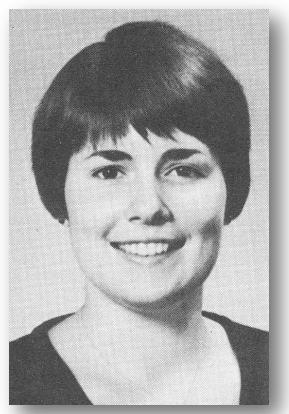
Celia May Baldwin

Compiled & Written by Jodi B. Kinner 2012

Celia May Laramie Baldwin is well known locally and across the nation as "CM." She was born on June 20, 1947 in Salt Lake City, Utah, to George L. and Dora (Benoit) Laramie. Her

parents were Deaf and her own deafness was hereditary. She had an adopted sister, Bridget Mary, who was also Deaf (Gallaudet Today, Spring 1974). On Celia May's mother side, she comes from a four-generation Deaf family: her parents, grandparents, and greatgrandparents were all Deaf (San Jose Mercury News, April 27, 1999). During a 1999 interview with the San Jose Mercury *News*, she said, "I was born into a deaf culture. I've never known any else. I'm very dedicated to preserving the stories of our culture throughout the generations. I'm very happy with who I am, and I'm proud to be from a deaf family" (Hull, San Jose Mercury News, April 27, 1999).

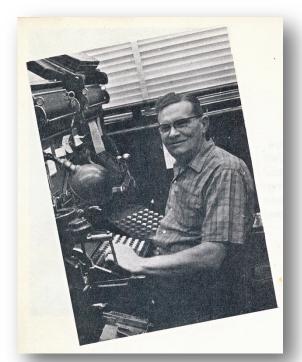
Celia May was born and raised in



Celia May Laramie Baldwin The UAD Bulletin, Fall 1969

Utah. She and her family lived in Salt Lake City and then in Bountiful, Utah during the years she was growing up. At home, they communicated in American Sign Language (Gallaudet Today, Spring 1974).

Celia May's father, George, graduated from the Utah School for the Deaf (USD) in 1927 and worked as a linotype operator with the Salt Lake Tribune for 25 years. He served as president of the Utah Association of the Deaf, the Utah Athletic Club for the Deaf, and Division No. 56 of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf (NFSD). He was selected as the local division's "Frater" of the Year in 1976 and was also admitted to the NFSD's National Hall of Fame. George and his wife Dora helped organize a chapter for the deaf at St. Olaf's Catholic Church in Bountiful, Utah (Deseret News, May 8, 1990). In 1982, the two-helped Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, then state coordinator of services to Deaf people, find a vacant Bountiful church to



George Laramie, a linotyper for the Newspaper Agency Corporation plant in Salt Lake City, Utah, 1968 The UAD Bulletin, Summer 1968

convert to a community center for the deaf. Dr. Sanderson had long advocated for a space that the deaf could call their own (Sanderson, 2004).

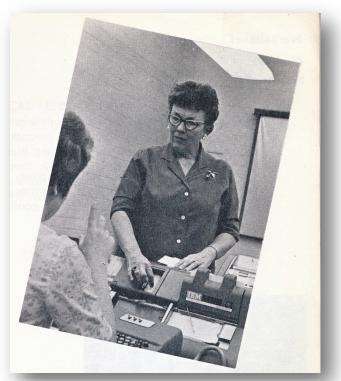
Celia May's mother, Dora, was born in Kansas. She contracted an ear infection at a young age, progressively lost her hearing, and at age 13, was diagnosed as severely deaf (Bass, 1982). She graduated from Kansas School for the Deaf in Olathe, Kansas, in 1931, and from Gallaudet College in 1936. Upon graduation, Dora taught at the Oklahoma School for the Deaf for two years. She then moved to Utah to marry George Laramie. Dora worked for the Air Force sewing uniforms for some years (Celia May

Baldwin, personal communication, April 15, 2012). In 1954, she was offered a teaching job at USD in Ogden, where she taught for eighteen years. Her last two years were in the USD extension (oral division) in Salt Lake City. She taught homemaking, typing, reading, math and dance. She left her teaching position in 1976 and entered semi-retirement, working as a substitute teacher. Gradually, she became fully retired and filled her time with many projects (Davis County Clipper, July 1981; Bass, 1982).

In 1962, two separate divisions for students were created at Utah School for the Deaf: oral and simultaneous communication. 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. With time, both divisions grew to

tolerate each other and the climate relaxed. Through it all, Barbara Bass, a long time teacher of remembered Dora concentrated on supporting and educating her students (Bass, 1982). Among her former students, she was most remembered as a great English teacher who was truly gifted at teaching sentence development and meaning. They recalled wishing they could stay in school longer to gain more knowledge at her feet.

Aside from teaching, Dora had served as secretary or treasurer for numerous Deaf organizations and as evaluator for the Utah Registry of



Dora Laramie, a teacher of the Utah School for the Deaf, 1968 The UAD Bulletin, Summer 1968

Interpreters of the Deaf. She was also a strong supporter for Utah Community Center for the Deaf (Bass, 1982). Dora epitomized friendliness, fairness, intelligence and industry. Additionally, she was praised for her contributions to Deaf education and the Deaf community (Davis County Clipper, July 1981; Bass, 1982).

As a young girl, Celia May attended nursery school at the University of Utah. From 1952 to 1965, she was a student at the USD in Ogden (Gallaudet Today, Spring 1974). Her sister, Bridget Mary, enrolled at USD in 1955 and graduated in 1971.

Celia May was an only child for several years and had always wanted a sister. On her

eighth birthday, she finally got her wish. George flew to Seattle, Washington, and brought her back a sister, Bridget Mary. Bridget did not know any sign language and her two gestures were "ha ha" and sticking out her tongue, but she blossomed and grew up to be a fine lady. She passed away on May 23, 1985 from acute leukemia. (Celia May Baldwin, personal communication, April 15, 2012). While Celia May and Bridget attended USD, Dora had to separate her roles of mother and teacher. They had to call their Mom, "Mrs. Laramie" throughout the school years.



Celia May Baldwin, 1966 The UAD Bulletin, Fall 1966

When either daughter found herself at odds with someone in authority and ran to mother for refuge, Dora did not get involved and allowed matters to run their course (Davis County Clipper, July 1981; Bass, 1982; Celia May Baldwin, personal communication, April 15, 2012).

At USD, Celia May was initially placed in an oral class where signing was not allowed. At the time, the students who were in the oral classes were not allowed to sign until they entered 9th grade. They were, however, allowed to sign after school hours and in dormitories. Celia May remembers many of students were hit by their teachers

with erasers or yardsticks for signing in class. In fall of 1961, she entered 9th grade, where she was finally allowed to use sign language in the classroom (Celia May Baldwin, personal communication, April 15, 2012).

The following year, the USD system changed, and the school embraced the Dual Division (known as the "Y" system), meaning that all children had to start in the Oral Division and were not allowed to enter the Simultaneous Communication Division until age 11 or 6th grade (The Utah Eagle, February 1968; Wight, Ogden Standard-Examiner, October, 19, 1970). Celia May's sister, Bridget, was placed in the Simultaneous Communication Division Celia May, then a sophomore, joined other high school students to participate in a student strike opposing the new Dual Track Division, with each track having its own separate classrooms, dormitory facilities, recess, and co-curricular activities (but not athletics) (The Utah Eagle, February 1968; The Ogden Standard-Examiner, October, 19, 1970; Celia May Baldwin, personal communication, April 15, 2012). As explained in "The Deaf Education History in Utah," Celia May was one of the many students who didn't like the operation of the new Dual Track Division because a "wall" formed when the oral and simultaneous communication students were not allowed to interact with each other."

While the USD education system was deteriorating academically and socially and student morale was low, Celia May and her classmate Ronald Burdett (son of Kenneth C. Burdett and Afton Curtis) were finishing up their junior year. Celia May and Ron attended the 100th year reunion at Gallaudet in 1964 and were "sold" on attending the college (Celia May Baldwin, personal communication, April 15, 2012). Enrolling in the college preparatory course at Gallaudet would prepare them for college-level work the following year. After passing their entrance exams, the two headed off for Washington, D.C. in the summer of 1965 (The UAD Bulletin, Fall 1966). Both Celia May's and Ron's parents had encouraged them to "take the plunge."

In her five years at Gallaudet, Celia May led an active life. She participated in a wide range of extra-curricular activities while maintaining a good academic record. She was a member of the Phi Kappa Zeta Sorority and was active in student body government, the Inter-Sorority Council, and the Newman Club. In 1966, she was chosen queen of her class (UAD Bulletin, Summer 1966). She played goalie on the varsity field hockey team that same year and played on many intramural sports teams while at Gallaudet (Gallaudet Today, Spring 1974).

Celia May was also the recipient of a variety of academic honors. In 1966, she received the Alpha Sigma Pi Fraternity Preparatory Award, and Phi Kappa Zeta Sorority awarded her a sorority scholarship in both 1967 and 1968. In 1968, she was also chosen as the "Sweetheart of Alpha Sigma Pi Fraternity." In 1969, she received the Delta Epsilon Sorority Ideal Student Award; and in 1970 she was named a Keeper of the Flame of the Future by the Junior NAD. Celia May was also chosen to be on the Council for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning at Gallaudet and was one of four students given this honor (UAD Bulletin, Fall 1969).

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One of Celia May's most vivid memories from her college years were the events which occurred in Washington, D.C. in the spring of her sophomore year. An excerpt from a 1974 interview reads:

After midnight one night in April 1968, the other residents of Cogswell Hall and I were taken aback by the sudden appearance of armed vehicles – such as jeeps and tanks – on campus. The awesome sight of soldiers rushing everywhere put a chill up and down our spines. Our first reaction was sheer panic – coupled with thoughts that World War III had just began. It wasn't until the next day that we realized what we had experienced was the beginning of the aftermath of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King – full scale riots locally and nationally (Gallaudet Today, Spring 1974, p. 36).

During Celia May's senior year at Gallaudet, she was chosen as general chairwoman of the 1970 Junior NAD Convention at Gallaudet College. It hosted 200 student delegates and faculty sponsors. As chairwoman, she came up with a variety of ideas and plans for producing future leaders. Celia May

concluded [in a 1970 interview with Gallaudet's *Buff and Blue:*]

The convention division itself is more or less an adventure of learning for all of us, with sharing and exchanging of issues the main thing. From this, we will develop into citizens beyond



Celia May teaching at St. John's School for the Deaf Gallaudet Today, Spring 1974

our expectations and we must make use of this experience in our forthcoming years to bring to all deaf people of America the best possible life!

She added that the convention's most important objective was to help Deaf youth "gain a sense of direction and initiative" for academic growth so that they might contribute maximally to

"the best possible American life" (UAD Bulletin, Fall 1969; Buff & Blue, February 19, 1970).

Five years later in 1970, Celia May graduated from Gallaudet College in mathematics. Shortly thereafter, she married Dr. Stephen Baldwin, also Deaf and a graduate of Gallaudet Class of 1968. At the time, he was teaching at St. John's School for the Deaf in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Celia May followed him to Milwaukee and taught at St. John's for four years (UAD Bulletin, Winter, 1970). The couple had two children (hearing) together: Dora Rose, born in 1974; and Laurence, born in 1976. Celia May and Stephen divorced in 1979.

At St. John's School for the Deaf, Celia May taught intermediate school: fourth, fifth and sixth grade. In addition, she was the sponsor of the St. Patrick's Club, a Girl Scout leader of St.



director of St. John's Gallaudet Today, Spring 1974

John's Troop #707, and for two years, the varsity volleyball coach. In 1972, she was honored with the Coach of the Year Award for her work with the volleyball team at St. John's (Gallaudet Today, Spring 1974).

Teaching Deaf children had always been Celia May's life-long dream, and credit for this

went to her parents. Her mother inspired her to teach (Gallaudet Today, Spring 1974). While Celia May was a mother of a young daughter and a teacher at St. John's School for the Deaf, she received her master of arts in education from the California State University at Northridge in 1975 (Kaila, 1998).

In Wisconsin, Celia May was active in a number of community activities: She was a member of the Wisconsin Association of the Deaf, parliamentarian of Chapter Seven of the International Catholic Deaf Association, secretary of the

Gallaudet College Alumni Association, president of Pi Gamma Chapter of Phi Kappa

Zeta, and president of the St. John's Lay Teachers Association (Gallaudet Today, Spring 1974).

In 1970, Celia May was appointed to the new Board of Fellows of Gallaudet College to review the total responsibilities, divisions, structure and results of the college as an educational institution, and to make recommendations to the President Edward C. Merrill and the Board of Directors (UAD Bulletin, Fall-Winter 1970-71). She served on the board for seven years. She was the only female member of the board. During an interview with *Gallaudet Today*, Celia May was asked how she felt at being the only woman on the Board. She answered:

Beside the demonstrated chivalry of my male Board of Fellows members, I am treated with just respect. The Board has not been faced with such issues that a hardcore women's liberator would act on. However, a woman should be involved because their feelings and insights sometime are different than males! There are many areas where



Western Vice President Ned Wheeler presents plaque and \$100 Savings Bond to Celia May Baldwin, the Society's 1977 Frater of the Year The Frat, 1978

women can be of great service within the deaf community. Many women's careers are interrupted when motherhood enters, but they are usually back when the children are older (Gallaudet Today, Spring 1974, p. 36).

In 1974, Celia May and Stephen moved to her home state of Utah, where she obtained a teaching position at her alma mater, the Utah School for the Deaf (Kaika, 1998). At the time, oral education programs in Utah were increasing along with the mainstreaming of Deaf students into local public schools. In her second year at the school, in 1975, Dr. Stephen Baldwin, then

curriculum coordinator of the Total Communication Division at USD, authored an article entitled "*Is Mainstreaming the Hearing Impaired Really Justified*?" for *The Utah Eagle* magazine. The article stirred controversy among parents who had enrolled their children in mainstream classes, Baldwin recalls (Baldwin, *The Utah Eagle*, April 1975; Baldwin, 1990).

Outside of her work, Celia May was a young woman of many talents and interests, which she had time to pursue as she raised her two young children. She thrived on serving others and was involved in this respect not only locally, but statewide and nationally (The Frat Newsletter, 1978). While living in Utah from 1974-1986, Celia May was very involved with Division #56 of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf, Utah Association for the Deaf and many other organizations.

In 1977, Celia May, member of Salt Lake City Division #56 since 1967, was recognized as "Frater of the Year" by the National Office for her outstanding contributions to the division, the community and the Society. The award was presented by Western Vice President Ned C. Wheeler, a native Utahn (Gannon, 1981; The Frat Newsletter, 1978). Her work with Division #56 resulted in a renewed interest by the division in fraternal affairs. Attendance at meetings climbed steadily due in part to the 19 members she had brought in. Celia May, with her innovativeness and enthusiasm, had made the division an active "doer." As social chairwoman, she arranged for refreshments after each meeting; her art skills yielded many attractive flyers for various events; and during the division's October banquet, she agreed at the last minute to be the evening's comedy entertainment and was a smash hit (The Frat Newsletter, 1978).

Celia May did not limit her or contributions to the NFSD. At the time, she was in her third term as treasurer of the St. Mary Magdalene Club of the Deaf. She was also instrumental in having the UAD organize a special lobbying committee that helped the Utah legislature approve funds for a proposed community center for the Deaf (The Frat Newsletter, 1978). When the American Athletic Association of the Deaf (now known as the USA Deaf Sports Federation) held its 33rd annual national basketball tournament for the first time in Salt Lake City, Utah, in March 1977, Celia May directed and produced one of the most successful variety shows that the AAAD had ever seen (The Frat Newsletter, 1978; Walker, 2006). From 1976 to 1978, she was a member of the Advocates for the Utah Handicapped and served on its board, representing the Deaf community well (The Frat Newsletter, 1978). Along with her mother, Dora (also an educator), she joined the Advisory Board Center for the Handicapped at Weber State College from 1976 to 1978. Celia May later joined a committee comprised of Lois Jones (chairperson), Ilene Kinner, and Darlene Cochran to plan the 1979 Utah Deaf Women's Conference in Salt Lake City, sponsored by the UAD. Over eighty women, age 18 to 80, attended (The Deaf American, February 1980).

Her long list of accomplishments in 1977 included the first place award in the annual International Catholic Deaf Association poster contest; production and direction of the awardwinning play "The Once and Future Frog" during the UAD annual Amateur Night; the Catholic Club's first place win in the Golden Spike Athletic Club's event "Almost Everything Goes;" first



Celia May, a teacher of the Utah School for the Deaf, 1980s Photo by Robert L. Bonnell

place in the annual mixed volleyball tournament (The Frat Newsletter, 1978).

In 1979, the UAD elected Celia May delegate to the 1981 National Association of the Deaf convention (UAD Bulletin, July 1979). On March 22, 1986, she directed the UAD's unique one-act plays, "The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife" and "Melisande and the Prince," with members of the board of directors and trustees taking part (UAD Bulletin, February 1986; UAD Bulletin, March 1986). She also staged several creative fundraisers for the deaf community such as "The Price is Not Right," "Club Feud," and a huge yard sale at the Utah Community Center for the Deaf in Bountiful (Celia May Baldwin, personal

communication, April 15, 2012). In 1987, she was awarded the Golden Hand from the UAD for her substantial contribution to the betterment of the Utah Deaf community. The UAD Bulletin described Celia May as "a long time active member of Utah Association for the Deaf and a staunch supporter." It added, "Her participation has not been limited to UAD, but has extended to Frat, St. Mary Magdalene Club for the Deaf, despite being a single parent of two children"

(UAD Bulletin, July 1987).

On the national level, Celia May has been active in professional and civic organizations, serving as vice president of the Gallaudet University Alumni Association (GUAA) (1982 to 1989); board member (1996 to 1998) and president of the California Educators of the Deaf; and president of GUAA's NorCal chapter (1989 to 1994) (Kaika, 1998).

In 1986, due to the declining quality of education at USD, many students transferred out of the school to get a better education elsewhere. With the rapid decrease of students on campus, Celia May sought a teaching job at the California School for the Deaf, Fremont (CSDF), received an offer, and moved to California. It was USD's loss and CSDF's gain. There, she taught middle high and high school. After just three years, in 1989, she became the principal of the middle school (Kaika, 1998). Of her appointment, Dr. Henry Klopping, CSDF superintendent said, "She's an incredibly dynamic person, and as a principal she supervised all the other teachers in the classroom. She

knows how to get people motivated and involved" (Hull, *San Jose Mercury News*, April 27, 1999).

As principal of CSDF, Celia May promoted several divisions such as "Chicken Soup of the Soul," two other winter divisions, and the DARE division;



Celia May at California School for the Deaf, Fremont, 1996 The California News, March 1, 1996

many ASL story competitions; spelling bees; honor roll assemblies; and weekly meetings with the students (Retirement Tea/Dinner, April 29, 2008). To show their appreciation, the Class of 1994 dedicated the Bell Tower yearbook to Celia May. Many of them expressed how fortunate they were to have had her as their teacher and principal. Students recalled her as a teacher who provided an encouraging, positive classroom atmosphere and challenging lessons. An outstanding quality that many of the students remember with fondness was her ability to be firm and caring simultaneously. Celia May helped her students recognize their strengths and areas needing improvement, and she would take time to assist each of them in overcoming any learning obstacles (IMPACT, 1994). Ten years later in 1999, she was ready for a new challenge. She was promoted to dean of student life, where she was responsible for over 450 students (Celia May Baldwin, personal communication, April 15, 2012). As dean, she adopted the academic department's division called Drop Everything and Read (DEAR). Since Celia May's tenure as dean, the students have been participating in DEAR every evening. She also produced eight CSDF plays from 2001 to 2008. She had an excellent attitude toward both teachers and students and was a real motivator in every way. With her wonderful management style, she gave her staff opportunities to grow and to improve the department (IMPACT, 1994). Additionally, her wide



Celia May, principal of the middle school, 1999 Ron Burda, Mercury News, April 27, 1999

smile and "can do" attitude inspired them to consistently meet and exceed her expectations (The 2008 CAL-ED Conference, March 8, 2008).

As an administrator of CSDF, Celia May attended the educational leadership division at California State University at Hayward, California, and obtained her administrative credentials in 1992 (Kaika, 1998). In 1994, the IMPACT Board of Directors presented Celia May an Administrator of the Year Award for "demonstrating commitment to providing quality education, accessing the deaf community and parents as a source of educational opportunities, and building bridges between various educational divisions" (The 1994 IMPACT

Conference). In 2008, California Educators of the Deaf (CAL-ED) presented Celia May an Administrator of the Year award at its conference. Anyone who had the distinct pleasure of working with Celia May in any of the many capacities in which she worked on or away from CSD campus knew the never-ending enthusiasm she brought to every encounter, every planning session, every activity, and even to daily work. When she decided to take on a challenge, there was never any doubt she would succeed. With her magic touch, she made all her accomplishments appear effortless (The 2008 CAL-ED Conference, March 8, 2008).

Ten years after the Deaf President Now Protest at Gallaudet University, Gallaudet President I. King Jordan appointed Celia May to Gallaudet's Board of Trustees on December 2, 1998. Dr. Jordan said, "The University is extremely fortunate to have Ms. Baldwin on our Board of Trustees," and "Her expertise, experience, and enthusiasm in the field of education of deaf and hard of hearing students will be an asset to the board" (Kaila, 1998). She served on the board for seven years.

In 2007, the Board of Trustees honored Celia May with a Resolution Award in recognition of her career achievements and leadership through Gallaudet services, as follows:

RESOLUTION

The Board of Trustees Gallaudet University Washington, D.C.

Whereas, Ms. Celia May L. Baldwin, a 1970 alumna of Gallaudet

University, served her alma mater from 1998 to 2006 as a devoted, intuitive, and effective member of the Board of Trustees; and

Whereas, the unsurpassed qualifications of leadership she exhibited as interim chair of the board, vice chair of the board, chair of the Student Affairs Committee, and member of the Committee on Trustees helped advance the University's academic excellence and made her a vital and essential member of the board, held in the highest esteem by her peers; and

Whereas, her illustrious career as an educator and administrator, beginning with St. John's



Catholic School of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, then at the Utah School for the Deaf, Ogden, and currently at the California School for the Deaf, Fremont, where after 15 years of teaching she served as middle school principal for 10 years, and where in 1999 she became the Dean of Students, have earned her the respect of her colleagues and the gratitude of numerous students who are indebted to her for a quality education, and

Whereas, in addition to her service as a trustee, she has

demonstrated a profound commitment to civic duty by selflessly sharing her time and knowledge with Gallaudet as a member of the Board of Fellows with President Edward C. Merrill, Jr. for seven years, and as vice president of the Gallaudet University Alumni Association for seven years, and serving as well on several professional and civic organizations, including a term as president of the California Educators of the Deaf; be it therefore



Ken Levinson, Gallaudet Board of Trustee, Dr. Henry Klopping, superintendent of the California School for the Deaf, Fremont and Celia May Baldwin, Gallaudet Board of Trustee at the 2003 Gallaudet graduation ceremony Achieve: On the Green, May 30, 2003

Resolved, that the Board of Trustees

at Gallaudet University expresses its deepest thanks and admiration of Ms. Baldwin for her outstanding contributions to Gallaudet; and be it further

Resolved, that the Board of Trustees and everyone affiliated with Gallaudet University offer their most sincere regards to Ms. Baldwin for her loyal service to Gallaudet University, and express their best wishes to Ms. Baldwin and her family for a long, joyous, and productive life.

March 13, 2007 (Celia May's Resolution Award signed by Gallaudet Board of Trustee Chair Ben Soukup and Secretary, Frank Wu, 2007).

Eight years later, after her appointment on the Board of Trustees, Gallaudet encountered another protest, known as "Unity for Gallaudet," after Celia May (as the interim chairperson of Board of Trustees) announced the 9th president of Gallaudet University to be Dr. Jane Fernandes, on May 1, 2006. During this protest that lasted a week and a half in May, Celia May Baldwin resigned from the Board of Trustees after receiving aggressive personal threats being made toward her by community members regarding the selection (Unity for Gallaudet, 2007).

Celia May retired from the CSDF in June 2008 after 22 years at the school. Overall, she had worked in the field of deaf education for 36 years. Upon her retirement, she continued to be a seasoned traveler. She enjoys doing many interesting projects, and one of them is making photo books. She says she enjoys being with her four "precious" grandsons, Theo and Nolan of son Laurence, and Ryan and Dylan of daughter Dora, and her new granddaughter, Caitlyn May, born on July 4, 2012. Celia May is also very active among the deaf senior citizens in the Bay Area. She has served on the Parodi Charitable Trust Fund at CSDF since 1990 and is on several boards (Celia May Baldwin, personal communication, April 15, 2012).

To conclude, during the interview with the Gallaudet Today in 1974, Celia May offered her words of advice to Gallaudet undergraduates: "It is vital for you to participate in some activities and support Gallaudet College in every way; in return, you will double your knowledge and experience" (Gallaudet Today, 1974). With her own knowledge and experience, she has indeed had an illustrious career and has accomplished much in her long service within the Deaf community.

Note

Celia May Baldwin, e-mail message to Jodi B. Kinner, April 15, 2012.

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