

OBSERVATIONS BY THE WRITER

To the 99% of mankind that perform life's essential chores with the use of their ears, the other 1% have always been an accursed lot. Deaf people come in all shapes and sizes and over the years have been treated with uniform derision, disdain, discrimination, and distrust. It was only a few hundred years ago that deaf people were put in institutions because they were thought to have no speech, no brains, and no potential. They were a problem for society. And society solved the problem by locking them up and throwing the keys away.

Society today is still hard on "deafies"--as they are affectionately called by their friends. They are often thought to be clumsy, rude, clan-nish, undereducated, threatening, lazy, and objects to be pitied. The hearing person is clearly favored in every way. Ordinary every-day activities the hearing person enjoys seem deliberately designed to help make life tough for deaf people. Fire trucks, ambulances, and automobiles use audio signals (sirens, horns) as a normal way of life; alarm clocks waken us; bells ring to change school classes or invite us to church; telephones and doors are answered when bells ring; recreational activities such as television, radio, musical concerts, plays, movies, lectures are all predicated upon sound; simple communication between two human beings or answering the "cry" of a baby are all involved with "hearing."

It is impossible for a hearing person to understand what it is like to live in a silent world because we just haven't been there. An analogy might be made for a white person understanding what it is to be a black man. We can study and get close, but it is impossible to completely understand because we are not black.

Another observation is essential to remember and, because it is so obvious, most of us do not think of it. Deafness is a disability that is unobservable. A deaf person looks completely normal and, in an ordinary group, would never be noticed. Because a person does not look disabled, many people underestimate the extent of handicapping conditions. Deafness is, in fact, a severe disability that gives rise to many and varied handicaps. We just do not realize the amount of learning that goes on through our ears.

For the past six years, I have associated with deaf people in order to understand them and in order to give educational leadership in this area in my role as associate state superintendent. I believe it is a professional obligation for one who is assigned to oversee educational programs for the deaf to examine, appraise, evaluate, and attempt to understand the product of the system. If one does not understand the product, its culture, attitudes, and economic status, then it is almost impossible to design a viable and sound educational program. I certainly do not claim to have all the answers nor can I claim to be an authority in this area. But I have gained some insights during that period. I have attended church with the deaf, visited their homes, played with them at their socials, attended their association meetings and amateur nights, and discussed their educational problems both in public and in private conversations.

My first impression of a deaf person was a feeling that he was rude. It was during a meeting when all of us were discussing a topic and just when another member or I would start a sentence, this deaf person would interrupt with his comments. The meeting was half over before I figured out the problem. He had an interpreter and she was two or three seconds

behind the sound, which meant that my deaf colleague was two or three seconds behind the conversation--just enough so that he interrupted us at times. I soon discovered the problem was not his but that of the chairman, who was not sensitive to the problem and often went hurriedly on without involving the deaf person.

My next observation and education in deafness occurred when I visited the deaf church meeting. My preconceived notion was that I would be in a very quiet meeting where fingers and hands would be "flying" but where sound would be minimal. The reverse was true as far as sound was concerned. I can't remember attending a noisier church service. The children were crying or making other noises and parents, being deaf, did not notice the noise until another person called it to their attention. The floor was wooden and every little thing produced a loud noise. One lady in high heels made a great deal of noise as she walked, where a hearing person would have "tiptoed." Of course, the deaf lady's behavior was appropriate since it was a deaf service and the noise did not bother others at all -- they were all deaf.

I mention this because there are times when hearing people who do not understand the behavior of the deaf community have thought them to be rude or lacking in some social skills.

I have watched interpreters very closely, and I have thought many times that my lip reading skills were pretty good and that I could, in fact, read the lips of the interpreter. I checked this out on several occasions during news broadcasts on television when an interpreter was signing for the deaf viewers. I have gone to the T.V. set and turned the sound off

completely and watched as hard as I could and, suddenly, my lip-reading ability has gone down to zero. I frankly have not been able to understand the news at all when the sound was off.

I should mention that every deaf person, regardless of the philosophy of education he has had, reads lips. There are those who do it fairly well and those who have less skills, and the skill seems to be unrelated to their educational attainment or intelligence quotient. It seems to be somewhat like the native ability people have for piano playing, for instance. Some have more native inborn ability than others, but just as in music, deaf people can and do improve and perfect this ability to the extent possible. My point here is that I have never come across any deaf person who has skill enough that he understands everything through lip reading. (Curiously, tests have shown that hearing people read lips better than deaf people!)

I want to mention also that lip reading, regardless of how well it is done, does not meet the needs of a deaf person in some circumstances. This is most obvious in meetings where all of the participants are conversing. When a deaf person can't hear and cannot tell by the sound who is speaking and the direction it is coming from, he can't focus his attention and turn his head toward the person speaking in order to read his lips.

I was interested in a recent news article on lip-reading from the Deseret News on Friday, January 21, 1977, which stated as follows:

CARTER TALK PUZZLES LIP READERS

NORTHAMPTON, Mass. (UPI) --

Jimmy Carter's inauguration posed a special problem for the nation's 15 million deaf people--the new President is almost impossible to lip read on television.

Teachers at the famed Clarke School for the Deaf said Thursday Carter's southern accent, his manner of speech and even his famous smile make it difficult for deaf people to make out what the President is saying.

"Initially there will be some difficulty lip reading Carter because he tends to smile so much. The overwhelming presence of that smile tends to stop deaf people from focusing on his lip movements," said Mrs. Patricia Archambault, coordinator of the school's speech program.

To get around the problem, the school's television studio captioned the inauguration speech on their television sets. The educators said deaf people without access to special captioning had trouble following Carter.

Mrs. Archambault said "after a lot of exposure" deaf people can become accustomed to such traits and "maybe with time they will be able to easily lip read the President. But initially there should be some difficulty."

The problem was revealed in a recent poll of Clarke's Upper School pupils, who listed Carter as the "most difficult personality to lip read on television."

She said in serious speeches, such as the Inauguration speech, Carter's tendency to smile would probably be overshadowed by the nature of the talk. But, even so, she said Carter tends to talk without moving his lips.

Dr. Arthur Boothroyd, one of the school's lip reading experts, said the President's southern accent is another difficulty for deaf people.

"The speed at which he talks and a lot of Southern mannerisms, such as dropping some syllables, make him difficult to lip read. If you're not used to those mannerisms, they can be difficult to follow," Boothroyd said.

Several years ago, I was asked to speak at the annual convention of the Utah Association of the Deaf. Since I was invited several months in advance of the meeting, I decided to give my speech in signs. For several weeks I practiced my talk with the help of a tutor for 30 minutes each day. I gave that talk with shaky and faltering hands to about 300 attendees, but the look of appreciation on their faces and the feeling of acceptance they gave me was worth every minute I put into the effort. Co-incidentally, I think it was about the same time that those of the "oral" persuasion felt that I was now a true proponent of "total communication" since I had learned to sign (slow as it was). Incidentally, I have been "oral" all of my life.

Deaf people are, in general, a happy people and do not feel that their disability is devastating. They love to get together and any meeting of the deaf goes on and on into the wee hours of the morning. Even after church services, they linger for great periods of time because, in my opinion, they have a desire and need for communication and can do so freely and easily with their own peers.

Deaf people tend to be very dramatic. I assume this comes from the use of signs. They act many things out to be understood and many deaf adults remind me of some gospel preachers found in the deep South as they gesture to get their points across.

Deaf people are deeply concerned about their own education. In general, they believe that they do not have the necessary skills to get the good jobs--the ones that pay well. And almost every deaf adult can tell you of instances where, because of his deafness, he has been discriminated against in some way or another. It is because they are undereducated and relegated to poor-paying positions that they are so insistent that education gives deaf children the skills to compete for good jobs in society when they finish school.

Along this line, I was interested in reading in the November, 1976, issue of "The Deaf American." It reported that Dr. John Schroedel had focused his dissertation research on ascertaining what were the important ingredients in determining the jobs deaf adults held. He studied the influences of a deaf person's education, communication skills, social class, race, sex, and use of hearing aids on attaining a job at a higher or lower level than the job held by the deaf person's parents. The results of his research show that education is the most important factor which allows deaf people to get jobs at high levels.

Society in general does not understand deafness, and many employers feel that a deaf person cannot do a satisfactory job for him. Many misconceptions exist. For example, many employers just assume that deaf people cannot drive. They believe that people who are deaf cannot hear a horn honk, a fire truck or ambulance siren or a policeman's whistle, so they would be a risk on the highway. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Most deaf people have better driving records than the hearing public at large because they have learned to use their eyesight more effectively than hearing people. Actually deaf people do have performance records on the job that are equal to or better than their hearing peers. They don't stop working to talk with fellow employees, and their attendance records are above average.

I have observed what I consider to be a serious problem at the School for the Deaf. There appears to me to be conflict, discontent, and strife at the professional level. This stems primarily from the desire of both the proponents of "oral" and "total communication" to discredit

the other side. There is suspicion on the part of both. This can best be illustrated by examples. (1) A few years ago, a deaf person came to see me with what he considered to be proof that "oral" teachers were giving the students the answers to standardized tests before the tests were administered. He had a ditto copy that had been retrieved from a waste basket which appeared to him to be the copy of a test along with the answers. He felt the oral teachers were giving undue help to their students to prove that the oral department was superior to the total communication one. (2) Another example occurred recently when oral teachers came to the meeting called specifically for graduates of the School for the Deaf in which they were invited to give their opinions for this study. The oral teachers were suspicious of the questionnaire and concerned about how it would be presented. (3) My last example is well exemplified below with excerpts from a letter from Merlin G. Cheney, Weber State College, addressed to Tony Christopulos, dated November 11, 1976:

"Dear Mr. Christopulos:

My last two visits to USD, September 29 and November 1 have been very disturbing and, after some deliberation, I decided it might be more helpful to express my concerns than to merely remain disturbed.

On both those visits, I was expressly invited to your campus to share techniques, knowledge, and experience which might prove useful to you and your staff. This, I was happy to do without remuneration and merely in the interest of education and cooperation among state agencies.

While on those occasions you were courteously considerate, I felt considerable belligerence and animosity from your staff. Especially, on November first, when I spoke briefly to your faculty meeting, I was subjected to the most unprofessional kind of rudeness. Nor was it appropriate that I should be grilled about administrative procedures of the college program at that time. I was plainly introduced as a professor of reading and writing who had been invited to address the group on that subject.

But clearly, your faculty was not interested in that subject, though it was one that should concern them greatly. Instead, they were bent on some kind of private quarrel among themselves about which techniques were "right" ones. I am offended that so petty a quarrel should have dominated their professional interaction with the college. I am deeply disturbed that I detected no sense of professionalism, no concern for the larger questions they need to address themselves to, and no conception that there is not a "right" way, but only ways that work better than others."

I am concerned about the lack of professionalism on the part of the staff at the school. It is apparent that there is a great deal of time, energy, and talent being wasted because of this constant fight.

When there is low morale and conflict, it inevitably affects the education of the students. Unhappy students do not learn well. Unfortunately, the conflict does not remain at the teacher level.

Over the years I have observed almost constant harassment by parents of hearing-impaired students. It is my opinion that the school administration has more "upset" and "demanding" parents than most regular schools much larger in size. Again, it is my belief that these parents, for the most part, are convinced that one philosophy is superior to another and many times they do not want to hear or accept any recommendations that would transfer their child to another program. The administration has reported to me many times that staff recommendations and parent wishes (often demands) are completely different and, in the final analysis, the parents' wishes are implemented.

The school has had many studies and recommendations made over the last few years and I suspect that both the administration and staff feel that too much time is required to answer concerns, defend programs, gather statistics, etc. and not enough time is left to do the required job of educating children. Many concerns and recommendations are made to the Governor's Advisory Council, and every one of them requires time of the staff of the school to investigate.

I have gathered a strong feeling in speaking with the Superintendent of the Utah School for the Deaf and various other administrators and teachers and with some input from parents first hand--expressions that parents relate to me, either second or third-handed, by speaking with relatives and friends of families of these children, and by my association with Beth Ann, my wife, and her circle of friends who are well acquainted in the deaf community--that there is, in general, an overwhelming desire for hearing parents who have deaf children to have those children attend the neighborhood school at almost any cost. In my own mind and without any objective data to back up this point, it is my conclusion that the reason the parents use for this tremendous desire is based on the fact that hearing parents of deaf children do not want the "stigma" of having a handicapped child in their family.

They desire normal children. Thus they want above all else to "normalize" their handicapped child. The "stigma" is so great that they simply do not want any of their associates to know they have a child in a "special" school. Just as important, they do not want to force their immediate relatives, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins to be found with having a relative in their family who is handicapped.

Likewise, they do not want to have to admit even to their working associates, church associates, political associates, etc. that they have a handicapped child. They would much rather say, "My child (the handicapped one) is attending Cottonwood High School (the school across the street from our house)." This strong desire gives them the feeling that somehow all the problems of deafness are going to be solved and then their goal has been accomplished. Of course, this desire is heightened when they are told

by professionals in the field that they can, in fact, mainstream their child and all will be well.

In my opinion, the great majority of all hearing parents fit into this category that I have just described and, unfortunately perhaps, there is a growing number of deaf parents who lean more and more toward integration into the neighborhood school. Besides their honest feelings that the opportunity to mingle with the normal world is an improvement, it also seems to be a feather in their cap and a step upward if they can say that their deaf child is in a public integrated situation. This, incidentally, is a real departure from the philosophy held by the vast majority of deaf persons as recently as fifteen years ago, when they manifested the feeling that even self-contained day programs should be taken away and they almost en masse wanted their children in a residential situation. Part of this change in feeling is due to their disenchantment with the quality of their own education and what they perceive to be a poor educational environment exemplified by the conflicts described above.

"Mainstreaming" is defined as "an educational program for handicapped youth which provides support to the handicapped student(s) and his/her teacher(s) while he/she pursues all or a majority of his/her education within a regular school program with non-handicapped students." I believe mainstreaming is fast becoming the most crucial issue in the education of deaf children in Utah. Much of the emphasis for mainstreaming comes from the University of Utah within the State, and with federal laws mandating local instruction in "the least restrictive environment" mainstreaming is becoming a legislated reality nationally. Many educators and parents have expressed great concern about recent federal laws and are fearful that our special schools may soon be lost in Utah.

I'm concerned that many parents who have not fully studied all of the ramifications may be supporting this trend to the detriment of the child. Mainstreaming should be done only after thorough preparation. All parties must be sensitive to the needs of the student and his/her progress must be carefully monitored and supported.

One central issue in mainstreaming is whether the child can be matched into a comparable age group with hearing pupils with about the same achievement levels. Generally speaking, if the hearing group is much further advanced in terms of achievement, the success for the deaf child will be hampered. Many of the programs existing now in school districts have not matched the hearing impaired children with hearing pupils with the same achievement level. It is my opinion that these programs are not satisfactory.

When a deaf child is mainstreamed, it is extremely important that teachers are well prepared to take such a child in their class. Teachers want to be sure, of course, that they can manage the responsibility and they want and should expect appropriate instructional support with the conditions spelled out in detail. The regular classroom teacher and administrators should participate fully in the planning and the decision making, and the teacher must be able to give the hearing impaired pupil the same personal and professional attention that he gives all other students. In too many instances the deaf child is somewhat isolated from the "normal" children and this creates many problems.

Another problem with mainstreaming is that some school systems assume that the regular classroom teacher must teach the deaf child everything. There can be full or partial mainstreaming depending upon the child's

capabilities and requirements and upon the school's resources. An effective mainstreaming situation must have regular and special teachers working as teams. A good mainstreaming program allows and encourages flexibility and time scheduling in curriculum modifications and in grouping of children for instruction. It is possible, for example, that a hearing impaired child may be physically with and in visual contact with hearing children all through the school day while still being given individualized, special educational instruction. Mainstreaming is an expensive program and that fact must not be forgotten.

At present, many people believe that recent legislation may eventually result in all handicapped children being mainstreamed and the residential school in Ogden will be closed. Some believe that the money now being expended at the Utah School for the Deaf would be better spent on the education of deaf children at the local district level. It is my opinion that the residential school is essential and should not be closed. There are many students who can best be served in special schools, and 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 will best be served.

It should be remembered that the School does participate in mainstreaming now in both departments.

My major concern is the quality of education students are receiving at the School for the Deaf. Before elaborating further on this point, it should be pointed out that the percentage of multi-handicapped children has increased the last few years and, in my opinion, conditions today seem to make it difficult to provide good educational programs. My concern does

not relate to philosophies. I'm afraid all students are getting less than a good education which will adequately prepare them for a good life and a good job. I don't have all of the facts and the study being conducted by the Research and Development Division may add light to this subject. This study is included in this report. However, many deaf students who are products of the School are not prepared to earn a living and do not have the basic skills necessary to function adequately in our society.

Listed below are two tables showing the testing scores in English for deaf students at Weber State College for this academic year.

Table I shows that the English grade level for new students ranged from a non-reader up to about a third grader, and the students who have been at Weber State College for a year range from about grade 3 up to grade 5. As compared to college freshmen, (Table II), it appears that USD graduates rank at the bottom in percentile. As compared to 9th graders (Table I), USD graduates are in the lowest quartile. The best graduate was at the 20th percentile. This means that almost 80% of the "hearing" students in the 9th grade ranked higher than the USD graduates enrolled presently at Weber State College.

Another concern is the "attitude" of the professional teachers in one department directed toward the other. It is deplorable. It is not professional at all. It exists on both sides and usually both sides blame the other.

As mentioned before, I have attended many activities of the deaf community and, almost without exception, I have not seen any teachers in attendance at those functions from the "oral" department. At some Governor's Advisory Committee Meetings I've observed rudeness on the part of teachers from both departments when recommendations have been presented.

TABLE I

COOPERATIVE ENGLISH TEST
Administered by Merlin Cheney

September 28, 1976 Norms Used - Table 13, grade 9
(Scores converted to percentile)

Student	VOCABULARY Score %ile	LEVEL OF COMP. Score %ile	SPEED OF COMP. Score %ile	TOTAL READING Score %ile	EXPRESSION Score %ile	TOTAL ENGLISH Score %ile
A.	127 2.0	135 19.1	146 59.9	137 18.9	127 3.0	132 8.2
B.	121 0.1	123 2.2	130 5.5	126 0.1	121 0.3	124 0.3
C.	132 10.3	135 19.0	135 14.9	134 12.5	135 19.3	135 13.6*
D.	136 20.9	128 8.0	133 9.7	135 12.5	132 13.6	134 13.6*
E.	121 0.1	126 5.5	130 5.5	126 0.9	127 3.0	127 0.9
F.	133 10.3	130 11.1	132 9.7	133 7.6	132 13.6	133 8.2*
G.	125 1.0	140 36.2	139 29.3	132 7.6	127 3.0	130 4.4
H.	129 3.6	133 14.8	139 29.3	134 12.5	128 5.3	131 4.4
I.	137 20.9	130 11.1	139 29.3	138 26.3	126 3.0	132 8.2
J.	136 20.9	143 43.3	143 45.0	140 34.6	133 13.6	137 20.4*
K.	140 35.8	135 19.1	135 14.9	138 26.3	133 13.6	135 13.6*

* Indicates student is in the second year at W. S. C.

TABLE II

COOPERATIVE ENGLISH TEST
Administered by Marlin Cheney

September 28, 1976 Norms Used - Table 17, College Freshmen

(Scores converted to percentile)

Student	VOCABULARY Score %ile	LEVEL OF COMP. Score %ile	SPEED OF COMP. Score %ile	TOTAL READING Score %ile	EXPRESSION Score %ile	TOTAL ENGLISH Score %ile
A	127 0.1	135 1.9	146 17.5	137 1.6	127 0.2	132 0.4
B	121 0.1	123 0.3	130 0.8	126 0.1	121 0.1	124 0.1
C	132 0.5	135 1.9	135 2.1	134 0.9	135 2.0	135 0.8
D	136 1.5	128 0.9	133 1.1	135 0.9	132 1.1	134 0.8
E.	121 0.1	126 0.7	130 0.8	126 0.1	127 0.2	127 0.1
F.	133 0.5	130 1.3	132 1.1	133 0.4	132 1.1	133 0.4
G.	125 0.1	140 6.3	139 5.4	132 0.4	127 0.2	130 0.2
H.	129 0.1	133 1.6	139 5.4	134 0.9	128 0.4	131 0.2
I.	137 1.5	130 1.3	139 5.4	138 2.7	126 0.2	132 0.4
J.	136 1.5	143 6.9	143 11.4	140 4.2	133 1.1	137 1.3
K.	140 4.1	135 1.9	135 2.1	138 2.7	133 1.1	135 0.8

The controversy over the use of signs is a problem. Oralists do not want their students to see signs in or out of school. Signing, on the other hand, is one of the necessary communication modes for some students. When a student is deprived of his natural mode of communication or is told it is an "inferior language" I believe that this is reflected in his feelings about himself.

When students learn that teachers don't like the language of signs and can't sign, when secretaries, lunch workers, custodians, and other school workers never sign to them, when parents at home refuse to sign, I think his self-image is damaged. And self-image is absolutely necessary for positive educational attainments.

I was interested in the keynote address by Dr. Allen Sussman entitled "Attitudes Toward Deafness," at the VIIth World Congress of the Deaf, Washington, D. C., August 4, 1975. He suggested that the preparation of professionals who work with the deaf should concentrate on the development of positive attitudes toward the deaf, and that candidates seeking jobs in the field should be screened for their attitude. He emphasized the need for training programs to familiarize professional workers with the way in which deaf adults react to hearing people and how to handle those reactions. He brings up the importance of helping parents develop healthy attitudes toward their deaf children. It is important to educate both hearing and deaf people in terms of attitudes toward disability in general, and deafness in particular.

I'm concerned with the present screening process which evaluates students and places them in programs. From the survey taken of the alumni of the School, it was apparent that many former students started in the

oral program and were transferred later to the total communication program. Mr. Christopulos prepared a study for the Advisory Council which showed that _____ students were transferred from oral to total from 1970 to 1976 and only one student transferred from total to oral during that same period of time. This indicates, however, that our present screening process is not very good and needs improvement. With this many transferring from "oral" to "total" and practically no movement from "total" to "oral", I'm afraid the "total" department is thought of as the program for those who can't make it "orally." When they do transfer to total after failing in the oral program, the best learning years have been lost. These oral students have been indoctrinated that total communication is not a good philosophy. They have failed in oral and are now transferred to the program they have learned to dislike at best. This, again, causes self-image problems. In addition parents, many times, are even more determined than students as to the wrongness of total communication. The child is torn between the desires of his parents and the program he has just entered. Many of these parents refuse to learn to communicate with him in the language of signs and fingerspelling which further frustrates him. All of these conditions point up the need to do a better job of orienting parents and evaluating students as early as possible.

In concluding this section, it seems to me that far too often the child's needs have been lost in the controversy over philosophies. Children are all different. They are different in the severity of their disability. Many of them have a second and third disability in addition to their learning impairment. No philosophy is a panacea to educating all children. My educational experience as a teacher has taught me that

what works for one child does not always work for another. When one teaching strategy doesn't work, good teachers try another. The main objective is the child--what are his needs, what works for him.

The main task for educators of the deaf is to work toward the development of quality programming which includes alternative approaches and improved diagnostics for selecting the best educational alternatives for each individual child.