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APPRECIATION LUNCHEON

Bill Graham—Cofounder of ALDA, Inc.

KATHY SCHLUETER: Our cofounder Bill Graham is with us today, and Cleo Simmons would like to do the introduction for Bill.

CLEO SIMMONS: I'm only doing this for Bill because it is an honor. I was at the first party that Bill Graham had for ALDA. There was a small group of us, about 13 of us, and I was at the first party. We did not know how to sign. We didn't even have ALDA Crude but it was really a terrific party. After Bill had the first party, I had the second party and then it became a Cleo's pool party. After that Bill wrote such a nice letter and said such nice things about me; from that time on, it was just a complete love for Bill.

He used to have a party every year at his house, and he invited everybody to it. I went to that and I met Bill's mother for the first time, and I loved her, and she said I love you too. After that, I was invited to a luncheon when Bill was getting a special award, and I sat with his mother, and it was the next day that his mother died. So I became Bill's second mother, and I still feel that way.

I received an award, a long time ago, at one of the first ALDAcons. Bill was introducing me, and I was reading it on the captions, and Mary Clark's husband and my husband had gone out to have a snort, and Mary Clark ran after my husband to tell him I was going to receive an award. And all I could think of was to hug Bill. I have no memory of saying anything.

After ALDA started, deafened people were coming out of the woodwork, because of the letter that Bill used to write. Mary Clark, Bill Graham, Steve Wilhelm and all the rest, Roy Miller, anybody else who wanted information about ALDA, I answered all the letters. I felt like I was working for Bill and how good that was for me. It was a very small group of people. No email. No TTY yet, and from that, we are here today.
(applause).

KATHY SCHLUETER: I can remember attending the first convention and the first thing they requested was that hearing persons go to this side and nonhearing that side and when I was taken into this convention, I was leaving my support. But then I was fortunate to be placed in Bill Graham's support group that day, and we talked and we developed a close relationship, and the counselor was worried about me leaving earlier and I was probably about the last person to speak because Bill and I sat down on the couch and we talked and talked and I said, if that man would have taken me home, I would have left my husband. But I went back to the farm, back with the farmer. ALDA-Freeport hosted ALDAcon in 1995 and I asked Bill to be my keynote speaker. He showed up and supported me. I asked him to attend this convention. He supported me. I know he is always busy, but without the support of Bill behind us, we would not have ALDA, and we need this family to continue, and I really am honored, Bill, to invite you to speak to your ALDA family.
(applause).

BILL GRAHAM: Man!

That was the most beautiful introduction I have ever had. Only a second mother could do that.
(applause).

Hi! A lot has been happening in my life lately. And I really didn't know what to say here. I asked Kathy and Cheryl Heppner what I should say here, what I should talk about. They both said, talk about the early days of ALDA. I'm happy to do that, except for one thing: I don't remember anything. I mean, we are talking 19 years ago. Nineteen years. That was nine years before my wife and I became parents.

Sometimes Karina and I look at photos from before we had kids, and you know how this goes...You see hiking in the mountains, sunning on the beach, visiting city after city, and we look at each other and say, hey, who are the people in these pictures? You mean *we had a life*? Well, ALDA began way before my precious children. So maybe you can understand why I don't remember anything. I don't remember a damn thing. It was another life, entirely. But here I am and I'm supposed to talk. So I made something up last night to kill some time for you before the afternoon sessions start.

I'm kidding, of course. I remember ALDA's early years just like my wedding day. It rained. It actually did rain on the morning of my wedding, but when we got to the church a big bright, beautiful sun came out. And that's what ALDA was for me, a big, bright, beautiful sun with a lot of wonderful memories. I know that the long-timers here relate to that.

In the beginning, and I'm sure it's still true now; ALDA was all about communication, or the lack thereof. Take the self-help group for late-deafened adults that ALDA arose from. I wrote about my experiences with that for ALDA News after Kathie Hering died two years ago. Three people were there. Nobody understood what the other person was

they had a lobby bar in the hospital? And some of the Grand Poohbahs of the court reporting world came. Jerry Miller and another NSRA president, Marty Block, a legend in the field since he played a role in the first live television captioning. I think maybe Bill Oliver, another past president of court reporters was there. Poohbahs! And they tried to realtime caption that meeting, which was the first ever ALDAcon.

Doing real captioning in front of an audience was new back then and there were plenty of problems with displaying the captions. Steve Wilhelm...he had to jerry-rig things for some of the court reporters, too. We ended up beaming captions on to a projector screen, the realtime version of ALDA Crude. The characters and letters were hard to see and some ran off the screen, but hey, this was cutting edge stuff for us. And we had the patience of Job back then.

I have wonderful memories of court reporters. I spent a lot of time with them. They volunteered their services, which is good because ALDA didn't have any money then. And I made great friendships with so many of them and attended several of their conventions and boy, could they do conventions. Exotic locations, lavish hotels, upbeat, wild and crazy people, fun, fun, fun! They learned a lot from ALDA.... But I spent a lot of time with them and they spent a lot of time with us. They weren't stupid: This open captioning stuff was a promising new market for them.

I remember the second ALDAcon really well. We had it in a hotel for the first time, on Michigan Avenue in Chicago overlooking Grant Park. We set up each workshop with a captioner and a projector screen or monitor on the left side of the room, and we had a sign language interpreter over on the right side of the room for all the workshops. Every workshop more and more people would move over to the left side of the room. So by the end of the conference, if you walked into some of those rooms, the whole audience would be over on the left side of the room and the interpreter was signing to empty chairs over here on the right side of the room. As Steve Wilhelm would and probably did say, "Did somebody fart over there?"

Today captioning is so amazingly good. I don't know what the standard for accuracy is now, 97, or 98 percent? Something like that. And people expect that. Fifteen years ago 60 or 70 percent made us perfectly happy. Court reporters, it took a while before they became known as CART reporters, were ALDA's super heroes. Almost every ALDA chapter has their own super heroes, and ALDA Chicago had Pat Graves. She came to our meetings week after week, month after month and captioned our meetings for nothing. She sometimes worked hours without a break. I can still see you kneading your fingers and rubbing your hands and looking, well, rather pained because she never took a break...and she worked for nothing! Now she has an extremely successful captioning business and she deserves every iota of her success. But we had her first. Congratulations, Pat.
(applause)

The other foundation of ALDA communication in its early days, and this, too, remains true, was ALDA News. People find ALDA through the Newsletter. Many people stay in

ALDA because of the Newsletter. It's a great publication. I really admire people who have managed the Newsletter all these years, Candis, Mark, Nancy, Marylyn and others, they have all my respect. It is hard to manage a newsletter in the midst of a busy life. And there is terrific writing in every issue.

I was lucky enough to originate the Newsletter. It was really first a letter more than news, just a way to maintain connections with people between social events. I wrote stories about simple, often silly things associated with deafness: our parties, my dog, the act of typing the newsletter, and my girlfriend's nose. Apparently a lot of people remember the one I wrote about Karina's nose. I called that story *Hand to Nose Communication*. I told about how Karina and I were lying on the grass one day sunning ourselves, talking to each other, with her, as usual, repeating things when I missed them. And I playfully reached over and grabbed her nose, and she said something like "Stop it, you dope," and I actually understood her better because she has a nasal voice and the vibrations I felt from it when she talked helped me understand her better. I kept holding on to her nose and we talked that way for about five minutes and it was very effective. So I wrote about it.

I haven't done any nose holding or even thought about that story in a long, long time, until Cheryl Heppner reminded me of it two weeks ago. We are both on the Board of Gallaudet University. Maybe you heard of that place. And while we were eating lunch, Cheryl was telling a person the nose story and of course I demonstrated it and held Cheryl's nose while she explained it all. You know what? It still works! Try it some time.

So many wonderful memories from the early years. Sister Maureen Conway, a nun from New York City. She had the biggest smile on God's green earth, and she hugged you like the Heimlich maneuver. I mean, really, really tight hug. Then she would shake you, smiling like crazy. When you saw Maureen coming you didn't know whether to jump for joy or flee.

Of course, Cleo Simmons, there from the beginning, from the very beginning, always there for me and for everyone else. She hosted the second ALDA party and never stopped giving them. Marylyn Howe...she's not here yet... We met by the pool at one of those swanky court reporter conventions. Marylyn was a dynamo--an amazing writer, a wicked sense of humor, charismatic enough to assemble the second robust chapter of ALDA in Boston. For a while, there, I was more a figurehead behind the scenes while Marylyn was driving ALDA. Marylyn organized that first Karaoke Party at ALDAcon in Boston. That was one of the most powerful memories of all for me, standing on that stage and singing *If I Had A Hammer* with Marylyn, Jerry Barnhart, Steve Larew, and all my brothers and sisters. Wow, that was precious. I cried then, I really did, and I still get weepy thinking about it... a powerful moment, unforgettable, and it happens every year at the 'con... Tomorrow night! Woo-hooooooooo! ALDAns, start your engines!

Marylyn started it. And then there's King Jordan, President of Gallaudet... he came a lot and made ALDAcon a very special memory with his presence. King loves to come to

ALDAcon. He couldn't make it today but I'm absolutely sure he wishes he could....And these kinds of memories go on and on and on.

I also have wonderful memories of people who are no longer with us: Kathie Hering, Rick Skyer, Mary Skyer, Helen Mendelssohn, Bob Hawley, Tracy McCarthy, Diane Tokarz, Stan Gadsden, Cleo's husband Gene, and alas, this list too goes on and on.

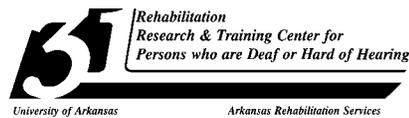
So there are many, many wonderful memories and this will be a new memory. Even though I'm only here for a day. I've been on the road way too much lately, and I want to get back to my family. Not that you aren't my family because you most certainly are, even though I'm never around. You didn't give me a curfew, people! Before I leave, I hope to talk with some of you who I've never met. And if you don't understand me, go right ahead and push some paper and a pencil at me. Don't worry. I'll write it down. And I won't roll my eyes.

Thank you very much for having me here.

Biographical

Bill Graham works for Websters Multimedia, Inc, as managing editor of Microsoft's Encarta Reference Suite. He is a member of the Gallaudet University Board of Trustees. He lives in Cary, Ill with his wife Karina, two children Eva, 10, and Tony 8, and a mother-in-law.

In 1987 Bill co founded ALDA in Chicago.



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