

Shirley H. Platt

Compiled & Written by Jodi B. Kinner
2012

Shirley H. Platt was born January 10, 1952 in Linton, Indiana, the eldest of eight children of Robert E. Hortie, Sr. and Dorothy A. Bowling. She became Deaf about the age of two and has a sister, Elizabeth Hortie, who is also Deaf. Her father, two uncles and two aunts are hard of hearing. The family deafness is hereditary (Shirley Platt, personal communication, April 4, 2012).

In 1970, Shirley graduated from Regina High School for Girls in Adelphi, Maryland. An avid reader and bookworm all her life, she would go to the library and check out (and finish reading) stacks of ten to fourteen books every two weeks (Shirley Platt, personal communication, April 4, 2012).

A “military brat,” she and her family lived on several military bases throughout the United States as her father was transferred with the US Marine Corps until he retired in 1966. Most of her educational years were spent in Prince Georges County, Maryland. She herself never played sports, but helped her parents chauffeur her seven siblings to their various sporting events. She attended Northern Virginia Community College and Gallaudet University. She worked for the U.S. Treasury Department in Washington, DC for fifteen years before leaving to attend college. She married another well-known long-time sports leader, Dennis R. Platt of Pontiac, Illinois, in September 1987 and



Shirley H. Platt receives the Art Kruger Award, 2006

moved to Ogden, Utah, where Dennis was employed by the Weber County government (Shirley Platt, personal communication, April 4, 2012).

Shirley was a long-time advocate for Deaf sports and gender equity (UAD Bulletin, June 2013). She served for more than three decades as a long-time leader and women’s advocate in the Deaf sports world. She started in 1983 at Metro Washington Association of the Deaf (MWAD), first as club secretary and then as athletic director. She became the first female officer in the Southeast Athletic Association of the Deaf (SEAAD) when she was elected secretary-treasurer (Shirley Platt, personal communication, April 4, 2012).

In May 1988, she was the first Deaf woman to be elected secretary-treasurer in the American Athletic Association of the Deaf (AAAD) – under President Martin Belsky. She had



Michael ‘Doc’ Torres & Shirley at the USADB National Tournament in 2011

the honor and privilege of working under the leadership of Dr. Lawrence Fleischer, and served as his “right hand” in the organization from 1989 to 1997. She believed wholeheartedly in Larry’s vision of a multi-sport organization under one umbrella with many hands making light work (Shirley Platt, personal communication, April 4, 2012).

Shirley was a reckoning force in the AAAD as her drive and determination helped women’s softball

become an official sport, followed by women’s basketball (Shirley Platt, personal communication, April 4, 2012).

On May 1, 1991, Shirley became the first and only executive director of AAAD and served in that role for eight years (UAD Bulletin, February 1991; Shirley Platt, personal communication, April 4, 2012). Under her stewardship, a beautiful home office was established in Ogden, Utah, in 1991, and AAAD published the popular magazine Deaf Sports Review and continued to publish the AAAD Bulletin. She represented AAAD proudly at many United States

Olympic Committee (USOC) and National Governing Body (NGB) events. She supported parity for the USA Deaflympics athletes and to make their voices heard.

She also represented the USA with Larry Fleischer at the Deaflympics in Bulgaria, Denmark and Finland, and at the PanAm Games in Venezuela (Shirley Platt, personal communication, April 4, 2012).

The American Athletic Association of the Deaf became known as the USA Deaf Sports Federation (USADSF) in 1997.



Shirley with board members of the American Athletic Association of the Deaf in 1993
L-R: Dennis Platt, John F. Fevesque, Shirley Platt, Lawrence Fleischer, Howard Gorrell and Sam Sonnenstrahl

Shirley was editor-in-chief of the AAAD Deaf Sports Review magazine and “Inside AAAD” (UAD Bulletin, February 1994). Her mentors were Edward C. Carney, Jerald M. Jordan and Lawrence R. Fleischer, all of whom encouraged her to become involved in Deaf sports, and

she subsequently made her way up through the ranks at the club, region and national levels (Shirley Platt, personal communication, April 4, 2012).



USA Deaf Basketball Commissioner/President Shirley Platt (center) at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in April 2013 at the signing of the Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport. The Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport is under the auspice of the International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG) based in Helsinki, Finland with Laura Edwards, head coach of USA 2013 Deaflympics Gold Medalist Women Basketball Team (left) and Dr. Becky Clark, IWG representative (right). Dr. Clark is a sports performance coach and licensed social worker. All three women are deaf

In the 1990s Shirley, a skilled writer, worked as a sportswriter for *Deaf USA*, a correspondent for both the *Silent News* and the *DeeCee Eyes*, and a contributor to the *AAAD Bulletin*.

The *UAD Bulletin* notes Shirley was “one busy lady” (UAD Bulletin, February 1991).

March 6-8, 1992, Shirley was a guest on the *Silent Network* Interview program, the first American talk show for Deaf persons.

There, she was interviewed by Dr. Stephen Baldwin, a former staff member of the Utah School for the Deaf, on her role as executive director of the AAAD (UAD Bulletin, May 1992).



Shirley (center) with Dennis Platt, AAAD Vice President, left and Larry Fleischer, AAAD President, right at the 1995 Winter Deaflympics in Finland while she was executive director

In Ogden, Utah, the AAAD’s national office outgrew its space located at 37th Street and Harrison Boulevard in only one year. On May 30, 1992, the national office was moved to 36th and Washington Boulevard. Many people contributed to the

effort: AAAD office staff members: Valerie

Kinney and Bonnie Bass; several men and women from the Golden Spike Athletic Association softball teams; Dennis Platt, Roger Christian, Shirley herself, and others. Having a larger office, the AAAD staff became even busier (Kinney, *UAD Bulletin*, July 1992). At one time, there were four or five volunteers and five staff members (Shirley Platt, personal communication, April 4, 2012).

Shirley received numerous honors and awards at all levels, but is proudest of the USADSF Art Kruger Award. The award honors those who have contributed outstanding leadership and support to the organization over many



Shirley with Jack Lambertson, USADSF President, left and Mark Apodaca, Vice President of Finance, right on her induction to the USA Deaf Sports Federation (AAAD) Hall of Fame 2012

years. Her contributions include working since the 1980s to improve the AAAD/USADSF, and serving as its only executive director overseeing the growth of the organization, enhancing its image through publications and media (News & Media: 2006 Awardees). The UAD Bulletin noted: “With her outstanding and lengthy service, Shirley has...demonstrated everything to reflect the truest sense of the words that are described for the Kruger Award. By becoming the newest recipient of the Art Kruger Award, Shirley is among a galaxy of giants for leadership and continued participation in deaf sports” (UAD Bulletin, July 2007).

She came out of retirement twice: once in 1998 and again in 2008, salvaging the near-defunct USA Deaf Basketball.



Shirley and Dennis Platt, 2006

Since 2009, she has served as president/commissioner of the USA Deaf Basketball (Shirley Platt, personal communication, April 4, 2012).

In 2013, Shirley officially announced her retirement after 30 years of service to Deaf sports from the club level at Metro Washington Association of the Deaf, to the region level with Southeast Athletic

Association of the Deaf, and then the past 25 years at the AAAD/USA Deaf Sports Federation and USA Deaf Basketball (USADB) national levels (UAD Bulletin, June 2013).

Shirley and her husband, Dennis were the only husband-wife team to have served as USA Deaf Basketball President/Commissioner. Between them they have devoted more than 70 years in the service of Deaf sports. Shirley said, “It was one of the most rewarding experiences anyone could ask for!” (UAD Bulletin, June 2013).

Certainly, one of Shirley’s most important contributions to Deaf sports may be that she “stood steadfast promoting deaf women into deaf sports” (UAD Bulletin, July 2007). On April 21, 2012, Shirley was inducted into the USA Deaf Sports Federation Hall of Fame as a long-time

leader of the organization. The USADSF and USA Deaf Basketball (USADB) are fortunate to have had Shirley's long-running, significant contributions to the organization. Through her advocacy for Deaf athletes, women and men alike, she helped make both organizations even stronger.

Note

Shirley Platt, e-mail message to Jodi B. Kinner, April 4, 2012.

Bibliography

“Art Kruger Award Given to Local Utahn.” *UAD Bulletin*, Vol. 31.2 (July 2007): 2.

“Milestones.” *UAD Bulletin*, Vol. 17, No. 9 (February 1994): 9.

“Our Shining Stars.” Shirley Platt. *UAD Bulletin*, Vol. 14, No. 9 (February 1991): 1.

Platt, Shirley, H. (2006). “News & Media: 2006 Awardees.”
http://www.usdeafsports.org/news/news_20070624.html

“The Silent Network.” (1992, May). *UAD Bulletin*, Vol. 15, No. 12 May 1992, 2.

Schroedel (Kinney), Valerie. “AAAD Office moves.” *UAD Bulletin*, v. 16, no. 2 (July 1992): 7.

USADB Press Release. “USADB Commissioner Shirley Platt Announces Retirement.” *UAD Bulletin*, vol. 37-01, p. 1 (June 2013).

“USADSF Honors Utahn.” *UAD Bulletin*, Vol. 26.8 (January 2007): 1.