

Marilyn T. Call

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Marilyn T. Call was born in Salt Lake City, Utah on October 7, 1953, to Earl and Louise Tiller. There are six children in her family. Three of them and her mother have varying degrees of hearing loss. Her own mild hearing loss was identified in elementary school, and it gradually progressed to the severe hearing loss she has today. Her older sister now has a profound hearing loss, but interestingly, her 84-year-old mother's hearing loss has stayed at the severe level.

Marilyn graduated from the University of Utah in therapeutic recreation, three years after her graduation from high school. She had been accepted into the university's graduate program in special education when she decided to put off pursuing her Master of Arts degree to get married (Marilyn Call, personal communication, April 24, 2012). She married Richard Call September 25, 1975, in the Salt Lake Temple. They had been high school sweethearts. He had served an LDS Mission in Washington D.C. while she attended college (Marilyn Call, personal communication, April 24, 2012).

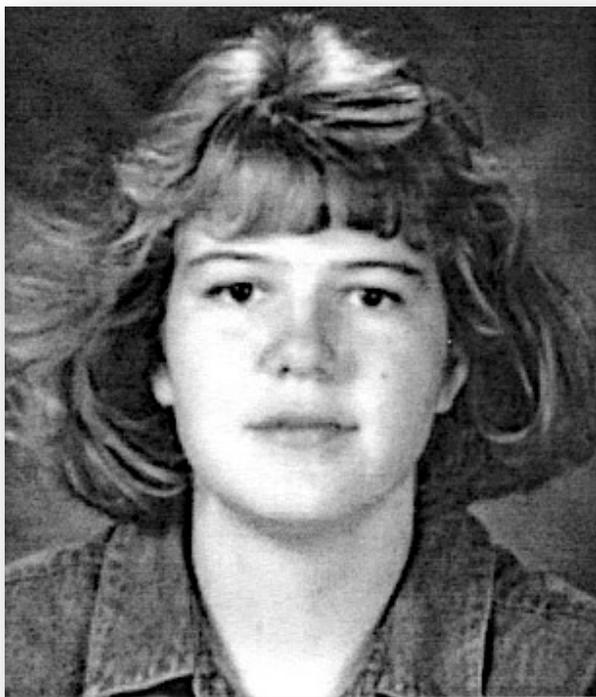


Marilyn Call

Marilyn and Richard's first daughter, Ashley Ann, was born November 9, 1976. They found out that she was deaf at age two and that she had autism at age three. Challenges aside, her obituary recounts a joyful, active life: "She found great joy in things most of us overlooked.

Ashley loved Utah's mountains in all four seasons. She loved boating, motorcycle rides, UTA busses, fish, Slurpees, phone books and long rides in cars with windows down. She loved her job at Harmon Music Group and her co-workers there.” At the age of 29 on March 21, 2006, Ashley passed away from complications due to epilepsy (Deseret News, March 23 2006).

Because Ashley had severe autism and was profoundly deaf, it was very hard to get school services for her. The preschool at the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB) said they could not serve her, directing them instead to the Parent-Infant Program (PIP). At a meeting with a PIP advisor, the advisor brought her orange SEE Sign Language book and encouraged Marilyn and Richard to teach her Ashley sign language. “This was very difficult



Ashley Call

because she would not make eye contact with people,” says Marilyn. “We would hold her cute little head and do a sign right in front of her face but she would look up or to the side” (Marilyn Call, personal communication, April 24, 2012).

At the time, there was a waiting list for the preschool at the Children’s Behavior Therapy Unit (CBTU) that served children with autism where she was eventually admitted. At CBTU Ashley was first taught how to look at people, and

then she began learning a signing system, Signing Exact English (SEE). Marilyn and Richard learned to sign with their children by volunteering in class at USDB, and from studying “the orange book,” the SEE “bible” at the time. When Ashley turned six, she was able to attend a residential division at USDB. She made so much progress after two years that she was moved into the deaf first grade class in Ogden, and within a few years came back home and enrolled in the USDB division in Salt Lake City (Marilyn Call, personal communication, April 24, 2012).

Ashley lived in-group homes for various brief periods in her life when her behavior struggles wore down her family. For the last five years of her life she lived at home, where she wanted to be, and the state allowed Marilyn to hire deaf support persons in her home (Marilyn Call, personal communication, April 24, 2012). Ashley’s favorite Deaf staff members were Rosa Rathbun, Carole Peck, and her sister Camille.

Their second daughter, Camille, was born October 3, 1978. Richard and Marilyn found out she was also Deaf when Camille was nine months old. One of the blessings for Camille of having a Deaf and autistic sister is that her family had already begun using sign language in the home.

“And no one – not even the people at Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AGBell) – told us to put Camille in an oral division,” Marilyn recalls. At age three, Camille was lucky to meet other Deaf children whose parents had also chosen the Total Communication division right from the beginning. Many students in her class went on to post-secondary or college educations and entered vocational or professional careers.



Camille Call, 1997 Miss Deaf Utah

At age 31, Camille died from complications due to epilepsy, like her sister Ashley before her. The following is from her obituary and describes some highlights of her life:

She was born deaf and loved her life as part of the Deaf community... Camille graduated from Cottonwood High School with honors in 1996. She was included in Who's Who of America's High School Students all three years. She graduated from Utah

State University in 2000. During her college years, she served as Miss Deaf Utah. She attended the Miss Deaf America Pageant three times, first as a contestant and later as a chaperone. She next served an LDS mission to Portland, Oregon and loved the Deaf community there. Her work life included teaching at the Missionary Training Center at BYU, mentoring families with deaf children and serving as an ASL instructor for Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. She served in Relief Society presidencies and Young Women's presidency for LDS Deaf Wards. Her crowning achievements; however, were her marriage to Samuel Garcia Jr. in the Salt Lake Temple on December 28, 2002, and giving life to two special sons, AJ (Alberto Jordan) (4) and Ashton Samuel (3).

Her obituary lovingly and poignantly recounts the end of her life: “She knew her time on earth was ending soon and when that time came, she hung around just long enough for family and close friends to kiss her goodbye. Camille was worn out from the epilepsy that ravaged her mind and body for the last four years of her life” (Salt Lake Tribune, June 22, 2010).

In 1985 when Ashley was nine and Camille was seven, Richard and Marilyn found out about an infant in the Philippines needing a home (Marilyn’s sister was serving a church mission there.) They adopted their son, Jason, the following March and welcomed him into the family when he was almost one year old. Today Jason and his wife, Jessica, have two daughters, Kaya and Khayla (Marilyn Call, personal communication, April 24, 2012).

Marilyn first got involved with lobbying on “the Hill” in 1979 when Ashley was three years old, and Marilyn was looking for a preschool for her to attend. Ashley needed a school like the Children’s Behavior Therapy Unit (CBTU) at



The biggest tragedy of their lives was having their girls die at the young ages of 29 and 31 from a form of Epilepsy that hit them in their late 20’s. Marilyn and Richard miss them every hour of everyday

Valley Mental Health but there were no openings. During this time, Marilyn met Carmen Pingree of the Pingree School, where she learned a lot about lobbying from Carmen and “took it all to heart” (Marilyn Call, personal communication, April 24, 2012).

In 1980 and 1981, Marilyn began helping with lobbying for more slots for autistic children at CBTU, as well as a group home for autistic adults. Both funding requests were passed by the Utah legislature. She then began lobbying in support of more funding for the specialized Autism Residential Program at the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind. That year USDB obtained the needed funding for more staff and a change in the staffing pattern (Marilyn Call, personal communication, April 24, 2012).

From 1983 to 1989, Marilyn worked for the Utah Parent Center as a Parent Trainer/Consultant (Marilyn Call, personal communication, April 24, 2012). There, she taught



Jason and Camille Call

workshops to assist parents become better advocates in the special education system and offered consulting and troubleshooting with parents. In addition, she was the editor of the newsletter as well as coordinator and creator of the surrogate parent-training program (Price, *DSDHH Newsletter*, July 27, 1992).

Marilyn was also a board member of the Systematic Transition Project, a member of the National Task Force to Study Mainstreaming Deaf Students, a member of the Advisory Council for Autism Society of Utah, and vice-president of the International Society of Parents of the Deaf (Utah Chapter) (Price, *DSDHH*

Newsletter, July 27, 1992). Marilyn later served on the Advisory Council for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind.

In 1989, Marilyn was hired as the first Director of the Legislative Coalition for People with Disabilities (LCPD). As director, she strengthened the membership of LCPD, developed advocate-training workshops throughout the State of Utah, and conducted ongoing public awareness activities (Price, DSDHH Newsletter, July 27, 1992). In addition, she lobbied for all sorts of issues for people with disabilities including funding for Rehabilitation, Special Education, and Division of Services for People with Disabilities. Additionally, in 1991, she lobbied in support of the new building for the Utah Community Center for the Deaf (UCCD) in Taylorsville, Utah.



Marilyn with Don Uchida and Blaine Petersen, former directors of the Office of Rehabilitation at Dave Mortensen’s day of honor, 2014

At the time, Marilyn became acquainted with Jim Hilber, Vocational Rehabilitation counselor; Gene Stewart, Division of Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH) division director; and several Deaf advocates (Sanderson, 2004). She recounts that in 1992, she

was “lured away” from her position at LCPD by Gene Stewart and was hired as program director of DSDHH. This position was previously held by Beth Ann Campbell with a change in the title. Under Marilyn’s direction, two new programs were developed: Circle of Friends (for people with multiple disabilities and some degree of hearing loss, started under a grant from Salt Lake County) and Deaf Connection (a program connecting families with Deaf



Marilyn with Senator Hatch. She served on his advisory committee on disabilities. Senator Hatch was a major player in getting the Americans with Disabilities Act passed

children with each other and with Deaf adults). With feedback from the community she lobbied for additional funding for positions to expand programs and services at UCCD: a family and youth specialist, a second case manager, and hard of hearing specialists in Salt Lake City and St. George. Funding was also gained for expanded community education, mental health services, job development services, and the building of a new wing on UCCD for additional classrooms and office space. Marilyn's advocacy work on Capitol Hill at the time included lobbying (as a member of a task force) for the passage of two legislative bills: one requiring sign language interpreters to be certified and one changing the legal status of American Sign Language so it could be recognized and taught as foreign language (Marilyn Call, personal communication, April 24, 2012).

When the Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing moved into the UCCD new building in 1992, the budget for services was quite small. One of the reasons Marilyn was hired as division 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 the division could match the great caliber of the building (Sanderson, 2004). She went back to the University of Utah part-time while still working full-time. She received her master's degree in social work in 1999 and her LCSW license in 2001 (Marilyn Call, personal communication, April 24, 2012). The Utah Community Center for the Deaf had "and Hard of Hearing" – UCCDHH - added to its name in 1999.

When a change in administration occurred at the UCCDHH, Marilyn was promoted in July 2001 to acting administrator of the DSDHH. After serving six months, she was promoted to director in January 2002 with the enthusiastic support of the Deaf community, (Sanderson, 2004).

As explained in the "History of the Robert G. Sanderson Community Center," Marilyn, as the director of UCCDHH, spearheaded the effort for the community center to be named after a deaf person. Doing so would make it the first community center to be so named. She felt the UCCDHH should carry the name of a Deaf person because the center would not have been possible without Deaf people's years of dedication and hard work (Call, UAD Bulletin,

September 2003; Sanderson, 2004). On March 1, 2003, she petitioned the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) to name the center after Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, a long-time leader of the Deaf community. The board unanimously supported the renaming of the community center to the Robert G. Sanderson Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Call, *UAD Bulletin*, September 2003).

In her role as director of the Sanderson Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Marilyn continued to expand or add divisions and services. She assisted individuals who were deaf or hard of hearing in applying for employment opportunities. She supported the creation of various programs that included outreach and technology, interpreter mentoring and training, and the development of free classes related to hearing loss.

Marilyn supported the development and expansion of a demonstration lab loaner bank, which allows Deaf and hard of hearing individuals to try various assistive technologies before they purchase it. She also fought for funding to hire mental health counselors and case managers fluent in American Sign Language (Hamilton Relay, June 3, 2011). Moreover, she helped to obtain funding for positions and office space to establish the satellite office known as Southern Utah Divisions for Deaf and Hard of Hearing in St. George, Utah.



Marilyn advocated with the state board of education and the governor to rename UCCD to the Sanderson Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, 2003

On June 3, 2011, Marilyn was selected for the Hamilton Relay 2011 Better Hearing and Speech Month Recognition Award for the State of Utah for her many years of advocacy,

mentoring, and administrative work on behalf of Deaf and hard of hearing persons and individuals with multiple disabilities. Hamilton Relay's newsletter called her "an excellent role model" and "an intelligent administrator who supports others to do great things." It noted, "her tireless efforts have encouraged development of new and innovative programs and services that build independence and promote happy, healthy living" (Hamilton Relay, June 3, 2011).

Marilyn has used her impressive lobbying skills to work persistently with the Utah State Legislature to expand programs, services and resources for people with disabilities for many, many years. She emphasizes that her passion and work with deaf divisions began because of her



daughters; she wanted them to have the best and fullest lives possible. "Working at the Sanderson Center," she said, "expanded my vision and understanding of deafness and sign language three hundred percent." Ironically, now that her hearing loss has progressed to the severe-to-profound level, the many support divisions that sprang from her advocacy work are available for her as well.

During the Sanderson Community Center 25th Anniversary Celebration on September 8, 2017, Marilyn received recognition of her years of service. Additionally, the

conference room inside the Sanderson Community Center has been named Marilyn T. Call Conference Room in honor of her longtime service as director (Community Connections with Utah's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Newsletter, October 2017).

One year after the Sanderson Community Center was moved under the Department of Workforce Service in 2016, Marilyn retired in December 2017. Her years of leadership, devotion, and commitment are greatly appreciated among the Utah Deaf community.



Note

Marilyn Call, e-mail message to Jodi B. Kinner, April 24, 2012.

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