Utah Chronicle* ran news articles on the protest (Hunt, *The Utah Daily Chronicle*, November 19 and Hunt, *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, December 16, 1977) and a Letter to the Editor by S.C. Sundstrom that responded to those articles. S.C. Sundstrom states to Lisa M. Hunt, the author of the Chronicle articles, that there is “...no evidence here that you have investigated the viewpoints or rationale of these [Deaf] individuals” (S.C. Sundstrom, *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, December 6, 1977).

After the protest, the Utah State Board of Education made the following

decisions, based on all the information that had been given them:

- Long-range research would be instituted to determine the characteristics of deaf students for whom certain programs worked best.
- A procedure would be established for diagnosis, evaluation, and placement of deaf students according to their needs. Such placement would require the approval of parents or guardians.
- Two distinct programs of instruction would be available at the Utah School for the Deaf in Ogden. These would be the Oral Program and the Total Communication Program.
- The students in each distinct program would be separated up through junior high school.
- The Utah School for the Deaf would report to the Utah State Board of Education, under their Special Education Instructional Services Dept., headed by LaRue Winget.
- USD faculty members and USBE members were to curb taking sides in deaf education methodology disputes.



Beth Ann Campbell
Photo by Robert L. Bonnell

The appointment of another advisory committee was not considered necessary at this time. The USBE also called for studies to determine whether a Total Communication Teacher Preparation Program at the university level was something the state needed.

In April 1979, the Utah State Board of Education passed a motion directing the University of Utah to add a faculty member to teach Total Communication skills to perspective teachers of the Deaf. The State Board planned to review the situation in a year. If the instructor had not been added by that time, USOE would consider withdrawing the university's accreditation in regard to their teacher training program for the Deaf (The Silent Spotlight, June 1979; Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005).

Issues Discussed with State Superintendent

On November 18, 1977, Dr. Walter D. Talbot, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, asked the Utah Association for the Deaf to talk over several issues that had been festering for several years. UAD asked the Utah Deaf community for support in meeting with Talbot. The Utah Deaf community wanted the state's help in developing a higher quality of education for Deaf children and a better caliber of help for Deaf adults in the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

Three days later, on November 21, a delegation from UAD met with Talbot. They were David Mortensen, UAD President, Paul Chamberlain, UAD Vice-President, Dora Laramie, and Kenneth Burdett, with Beth Ann Stewart Campbell (wife of Dr. Jay J. Campbell) as interpreter. Their purpose was to clarify three issues that were brought up by Talbot on the 18th of November. They hoped to influence him to make changes.

The issues were:

1. USD school separation policy imposed on the students,
2. The break-up of the deaf unit of the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and
3. The 22-member hearing conservation committee.

Dr. Talbot and the UAD delegation agreed to work first on the problem of methodology separation as presented in the new USD policy (The Silent Spotlight, November 1977). Dr. Talbot had also been in touch with the oral group. He had a meeting with their advocates on December 5th. Talbot wanted to develop a policy with input from both groups.

On December 6, 1977, Dr. Talbot wrote a letter to Dr. Bitter, explaining that the UAD wanted a legal opinion from the Utah Attorney General regarding the mandatory USD campus separation of the students. This request came even though UAD had agreed to the proposed policy, along with the minor changes accepted by Dr. Bitter and his group. The UAD wanted to know if the mandatory social and academic separation was in conflict with laws prohibiting discrimination such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation

Act. Talbot sent their request to the Attorney General's office (Dr. Talbot, personal communication, December 6, 1977).

In his letter to Bitter, Talbot expressed his disappointment that there was not unanimous support for his Alternative Number 9, which would base the degree of separation of instruction, living accommodations, and social life for each student on their Individual Education Plan (IEP). He felt that using the IEP would be a much better way to separate students. The Individual Education Plan was already in place as an educational guide. The IEP goes through an approval process where the school officials, parents, and, sometimes, the student all agree on educational goals. Using a policy-creating instrument that was already in place would be better than creating a new policy that would not allow USD to permit integration even if a parent requested it (Dr. Talbot, personal communication, December 6, 1977).

After months of discussion and debate, Dr. Walter D. Talbot drew up what he called a "Policy on Education of the Hearing Impaired." He presented it to the Utah State Board of Education. They accepted the document which included the controversial Item 9 which dealt with the separation of oral students and total communication students. This item did not please either group (G.B. Bitter, personal communication, March 6, 1978). The Policy on Education of the Hearing Impaired emphasized that:

- Two distinct programs of instruction (oral and TC) shall be available to all students at the State School for the Deaf, Ogden. Students would be assigned according to individual need as determined by the student, parents, and school officials (Item 9).
- USD would report to Dr. LaRue Winget of the State Board's Office of Instructional Services which was under Special Education (Formerly USD had reported to Dr. Jay J. Campbell, Office of Administration Services).
- Deaf students in USD's programs would be kept separate through the junior high school years. High school students would be allowed to mingle socially. The students who went to a mainstreamed high school for half day or more would be expected to join that school's extracurricular activities rather than join in the after-school activities at USD (Chaffin, *Deseret News*, December 16, 1977).

The Utah Attorney General conveyed that there was no conflict with separating the students on the USD campus because of the reasoning associated with the separation. The students in the Oral Program could not be around students who used sign language because of the nature of the philosophy of the Oral Program. After receiving this information, the UAD wanted to consult with other legal advisors since they believed the mandatory separation could still be considered discrimination and therefore be an illegal practice (The Silent Spotlight, January 1978).

To follow up on this, on April 11, 1978, UAD asked Dr. Jay J. Campbell to write a letter to David S. Tatel, Director of the Office for Civil Rights in Washington, DC. He asked, “Does Section 504 allow a school system to segregate or separate one group of deaf students from another on the same campus on the basis of the educational philosophy of the school and/or parents? (Dr. Campbell, personal communication, April 11, 1978).

David S. Tatel responded on July 10, 1978 saying that, if it is determined that there are sound pedagogical reasons, “it is inappropriate to educate a particular deaf child in the regular educational environment, and an alternative placement provides a free appropriate public education,” that it will not be considered a violation of Section 504 to separate the children.....” (David S. Tatel, personal communication, July 10, 1978). This didn’t provide the answer to Campbell’s question.

The real question Campbell wanted Tatel to respond to was: “Is it legal under Section 504 or under.....the Civil Rights Act to segregate or separate deaf children on the same campus on the basis of the educational philosophy of the school and/or the parents, [just as it is illegal] to segregate black and white children on the basis of race or color?” (Dr. Campbell, personal communication, April 11, 1978).

Tatal answered Dr. Campbell’s question concerning the segregation on the same school campus on the basis of the educational philosophy.

He wrote another letter.

Thank you for your letter of April 11, 1978, clarifying your inquiry of December 15, 1977, concerning the Department's Regulations implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 [As restated], your question is whether it is legal under Section 504 to segregate or separate certain deaf children from other deaf children on the same campus on the basis of the educational philosophy of the school and/or the parents.

Attached to your letter of April 11, 1978, was a paper entitled, "The Deaf Child Controversy Over Teaching Methods" describing a controversy among educators respecting the best method for teaching the pre-lingually, severely, or profoundly deaf child. On the one hand, the advocates of the oralist school of thought contend that most deaf children can be taught to speak and lip-read. They also contend that (a) sign language segregates the deaf into their own subculture, (b) gestures should be kept to a minimum, and (c) sign language should be forbidden because it will destroy the chance of oral success.

On the other hand, the advocates of the total communication school of thought contend that (a) most of the deaf cannot become oral successes, (b) sign language does not inhibit speech development, and (c) all methods are to be used, including sign language, speech, and lip-reading. Only time will tell which combination best suits a particular deaf child.

Subpart D of the Regulation generally prescribes the requirements recipients operating preschool, elementary, and secondary education programs must satisfy.

As you may know, Section 84.33 of the Regulation generally provides that recipients must provide a free appropriate public education to each qualified handicapped person within its jurisdiction. Section 84.34 (a) provides that a qualified handicapped person must be educated with persons who are not handicapped "to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the handicapped person." Once a determination has been made that it is inappropriate to educate a particular deaf child in the regular educational environment and an alternative placement provides a free appropriate public education, this office will not require

that the recipient choose between two competing educational philosophies. To the extent it is necessary, for sound pedagogical reasons to separate children enrolled in the oralist program from the children enrolled in the total communications program, no violation of Section 504 will be deemed to have occurred.

David S. Tatel, Director
Office for Civil Rights (David S. Tatel, Education on the Handicapped Law Report, July 10, 1978).

This was an important piece of information and worth the effort of pursuing the answer to the unique question of the practice of segregation among the USD Deaf students. After receiving Tatel's letter, it was clear that Section 504 would not help UAD banish the segregation that continued on the campus.

Dave Mortensen Wants to Curb Grant B. Bitter

On February 2, 1978, Dave Mortensen, president of the Utah Association for the Deaf, wrote a letter to Dr. Edward W. Clyde, chairman of the University of Utah's



**W. David Mortensen, 1949 Utah
School for the Deaf Senior**

Institutional Council which managed the university's growth (Dr. Edward W. Clyde: Utah History To Go website). Mortensen criticized the unprofessional conduct of Dr. Grant Bitter during his presentation to the Utah State Board of Education on August 19, 1977. Mortensen asked that Bitter "be reprimanded and put on probation or other corrective measures to stop the unprofessional conduct of a man that should not be at the University of Utah in the first place" (Dave Mortensen, personal communication, February 2, 1978). See Appendix O.

One month later, on March 6, 1978, Dr. Bitter responded (See Appendix P) to Dr. Clyde by denying any wrongdoing (G.B. Bitter, personal communication, March 6, 1978). Because of Bitter's adept skill in defending himself and making his recommendations and philosophy look harmless, no intervention to curb Bitter was ever imposed on him (Dave Mortensen, personal communication, February 2, 1978).

Constant Controversy over the Teacher Preparation Program at the University of Utah

On August 27, 1979 Dr. Walter D. Talbot, State Superintendent, wrote a letter to Dr. Don Logan, Chairman of the Department of Special Education at the University of Utah. Talbot recognized the concerns expressed by members of the Utah State Board of Education regarding the Teacher for the Deaf Preparation Program at the University. These Board members agreed with UAD that there was no balance of classes for the teacher candidates in total communication skills when compared with the oral/aural requirements. He validated that the UOU's educational training was largely oral/aural even though teacher candidates were given learning experiences in total communication. The classes that were required in sign language were minimal and not at all adequate. He mentioned that USBE felt there was a need for a Teacher for the Deaf Preparation Program in total communication, equal in all aspects to the oral/aural preparation program.

Dr. Talbot presented these three ideas in his attempt to find a solution to bring the total communication segment onto equal status with the oral/aural training that was already fully developed. He recommended:

1. The State Board of Regents permit a Total Communication Teacher for the Deaf Training Program be provided at another Utah teacher-training institution;
2. The State Board of Education could disapprove of the University of Utah's program by refusing to certify graduates from their current program; and/or
3. Strip the UOU of its current teacher training program so there would be no program at all in any of Utah's universities for training teachers of

the deaf (Dr. Talbot, personal communication, August 27, 1979).

His first recommendation did not become reality until 1982 (Bitter, *Utah's Hearing Impaired Children...At High Risk*, 1986).

UAD's Request for Deaf Representation Ignored

Ned C. Wheeler, a Deaf person, served on the Governor's Advisory Council for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind since 1968. After his death in 1981, a hearing person was appointed to the Council despite the request made by the Utah Association for the Deaf that a Deaf person be appointed. After the appointment, the Utah Deaf community emphatically mentioned that they were not represented on the Governor's five-member council. Despite their repeated requests, they were ignored.

Then in 1984, the UAD asked Utah Governor Scott Matheson, to appoint a Deaf person to the Institutional Council (IC) at the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. Governor Matheson sent them to the Utah State Board of Education since the Institutional Council interfaced with the Board on Deaf Education issues. The Board told UAD that they would take their request into consideration when there was a vacancy on the Council (Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, June 1985).



Scott Matheson, Utah Governor
Utah History to Go website

Dave Mortensen requested a meeting with State Superintendent of Public Instruction, G. Leland Burningham, in February 1984. His purpose was to ensure that the Utah Deaf community would be represented on the IC. However, through a letter he received from Burningham in April, he learned that the Governor's Advisory Council

would meld into the USDB's Institutional Council (Dabbling, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 24, 1984). This set Dave on a redirected pursuit which culminated on May 23, 1984, when he publicly objected to the fact that there was no deaf person appointed to serve on the Institutional Council. He said, "There was a deaf member on the Governor's Council, but after Ned C. Wheeler died, a hearing person was named in his place. Wouldn't you think that a deaf person should have been named to fill the vacancy of a deaf member who had died?" (Dabbling, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 24, 1984).

In April of 1985, a year later, there was a vacancy on the Institutional Council. At last, here was a chance to see if the Board of Education remembered what they'd told the UAD. Despite the fact that the Board requested UAD submit the names of two Deaf persons, those Deaf persons were turned down and the vacancy was filled by a hearing person. This result upset the Utah Deaf community. President Mortensen said, "What does this mean to us? That we are back [to] where we started [in] 1970 and that we are being subdued once again and cast aside as "handicapped beings" that really can't be part of the decision-making apparatus...." (Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, June 1985).

The UAD waited another year and wrote a letter to Bernarr Furse, the new State Superintendent of Public Instruction, in March 1986. They repeated their request that a Deaf person be appointed to the USD Institutional Council. Nothing happened.

Five months later on August 3, 1986, Dave Mortensen spoke up again. "We have been to the State Board of Education. We have met with Bernarr. We [the Deaf community] were concerned that a deaf person was not on the Advisory Council." Mortensen continued, "We told Bernarr our concerns and Bernarr understood the problem, but it was as far as he went. There was a vacancy coming up. It seems to me like we had some deaf people who applied."

Furse, however, had no recollection of hearing such a request. He said, "I'm not aware of such a request..... All I can say is I get hundreds of letters. It's very difficult to get all the groups who feel they should have a voice adequately represented."

Furse's explanation did not soften the feelings of the Utah Deaf community. The Deaf felt that, time after time, their requests for representation were always ignored. Darrell McCarty, Associate State Superintendent, told the Utah Deaf community leadership that they could take this issue to the governor. He said, "Everyone has the right to make recommendations (Auer, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, August 3, 1986). Subsequently UAD wrote a letter to the new Utah Governor, Norm Bangeter.

Despite the setback with State Superintendent Furse, 1986 was a productive year for the Deaf. Dave Mortensen worked with the state legislature in passing a law requiring that two Deaf persons sit on the USDB Institutional Council (Bass, *UAD Bulletin*, November 1999). The first two Deaf individuals to serve on the IC were Dr. Robert G. Sanderson and Dennis Platt in 1987.

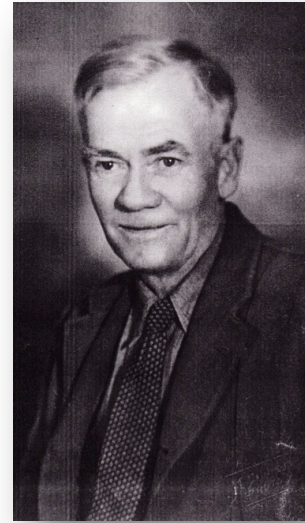
A New Deaf Education Program at Utah State University

Three years after State Superintendent Talbot's letter to Don Logan, the Utah State Board of Regents granted Utah State University (USU) approval to establish a new Deaf Education major where the teacher candidates would learn Total Communication skills. This happened on April 20, 1982. USU is located in northern Utah in Logan. The aural/oral teacher preparation program which focused on speech, spoken language, and listening skills remained at the University of Utah (G.B. Bitter Papers, 1970). The controversy quieted down in light of the establishment of a TC Deaf Education major, even though there had been no budget approved for the new program (Jeff Pollock, *The Utah Deaf Education Controversy*, May 4, 2005).

What a victory for the Utah Deaf community and UAD! For years, Utah's Total Communication teachers had come from out-of-state while most of the Oral/Aural teachers came from the University of Utah. It took Dr. Thomas Cecil Clark three years to develop the new Deaf Education program at Utah State University. Clark received funding from the U. S. Department of Education. There was great support for this program from UAD, Deaf people in Utah, Utah Senator Lyle Hilyard, and USU Dean

Oral Ballam (Dr. Thomas C. Clark, personal communication, November 13, 2008). The program opened its doors in 1985.

Clark had valuable insights regarding deafness that was incorporated into the programs he launched at USU. As it turned out, Clark's father, John Houston 'Hout' Clark, was in the initial group of members of the Utah Association of the Deaf when it was formed in 1909. Hout's 1st cousin, Elizabeth DeLong, was distinguished as the first president of UAD. In 1902 Hout and Elizabeth were the first USD students to graduate from Gallaudet University (Banks, The DeLong Family Saga; *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, May 8, 1897; *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, September 15, 1897). Tom Clark had Hout and Elizabeth teaching him what Deaf children needed in their educational setting.



John H. Clark

As a result of his interaction with his dad and cousin, Clark founded SKI-HI INSTITUTE in Logan, Utah in 1972. SKI-HI was an acronym which comes from



Elizabeth DeLong. Courtesy of FamilySearch

“Sensory Impairment-Home Intervention.” It was an Outreach program, providing home-based services to families of Deaf infants and toddlers from birth-5 years old. The SKI-HI program has grown to serving families of Deaf children throughout the world. Dr. Clark also came up with the idea of the Deaf Mentor Program. The program paired up hearing families with a Deaf adult. The hearing parents could ask questions about deafness and get common sense answers from the Deaf Mentor, who was also a sign language role model. This program helped ease the fear and unfamiliarity with which hearing families

struggled when faced with having a deaf baby.

The Deaf Education teacher program continues at USU under the direction of Dr. J. Freeman King. When King took over the program in 1991, he changed it from the Total Communication program to the Bilingual/Bicultural program (later renamed ASL/English Bilingual program (UAD Bulletin, October 1991). It took Dr. King years to gradually eliminate the speech pathology and audiology classes that the USU Deaf Education majors were required to take. King's program substituted those classes with more pedagogical coursework geared to training teachers, not clinicians. The current teacher's program has embraced the socio-cultural model of deafness and has removed the former pathological model.

The change from the Total Communication program to the ASL/English Bilingual program was a natural progression because research indicated that the Total Communication method did not provide a complete language model in either target languages of English or American Sign Language. The resultant ASL/English Bilingual program has been based on solid linguistic principles. The Deaf Education program at USU supports preparing teachers with a fundamental base of ASL, which is the language that Deaf children can naturally acquire. Teacher candidates learn how to teach English to the Deaf child as a second language. English is presented to the children in its written form. The target for the Bilingual Program is to help Deaf children/teens gain a mastery of course content and become literate, contributing members of the majority society.



Dr. J. King Freeman

The Deaf adults have been helpful as mentors for Freeman's students. They are

language role models and cultural experts for them. Their influence has been invaluable.

Finally, the waiting for Deaf education teachers who understand the Deaf child's educational needs is over. No more sacrificing Deaf children to the gods of legislative and educational ignorance. New parameters, new ideas, new paradigms have given a fresh sense of purpose as new teachers of the deaf are being trained and prepared.

To paraphrase what Dr. King has stated over and over again, Deaf children are primarily visual learners and, resultantly, should best be educated via a language that plays to the child's strength (vision), and not the child's weakness (hearing).

To summarize, the USU Deaf Education program helps candidates become fluent in ASL as well as gain the requisite training of how to use ASL in teaching academic subjects and English literacy. Utah State University was training teacher candidates how to impart education to Deaf and hard of hearing children. Graduates from their program are certified not only in Deaf Education but also in Elementary Education, Secondary Education, or Special Education. By contrast, the Teacher for the Deaf Training Program at the UOU qualified teachers in the therapy skills of audiology and speech pathology. The teacher candidates received very little instruction in how to teach academic subjects to Deaf children.

The ASL/English Bilingual program fully incorporates the use of residual hearing and the teaching of speech. Speech and Listening skills are available to the children as options. Here in this program speech is viewed as a tool which can enhance the child's communication with hearing family members and/or peers. It is not viewed as the final product, supplanting the acquisition of a complete and appropriate education.

As research has been done on bilingualism and education, the application of those findings to the educational goals of Deaf and hard of hearing children has made perfect sense. The ultimate goal for Deaf children is an education that is the equal, in all respects, to that of their hearing peers. Research shows that, in order for this educational goal to

be reached, Deaf and hard of hearing children must be allowed to become bilingual. As instruction is given in American Sign Language alongside the learning of English, there is recognition and respect given to both languages and cultures. There is no longer the need to force the child or the families to choose between signing or speaking, as has historically been the case. Instead, Deaf children and their families can truly enjoy the best of both worlds in a quality bilingual, bicultural program (Dr. Freeman King, personal communication, April 22, 2009).

Restructure of Administrative System at the Utah School for the Deaf

To review, the controversy between the oral and total communication programs continued to rage during 1986-1987. In 1986 Dr. Thomas Bannister was appointed as



**Dr. Thomas Bannister, USDB
Superintendent**

superintendent for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. He knew sign language and he was appalled at the biased, one-sided information provided to families (UAD Bulletin, November 1986). Dr. Jay J. Campbell's Comprehensive Study back in 1977 revealed a variety of situations where the principal, Tony Christopulos, was less committed to total communication as an educational philosophy and didn't provide the kind of leadership the TC division needed. He favored the oral division (Campbell, 1977).

Bannister decided to shake up the administrative system in order to end the controversy. Christopulos, unhappy with the change, resigned and retired (Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, May 14, 2011).

Superintendent Bannister came up with the idea of 'program directors' who would be assigned to geographic areas of the state. They would run the educational programs. He established a rule to prohibit bias. When Steven W. Noyce, a strong oral

advocate, became program director for the USD Programs in Orem, Utah, Deaf leaders, Dave Mortensen and Lloyd Perkins, visited the programs. They found that, though the Oral and TC classrooms were separated, they were happy to find that, for the first time, all the students were allowed to interact with each other during lunch and recess (Kenneth K. Kinner, personal communication, April 17, 2011).

The Teacher Preparation Program Closed

The Teacher for the Deaf Preparation Program in the Department of Special Education at the University of Utah was eliminated in 1986, after operating for nearly 23 years.

Dr. Grant B. Bitter wrote to Dr. Irvin Altman, Vice President of Academic Affairs. His appeal was entitled “Utah’s Hearing Impaired Children...At High Risk!” Numerous supporters joined with Bitter to try to prevent the closure. The University of Utah decided to scrap the program due to budgetary limitations imposed by the state, low student enrollment, and fewer graduates each year (Bitter, *Utah’s Hearing Impaired Children... At Risk*, 1986).

Bitter even approached the Utah Deaf community in his search for broader support. He asked UAD President Dave Mortensen to muster the Utah Deaf community’s backing to block the closure of the University’s teacher-training program. Dave bluntly said he and the Association would not lend their support to Bitter’s efforts (Dave Mortensen, personal communication, March 27, 2009).

After the UOU’s Teacher for the Deaf Preparation Program was closed, Bitter retired from his position as Associate Professor of Special Education on June 30, 1987 at the age of 65.



Dr. Grant B. Bitter
Deseret News, March 18, 1974

Consolidation of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

This next segment of history recounts the putting of both state schools onto one campus. Several things were going on at the same time.

By 1980, the number of day schools and mainstream classes had increased substantially nationwide (Baldwin, 1990). This situation had an impact on the Utah School for the Deaf. During the legislative session in February of 1986, there was a proposal made to consolidate the deaf school and the blind school onto one campus. The lawmakers mentioned that the deaf school located at 20th Street and Monroe Avenue, Ogden was half empty. They wanted to study the effects of moving the deaf school onto the blind school campus at 7th Street and Harrison Boulevard, Ogden (Deseret News, September 13, 1986).

A legislative task force was formed during the summer of 1986 specifically to go over the details of putting the two state schools together. Although the task force didn't have the expertise to make the ultimate determination, they intuitively felt that combining two campuses into one was more cost effective (UAD Bulletin, November 1986). They found out from Tom Bannister, USD Superintendent, that the consolidation would save between \$110,000 and \$130,000 a year (UAD Bulletin, July 1987). As part of the investigative process, Design West in Logan, Utah, received \$50,000 in planning funds in February of 1988. They were to come up with a variety of architectural campus designs that would accommodate children who were Deaf, blind, Deaf/blind or autistic in the event that such new buildings would be built (UAD Bulletin, October 1988).

A variety of scenarios were deemed feasible. There was a group who favored closing both Ogden campuses and moving the schools to Salt Lake City. This seemed like a reasonable choice since most of the students who registered for the deaf or blind school came from the Salt Lake City area. However, through some unfortunate oversight,

Salt Lake City was not one of the relocation options studied by the task force.

UAD President Dave Mortensen voiced his support of another, equally viable, idea. He suggested that the USD be built on land adjacent to the new facility built for the Utah Community Center of the Deaf (UCCD). USD and UCCD could share the school's proposed pool and gym. The school would use the pool and gym most heavily during the day and the UCCD patrons could use it in the evenings. If the deaf school was built next door, the rationale continued, the students could benefit from transitional activities which would help move them from school life into adult life. The study showed that buying property in Salt Lake City and building new facilities thereon would be expensive. Most of Utah's Deaf students were being mainstreamed into their local public-school system and were not attending the state school. With only a handful of Deaf students at the school at the time, the state could not justify such a large financial outlay (UAD Bulletin, October 1988).

Officials at both the Utah School for the Deaf and the Utah School for the Blind came to express their strong opposition to a merger. They feared that the consolidation would jeopardize the quality of services given to students. They petitioned the legislature to keep the two schools on separate campuses and challenged them to seek other ways to save money.

Their petition stated that:

- Short-term money concerns should not automatically be the only governing factor in deciding whether to combine campuses. Humane factors and long-term finances are also very important factors to be considered.
- Although enrollment had declined during the past three years at the deaf school while the extension program was being organized, enrollments were now on the upswing and expected to rise for the next four years.
- The building that the blind school would occupy, if it were moved onto the deaf school campus, was too small for their needs. The cost to enlarge and furnish it with the necessary equipment would be more expensive than maintaining a separate campus.
- Bringing deaf and blind students together would impede their progress because the two disabilities make it impossible for students to communicate with each other (Deseret News, September 13, 1986).

The Utah Council of the Blind also voiced their objections. They sent in a letter that said, “Those of us who are blind have never been able to understand why anyone... would see to connect two completely opposite handicaps.” They added that no state Deaf or blind programs in the nation had been consolidated since 1912 (Ipaktchian, *The Ogden Standard Examiner*, September 11, 1986).

The legislative study recommended combining the deaf and blind schools at the Ogden blind school campus. It was reasoned that leaving the blind students on their own campus would be less traumatic for them. The blind students would have a difficult time coping with new and different surroundings if their school was moved.

The vote of the Institutional Council (IC) followed the Task Force conclusions. The vote was three to one in favor of recommending to the Utah Board of Education that the Deaf school be located on the blind school campus. Dennis Platt, IC member who was Deaf, was the only one who voted to shift the services for both deaf and blind students to the Deaf school campus located at 846 20th

Street in Ogden. He cast his vote in favor of tradition. He wanted the Deaf school to remain at its current site where their origins had begun a century ago (UAD Bulletin, December 1988).



Dennis Platt

Most of the Institutional Council members felt the blind school campus on Harrison Blvd. offered the greatest advantage. It offered room for expansion and was located near Ben Lomond High School, Highland Middle School and Horace Mann Elementary School. This offered opportunities for mainstreaming (UAD Bulletin,

December 1988). The facility would include classrooms, residential cottages, an administration center, multipurpose building and a resource/media center (UAD Bulletin, February 1989).

It was during the September 28, 1988 meeting of the Institutional Council that the merger was approved (Leer, *Deseret News*, November 11, 1988, p. B1; *Deseret News*, November 4, 1988, p. A10). On November 11, 1988, the USDB Institutional Council presented their recommendations to the Utah State Board of Education (USBE). There was opposition in trying to stop the process. The Utah Deaf community presented a petition to the Board opposing this action. USBE members, Margaret Nelson and Dr. M. Richard Maxwell, were not in favor of leaving the state schools in Ogden. They argued that the merged schools should be located in Salt Lake City. They felt the decision hadn't included a comparison of potential cost. They were joined in their opinion by a member of the Salt Lake Deaf community, Kleda Barker Quigley (UAD Bulletin, December 1988).



Kleda Barker Quigley

Regardless of this last-minute input, the state school's Institutional Council and the State Board of Education backed the proposal to consolidate (UAD Bulletin, October 1988). The USBE approved the consolidation of both schools at the present blind school campus at 742 Harrison Blvd. in Ogden (Leer, *Deseret News*, November 2, 1988).

By July of 1988, it was pretty certain that the Utah legislature would approve the merger. Therefore, it was no surprise when the legislature voted in September 1988 to consolidate the campuses. The measure included a mandate that would provide state funding for remodeling of the buildings on campus and for continued general maintenance (UAD Bulletin, October 1987; UAD Bulletin, October 1988). The funding

request for the relocation would go to the 1989 session of the Utah Legislature after having gone through the state's Division of Facilities Construction Management group (UAD Bulletin, December 1988). The legislature was expected to pass this allocation request. This decision to consolidate the two campuses came at an urgent time. Some of the buildings on both campuses were out of compliance with fire and safety codes (Leers, *Deseret News*, November 11, 1988, p. B1). Superintendent Bannister stated that the state didn't want to spend several hundred thousand dollars to bring the buildings of both campuses into compliance. Since the schools would be consolidated, the code compliance issues could be part of the projected renovations to be made (Leer, *Deseret News*, November 2, 1988).

It was a sad day when the Utah School for the Deaf campus closed. The campus was at least 100 years old and had a rich history. It was planned that the property and buildings would be taken over by the Ogden City School District (Leer, *Deseret News*, November 2, 1988).

The merger proposal was emotional for many people. While the Utah Deaf community didn't want to see the Deaf school campus abandoned, it was difficult to justify a separate campus when the student population was so small. There were less than 10 Deaf students in the residential program. There were about 100 students coming to the day schools at the two sites. There were about 40 combined residential students whose disabilities were so severe that they could not be taught in the regular school system.



David West, USDB
Superintendent

It was reassuring to know that combining the two school campuses did not mean that the Deaf and blind programs themselves would be combined (Leers, *Deseret News*, November 11, 1988, p. B1; *Deseret News*, November 4, 1988).

In 1989 Superintendent Bannister left Utah for a new job at the Alabama School for the Deaf and Blind. Assistant Superintendent Lee Robinson said Bannister's legacy would include bringing the deaf and blind schools onto one campus and using both schools as state resource centers (UAD Bulletin, December 1989).

In 1990, David West replaced Thomas Bannister as USDB Superintendent. West was a Deaf educator and administrator with experience in various state deaf schools. As an added bonus, he was also fluent in American Sign Language (UAD Bulletin, May 1990).

Integration of Public Schools and the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

Not everyone supported the new plans for the Deaf school. In June 1989, the USD Institutional Council received a petition signed by twenty-five parents who had children at the Utah School for the Deaf. The parents requested that their children be transferred to a selected public elementary school by September of that year. They didn't want their children to be at the Deaf school campus. Instead they believed their children would benefit from the social and cultural interactions they could have with hearing peers. Ogden resident and parent representative, John Galli, explained, "We're not talking mainstreaming; we're talking integration" (Deseret News, June 15, 1989, p. A19; UAD Bulletin, July 1989).

The parents wanted their children to continue to have teachers and administrators from USD managing their education but their classrooms would be housed at a public school so they could be integrated for lunch, recesses, and those regular-education classes they could join. Superintendent Bannister wondered if the parents might be reacting to the terms "school for the Deaf" or "state institution", when referring to the educational placement for their children. The parents might see those phrases on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) form as having negative connotations (Deseret News, June 15, 1989, p. A19; UAD Bulletin, July 1989). Whether the parents did or not was unknown.

Pursuing the idea of integration as requested, the USD administrators discussed with several school districts about adding USD extension classes at their schools (UAD Bulletin, October 1989). However, the Utah Deaf community warned that the Deaf students would feel isolated. As proof of their advice, they mentioned attending public schools themselves as children and feeling isolated and excluded. Dr. Robert G. Sanderson said that Deaf children are happiest with each other. If they went to a public school they would quickly form a Deaf clique (Deseret News, June 15, 1989, p. A19; UAD Bulletin, July 1989).

This discussion led Shirley H. Platt, a Utah Deaf community member and educator at USD, to express her strong concerns about the emotional and social well-being of these Deaf students:

There has always been a solid front in the deaf community. It has existed since Laurent Clerc, a deaf man, [helped Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet] begin the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, CT in 1817. The deaf community with its own culture, history, and language has been a frontrunner in the establishment of long successful organizations of, by, and for the deaf, as compared to other disabled groups. Other disabled groups in sports, for example, (i.e. Paralympics) did not begin organizing until the 1970's and later.

Still, hearing people try to tell us what to do, how to do it, how to live our lives, and how to educate "our" children. If we deaf adults are bitter, it is NOT because our parents were never told about sign language or deaf schools and thus never had that option to consider. My deaf sister and I are certainly not bitter towards our family. My parents know now that many things they had to do in the past were not right – especially [regarding] our education in a public school.

We are fed up with seeing "our" deaf children repeatedly used as guinea pigs in the state of Utah while different groups test different theories and systems. These are kids' lives you are playing with; they are not laboratory animals to be tested on a whim. Giving birth to a deaf child doesn't give one the experience or know-how to deal with or educate a deaf child. Proven research has stated repeatedly

that deaf children do better with deaf peers and role models in schools for the Deaf. What's more, our deaf school is NOT an institution in the antiquated sense that language implies – it is a ridiculous stigma and these parents just don't want it known [that] their children are there. They are embarrassed – but why? These are NOT little imitation hearing children. These are deaf children who will ALWAYS be Deaf, so let them be.

If the parents feel the program needs changing, why not start at USD, where even some teachers are not totally



Shirley H. Platt

educated in deafness and the Deaf culture; where our sign language is abused to the point that teachers make up signs, use wrong concepts, and destroy the meaning and beauty of American Sign Language; where there is a program coordinator who many of us feel

does not even support the program and is not impartial but blatantly supports an oral philosophy; where former students have left because there is no sports program anymore or because of the former superintendents; and now where parents want to pull out an entire elementary program to give their children a dream world of what could but never will be, promoted by a few misguided individuals; and yet, sadly, USD is the place where many successful deaf Utahans grew up in the 50's, 60's, and 70's, not with unhappy memories of their abuse by cruel former school administrators, but instead of their large association and social life with other deaf children and adult role models.

Superintendent Thomas Bannister is the best thing that ever

happened to this school, so why not work to rebuild it?

Shirley H. Platt
Ogden
(Platt, *UAD Bulletin*, August 1989, p. 2)

The Utah Deaf community voicing its concerns did not change the course of USD's decision to grant the parents' wishes. The Deaf children involved were enrolled into local school districts.

During the 1990 legislative session, the Institutional Council gave a fact sheet about the USDB to the legislators, hoping to convince them that the state schools didn't just served the city of Ogden. Rep. Haze Hunter, chair of the appropriations subcommittee on capital facilities and general government, didn't feel the cost of \$8.1 million for the consolidation was justified. He questioned, "Do we really want to spend \$8.1 million on 35 students?" (*UAD Bulletin*, February 1990).

By this time there were 35 residential Deaf students on the deaf school campus, and about 45-50 students at the Utah School for the Blind. In comparison, there were 916 Deaf and blind students throughout the state attending the extension programs of USDB housed in the local public schools (*UAD Bulletin*, February 1990).

As Shirley Platt attested, the USD alumni were sadly watching the school change over the years. USD had provided them with a fully accessible environment that supported their language, communication style, literacy, academic, social, and emotional development. The Deaf school had also provided them with the support services they needed to become educated, successful, and contributing adults. They were heartbroken to see that the future generation of Deaf children would not have the same fond memories that they had had at the school.

Groundbreaking for the New Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind Facility

The groundbreaking ceremony for a new facility of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind took place October 1, 1991 on the campus at 742 Harrison Boulevard in Ogden. The Utah legislature had appropriated \$8.4 million to complete the first phase of the new 91,000 square foot facility. The merged school included an educational resource center, outreach services, educational support services, distribution center, administrative offices, a media-library center, a cafeteria, conference rooms, and cottages for residential students.

Numerous state and local school officials, members of the Legislature, representatives of the governor's office, the Ogden City Council members, representatives from the teachers' training program at Utah State University, and some members from the Utah Deaf community joined the teachers and numerous students at the one-hour ceremony. Jean Thomas served as interpreter.



**Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind
Control, Inc.**

Jack Wheeler, chairman of the USDB Institutional Council and an USD alumnus, outlined the history of the school. He remembered when USD, on the 20th Street campus, was self-sufficient with its own barn and garden. He touched upon nostalgic reflections of his own school days.

David West, USDB Superintendent, spoke about the work that had gone into making the concept of a new consolidated school a reality. He reassured those present

that the schools for the Deaf and the blind would remain separate, even though they were on the same campus.

Interesting historical facts popped up. The USDB at this time was 107 years old. Kenneth C. Burdett, who was present, first enrolled at USD 75 years ago. Dr. Thomas Clark, who was also there, said his father, John H. Clark, enrolled at USD 105 years ago.

As the shovels dug into the ground, the students let go a multitude of red, white, and blue balloons up into the sky (UAD Bulletin, October 1991; UAD Bulletin, November 1991). The groundbreaking ceremony represented an important milestone in their lives.

USDB Gets New Classrooms

The original plans for the new facility finalized in 1987 did not include



**Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind
Control, Inc.**

classrooms, in part because Superintendent David West reported that there were Deaf students who were moving out of Utah at that time and in part because USD officials continued to try to integrate children with disabilities into the regular education schools, whenever possible (UAD Bulletin, May 1993).

Superintendent West asked the 1993 Legislative Session for Phase II funding for the new nearly completed facility on Harrison Boulevard. The Phase II funding would allow Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind to complete the new facility by adding 21 classrooms and associated offices, proceed with the expansion of the dining area, and

build a community room for the blind and a community room for the Deaf (UAD Bulletin, May 1993).

The USDB request started out as 38th on the legislative list of priorities. Then it was moved up to the top 20. On February 17, it made it to 15th place. If the Phase II request reached the top ten by the time it went through the executive appropriations committee of both the House and the Senate, then Phase II would get the funding. This was important because Superintendent West was facing a crisis of where to place the Deaf and blind campus students for the next few years. The Phase II had a rocky passage in the legislature, but it did get passed (UAD Bulletin, March 1993).

The entire administrative personnel and the education resource center moved into the new facility in March – April 1993. But the students and teachers, both Deaf and blind, remained on the 20th Street campus. Ogden School District, the owner of the USDB campus on the 20th and Monroe Boulevard, wanted to get in to use their space. Teachers and Deaf students didn't know how long they would be on the old campus. The eventual move would depend on the progress of the Phase II construction (UAD Bulletin, May 1993).

Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind Move to New Campus

The new campus included a state-of-the-art educational resource library that had technology and supplies helpful for teachers of the Deaf and blind students who were placed in the public schools throughout the state. The facility also offered hearing and vision testing services, computer learning labs, and conference rooms. The Parent Infant Program had an area on the new campus dedicated to teaching new parents how to work with their Deaf or blind infants.

The facility was designed with the needs of the students in mind. For instance, there were no stairs in the buildings so students in wheelchairs could have accessibility. The swimming pool was used for academic, recreational, and therapeutic purposes. The

gymnasium included a multi-purpose room with a stage for the use of student theater productions. A water fountain in a key corridor had the sound of flowing water so the blind students/staff could orient themselves in the building. A clock with a loud tick was placed in another key hallway for the same purpose. One wing of the main facility was for students with autism while students with multiple disabilities was in another wing, close to the nurse's office.

Several cottages were built to provide a home-like atmosphere for students who lived on campus. Each cottage could house 6 students. At that time, about 35 students currently lived at the school during the week (UAD Bulletin, May 1993).

Did You Know?

Due to the poor quality of education at the Utah School for the Deaf, many students transferred out of the school within three years. Their goal was to get a better education elsewhere. These students were:

1. Don Cochran – Model Secondary School for the Deaf – 1985
2. Jan Williams – California School for the Deaf, Fremont – 1985
3. Lisa Cochran – Model Secondary School for the Deaf – 1986
4. Penny Simmons – Oregon School for the Deaf – 1986
5. Darrie (Duncan) Albers – Oregon School for the Deaf – 1986
6. Duane Kinner – Idaho School for the Deaf – 1986
7. Paula Micolichek – Layton High School – 1987
8. Mike Roach – Model Secondary School for the Deaf – 1987
9. Tammy Guldager – Idaho School for the Deaf – 1987
10. Debbie Fulton – Idaho School for the Deaf – 1987
11. Jared Williams – Model Secondary School for the Deaf – 1988

Eileen Lunsford was the only one from this group to remain at USD until she graduated in 1989.

Did You Know?

When the Ogden City School District took over the old deaf School buildings, Driggs Hall became their new office building. Woodbury Hall was not used and still stands on the campus today. The Main Building was renovated to accommodate more offices and

classrooms. The Vocational Building has a different function.

In 1986 a group of USD alumni asked the school district for permission to tour the 100-year old buildings. The alumni were hit with nostalgia as they fondly remembered their school days there. After their reunion in 1986, they were asked not to request any more tours. Now USD alumni rely on old pictures and stories told among themselves to relive their wonderful school experiences (Utah School for the Deaf Alumni Reunion, 2009).

Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind Becomes a State Institutional Resource

While other states in the nation had state residential schools where the majority of the Deaf children were educated and a few Deaf students attending a local public school nearby, the Utah School for the Deaf did the exact opposite. Most of USD's Deaf and hard of hearing students were mainstreamed. This often included self-contained classrooms staffed by USD personnel in the local public school. These Deaf and hard of hearing students, while being classified as mainstreamed, were counted separately from the mainstreamed Deaf and hard of hearing students who chose to be placed directly in the school districts rather than under USD's umbrella (Sanderson, *UAD Bulletin*, April 2001).

Before 2005 there was only a handful of students attending the residential campus on 742 Harrison Blvd in Ogden, despite the beautiful buildings full of classrooms and the cottages full of bedrooms. This represented about 10% of the state's Deaf and hard of hearing student population.

90% of the Deaf and hard of hearing students were scattered throughout the state of Utah in various school districts. These students were registered at the state deaf school. However, USD found itself also providing educational and consulting services to non-USD students who were Deaf and hard of hearing. Public school district service providers and families of the Deaf and hard of hearing students benefited from USD's expertise. Because of this, the state of Utah decided that USDB would serve as a State Institutional Resource, providing expertise to any educational programs that served Utah's Deaf and

hard of hearing children (Sanderson, *UAD Bulletin*, April 2001; McAllister, 2002).

Ron Nelson, UAD President in 2002, noticed that USDB's mission had been redefined as a statewide educational resource. USDB was no longer categorized as a school. It had become a state agency. This would change USDB's status in many ways. USDB no longer had to compete with school districts for state educational funding. It could be called upon to provide services to any school that made a request for their help, including the Jean Massieu School of the Deaf (JMS) which was a charter school in Salt Lake City at the time. Nelson also noted that the USDB could allocate its resources where they were most needed. That could take the form of sharpening its focus on serving Deaf, blind, and Deaf-blind students (Nelson, *UAD Bulletin*, December 2002).

There were definite pitfalls to having the Deaf and blind state schools classified as an agency instead of a school. As already mentioned, USDB was not allowed to compete with school districts for legislative money. Unlike local school districts, USDB didn't have a local tax base to support its budget because it was no longer a school. USDB's budget could be reduced by a legislative act, if the legislature-imposed restrictions on the finances of all of Utah's state agencies. USDB would then run the risk of not having enough funding for its educational programs which would put them in violation of federal laws and the Utah Special Education Code (Toomer-Cook, *Deseret News*, 2001). A final important downside to USDB being categorized as a state agency was its reduced accountability for the results of the education it provided. For example, the test scores of the Deaf and hard of hearing students in self-contained classrooms were combined with the scores of other special education students in the public school that housed the self-contained classroom. The USD students' scores should have been separated out and used to evaluate the quality of education provided by the state school. In this situation, there was no way to extract the scores of the USD students from the scores of the other students with disabilities.

As seen before, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates all states provide a continuum of appropriate educational placement options for children with disabilities. Utah needed to maintain its state residential schools. Like school districts, USD could receive federal financial guarantees under IDEA. In fact, Lawrence M. Siegel, a Special Education attorney out of California, stated that there should be no legal or fiscal disincentives for placing these children in special schools (Siegel, *National Deaf Education Project*, 2000).



Lawrence M. Siegel
Research at Gallaudet, Spring 2005

The problem, not only in Utah but in other states, cropped up when the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team discussed educational placement options. The regular education classroom would automatically be viewed as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). In 2000, Siegel stated that the educational placement decision for a Deaf or hard of hearing child must become communication-driven. If the child's preferred mode of communication was given top educational priority, it would definitely impact the outcome of the IEP placement decision. The greater question would become whether the school environment could provide the child an accessible language and equal access to communication. Siegel maintained that this was an issue of fundamental human rights. Siegel stated that Deaf and hard of hearing children had the same universal need for language and communication as any other human being. This basic need should be the start from which all educational determinations should flow. Automatically putting a Deaf or hard of hearing child into the public-school system, thinking it was the least restrictive environment, was careless of the deaf school. The IEP paperwork was and continues to be a legal document whereby all placement decisions and goals can be legally enforced. Before placement decisions are made, the IEP team should be made to delve deeper into the child's language accessibility before those decisions are set down on the IEP (National Deaf Education Project).

Commission on Education of the Deaf (COED)

Since the passage of the IDEA in 1975, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) witnessed a constant deterioration in the quality of educational services offered to Deaf and hard of hearing children across the nation. This was due, to a large extent, to the individual state's interpretation of what the LRE meant and its inappropriate application to Deaf and hard of hearing students (see above).

Gary Olsen wrote in the February 1989 issue of *The NAD Broadcaster* an article titled 'Definitely Ours.' He asserted that the following rights of Deaf and hard of hearing children and/or their parents were being denied:

- The right of parents to be made aware of all the educational placement options and learning strategies available for their child at the onset of their child's education and at every Individualized Educational Planning (IEP) meeting thereafter.
- The right of the child to have full support services at any one of these placements and not be cheated by programs that have only some of the services needed. This includes teachers with competent communication skills, aides with competent communication skills, interpreter services by a competent and qualified interpreter of the deaf (if the child is in a mainstreamed class setting), deaf and hard of hearing awareness programs available for teachers and children in regular education settings, speech therapists with training in deafness, deaf heritage programs for the deaf and hard of hearing students themselves, and the right for these children to have access to their own peers with whom they can directly communicate.
- The right of the child to have a "barrier-free" language environment with every child entitled to live in an environment where they can freely, continually, and appropriately receive and express communication.
- The right of the child to have knowledgeable individuals monitoring these programs and that such individuals, at various levels of administration within school districts, have background knowledge and certification in programs related to deafness.
- The right of the child to have programs large enough in size to provide the appropriate educational and social environment for the Deaf and hard of hearing children (UAD Bulletin, April 1989, p.6).

In the eyes of the Deaf community, the environment of the public school was viewed as the "most restrictive environment" for many Deaf children. As more and more Deaf children were placed in the mainstreaming system, many experienced isolation from their Deaf peers and deprivation of Deaf adult role models. This isolation and deprivation prevented them from acquiring American Sign Language during their school years (Erting et al., 1989).

On a national level legislators and educators were aware of the low academic achievement levels of Deaf and hard of hearing children. The United States congress passed the Education of the Deaf Act in 1986 which established the Commission on Education of the Deaf (COED). This Commission was charged to study the status of Deaf education in the United States and to recommend creative solutions (NASDSE Educational Services Guidelines, 2006).

The Babbidge Committee predates the COED by 22 years. This was an advisory committee, headed by Homer Babbidge, Jr., that was appointed by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare in March 1964 (Babbidge, ERIC, 1965). The Babbidge Report, which was submitted in 1965, concluded that the educational system for Deaf and hard of hearing students had major weaknesses in preparing Deaf children for full participation in society (Siegel, National Deaf Education Project, 2000). It also boldly declared that the oral deaf education was “a dismal failure” (Deaf Jam website)



Frank G. Bowe chaired the COED Committee. Bowe was later referred to as the Father of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The COED committee met for over eighteen months. There was a significant number of Deaf people involved in the committee. On February 4, 1988, their report was formally submitted to the President and Congress. It was called Toward Equality: Education of the Deaf (Toward Equality: Education of the Deaf, 1988). The 144-page report expressed dissatisfaction with the status of Deaf Education. It contained numerous findings and recommendations on a national level. The report concluded that the education of Deaf persons in the United States was characterized by inappropriate priorities and inadequate resources (Toward

Equality: Education of the Deaf. A Report to the President and the Congress of the United States, 1988; Commission on Education of the Deaf, 1988; UAD Bulletin, June 1988).

COED stated in very clear terms that the status of education for Deaf children was unacceptable throughout the nation. It recommended fundamental changes in how



Frank G. Bowe
Deaflife website

educational services were delivered to Deaf and hard of hearing children. These recommendations included changes in the way the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guidelines were applied. COED felt that the states' interpretation of the IDEA law had pushed too many Deaf and hard of hearing children into the mainstream regular public school instead of into special schools or centers devoted to the Deaf. COED said IEPs should put more emphasis into educational content, making sure the

children understood what is being taught, rather than where the children would be placed. In addition, COED said more attention must be paid to the Deaf and hard of hearing students who were not college bound (Deseret News, March 21, 1988, p. A2).

The report asked the Department of Education to clarify what was meant by the "Least Restrictive Environment" which was mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Baldwin, 1990; NASDSE Educational Services Guidelines, 2006). Believe it or not, the IDEA law does not use the words "mainstreaming" or "full inclusion." These terms cropped up as states attempted to interpret what the law mandated them to do for their Deaf and hard of hearing students (NASDSE Educational Services Guidelines, 2006).

COED criticized the system for failing to recognize and utilize American Sign Language and the Deaf community as a resource for the education of Deaf children:

Almost unrecognized is the legitimate status of American Sign Language (ASL) as a full-fledged native minority language to which all of the provisions of the Bilingual Education Act should apply. Also too seldom recognized is the need for a deaf child to have other deaf children as part of his or her peer group and to be exposed to deaf adults (Toward Equality: Education of the Deaf, 1988, p. 9).

UAD president, Dave Mortensen, proposed that the USDB Institutional Council select a committee to review the report from the Commission on Education of the Deaf (see Appendix Q). USDB Superintendent Tom Bannister asked four Deaf persons to serve on the 16-person committee. They were Dave Mortensen, Lloyd Perkins, Ron Nelson, and Dennis Platt. Dave felt one-fourth Deaf representation wasn't fair but had to accept the situation (UAD Bulletin, January 1989; UAD Bulletin, February 1989). The committee came up with recommendations for the State Department of Education based on their study of the COED's Toward Equality report. Their goal was to raise awareness so that changes could be made in the state laws regarding the education of Deaf children in both the residential and mainstreamed placements.

On September 7, 1989, the Institutional Council accepted all the recommendations of the USDB committee, passing them unanimously. The IC took the recommendations to the Utah State Board of Education in October 1989. Nothing changed in Utah Deaf Education from this study and recommendations (UAD Bulletin, October 1988, p. 4).

Mainstreaming Is Not the Answer for All Deaf Children

Because the Utah School for the Deaf became a State Institutional Resource, there was a shift in their Deaf education philosophy. This philosophy was recorded at the Institutional Council's February 1992 meeting. It went on record as saying "... students need to be mainstreamed to the maximum, when possible."

Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, a member of the USDB Institutional Council at the time, read the Council's two-page statement on mainstreaming and expressed his concerns in the March 1992 issue of the *UAD Bulletin*. He said that mainstreaming was not the answer for all Deaf children. His areas of concern were:

1. USD's general practice of mainstreaming most of their deaf students,
2. Inappropriate educational placement of the students, and
3. Non-research based educational information given to parents.

Sanderson said, as a rehabilitation counselor, he was privileged to work with and for hundreds of Deaf people. He saw the outcome of every possible educational program



Robert G. Sanderson, 1936 Utah School for the Deaf Senior

and philosophy. He saw the successes and the failures of teenagers and adults. He helped many to further their education and training, placing many in jobs (*UAD Bulletin*, March 1992, p. 3).

He was acutely aware of the emotional investment that parents of Deaf children had in them. He understood that parents wanted their Deaf children to be educated much the same as their hearing peers were, in schools close to their homes. He was also aware that a great many parents came to realize that their children had been short-changed educationally and

socially in the public-school programs. They didn't realize at the beginning that these placements were not appropriate for their children.

Furthermore, Sanderson noticed that Utah did not even evaluate the outcomes for either the oral Deaf students or the total communication Deaf students who had been

placed in mainstream public-school programs. The state needed to gather facts of what worked and what didn't. He was dismayed that so many school administrators and parents seemed to be deathly afraid of facts. In his UAD article, he shared his personal view that research should be conducted to learn about the success or failure of USD's programs. If the research indicated that a program was having problems, no matter where it was being administered, then the state would be better situated to solve the problems if they knew about them. Why be afraid??

Sanderson made sure to stress that he was not opposed to parents of Deaf children having the right to decide which program for best for their children. But, he insisted, such decisions should be based on the parents receiving fair information. He was definitely opposed to biased, one-sided information that was not founded on research. His heart went out to those parents who had to make decisions based on conflicting advice from so-called experts in fields related to hearing loss.

Finally, Sanderson added his own personal story. He was in the eighth grade when he became Deaf from spinal meningitis. Since Las Vegas, Nevada had no school for the Deaf, he was returned to the same class that he had been attending prior to his illness. His classmates tried to help him; his teachers tried to help him; he was given lots of attention but those efforts and his own were not working. On the advice of the teachers and the school principal, he was sent to the Utah School for the Deaf in Ogden, Utah. Maybe he would have been called a 'mainstream failure' but as he experienced the schooling and residential environment at the USD from 1931 to 1936, he was greatly benefited. USD influenced him to be a serious, disciplined student.

Using his own experience, Sanderson believed that every Deaf or hard of hearing child could have a wonderful education, if they were put into an educational environment appropriate to the child's natural abilities. If a placement was appropriate, the child would respond by learning. He emphasized that incorrect placements limited the child and should be changed as soon as it was evident that the child was not making any progress (UAD Bulletin, March 1992). Fifteen years later in 2007, the Conference of

Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf (CEASD) said the same thing. They said each Deaf child's individual communication style and language needs should guide any educational decision made on his/her behalf rather than having existing programs determine where the child should be placed (CEASD Position Paper, February 13, 2007).

American Sign Language

While oralism and mainstreaming continued to grow steadily in Utah, American Sign Language (ASL) had been shown and proven to be the language of the American Deaf community in the 1960's and the 1970's (Lucas & Valli, 1992; Stokoe, 1960, etc). Linguistic research had shown ASL to be a true language (Klima, & Bellugi, 1979; Wilcox, S. & Peyton, 1999, etc). The linguists discovered that ASL had its own grammar, phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics (Stokoe, 1960). It met the universal criteria for a human language in every way.

In the 1950's Dr. William C. Stokoe, a hearing professor of English at Gallaudet College and linguistic researcher, was the first to pose the question of whether American Sign Language was a language. While he was employed at Gallaudet College, he became fascinated with the graceful signing that students used outside the classroom. He began to study linguistics, especially studying the students of Deaf parents. Gallaudet frowned on his study. He was ridiculed by Deaf and hearing colleagues, but he persisted in his work (Erting et al, 1989). In 1960, he published a pivotal paper called "*Sign Language Structure*" urging that ASL was, indeed, a true language on par with any spoken language. Later, ASL was proven to be a complex, three-dimensional language (Stokoe, Casterline, & Croneberg, 1965).



Stokoe set the beginnings for a new generation of linguistic studies of signed languages. Out of this grew a respect for Deaf culture and Deaf communities. This eventually flowered into a new movement to bring ASL back into the classroom (Erting et al., 1989).

In November 1990 there was held the Utah Intercollegiate Assembly at the University of Utah. Dr. William 'Bill' Vicars attended this assembly. He was the first person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree from Weber State University (WSU) using sign language as a second language. He founded the Sign Language Studio where he and his wife, Belinda, taught ASL (Rees, UAD Bulletin, March 1993, p. 6). At this assembly there were over 60 resolutions proposed by representatives from various colleges throughout Utah. There Vicars proposed a resolution that American Sign Language be allowed to fulfill the Bachelor of Arts degree requirement for foreign language and also satisfy graduate school entrance language requirements in all of Utah's public institutions of higher education.

The ASL resolution took top place. Vicars was actively seeking a state legislator to sponsor this ASL resolution (UAD Bulletin, December 1990).



Norman Bangerter, Utah Governor
American Landmark Group
website

However, there was opposition at Vicars' alma mater, WSU. Dr. Robert Belka, head of the foreign language department at Weber State University, did not agree with this resolution either in 1990 or prior to that time. During Vicars' earlier undergraduate years, Bill served as WSU's Physically Challenged Students Senator. That's the first time Bill attempted to add ASL to the list of foreign languages that was accredited there. Belka was against this because, as he said, "ASL is not recognized as a foreign language because it does not meet the four criteria inherent to a language: being able to hear it, read it, write it, and speak it." He believed the sound of a language was 'probably the most important' aspect of a language. Belka said, 'If you take sound away from a

symphony, you have nothing. Take away sound and where's the beauty of language?' (UAD Bulletin, November 1990, p. 7).

While Weber State University was unwilling to accept ASL as a foreign language, Brigham Young University (BYU) accepted it for the Fall of 1991 as an elective, satisfying the general education language credit. Oddly enough, ASL had been a language course at BYU for more than 10 years. Jack Rose, the coordinator of ASL at BYU, said, "There was never a sufficient avenue for ASL to get serious consideration.



Dr. William Vicars

We recommended it for many years, but until last year it hadn't been proposed the way it should have been." Alan Keele, associate dean of Honors and General Education, said one of the reasons this action didn't go through earlier was because of misunderstandings by BYU about ASL" (UAD Bulletin, March 1991, p. 1). Keele explained that many people felt a signed language did not fit under the foreign language category because it wasn't spoken. "[However, what we recognized was] What constitutes a language is in the way you use it" (UAD Bulletin, March 1991, p. 2).

In October 1991, "the foreign language department at the Weber State University finally accepted ASL as the equivalent for a foreign language. However, Belka imposed two conditions on granting the special foreign language credit to the Deaf students who asked for it. The conditions were, as quoted by Belka, 'that the student can verify a 30% hearing loss in both ears or 100% loss in one through a certified audiologist, AND receives verification from an official agency that he/she is proficient in ASL at the Intermediate Level survival skills'" (UAD Bulletin, October 1991, p. 6).

Vicars was not satisfied with having only two Utah universities who accepted ASL as a foreign language credit. He decided to contact Governor Norman Bangert and seek his support in having all Utah institutions of higher learning agree to accept ASL. The Governor told Vicars that the Deputy Commissioner for Higher Education would reopen the discussion regarding credit for ASL as a foreign language later this fall (UAD Bulletin, October 1991, p. 6).

With the increasing support of linguistic research and the advocacy of the Deaf community, the Utah senate passed Utah Senate Bill 42 (53A-13-101.5) in 1994. This bill recognized ASL as a fully developed, autonomous, natural language with distinct grammar, syntax and art forms. It provided the means whereby American Sign Language



Kristi Mortensen

would be accorded equal status with other languages at all the state's public institutions of higher learning (Utah State Legislature, 1994; Guerrero, *UAD Bulletin*, May 1994). Governor Leavitt signed this bill into law on March 2, 1994. Kristi Mortensen said the passing of Senate Bill 42 was the direct result of the Task Force that she served on. This Legislative Task Force was created in 1993 to study the issue of interpreter certification and standards represented by House Bill 167 (Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, April 1994).

The new ASL legislation sparked debate at Weber State University. There had been debates and disagreements about the bill's meaning and its consequential impact at the university. Belka said the legislation did nothing to change the status of ASL there. Senator Brent C. Richards, who sponsored the bill, was surprised that any public educational institution would think the bill would not have any effect on them. He

emphasized that, “Every institution of high education in Utah will absolutely be affected by this bill” (Guerrero, *UAD Bulletin*, May 1994, p. 3). Vicars, ASL instructor and activist at WSU, viewed the legislation as a clear victory for the Deaf community and ASL supporters in Utah. He said, “When the legislation passed, there was a feeling of vindication that what we had been saying all along was now being recognized – not just by linguists, but by members of the general community” (Guerrero, *UAD Bulletin*, May 1994, p. 3).

Belka’s opposition to ASL being given the status of a foreign language came from the fact that a student learning ASL could not travel outside of the United States and converse with Deaf citizens of another country because each country had its own signed language. In contrast, if a student learned Spanish or German, they could travel to that foreign country and converse easily with native speakers. This was the crux of Belka’s disapproving attitude towards American Sign Language (Guerrero, *UAD Bulletin*, May 1994, p. 3) In his mind, the whole point of awarding a foreign language credit was to promote and facilitate communication between citizens of different countries. He felt signed languages didn’t qualify in that regard.

Today, Deaf people reclaim ASL as their birthright, their natural language that had been withheld from them in the school system for over one hundred years. In January 2008, the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) reaffirmed its position that acquisition of language from birth is a human right for every person and that Deaf infants and children should be given the opportunity to acquire and develop proficiency in ASL as early as possible (NAD Position Statement on American Sign Language, 2008).

Did You Know?

Gene Stewart, a former Director of the Utah Community Center for the Deaf, shared that, after the movie, “Children of a Lesser God,” came to the cinema, the American Sign Language classes at the University of Utah doubled in size. When he and Dr. Robert G. Sanderson attempted to persuade the Foreign Language Department at the University of Utah to accept American Sign Language as a foreign language, equal to German,

French or Spanish, they were told “We will never, never, ever accept that monkey language at this University!

A year later, Stewart and Sanderson went to Washington, D.C. to receive training on how to approach universities to accept American Sign Language as a foreign language. By the time the two met the new department head, with Sanderson carrying in an armload of books to explain how ASL was indeed a valid language, the department head said, “No! No! No need for that, we are ready to accept ASL in our department.”

Today, the University of Utah is still offering ASL classes for those students who wish to take it to meet the foreign language requirement (Stewart, *DSDHH Newsletter*, April 2012).

Did You Know?

In 1994, the Utah Association for the Deaf protested against the Utah State Office of Education for setting up a Task Force for USD to determine deaf educational issues with 28 hearing people and one deaf person, in the form of Dr. Robert G. Sanderson.

The Task Force did agree to recognize the culturally deaf as different from the oral deaf, to include more deaf representation on the USDB Institutional Council, and eventually to set up an education committee with more deaf representatives (Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, December 1994).

The Deaf Mentor Program

Dr. Paula Pittman, co-founder of the Deaf Mentor Program and Director of the Parent Infant Program at the Utah School for the Deaf, explained that in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s Bilingual-Bicultural (Bi-Bi) education for children who were Deaf or hard of hearing was being discussed and examined across the United States. The precepts of this movement were focused primarily on school-aged children. The concept behind this educational approach was to expose children who were Deaf or hard of hearing to both ASL and English, to use ASL to teach English concepts, and to help children to understand both Deaf and Hearing cultures. The researchers and program developers affiliated with the USU SKI-HI Institute, Dr. Tom Clark, Dr. Sue Watkins, and Dr. Paula

Pittman, were intrigued with the Bi-Bi concepts. They wanted to explore how they could provide a Bilingual-Bicultural approach for families who had Deaf or hard of hearing youngsters ages birth to five. In 1991 the SKI-HI Institute team wrote a grant to the Office of Special Education Programs to fund their idea of bringing the Bi-Bi option to families in the home. They received the grant and in 1993 the SKI-HI Institute partnered with the Utah Deaf community and the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind to bring the Deaf Mentor Project to Utah (Dr. Paula Pittman, personal communication, January 8, 2009).

The Deaf Mentor Project, as envisioned by the SKI-HI Institute, was to determine if families could, with the help of professionals, create a bilingual-bicultural environment in their homes where children were exposed to both conceptually accurate signed English and ASL and where the families were aware of both the Deaf and Hearing cultures. The Institute could then evaluate the effectiveness of the project. For the first time in the history of early childhood Deaf education, the SKI-HI Institute was going to add what had been missing from early intervention programming for families with Deaf and hard of hearing infants and toddlers, i.e. Deaf Mentors. The Mentor would be a Deaf adult role model for the families. The Mentor would teach them American Sign Language, model appropriate visual communication and interaction with their Deaf/hard of hearing infants and toddlers and introduce the families to the Utah Deaf community. All of these things would occur during weekly home visits. Every six months, these infants and toddlers, ages 0-5, would be assessed for language development. At the end of the three-year grant, parents would



Dr. Paula Pittman

be interviewed regarding their satisfaction with the program. Included in the evaluation would be the parents' perceptions of the Deaf community before and after the Mentor services were begun as well as parents' perceptions of their child's future as a child and an adult.

The Deaf Mentor project was an addition to the already functioning Parent-Infant Program (PIP) at USD. The Parent Infant Program had been established at the Deaf school in 1973. It was funded from a model demonstration grant also designed by Clark while he managed the SKI-HI Institute. PIP, originally called the SKI-HI Model Project, was designed to train professionals, called Parent Advisors, to go into the homes of families who had young Deaf or hard of hearing children and provide the families with support and information so they could more effectively raise their child. 90% of children who are born Deaf or hard of hearing are born to hearing parents. There was a great need for those parents to learn about deafness, understand the visual nature of their children, and be able to learn sign language. This kind of help would prepare parents to become better informed in anticipation of all the educational decisions they were expected to make for their child. PIP has been a strong program within the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind for over 30 years and remains an essential part of the services the school provides.



Dr. J. Freeman King & Jan Kelly-King

When the Deaf Mentor Project was in its formative period, Dr. Robert G. Sanderson was involved in the initial brainstorming meetings. He was not alone. Other UAD Board members and SKI-HI staff worked together to make this idea come to life. SKI-HI staff held information meetings with the Utah Deaf community all along the Wasatch Front to let them know about this new program. Individuals interested in

becoming Deaf Mentors were asked to fill out application forms at those meetings. At that time seventy-seven people applied to become a Deaf Mentor. A committee of Utah Deaf community members, including Sanderson, Darlene Cochran, Gene Stewart, and Dave Mortensen, reviewed all of the applicants and rated each one according to a list of criteria. The SKI-HI team needed to narrow down the list of applicants for the initial interviews. Twenty-five individuals survived the cut and were interviewed. Nine applicants were chosen and were trained to become Utah's first Deaf Mentors. They were Darlene Cochran, Nanette Hix, Denise Ivory, Heather Kendrick, Marlene Malm, Kristi Mortensen, Rosa Maria Rathbun, Ricky Rose, and Paul Ruth. They became the first Deaf Mentors in the country.

The Parent Infant Program at the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind agreed to partner with the SKI-HI Institute so that information about the Deaf Mentor Project could be shared with families in the PIP program. Parent Advisors received training about the Deaf Mentor Project, as did the teachers at USD. Families that were receiving PIP services were invited to public meetings to learn more about the Deaf Mentor Project. Twenty-six families within PIP were interested in receiving Deaf Mentor services.

In October 1993, the newly hired Deaf Mentors attended an initial Deaf Mentor Training. This training workshop was conducted by Dr. Paula Pittman, Dr. Susan Watkins, and Jan Kelley-King. For three days the Deaf Mentors learned the policies of the Deaf Mentor Experimental Research Project and all the activities and responsibilities they would have as they worked directly with families. The Project was launched, providing weekly home visits to parents to teach ASL instruction, Early Visual communication, and Deaf culture. The target ages of the Deaf children were from birth through age five.

The Deaf Mentor Experimental Research Project provided information and guidance for parents of Deaf children. These included techniques to develop skills in the following areas: 1) understanding and using ASL effectively; 2) understanding the deaf child's visual needs; 3) conversational interaction with children using early visual

communication methods; 4) fun interactive activities with the child where families could learn how to use ASL; and 5) involvement in and understanding of cultural behaviors within the Deaf community.

Deaf Mentors continued to receive ongoing training once a month under Dr. Paula Pittman who was director during the three-year grant project. Training workshops included such topics as early language development, understanding and working with parents, how to work with children who are hyper-active, including siblings in home visits, techniques and activities to help families understand ASL concepts, and working with children with additional disabilities. Guest lecturers were invited to present new information to Deaf Mentors. This included presenters from Canada who taught how to develop self-esteem in young children and presenters from Gallaudet University who taught about effective Bi-Bi education. Minnie Mae Wilding-Diaz presented in-depth information on the linguistic structure of ASL.

The Deaf Mentors and PIP Parent Advisors made weekly visits, coordinating with the families to schedule their visits at different times. Every three to four months Deaf Mentors and Parent Advisors were encouraged to make joint visits to families where the Deaf Mentor would communicate with the family using ASL and the Parent Advisor would communicate with the family using signed English. This proved to be a very fun and rewarding experience for everyone involved. Families loved these joint visits and had the opportunity to see ASL and signed English being used successfully with their child.

Those who were part of this historic study from 1993-1996 were Dr. Petra Horn-Marsh (nee Rose) as diagnostician and language assessor; Dr. Robert Sanderson, David Mortensen, Darlene Cochran, and Rosa Maria Rathbun as Advisory Board members; Martin and Kelli Illi and Gary and Renee Evans as Advisory Board members-parents; Carol Croyle as PIP Parent Advisor who started 'Deaf Connection' with the Deaf community; Dr. Freeman King and Jan Kelley-King as lecturers from Utah State University; Dr. Petra Horn-Marsh, Dr. Susan Watkins, and Dr. Pittman as curriculum

development; Dr. Paula Pittman, Dr. Sue Watkins, and Jan King as initial Mentor trainers; Minnie Mae Wilding-Diaz as ASL workshop presenter; Kelli Illi and Minnie Mae Wilding-Diaz as Mentor interviewing committee.

This was a unique landmark project of monumental importance. It brought together Deaf and hearing professionals, hearing parents and Deaf adults, and a variety of agencies serving Deaf and hard of hearing children. The research conducted during the study revealed that children in the program developed better English skills than children who did not have Deaf Mentors. It almost goes without saying but it must be said that the children developed amazing ASL skills during the project. It was found that children who received Deaf Mentor and PIP Parent Advisor services were able to communicate more effectively with their families than those children who did not have Deaf Mentors in their homes.

Because this was a real success, those families who had received Deaf Mentor services were determined to keep the program alive even after the grant funding for the Deaf Mentor Project ended in 1995. Parents and members of the Utah Deaf community lobbied the legislature to provide ongoing funding for the Deaf Mentor Project. Nearly 200 parents, children, and Deaf community members came to the Utah State Capitol to ask for funding for Deaf Mentors. After seeing the language growth in the children, USD accepted the Deaf Mentor program under their Parent-Infant Program in 1996. The 1996 State Legislature approved funding for USDB to incorporate the Deaf Mentor program into its infant services (Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, February 1997). It was at this time that the Deaf Mentor Experimental Research Project became the Utah Deaf Mentor Program.



Dr. Petra M. Horn-Marsh

In 1995, the Deaf Mentor Project received the Presidential Award from the Utah Association for the Deaf, in recognition of the valuable contribution in the realm of future empowerment of young Deaf children. The award was presented to Dr. Paula Pittman and the SKI-HI Institute.

Pittman set up the program within the Parent Infant Program once it became part of USDB. However, Pittman felt the program should be run by a Deaf person who had had experience with the original Deaf Mentor Project. It was agreed that a qualified Deaf person be hired. Dr. Petra Horn-Marsh became the first Deaf Mentor Specialist. The number of families grew from 34 to 76 in just four years. Several benefits became evident as families became more comfortable with the Deaf community and were more aware of educational options for their Deaf and hard of hearing children. A happy outgrowth of this interaction led many of these Deaf Mentor families to play important leadership roles in the establishment of the Jean Massieu School, a bilingual-bicultural charter school of the Deaf, that was established in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Horn-Marsh and Pittman added the Shared Reading Project to the Deaf Mentor Curriculum. The Shared Reading Project (SRP) was developed by the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center at Gallaudet University. The SRP helped families learn how to read to their children and improve both their ASL and English language skills. Michelle Tanner, a USD teacher at the time, provided SRP training to the Deaf Mentors. She continues to be an active SRP trainer for the state of Utah.

The SKI-HI Institute wrote a new grant to take the successful Deaf Mentor Project on the road. They wanted to give other states the opportunity to establish Deaf Mentor Programs. Darlene Cochran, Nanette Hix, Marlene Malm, and Rosa Maria Rathbun became National Deaf Mentor Trainers with Pittman directing the Deaf Mentor Outreach Project for the SKI-HI Institute. These trainers traveled to nine states. Deaf Mentors in the other states were concerned about parents who did not know how to communicate with their children. As a direct result of being in the Deaf Mentor program,

there was enormous growth in the families after they learned to accept their children's deafness and learned how to communicate effectively with them.

In 2000, Horn-Marsh resigned as the Deaf Mentor Specialist. Barbara Bass, a veteran USDB teacher, the last Deaf teacher to teach on the Ogden campus, replaced her as the Deaf Mentor Specialist. Bass kept the program strong for two years. Upon Bass' retirement in 2002, Terrance Cantrell assumed the position. He continued working as the Deaf Mentor Specialist until fall of 2008.

Cantrell founded the Deaf Mentor Conference, which takes place every year in the fall. The Deaf Mentor Conference was designed to help families meet and talk with similar families and to be aware of products and services available for them and their children. He strongly believed that community involvement was necessary for all Deaf children and their families so as to successfully develop language. By incorporating games, stories, information, and personal dialogue at the Conference, families learned more about hearing loss, communication methods, and understood what life was like for the person who was Deaf or hard of hearing.

We would like to honor the Deaf Mentors who served with great dedication for many years. Darlene Cochran, a member of the review committee, Advisory Board member, and a National Trainer for the Deaf Mentor Outreach Project, served as a Deaf Mentor for 15 years. She came at the very beginning and retired in 2006. Darlene was extremely instrumental in the success of this program. Merilee Swain served as a Deaf Mentor for more than 10 years and she was a Lead Deaf Mentor for the Deaf Mentor Program. Marlene Malm and Nanette Hix, both original Deaf Mentors, each served in the program for more than 10 years and were National Trainers for the Deaf Mentor Outreach Program at SKI-HI. The commitment level and dedication of Deaf Mentors like these have been the backbone of this program for years.

In recent years families continue to be very interested in the Deaf Mentor services. USDB is investing time, energy, and money into making this program strong

and effective. Emily Broadbent Tanner was hired in January 2009 as Deaf Mentor Specialist. Emily has wonderful ideas for the program and has already made some amazing changes. There are 83 families in the PIP Deaf Mentor program (Dr. Paula Pittman, personal communication, January 8, 2009).

Did You Know?

Dr. Petra Horn-Marsh, 35, was the first Deaf woman to receive a PhD in sociology at Utah State University on May 5, 2000. In fact, she may well be the first person in the United States to accomplish this goal, according to one of Petra's greatest admirers, Anne Butler, a history professor (Brunson, *UAD Bulletin*, June 2000).

Did You Know?

Emily Broadbent Tanner, a Total Communication student in the public school system, was quoted in the *Ogden Standard Examiner* on May 22, 1997 to say that "A lot of people think Deaf people can't do anything, like we're disabled or handicapped. We're not. We have a unique culture. We are a minority group with our beliefs, culture, and behaviors. Deaf people are normal, just like everybody else. They just can't hear. That's all" (Wangsgard, *UAD Bulletin*, July 1997).



Emily Broadbent Tanner

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Child's Bill of Right

In 1992, the Council of Organizational Representatives provided a Deaf Child's Bill of Rights in its testimony to the Federal Congress. It requested that this Bill of Rights be incorporated into the national Education of the Deaf Act (EDA). The federal government decided not to incorporate this Bill of Rights into the EDA. Instead the government left it up to each state to write its own Bill of Rights into their state legislation (A Synopsis of the Bill of Rights for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, 1997).

Dr. Jay Innes was holding a workshop where he worked at the California School for the Deaf-Fremont in California. As the Deaf Education expert for the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), he was to assist any group interested in spearheading a Deaf Child's Bill of Rights in their home state. Dave Mortensen, then president of UAD, immediately summoned Bronwyn O'Hara, a hearing parent of three Deaf children,



Dr. Jay Innes

Stanley O'Neal, UAD Board Member, Kristi L. Mortensen, Deaf Education Advocate, Janice Gillespie, a Deaf representative, and Kenneth L. Kinner, a Deaf parent of a Deaf child, to go to Fremont, California for a weekend training on the Deaf Child's Bill of Rights. They were to learn strategies on guiding such a Bill of Rights through the state legislature so it could become law (UAD Bulletin, July 1995). When they

returned to Utah, the group tried to get the Deaf Child's Bill of Rights into the legislature. Kristi Mortensen believed the difficulty and eventual failure was due to Utah's attitude of not wanting to change (Kristi Mortensen, personal communication, 2005).

Kristi Mortensen, as Chair of the UAD Education Committee, worked with this committee to develop a Utah Deaf Child's Bill of Rights. The following was a wish list of what they would like covered in the legislation:

1. Provide full and equal communication and language access;
2. Provide a full range of educational placement options;
3. Administer appropriate language assessments on deaf and hard of hearing children;
4. Provide an education with a sufficient number of same language mode peers who are of the same age and ability level;
5. Provide opportunities to interact with deaf and hard of hearing adult role models;
6. Provide equal benefit from all services and programs at their schools;

7. Provide availability of qualified and certified personnel who can communicate directly with deaf and hard of hearing children, and
8. Proclaim the deaf and hard of hearing child's right to equal access to an appropriate education.

After developing this Deaf Child's Bill of Rights, it was brought before the Utah legislature in 1996. It didn't pass because both the Utah School for the Deaf, the Utah State Office of Education, and the Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities were opposed to it. These entities all felt the specifics in the bill were not needed since IDEA was mandated by the federal government. Other underlying factors that caused the bill to fail could have been Utah's strong oral education tradition and funding issues.

If these agencies thought IDEA covered the language items found in the Deaf Child's Bill of Rights, it should be noted that the IDEA law, at this time, included no considerations regarding language acquisition or preferred communication usage. According to the Utah State Office of Education and USD, they felt that they were already providing an appropriate education for the state's Deaf and hard of hearing children. Their combined opposition persuaded the legislators to take no action. After the legislative session, USDB Superintendent Lee Robinson, serving during this critical time, immediately created a Deaf Children's Bill of Rights document showing the list of educational services that Deaf children have the right to access. The fact was, almost none of those services were provided to the children or their families (Kristi Mortensen, personal communication, 2005).

In February 1997, several other groups wanted to participate in the Deaf Child's Bill of Rights legislation. The UAD Education Committee decided to give the other groups an opportunity to review the Bill of Rights and hold discussions (Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, February 1997) In

order to do this the committee held off introducing the bill to the 1997 Utah Legislature.

Helen Post, president of the Utah Parent Center and mother of a Deaf daughter, was one of the people who stopped the Deaf Child's Bill of Rights after UAD spent many hours on the bill. At the UAD Education Committee



Helen Post, Director of Utah Parent Center
Source: YouTube

meeting, UAD challenged Post, wanting to know why she stopped the bill. She explained that the Deaf community cannot do all that needs to be done *alone*. She, as a parent, cannot do all that needs to be done *alone*. The Utah State Board of Education and the Utah State Office of Education cannot do it *alone*. The legislature cannot do anything that will be effective in helping all of them if they are not working together. Post believed that there was a need for all of these entities to work together (Post, *UAD Bulletin*, February 1997). Kristi Mortensen agreed that it was important to get 'buy-in' from various groups. Without the combined effort, the Deaf Child's Bill of Rights quite possibly would not become passed into law by the legislature (Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, February 1997).

The very next month, on March 15, 1997, the UAD held a 'Deaf Child's Bill of Rights' Conference. The presenters were Jay Innes, Chairman of the NAD Deaf Education Committee and Leon Curtis, the NAD Region IV representative (Nelson, *UAD Bulletin*, March 1997). Both of them focused on showing how the Bill of Rights could benefit the Deaf and hard of hearing children under our current state laws. Kristi and the UAD Deaf Education committee got to work on their version of the bill. However, in the

fall of 1997, Innes asked that the bill be put on hold. The federal reauthorization in June of 1997 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) included amendments that the UAD's bill proposal could possibly contradict. There was a need to study the amendments and how they would apply to the Deaf or hard of hearing child. If the UAD pushed the Deaf Child's Bill of Rights, as it stood, through the 1998 Legislative Session, it could cause problems. Kristi and the UAD agreed to wait. After the NAD decided on how to interpret the Reauthorization's effects on Deaf children, then Innes could plan another training. There was some speculation that Gallaudet University would host training in 1998 (Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, October 1997, p.4).

In 2004, Kristi Mortensen appealed to the Board members of the Utah Association of the Deaf to change the title of the "Deaf Child's Bill of Rights" to "Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Bill of Rights." She felt this wording would provide services to children with any kind of hearing loss. The UAD Board seemed to favor the change. Awareness of the change in the title of the Bill of Rights grew, including many parents who thought the new name was better. Mortensen was certain that Utah was closer than ever to passing its own Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Bill of Rights into state law (Kristi L. Mortensen, personal communication, 2005).

Dr. Jay Innes, who had become the Director of the Gallaudet Leadership Institute, returned to Utah in January 13, 2006 to go over the UAD's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Bill of Rights. Part of his presentation was an overview of Deaf Education within the United States and, then specifically, in Utah. The issues he presented at this workshop were the topics being discussed across the nation:

1. More language and communication impact;
2. More accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing children with free flowing interaction among Deaf or hearing peers; and
3. More certified teachers in deaf education who can provide a comfortable environment for the deaf and hard of hearing children.

Innes could see it was important to get a Bill of Rights passed in Utah because the Federal laws were not written with strong enough legal language to help get Utah's Deaf and hard of hearing children what they needed. The bill needed to focus on the need for

communication. The way the UAD bill proposal was written at the moment, it only stressed accessibility to everything that a Deaf and hard of hearing child needed. There was nothing spelled out. It was too nebulous. Written well, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Bill of Rights could guide parents to know if the educational placement of their child was suitable. Correspondingly, the IEP team would know how to serve the families more appropriately (Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, February 2006).

Mortensen observed that the IEP teams had a past tradition of placing the Deaf or hard of hearing child in school based on their ability to hear and talk. This had been the 'Utah way.' Many new research studies indicated huge problems when a Deaf child's placement was wrong. One of the backlashes the children experienced was reaching adulthood and spending a lot of time with mental health counselors. Many of these children grew up without getting enough of an education to be able to get a job. These would end up on the government dole in the form of Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Some of these children would be behind in communication skills if their placement was not the kind that would help them develop language (Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, February 2006).

Kristi stated that, "We already know that it is very difficult for a full-grown adult to acquire new learning.....compared [with the] very young and being in a language-communication educational environment where they experience no obstacles in communication and learning" (Mortensen, *UAD Bulletin*, October 1997, p. 4). Mortensen felt that the Utah School for the Deaf viewed the Bill of Rights as a threat. They did not want to accept changes to their ancient methods of teaching the Deaf. Didn't USD realize that the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children's Bill of Rights would apply to every school system in the state, not just to the state school? (Kristi Mortensen, personal communication, 2006)

Mortensen saw how parents of Deaf and hard of hearing children were eager to use the proposed bill to expand their children's learning environment. More and more hearing parents became proactive in getting their Deaf children access to appropriate

education, social skills, communication skills, as well as improved emotional and cognitive development (Kristi Mortensen, personal communication, 2007).

Fast forward to April 30, 2009, where we see Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr. signing House Bill 296. This law allowed Deaf students to remain at the Utah School for the Deaf for their schooling regardless of their age or grade-level accomplishments. This law was a milestone that allowed USDB, for the first time, to step out of its remedial role. This law made it possible for grade-appropriate Deaf and hard of hearing students to be educated at the state school rather than be mainstreamed into a neighborhood school. USD was naturally equipped to provide these children with access to complete language, communication and social skills. With this law USD could provide on-grade level educational material for these students. This was very good news! More information about HB 296 can be found in “An Evolution of the ASL/English Bilingual Teaching Method in Utah.”

The future remains bright in working towards taking the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children’s Bill of Rights into the hallowed halls of the Utah Capitol building. The UAD is committed to working with legislators to gain their favorable support. The Utah Deaf community can help these governmental lawmakers understand the crux of the Bill of Rights: that each Deaf and hard of hearing child will have their unique communication needs play a major role in deciding their educational placement. Their preferred mode of communication and language will drive their instructional environment.

On October 8, 2015, California passed Senate Bill 210 in a continued effort to support their Deaf Child’s Bill of Rights which had been passed in September of 1994 (California Department of Education, 1994; California Legislative Information, 2015). Julie Rems-Smario, a Deaf political activist, former board member of the National Association of the Deaf, and current president of the California Association of the Deaf, encouraged the other 49 states of the nation to follow suit. This bill requires all Deaf and hard of hearing babies in California to go through language acquisition assessments every six months until they turn five. The goal of the Senate Bill is to ensure these children will

be academically ready for kindergarten (California Legislative Information, 2015; Deaf Nation, 2015; Endeavors, Fall 2015). As the Utah Deaf community moves forward to bring these same laws to Utah, the next generation of Deaf and hard of hearing children will finally be able to receive an appropriate and accessible education.



Julie Rems-Smairo

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