



I. K. Jordan Awards Banquet

Cheryl Heppner

CHERYL HEPPNER: Good evening. This year's I. King Jordan Award winner became deaf at the age of 19. She completed her college education and went on to earn a Masters Degree in deafness rehabilitation at New York University.

She left her beloved State of New York for a warmer climate when she accepted a position as a counselor for deaf students at Floyd College in Rome, Georgia. Since then she has had a long career with a number of impressive job titles.

She was Program Coordinator at Atlanta Center for Independent Living, Deafness Programs Advisor in the Georgia Division of Rehabilitation Services, and Director of the Georgia Interpreting Services Network. As director of GISN, she implemented and then directed the network, which provided sign language interpreting services to state agencies and private entities. In 1998, she became the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator for the Division of Rehabilitation Services, where she implemented a training program for more than 1,000 staff members. She served as instructor and consultant in the interpreter training program at DeKalb College for more than ten years.

Our 2006 winner has always been very active in advocating for citizens with disabilities, especially those who are deaf, deafened and hard of hearing. She served on the Committee for Disability Access for the Atlanta Committee on the Olympic Games from 1991 to 1996. She is a past member of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Association Task Force for Elderly and Disabled Persons. In 1998 she was on the Georgia ADA Exchange Board. She was a member of the Georgia Sensory Rehabilitation Center Advisory Council. Currently she is a member of the Atlanta

Interfaith Disabilities Network, and also serving on the Georgia Telecommunications Relay Advisory Council. After her retirement in 1999 she became a full time volunteer. In addition to her work with various disability related organizations, she has spent many hours working with Hands On Atlanta, Good Will, and Holy Trinity Episcopal Parish.

Our newest I. King Jordan Award winner was adopted by several members of the deaf community when she first moved to Atlanta. She became fluent in American Sign Language, and she has maintained a good relationship with the deaf community. She served as President of the Northeast Metro chapter of the Georgia Association of the Deaf, has been a judge in the Black Deaf Advocates Miss Black Deaf Georgia Pageant. She has volunteered at the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf. She has fostered a good relationship between the Georgia Association of the Deaf and the ALDA-Peach chapter. Georgia Association of the Deaf was the first donor to ALDA-Peach's Treasury.

She has served as a community educator throughout her years in Atlanta. She has worked with the rehabilitation, business, legal and civic communities as a public speaker. She also provides advocacy for late-deafened adults while educating the public, and by requesting interpreters for conferences, committee meetings, and medical appointments.

She is one of ALDA's greatest ambassadors. She spreads the word about ALDA wherever she goes. Anyone who knows her knows what ALDA is, and how much it means to her. She has been a dedicated ALDA member for many years. She has served on the Board of ALDA, Inc. from 1995 to 1997. She was President in 1996.

She is everywhere in ALDA. Here are a few of the ways that she has served: On the ALDA Nominations Committee. On the ALDAcon Program Committee. As a keynote speaker at ALDAcon. As a workshop speaker at several ALDAcons. As a member of the former President's Task Force, as ALDAcon 2004 Public Relations Chair. As Co-chair of the ALDAcon Silent Auction twice.

She has previously been honored with the Able ALDAn Award in 1998, the Fearless Leader Award in 2001, and the Robert Davila Angel Award in 2005.

Our winner is known for always remembering birthdays of her close friends. She is devoted to a menagerie of adopted pets. She has been our Karaoke Queen.

She loves chocolate.

We would like to thank ALDAn Jerry Barnhart and our winner's dear friend, Gertrude Beal, for some of these scoops that we have shared with you tonight.

ANN GRADY SMITH: Our award winner for many years has worked in the Metro Atlanta area [and founded the chapter] ALDA-Peach. It was chartered in December 1999 and she was its first President. She also served on its Board as a Member-At-

Large, Vice President and Treasurer. She is truly a pick of the crop, a real peach of an ALDAn.

CHERYL HEPPNER: Robin Titterington, the 2006 I. King Jordan Award winner, we love you.

(applause).
(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE).
(Standing ovation).

EDGAR PALMER: Robin, as you know, Dr. Jordan couldn't be here tonight but he really wanted to be here because he wanted to recognize the special night for you. After talking of the appreciation for what you have done he wants to give you a small token. Are you ready for this? (Hands Robin a football.)

(applause).

Congratulations!!

ROBIN TITTERINGTON: I am SO honored. Thank you to the ALDA Board of Directors for giving me this honor, which means more than you can know. And I am so glad that Bill Graham is here, thank you, Bill, for changing my life and the lives of so many other deafened adults. I feel Kathie Herring's presence is also with us. I also need to tell the Peaches I love you, you keep me going through the year. And of course, thank you to Jerry, Cheryl, Ann, Kathy and Gertrude and anyone else who has been involved in this! I feel like I'm giving an Oscar thank-you!

I want to share just a little of my journey. You know most of my life story now, but I want to share a few more things. I am so proud to have the I. King Jordan Award. King and I have a few connections that I doubt even he is aware of. When I was at Gallaudet, I took a class with him, Psychology of Deafness. I made an "A!"

March of 1988 was eventful for both of us. That was the time of the Deaf President Now revolution when King was named the first deaf president of Gallaudet. It was also the first time I started dialysis treatments. Believe it or not, the first week, the clinic got a decoder so I could have captioned TV. Alas, in those days, not much was captioned! But one thing that was captioned was ABC World News Tonight. And I would go to those new treatments and see the happenings at Gallaudet. I would try to get the attention of the nurses and point at the TV and say, "look! Look! They're deaf like me!" But they didn't understand, not like you understand.

Some of you have told me that when you became deafened, you tried to get involved in the culturally Deaf community but felt unwelcome. That is heart breaking to me. I moved to Georgia as a relatively new deafened adult who did not sign well and had no understanding of ASL. But the Georgia Deaf community welcomed me, taught me and loved me and I shall forever be honored to be a part of that community.

I didn't learn about ALDA until I had been deafened more than 15 years. One day at my office, an issue of ALDA NEWS appeared. I still think angels delivered it. I read through it. You are probably thinking my first thought was, "I found people like me!" You'd be wrong. I think in those days Bill Graham wrote the entire newsletter and I believe he was only assisted by his dog who licked the stamps. My first thought was, "these people are crazy!" And I couldn't wait to meet them!

When I attended my first ALDAcon in Boston, I only knew Steve Larew from my Gallaudet days but had not spoken to him in 15 years. I also had met Jerry Barnhart once. But when I arrived in Boston I knew I had come home. I didn't even care that the hotel was not fully wheelchair accessible. They had to take off the bathroom door and they put up a curtain. My roommate was very understanding but her hearing ear dog was not so polite. More than once, I reached for a towel and met with a hairy head instead!

As I said, the culturally Deaf community of Georgia welcomed me with open arms. I was happy before I found ALDA. You might think that since I had been deafened over 15 years, I didn't even need ALDA. Again, you would be wrong. One thing my Deaf community could not share was the sense of loss I had when I became deafened. Deafness happened to me, to my family and to my friends. And it wasn't until I got involved in ALDA that I could really acknowledge what trauma I had experienced. It was okay to cry and say, "this was really a life-changing and difficult experience." I cried all the way home (and I still cry sometimes when I leave my ALDA family!)

Just one more thing: I cannot thank anyone who has served on the ALDA board of directors enough. So many of us say, "I just don't have time," but fortunately, we have had individuals every year say, "I'll do it!" These are all volunteers, they have jobs homes and family, yet every night they are on their computers doing the business that keeps ALDA going. I don't believe there are any of us who can't do something to help. Each of us is an ambassador for ALDA. There is probably not one person in my life who has spent more than an hour with me that doesn't know about ALDA. So, I challenge each of you to take one small task to help our organization become stronger.

Again, so many thanks to each of you, especially for the hugs! I love you all!

