

## **New Wing for Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Approved!**

With Mr. Wales's effort, the total cooperation of the Deaf community, and the support of the Utah State Board of Education and the Office of Rehabilitation Services administrators, most importantly, the support of key legislators, the new wing became a reality. Dr. Sanderson was glad that the wing was not bumped off the priority list in 1981, like the request for a new center of the deaf when it was bumped down from number five to eleven favoring the new dairy barn for cows at Utah State University. He said, "We [UAD and the Deaf community] were very naïve then" (Sanderson, 2004).

Dr. Sanderson said that one big reason the wing was funded that particular year was because there was not much funding for new projects. Most projects were requesting several million

dollars. The legislative committee was able to give \$1.5 million and luckily, the new wing request was for \$1 million. Thus, the wing was funded



**Utah Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, 2002**

because the request was such a relatively small one (Sanderson, 2004).

On May 4, 2001, a groundbreaking ceremony for the new addition to the Utah Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing took place. The center staff members, Deaf and hearing communities, officials and legislators were present to celebrate the occasion (UAD Bulletin, June 2001; Sanderson, 2004).

Soon after the ceremony, construction commenced and work as usual continued in the center. The certain hallways and rooms were close off with the least possible disruption to activities (Sanderson, 2004).

At the same time, there was a change in administration. Mr. Wales obtained another job in Washington State. Marilyn Call, who had been serving under him as program director, was promoted in July 2001 to Acting Director of the DSDHH. After serving six months, she, with the enthusiastic support of the Deaf community, was promoted to director in January 2002 (Sanderson, 2004).

The new wing of the building was completed on time, in January 2002 and celebrated in March (Sanderson, 2004).

### **Did You Know?**

According to Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, during Rusty's second year as an administrator, he held a strategic planning session that answered the question of whether the Division for Services of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Offices should serve the hard of hearing population and whether it should have a neutral position on communication methods.

The members of this committee studied the Utah Code that pertained to the division, and after much discussion agreed that services were meant to be offered to people who were Deaf, oral deaf, hard of hearing, and people with cochlear implants.

An in-house policy concerning communication states that all people should be able to understand and communicate each other at the Sanderson Community Center. In addition, all staff members whether they were deaf, hard of hearing or hearing was to sign what they were saying in the halls and common areas. In this way, the center was a barrier free communication area. The division strived to provide accommodations such as signing interpreters, voice interpreters, real time captioning and etc. (Sanderson, 2004; Marilyn Call, personal communication, October 15, 2009).

## **How the Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Programs Grew to Fit the New Building**

When the Division of Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH) moved into the new building in 1992, the budget for services was quite small. One of the reasons Ms. Call was hired as Program Director was because of her experience on the Capitol Hill and her good relationship with many legislators. When she was hired, she realized there was much work to be done to expand needed social services so program could match the great caliber of the building (Sanderson, 2004).

When DSDHH was formed in 1988, the Division of Rehabilitation became the Office of Rehabilitation with four divisions under it in enabling growth for DSDHH (Sanderson, 2004).

Dr. Judy Ann Buffmire made the mistake of not involving deaf people when she passed the SB 218, but she made it so that Rehabilitation Services and its four divisions could request line item funding each year for new programs. With this change and after Ms. Call's knowledge of new funding was obtained year by year for services such as counseling, case management, hard of hearing adjustment classes, and interpreter training and certification (Sanderson, 2004).

The Division budget grew by almost \$1.5 million in a decade and services were greatly expanded in the same time period. Each year deaf and hard of hearing individuals lobbied for funded request (Sanderson, 2004).



**Marilyn Call**

## **Renaming the Utah Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to the Robert G. Sanderson Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

While Marilyn Call was the director of the Utah Community Center of the Deaf, she felt the history would not be complete without telling how the Utah Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing became the Robert G. Sanderson Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She always thought the center should carry the name of a Deaf individual because the center would not have been possible without Deaf people's persistent advocacy (Call, *UAD Bulletin*, September 2003 Sanderson, 2004).

During the year of 2003, Ms. Call told a friend of hers about this dream she had to rename the community center. She wanted to see it named after a hero and a legend in the Deaf community. Her friend commented that he thought naming buildings for people was a stupid idea. He said 25 or 30 years, no one will know who Bob Sanderson is. Ms. Call was amazed at his perspective but she replied, "That is exactly why we need to name this building after a Deaf leader. People need to know about those who came before. They need to have their curiosity piqued and more importantly their gratitude inspired." She quoted saying, Richard L. Evans once said, "It is sobering or should be, to each of us to consider how much of the hours and efforts of others have gone into the making of all of us. The time others have taken to feed us, teach us, preserve our freedom, write the books we read, invent the tools we use; all of the tangibles that are ours; the very houses and buildings in which we live our lives. All this and so much else unmentioned, others have done for



us. We are the inheritors of so much more than we can calculate. One measure of our gratitude should be our willingness to work, to serve, to pass on to others such things as we ourselves have received” (Call, *UAD Bulletin*, September 2003; Sanderson, 2004).

Ms. Call stated that the community center would not exist without persistent, coordinated advocacy efforts of the Utah Deaf community that spanned at least five decades. She also desired to see in twenty to fifty years from now everyone who comes to the community center knows who Dr. Robert G. Sanderson is. Additionally, she wanted them to learn the history and appreciate what Dr. Sanderson and other great Deaf leaders of the 1990s such as Dave Mortensen and Dennis Platt had done (Call, *UAD Bulletin*,

September 2003; Sanderson, 2004).



**Marilyn Call**

Additionally, Ms. Call reminded that Deaf leaders persevered at lobbying for the community center for 46 years. They also lobbied for the relay system, interpreters and many other accommodations the Utah Deaf community have today. 100 years ago Deaf people were not even allowed to marry or get a driver’s license.

Because of this, Ms. Call wanted people to know what a small group of Deaf leaders in Utah accomplished by hard work and sacrifice (Call, *UAD Bulletin*, September 2003; Sanderson, 2004).

According to Ms. Call, the Deaf Center was second home to individuals with hearing loss throughout the Wasatch Front. It was the one place where the

communication barriers of the world did not exist and it was a refuge. She believed a home such as this should bear the name of an outstanding Deaf individual (Call, *UAD Bulletin*, September 2003; Sanderson, 2004).

After all, Dr. Sanderson reminded Ms. Call of Old Faithful. A new sign in Yellowstone National Park explains that the Old Faithful geyser does not shoot as high or as fast as it used to perhaps because of earthquakes and human pollution. However, it is still the most faithful geyser in the park. She explained that Dr. Sanderson may not walk as fast anymore...or jump as high...but he was always there to do a job when he was needed...just like Old Faithful (Call, *UAD Bulletin*, September 2003; Sanderson, 2004).

### **Marilyn Call Gives a Speech at the Utah State Board of Education**

On August 1, 2003, Marilyn Call gave a short speech at the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) on why the community center should be given a new name; Robert G. Sanderson Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She requested that the USBE name the Center after Dr. Sanderson. The board unanimously supported renaming the community center (Call, *UAD Bulletin*, September 2003).

At the State Board meeting, Marilyn Call shared the excellent reasons why Dr. Sanderson was chosen to represent Utah's Deaf leaders (Marilyn Call, *UAD Bulletin*, September 2003).

1. Dr. Sanderson was the first person hired to create a rehabilitation service program for Deaf people. The many services that we have today stem from his creation of a Deaf Unit of Vocational Rehabilitation.
2. He was the Chairman for the Feasibility Study committee, which submitted the findings to Dr. Talbot in 1975. This officially began a quest for funding for a Center, which culminated in 1988.
3. He has been lobbying the legislature for better services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Utahns for over 40 years. Many of the services provided to the Deaf community today were his original ideas.
4. He was the first Deaf professional hired by the Utah State Board of Education.
5. He is the first Deaf person in Utah to get a Doctorate degree. He didn't need this for his job. He just wanted to prove that Deaf people could do it.

6. When he retired in 1985, he didn't quit working for the cause. He just stopped getting paid. He continued to serve as an advocate. Almost 20 year past retirement, he never misses an opportunity to lead and advocate for the deaf. He continued to drive down to the Capitol even on snowy days to lobby for the cause. He continues to drive from Roy to the Center 2 or 3 times a week from Roy. He serves on various committees, boards, volunteers at the bookstore, and more.

The State Board unanimously supported renaming the community center (Call, *UAD Bulletin*, September 2003).

### **Historic Moment**

Ron Nelson, UAD president went to the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) meeting when Ms. Call gave a short speech on why the Utah Community Center of Deaf and Hard of Hearing should be given a new name. Robert Sanderson and his lovely wife, Mary, were present along with Dave Mortensen and his lovely wife, Shanna, Ron Nelson and his lovely wife, Kristi Mortensen. Dennis Platt, Camille Call-Garcia, Kathy Evans and Mitch Jensen also attended the meeting to witness such an historic moment.

Mr. Nelson said it was historical moment for all of them to see the USBE board voted unanimously to support the name change and said that Dr. Sanderson gave a short



**Ron Nelson**

speech with tears in his eyes and thanked the board for the honor. He said he was lucky to be with the right people at the right time, especially his wife, Mary Sanderson and also Dave Mortensen.

Mr. Nelson observed that they were fortunate to have their previous center named after one of their own people. It gave them another reason to be proud of the center and take care of it the best they can (Nelson, *UAD Bulletin*, September 2003).

## Robert G. Sanderson Community Center Celebration

On October 4, 2003 from 6:30 to 9:00 PM, a huge renaming celebration was held in honor of Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, a leader in the Utah Deaf community of Utah. There were 1,000 people in attendance. Dr. Sanderson, his wife Mary, and his two sons, Gary and Barry, and their spouses and children came. Governor Olene S. Walker, Dr. Blaine Petersen, and Representative Judy Ann Buffmire also came. Dr. I. King Jordan, president of Gallaudet University flew from Washington, D.C. to join the celebration. Dr. Jordan spoke at the event. He and Dr. Sanderson were long time friends (Dr. Sanderson was a member of the Gallaudet College's Board of Trustees during the 1988 Deaf President Now) (Sanderson, 2004).



**Dr. I. King Jordan with his wife, Linda walking into the Sanderson Community Center**

Hard of Hearing. After all, he deserved to get a large portion of the credit for keeping the dream alive (Call, *UAD Bulletin*, September 2003).

The Sanderson Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is the first state building



**Dr. Sanderson has a heartwarming encounter with Beth Ann Stewart Campbell**

that we are aware of to be named after a Deaf individual. It is the pride and the home of the Deaf community in Utah.

Dr. Sanderson said that, “Having the Utah center named after him was

“humbling.” He added, “It’s something I never expected, “an honor that should also go to his supportive family, friends and colleagues. I didn’t stand alone” (Urbani, *Deseret News*, October 2003).



Dr. Sanderson and Marilyn Call. The man next to Robert is unknown

### **The Sanderson’s Memorial Stones and Bench**

Upon the death of Dr. Robert G. Sanderson’s wife, Mary, in October 2008, Dr. Sanderson and his son Barry approached Marilyn Call about putting a bench and stone up in memory of Mary. Marilyn felt this was appropriate and gave the okay because this building is named for Dr. Sanderson and they all knew that his time would follow within a few years. s. Call showed the family a few possible places for the bench and marker. When they walked the grounds they said they could sense from Mary's spirit that she wanted the memorial site to be close to the playground where children would be happily playing.



The day is here, so to speak. On March 31, 2012, Dr. Sanderson's memorial stone, with name and dates, was placed with Mary's stone. Gary Sanderson, who died in 2011, will have his name on the same stone as his father. Gary was a nationally known interpreter as well as the director of CSUN National Center on Deafness in California (Marilyn Call, personal communication, March 21, 2012).

### **Sculpture Unveiled at Celebration**

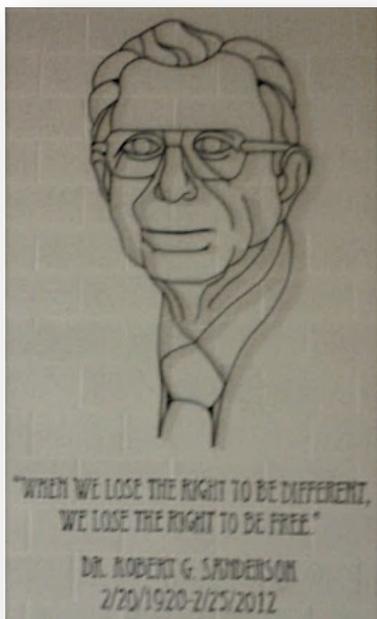
In the November 2012 issue of the UAD Bulletin, Valerie Kinney wrote in her article that the highlight of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration at the Robert G. Sanderson Community Center was the unveiling of a metal sculpture of Dr. Robert G. Sanderson who was the namesake of the community center (Kinney, *UAD Bulletin*, November 2012).

Trenton Marsh, a metalworker on the side, an interpreter trainer (deaf) with the Utah Interpreter, carved the sculpture of Dr. Sanderson. Under the sculpture, the words, "When we lose the right to be different, we lose the right to be free." His birth date



**Trenton Marsh**

and death date, 2-20-1920 and 2-25-2012, are under the quotation.



Dr. Sanderson's family – son Barry and his wife, Teresa Sanderson, grandson Robert and his wife, Nicole Sanderson, granddaughter McKalle and husband Tyler Dahl - were present for the unveiling. When Barry was asked what his thoughts were as the sculpture was unveiled. He

said, “The thing that struck me most was that Dad would have been thrilled to see so many people there, young and old. When he and the other began work on the dream of having a community center, I don’t think they could have imagined what it would become. It is a dream fulfilled by being a place where generation after generation can enjoy social events and have the necessary resources to lead happy and productive lives. We were honored to be there” (Kinney, *UAD Bulletin*, November 2012).

During the Italian dinner through a program hosted by Marilyn Call, director spoke of how five deaf leaders met to form a [1975] feasibility committee to explore ways and means of making a center for deaf and hard of hearing a reality. Of the five, only one is living: Dave Mortensen. Others were Dr. Sanderson, Ned C. Wheeler, Dora Laramie and Lloyd Perkins (Kinney, *UAD Bulletin*, November 2012).



Barry Sanderson and his wife, Teresa

The theme of the event was “Roaring 20’s Party,” was mirrored in the 1920’s costumes worn by some of the nearly 300 attendees. Ms. Call explained that the number 20 resonated – October 20, 1920’s era, 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, Dr. Sanderson’s birthday, 20<sup>th</sup> of February, and birth year, 1920 (Kinney, *UAD Bulletin*, November 2012).

After dinner, various games such as shuffleboard, pinball, and bingo were provided for everyone to play and the costume judging was also held. Some participants had fun showing off their dance moves. Ms. Kinney stated, “It was an evening to be remembered long after everyone went home! (Kinney, *UAD Bulletin*, November 2012).

## Conclusion

All things considered, I wanted to say that we are very fortunate to have our own Robert G. Sanderson Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing available for deaf and hard of hearing populations in the state of Utah. It took the Utah Association for the Deaf officers and members of the Utah Deaf community 40 years to make our community center a reality. For years, the deaf leaders, especially Dr. Sanderson and Dave Mortensen got active and remained active throughout the political process without giving up so that we have a luxurious community center to meet our communication and accessibility needs. In addition, they were persistent in keeping the ball rolling despite



**Dr. Sanderson**



**W. David Mortensen**  
Photo by Robert L. Bonnell

bumps in the road to

reflect the vision of the community center. Now that they have conquered hurdles to realize the Sanderson Community Center for the benefit of the Deaf community. I hope this historical document helps you remember and appreciate what the self-sacrificed leaders had done for us that we now take for granted.

## Notes

Beth Ann Campbell, e-mail message to Jodi B. Kinner, September 20, 2012.

Darlene Stewart Cochran, interview with her brother, Gene Stewart, April 4, 2012.

Dave Mortensen, e-mail message to Jodi B. Kinner, April 3, 2012.

Kenneth L. Kinner, personal communication, 2008.

Marilyn Call, e-mail message to Jodi B. Kinner, October 15, 2009.

Marilyn Call, e-mail message to Jodi B. Kinner, January 25, 2012.

Marilyn Call, e-mail message to Jodi B. Kinner, March 21, 2012.

Norman Williams, e-mail message to Jodi B. Kinner, April 12, 2012.

Norman Williams, e-mail message to Jodi B. Kinner, May 8, 2012.

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