I keep seeing images. They’re so different: sometimes exciting, sometimes just incredibly sad. I’m told that memories are supposed to be vibrant, full of voices, and strung with raw emotions. What sets mine apart is that there are no voices reverberating in my ears. It was too long ago, I guess. A whole lifetime has passed since I heard my last sound—45 years, to be exact. Now at 48, I have created a world inhabited by phantoms. You’re already assuming that by phantoms I mean people. Yes and no.

Like most of these living in silence, I’m used to watching life like a show; somebody just forgot to turn the sound on. Monologues of its heroes and heroines capture my imagination, changing subjects with the same ease as they would if I could hear them talking.

Ah, this unforgettable French movie, *The Artist*. The tragic eyes that fill the screen. The widely open mouth that taunts and accuses but is unable to scream. There’s no release for the pain. Numbness, helplessness is the fate of an artist who tries to convey conflicting emotions that aren’t related entirely to deafness.

I know it all too well—the suffering of an artistic personality that challenges his or her human limits. It has nothing to do with vanity or with overestimating oneself. It’s our natural striving for perfection. I should feel related to that silent movie actor, but though I’m like him in more than one way, I’m still incredibly different.

Sometimes I wish the words were flooding over me in a verbal frenzy. I want them to constrict my throat, trying to break away. It is how a novelist or even a sports broadcaster is supposed to feel. Breaking away, tearing through the distances, fears, courage, and excitement. It’s a normal creative process that shouldn’t be off-limits even to a seventh-grader contemplating his free-themed class assignment. One cannot possibly fail a test that doesn’t require extensive knowledge. In fact, there are no strict teachers or parents called to the parent-teacher conference.

Still, I’m being judged regularly. People regard me with a healthy dose of skepticism. After all, this English language is their undeniable right. From their viewpoint, I must feel like an impostor. I myself sometimes don’t know where I belong. It is not that I’m eager to blend in, so I might be associated with a certain class. Nor am I an overachiever, a person unable to stop testing the patience of others. Life has put me in unique circumstances.

William Henley in his poem *Invictus* [Editor’s note: Latin for “unconquered”] said it best: “In the fell clutch of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud.” Therefore, these notes are not meant as a complaint. My point is to convey all the unfairness that weighs down on my heart. It’s something that most of us have to deal with at one time or another. This is what venting is for—a perfect opportunity to ramble without suffering the consequences. After all, I’ve already been branded, tried, and sentenced. Nothing I say will ever change that. People have claimed that (a) only a native can speak like a native and (b) upbringing matters. Whatever that means.

My upbringing began with the mirror. It wasn’t a curved mirror from the fair, just a regular mirror that stood in my bedroom. If it was supposed to reflect the funny faces all children make when
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Hi, everyone,

Next week my department at work will be participating in inclusion training. I’m not sure exactly what it will entail, but it must be pretty important, since colleagues from three countries will be flying in to attend the workshop. I’m “hearing” that dinner and bowling are part of the event, so there will be some fun involved (and hopefully I won’t embarrass myself with a series of gutter balls). Diversity and inclusion have taken on a new level of importance in the workplace these days, being hailed as good business sense and the right thing to do. While I wholeheartedly agree, both must be practiced, not simply taught, and must extend beyond the workplace to other areas of our lives.

So I find myself thinking about how diversity and inclusion are experienced in ALDA. This brings to mind the recent passing of two well-known ALDAns, Mary Clark and Shawn Lovley, and the gifts that they, and others whom ALDA has lost, have shared with us—gifts that have helped to transform the isolated late-deafened population into an inclusive and welcoming late-deafened community. Through their generous volunteerism and dedicated advocacy, Mary, Shawn, and others like them offered inclusion and acceptance to those feeling lost in a hearing world. Their deaths leave a terrible void, but their lives leave a wonderful legacy in the diversity and strength of a unique hearing-loss community.

So, on that note, we’re pleased to bring you another issue of ALDA News, with articles from a diverse group of authors on a variety of topics. We initially planned that the theme for this issue would be holiday communication challenges, but we have always welcomed articles on any topic related to hearing loss, and the stories we received reflect a wide variety experiences. Although most are not about holiday communications, they do have a common theme. Subtle and somewhat hidden, but definitely woven into the undertones of each story, this theme is courage. Each author, in his or her own way, faces challenges such as searching for a new job, dealing with tinnitus, and traveling alone. Overcoming these challenges, as the authors have done, requires courage. We can take heart in knowing that we, too, can overcome challenges, especially with the support of our ALDA community.

As always, we welcome your thoughts and com-

ments. If you have any ideas for future themes, or suggestions for improving the newsletter, don’t hesitate to contact me.

ALDAbest,
Eileen

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Note from Nancy
By Nancy Kingsley, Editor-in-Chief

This issue notes the recent passing of two longtime ALDA members, Mary Clark and Shawn Lovley, both of whom are memorialized here. Over the years, ALDA has lost many shining stars, including its co-founder Kathie Hering, former president Edna Shipley-Conner, former ALDA News editor-in-chief Candis Shannon, international member Geoff Brown of the United Kingdom, and others too numerous to mention. Such losses are inevitable in any organization that has been in existence for more than two decades, but in addition, some causes of deafness can result in life-threatening complications.

As we have learned from our deafness and other experiences, we sometimes have to let go of what we cherish. The fact that this is difficult is the reason why our organization was founded—to help us adjust to a major loss. Involvement in ALDA also helps us to get a better understanding of the different effects of a sudden, unexpected loss and a gradual, progressive one.

What we have learned from coping with deafness can assist us in dealing with other losses. Helpful techniques include the following:

- Be with people who comfort and recharge you.
- Talk to those who have survived similar experiences.
- Find creative ways like journaling, painting, drawing, photography, woodwork, quilting, collage, or scrapbooking to express your feelings.
- Use the coping methods that helped you to deal with past losses.

One of the hardest things to accept about a loss is its finality. In most cases, deafness is permanent (although it can often be partially remedied with a cochlear implant), and death, of course, is always irreversible (although our memories of a loved one are lasting). Many ALDAns have commented wistfully about missing music after becoming deaf, but people who have been deaf since birth don’t have a similar sense of loss, since they have never experienced music’s full richness. Likewise, we can only miss the people we have known. And our losses, while painful, can make us more appreciative of what we have, which we might otherwise unthinkingly take for granted.

When we miss someone or something, we are recognizing that the former presence was a gift that enriched us. But nothing we love is ever totally lost to us, because it has changed us for the better in some way, and that change is still part of us.
Mary Clark’s Life and Accomplishments

Mary Edwards Lander Clark died August 24. A resident of Oak Park [Illinois] for nearly 30 years, Mary was a teacher, counselor, orator, humorist, educator, hostess at her big house on Forest Avenue, and loving mother.

Mary was born on June 17, 1956 in Saginaw, Michigan. She gradually lost her hearing but developed interest in hearing solutions even as a high school student. By 1990 she was totally deaf, but understood both the hearing and deaf cultures.

Mary graduated from Ball State University in 1978 with a degree in special education. Additionally, she studied at Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. Mary taught deaf kindergarteners at Mahalia Jackson Elementary School in Chicago in the 1970s and high school students at the Whitney Young Magnet High School in the 1980s. More recently she taught ASL at Concordia College in River Forest.

Mary traveled the country to educate and empower newly deaf individuals who felt they had nowhere to turn. She was always helping, through her work with AT&T’s call centers, Illinois Hands and Voices, and Hearing Loss LINK of Chicago. She testified frequently at state and local hearings in support of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and for many years she directed the Progress Center for Independent Living in Oak Park. She was named one of 100 Women Making a Difference by Today’s Chicago Woman Foundation in 1999. As one of the original [ALDA] members, Mary served as a two-time national president, spent many years on the board, and was a long-time contributor to the ALDA News, where her stories of raising a family and living with deafness were legendary. In 2005, Mary received ALDA’s highest honor, the I. King Jordan Distinguished Service Award.

She is survived by her daughters, Lauren, Lindsay, and Emily Clark; her father Lawrence C. Lander; her sister Elizabeth; and two brothers, John Lander and Lawrence F. Lander. A celebration of her life and service was held August 30. A memorial service followed, officiated by her longtime friend and fellow advocate, Father Joe Mulcrone.

Mary’s family requests contributions to the Association of Late Deafened Adults (www.alda.org) or the charity of your choice. [Editor’s note: Anyone wishing to donate to ALDA in memory of Mary Clark may do so by either sending a check or by using PayPal or a credit card online. To donate online, go to ALDA.org, click on “How to Donate,” and follow the steps. To mail donations, make the check payable to ALDA, Inc. and send it to ALDA, Inc., 8038 Macintosh Lane, Rockford, IL 61107. Donations are tax-deductible.]

Her big smile and even her handle: ldmpoppins—late-deafened Mary Poppins—says it all.
A Lovely Memorial Service for Mary Clark

I flew from California the night before Mary’s August 30 memorial service. I would not have been able to arrive in time for the 4 p.m. service if I had come on August 30. And before the service, I wanted to see Cleo Simmons, who had hundreds of photos of ALDA-Chicago, so I could pick a few of Mary to include in the slideshow I was making for Mary’s family, and to go to Mary’s house (aka “The ALDA Hotel”) to get some family photos for the slideshow.

I stayed up a few hours putting together the slideshow. I was almost done when I realized I could not add some photos from a CD that Mary’s brother Larry had given me, so I drove over to the house again (luckily only five minutes away), grabbed another CD, and headed back to the hotel to finish up. That day, Mary’s obituary was posted in the local paper. A copy is available here: http://www.elda.org/media/maryedwardslanderclark-obit.pdf

On Thursday around 3:30 p.m., I headed over to the funeral home, which was across the street from my hotel. I set up my laptop with the PowerPoint file, connected it to the funeral home’s TV, and tested it out. John Fox (Mary’s brother-in-law) and Lauren Clark (Mary’s daughter) gave me feedback on the sound, as I had included several of Mary’s favorite songs. The family watched the slideshow while waiting for people to arrive. It is available at https://vimeo.com/48689364 and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JslXqqPBXg&amp;feature=youtube. Photos from the service are on my Facebook wall, viewable by the public, at http://fb.me/SeyXQu.

At 4 p.m., guests started to arrive, including Tina Childress, Kathy Schlueter, Carol Postulka, and Jean Richards. Steve Wilhelm came all the way from my area of San Francisco, thank-ful that I had informed him about Mary’s passing. Soon Cleo Simmons arrived, along with Linda Belice, Marsha Kopp, Karen Putz, and Bill Graham and his wife Karen. Lois Maroney, Mary Lou Mistretta, and Tess Crowder came from Florida, and Marylyn Howe arrived from Savannah, Georgia. Please forgive me if I forgot anyone.

Mary was very involved in equal access, so with the help of Marylyn Howe and Bill Graham, there were six sign language Interpreters and a CART provider. Soon the room was packed, and Father Joe Mulcrone, a longtime friend of the family, presided over the service. His homily related Mary to one of the books on her shelf, The Road Less Traveled. Next, Mary’s sister-in-law Joyce (whose husband is Mary’s older brother, Larry Lander) said a few words and then asked Cleo Simmons to speak. Cleo told everyone that she had known Mary even before ALDA was founded, and Mary had adopted her as her “second mom.”

I was asked to talk next. I had my notes in my phone so I wouldn’t forget what to say, so I apologized to Father Joe for breaking his rule “turn all phones off,” and he laughed. I spoke about meeting Mary back in 1995 at my first ALDAcon in Rockford, Illinois. Her warm, welcoming smile helped me to assimilate into ALDA, and we became fast friends. She was part of my second family, along with Edna Shipley-Conner and many others. I visited Mary often and helped her out from a long distance as well, since I was her “personal geek” (tech support). I told about her visit to California in April and her balance issues. I mentioned how she

Continued on page 8
Remembering Mary Clark

Mary Clark entered ALDA about eight months after we started a self-help support group in Chicago for people who became deaf as adults. One of Mary’s friends who had heard about the group had harassed her for months to go to a meeting. But Mary resisted—she was young, in her early 30s, and didn’t know anyone else who had become deaf in the prime of life. She envisioned the self-help group as a bunch of old people sitting around trying to hear one another talk about their grandchildren. But her friend kept at her, and partly to shut her up, Mary came to a meeting.

That first night Mary had obvious anxiety and tiptoed into the room, sitting down near the door if she needed to flee. The rest of us were actually about her age, which must have given her some comfort, but she didn’t say much at the meeting. We tried to make her feel welcome and encouraged her to come back the next week. She did, and then the next week and the next. In a month or two she had become a fixture of the group and was well on her way to becoming the charming, talkative, and fun-seeking person ALDA came to know and love.

There are many enchanting anecdotes involving Mary from the early years of ALDA. She helped define the organization as a place not only to find personal support but also to have fun socially. For most of us, ALDA was the only place where we could party and not feel on the periphery. We smiled and laughed together and laughed some more, and Mary was always near the center.

Those were good times—wondrously good—and I’m sure many of ALDA’s old guard will share their zany or poignant memories of Mary in the weeks and months to come. But the memories I hold dearest are more recent and personal.

Over the last few years, Mary communicated most frequently and expressively by email. She shared her life with many friends, and for whatever reason I was one of her mainstays. Almost daily I received a stream-of-consciousness email from Mary chronicling her activities, thoughts, and feelings. She sometimes rambled, but her writing was always elegant and evocative, and more often than not sprinkled with humor and insight.

I (and I know others) received hundreds of engaging emails from Mary during this period. She didn’t text, so on some days the ancillary emails could amount to a dozen or more as well. And, as always with Mary, there was zaniness at times. Quite often Marylyn Howe, Larry Littleton, and I were all included on the same email thread from Mary. At one point Larry began to send me private messages wondering why I hadn’t responded to something Mary had written. “I never got it,” I replied. “Sure you did,” he said. The puzzle continued for at least a month until Larry noticed that Mary was addressing some of her emails to williamgraham@aol.com, whereas my email address was williamtgraham@gmail.com. In other words, another William Graham was receiving the uncommonly personal emails Mary had sent. We told Mary about the mistake but she continued to make it, occasionally sending AOL Bill chapter and verse about her daily activities, her bucket list, and her ALDA-centric views on life. I won’t be surprised if AOL Bill sends a donation to ALDA in Mary’s memory.

Mary deeply loved her family, and she shared that with us, too. She often forwarded long emails from her father that had stories about her when she was young. Her dad is an amazingly gifted and spontaneous writer, with an incredible memory. Although I had never actually met him, I did know him personally, if that makes sense. Mary’s writing, energy, and memory mirrored her dad’s, as anyone close to her can attest.

When her mother died, Mary emailed, saying that she remembered a piece I had written for ALDA News after my own mother’s death. She said she really connected with my words. I was surprised she remembered it 20 years later, and of course I was greatly touched that she did. Mary asked me how long it was before I got over the loss of my mom. I told her that even five years later I’d regularly tear up. After I said that I momentarily wished I hadn’t, because I thought it might make her disconsolate, but it had the opposite effect: It consoled her that the intense love she felt for her mom would endure in memory.

Mary and I had an email exchange the last day of her conscious life, apparently just a few hours before her accident. [Editor’s note: Mary fell and struck her head.] Our conversation was unremarkable, about mundane activities on what amounted to a bad hair day for her. But in the framework of what happened afterwards, her last words to me beautifully capture her perspective, acceptance, humor, and spirit, and contained the perfect exit line. She wrote:

“So I take it day by day. Will get through today... clean up the dog mess...put some pennies aside and let the rest go. Plenty of ice cream sandwiches in the freezer too. Be thankful for the little things...smile.”

She left with a smile. I’m sure that’s how she’d want to be remembered. Like we remember her.

Bill is the co-founder of ALDA. He can be contacted at williamtgraham@gmail.com.
Shawn Lovley: In Memoriam

Shawn Lovley, 51, died on June 25, 2012 at his Maryland home, surrounded by his wife Mary and other loved ones. In 1987, Shawn had surgery and radiation for a brain tumor, and the following year he married “marvelous Mary.” Although Mary was a sign language interpreter, Shawn later noted that he never became skilled at signing. With a master of fine arts in theatre arts, he became the head of the theatre department at a Georgia college.

In 1990, Shawn lost his hearing as a result of aftereffects of his brain tumor, and he attended his first ALDAcon in 1991 with Bill Graham as his newcomer buddy. Shawn then moved to Maryland and became a volunteer at Gallaudet’s National Information Center on Deafness. In 1993, he won a New York Deaf Theatre playwriting competition for a humorous one-act play about late-deafness. He was elected to the 1996 ALDA Board and served as ALDA treasurer in 2004. Shawn also wrote several books and many articles about late deafness and wellness, including *He Who Laughs Lasts*.

Memorial Service for Mary Clark (continued)...

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always had a balloon with her on ALDAcon’s karaoke night so she could feel the vibrations and how we loved dancing with that balloon between us. I commented about her love of “a glass of Chardonnay” while having fun with all her ALDA friends, and I asked Mary’s daughters to please keep in touch with the ALDA family they had grown up with. Several people couldn’t believe I flew from California for this service, but I loved Mary as one of my closest friends and will always carry her in my heart. There was never any question about my attending.

Father Joe spoke some more, followed by a deaf deacon, Casimir Fronczek. Then Mary’s daughters, Emily, Lindsay, and Lauren, shared stories of their mom and growing up in a deaf household.

One funny thing happened—when Joyce Lander mentioned a lovely photo of the women in strapless gowns the CART provider mistakenly typed “topless gowns.” Lauren was laughing as she made the correction. Mary would have loved that!

The service closed with one of Mary’s favorite artists, Carole King, singing “Way Over Yonder.” Then some folks headed over to Poor Phil’s Pub across the street. Many of us went back to Mary’s house to eat and socialize with the family for a couple of hours. Then we returned to Poor Phil’s (Mary and I had gone there when I was in town) to toast Mary. We stayed for a couple of hours reminiscing and laughing and crying.

The next day I stopped by the house to leave a copy of the slideshow. Larry opened a condolence letter from the Governor, and there was also a large write-up about Mary in the Chicago Tribune. A PDF copy can be accessed here: http://www.alda.org/pdfs/Tribune-Obituary.pdf.

I thank Larry and Joyce Lander (Mary’s brother and his wife) for letting me be a part of this. I was happy that I could create the slideshow for the family and that I was allowed to speak. I think they also got a small glimpse of how much Mary was respected by those in the deaf and late-deafened communities. Mary was loved and admired by many and will be greatly missed.

There is also something in the works to honor Mary at ALDAcon. Watch the program schedule updates.

*Ken Arcia is a former ALDA president. He can be contacted at Alda96ken@gmail.com.*
Nominations for ALDA Board Positions

Each year ALDA, Inc. holds an election by secret ballot to fill open positions on the Board of Directors. The Nominations Committee is now soliciting nominations for the following positions:

President-Elect – During the changeover to two-year terms of President, Vice President, and Past President that was voted on and passed in 2011, this will be the last time that we elect a President-Elect. The President-Elect shall assist the President in the discharge of all functions of that office. In the event of the President’s extended absence or disability, the President-Elect shall perform the duties of that office. Note that the last President-Elect will serve four years: one year as President-Elect, one year as President, and two years as Past President.

Secretary – The Secretary generally serves a two-year term, but this year will be elected for a three-year term, in order to move the election of Secretary to odd years as was voted on in 2011. Hereafter, when next elected in December of 2015, the Secretary’s term will revert to being two years (2016-2017). The Secretary shall keep minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors, the Executive Committee, and the annual general business meeting. The Secretary shall maintain files of all official correspondence of ALDA, shall present a report to the general membership as directed by the Board, and in general shall perform all duties incident to the office of Secretary.

Regional Directors 3 and 4 – Regional Directors serve two-year terms. Each represents one of four regions, MUST live in that region and is elected by members residing in the region. The Regional Director responds to communications from individuals in the region who need information about local resources; provides support to groups, chapters, individuals, families, and professionals within the region; establishes networks and supports regional interests and concerns at Board meetings.

Region 3: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virgin Island, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Central America, Africa, South America.


A member wishing to be nominated or to nominate another member needs to submit a nomination form, indicating the name of the nominee and the office for which s/he is nominated. If you would like a nomination form or additional information, contact Cynthia Amerman at pastpresident@alda.org. Deadline for nominations is November 15, 2012.

ALDAcon Proceedings Needs Volunteers

The ALDAcon Proceedings have been providing anyone who needs information about hearing loss with the information presented at ALDAcon yearly workshops. This is freely available on the ALDA website for all to view. For more than a decade, Carolyn Piper has ably handled preparing the Proceedings with the assistance of some dedicated editors and proofreaders, and she is now retiring from the manager position. I have been helping edit the workshop talks for about five years, and I will take over her job with the aid of Robin Titterington, a new volunteer proofreader. However, folks, we do need more readers to help with proofing, editing, making decisions about the Proceedings, and various other jobs.

Working for the Proceedings is a reading and sit-down-at-your-computer job. It usually starts in January and runs through March or April (if all goes well). First, we read all the captioned workshop proceedings and together make decisions about which workshops we will prepare for the online Proceedings. Next, we assign ourselves specific talks to edit. It’s easier for me to edit the talks from the workshops I attended.

Some talks are organized and easy to edit; others are good but disorganized and take a lot of thought to make them readable. A few talks are so disorganized, dependent on pictures and diagrams, or just not useful for ALDA that we eliminate them. Editing one workshop typically takes at least two readings and four to eight hours.

Proofreading is for people with a sharp eye for typos, misspellings, and minor grammatical or punctuation errors. Proofing does not change wording or rearrange the order of phrases or sentences; that is the editor’s job. Proofers read what the editor has finished editing but may have missed some misspelling or technical detail.

By Margreta von Pein

Continued on page 22
A Hunter’s Silent Holiday

By Ashley Spencer

A yawn escapes from me as layers and layers of bulky clothing are piled on, enabling me to go from chilled to toasty warm in a matter of minutes. I am in the silence of a morning that hasn’t arrived just yet, but the hold of the night before has dissipated to its last frail strings. This is the silence that is between worlds, similar to the one that I have known for so long.

The humming of the engine seems eerily out of character, insulting the quietness of this sacred time for the group that is crammed into a too-small vehicle as we travel to the place where we will spend most of our day. A few words escape my father’s mouth for last-minute encouragement; unaware that I cannot see his lips in the pitch blackness, he points to where my station will be and informs me of the other place in which he will stealthily hide, waiting for his prey. I repeat for clarification, watching his silhouette nod that I had understood him correctly, and blindly head in the general direction of where he pointed and hope like hell I find it before the dawn.

Finally settled in the crook of the stand, I adjust myself and scan the surface as the first streaks of the morning light peek through, awakening a chorus of the forest, which soon becomes a type of white noise, soothing the year-long stress out of my tired soul.

It happens almost every year, for about a week around November—my unofficial holiday, my celebration of a life cycle. It’s a celebration of when my family can be in my shoes for a brief time, to experience the stillness and a subtle fear of not knowing what to expect until it’s upon them, insulting their well-toned sense of hearing. It’s a time when they are startled by every noise, from the too-loud creak of the neck as they scan the grounds for the familiar shape of their prey, wiggling their fingers in hopes of regaining feeling despite the cold, to the sudden loud crack of a gun going off, occasionally disturbing the Zen-like natural peace that had settled over them.

Honestly, it’s not the “thrill” of the hunt that gets me up before the rest of the world on these days, or even the thought of getting meat to feed my family for a few months, but knowing that for a moment, however brief, my family can experience the silence that I face, forced to use other senses and whatever resources are available to them, which in this case are hand gestures and text messages to convey what they want to say and frustration when something is miscommunicated.

Some may think it’s selfish to want that, but I feel that there isn’t much available to aid them in understanding the frustrations, anger, and disappointment that someone with a hearing loss such as I have experiences, to enable me to explain this in words so that my hearing family could comprehend my everyday struggles and yet appreciate being able to see beyond what sound gives to view the beauty of a crisp late fall morning blanketed in sparkling frost, the painted hues of pinks, oranges and vibrant reds against the shaded foreground of pines, birch and mighty dots of maples. To smell the delicate freshness of the cold as a brief wind blows the last of the previous night and lingering decayed vegetation to some unknown destination.

After this short holiday, the peaceful connection begins to wear off as we are brought back to the “real” world, and once again, the serenity is locked away for another year, the lessons forgotten, and my frustration resumes.

Ashley Spencer is a starving hard of hearing college student who lives in north central Wisconsin with her husband Josh. When she’s not overwhelmed by homework, you might find her either relaxing on the back porch with her nose in a book or roaming the local nature scenes, snapping pictures. She continues her creativity by writing, expanding her knowledge of complementary and alternative medicines, and various other activities. Ashley is often tortured by her husband’s corny jokes. This is her first publication. She can be reached at earth.wolflady@gmail.com.
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Random Neural Firings # 2  
By Helen Droitsch

Why is it that I wake up with two measures of a song that won’t go away…  
Firing in my brain like some old record on repeat repeat repeat…

Why is it that voice recordings of dentists and doctors are at such a high pitch…  
And so fast that I can’t get the sense of their words even when it is crucial…

Why is it that most British DVDs are not closed captioned? Do they think  
Their convoluted closed mouthings are discernible to everyone? Why is that?

Why must major TV producers such as CBS put out DVDs of my favorite shows  
Without closed captioning? This makes no sense…

Why is it that I must carefully check the narrators on books on CD for those  
Who pronounce their words carefully and ideally slowly  
and are within my ever diminishing range of hearing

Why is it that when my computer crashed spectacularly recently  
That the program I most missed was Sprint CapTel? How badly I missed having phone  
Conversations where I could see the person’s words on screen…

Copy and save them to a Word document  
In case I miss something important?

Why is it that I cannot understand the words on my cell phone in  
crowded places where I most need to hear them  
hear train delay snow warnings my kids?

And  
why is it that when I ask a salesperson for help in getting a cell  
phone that will let me see the words on screen he acts as though  
I were brain dead…and talks faster.  
What part of hard of hearing did he not get?

Why is it that doctors…and some nurses…seem to think that five minutes with a patient means  
five minutes at fast forward rackety rackety…howareyoufeelingthatsfine whydont…youtellme….  
okthatsfine…youarerunningaslightfever…thatsfine…ihavenprescribed…mumblemumblemumble…….  
theremaybesomesideeffects…butiwoundntworry…okayseeyoutomorrow.  
How was that helpful?

Why do people immediately assume that if you are deaf that ipso facto…  
You must be stupid too?

Why is it that I would prefer the company of my Kindle to the  
Company of patients who will not use their hearing aids and think that it is my job  
To rapid fire questions at them to which they do not reply?

Why is it that my book and writing groups  
are held in echoing rooms with lots of cross patter so I  
only understand every third word?

Continued on page 13
Teamwork
By Martha Mattox-Baker

Working together for a cause is sometimes done by more than one group, and there are many hearing loss organizations that can combine for advocacy and support. Ronnie Adler from the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) contacted me as the group leader of ALDA-Midwest and asked if we would be an alliance for the HLAA Walk4Hearing in Dayton, Ohio in May 2012. I then emailed our group to ask if they would be willing to participate. They responded that they would, and some members who were too far away said they would sponsor the ones who walked.

Pam Carlson volunteered to be the Walk leader, since she had experience and had friends who had walked with her. We planned several months in advance. Since ALDA-Midwest is only a group instead of a chapter, we did not have the necessary 501(c)(3). I contacted Matt Ferrara, ALDA’s treasurer, and we set it up so that all the profits that ALDA-Midwest earned would go directly to ALDA, Inc. for hearing loss advocacy and support. As an alliance group, we would get 40 percent of what we raised; 50 percent would go to HLAA National and 10 percent to the setup site.

Pam also designed T shirts for our group. The front had “ALDA /HLAA Walk4Hearing” and the back said “ALDA CHEERS TO HEAR.” Mary Clark traveled from Chicago to participate in the Walk. She, Pam, and I were the ALDA walkers on the team. With other friends attending, we had 28 people walking, and we also had people from other ALDA chapters helping and supporting us. We have raised a grand total of $720 so far, and our involvement has been very satisfying.

Random Neural Firings (continued)...
Continued from page 12

Yet…
‘Why is that I was born in a time where I could see others’ words
On the computer screen or the phone screen?
‘How could I have been so lucky?
‘My grandmother would have been thrilled

‘How could I have been so fortunate to be born
In a world where babies can be made to hear
Children closed off in a world of silence
Can wipe tears from their eyes at the wonder of
‘Birds singing?

‘How could I be so lucky as to be able to
‘Borrow DVDs that teach me how to sign
‘How could I be so lucky as to find exciting foreign films
So wonderful because they are all closed captioned!

‘How could I be so lucky as to find people to talk with to Internet
with…
‘About all of this.

Helen Droitsch has spent the bulk of her working life as an accountant. She is the mother of two wonderful children and grandmother of two terrific grandchildren. She lives in Salt Lake City, where she recently won writing prizes two years in a row. She also spent the last year recovering from two hip surgeries that took her into hospitals and recovery facilities. There the world of silence and misunderstandings took on new life. Her laptop, Kindle, and CaptionCall phone became her best friends, and her daughter and son-in-law her chief interpreters. Helen notes that, for those who would like an Internet phone service, Sprint CapTel is free because it is supported by government funding. She will be glad to provide more details and can be reached at hel3oise@aol.com. She would also appreciate exchanging ideas, musings, books read, Internet sites useful for hard of hearing people, etc.
Happy Hole-idays

By Antonia Lindsey Rathbun

People’s individual experiences in ALDA may mirror a larger historical discussion of over 150 years in America and elsewhere about signing/oral cultural perspectives. Some of us participate in it and others fall into awareness of this difficult dialogue when we meet up in ALDA. Personal experience is shaped by larger contexts. Recognizing what influenced our perspective can offer us the chance to be less defensive, but only when we see there is actually something to learn that may have eluded us before in our gut reactions towards people with a different shape to their experiences. Curiosity is a fine quality to have at the dinner table of the ALDA family, at holidays, or any time.

ALDA affords us safety, acceptance, and a place to spill our guts, vent our spleen, and find our personal whatever works in the climate of a larger accepting family. No one will force us to like everyone’s opinions, but we are each free to have them and to work our way along as these change over time. And THEY DO. Huge sighs, outright rants—all that are accepted, and we can count on group members to point out when we get stuck in our own rut and need to have side conversations of more depth on certain painful topics. There is no one-size-fits-all rubric but this: TOLERANCE. That’s my experience here.

We all have an interesting history of arriving into the real world beneath the black and white “Great Divide” (deaf/hearing…actually a color spectrum of subcultures). I credit Jersey Diana [Diana Fanuel] for posing a simple, profound question to me: “How did you get such a strong deafened identity?” I didn’t realize I was that strongly deafened-identified, but yes, I am. How?

It was pain. Just that. Pain so big, so traumatic, that my body was changed permanently in a way beyond words or sounds at all. My visual system took over very early on. When you are barely four years old with chicken pox and measles at the same time, being dunked in ice-water baths you don’t understand because you can’t hear your parents explain…when you go through a bilateral myringotomy [incision in the eardrum] without an anesthetic, as happened to me and lots of others…it is excruciating. I remember wishing I were dead. Blood and pus leaked out of both my ears for three months. After that ordeal, I vacuumed up the world with my eyes. I went mute. I no longer trusted.

My soft-tissue physiology is abnormal because of Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, a collagen disorder that causes increased joint mobility, joint displacement, and scarring of soft tissue, so who knows what was injured by the procedure (Figure 2, the reverse side of the owl image, states that pain can’t be escaped). The artwork shows the spirit hole that the wound made. Deaf experience began there. And though hearing returned, all was different and the blue spiraled ribbon wound into the future. I became a painter and art therapist, no surprise. With the last of three surgeries by age 54 for Meniere’s, the left-sided endolymphatic shunt, and ototoxic medications—my surgeon admitted that it took him a loooong time to find his way around because he had never seen an internal ear like mine in 20 years—my body was done with the hearing world and it all just shut down. You can see the owl turned into a deaf butterfly (Figure 3), living by the language of eyes/hand movements now. I am a dizzy deafugee.

I made this piece on deafhood while in Colorado, celebrating the 151st anniversary of George Veditz’ birth. Veditz was German-American and served as the first presi-
ALDA's motto is “Whatever works, works!” As ALDAns, we recognize the very difficult journey each of us has been through, and we respect individuals' rights to choose how they will communicate. It is a joy to be in a group with Robin Titterington, Ken Arcia, or many of the others that Antonia Lindsey Rathbun mentioned in her article “Happy Hole-idays” in this issue, who act as facilitators to involve everyone in the group in communicating with each other. These leaders teach us by example that it is not only whatever works for me that is important, but also whatever works for you. This is what is unique to ALDA.

Other organizations have chosen specific communication methodologies that they adhere to: sign language, speech reading, amplification. But ALDA recognizes that all are needed, along with the written word, and we don’t all have to be the same. We thrive on recognizing our similarities amidst our diversity. Is it easy? No! How wonderful that we, who understand just how hard that journey is, can come together online and/or at ALDAcon to share the ups and downs and give one another support.

Sometimes we challenge each other, too. Often those challenges are to step outside of our personal comfort zones, learn something more, and accept a different viewpoint. Change is difficult, but together we can embrace the changes that help us grow. We can all become facilitators because we value whatever works.

Kathy is ALDA's Region 4 director and can be contacted at rd4@alda.org.

Your support is essential to help TDI maintain its advocacy work in our nation’s capital, Washington, D.C. Here are some of our goals!

- Current Bills in Congress on Internet Access (HR #3101 & S #3304)
- Mandate for Captioned Telephone Relay Service
- Relay for Deaf-Blind Users
- Universal TV Captioning at All Hours
- Captioning at Movies, Live Events and Online
- National Broadband Plan
- Modernized NG-911 Services
- And much more. . .

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TDI - Shaping An Accessible World
parents aren’t looking, then the mirror picked up the wrong mistress. Because I never used it for fun. The mirror was part of my education, at least as far as that education went. It was how I learned about my surroundings: through the repetitious movements of my mother’s lips. They brought to me everything: the love and the passion that filled my life, slowly making me the woman I am now. Miraculously, these lips conveyed to me the sense of rhythm and rhyme. This intuitive, elaborate sense has become ingrained in me more through my mother’s fiery wish to make it all available to her deaf child.

The impossible has happened. My piano teacher nodded her head approvingly, listening to the sounds of Rigadoon escaping from under my fingers. That lively dance music had annoyed me at first. It was improbably hard to master: my teacher used to cover the note sheets with her handwriting, scribbling the *fortissimo!* in fat black letters. It was not until several months later that I suddenly felt the demanding vibration of the instrument. It wanted to speak to me, scream in my ears, or maybe even roar like a thunderstorm. If only I’d wanted to know everything it tried to express; but what do you want from a five-year-old? There was no connection to be made: just an additional lesson to learn. I did it because it was expected of me. Maybe in time, I would have discovered the same powerful tide that joined Beethoven and his instrument, the same impulses that run in our nerve fibers, making the others whisper of the extraordinary talent.

What do we know about things hidden in the depths of our personality? For what is music if not the amalgamated world of sounds? It was our human perception that made these sounds beautiful. We have created the art of arrangement. How would we know that the melody is harmonic, if it weren’t for someone who discovered this harmony way before our time? Everything is relative. Hearing isn’t as exclusive as we were led to believe. A composer doesn’t need to hear the music he creates for it to become written. He imagines it, relates to the sounds of his surroundings. Is it a mountain stream, rushing over the stones on its way to the lake? Or a flower that has given its bells to the tender breeze? Our fingers can hear. At least mine can: though years have passed since they touched the black and white keys for the last time, their sensitivity hasn’t changed. There’s more. That music has remained inside of me. This is how I’ve become a poet. Selected poems were since made into songs. Each of them was like an explosion, giving way to everything gathered in my wounded soul. Maybe if it were that much-needed outlet that helps to maintain balance between “inside” and “outside,” I would have found my comfort zone once and for all. But it was not to be.

The last reminiscence from that period of my life may be summed up by a vision of a giant iceberg. As our plane was flying across the endless sheets of ice covering the visible expanse of the Arctic Ocean, I couldn’t tear my eyes away from a floating mountain. It came like an omen, a sign of a great adventure. Thousands of miles away, another continent lay in wait. As foreign to me as this block of frozen water, millions of years in the making, America hid itself somewhere up ahead. I did not speak its language, nor did I have a clue as to whether there was something besides the steel and concrete blocks. Europe had been left behind—forever, if my hunch was right. And there was nothing I could do about it.

Upon my arrival, the reality turned to be not just harsh but almost unbearable. There I was, in a strange place, left to survive among total strangers. Although not quite an outcast, I still couldn’t reach out to them. A cat had gotten my tongue; I simply didn’t know how to pronounce a single word.

The specialists shrugged in response to my desperate pleas for help. Verbal communication in English? Lipreading without a solid language base? Such nonsense was unheard of, and they weren’t going to encourage the sheer madness of it. Their only advice was to learn ASL. Submission and acceptance were, in their insistent opinion, the only options available to me.

All of which had met a remarkable disregard on my part, though. Who says we should limit ourselves only to things that are “statistically possible”? With that thought, I walked into the nearest library.

At 17, I read the first volume of a legendary Asian saga by James Clavell. At that time, there was only one chapter from *Shogun* available in Russian translation. Reading these books has since become kind of an obsession with me, as I’d never come across such a treasure before. On that day, I had no clue about whether they’d ever been translated, but this long-standing dream pushed me to act. Without it, I wouldn’t be as I am today.

To look at that book was scary. *Shogun* was the thickest volume I’d ever seen. Leafing through the thousand-something pages made me realize that all these passages looked completely unfamiliar. It was enough to discourage even a pretty determined person. But somehow, all I felt was a surge of obstinateness. My own virtual iceberg threatened to topple down, pinning me underneath. But if there is a final destination for each one of us, then it is going to be me picking up mine.

Days went past one by one. I contin-
One of Us

By Karen Krull, Curator

Belinda Miller calls herself “semi–retired, but these days that description could be considered inaccurate. She worked for a subsidiary of Bank of America for 28 years and “retired” when the subsidiary was sold off in 2001. Belinda now works part-time for a company that publishes six weekly newspapers (in the northeast Georgia area), four of which she proofreads. They are published every Wednesday, so from Monday through Wednesday she reads quite a bit! From Thursday through Sunday mornings, she babysits her 16-month-old granddaughter. She’s also in charge of the doing the payroll at the newspaper company and managing the benefits program. Let’s see, that’s now three jobs – so, nope, semi-retired is not accurate! She also volunteers as the publication editor for the ALDA Inc. website and works on the Reader for ALDACon 2012.

Belinda has sensorineural hearing loss; her left ear is totally deaf and her right ear has a profound loss. She wears a Phonak BTE that has Bluetooth technology, using an iCom device that helps her understand a cellphone. She has a difficult time distinguishing words and doesn’t use the phone much. Without her hearing aid, she is deaf. (She told me that it took a lotta years for her to be able to say that, not just to others, but even to herself!) She is aware that eventually, hearing aids will not be powerful enough to help, but with all the constantly changing and improving technology, who knows? Keep reading, and you’ll know why Belinda is “one of us”.

You can contact her at belindamiller@windstream.net.

Name: Belinda Miller

Where were you born? In a small town in the middle of Georgia.

What is your current residence? In a small town in northeast Georgia – after living several years in the metropolitan Atlanta area (i.e., the big city), I returned to my roots.

What is the cause of your deafness? Sensorineural hearing loss since birth.

Age/year you became deafened? I have a gradual hearing loss and at age 39, I finally acknowledged that I “could not hear” and got my first hearing aid for my right ear. The left ear was beyond help.

Marital status? Divorced.

What is your present job? I proofread four weekly newspapers.

What is the worst job you ever had? My very first one at age 16. I was a store clerk at the local five and dime store (remember those?), and I didn’t have a clue as to what I was supposed to be doing!

The cash register— one of those large, intimidating, punch-the-number keys and pull-down-the-lever-to-total-it-all types—was my downfall. I think I lasted about a week before I was kindly asked to leave. About a year after that, the store closed its doors for good.

Movies you want to see again? I’d love to experience the epic movies in a theater—Saving Private Ryan, Titanic, and even my very first “movie in a theater,” Ben Hur. I’ve yet to take advantage of a movie theater’s closed-captioning technology.

Books you tell others to read? Just about any book by Charles Martin or Jodi Picoult

I stay home to watch: Masterpiece Classic by the Public Broadcasting System. Downton Abbey is a must-see!

Favorite pig-out food: Ice cream, especially vanilla fudge swirl

Hobbies: Sewing—I enjoy taking a length of fabric and creating something out of it. I’m known for my fleece pajama bottoms—everyone on my Christmas list eventually gets a pair or two!

If I had more free time, I’d: Ahhh, that list is long! Learn sign language, make a quilt, take a painting class, go hiking in the spring and summer at the nearby parks, and learn to knit, for starters…

The hardest thing about becoming deafened is: Never knowing if I REALLY understood all that someone said. Never knowing if I truly understand what is going on around me.

I began accepting my deafness: only just within the last five years. There was a grieving period and a time of depression, but I’ve accepted it and understand that it defines who and what I am only to the degree that I allow it to.

The worst thing about deafness is: the gradual diminishing of speech discrimination ability when I’m unable to look at the person speaking, as in talking on the telephone. Even with the Bluetooth technology that comes with my hearing aid, it’s tough to understand all that my kids are saying on the phone. That makes me feel very frustrated and sometimes helpless.

The best thing about deafness is: Continued on page 18
taking the hearing aid out and experiencing total silence from all the hullabaloo going on around me!

How did you learn about ALDA? When I got my first home computer (in 1996), the first thing I did was look up hearing loss. I found the SayWhatClub and joined. When Marge Tamas and Robin Titterington put out a call for people to come to an ALDA chapter meeting in Georgia, I went and was very glad I did!

In what ways has ALDA enhanced your life? Discovering that being late-deafened is not unique (which is a relief, as I had felt that *I* was the only one); being able to comfortably socialize with others using the “whatever works” philosophy; and becoming part of an organization that advocates for late-deafened people within the larger community.

When I am depressed, I eat an extra—large bowl of vanilla fudge swirl ice cream.

My most irrational fear is: losing control. I’m a “control freak,” as I feel that as long as I control a situation, all will be well, which is crazy. It’s hard for me to “let go and let nature or events take its course.” Totally irrational...

If I could hear again, the first thing I would do is: listen to music, all kinds, and enjoy understanding the lyrics! That’s one thing I have never been able to do. And listen to birds singing! I’ve never heard a bird sing.

The thing I like best about myself: That I’m kind and compassionate.

What I can’t stand is: PITY. Please do not pity me just because I can’t hear.

Favorite memory: There are lots—many of which still cause me to smile or even laugh out loud. My two kids and two grandkids are sources of many good memories, as well as my own life as a child growing up in the country. It’s hard to pick just one....

Favorite saying: Praise God, hallelujah, amen! You know it’s something good, no matter how small, when I say that.

The bottom line is: I’m just like you and I put my pants on the same way.
Happy Hole-idays (continued)...

Continued from page 14

dent of the National Association of the Deaf. An educator, scholar, and chess champion with a brilliant mind, he was a master of the written word and fought for the legacy of ASL, as shown in his short 1913 “Preservation of the Sign Language” ASL film. After 100 years, ASL is still under siege by many who really don’t perceive what it means to Deaf people, why ASL symbolizes an endangered culture. What it stands for despite the systematic public education agenda to eradicate it and assimilate all deaf children into one educational framework. Jersey Diana [Fanuel] understands the Deaf world, as do Robin [Titterington], Sharaine [Rawlinson Roberts], and so many others in ALDA. What people in the Deaf world still wait for from hearing America is the recognition that their sensory processing is different and becomes cultural experience, which has had implications as horrific and wonderful as those experienced in black America, Indian country, and other subcultures. Diversity is a gift that enriches community. It is still not understood or accepted that this Deaf struggle STILL HAPPENS in numerous legal and practical ways.

Deaf people were sterilized in Nazi Germany through medically accepted policies, practiced by responsible medical staff and scientists at all levels of the society because Hitler was impressed with the eugenic views of our famous Alexander Graham Bell. How many hearing people know and understand that today? How many know that Deaf people have been beaten, abused, and shamed for signing as children, and Deaf adults have not had public recognition of this history of cultural abuse, discrimination, and marginalization? These are only some of the ghosts that turn up in the ASL classroom, IEP meeting, and America’s medical establishment that affect policies, “best practices,” interventions, lack of interventions, which interventions… it goes on and on. So if we understand more of the history, that can help us see where some of these intersections become sticky! Who has hurt whom? How does it continue? What possible spillovers are still in progress?

When our hearing stops, we seek recourse for a basic human need: communication. It is one of the great things about ALDA; we have someone from every hue of the spectrum in our midst and can get diverse takes on the challenges and possibilities. We have a truly diverse holiday banquet table. We may bump elbows and step on toes, sure, but there is a table and we are indeed welcome here.

I find our conversations at ALDA so helpful because we speak as individuals, each going through a change process. We can be safe with each other when we explore what our stuck points are, but it gets very unsafe, fast, when we relate only group by group. Black and white thinking is always a danger when our emotions are at work and more so when we are unaware of these unconscious feelings. “Us” and “them.” In ALDA, the goal is to have just US, in all our wide variety. Tom and Mary Hagney and I share by huge smiles, by hugs, and by pictures, accepting bodily life as different, no matter what works in each of our efforts to compensate and get around in this world. Robin and I and Jersey Diana and Cynthia [Amerman] and Yael [Shaner] and others sign. Lisa [Bothwell] and I sign, talk…sign, SIGN…talk…write, sign sign. Etc. Anita [Dowd] and Karen [Griffard Putz] and Tina [Childress] and Ken [Arcia] and Bill [Graham] and I sing…sign…sing…sign…whatever really does work. Larry Littleton does it all even in front of a camera (brave). All of us really do ALL that we can. It is why I can invite my hearing husband (who can’t sign at all and is now almost totally deaf in his right ear and still denying it, grin). Here, we ARE. We just ARE in all of our mixed subcultures on the spectrum of deaf/hearing. Mary Clark, who was a light of friendship to many, was one with that natural acceptance. Her smile encompassed every color on our spectrum. She was full of welcome. May her spirit continue to invite us all to be of blessing to one another by being ourselves, all shades and stripes.

Happy hole-idays, everyone; may you find the blessing in your wounds and stick around until you do!

P.S. How do I celebrate the holidays? I facilitate art with the children at Portland’s annual Deaf Kids’ Christmas Party and then scour up old friends who will cue me to sing parts on Christmas carols. If I can’t find anyone to sing with, my hubby and I hunt for mudrooms and I sing to my chickens. George Veditz raised ‘em. I can, too! 😊

Antonia is a semi-retired art therapist/artist who lives with her husband Jeff near Portland, Oregon. When she is not in the studio, she consults and publishes on clinical intervention with children and families who have alcohol and drug-related disorders and neurobehavioral and communication differences at www. antoniarathbun.com, and she also heads the art therapy department at MundoPato, an international virtual therapies gateway for autism. Antonia can be reached at Antonia@antoniarathbun.com.
Five years ago my husband retired as chaplain, teacher, and coach at Blair Academy in New Jersey, and we moved to Tucson, Arizona to be near our daughter and granddaughter. That meant leaving 15 years of friendships with deaf and hard of hearing people in New Jersey and surrounding states, to start all over again. ALDA friends in New Jersey were available via email, but no warm bodies. I missed my friends from the east.

Within a week, however, I had found Tucson’s Adult Loss of Hearing Association (ALOHA) online. The ALOHA building was only five minutes from my house, while everything in New Jersey had been an average of 1½ hours’ drive because I lived out in the country near the Appalachian Trail. The next day, I stopped in and spoke with ALOHA’s office manager, Loretta Butler, who was hard of hearing—a good sign. ALOHA has a weekly peer support group, so the next Tuesday I attended. I waltzed in thinking that I knew pretty much about deafness, having been involved with many different organizations in New Jersey and other places (including California). However, I was about to get an education.

At ALOHA, Loretta and Loopin’ Lou Touchette (leader of the “Let’s Loop Tucson” Project) knew about all the latest technology, and the leader of the Desert Cochlear group (which also meets at ALOHA) told me about a hands-free device for my car phone. Our peer support group room was looped and, with my CI on telecoil, I picked up every word. I was hooked! At the peer support group each week, I learned about many brands of hearing aids, and about other brands of CIs, all from people who used them and were candid with me. There was not only technical support but also emotional support. People like Dixie Nixon, Cheryl McGill, and Loretta were skillful at getting people to reveal their feelings. I met more fabulous people at ALOHA with every visit—George Ghorpade, an Indian-American engineer and his adorable hearing dog, Charles Spencer (who now works for CaptionCall), and Lisa Furr, a Deaf woman who gives fabulous presentations for Hamilton about CapTel. But talk wasn’t limited to hearing loss. Much new information about Tucson came to me via the peer support group. We joke a lot—with CART on the first Tuesday for presentations, and a University of Arizona audiology student typing for our face-to-face meetings, if someone does miss a line, there is no such thing as “never mind” or “it wasn’t important.”

Within the year, ALOHA elected me to the board, and we started giving workshops on hearing loss with faculty from the University of Arizona (check out the Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences page at http://slhs.arizona.edu). Then I joined a group that included people with all kinds of deafness—Tucson Citizens for Better Captions. There I found my Deaf friends Cliff and Nancy Rowley, who had moved to Tucson from New Jersey just before we did. We all had been members of Northwest Jersey Association of the Deaf, an inclusive Deaf club—“we welcome sign language students!”

I and two other ALDAns from Phoenix founded ALDA-Sonora, and an HLAA chapter president who is also an ALDA member has been very supportive of our desire to have an Arizona ALDA chapter. The two co-founders have not been able to keep Sonora going while I have been on the national ALDA board, one because of health issues and the other because of moving to Montana to start a new group “up north.” We will begin again with a social ALDA group in Tucson this fall, and there is new interest in Phoenix as well.

ALOA is beginning a partnership with Senior Companions to be more inclusive of the Hispanic and Native American (Yaqui) populations in our area. So much can be accomplished when organizations and individuals partner with each other for the benefit of all. Another example of this at the international level is the Collaborative for Communication Access via Captioning’s (CCAC’s) new video about the necessity of captioning worldwide: http://usodep.blogs.govdelivery.com/2012/06/13/dont-leave-us-out. The founder of the CCAC, Lauren Storck, is also a member of ALDA.

I’ve learned that if I’m willing to put myself a bit out of my comfort zone, I meet wonderful people who know what it’s like to have lived the way each of us has, excluded from many of society’s most gratifying events, and when we put our heads and hearts together, we can accomplish increasing inclusion, a better life for all of us.

Cynthia is ALDA’s past president and can be contacted at past.president@alda.org.
Reflections on the Job Hunt

By C. J. Rasmussen

I have changed jobs several times since losing my hearing. With every new search I have been frustrated by the lack of guidance available to job seekers with my profile: significant hearing loss, verbal, able to communicate in one-on-one conversations in quiet rooms but severely handicapped on the phone and in noisy situations. I have spent hours Googling the topic, but all the guidance I have found—mostly the websites of organizations with a mission to assist “deaf and hard of hearing” people—inevitably discussed issues that concern only culturally Deaf jobseekers, such as how to announce that you need an interpreter for your interview. For a while, I was a member of a message board for jobseekers with disabilities that was set up by Monster.com, but its administrator kept posting career advice in the form of webcasts, there were no other hard of hearing members, and the advice of the “job hunting experts” who came by was generic. It seemed that no one out there understood the specific hurdles hard of hearing job seekers face. It was clear that I had to pave my own way, and I learned a few lessons that I would like to share with the ALDA audience.

Let me start by telling you that pretending (to yourself and to your employer and colleagues) that there is nothing wrong with your hearing is never the right way to go. In landing my very first job after college—the night shift as a counselor at a residence for girls who had been removed from their families—I managed the interview by asking the interviewers to repeat when I didn’t hear them. I didn’t mention my disability. They promised to call me in a few days, and when the call came, I took it with the assistance of my boyfriend, who listened in. I was a horrible fit for the job, unable to stay alert overnight and unable to deal with the residents (whom I could not easily understand) or with the numerous phone calls (including calls from the police and the juvenile justice system) that I had to take. My supervisor was annoyed and, backed by the human resources department, demanded that I get examined by an ear-nose-and-throat specialist. The results were not yet in when the residence was closed down and all staff were laid off. I was mostly relieved to be free from working in an environment that was becoming hostile towards me.

I have since become wiser about my employment. I understand that I have limitations, but I also have many opportunities. I transitioned to a career in fundraising, with a focus on fundraising research, which involves very little interaction with donors and rarely requires that work be done on the phone.

For a hard of hearing applicant, especially one who can do one-on-one conversations with little help, the biggest obstacle prior to the actual job interview is handling the request for a phone interview, which usually comes via email. If you can’t handle a phone conversation, I think that at this point you have no choice but to go ahead and disclose your disability and suggest an alternative. I have mostly been successful with this strategy, especially when I was careful to stay positive and suggest an alternative (which showed that I was in control of the situation). Interviewers have accommodated my requests for face-to-face interviews and on two occasions they suggested that instead of taking the time to come in, I respond to the phone interview questions by email, giving me 24-48 hours to write up my answers. In both instances, after submitting detailed responses to the questions they sent me, I was asked to come in for an interview. One of those interviews led to my current job.

Unfortunately, not all of my requests to skip the phone interview have been met with understanding. There were recruiters who never got back to me once I told them I couldn’t talk on the phone, and in one case a supervisor informed me directly that she saw no point in meeting me because my disability makes me a bad fit for the job. [Editor’s note: captioned telephones now make it possible to conduct a phone conversation without an obvious intermediary.]

What should you do if there is no phone interview and you can manage the in-person interview without disclosing? Should you talk about your special needs? I have always wanted to be honest about my abilities, and several times during the first face-to-face interview, I talked about my limitations, especially the ones I face with the phone and in large groups. In retrospect, I see this as a mistake, because the focus during an interview should be on the candidate’s abilities and the strengths they will bring to the company. You should be promoting yourself. Don’t tell them what you can’t do and don’t make your disability a central issue of the interview. If you are invited for subsequent interviews and those are going well, you can mention that you will need accommodations. You can also mention it right after you accept an offer, but no later than the first day of work. [Editor’s note: Potential employers are not legally permitted to ask about an applicant’s disability.]

Finally, I would like to talk about working with the job coaches available through state bureaus of rehabilitation services. At one point, I had a job coach, and while she was very supportive and able, she did not help me find a job. I think job coaches are a bad fit for hard of hearing people looking for professional work. My job coach would typically circumvent the established application process and call the employer (even when employers specifically asked that candidates do not call), tell them about my disability,
Making God Laugh, a Captioned Play

By Kim Mettache

Five of us ALDA-Chicago and ALDA-NWI members attended a captioned play on June 10 at the Munster (Indiana) Performing Center. The play, “Making God Laugh,” was a very funny comedy. What made it even better was that we didn’t miss any of the punch lines!

Kitty Berger, Debra Flowers, Beth Botts, Karen Patterson, and I were all armed with a cellphone, iPhone, iPad, or tablet. The captioning was provided by Kathy Cortopassi of Voice to Print Captioning, who typed from another part of the room. The captions were streamed onto our screens through the Internet.

We did have some difficulty getting started. This can happen when the technology is new; this kind of captioning was never done before in northwest Indiana. Since the captions were transmitted through the Internet, we also experienced some dropped lines (just like when a cellphone call sometimes gets dropped).

The set was attractively done in 1970s décor. The top part of the stage had beautiful wood with stained glass windows to give the impression of a home. The stage jutted out into the audience, so everyone had a great seat, close to the stage from three sides. However, at times we couldn’t read lips because the actors moved around and their backs were sometimes facing us. A real dilemma! The captioning truly helped us follow the script.

The characters included a mom and dad, a son who was a priest, another son who was the bumbling idiot, and an insecure daughter. They reminded me so much of the characters from “All in the Family,” a ‘60s sitcom. The family was so dysfunctional that it made mine look very normal.

The play began in the ‘80s and moved through the holidays over the years to the present day. It was truly funny when the mom served her traditional “Fantasia” cheese dip at every family gathering—the kids hated it but could never tell their mom. At one point, Maddie, the daughter, dumped the dip into the toilet while her mother was out of the room. You could hear the groaning and noises as the cheese dip was attempting to make its way through the pipes. Finally, at the very end, the mom tasted the dip and admitted it was awful.

At the end, the parents admitted they were not getting any younger and needed help for the mom, who had Alzheimer’s. The children tried to decide who could move in and take care of them. It was heartwarming to see that the bumbling idiot had finally grown up and stepped up to move back home with the parents.

We had a great time and look forward to the next play, The Little Shop of Horrors.

Kim is the founder, president, and treasurer of ALDA-Northwest Indiana; a former ALDA-Chicago board member; and a former ALDA Region 2 director. She and her family reside in Dyer, Indiana. Her email address is Kimiam265@aol.com.

ALDAns at captioned play: Kim is second from left

ALDacon Proceedings (continued)...

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Anyone interested? Are there some unemployed English majors out there? This job lets you read all about the workshops that you did not attend. Contact me at mvpein@yahoo.com if you have questions and/or time to help out with the Proceedings.
Imagine yourself traveling on a jet airplane or ferryboat and listening to the roar of the engines, while trying to carry on a conversation with another person above the noise. Many of us who’ve been in that situation have been annoyed by the effort required to hear others’ speech, but ultimately the journey ended, and so did the noise. However, for some of us who experience severe tinnitus, the noise we experience never ends.

Tinnitus is noise that is heard internally and cannot be heard by others. It can sound like ringing bells, roaring engines, chirping birds, whistling teakettles, banging doorknockers, buzzing insects, clicking crickets, sloshing water, screaming sirens, humming motors and other sounds heard either singly or in multiples. It can flare up unexpectedly, vary in loudness, interfere with listening to speech, diminish unexpectedly, and disappear altogether. When tinnitus is extremely loud, it can be distressing, distracting, depressing, and disruptive to sleep and concentration. I have tinnitus that started mildly in early childhood with ear infections and progressed to severe levels along with my progressive deafness.

The National Information Center on Deafness states: “Tinnitus is not a disease. It is a symptom of an underlying condition. It can arise from a variety of problems of the ear canal, middle ear, inner ear, or the hearing nerve as well as from other parts of the body. Tinnitus can be caused by something as simple as ear wax or a foreign body in the ear canal, or by a rare tumor on the hearing nerve. People with Meniere’s disease, thought to be caused by an excess of fluid normally present in the ear, experience hearing loss, dizziness, and tinnitus. Otosclerosis, a disease in which the bones in the middle ear are immobilized by bony growth, can also cause tinnitus.”

In “Questions and Answers about Tinnitus,” Maureen McDonald, M.S., CCC-A, Harriet Kaplan, Ph.D., and Gloria Reich, Ph.D. mention some additional causes—high doses of certain medications (including aspirin and some antibiotics), hypertension (high blood pressure), temporomandibular joint dysfunction (TMJ), head trauma, and exposure to loud sounds such as loud music, power tools, or firearms. The authors also note that people often experience temporary tinnitus and slight hearing loss after exposure to loud noise, but this condition can become permanent after repeated exposure.

I’ve been studying tinnitus and have accumulated a one-inch think file folder of articles dated back as far as 1986. After all the doctors I consulted, and after reading as much information as I could find, I’ve come to the conclusion that in my case, early childhood ear infections initially damaged my hearing nerves and caused hearing loss and tinnitus. Then plaque buildup because of high cholesterol clogged blood vessels, which caused further damage. Now that I’m in my 70s I also have high blood pressure, and I believe that this also contributes to my ongoing severe tinnitus.

Coping with excessively loud tinnitus that disrupts sleep and interferes with listening requires some stoicism. I try to avoid stress by planning my daily activities to include a one-hour nap. (I figure that lying down flat on my back will improve blood circulation to my head.) I avoid salty foods, use little salt in cooking, and pick restaurant menu items like steamed vegetables and fresh fruit. I drink decaffeinated tea and coffee most of the time. When tinnitus becomes especially distressing in a quiet environment, I listen to the radio or TV. I also take OTC sleep aids like 25 mg of diphenhydramine or melatonin before bedtime.

Finally, I am better able to accept my tinnitus by recognizing that, as bothersome as the head noise is, at least it is not painful. There’s a story about people with afflictions and problems being invited to put their troubles on a table and then take another’s problems in trade for their own. In the story, people decide to keep their own troubles, figuring that it’s better to have a familiar problem than the unknown difficulties of others. I have tinnitus, but not pain. My head noise appears insignificant to me when I think of those who are deaf and blind, or unable to walk or talk, or are missing limbs, or cannot breathe without an oxygen tank, or don’t have enough to eat. The list is endless, and my tinnitus seems like a light burden to carry because I can at least see, hear, walk, and eat. Although I get tired of a lifetime of listening to the “jet engine in my head,” I realize there isn’t a cure in the immediate future and maybe not even in the remainder of my lifespan. So I try to turn a pleasant face to the world and not whine and complain about something that others can’t see, because my tinnitus and deafness are invisible. I remember the old
Hearing Aids 101

By Chelle George

Hearing aids aren’t called hearing miracles for a reason. They help but can’t reproduce normal hearing. Those of us who wear hearing aids learn their limits, but some hearing people seem to think once we pop our hearing aids in, we will understand everything. I’m here to tell you that even with our aids in we are still hard of hearing. (Note: Cochlear implants can’t provide normal hearing, either. Implantees hear a wider range of sounds than a hearing aid can provide, but they are still hard of hearing even with their implant on.)

Sensorineural hearing loss, also called nerve deafness, is the most common type of hearing loss and is permanent. With this kind of loss, some sounds come across at normal volume and others not at all. Usually low tones are heard best, with the higher frequencies missing. High-pitched sounds are made by birds, bugs, timers, phones ringing, and children’s and women’s voices. Many consonants are in the higher frequencies, and vowels come across in low tones.

Imagine going through your day hearing mostly vowels and only some consonants clearly. Many conversations are a constant puzzle to piece together. Take the sentence, “I’ve got to get my keys,” and try understanding it this way: I ot to et I ee’s. For those with hearing loss, their mind races to fill in the blanks. Life becomes like the Wheel of Fortune, with “can I buy a consonant, please?” My hearing aids help me get a few more sounds but I still miss whole words. A busy day of “hearing” can lead to exhaustion with all that concentration and mental activity.

Hearing people seem to think, “If only she would turn up the volume, she could hear.” Here it is in simple terms: increased volume distorts sounds. Some sounds I hear well and some I do not. Take the word “shout” and try shouting it out. The “OW” hurts my ears coming across loud and clear, but the “sh” and “r” are lost. Shouting won’t work, and neither will hearing aids with a super high volume, because technology hasn’t caught up to the need to replace missing frequencies.

Mechanical hearing picks up mechanical noises better than sounds I want to hear. I can’t hear my phone ring, my cat meow, or birds sing, and I have trouble understanding speech, but I do hear the garbage truck grind to a halt in front of my house and the banging of the garbage bin as it’s tipped over and set back down. In cars, I hear road noise better than the person sitting next to me. In restaurants I hear fans, refrigerators, and soda machines, not to mention the clashing of plates and clattering of silverware, far better than the person sitting across from me trying to have a conversation. This also applies to large gatherings. All I hear is the roar of the crowd, which drowns out the voice of the person in front of me who is trying to converse with me.

The old analog hearing aids were much harder to wear all the time because they turned up all sounds, including those I already heard well. The newer digital ones suppress some sounds and try to turn sounds I can’t hear into sounds I can, but that program has its limits. Noises don’t hurt my ears as much as they used to, but I still can’t hear whispers, understand the television without captions or lyrics in songs, or understand what someone says from another room. Listening to people still takes mega amounts of concentration. I use some lipreading and watch body language and facial expressions for clues, but sometimes I still get stuck on a word or a whole sentence, even with the help of my digital hearing aids.

Please know that I am tormented by my failure to understand my native tongue, simple English. I come down hard enough on myself without others getting impatient with me. Eyeglasses can usually restore normal vision, but hearing aids can’t do the same for hearing loss.

Chelle lives in Salt Lake City but is originally from Southern California. She raised three children, became a grandma in November 2010, and enjoys skiing and traveling. Chelle is active in the Hearing Loss Association and is co-chair for the local Walk4Hearing. She has a hearing loss blog at http://hearinglosspages.wordpress.com and can be contacted at livinglifefullest@gmail.com.
Traveling Deaf and Alone in a Foreign Country

By Margreta von Pein

A few months ago two ALDA friends on different occasions told me that I was holding myself back. I’m profoundly late-deafened with a cochlear implant experience of seven years, and I live alone. My friends indicated that my hearing ability would be better if I had more language practice. Their observations made me conscious of how I tend to stay by myself if I think a hearing situation will be challenging. I have lots of excuses, but basically I say that I enjoy my own company and do not depend on socializing for self-assurance.

Since I already had plans to visit my mother’s relatives in Germany in May, this new awareness accompanied me. For 30 years I had been visiting these cousins, who can also speak English, and as a child before hearing loss, I’d heard German at home. Four years ago I began studying German and considered this month in Germany to be my final exam. I also planned a four-day side trip to Paris. My knowledge of French came from four years of high school French and some reading in graduate school, but I had no speaking experience. That was 50 years ago, and I’d never been to France.

I prefer to travel with someone rather than by myself, but that opportunity does not always present itself, and my dawning awareness of my withdrawal behavior suggested that visiting Paris might present a challenge a little outside my comfort zone.

In Germany with relatives, my sense of duty and politeness kept me from hiding out. I made myself engage in conversation. I wanted to practice my German. When I was alone in Paris, no compelling social reasons made me challenge the communication difficulties, but I knew that if I didn’t, I would not see much in the short time I had there.

After arriving at my Paris hotel late in the afternoon, I decided to walk around the neighborhood a bit before dark. My traveler’s French was basically serviceable, but after the hotel check-in experience in which I finally had to ask, “Écrivez-vous, s’il vous plaît? [Can you please write?],” I became shy. The French people I spoke to understood my questions, but I could not understand their answers. That reminded me of my experiences trying to understand spoken English while hard of hearing and then new to electronic hearing. It felt like I was reverting to childhood, a deaf childhood, as it were. So I walked around, didn’t get what I sought—or rather, excused myself from wanting anything—and went back to my room.

There in my pleasant hotel room with all of Paris outside, I took stock. Okay, it’s been a long train ride from Germany today, it’s an entirely new environment, and I’m tired...I decided to get a good night’s rest and start out early the next day to get the information I wanted, such as what bus to take to a particular site and where to find public transit tickets, a cash machine, and a museum pass.

The next day brought on the challenges. Sometimes when I asked a question in French, I didn’t know what language the person was using to answer me. Was that English; was that French? I developed a strategy. When I could not understand someone’s response, I just said, “Merci [Thanks],” and found another person I might understand better. I kept the writing trump card in my pocket: “Écrivez-vous, s’il vous plaît?” just in case. I did find out what I needed to know and took myself on a whirlwind tour of Paris. It was lovely.

As for being alone, deaf or not, many people feel lost among groups of people enjoying themselves at a café in the evening. When I go out alone in California or Germany, at least I understand some of the high spirits around me and enjoy that. On this trip I got the impression that Germans were friendlier than Parisians, but that could be due to my being far more familiar with Germanic than with Gallic culture. On the other hand, three French speakers—two men and a woman—approached me with their questions on separate occasions. Each time I had to say, “Je suis sourd [I am deaf],” to which they responded, “Désolé [Sorry],” and went on their way. Maybe they were only asking for directions. Or maybe I discouraged a pick-up or two; I’ll never know.

Until this trip to Europe, my habit had been to depend on a hearing friend with whom I was traveling to make the decisions because I can’t decipher announcements about which train to take on what platform or a time change. When a hotel receptionist requested information or a waiter asked for my preference, I would defer to my hearing companion to translate or sometimes just answer for me. If a group I was with was making plans, I’d say, “I’m for whatever you choose. Just tell me what’s happening when you decide.” Typically, someone would volunteer, “Just follow me,” and

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Late-Deafened People

By Geoff Brown

Editor’s note: Geoff wrote the article from which these excerpts were selected around 2004, when he was the chairman of IFHOH’s Late Deafened Commission. He was also a frequent ALDAcon attendee. He died in July 2011 at the age of 84, and the ALDA News published a tribute to him in the fall 2011 issue. Geoff was deafened by meningitis at 17 and had a cochlear implant. He was a leader in the UK’s National Association of Deafened Persons and a founding member of STAGETEXT, which provides open captioning for British theaters. Professionally, he was a scientist in the chemical industry, and after retiring he set up a bookbinding business. He was also a lay Methodist preacher.

When you experience a profound change like losing your hearing, you need to step back and take a new look at your life, to make a decision about which way you want to go. Some people are lucky, as I was, and can carry on with the job they were doing before they became deafened, although some adjustments will probably be needed. For example, a textphone to replace a voice phone or a visual signal to replace an audible signal may be needed, perhaps along with some re-training and re-scheduling. Other people may need to find a new job where the ability to hear is less important, and they will need to accept a much greater change in their lives.

It is important that guidance and support are available to help deafened people to find new jobs and make the necessary adjustments so that their deafness becomes less of a restriction. This is one of the functions of the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH) and its member organisations. [Editor’s note: ALDA and HLAA are the U.S. members of IFHOH.]

In a social or family environment, new ways of communication will be needed. Lipreading is probably the most common way, but where this fails, family members could learn finger spelling, and sometimes written notes are the best way of communicating. Why not learn sign language, you may ask. I will come back to that in a moment.

It is in their social life that deafened people feel most left out. We are effectively excluded from radio, cinema, theatre, lectures, tours of art galleries and museums, friendly chats in a restaurant or pub, religious services, hearing experiences of many kinds. It is possible to overcome much of this, but in general we need to look for new ways of spending our leisure hours.

It is depressing to find, as we frequently do, an event advertised as being accessible to deaf people only to discover that the provision is limited to an induction loop or some other assistive device, and a sign language interpreter. This effectively excludes most deafened people.

Well, someone will say, instead of sitting there complaining, why don’t you learn sign language? That is not as easy as it sounds. How long would it take you to learn, say, Italian well enough to be able to follow a talk in Italian? Sign language is another language and it takes just as long to learn as any other language would take. It would probably be about three years before you were skillful enough to be able to follow a sign interpreter at a theatre show or a lecture.

And then, how many people do you know who use sign language? It would not be much help in any social situation except where you are meeting with other sign users. Some deafened people do learn sign language and use it among themselves, but it is not really a solution to communication with that hearing world in which we grew up.

Furthermore, we must ensure that all our own meetings and conferences are accessible to deafened people by providing speech-to-text transcription [CART] with the text displayed on a screen. This is expensive, of course, but seeking sponsors and obtaining grants for this aspect of communication should be an accepted part of planning a conference where deafened people are likely to be present. [Our] organisations should be campaigning for facilities for deafened people to be made available at theatres and cinemas, at museums, galleries and places of interest, anywhere where deafened people are likely to need access.

I can only speak for my own country, Great Britain, but I think many countries now have subtitled television programmes. In Britain an organisation called Stagetext was set up [in 2000] to provide captions for theatre shows, and this is expanding rapidly. Some cinemas (movie theatres) show subtitled films, but there is need for a great expansion in this service. DVDs should always be provided with captions, but we still have a long way to go in this direction. Trans-national organisations such as the United Nations and the European Commission are committed to improving the quality of life of their citizens, but provision for deafened people is an area that they have not, as far as I

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Chapter Happenings

By Ann Smith, Curator

Rachael Morris, ALDA-Carolina Flight, reports that their group is still busy preparing for ALDAcon 2012 in Columbia, South Carolina.

Francine Stieglitz of ALDA-Boston tells us that the weather was perfect for the chapter’s Independence Day party on July 7. Twenty-six people enjoyed the appetizers, salads, desserts, and drinks that accompanied the delicious pork loin and oversized Portobello mushrooms (cooked on separate grills). Guests brought lawn chairs, which made it possible to sit outdoors. Very special thanks go to hosts Lou and Linda Sakin, who prepared their home both inside and out, in case the weather didn’t cooperate. On September 8, licensed clinical social worker Molly-Jane Rubinger was the speaker at the first fall event. Her topic was how hearing loss impacts relationships. On September 26, Board member Anthony Cannella (the ALDA-Boston chair for the Walk4Hearing) was scheduled to host a luncheon in Boston for those interested in learning more about ALDA and the Walk4Hearing.

ALDA-Chicago members once again enjoyed their annual pool party. Marlene Thometz reports that Cleo Simmons brightened the summer with the party at her brand new backyard pool. There was also plenty of food on the table for the event.

Bill Reese of ALDA-Suncoast always has a good story about the Tampa Bay area’s chapter. They had to hold their August meeting in a different room because the regular room was being used for local elections. As Bill reported, “We ended up in a children’s room with very low tables and tiny chairs. Thankfully, an adjoining storage room had adult-sized chairs.” Cynthia Moyihnan, who represented Canine Companions for Independence (CCI), gave a presentation about her experience getting her hearing dog. Afterwards, members had their “meeting after the meeting” at a local restaurant.

ALDA-Suncoast arranged to be a voice at a September 6 town hall meeting for “Stadium Captioning of Tampa Bay Sports,” and in October the chapter planned to have a table at a disability event called F.A.I.R. (for “Family Abilities Information Rally”).

ALDA-Peach (Georgia) has been very busy these last few months, Jim Stansell reports. In June, the chapter held a photography information session. Kristin Stansell led off with information on “How to See Your Pictures.” Then Marge Tamas was scheduled to present “Film vs. Digital.” Marge had to be out of town, so her husband Steve filled in for her. Next, Jim Stansell gave a short presentation on antique cameras and the history of photography. He also brought some of his collection of old cameras. Steve Tamas finished the session with a look at the future of photography and some of the new equipment waiting in the wings. A lot of discussion followed.

In July, Peach members went to the Callanwole Fine Arts Center, located in a 1920s mansion that was once the largest home in the Atlanta area. The August meeting was at a local “Southern cooking” buffet. One member brought his hearing service dog.

Send your chapter’s happenings to Ann Smith at fabsmith@att.net. Deadline for the next issue is November 24.
Reflections on the Job Hunt (continued)...

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and ask for a meeting. This never made me look like a good candidate and I never got any meetings, because the companies I was applying to were invariably only interested in the skills of the candidates and not in their problems. In addition, having someone else call for me gave the impression that I was not capable of managing my own job search, i.e. that I would not be an independent and resourceful employee.

Looking for employment is stressful for everyone, and hard of hearing candidates face special difficulties, but they shouldn’t be discouraged from seeking their dream job because of fear that their hearing impairment will not be accepted. My experience is that employers mostly meet hard of hearing applicants with understanding. Of course, uneducated and prejudiced people can be found everywhere, and that’s why you should know your rights, but in a job search the focus should be on presenting yourself as an asset and showcasing your strengths.

C. J. Rasmussen (a pen name) hears (but only so-so) with a cochlear implant, which she got after she lost her hearing to osteogenesis imperfecta. She lives and works in New York and can be contacted at osteo.imp.author@gmail.com.

Traveling Deaf and Alone (continued)...

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I would. This approach falls into the “holding myself back” category because I gave up on listening. No language practice there.

When I’m alone in a foreign country, such behavior is not possible. Instead, I must remain alert and assertive. I check the maps and count the stations passing to be sure I don’t miss mine. I look for the station’s name and confirm it before I de-board. At a hotel, when I don’t understand what the concierge is telling me after several frustrating tries, I offer paper and pencil and ask the person to write down what I didn’t understand.

My travel story may not contain any special advice different from what we already practice living in our native country. But I know how to state “I am deaf” and “Please write it” in seven languages.

Margreta retired after 25 years as a college English teacher and moved to the San Francisco Bay area. She can be contacted at mypein@yahoo.com.

Late-Deafened People (continued)...

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know, touched on. Somewhere down the maze of corridors, there will probably be someone who could be persuaded to see this as part of his or her responsibility.

Nearer home, national organisations should be campaigning for more facilities to enable deafened people to enjoy events and experiences that are available to hearing people. To sum up, although there are far more deafened people, that is, profoundly deaf people who do not use sign language, than there are sign language users, they are not receiving attention in proportion to their numbers.

Got Tinnitus? (continued)...

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Carol has had a progressive hearing loss since early childhood and lives in an Ocean County, New Jersey retirement village with her husband. She can be contacted at cgranaldi@comcast.net.
Liisa Sammalpenger reports that her 60th birthday was the 4th of July, and she was interviewed in the Helsingin sanomat (www.hs.fi), Finland’s biggest newspaper, about “the 30 years of Finnish peer support ministry (activities) of deafened people (focus on adult onset deafness). ‘To become deaf just at the right time’ was the subject line.” The article is in Finnish (duh), and the following excerpts about Liisa are from the Google translation: “Born July 4, 1952 in Lappeenranta, Finland. Called Pöllänen [at] birth. Lives in Helsinki. Retired. Worked for Hard of Hearing Association 1981-96. Widow.”

A belated happy birthday, Liisa, from all your ALDA friends.

Congratulations to Karyn Baker, daughter of ALDA-Midwest’s Martha Mattox-Baker. Karyn received a medical assisting diploma with cum laude honors. She was able to accomplish this as a single mother with two sons, aged four and five. Martha helped take care of the older boy, who has special needs, while Karyn went to classes. Karyn is now working for Columbus Kidney Care as the office supervisor. Good work, Marty and Karen!

Muhammad Akram from Pakistan, who is with ALDA-Asia Pacific, writes that a network of hard of hearing and deafened people in the Asia-Pacific region was recently founded. The organization, named Asia-Pacific Federation of the Hard of Hearing and Deafened (APFHD), has a website at www.ap-fhd.net. For more information, contact secretary@ap-fhd.net.

Send your news to Ann Smith at fabsmith@att.net. Deadline for the next issue is November 24.
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 convention (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:

ALDA, Inc., 8038 MacIntosh Lane, Suite 2, Rockford, IL 61107-5336

I'd like to: □ Join ALDA □ Give a Gift Membership to:
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City _____________________________________________________________
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Fax ________________________________
E-mail ________________________________
URL/Website Address: _________________________________________
ALDA Chapter (Name/None): ______________________________________

Gender: Male □ Female □
Hearing Loss:
Late-Deafened □ Hard of Hearing □ Deaf □ Hearing □

Newsletter preferred format (select one):
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□ Veterans Membership $25.00............$25.00
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8038 Maclntosh Lane, Suite 2
Rockford, IL 61107

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

Education ✓ Advocacy ✓ Role Models ✓ Support ✓
Association of Late-Deafened Adults
ALDA, Inc.
8038 MacIntosh Lane, Suite 2
Rockford, IL 61107

Be sure to check your address label. It shows the date your dues will expire. Don't let your membership lapse!

Visit us on the web at: www.alda.org

Make a Difference! Become 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

Lifetime Memberships may be tax deductible and can be paid in three annual installments by check or credit card.

Lifetime Membership Tier
• Bronze $500 - $1,499: receive a personal letter from the President, bronze plaque
• Silver $1,500 - $2,999: receive a personal letter from the President, silver plaque and priority seating at future ALDAcons
• 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