Many people have asked me the name of my hearing dog, Remick. I often explain that I don’t know where her name came from, that she came with it. Sometimes, I wonder if there’s a connection to the actress Lee Remick, whose friends described her as “a true, loyal, dedicated, focused, hard-working, professional individual.” Like the actress, Remick exhibits similar qualities.

It’s now over five years that Remick and I have been partnered. I remember clearly being excited to get “The Call” that there was a hearing dog for me; then I remember having very mixed feelings. Was I doing the right thing? Did I really NEED a hearing dog? Did I want to be with a dog all the time? I remember going through the application process—it wasn’t easy. I investigated a number of hearing dog agencies. One agency that was not too far from my home, asked me whether I had another dog, and told me to get rid of it. I lied; I said I’d give him to a family member. They must have known that I lied because they told me not to put all my eggs in one basket, to check out other agencies. I didn’t hear back from them until about two years after I was partnered with Remick.

I ultimately applied to CCI—Canine Companions for Independence. They also had a branch near my home. I filled out the paper work, then had a phone interview, and then had a face-to-face interview, at which point applicants were introduced to some dogs. They showed us choke collars and prong collars—I told them there was no way I would use those things on a dog! So they put “those things” on my arm to show me how it felt and explained dog anatomy. I could go on about the interview process, but suffice to say that it took about 18 months to almost two years from the time I filled out the application to the time I got The Call that they had a dog for me.

Most hearing dog agencies look for a perfect match between dog and human, and CCI is no exception. They are the only agency that breeds its own dogs, and that’s something that was important to me. They, like most agencies, put their dogs through rigorous training and testing, to make sure that the dogs are healthy, have what I call perfect temperaments, and have the myriad skills required to be a service dog. After they learn as much as they can about us, the humans, through the interview process, they try to match our needs with the abilities of a dog. When I got The Call, it was explained that they felt they had THE dog for me and it was time for me to go to team training.

I did pretty much everything that CCI said I should do. I read their training book—it was almost like a text on dogs, covering dog behavior, dog health, dog commands, etc. The information explained that team training would be an intense two weeks in their main center in Santa Rosa, California. I’d have to pay for air fare, but they had dormitories for the humans to stay in, if needed. The only cost was a $100 good faith deposit—in return, we’d get dog supplies (crate, grooming tools, leash, vest, a variety of collars, food, bowls, etc.).

When it was time to actually go to team training, often abbreviated TT, I was a wreck; I was as unsure as I have ever been about anything. Then, like a proverbial message, I had an un-
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Publisher:
ALDA, Inc.
8038 MacIntosh Lane, Suite 2
Rockford, IL 61107

ALDA VOICE/TTY: 815.332.1515 or 866.402.ALDA
FAX: 877.907.1738
E-MAIL: info@alda.org
WEBSITE: www.alda.org

Editor-in-Chief:
Nancy Kingsley (Kingsnan@aol.com)
717.394.1391 (2-line CapTel)

Managing Editor:
Eileen Hollywood (EileenA2@aol.com)
732-380-1233 TTY

Editorial Review Board:
Mark Dessert (subvet633@verizon.net), Cheryl Heppner (NVRCheryl@aol.com), Carolyn Piper (wicwas@wctv.com), and Robin Titterington (furriesmom@comcast.net)

Technology Director:
Ken Arcia (ALDA96Ken@dslextreme.com)

Chapter Happenings and GA to SK:
Ann Smith (fabsmith@att.net)

ALDAnonymous:
Bill Graham and Robin Titterington
(aldanonymous@gmail.com)

Advertising Directors:
To place an ad:
Matt Ferrara (mattF812@verizon.net)
V/TTY: 815.332.1515 or (toll-free) 866.402.2532

Ad Billing information:
Vaughn Shaw (treasurer@alda.org)
V/TTY: 815.332.1515 or (toll-free) 866.402.2532

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Graphic Artist:
Ellen E. Bailey (eebail@verizon.net)

ALDA 2010 Board of Directors
board@alda.org

Linda Drattell, President
president@alda.org

Kathy Schlueter, Past President
past.president@alda.org

Cynthia Amerman, President-Elect
president.elect@alda.org

Brenda Estes, Secretary
secretary@alda.org

Vaughn Shaw, Treasurer
treasurer@alda.org

Matt Ferrara, Region 1 Director
rd1@alda.org

Marsha Kopp, Region 2 Director
rd2@alda.org

Dave Litman, Region 3 Director
rd3@alda.org

Michelle Lewis, Region 4 Director
rd4@alda.org

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Correction

The young lady in the photo with Raphael Torralba in the summer issue is Jackqueline Donado, who is Raphael’s girlfriend.

ALDacon 2010 Awards

I. King Jordan Award—Dr. Jane Schlau
Able ALDAn Award—Karen Krull
Robert Davila ALDA Angel Award—National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID)
President’s Special Recognition Award—Nancy Kingsley

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30 What Is ALDA?
I usually write about my experiences regarding the theme of our current issue, but I’ve never owned a dog, hearing or otherwise. (I did once have a cat—or, as I often put it, the cat had me. However, cats are not noted for their assistive capabilities.)

But there’s something else I’d like to share with our readers. I just came back from the first ALDacon I’ve attended in a number of years. I had been to a dozen consecutive ‘cons in the past, but I was forced to break the chain when my son got married during a ‘con weekend. The next year, my husband became fatally ill shortly before the ‘con, so I had to skip that one, too. In addition, my regular roommate stopped attending, so I didn’t have someone to room with anymore. Consequently, when Geoff Brown asked me to be on his spirituality panel, I told him I wouldn’t be attending.

Shortly before the ‘con was to start, Linda Drattell convinced me to change my mind, so I quickly registered, requested a roommate, and reserved a plane and a hotel room that looked out onto the magnificence of Pikes Peak. I then received an email from someone with the intriguing name of Stormy Iverson, asking whether I still needed a roommate, and we agreed to share a room. (When we met, we discovered that we have several things in common—we’re both left-handed only children who drink lots of coffee.) Stormy is hearing and studying late-deafness for her Ph.D., so she set up a video camera in our room and interviewed some ‘con attendees.

I hadn’t signed up in advance for Thursday’s tour of the Garden of the Gods, and when I got to the ‘con on Wednesday, I was disappointed to discover that the tour bus was full. But I got lucky—at the last minute, someone decided not to go, and I was able to buy her ticket. Walking among the huge red sandstone rock formations was awe-inspiring.

I especially enjoyed two workshops by John Waldo, a hard of hearing attorney who founded the Washington State Communication Access Project (Wash-CAP): “Organizing Effective Advocacy—Working Together to Build an Accessible World” and “The Battle for Captioned Movies—An ADA Case Study.” Another particularly helpful workshop was “Online Support Resources for People with Cochlear Implants” by Valerie LeBeau, a speech language pathologist, and Tina Childress, a late-deafened audiologist with bilateral CIs.

Pat Graves, the president of Caption First, who helped to develop CART standards, gave an outstanding speech at the awards luncheon about the many similarities between her experience of vision loss and our experience of hearing loss. And I was very touched when ALDA President Linda Drattell called me up to receive the President’s Special Recognition Award for my work with the ALDA News and ALDA Bylaws.

Seeing people I hadn’t seen in (I don’t want to say how many) years was another highlight—it didn’t feel as if I’d ever been away! Meeting new people was also gratifying, especially those, such as Rachael Morris, who had written for the ALDA News (her article was our cover story in the Winter 2010 issue) and those, such as various board members, with whom I had exchanged emails.

And the spirituality panel? I ended up on it after all, when an expected participant reported that she had to leave before it was scheduled to take place.

If you haven’t yet been to a ‘con, or haven’t been to one in awhile, consider joining your ALDA family at the next one!
I find myself on an ALDA “high” at the moment, having recently returned from ALDAcon 2010 in Colorado Springs. It was a fabulous five days where communication barriers disappeared into the thin mountain air above Pike’s Peak. Attendees were immersed in a near-utopian environment of CART, sign language (both ASL and ALDA crappy sign, to borrow a phrase from ALDA co-founder Bill Graham), paper and pen, and most of all, friendship and understanding. Lifelong friendships are born at ALDAcon. This year was no exception, and it provided an opportunity to make friends of the furry kind as well, since several conference-goers had their canine companions in hand.

With canine assistants growing in numbers and acceptance, we decided to focus on the subject of hearing dogs for this issue. Whether a dog is personally or professionally trained, it provides incomparable service and priceless companionship to its owner. Our cover story, “A Hearing Dog by My Side” by Jane Schlau, takes a personal look at life with a professionally trained hearing dog. In “The Hearing Dog Relationship—A Magical Friendship,” Lori Messing provides a wonderful and funny account of life with her hearing dog, which she trained herself.

Those of you who know Woody Waga, our veteran CART writer from past ALDAcons, will not want to miss his heartfelt letter to ALDA.

Getting back to our theme, Carol Granaldi’s story, “Deaf Dog, Deaf Me,” about her furry family pet, Missy, will make you both smile and sniffle. “Being a Hearing Dog Trainer” by Beth Hay provides a behind-the-scenes view of hearing dogs from a trainer’s perspective. Cynthia Amerman, ALDA’s president-elect, has been hard at work spreading ALDA’s message abroad, and she shares the details of her summer travels in “Highlights of Cynthia Amerman’s European Trip, Summer 2010, Part One: The International Federation of Hard of Hearing People’s Biennial General Meeting.”

Many readers will enjoy “Life in ALDA-Land: Invisible Fences,” Mary Clark’s lighthearted story about her family dog, Cooper. Ken Reid provides another interesting look at hearing dogs from a trainer’s point of view in “Training Hearing Dogs for Canine Companions.” And Sheltie owners will feel a connection to Mary Ruth Dilling’s story about her personally trained dog in “Lassie to the Rescue.” In “Thirty-Six Years with Canine Ears,” Cheryl Heppner talks about the joys and demands she experienced in owning hearing dogs. “Calvin, My New Partner” by Brenda Estes examines how a lifelong love of dogs led her to bring a hearing dog into her life.

In addition to these fantastic stories, we also have our regular newsletter columns and two short humorous essays by the late Jerry Barnhart, reprinted from early issues of the ALDA News. And be sure to read the flyer about ALDAcon 2011. Kim Mettache and Terri Singer are already hard at work on this conference, which is sure to be as awesome as previous ALDAcons.

As always, this newsletter would not be possible without the contributions of our writers, so I’d like to thank them all for taking the time to submit their stories. If you would like to write for us and/or have suggestions for themes for future issues, please let me know. We want to provide articles that make you eagerly await the next issue of ALDA News.

ALDAbest,
Eileen
Those of you who met me at my very first ALDAcon in 1999 will probably recall how inexperienced and shy I was, dragging my mother in tow. I didn’t know how to use relay. I thought I could no longer drive a car. I definitely didn’t know that late-deafness affected so many people!

Like most who attend ALDAcon for the first time, I discovered I wasn’t alone, but to my surprise, I also learned through some exhibit hall information that I had a very special little friend waiting for me back at home—a furry friend who never left my side through all my trials with hearing loss.

Back then, I didn’t even know what a hearing dog really was. I had always associated service dogs with guide dogs for people who are blind. I thought they had to be bigger—German shepherds or golden retrievers—with extensive training to do all sorts of complicated tricks and tasks. I certainly never, ever fathomed a dog could be used to help a deaf person!

At ALDAcon, it only just began to dawn on me that my beautiful little Shih Tzu, Jasmine, could actually be considered a hearing dog.

I brought Jasmine home in 1994, five years before I found ALDA. I was a freshman in college experiencing my first real bout with hearing loss. I became terribly ill with Lyme disease that had finally been diagnosed after baffling my doctors for over eight years. It was most likely because I had been incorrectly treated without antibiotics for so long that I began to lose my hearing.

When I finally found a Lyme disease specialist, she felt my only hope was very aggressive intravenous antibiotic therapy for several months at a time. She explained I’d need a permanently inserted central catheter (PICC line catheter) in my arm that would allow me to administer my antibiotics for a few hours each day.

Inserting a PICC line is supposed to be a simple procedure that can actually be done right in the doctor’s office by a nurse. Sadly, I am not blessed with very good veins and I am never one of the “easy” patients when it comes to IV lines. I returned home from my appointment bruised and sore after five attempted PICC lines. I hid under the covers and cried, feeling doomed to just grow sicker and lose more hearing.

I was 18 at the time and quite scared. I moved back in with my parents, leaving my college dorm room behind forever. I dropped my Spanish classes because I could hardly understand my professors who spoke English, let alone a foreign language. I eventually also changed my minor from teaching to writing because I couldn’t imagine standing in front of a classroom full of hearing children as a...a...duh-duh-duh DEAF person. I couldn’t even say the word “deaf” at that point in my life. My parents were obviously very worried about me. I needed the IV antibiotics and I needed some hope even more.

Anyone who knows me also knows there are two very simple things in life that cheer me up without fail—Disney and dogs. When my father pulled off my bedcovers and showed me an ad in the newspaper for a Shih-Tzu puppy, I have to admit that despite my best efforts to remain dismal, I perked up.

The breeder’s townhouse in Staten Island was dark. It smelled from kerosene and I could feel my hopes sinking as we walked through the front door. There were no dogs in sight when we were ushered into the living room, where we sat down while the breeder scurried off mysteriously to get the puppy.

She was a lot larger than I thought she would be for a four-month-old dog. She was mostly white, which reminded me of the PICC line nurse’s white uniform (not a good thing.) Her coat was also already almost floor-length. She was beautiful, but she didn’t look like the shorter-haired, round little fluff ball I had pictured with the Shih-Tzu’s characteristic chrysanthemum face and tiny black nose. Her mouth was all wrong, as well. I wanted a little mouth that looked like a rosebud.

“She’s a little bit larger than I hoped,” I politely observed.

“Well,” the breeder responded meekly, “I do have another puppy that’s smaller. I was holding her for a friend, but she’s not fussy. She’ll take this dog instead, if you want the other.”

My face lit up again with renewed hope. “Yes, I’d love to see her!”

Before I could blink an eye, I had her in my arms shimmying up my chest toward my ears, trying desperately to lick them, like she KNEW! When I managed to pry her away and look at her face, I saw that she had big bright eyes with long lashes like Princess Jasmine from the Disney
Deaf Dog, Deaf Me

My dog Missy was our family pet during the latter 1970s when our four boys were in elementary school. She was from a litter of mixed collie and golden retriever puppies, and a better mix for a family of energetic boys couldn’t be found. We all enjoyed her puppyhood, housebreaking her through the freezing winter of 1978, when most dogs wouldn’t go out in the bitter cold and ice. She had a sunny disposition, like her golden fur, and was always a wonderful household companion. The boys enjoyed teaching her some tricks, and she always got excited when she heard the leash chain rattling, as we took it off the hook before taking her out for a walk.

This was my period of peak activities as a mother and office worker for the local newspapers. I had a considerable hearing loss, but at that time I managed fairly well with use of a hearing aid. My left ear, which was my better ear in childhood, no longer functioned with a hearing aid, so I relied to a great degree on what I could hear with my right ear in childhood, no longer functioned with a hearing aid. My left ear, which was considered hearing loss, but at that time I managed fairly well with use of a hearing aid. My left ear, which was my better ear in childhood, no longer functioned with a hearing aid, so I relied to a great degree on what I could hear with my right ear and its hearing aid. Because our sons had grown up with a mother who didn’t hear normally even with the hearing aid, they were accustomed to accommodating me when I needed “repeats.” They understood my need to see their faces to speechread, and if I wasn’t looking at them when they spoke, they’d tell me, “You’re not listening—you’re not looking at me.” My rule in our family was: “Speak to me only when you can see the whites of my eyes.” Our household also included a longhaired cat called Abigail Von Feline, or “Abby” for short.

After having Missy for a couple of years, I learned to observe her whenever she heard something and reacted to it. I realized that I was actually relying on her as a “hearing dog” by studying her behavior. For example, she had several distinctive barks that told me that something was happening. The front doorbell ringing would set off a raucous bark, and I would then follow up by going to the front door. I couldn’t hear the doorbell’s high-pitched sound very well from different parts of the house, but I could definitely hear Missy’s excited barking. Oftentimes, we would be sitting in the TV room and Missy would be lying quietly. She would hear something happening outdoors and raise her head in alert. I’d watch as her ears would “rotate” as though she were following something. She’d then bark a single quiet “woof” and I’d look out the window. Usually, she was listening to the neighbor across the street getting out of his car, or passersby walking on our front sidewalk, or someone approaching our front door to ring the doorbell.

There were times, when our cat Abby would be on the front doorstep and meow to be let in. Of course, I couldn’t hear her meows, but Missy did. She’d go to the front door, drop her head down low, and quietly “woof, woof, woof” as though to reassure Abby that someone soon would let her in. I’d go to the door, and Abby would march happily in, no doubt thanking Missy for her thoughtfulness. Another distinctive bark that alerted me was Missy’s “I gotta pee” bark at the back door. This was a louder single bark, and if no one came, she’d bark a decibel louder and yet louder in desperation until I’d hear her and let her outside to her “toilet.” These were idyllic times for me—family growing up and a dog that I could rely on to tell me what was happening with things I couldn’t hear.

As time went on, Missy entered her senior years, and I realized that she was slowing down. I particularly noticed that she no longer responded to the rattling leash chain when it was time for her walk. She also was developing arthritis and became reluctant to walk very far. She didn’t respond to her name when I’d call her to go out, and when she was lying quietly in the TV room, she didn’t raise her head in her “who goes there?” stance.

She’d become oblivious to the environmental sounds around her, didn’t respond to our calls, and would stare off with a “spacey” look. She had become deaf and arthritic, and soon she started to bump into things as she walked around the house. I knew then she was becoming blind or was already blind. My hearing dog could no longer help me, and she needed help herself. By then she was already 13 years old. A visit to the vet confirmed my worst fears: she was deaf, blind, and becoming crippled. Because she couldn’t see or hear, she had become incontinent in the house, and this was the final indignity. We decided to put her to sleep.

I remember the date: November 22, 1990. It was a gloomy, overcast and foggy day, and we sadly guided Missy to our van, lifted her, and drove to the vet’s office. When we opened the van’s door, she stood uncertainly at the opening, and when I yanked her to come down, she fell to the ground. My heart was breaking that this magnificent golden dog was old, incontinent, and no longer had her sense of hearing or vision. My husband Pete and I carried her into the office. The vet gave her a shot to relax her and told us that the next shot would put her to sleep, and that she would feel no pain and just make a little sigh. While we held her, we said goodbye to our faithful friend and let her go.

I’m writing this 20 years later, and the continued on page 10
An Open Letter to ALDA, My Family from Woody Waga

Dear Fellow ALDAns,

I’ve been told, “Never begin an article with a negative—you might lose your audience.” I’ll take that chance. If you don’t know me, I guess you haven’t been to too many ALDAcons. As a hearing person, I’ve attended every ALDAcon except the very first and the last two. I am a CART reporter and I’ve coordinated CART for almost all of those conventions. And now I have turned the reins over to my extremely able colleague, Pat Graves. I ask you to continue reading so you, too, will know the strength and purpose of membership in ALDA.

I was born into a middle-class blue collar family oh, many years ago. As teenage kids growing up on the streets of Brooklyn, we would be perplexed about racial discrimination. Our moms and dads had taught us to assist blind people across the street and we learned that you don’t pity a challenged person—you cooperate and work with them.

Becoming a court reporter was the second greatest professional achievement of my life. I loved reporting the spoken word, thinking I was an artist of sorts, creating unique shorthand outlines for esoteric words. I said second greatest, for a greater achievement was being a pioneer and developing the CART community. When I was president of the National Court Reporters Association, I saw the need to take court reporting to a higher plane. Television captioning was already a done deal, and I didn’t want to join that marketplace and be the only person in my firm captioning, for I would be the one writing all the nights and weekends. I saw another need for court reporters. I asked myself, why shouldn’t deaf people be able to do everything I can do?

When I entered the world of CART, I wanted to experience being deaf. I still watch television on mute and read the captions. Sometimes I watch television with the sound off when there are no captions so I will know what some of you feel like. I close my eyes and walk around my home like a blind person, counting steps and touching pieces of furniture. And the more I think of challenges, the more difficult it is for me to understand why the rest of the world lives in a shell of ignorance to others. I always wanted to make a difference.

Having coordinated the CART services for so many ALDAcons, I met the movers and shakers. More importantly, I was accepted into a new culture. I quickly became the late Edna Shipley-Conner’s personal CART reporter, welcoming newcomers, getting up early to set up her ground rules about privacy and confidentiality. And while ALDAcon lasts less than one week, I lived for that convention with such passion and gusto that all other hundreds of CART assignments during the year paled in comparison.

It is said you pick your friends, not your family. ALDA provides those choices. I had a family of friends who cared about me and I about them. Bill Graham, one of the founders, was my friend from day one. I knew I. King Jordan’s life story and Bob Davila’s climb up the ladder of greatness. I was more than a Life Member—I was one of the bunch. I cried when Diane Tokarz passed away, held the late Stan Gadsden in my arms, and was trusted at confidential Friends of Bill W meetings. [Editor’s note: these are Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.] What I heard and CARTed stayed in that room.

I recall my first ALDA friend, Marylyn Howe from Boston. She was being honored with a humanities award in the Time & Life Building in New York City, and I was asked to CART for her. She accepted the award and immediately and publicly gave it to her father, declaring he was the greatest American who ever lived. After Marylyn came Mary Clark, Robin Titterington, Kathy Schlueter, and the whole gang from Chicago to Boston and hundreds of little hamlets in between. I knew Ken Arcia. I CARTed in a room in which sat Nancy Kingsley at the very beginning of it all.

We’re talking about major league ALDA history here. The late Rick Skyer would let me dream with him. Pacesetters like Cheryl and Fred Heppner were the everyday people and Carol Granaldi was the equivalent of a top-shelf legislator. I got to know so much about NF2 that I would volunteer to work at the NF2 workshop. Big Red (Cynthia Amerman) would tease me. I always pulled rank on my fellow CART reporters so I could work with Dr. Roy Miller. While my mother was hard of hearing, she was always in denial, so I took her to an ALDAcon when it met in Fort Lauderdale area. She listened to Mark Dessert give a presentation and said, “Son, that man is brilliant. But why isn’t

continued on page 17
“What is it like to be a hearing dog trainer?” That is the question I am invariably asked whenever people learn that I work at Dogs for the Deaf (DFD). Our organization employs a number of people in different positions, all dedicated to our mission of rescuing and professionally training dogs to assist people, but the job of hearing dog trainer requires such specialized training and preparation that very few people know what it entails. Trainers acquire their skills by spending two to three years as an apprentice trainer, working with the training department team leader and other trainers on staff.

Our client’s first encounter with his/her dog’s trainer typically happens during placement, but the trainer’s real work begins about six months before that, when the trainer evaluates and rescues the dog from the shelter. Our trainers look for a very specific temperament in the dogs they evaluate. Confidence, friendliness, and the ability to be motivated by toys, treats, and praise are essential characteristics. The level of confidence that is required for a dog to be successful in completing the hearing dog training is very high and very difficult for us to find. A dog must not just be able to tolerate being out in public; the dog must enjoy it and be comfortable at all times. The evaluation process doesn’t stop once the dog arrives at DFD; trainers must continually look at their dogs objectively to be able to determine what the dogs are “telling” them about what they like, how they learn, and whether they are comfortable with what they encounter while out on training trips in public. Trainers spend a significant amount of time learning what dogs’ body language can tell them. Sometimes the message the dog is sending is: “Being a hearing dog is not for me!” When that happens, we place the dog as either a Miracle Mutt (special dogs for the special people) or a Career Change Dog (pet). It’s all about allowing the dog to show us what sort of home and job he’s best suited for and placing him in that home.

Hearing dogs work sounds in the home, such as the smoke alarm, oven timer, telephone, doorbell/knock, name call, and alarm clock. When a sound occurs, the dog goes to the source to determine where it is coming from, then runs to his person, makes a physical alert, and leads the person to the sound. Trainers train the dogs to work sounds in training apartments at the DFD facility. The trainer first determines how each dog acquires information and then finds the best way to present the information. Because all of our dogs are rescued and selected for temperament rather than breed combination, trainers have the opportunity to work with an interesting variety of dogs, all with different personalities, challenges, and learning styles. This results in trainers using many different paths that lead to the same outcome.

A common question asked of the trainers is: “How are you able to work with a dog for a period of time, bond with that dog, and then place it in someone else’s home?” The bond that the dog forms with the trainer is a crucial part of the learning process, because it is essential that the dog learn to trust (not always an easy thing for a dog that has come from a shelter). If the dog has been able to form a bond with the trainer and trust that person, it is much more likely that the dog will be able to form a similar bond and be able to trust the client on placement. The trainers see themselves as intermediaries playing a part in a process that will ultimately lead to a dog finding its place in a forever home, with an important job to do. And the trainer remains connected to the dog and its person for the lifetime of the team. Seeing the positive effect a hearing dog has in the life of a person who is hard of hearing or deaf is especially rewarding for the trainer.

In addition to building a relationship with the dog, the trainer must also establish a rapport with the client while conducting the placement. This typically lasts three to five days, during which time the trainer shows the client how to work with the dog and maintain the sound work training, socialization, and obedience. Sometimes people expect their dog to immediately work sounds perfectly right from the start, not realizing that their home is a very different environment from the training apartment at Dogs for the Deaf where the dog first learned sound work. During training, the sound work is more of a game, and although the aspect of fun and play needs to remain part of the work, the dog quickly realizes the client cannot hear the sounds and relies on the dog for the alert. The trainer re-

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Greetings from the ALDA IC! Many of you may know that the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH) had a Biennial General Meeting (BGM) in Stockholm, Sweden in June. ALDA is a voting member of IFHOH, and we heard that IFHOH would be removing the term “deafened” from their new constitution. We had long conversations about this and alerted the ALDA board, which nominated ALDA’s president-elect, Cynthia Amerman, and one of the IC members to attend the BGM. Cynthia reported that the problem was in poor translation from German into English, and that removing “deafened” was not the intention. Cynthia also described her wonderful tour (with Liisa Sammalpenger, the other IC member) of various Nordic countries, where she met with hard of hearing and deafened people’s organizations. You can read Cynthia’s report in this issue.

From ALDA-Asia Pacific (ALDA-AP) members, we found that international members have difficulty paying their ALDA membership fee, as PayPal is not available in all the countries, and snail mail is too slow. So on our request, the ALDA board is considering how to make the payment process easier (e.g. by credit card).

Lauren Storck, the former chairperson of the IC, was a delegate to the summit meeting of the National Council on Disabilities in Washington, D.C. in July. The speaker was Judith Heumann, one of the original activists for the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 20 years ago. She introduced her staff in the State Department, and some of the discussion was about international cooperation and outreach. During the same week, Lauren was invited to the White House ceremony to celebrate the anniversary of the ADA, and was very happy to shake President Obama’s hand. His speech on the South Lawn was inspiring! There is much more to do to obtain full equal access for us all.

Muhammad Akram
Chair, IC of ALDA

Deaf Dog, Deaf Me (continued)...

memory is still fresh and brings me to tears. I recall that she became different when her hearing failed her, just as a human would become different with developing deafness. Where once she’d react to the sound of her name, the leash chain rattling, the outdoors sounds, and our cat’s meow, she then became quiet, unresponsive, and isolated, staring out into space. No one could ever tell me that deafness is a minor disability, not for humans, and certainly not for animals.

Missy wasn’t a trained hearing dog, but she served me in so many ways by listening and alerting me to what was happening in my environment. Nowadays, I rely on my cochlear implants to hear household sounds. We recently got another dog, a Bichon Frise named Sadie. She is the love of our life, and once again I’m watching her behavior to tell me things that she can hear better than me. Although she’s not a trained hearing dog either, she serves me in many of the ways that Missy once did. But I will never forget my dog Missy who became deaf, along with me.

Carol has had a progressive hearing loss since early childhood and now has bilateral cochlear implants. She lives in an Ocean County, New Jersey retirement village with her husband and can be contacted at cgranaldi@comcast.net.

Being a Hearing Dog Trainer(continued)...

responds to questions or concerns and assists clients in working through behavioral challenges their dog may be experiencing.

Hearing dogs play a very important role in the lives of clients; they act as their “ears.” And they work without a person prompting them; the sound is their cue to work and they must make the choice to work. Trainers typically seek out employment at Dogs for the Deaf because they love dogs and believe in our mission. They stay because the unique educational situation here offers many opportunities for creativity and learning. To see a dog make the connection and grasp the concept of working a sound is rewarding; to take that dog, which had been found in a shelter, place him where his skills and companionship are desperately needed, and watch him and his new teammate “click” as they form their bond and learn to work together is truly heartwarming.

Beth has worked at Dogs for the Deaf for 14 years and currently holds the position of client services coordinator. She lives in Eagle Point, Oregon, with her family and her two demonstration dogs, Trickie and Palmer (Palmer is pictured with Beth). She can be contacted at beth@dogsforthedeaf.org.
I stay home to watch: I don’t! At least, not anymore
Favorite pig-out food: Potatoes (in almost any incarnation). I like dark chocolate but would get sick if I pigged out on it!
Hobbies: Walking, hiking, running, reading, traveling, food, craft beers, classic movies, documentaries, PBS, puzzles, games, backpacking, badminton, basketball, bowling...
If I had more free time, I’d: Travel more often
The hardest thing about becoming deafened is: the effort it takes to hear and still not being able to hear enough. Also not being able to tell where a sound originates.
I began accepting my deafness: I didn’t have a choice, since I always lived with it; though I often wondered what it is like to hear well
The worst thing about deafness is: Not being able to follow conversations in a group setting.
The best thing about deafness is: Being able to sleep soundly at night
How did you learn about ALDA? In January 2000 (while on a temporary work assignment in St. Petersburg, Florida), I went with a friend to a local ALDA chapter meeting. I became VERY interested when Lois Maroney, LMHC arrived with information about ALDAcon 2000 in Santa Fe
In what ways has ALDA enhanced your life? I look forward to the yearly conventions (I have been to every one since Santa Fe) and enjoy meeting new friends
When I am depressed: Running/hiking a lot helps keep my endorphins happy; therefore I’m rarely “down and out.” However, if I happen to be very upset; I don’t eat
My most irrational fear is: I don’t really know what to fear these days. There’s no sense worrying about things one cannot control
If I could hear again, the first thing I would do is: Go back and relive my life all over again
The thing I like best about myself: I like to be physically active

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Late-Deafened Life: Let Sleeping Dogs Lie  
By Michele J. Bornert

I have a dog. A really cute dog. But a hearing or guard dog she is not.

When I first got Maggie, an adorable bearded collie, from the Beardie Rescue, I had all sorts of plans for her. I had wanted a dog that looked like her all my life, but I never could get one. Finally my dream had come true! I had also thought about getting a hearing or guard dog since I became completely deaf a decade ago, so, naturally, I figured I could make two dreams come true at one fell swoop.

That never came to fruition.

Oh, Maggie’s a great dog. She doesn’t bite, hump legs (I think only boy dogs do that, anyway), or pee in the house…usually. She doesn’t growl at strangers or drink from the toilet…most of the time. She doesn’t get into the trash or pester me all day for a snack, either…for the most part. Come to think of it, Maggie doesn’t do much of anything. Unless you include lying spread-eagled on the living room floor and occasionally licking herself as “doing something.”

So when I set off to train her, I had no idea where this would lead.

“Come here, Maggie!” Maggie lay on the floor; not even her ears twitched. “Maggie, come!” She shifted a bit, then sighed a huge sigh, and went back to sleep. “Maggie, help me! I’m being attacked! Help! Help!” Maggie opened up one eye, licked her chops, and returned to dreamland.

I had to get serious. Even if I couldn’t have a hearing dog per se, I at least wanted a semi-functional guard dog.

I decided to ask a friend, whom Maggie had not yet met, to barge into the front door while Maggie lay sleeping (again) in the living room. I watched from the kitchen, and when the “stranger” stormed in, I started screaming, “Help! Robber! Thief! Murderer! Rapist! Help, Maggie! Help me!” Maggie slowly lifted her head, glanced at me, glanced at the “stranger,” and went back to sleep.

Nothing was working! It was driving me crazy! Do something, girl! Bite! Maim! Sic! Anything!

Finally, I had one last plan. I decided to fake my own life-threatening tragedy. I mean, she had to do something when she found her beloved owner lying on the floor with blood on her face, right? So I got out the ketchup, poured it on my face (yuck!), stumbled into the living room, and “fainted” onto the floor in front of where she lay. I began to moan, “Ohhhh…someone…please…help…me…I’m…bleeding.” Then I gave a huge, theatrical sigh and succumbed to my oncoming demise.

Nothing happened.

I slowly opened one eye to see what Maggie’s reaction was. She was chasing cars in her sleep, barking and moving her legs as if to run. I did what any unconscious victim would do. I flicked her really hard on her butt and tried again. “Help…Maggie…”

Thirty seconds later, Maggie slowly got up, stretched her front legs and then her back legs, walked up to me, and began licking the ketchup off my face. When she was done, she gave a good long yawn, walked across the room, and went back to sleep on the couch.

Instead of a victim to be rescued, I was a mid-afternoon snack.

I have a dog. A really cute dog. But a hearing or guard dog she is not.

Michele is a freelance writer and ASL/Deaf culture teacher who lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan with her husband (Kenny), three children (Mollie, Jacob, & Natalie), and lazy beardie (Maggie). She can be contacted at DeafExpressions05@gmail.com.

One of Us (continued)...

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Nobody knows: My favorite color is yellow
What I can’t stand is: Standing still
Favorite memory: Can’t really pick a favorite. More recent favorite memories are the recent fall and spring hikes on the Appalachian Trail in Massachusetts and Connecticut. In November 2009, I hiked Mt Greylock in Massachusetts after a couple inches of snow had fallen. It was a beautiful sunny day and a fabulous walk in a winter wonderland with postcard-perfect scenery!

Favorite saying: “Exercise is the cheapest and best medicine”

The bottom line is: Most people without hearing loss take hearing for granted.
ALDAnonymous

By Bill Graham and Robin Titterington, Curators

If you have tinnitus/head noises, how does it affect you and how do you cope with it? How would you describe the sound?

I have been completely deaf for six years now and have experienced a wide range of tinnitus sounds since the onset of my hearing loss in 1997. It started out as crickets, which I thought were real! So for a year I did not even acknowledge that I was starting to have a hearing loss. My puzzlement did not hit me until I heard the crickets one evening while it was raining and could not find a single one hiding in the house or on the outdoor patio. That was a heads up that something was not right.

Since then the sounds have varied from the pleasant sound of Scottish bagpipes to the annoying sound of a broken Halloween ghost decoration playing over and over again during the first couple of months of my being deaf. (And yes, it was constant and drove me mad!) Later, the sounds transformed into the background noise of static or talk radio. Every time I got into my vehicle, I subconsciously thought the radio was on even though I cannot hear a thing.

Over time I think my brain just adapted to the tinnitus and became so used to it that it would just block it out (or at the very least accept a more symbiotic existence with it). The only exceptions when it becomes very apparent are times when I am subjected to very loud noises or environments even though I cannot hear them.

Lately, however, a very bizarre noise has developed over the last year and a half. It sounds like scratching a record or trying to get reception of a station on the radio. When I mention it to doctors, nobody has a clue. For many months it disappeared and then started again over the last month. Thus I am wondering whether my brain is becoming aware of the tinnitus again and creating a new sound for it.

Who said deafness means silence?

I’ve had tinnitus so long that I don’t remember what life is like without it. Mine is a buzz or drone and it usually remains constant. I just try to ignore it, and I’m generally successful. On rare occasions, I get various odd noises like bells ringing or unknown music playing. Fortunately, these noises don’t usually last long.

Usually I ignore the whistles and humming of tinnitus. Hearing people filter out background noise, too. For the voices (talking and singing), I have songs with happy messages that are my safe songs. If the talking is bad or part of a song repeats like a broken record, I block them with a safe song. Head noise doesn’t bother me at night when I sleep, and I stay busy during the day.

Next ALDAnonymous question (recycled from ALDA News, October-December 1992):

Do you find it difficult to ask people to write things down for you when you can’t understand what they are saying? If so, why?

Send your responses to Bill and Robin at aldanonymous@gmail.com by December 21.
Liisa Sammalpenger and I took the subway from Skarpnack to St. Eriksgatan (in Sweden) and walked to the Hotell Norrtull, which used to be a brewery with train tracks running through it, brick walls, and surprisingly good acoustics. The first person I met was Lilian Ebadi Lindqvist (at registration), one of 33 paid staff members of our host organization HRF, the Hard of Hearing Association of Sweden. Lidia Best, the National Association of Deafened People’s (NADP’s) delegate from England, introduced herself to me. Lidia grew up in Poland; many members of IFHOH have multinational backgrounds.

I’m officially on the delegate list, so I will be able to vote at the meeting on Sunday. HLAA’s delegates are all in Milwaukee—none is here to vote but they have four votes, Finland and Sweden each have five, Denmark has four, ALDA has one, etc. Marcia Dugan of HLAA was a beloved former IFHOH President; the current President is Jan-Peter Stromgren from Sweden. Presidential candidate Ruth Warick and Carole Willans, a hard of hearing lawyer/advocate both come from Canada. Almost everyone speaks English, including the interpreters and palantypists (CART providers), who write in English no matter what language is being spoken.

The day began with welcomes from Jan-Peter (also President of HRF, the Swedish hard of hearing association) and a city council member who advocates for people with hearing loss, followed by two HRF Stockholm board members. Later in the morning, Lars-Ake Wikstrom, President of the Swedish Deaf Association and a 1975 Gallaudet graduate, gave a presentation on how Deaf and hard of hearing people can work together to advocate for captioning and other mutual interests. In both Sweden and Finland, groups with hearing loss work closely with each other. They are government-sponsored organizations and don’t need to worry about paying for CART or interpreters, as that is taken care of.

For instance, for my visits to organizations in both countries, bilingual Swedish-English and Finnish-English palantypists will make the meetings accessible to me. When we got an opportunity to converse, Lars-Ake slipped easily into ASL. I found that we know many Gallaudet people in common. Deaf people everywhere seem so appreciative that I sign, even if not at top level or in their native sign language; it makes my struggles with ASL worthwhile. Comfort Audio sponsors this IFHOH meeting. Small microphones throughout the room that work on a push-to-talk basis make communication easier because no one has to take a microphone to the person in the audience who is speaking.

Later in the day, Knut Magne Ellingsen from Norway announced that the next IFHOH Biennial General Meeting (BGM) will take place in Bergen from June 25-28, 2012. The theme is “A Better Quality of Life.”

Communication was easier for some of us than it might otherwise have been due to the fact that English is the official language of the BGM.

The day began with a presentation by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency’s (SIDA’s) Lisa Frederiksson, head of the Human Rights and Political Participation Team, Department for Empowerment. Lisa gave a general overview of SIDA’s work with people with disabilities in developing countries. They use well over half of the funding for the actual projects rather than for administration. I’ve read that, proportionately, Nordic countries give far more money to developing countries than the US does, and what I am learning here seems to verify that. HRF, the Swedish hard of hearing association, has projects in Laos, Bolivia, Kenya, Lithuania and Thailand.

Later I was able to speak Spanish with Charlotta Göller, who works in Bolivia for HRF. She wrote her doctoral dissertation on her work with people with disabilities in Guatemala so, as some of you might guess, Lotta and I had a strong connection from the start. [Editor’s note: While earning a master’s in social work from Gallaudet, Cynthia interned in Guatemala, where she connected people with hearing loss there to US deaf and hard of hearing communities.] I’m noticing (admittedly through a first impression) that we in the US may have more people with hearing loss in agency administrative positions. Lotta, who is hearing, uses Swedish Sign Language fluently and also speaks excellent English and Spanish.

Next, Ahiya Kamara from Israel, Vice President of IFHOH, reported on the worldwide status of hard of hearing people. The World Health Organization (WHO) and IFHOH helped start the WWHearing (World Wide Hearing Care continued on page 20
Training Hearing Dogs for Canine Companions

By Ken Reid, Canine Companions for Independence

When you think of dogs, what are some of things that you think about? How do they make our lives better? What are they good at?

Well, those of us who live with dogs know that they’re great social companions. We like playing, exercising, and petting them, cuddling with them, and just having them around.

Different dogs are good at different things. Some have been selectively bred for many years to have exceptional eyesight and speed to assist hunters. These breeds have also been chosen for their speed so that they can chase down the hunter’s quarry. Other dogs are bred to assist ranchers and herd livestock, help hunters and retrieve birds, or assist humans and protect property. What about dog breeds developed for their sense of smell? They’re almost freakishly good at it and can detect drugs, bombs, tumors, and lots of other things. There are breeds of dogs that have been developed especially to enhance and maximize all of these attributes.

But what about their hearing? Dogs have pretty good hearing, too. Can we maximize their sense of hearing as yet another way that they can help us? There are a small (but growing) number of people who can personally attest to the answer, “Yes.”

People who are deaf or hard of hearing can choose to have a trained hearing dog help them to be more aware of the sounds that they are missing. I’m fortunate enough to be a trainer of hearing dogs at the national nonprofit Canine Companions for Independence, which trains and provides assistance dogs free to help people with a variety of disabilities. I’ve been a trainer there for 16 years, and for the last several years I’ve specialized in training hearing dogs.

Like many people, when I was a child my family had pet dogs. I not only liked dogs, I wanted to BE a dog! At a very young age I recognized qualities in our dogs that I wished I could emulate. I wanted to be happy all the time. I wanted to be faithful. I wanted to be truthful and honest. I wanted to be brave. I wanted to be playful, adaptable, accepting of others, and I wanted to be liked by everyone. Dogs can also be helpful to us humans in so many ways. I wanted to think, feel, and be like a dog. I thought, “What could be better than being a dog?”

I never had any idea of pursuing a career in anything related to dogs. I didn’t ever consider that such a thing was possible. Soon after my wife and I got married, we were walking through the local county fair and saw a booth for an organization that had some beautiful Labrador retrievers and golden retrievers. Honestly, we didn’t really register that what this organization did was provide highly trained dogs that could assist people with disabilities. We just saw an opportunity to include a dog in our lives again. Free puppies! We signed up.

For the next four years we were volunteer puppy raisers for Canine Companions. We took an eight-week-old puppy into our home and raised it for the next year and a half. During that time we would attend regular classes to learn how to train the young dogs in obedience and basic commands that would start them on their path to be a possible assistance dog for someone. Some of them made it and some of them didn’t. Throughout that time I gained a deeper appreciation of how a dog could have a profoundly positive impact on someone’s life.

This is when I started to see the possibility of pursuing this training thing further and making it my job. I was impressed with the passion and devotion that the Canine Companions trainers had for what they did and I wanted to have a job that I felt that way about also. Not only that, but I thought that I could be pretty good at it. I could train dogs. I understood dogs. Heck, I wanted to be a dog!

I was so convinced that this was what I wanted to do that I submitted a job application at Canine Companions five times and was rejected four times. When I did finally get an interview, one of the interviewers said, “It appears that the only way that we can get rid of you is to hire you.” I laughed and said that was just about right. I got the job.

I was now a Canine Companions instructor! I spent three years in an apprenticeship program under the mentoring of the more senior instructors ahead of me. During that time I started to learn the craft of training dogs to perform at a very high level. As

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The Hearing Dog Relationship (continued)...

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movie Aladdin and that’s how she got her name.

To this day, I believe Jasmine knew that I was becoming deaf. She instinctively did things to help me. She came to get me when the doorbell rang, woke me in the morning when my alarm went off, and popped up at every loud bang, horn, alarm, and screech. She got me when I forgot about the pasta I was burning on the stove in wake of a blaring smoke alarm I couldn’t hear. She slept curled up next to me when I returned with my new PICC line just a few days after I brought her home. A vascular surgeon had finally been able to insert it in the hospital using an X-ray and contrast dye.

When I returned from my first ALDAcon with all my new knowledge, ready to embrace the world as a deaf person who actually had the know-how to express her needs, I was intent on finding someone who could formally certify Jasmine as a real hearing dog, but I soon learned it would be no easy task. There are very few people who will train a personal pet. Most hearing dogs are needy dogs in shelters that are selected and trained by agencies. Then they are placed with people with hearing loss who have applied to be matched with a dog. There’s usually a waiting period involved and the client doesn’t get to select a specific dog or breed. I already had my perfect puppy—I just wanted her certified so I could take her wherever I wanted.

I did eventually find a man who certified hearing dogs in New Jersey, where I lived at the time. He was a former police officer who used to train German shepherds for police work, and he had started a small agency to train and certify hearing ear dogs. He came to my house to meet Jasmine. To my surprise, after a few questions about Jasmine’s specific talents, he told me she was already naturally providing a service and as long as she did just one thing to help, she would automatically be considered a hearing dog according to the ADA. He took her picture and said that I’d be receiving an ID card in the mail shortly. He suggested I buy her a service dog vest or make her some sort of jacket that would identify her as a service dog. I was a bit disappointed, because I thought that he would officially train her to tweak her instincts into real service dog skills, but I was also happy that she counted as a service dog and I could start taking her with me wherever I wanted!

It’s true that it is sometimes more difficult to take little hearing dogs certain places. People love to reach down and pet them because they’re so cute. The service dog stereotype is also problematic. Most people think like I did in the beginning. They assume a service dog is a guide dog for people who are blind—a German shepherd or a golden retriever. I admit I’ve had to stand up for my rights more than a few times in restaurants and I’ve even been asked to leave, although I’ve produced service dog guidelines.

Now that so many years have passed and my beloved little Jasmine is no longer with me, I have my next hearing dog, Dolly. Instinctually, she is better than Jasmine in some ways. She is extremely calm and lies down to rest wherever I bring her. She would never even think of begging at the table, which did prove to be problematic with Jasmine sometimes, Dolly is the perfect lady, extremely well behaved and protective of me.

I’m not sure if it’s her excellent behavior or if awareness of hearing dogs has truly improved, but I certainly seem to have an easier time taking Dolly with me. She is much more accepted than Jasmine was.

Now that I live in Manhattan, it is especially easy. Dogs are everywhere, service dog or not. I have seen tiny dogs in prissy little bags on the subway and horse-sized dogs walking the aisles at Bloomingdales! New York is definitely a dog lover’s city. When I push Dolly in her pink pet stroller, I fit right in with the locals, but I’m often a sightseeing attraction for tourists quick with cameras snapping a shot of the crazy New Yorker with her dog in a carriage like a baby! They’ve got one thing right (maybe two—I am a little crazy): Dolly is my baby. What can I say? I love dogs so much that I’ve made them the focus of my new business.

When I developed a serious heart condition three years ago and I had to stop working, I did what I have always done... I began to look for puppies to cheer myself up. I found one I loved and intended to buy, only to discover that I am not allowed to have more than one dog in my apartment building. My mother, who saw once again that I needed some puppy hope to get me through my latest illness, suggested that we contact the breeder to see if she might consider selling us not one puppy but two, and then we’d find them loving homes.

Wish Upon A Puppy, LLC (www.wishuponapuppy.com) was soon born. We began a website for our puppies and started selling them. The business took off very quickly and I now have waiting lists for my dogs. They are often sold before I even get them from the breeder.

I have some ads placed on deaf websites here and there announcing we’re a deaf-friendly business with knowledge of hearing dogs. My mother handles all the phone work for the business and is always excited when she receives a relay

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The Hearing Dog Relationship (continued)...

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call with questions about hearing dogs. Wish Upon A Puppy is still in the beginning stages, but we eventually hope to include more deaf services and information about hearing dogs on our website.

I don’t know what I would have done all these years without my dogs. For me, a hearing dog provides so much more than a service. They’re little unconditional love machines that follow like shadows, through rough and calm waters, high hopes and disappointments. They’re there to lick your ears when you’re losing your hearing and bark when your cochlear implant is activated for the first time.

When I fell asleep and left the water running in the kitchen sink with the stopper plugged, Dolly jumped up incessantly at the side of my bed until she was huffing and out of breath. Clueless and groggy, I rolled over ready to scold her for waking me, but instead I was shocked to see that she was soaking wet. Still annoyed and totally clueless, I berated, “Bad, Dolly, did you pee!?!?”

It’s hard to believe, but I didn’t realize what I’d done until I put my foot on the floor and stepped into the inch of water spread throughout most of my studio apartment and spilling out into the hallway. Poor Dolly had been trying to wake me for who knows how long.

When I do a doozy of a dumb thing like this, it certainly seems like Dolly is the smarter one and it reminds me of the invaluable help she provides to me every day—help that I usually take for granted. Thankfully, a hearing dog’s enthusiasm knows no bounds, and no matter how many times I mess up or even just miss the doorbell, I know she’ll always be there to not only lend a paw, but also give a lick that makes most of the embarrassment dissolve. The hearing dog relationship is a magical one, rooted in instinct, mutual love, and most of all, a very special friendship.

Lori is an honors graduate of Drew University in Madison, New Jersey and a former sixth grade reading teacher. She recently founded Wish Upon A Puppy, LLC with her mother, Jerilyn Heir. Lori has volunteered for ALDA in many capacities over the last 11 years, including public relations, editing and writing for the ALDA News, and ALDacon planning. She is active in her local chapter, ALDA-Garden State, as editor of its newsletter and moderator of the ALDA-GS listserv. She currently lives in Manhattan with her husband Jacob and her dog Dolly and can be contacted at lorimessing@comcast.net.

An Open Letter to ALDA (continued)...

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he wearing shoes?” I responded, “Mom, because this is ALDA and we’re all accepted; the objective is not to glitter and shine but to be with your ALDA family.” No matter what the subject, I would come away learning. That was just a small part of what ALDA meant to me, a “hearie.” For lack of space, I am leaving out so much more about so many more wonderful people.

On June 1, 2009, while I was driving my car alone, my stomach exploded unexpectedly. I found my way to a hospital and awoke in the ICU. Morphine and synthetic heroin were my first cousins and they were not doing the trick at all. While I was unable to communicate with the outside world, somehow our own Lori Heir Messing found out about my condition. That wonderful person was sending me emails from other ALDAns and people were praying for me. I recall when Lori came to her first ‘con. At first she was shy, but that was short-lived. Lori lit up every conference room and corridor with her inimitable enthusiasm. When I was down and out, she pushed me to fight.

I lived in this miserable condition for five months, never taking a shower, never entering a bathroom for normal everyday activities. In my depressed state, I wanted to be allowed to die. Enter my miracle worker. I met Dr. Jeffrey Milsom, a world-class surgeon at Cornell Medical Center. He said he would try to put Humpty Dumpty together again, and he did just that. I am healthier now than at almost any other point in my life, and my attitude is the most positive. So I taught Jeffrey the sign for “attitude”—you know, the “A” around your heart. In subsequent months when I visited my surgeon, instead of a hello, we would sign “attitude.”

Although I physically stopped CARTing about the time I became ill, slightly more than one year ago, I continue to book and assign hundreds of hours of CART each week in schools and corporations and from weddings to funerals. I have received dozens of professional awards, but my favorite has always been the ALDA Angel Award. It hangs on my wall most conspicuously displayed. Even though my ALDA Lifetime Membership almost expired a year ago, please know that you were and always will be my ALDA family. I don’t know when, but I’ll see you again! God bless you all!

This is condensed from a version that was published in the August 2010 issue of the ALDA-Garden State newsletter. Woody can be contacted at wwaga@veritext.com.
Lassie to the Rescue
By Mary Ruth Dilling

Over the past three years, my hearing worsened to the point where I had to get hearing aids. As the prognosis was not that good and the aids did not help with everything, I started looking for other assistance. Because I am a writer/speaker who planned to travel a good deal, I knew I needed something that would be able to get me around easily. After discussing the issue with my family, we decided I needed a hearing dog. We discussed my plans and the various breeds available. Then I started searching.

When I first began looking online, I was amazed at how long the waiting lists were for a service dog. The cost was also sometimes prohibitive. After talking the issue over with my online support group, I decided to buy a dog to train myself. I had fond childhood memories of a Sheltie my neighbor had owned when I was in kindergarten. I used to play with him for hours every week, so we chose to go with a Sheltie. I live in the Pacific Northwest and began by looking at Sheltie Rescues. I found one in Montana that had a two-year-old dog, and we decided to meet at a halfway point to see if the dog and I would bond.

When I first saw the dog, a warm feeling flowed over me and I rushed over so fast that I startled her. I finally slowed down and allowed myself to be introduced. She had spent her life in a kennel and had not been humanized much. Within ten minutes, she had her head on my lap and I was petting her. It was a match made in heaven. By the time we arrived home, she followed me into the bathroom. Since then, she does not like to be parted from me for any length of time. We are soulmates in a human/animal connection.

Since October 2009, Wynnie has made great strides in learning her needed skills. Many she has picked up on her own by simply observing my son alerting me to things around the house. Now, it is her job. The first thing we worked on was alerting me to the alarm clock, as that was my main need. That took about two weeks. We had a bit of an issue, as Wynnie would try to decide when I should wake up even without the alarm clock, but we have since worked on that aspect of her training. She alerts me to the phone, tea kettle, door, and a family member returning home. She has also had obedience training at the same time, and more skill training is planned. She will come and get me if someone at home tells her to get me. Many times in a crowd, I do not hear people call my name, so we are working with her to alert me to the sound of my name. It is taking time for her to learn this skill, as people use different versions of my name.

In the beginning, I had legal run-ins with some places of business that did not want me bringing Wynnie in. Now that I have educated them as to the law, they have no complaints. She never barks with her vest on. She simply sits quietly by my chair and waits—something she has instinctively done from the first trip out. I drive a lot, and it’s great to have another body, even if it is a dog, in the car with me. It is a comfort to know I am not alone running from place to place. She lets me know if something is not right around me. That gives me a measure of safety I did not have before.

One of the best things I find about having a service dog is the opportunity to be an advocate for those with disabilities. I sit on the local National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) board, as well as on several nonprofit boards for those with disabilities. Since I got Wynnie, people seem to come forward more about getting help. Last week, I attended a seminar and was allowed preferential sitting. After the meeting, a man approached to ask about the dog and the law in regard to a friend of his. I eagerly informed him of the woman’s rights and gave him my card. As we were preparing to leave, he asked how I knew so much. I told him that this is what I do; I am an advocate for those with challenges. Educating about service animals is only a small aspect.

I have been very happy with my decision to purchase a hearing dog. Wynnie is more than a service dog to me. She has become a very dear friend.

Mary Ruth is a transplanted Texan living in the Pacific Northwest. While working on her master’s degree, she keeps busy with home schooling her son, writing, speaking to groups on mental health issues, communication, and goal setting. She is the president of Kindling Dreams, LLC and can be contacted at maryruthdilling@gmail.com.
Thirty-Six Years with Canine Ears

By Cheryl Heppner

More than 36 years ago, I got my first hearing dog. Fred and I, married for a little more than a year, moved from our small apartment to military housing close by the Navy base in Newport, Rhode Island, where he was stationed. There, for the first time, we had a home with room to stretch and a small backyard.

Fred knew just what would make my Valentine’s Day in our new place perfect. He gave me a lovely Shetland sheepdog that I named White Ruff Toby. It didn’t take Toby long to recognize that I couldn’t hear and that without her help I’d go through life hopelessly ignorant about what was happening around me. In the tradition of many great working dogs before her, she took it upon herself to let me know when the postman was on his daily rounds, running to tell me as he approached. Toby also discovered that if I opened the door when the postman was coming by, he would stop to give her a treat. From that day forward, she never missed getting that treat, and kept adding to her repertoire of things that she felt I should know about.

After Toby’s death, I was stunned to fully realize what great good fortune I’d had. With her keen intelligence and strong work ethic, it was she who had trained me to read her facial expressions and body language to learn about things happening in my world. But there was only one Toby. Her daughter, Tam, and her two grandkids, Mac and Leila, had only copied her behavior. Once she was gone, they didn’t have the faintest idea how to alert me on their own.

And so it was that in 1991, after the totally wrenching death of Leila, the last of my beloved Shelties, I began to learn how to train a hearing dog correctly and be a good partner. I was matched with Dana the wonder dog and trained by Canine Companions for Independence (CCI). Dana was a smart, stubborn, fun-loving, and totally food-crazy golden retriever. She also had a mystic quality; she was an empath who sensed strong emotion in humans and was drawn to them to give comfort. People across the US, some of them ALDAns, will long remember communing with my lovely golden girl. Witnessing those moments when she connected as soul to soul was a deeply spiritual experience for me.

I returned to Canine Companions for Independence when Dana’s hearing and eyesight began to deteriorate too much for us to be safe in public. Galaxy and I graduated in November 2002, making it twice that Canine Companions found the perfect match for me. Galaxy is the dog who wants everything she does to make me say “Wow!” Unlike Dana, she is not bold and adventurous. Galaxy needs a lot of encouragement and praise, but when she is confident of what is expected of her, she takes great pride doing it perfectly and with flair. She is devastated if she thinks she’s done something less than stellar or made a mistake. My heart is so filled with love for her that I am surprised it has not burst.

In October, Galaxy will be 10 years old. Already we are approaching the time I have been dreading, when I must start planning for her retirement and the prospect of training with another canine partner.

A hearing dog is not for everyone. Any respectable hearing dog training program is going to require quite a bit of paperwork to be sure you are an appropriate candidate and your expectations are realistic. There may well be an in-person interview or two. Having gone through the CCI application process twice with such great matches, I better appreciate how extensive it was. Good training programs take into consideration not just temperament but also the lifestyle, personality, health, and support system of the applicant.

The initial training at a training center or in your home is just the beginning. Training takes time to polish skills, and to keep them sharp, practice must become routine. You’ll need to consider the time and energy required for daily exercise, feeding, and grooming. Additional expenses for food, gear such as collars and leashes, toys, and veterinary care will be added to your budget. You’ll have to plan your trips with a lot more attention to detail. If you are flying, you’ll want a plane seat with enough legroom to make it comfortable for both you and your dog. You’ll need to plan long flights, and maybe break them up with enough of a stopover to give time to allow your dog to relieve himself/herself. When you stay at hotels, you’ll have to hunt for a good pet relief area and a place to dispose of poop bags.

More people will stop to talk with you in public, especially dog lovers. Your relatives may not understand or appreciate why you are bringing your dog everywhere when their pets stay home. If you plan to take your dog to work, you may have to deal with co-workers who want to treat your hearing dog like a pet or are hostile to having a dog in the

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for Developing Countries) initiative in 2003. WHO determined that over 90% of the 278 million people worldwide with disabling hearing loss—of whom 2/3 live in developing countries such as Guatemala, Laos, Bolivia, etc.—would benefit from hearing aids. Numbers of people with hearing loss are growing everywhere due to population growth and longer life expectancies.

In high-income countries, 33% of the people who need them have hearing aids, but in low-income countries, only 3% are able to afford them. Even if they do get hearing aids, people in low-income countries can’t afford to continue buying batteries, so the development of solar batteries is now under way. WWHearing aims to provide affordable high-quality hearing aids and services and is hoping to set up projects in Jordan, Kenya, Pakistan and Nepal but is facing a lack of funding because hard of hearing people have not been included in the WHO budget again this year. Disability organizations like ALDA can write to the UN Office in Geneva about advocacy, educating society about hearing loss, etc. The more of our organizations the UN hears from, the better.

Ragnar Ågren of Comfort Audio spoke to us about the new “digisystem microphone” technology, which prevents eavesdropping on other conversations that are on the same frequency through “frequency shift keying” of encrypted sound transmission. Some years ago at the HLAA convention in Minneapolis, where I worked at the Gallaudet booth, I was able to hear a confidential conversation between two counselors when I turned on my Phonak Microlink system. It was very disconcerting to hear something I wasn’t supposed to hear, and I imagine that others heard my conversations, too.

After lunch we walked to HRF, where Hans Ericson gave us a tour of the agency. We saw his and Lotta’s offices as well as Stefan Andersson’s, where the monthly magazine for hard of hearing people, AURIS, is prepared for publication. Next, Hans introduced us to HRF’s state-of-the-art conference room that was “superlooped,” meaning that under the carpet were many looping wires. Our hearing aid or CI telecoils could pick up sound from every part of the room. There were three large monitors for displaying CART and chairs for sign language interpreters. HRF has 33,000 hard of hearing members, and there are an estimated 10,000 Deaf people in Deaf organizations. HRF provides its members with hearing aids and insurance for their hearing aids, and Norway and Finland have similar governmental programs. Sixty percent of the 33 workers at HRF have hearing loss themselves. On their website, HRF offers a hearing test, and soon they will also be able to test people by phone.

When we returned to the hotel, princes and princesses, kings and queens were arriving from all over Europe at the site of Crown Princess Victoria’s wedding. Many of the royal couples walked to the castle and church from their yachts. Kalle was able to turn on the Swedish TV captions. My first and only Swedish sentence so far, “Här kommer dar Brude” (“Here comes the bride”), flashed on the screen as Victoria’s stately black Volvo arrived at the church.

Sunday, June 20

All the delegates received voting packets, and I found a card with the number 1 on it in mine,signifying ALDA’s number of votes. There were 54 total votes because, as might be expected, delegates from a few countries could not attend. When we voted on anything, I raised my hand with the ALDA card in it.

Minutes from the Vancouver BGM were approved. I abstained from voting on this because I didn’t attend the Vancouver meeting, nor did anyone else from ALDA that I know of. Next, we voted to admit four organizations—Deafness Forum of Australia, Ho Chi Minh City Deaf Association (Hanh’s group), Pakistan Hard of Hearing Association (Akram’s group), and Uganda National Association of the Hard of Hearing.

Other motions we approved included: to establish a Marcia Dugan Fund (this will function much like our Edna Shipley-Conner Fund); to stay with the international bright blue symbol of the ear to indicate hearing loss rather than a newly-devised one that was more complex and not easily seen by people with vision loss; and to make the website more accessible by translating it into other languages. Member organizations were asked to translate the website content into their respective languages. Since the website language is English, we are off the hook. We also approved an updated Position Statement on Cochlear Implants that had been in the works for two years. You can find this information at www.ifhoh.org.

Now for the most important motion for ALDA. The IFHOH constitution was originally written in English. However, IFHOH was incorporated in Germany, and new tax laws in Germany necessitated that the constitution be written in German. Siegfried Karg of Germany translated the constitution and worked with a lawyer to include the tax law changes. Since it would take most of the delegates several years of study to be capable of understanding the German translation, we had to accept on good faith that the meaning of the articles of the German version were equivalent to the articles of the original constitution in English.

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expected encounter. When my husband and I got on the plane, we were given bulk head seats—yes, even before I had a dog. I was sitting in the middle seat, next to my husband at the window. A woman appeared with a huge German shepherd and sat down right next to us. That dog was in training to become a service dog; she was a trainer and they were on their way to a conference. To this day I believe it was just meant to be!

About three days into team training we were paired with dogs. I should mention that my TT class was made up of six women—interestingly, they were all educators like me. During those first few days we got a ton of information about dog behavior as well as human behavior. Most importantly, we were taught that dogs were dogs—not humans and not children—and we had to learn how dogs “think.” Ultimately, over those two intensive weeks, we not only learned how to handle our dogs, but we also learned a lot about ourselves. It was a life-changing time—and to this day most of us from that class are still in touch.

We were taught that the bonding between us and our dogs would take time and that we needed to be patient and learn from our dogs while they learned about their new environments. While we had the opportunity to practice in a variety of situations with our dogs in TT, it was a bit different when we got home, without the support of live trainers. I introduced Remick to our pet outside of my house, after the long trip from California to Connecticut. Remick, who seemed like such a perfect, quiet dog, responded to those first few hours by peeing in the house. While I sort of freaked, I realized in retrospect that she was just scared—and so was I! She never had another accident; since those first few days, I think she’s been perfect.

After about two months, a CCI trainer came for a visit. She spent a few days with me in both my home and work environments, to see how Remick and I were doing. She observed our relationship and helped us to improve our work together. That visit was like a fine-tuning—it helped me see many things as potential jobs for Remick—and it reinforced what we had learned in team training, individualized for my specific needs. At this visit we took a public certification test that would give us certification for the next three years. (Certification is renewed every three years.) To pass this test, we had to walk together; I had to drop Remick’s leash to show that she would stay with me even without it; I had to find an unknown child and get that child to pet Remick while Remick did nothing; Remick had to avoid eating food from the floor, even human food; we had to manage an elevator safely and get in and out of the car safely. Needless to say, we have passed every test we’ve taken.

Remick responds to about two dozen sounds—she alerts me by poking me with her nose. Some of the sounds include my alarm clock, toaster, microwave, timer, and tea kettle; and my special phone, door knock, and doorbell. At work, if someone comes into my office and I don’t see the person because I’m working on the computer, she’ll alert me. One of the most helpful things she does is respond to my name being called—I can be almost anywhere, and if my husband, family member, or even a co-worker calls my name, she’ll alert me. She knows I can’t hear; we travel together everywhere, and—without any training to this sound—when the alarm goes off at the baggage carousel, she alerts me. Another favorite is when my keys drop—I have dropped them so many times and don’t realize it because I can’t hear them—she will not only alert me, and take me to my keys, but she’ll also pick them up!

Most of Remick’s work is sporadic. My phone isn’t always ringing or my toaster always dinging. We practice alerts all the time—Remick LOVES to work—I think she thinks it’s a game. Sometimes, she’ll just perk up her ears or change her gaze, and I know to look where she’s looking, as something is happening there and she’s showing me. While she’s not trained to protect me from cars or other things we might think of as safety matters, one time I was just crossing the road and was clueless that a truck was approaching. Remick gently but very firmly pushed me; I was surprised to see the truck coming at us, and she protected us both from harm.

Remick and I graduated from team training in July 2005, and we haven’t been apart more than a few hours since then. We go to work together every day. In fact, when she needed a minor medical procedure and I went to work without her, my students were almost angry with me that she wasn’t there. The next day, when she was back at work, almost everyone was concerned about her and some even brought her special treats. When I go anywhere, she’s with me—traveling, visiting, shopping (even food shopping), doctor’s appointments—everywhere. She tells me about the environment with her body language, alerts me to sounds, and in general, lets me know what’s going on.

We also tend to make a lot of friends. So many people come up to us and ask about her—they want to pet her and know her name, age, sex, breed; some people ask whether she’s friendly and if she bites; one child wanted to know how I take care of Remick’s paws. I am always educating about her—folks just don’t know how wonderful a hearing dog is. Many have said, “Gee, I know of guide dogs, but hearing
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dogs? What can she do?” When I tell them the long list of sounds she responds to, they are amazed. I often do a quick demonstration of how she alerts me, to rapt audiences. While I was “soaking” in the beauty parlor, my hairdresser asked how Remick lets me know about sounds. When I demonstrated an alert and then looked up, I saw that the whole beauty parlor was watching!

I often find myself wondering whether Remick is happy. She loves to work, but I work hard, and often that means I’m at a computer or in a meeting, where her job is to just be there, in case there’s a fire alarm, someone calls me, or there’s some other sound I need to know about. Unfortunately for her, that means a lot of waiting, but once that sound comes, I think she’s the happiest dog in the world!

Recently, my school was testing fire alarms. Every time the alarm went off—which was every few minutes—Remick would alert me. I would reward her, but we didn’t leave the building. I was trying to work; there were no students and I wanted to get in as much work as I could. Of course, Remick didn’t understand that and became almost frantic that we weren’t leaving the building. In one of her “funny Remick moments,” she actually left my office while I was typing, went to my colleague next door, and brought her to my office, with a look on her face like “NOW will you listen to me and get out of here?!”

It’s very hard to put down in words what Remick means to me. She has enriched my life—she makes being deaf much easier. She requires very little from me—food, water, exercise, and walking now and then (she goes to the bathroom on command)—but I hope she gets much more than that, as I see her as more than a dog. I genuinely care about her; I talk to her all the time and I really think she understands. (I once asked her whether something happened upstairs, and she made direct eye contact with me, then a sad face—yes, dogs have strong facial expressions—and I knew I had to go upstairs.)

She brings me the environment, and even more than that, she is a loyal friend. She’s now 7 ½ years old and when she turns 8, CCI will start to ask about her retirement. I can’t even think about it! She loves to work so much that I hope she has many more years of work left. And yes, when she is ready to retire, I hope to get a “successor” dog. I want to give Remick the chance to teach another dog everything she knows. I honestly can’t imagine life without a dog by my side.

Dr. Jane Schlau is a former president of ALDA, Inc. as well as a former Region 1 director. Currently the principal of St. Mary’s School for the Deaf in Buffalo, New York, she presents frequently on late-deafened issues and is very involved in advocacy for deafened adults and children with hearing loss. She and her hearing dog Remick also do demonstrations. Jane has been married to husband Larry for 34 years; they have two grown children and two grandchildren. She was this year’s ALDAcon planning co-chair and I. King Jordan Award winner. Jane can be contacted at JaneS256@aol.com.

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What happened next was quite unexpected. The German tax lawyer had translated the German IFHOH constitution back to English. Here are just two examples of how the newly translated constitution strayed from the original: (1) The kind of communication hard of hearing people use is referred to as “phonetic” as opposed to “oral” or “spoken,” and (2) “deafened” (as opposed to “hard of hearing”) is translated as “those who suffer from deafness.” The word “deafened” doesn’t appear in the new English IFHOH constitution at all. These word choices proved unacceptable to many IFHOH member nations. In order to keep our tax-exempt status, we voted unanimously to accept the German version of the constitution now, and to postpone voting on the revised English version until the Bergen, Norway BGM in 2012.

Cynthia is ALDA’s president-elect and serves as group leader for ALDA-Sonora in Arizona. She earned an M.Litt. degree from Drew University and a master of social work degree from Gallaudet and taught English, Spanish, and creative writing for many years. Cynthia is a co-founder and past president of ALDA-Garden State and represented late-deafened people on the New Jersey Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Council. As a member of ALDA’s International Committee, she worked to create ties between the Guatemalan and US deaf/hard of hearing communities. Cynthia served as Newcomer Chair for ALDAcon 2009 and 2010, and recently became a board member of ALOHA (the Adult Loss of Hearing Association) in Tucson, where she has lived for two years. She and her husband share a house they are renovating with their daughter and granddaughter. Parts Two and Three of this series will continue the story of Cynthia’s trip after the conclusion of the IFHOH meeting. She can be contacted at cynthiaamerman@gmail.com.
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a puppy raiser, I had learned how to train a single dog to follow about 25 different commands. Now I was responsible for training anywhere from 5 to 15 dogs how to perform about 45 commands.

To say that those three years were challenging is a big understatement. I was fortunate, because training has always been relatively easy for me. Maybe it’s because I could relate to the dog’s perspective on things? One of the difficult things was the part of my job that required me to instruct people on how to work with the dogs that we trained. (I guess that I might not have understood why the job title is “instructor” and not “trainer.”) Training dogs is easy; training people is hard!

Someone said that obstacles and limitations are opportunities for something inside of us to come to life. If that’s true, then I was full of opportunities! At least four times each year, Canine Companions holds classes that we call team training. These are the occasions when our participants are invited to a two-week intensive class. During this time we teach the students everything that they need to know to be able to include their assistance dog in their lives and utilize their dog’s unique skills to help them.

For the next ten years this is what I did. I trained our dogs to help people in the categories of facility dog (dogs used for therapeutic benefit), skilled companion (dogs primarily for children), and service dogs (dogs assisting an independent adult). I had very little to do with our hearing dogs. Several years ago I was given the opportunity to focus my attention on the hearing dog program. It turned out to be a wonderful chance for me to do something new and apply my training experience in a different way.

For Canine Companions’ other categories of trained assistance dogs, our goal is to have a dog that is highly trained and will perform its skills consistently and reliably when told to do them. We want the dog to look for direction from its handler before executing a trained behavior. In the case of hearing dogs, we look for something a bit different. Since the dog’s primary skill is to alert its handler to sounds that the person is not aware of, we’re expecting the dog to execute its trained behavior without being told or even, sometimes, in direct opposition to the direction given. For example, if the handler has told the dog to lie down and stay in a particular place, we want the dog to “break” that command and alert the handler if one of the training sounds happens.

This expectation means that the dog that becomes a successful Canine Companions hearing dog has a bit more “spunk” than the dogs that are successful in our other categories. The training that the trainer gives these dogs has a bit of a different angle to it as well. We want to utilize the extra energy that the dog has while at the same time ensuring that the person feels comfortable taking the Canine Companions hearing dog with him or her into all public settings because the dog is calm, confident, and easy to manage.

We also look for dogs that love to learn new things. Someone who receives a Canine Companions Hearing Dog gets what amounts to a “starter kit.” The dog that they receive and go home with has the skills of alerting its handler and then leading the person back to a few certain sounds. The goal of our team training class is to instruct the new handler in how to work with the dog to apply those skills to the sounds that are important in that particular person’s life. In essence, we teach the handlers how to be trainers of their new dog. Then when they go home they start working together with daily training to make sure that when their cell phone “rings” or their baby cries the dog will be able to alert them and indicate where the sound is coming from.

A Canine Companions hearing dog is inquisitive, reliable, loves to learn, is eager to solve problems by applying its experience in new ways, and is helpful. Hey, that sounds kind of like me! Maybe I’ve found a way to fulfill my childhood dream of being a dog. I just didn’t know at the time that I wanted to be a Canine Companions hearing dog.

My career at Canine Companions for Independence has been a wonderful experience for me. Not only do I get to spend so much of my time around my favorite animals but I also get to share that experience with other people who are looking for a bit of help in their lives. They can often find it in a dog that I’ve trained. What could be a better career than that?

Ken Reid has been an instructor for 16 years at Canine Companions for Independence, a national nonprofit organization that trains and provides assistance dogs that help people with disabilities. He and his wife have lived in Northern California all their lives. Ken spends as much time as possible cycling, running, or hiking (sometimes all at the same time), and he also volunteers with hiking trail building and maintenance. His family is completed by two dogs and a horse. For more information about Canine Companions for Independence, visit www.cci.org or email info@cci.org.
Chatting With Harriet: In a Gay Bar

By Harriet Frankel

Not long ago, I found myself, a deaf 93-year-old woman, in a gay bar at 9 o’clock at night, wishing I could hear what was being said. What in the world was I doing there? It’s a rather long story, but bear with me.

I live in Atlanta in a big old house, and I have tenants in my terrace and in my loft. This helps pay for the utilities, which have skyrocketed, and more. When a tenant who had lived in the loft had to start using a wheelchair, I put in a bed and another bathroom downstairs so she could stay on with me. We had our own little community in this old house.

Time moves on, and my wheelchair lady, Linda, moved out and Phil, a man who was a friend of hers, asked to rent her room because it was near where he worked at a gay bar. So for the next eight years he was my tenant. Phil was not the brightest of men, but he was nice, and when he lost his job he tried and tried to find another one, but everything was against him. Phil had no real skills and no family here, so I told him, “I’ll hire you and you can help with my yard work and drive me where I need to go and just be a general flunky because I can no longer do it.” This suited him fine, especially since he had a little dog, Cricket, that he adored and I had a yard, and so they became part of our little community.

Phil became ill, and one morning, Ingrid, my downstairs tenant, found him dead in his room. What to do? She called his sister in Tennessee, who took over, and then later Don, one of his gay friends, invited me to a memorial service for him at the neighborhood gay bar, which I had never been in, and I didn’t know about the big party room upstairs. Don picked me up and took me to the bar. Phil had a lot of friends, and they were all there. I was introduced to everyone, and then they led me to a fabulous spread and insisted on filling my plate. For about an hour, I watched all the people partying, chatting, and embracing one another. Then one of the hosts got up and invited those who knew Phil well to tell what they remembered about him. One person after another came forward and talked for a few minutes. Almost a dozen men said something, but of course I couldn’t hear what was said. When the speakers ended, all raised their glasses in a toast to Phil’s memory. It was very touching and I had a lump in my throat.

I was sorry that I couldn’t hear what was being said.

I didn’t have a friend to interpret and there was no screen with captioning to read. I was asked to say a few words, but since I didn’t know what had been said I was at a total loss, and I couldn’t explain to all those strangers that I was totally deaf. All I managed to say was that I would miss Phil—after all, he had been part of my household for eight years.

Phil and his gay friends expanded my life with a peek into another world that not many older women get to experience. When the service was over, everyone went back to partying, and Don took me back home. Yes, I’ll miss Phil, since I saw him almost every day when he brought in my mail or I watched him play with his beloved dog in the back yard. Cricket is now cared for by my next-door neighbor, which is a small comfort, but I’m still sorry that I couldn’t hear what Phil’s many friends said about him at the memorial service in the party room of the gay bar.
Chapter Happenings

By Ann Smith, Curator

Lori Messing reports that ALDA-Garden State awarded the 2010 Barnhart Memorial Scholarship to Lorrae Bradbury of Marlton, New Jersey. Lorrae is a third-year student at Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania, who was diagnosed with severe progressive hearing loss a few days before beginning her freshman year in college. ALDA-Garden State also participated in a symposium to mark the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The symposium was held at the New Jersey State House Annex in Trenton and included “late-deafness” as an agenda topic, thanks to Jenny Beilis, Carol Granaldi, and other ALDA-GS members. ALDA-Garden State will participate in the Garden State Walk4Hearing on October 16th. Team ALDA-Best is recruiting members and seeking contributions for the walk.

Marlene Thometz reports that ALDA-Chicago took a late afternoon tram tour of the Chicago Botanic Garden in June. Tour transcripts and an interpreter were provided, and dining at the Garden Cafe followed. Cleo Simmons’s annual, and very popular, pool party was held on a lovely July Saturday afternoon. In August, Mary Clark had planned a front porch dinner honoring the Rick Skyer family (Sally, Melissa, and Michael), who were visiting in Chicago. The mosquitoes made the porch intolerable, but the group enjoyed dinner after moving indoors. Also in August, ALDA-Chicago members visited Emilio’s Tapas Restaurant and followed the Spanish custom of making a meal of two or three tapas, shared with others at the table.

ALDA-Peach’s June meeting featured a presentation by Scott Rinehart of Cochlear Americas titled “Because Life is Worth Hearing.” Scott’s presentation was originally scheduled for the January meeting, but it was postponed to February because of severe winter weather and again postponed because of snow and ice. Fortunately, there was no winter weather in June (the temperature was in the mid-90s), and the Peaches enjoyed Scott’s presentation about BAHAs (Cochlear’s version of the bone-anchored hearing aid) and CIs. In July, ALDA-Peach had a fabulous discussion on “Hearing Loss and the Workplace.” Angie Fugo, Marge Tamas, and Yael Shaner gave excellent presentations about the challenges they have faced in their jobs, John Esmay shared the frustrations of running a small business after suffering hearing loss, and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) investigator Ananda Brantley-Melson covered the process of filing complaints. All of the presenters are ALDA-Peach members. In August, ALDA-Peach members toured the “Dr. Seuss Goes to War” exhibit at the Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta. This is an exhibit of the political cartoons that Theodore Geiser (who was known as Dr. Seuss) produced in the years preceding and during World War II. The Peaches also enjoyed the museum’s exhibits of Atlanta’s Jewish heritage, especially those related to their own Harriet Frankel and her late husband.

Send your chapter news to Ann at fabsmith@att.net by December 21.

Thirty-six Years (continued)...

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workplace. In public, you’ll face ignorant people who don’t know about access laws for service dogs and may challenge your right to be there. You may need to learn new skills, such as the ability to push a shopping cart while maneuvering narrow aisles with a dog on a leash.

Each of my hearing dogs has brought me incredible and unique gifts. All of them made me aware of things that I would otherwise have missed, opening me to knowledge, beauty, a greater sense of safety, and lovely companionship when I traveled without another human. But most of all, they have always made me want to be a far better person so that I could deserve their patience, trust, and dedication. These incredible dogs have blessed my life over the course of the last 36 years. I can’t imagine life without one.

Cheryl is the executive director of the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons. She has a B.A. in journalism from Pennsylvania State University and serves on the Gallaudet University Board of Trustees. A past president of ALDA, she is involved in numerous advocacy projects, with a particular focus on telecommunications, television captioning, and movie captioning. Among the many recognitions Cheryl has received are the ALDA I. King Jordan Lifetime Achievement Award and the ALDA Brainstorm Award. In 2000, Glamour magazine named her one of the “Women at Their Best.” Her memoir, Seeds of Disquiet: One Deaf Woman’s Experience, was published in 1992. Cheryl can be contacted at NVRCheryl@aol.com.
GA to SK

By Ann Smith, Curator

Past ALDA president Marylyn Howe and Gallaudet’s president emeritus Dr. I. King Jordan were among the ADA’s 20th anniversary celebrants at the White House on July 26, 2010. Marylyn represented the National Council on Disability and Dr. Jordan represented the Commission on Presidential Scholars. (See photo on next page.)

Beverly Sudler is an avid CapTel advocate; she’s even been on national TV to promote CapTel captioned telephone technology. Bev appeared in The Profile Series, hosted by Lou Gossett, Jr., in a seven-minute segment on the Discovery Channel on May 26. Bev says, “It was an exciting experience—the TV interviewer flew up from Florida, the director of CapTel marketing came in from Madison, Wisconsin, and the two cameramen came from Montclair, New Jersey. They were here one day in October 2009 and one day in November 2009. I hope I got the message out. I had no script, no coaching, and no make-up artist.” To see Bev’s appearance, go to www.captel.com and enter “Profile Series” in the search field. The lovely child in the film is Bev’s granddaughter, Candice. Bev will also be featured in the October CapTel newsletter. Bev belongs to ALDA-Garden State, ALDA-NJ, ALDA, Inc., the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), and serves on the HLAA-NJ board and on the Relay Advisory Board of New Jersey.

Michele Bornert reports from Michigan that she now has a deaf-related blog called Deaf Expressions at http://deafexpressions.blogspot.com. Also, after a brief hiatus, her business (also called Deaf Expressions) is getting back in gear and has two workshops coming up this fall.

Ken Arcia joined about 20 other deaf people for an eight-day, seven-night cruise to Alaska from Seattle. He is on the board of directors of DeafHope (www.deaf-hope.org), an agency that provides services to deaf women and children who are victims of domestic and/or sexual violence. The cruise was a fundraiser, with a percentage of all the deaf passenger fees going to DeafHope. This was Ken’s third cruise (the others were to the Caribbean and Mexico) and definitely the furthest north. When he returned, Ken was only unpacked for 11 days before flying to ALDAcon. Hope you saw him there!

Roxanne Gasaway in Georgia reports an epidemic of weddings in her family. Two of her nieces and one step-niece got married in the late spring/early summer. Each wedding was in a different state; Roxanne wasn’t able to attend, but photographs made her feel that she’d been there.

Flooding in Pakistan began in July after heavy monsoon rains, killing over 2000 people and destroying over a million homes. Fortunately, Muhammad Akram, leader of ALDA-Asia Pacific and chair of ALDA’s International Committee, reports that people are safe in Karachi, where he lives. However, he adds that around 20 million people have been affected and many of them have moved to camps in Karachi. He and others are visiting the camps to locate people with disabilities to make sure that their needs are being met.

ALDA News Editor-in-Chief Nancy Kingsley will become the next state director of the Hearing Loss Association of Pennsylvania, replacing Diana Bender (for the next year, the two will be co-directors). Nancy also serves as the chair of the Pennsylvania Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the president of the Hearing Loss Association of Lancaster County.

Doreen Dougherty and Tony Yuppa are happy to share the news of their engagement with their many ALDA friends. Tony popped the question on the summit of Pike’s Peak, while he and Doreen were in Colorado Springs for the 2010 ALDAcon. Since the couple first met at an ALDA function, it was the perfect time and place. The wedding is planned for 2011, but no date has been set. Doreen is the president of ALDA-Garden State and Tony is vice president.

Send your personal news to Ann at fabsmith@att.net by December 21.
Life in ALDA-Land: Invisible Fences

By Mary Clark

My dog Cooper is hearing. I am not. There is an invisible fence around my house, and Cooper has a collar to remind him if he wants to go beyond the fence. (He has never tried that, though.) I have many invisible fences, too, some of them as a deaf person, and I don’t even wear a collar.

Cooper has been with us for five years, and I swear he knows I am deaf. He rarely barks, and my kids tell me he cries to them but not to me. Instead, he jumps on me and looks me in the eye and then we talk. I sign and say, “Oh, do you need to go out? Do you want to eat? Where is your toy?” We play that 20 questions game and then I can figure it out. He has quite a receptive vocabulary for a five-year-old dog. When he sleeps, he is right next to me and I can feel his growl if he senses danger. It is comforting to know that he protects me that way. Usually it is just the mailman, who opens my front door to put the mail on my table in the foyer.

When Cooper eats half the bag of dog food I foolishly left on the pantry floor or the leftover quiche I didn’t put far away enough on the counter, I know. He walks into the room licking his chops with his tail between his legs and his head down. Deaf people are good at body language, and I have found out they are good with dogs as well.

I don’t have a trained hearing dog but have always wanted one. Perhaps when Cooper and the kids are no longer around, I will actually pursue it. But we all treat dogs like pets. Why should they have to work when they are not getting paid? Why can’t they just eat, sleep and get fat? A real trained hearing dog would become psychotic if he/she lived here because of that philosophy.

I remember Cheryl Heppner coming to visit one time with her dog. I was impressed. We were having a glass of wine in the den when the dog all of sudden alerted Cheryl to something going on in the house. I was aghast. No one was home! We then figured out that he had heard the renter who rents a third floor apartment go up the back stairway. Wow...what ears! If only I could have ears like that!

Invisible fences? No one seems to understand them. Just yesterday, Cooper was again arrested by the police, so I had to explain once more what an invisible fence is. I say to tourists who are often in my area looking at the old historical homes when Cooper is in the yard running freely, “Don’t worry—he can’t get out of the yard. He is trained. He is not going to snatch your baby or attack your wife!” They then say something back, and my own invisible fence gets a little higher and a little tougher to handle.

Gotta go...my “hearing” dog is in the pantry!

Mary has been to every ALDAcon and is a past ALDA president. She lives in Oak Park, Illinois, just west of Chicago.
Reserve these dates and plan to be in Indianapolis for the 23rd ALDAcon to be held at the Embassy Suites-Downtown. Kim Mettache and Terri Singer, co-chairs of the planning committee, have lots of surprises in store, including a variety of workshops, inspiring speakers, fascinating entertainment, the traditional Karaoke party, the latest technology and information in the exhibit hall, a tempting silent auction, and a Friday Night Banquet that will astound you.

The Embassy Suites is an all-suite hotel. This means each “room” reservation provides a bedroom with two double or one king-sized bed and a living room with a sleeper sofa. You also receive a FREE hot breakfast each morning, and each evening you’re invited to the manager’s free wine/beer/cocktail reception. All this—and more—for $119 per night per suite.

ALDA 500 CLUB
To spur you on, we’ve created a payment plan, officially known as the ALDA 500 Club. Through this club, you’ll be able to make periodic payments to your account rather than paying the entire registration fee all at once. You’ll also be able to designate funds for your room reservation. ALDA will not be responsible for payment of your hotel bill. The registration and cancellation particulars have yet to be determined. Check the ALDA website for updates soon. We’ll also publish information on a Facebook page in the near future. In the meantime, use the form below to send in your first payment. Don’t wait. Do it NOW!!

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- National Broadband Plan
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TDI - Shaping An Accessible World

SK SK

Nothing but love has made the dog lose his wild freedom, to become the servant of man.

—D.H. Lawrence
The mission of the Association of Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA) is to support the empowerment of late-deafened people.

Late-deafened adults are people who have lost their hearing in any degree after having acquired spoken language. ALDA members may or may not use hearing aids, may or may not use assistive listening devices, may or may not use cochlear implants, and may or may not use sign language. What ALDA members DO is “whatever works.” This is the philosophy that keeps the doors to ALDA wide open to anyone who is interested.

ALDA is committed to providing a support network and a sense of belonging to late-deafened people, sharing our unique experiences, challenges, and coping strategies; helping one another find practical solutions and psychological relief; and working together with other organizations and service providers for our common good.

ALDA provides networking through local chapters and groups as well as our annual conference (ALDAcon). We offer social activities, advocacy, peer support, up-to-date information on new technology, and guidance for late-deafened adults, their families, and their friends on ways to deal effectively with the difficulties arising from losing our hearing. ALDA is inclusive, never exclusive. Members find themselves part of a family, with emotional and social support, and, above all, acceptance.

Membership in ALDA provides support for outreach: newsletters, brochures, mass mailings, public presentations, and participation in local and national events to spread the word about ALDA to the more than 31 million Americans, and other late-deafened people worldwide, who would benefit from our organization. ALDA also assists chapter leaders and regional directors to expand ALDA through more chapters and groups and increased membership.

You can join ALDA via the form in this issue, or go to www.alda.org or contact ALDA, Inc. at 8038 MacIntosh Lane, Suite 2, Rockford, IL 61107, 815-332-1515 V/TTY. Membership entitles you to receive the quarterly ALDA News, which spotlights personal experiences of late-deafened people, and to attend ALDAcon at the lower member rate.

If you are interested in learning about ALDA in your area or seeing ALDA become active there, please contact your regional director (contact information is at “Contact Us” on the ALDA website).
JOIN THE FAMILY.....JOIN ALDA!

Your membership in the Association of Late-Deafened Adults connections you with ALDAns throughout the world. Don’t miss our informative quarterly newsletter, ALDA News. Check our chapter directory at www.alda.org to find a chapter near you. Our fully accessible annual convention is a must for newcomers and old-timers alike.

To join or renew using credit cards on our secure site, go to www.alda.org. To mail your membership, please complete this form and send with check payable to:

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www.alda.org/alda_membership_form.htm

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ALDA’s Mission Statement:
To Support the Empowerment of Deafened People.

✓ Education
✓ Advocacy
✓ Role Models
✓ Support

ALDA provides networking opportunities through local chapters and groups as well as at the annual ALDA conference (ALDAcon).
Don’t Just Be a Member, Be a Lifetime Member!

Why a Lifetime Member?
A. ALDA and the work it does to support the empowerment of deafened people means a lot to me; I want to support ALDA financially
B. I don’t have to worry about forgetting to renew my dues
C. I plan to live to be at least 130 years old; think what a bargain Lifetime Membership will be!

Ann Smith, Lifetime Member

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• **Bronze** $500 - $1,499: receive a personal letter from the President, bronze plaque
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• **Gold** $3,000+: receive a personal letter from the President, gold plaque, priority seating at future ALDAcons and complimentary registration to a future ALDAcon.

Contact ALDA treasurer: treasurer@alda.org or visit www.alda.org