

Divisions of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf Organized in Utah

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Acknowledgement

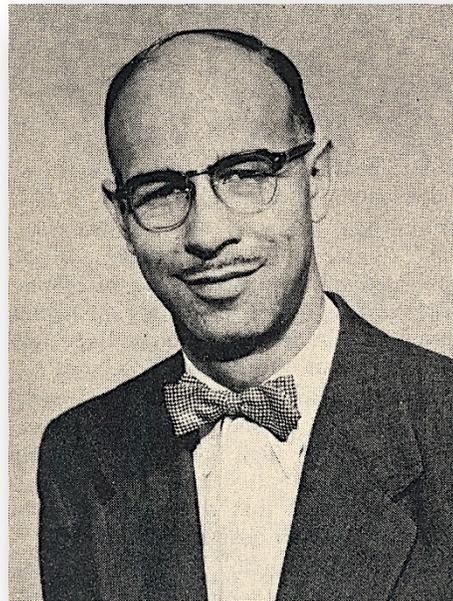
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Rodney W. Walker
The Utah Eagle, April 1955

Fraternal Society of the Deaf

The idea of a fraternal society began at the Michigan School for the Deaf (MSD) in Flint, Michigan in 1898. At this time, there was much interest in America to form fraternal societies. Approximately 70,000 men's fraternal groups were formed, and hundreds of thousands of men joined the membership ranks (Borggaard, 2001). Students at MSD were members of McKinley Lodge No. 922 of the Coming Men of America (CMA), a junior fraternal organization. The purpose of the CMA was to cultivate ideals of patriotism, honor and manhood in young men (Gannon, 1981; Borggaard, 2001).

During the summer of 1898, inspired by the ideals of the CMA, a group of thirteen young male graduates from MSD and members of the CMA, McKinley Lodge No. 922 met at the alumni reunion on the school campus to explore the possibility of providing some form of insurance protection for themselves and for other Deaf men. They were concerned about the difficulty they and other Deaf persons had in purchasing life insurance. In those days, life and accident insurance costs were exorbitantly high for Deaf men. They were often denied the right to buy policies from the insurance companies and fraternal benefit societies (Borggaard, 2001). Deaf men were considered high risks. The insurance companies mistakenly believed Deaf people were more likely to have accidents than hearing people and that they had shorter-than-average life spans. Thus, hearing people were able to buy many different kinds of insurance, and at standard rates, but Deaf people could not. Deaf people wanted to enjoy the same privileges as hearing people (Gannon, 1981; UAD Bulletin, Summer 1966).

After experiencing first-hand discrimination in obtaining life insurance and employment, a group of young men joined together to work on the concept of the Fraternal Society of the Deaf (FSD) (Borggaard, 2001). Peter N. Hellers Jr. of Detroit, Michigan, was elected president of the organizing group. He and the other officers were to research the possibility of forming a fraternal insurance group and to report back the results to members at the next MSD reunion. During the next three years, the president and officers worked hard, researching and gathering information about insurance. They were ready for action at the second meeting (Gannon, 1981).

After much planning, the members' dream came true on June 12, 1901, when the Fraternal Society of the Deaf was founded. Those members met at the next reunion on the MSD campus and called for a Lodge meeting. First, board officers were elected. Peter N. Hellers Jr. was elected the first Grand President of the new company and issued Certificate No. One (Gannon, 1981; Borggaard, 2001). Two months later, on August 12, 1901, the Fraternal Society became incorporated under the laws of Illinois as a not-for-profit organization. Because a majority of the members were employed in the Chicago area, the board decided to form the first operating office there (Borggaard, 2001).

Those early years were difficult for the officers, who worked in earnest to achieve their aims. There was no money for an office, so they worked in their homes. Plus, the men had little or no experience in running a fraternal insurance business (Gannon, 1981). But the largest hurdle, since the company was very young, was that there was no money to pay for the burial benefits the Fraternal Society was initially founded to provide. To resolve this issue, each member gave one dollar whenever a member passed away to help pay for burial costs. This system was hardest on the members who lived the longest, but in those days, it was a common practice among fraternal insurance groups. Over time, the Fraternal Society grew. As it grew, benefits improved: life, illness, and accident coverage were added (Gannon, 1981).

In 1905, the first formal office opened in Chicago, Illinois. The Fraternal Society had grown to 200 members and eight divisions. The success of the Society was a testament to the pioneering efforts of the men in those early years, who, in their faith, determination and hard work, managed to keep the Fraternal society alive (Gannon, 1981).

National Fraternal Society of the Deaf

On December 2, 1907, the society changed its name to the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf (NFSD) and was incorporated as a legal reserve society in the State of Illinois, which granted it the right to operate as a fraternal beneficiary society (Walker, 1966; Gannon, 1981; Borggaard, 2001; Walker, 2006). The NFSD was recognized as one of the strongest fraternal

insurance societies in the United States. The philosophy of the Society was that they were all brothers and sisters, and therefore, they called each other such (Walker, 2006).

Women's Battle for Admission to the NFSD

Since the founding of the NFSD in 1901, women were denied admission to the organization and full membership. They were not allowed to purchase a regular insurance membership as men. They battled for their access to all of the rights and privileges that men had.

In 1915, women started demanding admission to the NFSD. At the time, the NFSD's organization work was the responsibility of the head of the family; the men rejected attempts to give the women equal membership (Records of National Fraternal Society of the Deaf, 1900-2006). But the women did not give up, and in 1937, the NFSD allowed them to form social auxiliaries. The purpose of these auxiliaries was to promote the best interests of the division with which they were affiliated (Records of National Fraternal Society of the Deaf, 1900-2006). Although it was a small step toward victory, women still did not have the right of full admission to the NFSD.

It was not until 1951 that the NFSD agreed that women would be given regular insurance membership during the NFSD convention in Chicago, Illinois (Records of National Fraternal Society of the Deaf, 1900-2006). The race restriction was eliminated four years later in 1955 and the Black Deaf community was admitted as well. In 1967, membership was opened to hearing children of the Deaf members (Walker, 2006).

A few facts:

- Officers of the NFSD must be deaf, a requirement from the beginning to the present
- In 1975 NFSD moves into its new home office at Mt. Prospect, Illinois
- In 1978 the 30,000th Life Insurance Certificate is issued
- In 1981 NFSD assets pass eight million dollars (Walker, 2006)

Salt Lake City Division No. 56

After the first chartered division of this society was established in Chicago, Illinois on November 7, 1901, new divisions across the country spread rapidly over the next fifteen years. This brought the total to 59. The Salt Lake City Division No. 56 was among them (Walker, 1966).

The original story on the Salt Lake City Division No. 56 begins in early 1916. Justina Keeley of Salt Lake City, Utah was visiting her home state of Missouri where she learned about a new insurance organization of the deaf, by the deaf, and for the deaf. She brought word back to Utah, and Melville John Matheis went to Chicago to investigate the set-up of this program. Matheis became a member of NFSD on August 1, 1916. With the help of Grand Secretary-Treasurer Francis P. Gibson, Salt Lake



Melville John Matheis

City Division No. 56 was chartered on October 24, 1916 (UAD Bulletin, Summer, 1966; Walker, 1966).



Justina Keeley
Golden Anniversary. Salt Lake City Division No. 56. National Fraternal Society of the Deaf. 1916-1966. Prudential Plaza Auditorium. October 15, 1966

The first charter members were: Melville J. Matheis, Alfred C. Keeley, Joseph G. Keeley, John W. McMills, Leo Hawkins, Emery E. Preece, Lyman Bernstein, and Jacob Beck (UAD Bulletin, Summer, 1966). Eight more members were added before the year of 1916 came to a close. The following year witnessed 13 new members, and the year after that, another 13. The membership grew to approximately

42 members in 3 years (Walker, 1966; Walker, 2006).

Some years later, some of the members left the Society, believing the meetings were open only to division members and calling the division a “secret society.” After the misunderstanding was cleared up, the negative label was removed, and the membership began to grow again (Walker, 2006).

On February 21, 1920, the Salt Lake City No. 56 held a banquet at the Newhouse Hotel on the evening of Washington’s Birthday. About sixty people were present, including Harry Sanger Smith, who used the pen name “Bob White” and wrote for *The Silent Worker* magazine. He shared that “a most enjoyable evening was spent” (White, *The Silent Worker*, April 1920).

Over the years, the “Frats” in Utah were still directing all the Society’s activities after each meeting, including games and refreshments. The Frats sponsored many social activities such as dances,

outings, banquets,

parties and carnivals

for both members and

non-members (UAD

Bulletin, Fall 1961).

Additionally, the Frats

would host dances and

socials at the Young

Women's Christian

Association building

during the Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-

day Saints’ semiannual

conferences, between the

years of about 1930

through 1940 (Walker,

1966).



Members of the Salt Lake City Division No. 56, 1918
Front Row (L-R): John McMills, Grant Morgan, Earl Lewis, Jack Waterhouse, Alma Wild. Middle Row (L-R): Ezra Christensen, Joseph Cameron, John Rowan, Riley Carter, Jacob Beck, Axel Amundsen, Ole Pettit. Back Row (L-R): Michael Rowan, Dallas Burros, George Preece, Robert Hicks, Emery Preece, Ezra Rollo, LeRoy Donelson, Alexander Wright, Leo Harkins, Elign Jacobsen

Members were encouraged to attend the monthly meetings. If a member was absent without an excuse, he had to pay a fine of ten cents. Or, if he came to the meetings but failed to bring his receipt as proof of paying his dues and being in good standing, he would pay a ten-cent fine, too. The meetings were always full (Walker, 1966).

Members of the division had the opportunity of learning from the book *Robert's Rules of Order* how to conduct meetings and how to act as an officer, trustee, chairman, delegate and such. Through these experiences, members could earn merits, the total of which would classify them as members in the first degree, tenth degree, and so on to the thirty-fourth degree, according to number of earned points. About ten members, including Rodney Walker, a member of the Salt Lake City Division No. 56 reached the thirty-fourth degree. Also, any member who performed community service with the organizations of the deaf besides the Frats, could be inducted into the NFSD Hall of Fame (Walker, 2006).

Salt Lake City Division No. 56 helped train its members in their responsibilities as officers. The men learned how to conduct meetings and other Society affairs, keep minutes and



Members of the Salt Lake Division No. 56, 1921
Front Row (L-R): Alexander White, Melville Matheis, Rufus Briggs. Second
Row (L-R): Ole Pettit, Joseph Keeley, Jacob Beck, John McMills. Third Row
(L-R): Asel Amundsen, Leo White, Lyman Bernstein, Elgin Jacobsen. Back
Row (L-R): Leroy Donelson, Otto Farley, Ezra Rollo, Leo Hawkins

records, handle funds, and run the division on a business-like level. Members developed leadership talents and abilities to carry out their duties. The Salt

Lake City division, like many others, had brought happy hours of enjoyment to Deaf

people in Utah through its activities, such as banquets, outings, swimming, softball games, plays, movies, to name a few (Walker, 1966).

Since the inception of Salt Lake Division No. 56, members had been sent as delegates – along with delegates from four other Utah divisions – to each quadrennial convention of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf (held every four years). A unique feature of the NFSD was that it was the only insurance company whose policy holders took an active part in governing its affairs (Walker, 1966).

Like many other fraternal orders, the Salt Lake City Division No. 56 and its subordinate divisions had gone through thick and lean years. At one time Division No. 56 came near to losing its charter.

Seven members, the minimum required, struggled to carry on for a few years. At last the membership started to increase until it eventually reached an average of 35 active members (Walker, 1966).

On November 18, 1961, the Salt Lake City Division No. 56 of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf passed its 45th year milestone. Division No. 56 celebrated the occasion with a banquet at The Inn at Temple Square. Since the beginning of this division, approximately 140 Deaf men and women had become



Salt Lake Frats in a parade in about 1918
Front Row (L-R): Riley Carter, John McMills, Ezra Rollo, Michael Rowan (holding flag), Robert Hicks, Ole Pettit, Joseph Cameron. Second Row (L-R): George Precece, Dallas Burrows, Leroy Donelson, Floyd Underwood, Alex Wright, Earl Lewis, Axel Anderson. Third Row (L-R): Elgin Jacobsen and Lee Hawkins (holding the banner)

members. Some of them were elected by the members to take up offices within the division, and they had developed the leadership talents and abilities needed to carry out their duties. At that time, Alfred Charles Keeley, a brother-in-law of Justina Keeley, was the only surviving active member of Division No. 56 from when it began in 1916 with only eight members, including himself (Walker, 1966; UAD Bulletin, Fall 1961).

In 1966, the NFSD ranked high among the fifteen largest life insurance companies in the nation. It had notably high rankings in assets per \$100 of liabilities, surplus per \$100 of insurance, and rate of interest earned. It had the lowest mortality ratio of all of them (Walker, 1966).

At the first convention of NFSD, held in Chicago in 1903, the report of the original Fraternal Society of the Deaf showed a \$279.94 balance in the treasury and a membership of 90.



Golden Jubilee Committee for the Salt Lake City Division No. 56 of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf's 50th Year Anniversary, 1966. Front Row (L-R): Ex-Office Peter M. Green, Chairman Rodney W. Walker, Paul D. Wood. Back Row (L-R): Verl W. Thorup, G. Lynn Losee, Norman B. Williams, and John F. White

When the reorganized Society reached its 65th year in 1966, it had \$5.5 million in assets, and a membership around 10,000. Insurance amounts were \$8,281,500, and the members and their beneficiaries had been paid more than \$1,490,400 in death and disability benefits (Walker, 1966).

On October 15, 1966, Salt Lake City Division No. 56 marked its 50th year with an anniversary gala at the old Prudential Savings building on 33rd South and State Street. The celebration included a banquet, a souvenir program, a floorshow and door prizes. Rodney W. Walker was the chairman of the event, and the party committee consisted of former officers Peter M. Green, Paul D. Wood, Veri W. Thorup, G. Lynn Losee, Norman B. Williams and John F. White. Alfred C. Keeley, the division's only

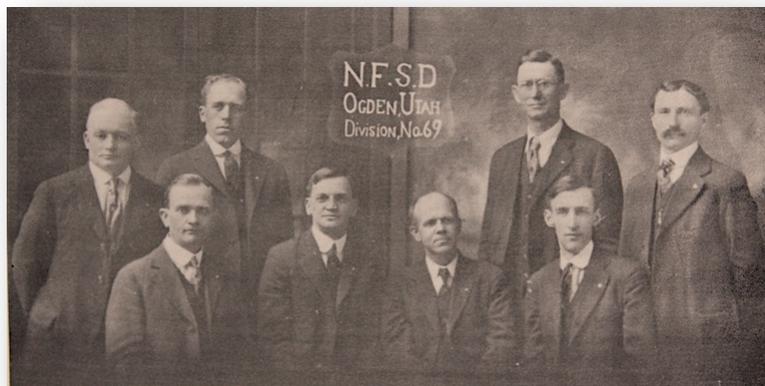
surviving charter member, was honored at the banquet. Leonard B. Warshawsky, assistant grand secretary-treasurer of the NFSD Home Office in Chicago, Illinois, was a guest speaker. A group of dancers from Brigham Young University performed for the party. The souvenir program was filled with historical pictures of members dating back to the beginning of the Society, and a list of members from the beginning of the Society till the time of the 50th anniversary was displayed (UAD Bulletin, Summer 1966; UAD Bulletin, Winter 1967).

In 1980, Salt Lake Division No. 56 was named by the NFSD Home Office as Division of the Year. A letter from the Home Office stated that the division had demonstrated an excellent fraternal spirit, participated in community activities, maintained a high average in meeting attendance and brought in many new members. There were over 150 divisions in the United States and Canada at the time, so it was quite an honor to be singled out for their work (Walker, 2006).

Ogden Division No. 69

In Ogden, Utah, some of these members succeeded in getting their own local division chartered on November 9, 1918 with the help of State Organizer, Melville J. Matheis. The charter members of Ogden Division No. 69 were Nephi Larsen, Otto Farley, William Vaughn, and Alfred D. Young. Unfortunately, this division was short-lived and was dissolved on December 1, 1923 (Walker, 1966; UAD Bulletin, April 2002).

A prominent, brilliant Deaf man by the name of Otto Paul Farley, an alumnus of the Utah School for the Deaf and a printer at that school, served in various offices of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf. On November 12, 1920, he passed away at the age of 30. At



Members of the Ogden Division No 69, 1918-1923
Front Row (L-R): Nephi Larsen, William Cole, Paul Mark, Otto Farley.
Back Row (L-R): Allred Young, Neils Meisner, John Bowcutt, and William Vaughn



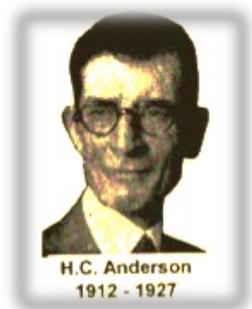
Otto Paul Farley
The Silent Worker, October
1920

the funeral, the Ogden Division of NFSD put the word “Brothers” on a large crescent and mounted a pedestal whose base bore the letters “NFSD” (White, *The Silent Worker*, December 1920). Otto was survived by his wife, Pearl West Farley and a young son, Owen Theodore. Pearl became overwhelmed with sorrow, as it was in the early part of June that her little daughter, Nellie Virginia had passed away (White, *The Silent Worker*, December 1920). She soon found herself in destitute circumstances. The day after Christmas, Pearl received a check for \$1050

from NFSD after only four years of paying dues of a few dollars. She was fortunate that her husband had been a member of NFSD so she could cover basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter (The Silent Worker, December 1920; White, *The Silent Worker*, February 5, 1921).

NFSD President Harry C. Anderson Visits Ogden, Utah

In 1920, when Harry Sanger Smith, known as “Bob White,” a writer of *The Silent Worker* magazine and a printing and linotyping Instructor at the Utah School for the Deaf in the 1920s, was in Idaho, he learned that the NFSD president, Harry C. Anderson (1912-1927) was coming to visit Ogden, Utah. He decided that welcoming him was going to be something radically different from the old, stereotyped mode of entertaining. In addition, he felt that traveling by rail seemed nice to those who had never done much traveling. Utahns had never met President Anderson and Harry spotted him at the train station, which he said, “was a very easy matter.” He shared that “after the usual greetings were over, President Anderson was “roped and tied” and thrown into the most popular leader of the Deaf community, Paul Mark’s “prairie schooner” (the Peerless). They rode through the trail from Ogden Canyon to Heritage Hotel where President Anderson and his wife were



H.C. Anderson
1912 - 1927

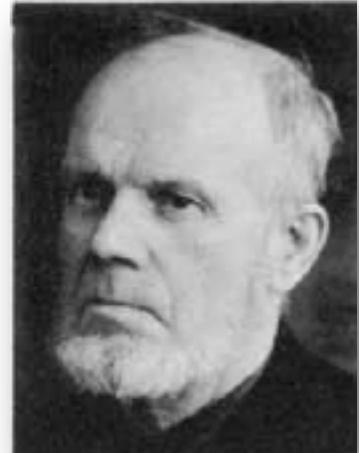
registered during their stay in Ogden, Utah (White, *The Silent Worker*, November 1920).

Harry proudly shared that “riding through the canyon was a revelation to President Anderson. He had never seen the Rockies before and the call of the wild was strong, mighty strong within him.” Harry even observed that “President Anderson took a great delight in the picturesque and the



Harry Sanger Smith
The Silent Worker, September
1900

beautiful just as old Mother Nature made things; the mountains, and the prairies appealed to him more than all the swell affairs ever staged in his honor” (White, *The Silent Worker*, November 1921).



Paul Mark

Ogden Division No. 127

In June 1945, the Ogden division was re-chartered with 22 members from the Salt Lake City Division No. 56, and reorganized as the Ogden Division No. 127 (Walker, 1966). The Home Office of the society appointed Brother George L. Laramie to affect the first meeting of the Ogden Division and to install new officers. The charter members were: Donald L. Jensen, Robert J. Welch, Ned C. Wheeler, Wayne H. Christensen, John C. Peterson, Roy E. Smith, Arvel Christensen, Kenneth Burdett, Lloyd Perkins, Paul Mark, Joseph Burnett, Paul Loveland, Pete Koukoutaskis, Lee A. Shepherd, Bruce M. Eyre, Guy A. Despain, Merrill Bauer, Melwin Sorensen, Tony Jelaco, and Marlo Honey. In December 1965, the division celebrated its 20th birthday with its membership still strong in both number and spirit (Walker, 1966).

In 1970, Ogden Division No. 127 celebrated its 25th anniversary. Nearly 100 people from the Salt Lake and Ogden divisions of NFSD gathered for a dinner in the ballroom of the Ben Lomond Hotel to mark the occasion. Frank B. Sullivan, grand division president, gave a talk on the rapid advancement made by the Deaf and by the various organizations of the Deaf in the previous ten years, and on future advancements to be made. On behalf of the Salt Lake division, its president Keith Stewart presented a \$25.00 check to Ogden division president



Members of the Ogden Division No. 127, 1965
Front Row (L-R): Robert Sanderson, Joseph Bunnett, Ned Wheeler, Avel Christensen. Middle Row (L-R): Ray Smith, Mary Sanderson, Edith Wheeler, Dorothy Linden, Joe Kerschbaum. Back Row (L-R): Oliver Woodward, Charles Buck, Chrles Whipple, Leon Curtis, Donald Jensen, Kenneth Burdett, Jack Peterson, Richard Brubaker, Harry Woffe, and Jerry Taylor

Edith Wheeler, to commemorate the 25 years since the division’s founding. Beautiful sign songs were performed by LaVern Burnett (“The Impossible Dream”) and Jerry Taylor (“The Star-Spangled Banner”) Robert Sanderson served as master of ceremonies at the banquet, and Grand

Western Vice President Ned Wheeler gave remarks. Credit for the success of the evening went to Joseph Burnett and his wife, LaVern Burnett (UAD Bulletin, Fall-Winter 1970-71).



Edith Wheeler, President of Ogden Division No 127, and wife of Western Grand Vice President, Ned Wheeler, expressed her appreciation for the \$25.00 gift given Division 127 by Salt Lake Division No. 56 and presented Keith Stewart (standing behind Edith), president of the Salt Lake Division. Occasion was the 25th Anniversary celebration of the Ogden Division. Looking on, left to right are: Frank Sullivan, Grand President, guest speaker, emcee Robert Sanderson, Mary Sanderson and Kenneth Burdett, first president of the Ogden Division. Source: The Frat, 1970

Salt Lake City Division No. 56 Celebrates Its 75th Anniversary

In 1991, Salt Lake City Division No. 56 celebrated its 75th anniversary, but the membership by that time had shrunk to a fraction of its peak numbers. Members of Ogden Division No. 127 joined with the members of the Salt Lake City division on this occasion, and another grand banquet was held. The Home Office sent a plaque with congratulations. It read: “NATIONAL FRATERNAL SOCIETY OF THE DEAF – SALT LAKE CITY DIV. #56 – For its 75 YEARS OF FRATERNAL SERVICE– October 24, 1991.” At the banquet, John F. White was recognized as the member of longest standing in the division, with 58 years of membership. He joined the Society in 1935. Rodney W. Walker was recognized as having been a member for 51 years (Walker, 2006).

Salt Lake City Division No. 56 and Ogden Division No. 127 Host the 27th Quadrennial Convention

At the 1991 convention of the NFSD in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the delegation from Utah triumphed in a spirited competition for the honor of holding the 1995 convention. Salt Lake City would be the next host city. Representing Ogden Division No. 127 were Nancy and Jerry Taylor, and Dr. Robert and Mary Sanderson. Salt Lake City Division No. 56 was ably represented by Pete Green. The two divisions combined forces to make a clever presentation involving Pete and Nancy dressed as honeybees (as Utah is “The Beehive State”) in a buzzing skit promoting Utah as “the place to bee and to bring one’s honeybee along for a wonderful meeting and a vacation for the family, too!” Colorful, neon, bee-themed flyers plus salt-water taffy were handed out to all of the 81 delegates. In addition, the two divisions hosted a hospitality room with the help of Little America Hotel’s Kathy Schell – an event that drew comments from delegates that the Utah people were a classy bunch.



**Robert Sanderson and George Gavros
with a Frat Award, 1991**

Other divisions competing for the 1995 convention were: Washington, D.C.; Miami-Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and Tucson, Arizona. Each had hospitality rooms and made presentations during the bidding, but Utah won a majority of all votes cast. The two divisions soon met to begin setting up a base committee for the coming development of a plan for the 1995 convention (Sanderson, *Utah Bulletin*, August 1991).

After nearly four years of planning, Salt Lake City Division No. 56 and Ogden Division No. 127 together hosted the 27th Quadrennial Convention of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf in Salt Lake City from July 25 - 29, 1995 (UAD Bulletin, July 1995; Walker, 2006). Peter M. Green served as chairman of the event. The Friday evening banquet featured a speaker well



Members of the Salt Lake City Division No. 56 celebrate its 75th Anniversary Membership at the time was small. Members of the Ogden Division No. 127 join the members of the Salt Lake City Division on this occasion in 1991. Standing (L-R): Peter Green, George Gavros, Eugene Plumby, Lee Shepherd, Boyd Collins, Bruce Eyre, Robert Bonnell, Rodney Walker, Jerry Schwab, Ottrie, Schwab, Paul Wood, Verl Thorup, Carol Addeman, Spencer Addeman, Vida White, Penny Williams. Sitting (L-R): LaRue Ross, Carole Gavros, Darlene Bonnell, Dorothy Young, Jack White, and Sally Green

known throughout the country, Dr. Frank B. Sullivan. Sullivan was an alumnus of Montana School for the Deaf (Class of '36), a graduate of Gallaudet College (Class of '41), former Grand President of the NFSD, a former trustee of Gallaudet University, and a

consultant to the National Captioning Institute. He had always been an entertaining

speaker with a strong message, and that evening was no exception. During the banquet, Bill Carwile, a well-known mime, entertained guests with his pantomime (UAD Bulletin, July 1995). The bigger events included: golfing; watching the Pioneer Days Parade; a bus tour to Wendover, Utah; board meetings; workshops; the President's Reception; a Hall of Fame Luncheon; business meetings; a Fun Night; a Gallaudet University continental breakfast; a banquet and awards night; a picnic buffet; and entertainment (Walker, 2006). Professional entertainer Mary Beth Miller from New York tickled many funny bones that evening (UAD Bulletin, July 1995).

At that time, Deaf men had many more choices than they had held one hundred years earlier: in insurance, education, recreation, business, jobs, and membership organizations. Times had changed, but one thing never does, and that is the need for human communication and the need to have a voice in one's own progress, welfare and socialization (Walker, 2009, p. 170-171).

The Society's core philosophy was printed in that year's convention program:

FRATERNALISM. Let us carry that message forward into the next century, telling other people that what we offer is much more than just a policy certificate. We care about each other; we *really* care (1995 27th Quadrennial Convention Program Book).

Did You Know?

Dr. Robert G. Sanderson of Ogden Division No. 127 received a 34th degree designation from the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf. Such degrees were awarded to members that had made contributions and shown dedication to NFSD's causes and exemplified the spirit of fraternalism (UAD Bulletin, September 1995).



Robert G. Sanderson
UAD Bulletin, Winter 1965



Logo of the Salt Lake City Division
No 56, 1983

As years passed, members started to miss meetings, many dropped out, and others died. The meeting place of Salt Lake division No. 56 moved from place to place through years to the final location at the Robert G. Sanderson Community Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Taylorsville, Utah. The estimated total number of members joining the division, from the beginning date of the charter of the Salt Lake City Division No. 56 to the end of 1997, was about 310 (Walker, 2009).

In 1999, the quadrennial (and last) convention of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf was held at the Wyndham Palace Hotel in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. Rodney W. Walker

was chosen as the delegate for Salt Lake City Division No. 56, and he flew to Lake Buena Vista, Florida, near Orlando to attend the convention. Much of the discussion at the convention focused on how to recruit and keep members (Walker, 2006).



Members of the Ogden Division No. 127 celebrate the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf's birthday in 1976
Front Row (L-R): Dennis Platt, Valerie (Kinney) Platt, Ned Wheeler, Celia May Baldwin, George Laramie. Back row (L-R): Mary Sanderson, Nellie Sausedo, Richard Brubaker, Rodney Walker

Did You Know?

Valerie Kinney was inducted into the Golden Circle by the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf. She has been a member of the Ogden Division No. 127 since January 1970. This award was given to those who had been members of the NFSD for 25 years or more and who had continued to serve their division and the Society beyond the 34th degree. Less than 1% of all Society members had been honored with the Golden Circle (UAD Bulletin, April 2000).



Valerie Kinney

NFSD Celebrates Its 100th Birthday

In 2001 in Chicago, the NFSD celebrated its 100th birthday with delegates from some of the divisions. No delegates were sent from Salt Lake City for that celebration. An amendment regarding holding the quadrennial convention was changed to include a requirement for a mail-in-ballot due to the dwindling funds at the Home Office (Walker, 2006).

By this time, the membership of Salt Lake City Division No. 56 had started to decline, which caused some difficulty in securing the required quorum for regular meetings to be held. Salt Lake City Division No. 56 was eventually disbanded, as per a vote by a quorum of five members, in July 2004, after being in existence for 87 years (Walker, 2006).

Decline and Closure of the NFSD

The reasons for the decline of NFSD membership were several: Since the late 1980's, many different kinds of insurance had begun to be made available to Deaf people. Life insurance companies, in competition with each other, began selling insurance policies at lower rates, and



Swimming at Saltair

Front Row (L-R): Jacob Beck, Alfred Keeley, John Mathies, Harvey Mooris. Second Back (L-R): Nephi Larsen, Elgin Jacobson, Joseph Cameron, Otto Farley, George Preece, Kenneth Olsen, Jack Waterhouse, Joseph Keeley

over time, offered them to Deaf people. Also, hearing parents of Deaf children were already buying life insurance from insurance companies other than NFSD. Not least, some Deaf persons had enough insurance from NFSD to cash in their life insurance policies. All of the above factors, and others,

contributed to the end of the NFSD (Walker, 2006). The reason Deaf

people can purchase insurance today is because of the work begun in 1898 by a group of thirteen young men who formed the NFSD.

In 2005, NFSD turned over its insurance business to the Catholic Order of Foresters and tried to make it solely as a fraternal society. However, two-thirds of the members chose not to renew the \$25 annual membership fee. With no other income, NFSD could no longer support an office or provide membership benefits. As of January 1, 2007, the NFSD's Board of Directors decided to cease operations and turn over its insurance business to the Catholic Order of Foresters. After 105 years, the NFSD had gone out of business (DeafWeekly, February 21, 2007). Upon its closure, Jerry Taylor was the last president of the Ogden Division No. 127, while Willis Morton was also the last president of the Salt Lake City Division No. 56.

The National Fraternal Society of the Deaf was one of the oldest Deaf organizations in the nation. For more than 100 years, the NFSD was the world's only insurance organization managed by Deaf and hard of hearing people for the exclusive benefit of Deaf and hard of hearing people and their families. Thousands of Deaf people benefited from the insurance provided by the fraternal society. Since its founding in 1901, NFSD had built a financially successful business, ensuring that Deaf people no longer encountered the kind of difficulty in purchasing insurance coverage that the founders themselves had experienced. The NFSD contributed to the elimination of such discrimination and invited stiff competition from other insurance providers. The organization set a fine example of the successful achievement of a determined group of Deaf people. Additionally, the NFSD had proven that deafness need not be a barrier to one's success in the business world (Gannon, 1981).



Jerry Taylor

National Fraternal Society of the Deaf Hall of Fame

Several NFSD Utahns were inducted into the Hall of Fame:

1973 – Paul Mark, Ogden Division No. 69

1974 – Ned C. Wheeler, Ogden Division No. 127

1975 – Kenneth C. Burdett, Ogden Division No. 127

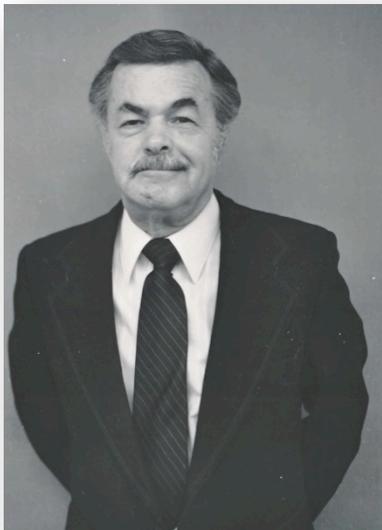
1977 – Rodney W. Walker, Salt Lake Division No. 56

1978 – George L. Laramie, Salt Lake Division No. 56

1994 – Dr. Robert G. Sanderson, Ogden Division No. 127 and Peter Green, Salt Lake Division No. 56 (Gannon, 1981; Walker, 2006)

Did You Know?

Peter M. Green, a National Fraternal Society of the Deaf member since 1951, was one of the four members inducted into the Hall of Fame for 1994. They were chosen on the basis of service to their divisions and the community at large. A permanent plaque in the home office displays the names of those honored through the years.



Peter M. Green

Green joined the Division at the age of 16 and was an active member thereafter. While serving as delegate at the Society's 1991 convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he and other fraters succeeded in their efforts to obtain the vote for the 1995 Salt Lake City Convention location (UAD Bulletin, September 1995).

Frater of the Year

In 1977, Celia May Baldwin of Salt Lake City No. 56 was recognized as “Frater of the Year” (Gannon, 1981).



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

Division of the Year

In 1979, Salt Lake City, Utah No. 56 was recognized as “Division of the Year” (Gannon, 1981).

National Fraternal Society of the Deaf Board of Directors

Dr. Robert G. Sanderson was elected the first chairman of the NFSD Board of Directors under the reorganized structure (1995 27th Convention Program Book). He served as the chairman from 1983 to 1999 (Borggaard, 2001). He also served on the Board of Directors from 1987 to 1991 (Borggaard, 2001).

Western Vice-President

Ned C. Wheeler served as Western Vice-President from 1967 to 1981. After his death in 1981, Dr. Robert G. Sanderson took over his duties and again from 1983 to 1987 (Borggaard, 2001).



Ned C. Wheeler

NFSD Convention Delegates

Dorothy Young of Utah served as a delegate for Salt Lake City Division No. 56 and again for Ogden Division No. 127 (1995 27th Quadrennial Convention Program Book).

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