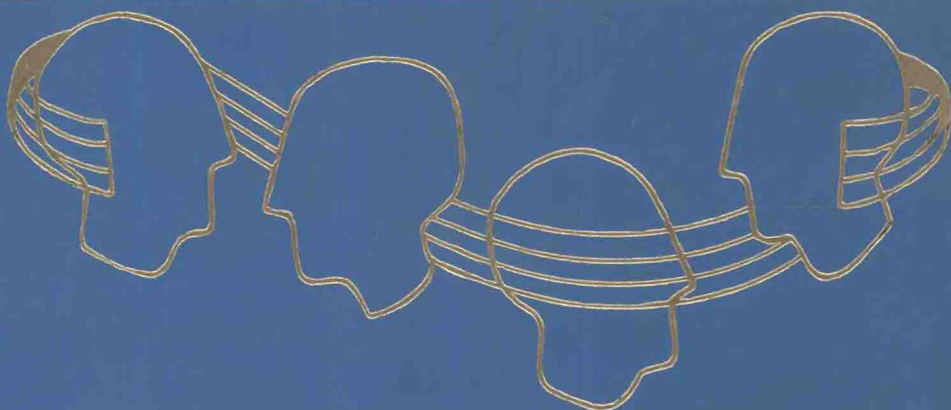


DEAFNESS AND COMMUNICATION

ASSESSMENT AND TRAINING



EDITED BY
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FOREWORD

Severe hearing impairment, particularly when present at birth or soon thereafter, threatens ready communication within family, workplace, and community. This has always been the case.

- What families do, how families live, and what families say have changed and continue to change.
- Where people work, the nature of work, and the communication requirements of the workplace have changed and continue to change.
- Where people live, how people relate to immediate and distant communities, and extent of participation have changed and continue to change.

The foregoing conditions, in constant flux, differentially influence hearing-impaired individuals and at the same time present special challenges to those significant others who intervene on their behalf.

Verbal communication, whether in spoken, written, fingerspelled, or signed form, is exclusively humankind. Its acquisition and continuous refinement, naturally achieved in people with intact hearing, come only with special assistance in severely hearing-impaired individuals.

Existing literature is replete with ingenious techniques and procedures aimed at minimizing and/or eliminating primary communication effects and secondary socioeducational consequences of auditory disabilities. With notable exceptions, these attempts have been largely intuitive, anecdotal in form, and cross-sectional (one-time efforts) in character. Early severe hearing impairment clearly has not responded to the “quick fix.”

The reality of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) provides the plat-

form for the current effort. Its clinical and research scientists recognize the need for sustained organized inquiry into the many facets of human communication and its importance to severely hearing-impaired people. Editors Sims, Walter, and Whitehead have been successful in pulling together results of systematic research studies in communication conducted at NTID and have incorporated correlated work of others from institutions having an abiding interest in the problem.

These efforts take advantage of state-of-the-art measurement devices and techniques used in varied disciplines, such as speech science, audiology, physics, experimental psychology, linguistics, education, speech pathology, and neurophysiology. Each study represents advance in our understanding. As a group these studies

- Add scientific rigor to a literature rich in inventiveness and intuition.
- Represent, as a result of the existence of NTID, an emergence of continuity and systematic scientific inquiry into the multidimensional communication problems confronting severely hearing-impaired people.

Apropos of this noteworthy publication, “He has half the deed done, who has made a beginning”; and this indeed augurs well for improvements in the assessment and treatment of children, youth, and adults beset with severe hearing impairment.

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PREFACE

The motivating factors for producing a text can be the result of personal, collegial, financial, or intellectual needs. This present volume originated because of a collegial relationship among the editors and a professional need to have a text that addresses the communicative handicapping effects of severe to profound hearing impairment. It has only been during the past decade that the disciplines associated with hearing impairment have begun to address communication problems in an integrated manner. As a result, we have attempted to synthesize into the structure of this book the disciplines of linguistics, speech, audiology, and education. It is our feeling that each of these disciplines provides unique insights into remediating the handicapping effects of severe to profound hearing impairment. But instruction and development of communicative competence is the bottom line, and good instruction, while it must be scientific, is also largely still an art.

As a result there is a broad range of tones to the chapters in this book, from the more formal research review chapters to those which emphasize application of assessment and instruction to the hearing-impaired population. We have tried, in each of the discipline areas, to provide for a balance between review of research and application. In order to accomplish this, the book contains chapters that review current practice in each of the areas and chapters which offer strategies for diagnosing and instructing. In addition, we believe it important, because of Public Law 94-142, to provide special discussions of this

legislation as it applies to communication skill training and the providing of support services in integrated educational settings. As such, the providing of support services in integrated settings focuses on providing for the hearing-impaired person not being able to receive and produce an intelligible signal through the usual channels of communication used by hearing persons.

It is probably this belief in the need to bring together in one place "state-of-the-art" information about communication of the severely to profoundly hearing-impaired, coupled with the emphasis on mainstreaming, that has been the strongest motivator for producing the book. As a result, we intend that the primary user of the text will be those individuals schooled in one of the disciplines commonly associated with hearing impairment but who need upgrading in order to carry on responsibilities defined by a student's individual educational program. Thus, the book is for the speech therapist, English teacher, or audiologist who has responsibility for severely hearing-impaired students in terms of their communication training. This text should provide a good overview of the relevant literature and practices in coping with the special problems offered by this population of handicapped individuals.

**Donald Sims
Gerard Walter
Robert Whitehead**

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of Haskins Laboratories, New Haven, Connecticut, and by Mrs. Brenda Whitehead of NTID, and of the advice and assistance of Dr. Mary Jo Osberger and Dr. Noel Matkin. A special thanks goes to the NTID Word Processing Center, without whose efforts the manuscript would never have been typed and to the NTID Media Department whose talents and perseverance resulted in the successful completion of the artwork. Sincere gratitude is given to the government of the United States of America, who, through approval of Public Law 89-36, has provided for the establishment and maintenance of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf.

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How Do You Dance without Music?

SHANNY MOW

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My name is Sam. Sometimes I'm called Silent Sam, a tag I loathe out of prejudice—both mine and the bestower's. Besides it is misleading, since I make more noise sipping my soup than the guy at the next table, who is not deaf but wishes he were every time I take a particularly enthusiastic spoonful.

This is my story, of how I live through a day and the problems I face as a deaf human being, as told to and written by another deaf human being who is fortunate to have the words I do not.

I would be presumptuous to claim that my problems are typical of all deaf persons, or that I qualify as a "typical deaf person," whatever that is. There are prelingually and postlingually deaf individuals. There are the college-educated and the illiterate. The hard of hearing and the deaf. There are those with deafness plus other handicaps. You may say each is a breed apart. Each has problems of his own.

In a style that belies my blue-collar job, my recorder has set down what I think, what I believe, and what I go through.

I can dance better than I can write. Seeing me on the dance floor, hearing people always ask, "How do you dance without music?" "Actually I don't, I dance to vibrations," I tell them. One night I realized I had been giving an incomplete answer to this question. Now I tell them, "... the vibrations of life."

* * *

"But you can't see a thing from the driver's side," the Volkswagen dealer explains. Sam reads the hurried scribbling, and for a minute fingers his new driver's license. Under RESTRICTIONS, it reads LEFT AND RIGHT REAR VIEW MIRRORS.

Ten dollars goodbye for a right rear view mirror that doesn't give you the view you don't need. Since when did the bureaucrats at the Motor Vehicles decide deafness is a luxury? Be grateful that they let you drive at all?

Wearily he takes the pad and writes, "Install it anyway. I'll be back."

In the noon sun he squints but still can make out the drug store two blocks away. Carefully he looks left, then right and left again and crosses the street. Midway he pauses to look right again.

A lot can happen in two blocks. A lost motorist yelling for directions. A nervous smoker asking for a match. A friendly stranger with sinister motives wanting to talk. A policeman blowing his whistle and suspecting you for a fugitive when you walk on. A dog biting from behind. A runaway grocery cart hitting from the blind side. You grow weary and wary of such people who, at the sight of you pointing to your ear, always seem to forget suddenly their purpose for approaching you. As for whistle-blowing policemen, biting dogs and runaway carts, you develop your own brand of oriental fatalism.

Inside the drug store Sam asks for a package of Salem cigarettes, pronouncing the brand name as distinctly as he can. The clerk gives him an odd look, then reaches down the counter. Her hand reappears with the Salems. He breathes easier.

You feel like a poker player who is also a compulsive bluffer. Mervin Garretson has explained why he switched brands, rather than fight. As long as you pronounce something safe like Salem, not Chesterfield, there is little danger of receiving cough syrup instead. You can never relax when you cannot hear what you speak. Not even if you've been up to your ears in speech training. Maybe you can, in front of a trained ear, someone who is familiar with the "deaf accent," but unfortunately is not always around.

Sam also selects a Chap Stick and a roll of Life Savers. The clerk says something which he can at best only guess. His pocket feels heavy with change, but he reaches for his wallet, takes out a dollar bill and hands it to her.

The tension is even worse when you attempt to lip-read. The name of this game is "Figure Out the Fingerprint." Like the whorls on his fingertips, each person's lips are different and moved in a peculiar way of their own. When young, you build confidence as you guess correctly "ball," "fish," "top," and "shoe" on your teacher's lips. This confidence doesn't last. As soon as you discover there are more than four words in the dictionary, it evaporates. Seventy percent of the words when appearing on the lips are no more than blurs. Lipreading is a precious and cruel art which rewards a few who have mastered it and tortures the many who have tried and failed.

The lunch hour is almost over. Sam drives back to the plant, ignoring the new chrome outside his Volkswagen. Several workers nod or wave at him as he makes his way to his workbench. He waves back, but today he feels no desire to join them for the usual banter that precedes the job at hand.

These are good guys. We get along. They like you, even respect you. You laugh at their jokes and fake punches to their jaws. Yet there remains an invisible, insurmountable wall between us. No man can become completely a part of another man's world. He is never more eloquently reminded of this impossibility than when there is no way he can talk with the other man.

Without a word, the foreman nods. Sam scribbles down another question. The foreman nods again. Still another question. More nodding, this time with marked annoyance. Sam then knows it is pointless to continue.

Communication is the father of human relationships. From infancy a person learns to speak at a rate closely synchronized with his thinking processes. Deviation from this timing between thinking and speaking upsets his natural flow of thought. He loses his tongue or forces out words which sound so artificial that they disgust him. As a deaf person, you sympathize with this mental block in the hearing person who tries to speak to you. In fact, you expect it. For this reason, just or not, you always wonder why he takes the trouble to speak to you.

You feel no less helpless in your search for

meaningful communication. When the hearing person does not know, as he usually does not, sign language, the only recourse lies with the pencil and pad. Here your language defeats you before you begin. You have been deprived of the natural process of learning language, i.e., through hearing. English is a language so complicated and inconsistent that its mastery is for you as elusive as the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Gamely you pick up the pencil only to find the hearing person hung-up in his own way: poor penmanship, bad spelling, or some other reasons known only to him. Inhibition reduces communication to a superficial level, a most unsatisfactory relationship to both parties. Speech and lipreading? Try discussing Kazantzakis, or any subject, limiting yourself to the thirty percent of the words that can be lip-read with no guarantee that there would be none of the words you have not seen before.

Tired as he is, Sam cannot go home yet. He remembers he has a couple of errands to perform. He surveys the traffic. It is getting bad. He tries but cannot think of a short cut to the other side of town where Paul lives. He shifts the gears, passing one roadside booth after another, each displaying the familiar Bell symbol.

His finger is tiring. From pressing continuously the door button that is rigged to a light bulb inside. He searches through a window, then another. No sign of life except for the parakeet. Refraining from kicking the door, he hastily writes down the message, inserts it in a crack in the door, and returns to his car. Sweat streaks down his forehead and he wipes it away. Hopefully he eyes the door once more.

How soon will you get Paul's reply? Will the note still be there when he comes home? When will he come home? He could not know you were driving down. You took your chance and lost. An alternate to this external courtship with chance is to plan ahead. Carry out, no wavering. Build a reputation as a man of his word. Your word determines the kind of relationship you will enjoy with your fellowmen. It does not have the freedom and flexibility made possible by the telephone with its sanctuary of distance, so dear to the hearing person at the eleventh hour. When you have committed yourself, by mail or in a previous visit, to come to a party, you come. Even if you are feeling particularly misanthropic that night. You may excuse yourself with a few days advance notice, again by mail or in person, but you have to be mighty convincing when you explain to the host

that Jeane Dixon has divulged the future to you—that on the night of the party you would feel terribly antisocial; therefore, it would be wise if you stay away.

“Your number is 48,” the girl behind the counter smiles sweetly and turns to the next customer. Sam hesitates, then shrugs and finds a seat close to the TAKE-OUT counter.

Bright kid, this girl. She reacted as if there were nothing out of the ordinary when a customer grabs the order pad and places his own order. No doubt she is also a great believer in miracles, that somehow your deafness will disappear before your pizza is ready and the number, whatever it is, announced on the loudspeaker.

The pizza tastes cold but good. Sam settles back and watches with affection as Brian and Brenda finish their portions. He waits until Jane returns with the coffee before waving for the family’s attention. “Want to go to the lake next week?” he more announces, then asks with his hands and fingers. Shrieks of delight answer him, unheard.

In group discussions where you alone are deaf, you do not exist. Because you cannot present your ideas through a medium everyone is accustomed to, you are not expected, much less asked, to contribute them. Because you are deaf, they turn deaf. Just do what your parents, friends, fellow workers—who can hear—tell you; you will know soon enough as we go along. Yours is not to reason why; yours is to do and die, silently. Does no one realize that security comes from knowing what you will be doing next, knowing what to expect? Does no one agree that much of the joy of performing an activity stems from the realization that you had a hand in planning it?

“Yes, you may bring Barb and Jo along,” Sam smiles as Brenda hugs the dolls and skips happily out of the room. To his seven-year-old son, he says, “Brian, tell me, what can we do at the lake?”

You never forget that frightening experience. When you were Brian’s age. You were left out of the dinner table conversation. It is called mental isolation. While everyone is talking or laughing, you are as far away as a lone Arab on a desert that stretches to every horizon. Everyone and everything are a mirage; you see them but you cannot touch or become a part of them. You thirst for connection. You suffocate inside but you cannot tell anyone of this horrible feeling. You do not know how to. You get the impression nobody

understands or cares. You have no one to share your childish enthusiasm and curiosity, no sympathetic listener who can give meaning to your world and the desert around you. You are not granted even the illusion of participation. You are expected to spend fifteen years in the straitjacket of speech training and lipreading. You learn not how to communicate, only how to parrot words, never to speak your own. Meantime your parents never bother to put in an hour a day to learn the sign language or some part of it. One hour out of twenty-four that can change a lifetime for you. Instead, the most natural form of expression for you is dismissed as vulgar. It has never occurred to them that communication is more than method or talk. That it is a sense of belonging, an exchange of understanding, a mutual respect for the other’s humanity.

The kids have been put in bed. Sam pours a third cup of coffee for himself. Jane is doing the dishes, and he decides to get his pipe from the living room. He cannot find it and returns to the kitchen.

Your eyes are your contact with the world, but there is only so much you can see. Seeing is waiting. From the living room you cannot ask Jane about the pipe. In the kitchen you cannot ask while she is washing the carving knife. She cannot answer until the knife is safely put down. You must stop with half of the shaving lather still on your face to answer how you want your eggs done. Then Jane must hurry back to the kitchen before the waffle burns. You always have laryngitis when you call Brian and Brenda to supper. It is rude to notice the fly in your pie while Jane is talking. You must walk across the room and touch her shoulder if you want her attention. Or stamp on the floor and probably ruin her mood or concentration for the next half hour.

The man on the tube looks as if he has a goldfish flipping inside his mouth. He refuses to leave; another joins him, mouthing likewise. Sam sighs and reaches for the channel dial. In a split second the Shakespeare Special is replaced by an undersea scene.

A big fish approaches the diver. Barracuda? It is going to attack the diver, or is it? Why does it hesitate, then swim off? What did the diver do that was not visibly obvious? Would he be attacked had he acted otherwise? But is the damn fish some kind of shark? The commentator supplies all the answers, but they pass through you as if you were a sieve. Desperately you grab for what you can, but you cannot see what you cannot hear. A wealth

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of information, both practical and exotic, escapes you daily. Television, movies and the stage hold limited meaning for you. Radio, phonographs, tape recorders, and loudspeakers have none. Then to what do you turn for information? The nearby human being is too unreliable. So you have only books. You read twice, thrice, four times, as much as the average person to know just as much. Slowly you close the cultural gap that is widening even faster by the incredible speed and ease of modern media.

Sam is alone in the living room, illuminated by a single lamp. Jane has long since retired, but he himself feels no urgency for sleep. From the coffee table he picks up Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Hardly has he opened the book before he reaches for the dictionary.

What are haricot beans? Messtin? Dollop? Vocabulary? Already four words out of your vocabulary, all from the first paragraph on the first page! You read this classic as an adult while others read it in their teens. You are lucky you can recognize the words as English. For some deaf adults they might well be reading the original version in German. Others with a little more reading ability plod through page by page, this laborious effort dimming the brilliant power of the message and the brutal grace of the story. In addition, there are unfamiliar idioms, colloquialisms, and expressions. The difficult language which you have never mastered makes for difficult reading. As if it is not enough, you lack the background information necessary for comprehension of the subject. Scratch out another—or your last—reliable source of information.

Finishing a chapter, he puts the book down and closes the edge-torn dictionary. He rubs his eyes and stretches his arms. The *Tribune* comes in his field of vision, and he opens it to the classified ads section.

Maybe there's something you overlooked earlier tonight. . . . Yes, here's a possibility. . . . Damn it, no address, just a lousy phone number. . . . Have you enough of the job at the plant! Eight years of brain-numbing drudgery. Is one such a coward not to quit? When you contemplate a job change, you are not half as concerned about the new location, working conditions, fringe benefits, school for your children, new friends, etc., as you are about basic survival and a decent income that will permit your family to live in relative comfort. You don't move on because you itch for a change of scenery or because your boss doesn't like the

length of your hair. You do not doubt your ability to change jobs, to perform the job or to keep the job, only whether you would be given a chance to prove this ability, to convince the prospective but skeptical employer that ability is all that counts. You can't write or read well. You can't speak. How do you sell yourself, by drawing pictures? All things being equal, the job goes to the applicant whose ears do not just hold up his eyeglasses.

Against the vast black nothingness, a fleck of light winks here and there, like a distant planet greeting a lost traveler. Watching through the window, Sam suddenly realizes how much he loves the city.

In one city you dare not hope for many job openings, any kind, where the deafness of a worker is treated as irrelevant or routine. You may have to cross a dozen city limits, perhaps half a continent, before you find one. Then the lesser factors take on new importance. Such as Brian and Brenda's new playmates. The slow and often painful acceptance. The children are still learning to live with their and your handicap. Then there is the search for housing in want ads which seem to conspire against you, listing only phone numbers for the most desirable and reasonably priced units. And the orientation of local merchants and new neighbors to your deafness. And the deaf population in the new city which may turn out to consist entirely of your family. You are well settled here. Need you push your luck?

Slowly he folds the paper and gets up. He switches the lamp off and walks cautiously down the dark hall. His hands move along the wall, keeping in contact for balance which was affected when he became deaf. At the door of his bedroom he pauses. As his eyes adjust to the darkness, he can make out the features of Jane's face.

Sam, do you love her or are you merely fond of her? You married her because she was available, the best of a limited lot. Probably she had said "Yes" for the same reason. It has always been this way: You don't have a ghost of a choice. Education, ambition, job, wife, friends, recreation, and sometimes religion. For you, choice is a limited word. You are the novelist's delight, the lonely, soul-searching character who has never found what he seeks in life. Unlike the perennial wanderer, you know which road you want to travel, but you keep running into one roadblock or another. The day you lost your hearing your universe shrank many times over; your power of choice in a world of sound is drastically reduced. Thrown

in the storm of silence, you seek refuge among your own kind and become a part of a microcosm which you are not sure you want. It is a closed society whose bond among members is founded not on mutual interests or intellectual equality but on a common desire for escape from the "cruel outside world," for communication although this communication frequently turns out to be an illusion. It breeds dependence, stagnation, pettiness, and finally boredom. It is a microcosm that unmercifully tries your individuality. You either surrender to tribal conformity or return to the other world. Or live on the fringes of both worlds, never to fully accept one and never to be fully accepted by the other.

He tosses in the bed. Unable to sleep, he stares at the far corner of the room. Jane stirs but is still again. He moves his hands to the back of his head and folds them.

Are you indulging in excessive self-pity? Brood and brood until there is no objectivity left in you? Is that why psychologists analyze you as being self-centered, immature, suspicious and narrow-minded, always self-conscious and defensive about your inability to hear? An unhealthy mental attitude? Or shall we call it inevitable? This outlook is not a product of deafness per se but of a general public attitude to, or ignorance of, the nature of deafness and the problems it creates.

Imagine yourself in a living room full of people who all know what is going on. Except you, who inquire and are answered with a polite smile which only underlines your helplessness. Everyone seems relaxed, enjoying himself. Except you, who are uneasily waiting for something to happen which makes sense to you. Everyone chats congenially with one another. Except you, who receive more polite smiles and furtive glances. Everyone tells something hilarious and laughs. Except you, who

debate with yourself whether you would appear less ridiculous going along and laughing at God-knows-what or remaining stoic, thus making your deafness even more conspicuous in an atmosphere already made uneasy by your presence.

Leaving the room means crawling back into your "deaf shell" from which you seek escape in the first place. A triumph of futility. So you stay on, making the best of your dilemma, waiting, hoping for the breakthrough when someone will realize you are indeed human. And tolerance may yet become acceptance.

You find it difficult to forget for a moment you are deaf when you are continuously reminded by an unwitting public. You are daily subjected to this public's unpredictable reaction and to the necessity of proving yourself. A lifetime of unending strain. After all this, can you kid yourself about not becoming oversensitive in your human relationships?

You know you are getting a raw deal, but you do not know whom to blame. Public ignorance is a faceless enemy against whom you have no weapon, only your battle-weary ingenuity. How do you get a society to accept you when it is ruled by this enemy? It can be educated to show understanding, compassion, but it does not always listen. Sometimes you wonder why it seems to be afraid of you.

People are, however, not your *raison d'être*. Each unpleasant episode with them is an unavoidable skirmish. They represent only obstacles in your battle. The objective of the battle is a life in which you can sing between dejections, laugh between tears, and dream between nightmares. Breathe between repressions, love between prejudices, and grow between defeats. And, by God, you are making it.

Peace settles over Sam. He falls asleep with his arms around Jane.