I was invited to write for the ALDA News about what it's like to be married to Bill, sort of as a follow up to Bill's once well-read article about his using my nose as an auditory aid. Yes, this is the club of “anything that works.” That was a long time ago and, as many of you hearing people married to deafened people know, partnership with a late-deafened person means there will be change. And then more change.

When I first met Bill, ALDA was a nascent organization held together with paper clips and gum. It was exciting because I had only previously worked with culturally Deaf people—I was an interpreter and social worker—and few people admitted to a “late-deafened” identity. I thought you were either hearing or deaf, or perhaps hard of hearing. But the idea that acquiring hearing loss as an adult is a reason to congregate was new to me, and my initial experience with late-deafened adults was that communication with them was rough going. How would a whole group of them ever talk to each other? Then I learned about carbon copies of pre-historic “CART” and note pads and karaoke and all the rest. It became clear to me that this was a group centered around compassion, heart, and soul. They were patient and figured it out.

Anyway, back to me and Bill. We had met in a bowling alley in 1988. He was pre-cochlear implant deaf, and his communication skills were a combination of smiles, nods, and about 20 signs. Yet he asked me out on a date and I got a definite good vibe from him, but how would we talk? We went on a couple of outings that required little communication (if you want to not talk to your dates, take them on a rigorous biking trip), and I prayed that his sign language would improve. After all, he had a deaf roommate, deaf friends, me—and he seemed motivated.

Bill's communication style is a mashup of slow signed English with most of the signs eliminated for clarity and speechreading. As with many late-deafened adults, he prefers holding the first letter of a finger-spelled word. It was a complete change in how I used sign language, and I had a hard time adjusting to it. The ASL community’s response is: What are you doing to our language???? In the ALDA community, the response is: Trying the hell to communicate!!!! Anyway, I moved toward ALDAese and Bill started to understand ASL a bit more, and we ended up with a communication system that's a hybrid of both. Whatever works, of course.

After several fun trips and a house purchase, we tied the knot. Unlike with many of my ALDA-partner friends, Bill’s deafness was not a surprise to us. Other couples often had to navigate the transition from hearing to deafness together. You could say I knew what I was doing, yet there was still an emotional loss. I realized that we wouldn't be able to do many things together that I enjoyed, like listening to classical music and opera. I also knew that we wouldn't be able to mingle easily in groups and family events, that I would often interpret, and that communication would always need to be negotiated and managed in some way. I realized that I would be the only one

Continued on page 17
ALDA NEWS

Publisher:
ALDA, Inc.
8038 MacIntosh Lane, Suite 2
Rockford, IL 61107

ALDA VOICE/TTY: 815.332.1515 or 866.402.ALDA (866.402.2532)
FAX: 877.907.1738
E-MAIL: info@alda.org
WEBSITE: www.alda.org

Editor-in-Chief:
Nancy Kingsley (Kingsnan@aol.com)
717.435.5514 (captioned telephone)

Managing Editor:
Marta Watson (aldamartacitaw@gmail.com)

Editorial Review Board:
Mark Dessert (subvet633@verizon.net)
Cheryl Heppner (NVRCheryl@aol.com)
Carolyn Piper (wicwas@wcvt.com)

Technology Director:
Ken Arcia (technology@alda.org)

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

ALDAAnonymous:
Bill Graham
(aldanonymous@gmail.com)

Advertising Director:
To place an ad:
Paul Wummer (newsadvertising@alda.org)

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

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Graphic Artist:
Ellen Perkins (eebail@verizon.net)

ALDA 2016 Board of Directors
aldaboard@alda.org

Steve Larew, President
president@alda.org

Dave Litman, Past President
captained telephone)

Managing Editor:
Marta Watson (aldamartacitaw@gmail.com)

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Note from Nancy

By Nancy Kingsley, Editor-in-Chief

You’ll notice that this issue doesn’t include “Marta’s Meanderings” by ALDA News Managing Editor Marta Watson. That’s because Marta is taking a (hopefully temporary) leave of absence while she recovers from NF2-related surgery performed in late August. We had a few articles in reserve (including one by Marta), and Linda Drattell recruited several more for this issue (thank you, Linda!).

This is a good time to mention, once again, that the ALDA News depends on its readers for contributions. If you enjoy reading the ALDA News and would like to see it continue to be published, please seriously consider submitting one or more articles. You don’t need to be a polished writer—all submissions are edited as necessary. We’re looking for hearing loss related articles and personal experiences with any aspect of hearing loss. You don’t have to be an ALDA member or have a hearing loss yourself to write for us. Submissions should be between 900 and 2600 words long.

During the absence of a managing editor, you can send submissions (or questions about submitting) directly to me at kingsnan@aol.com. Please fill that inbox!

CORRECTION

The email address for Debra Ackerman, whose article appeared in the Summer 2016 issue, is bec134@jun.com.

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President’s News

By Steve Larew

This was written the week after ALDAcon 2016. As always, it was a wonderful time to catch up with friends in person rather than by email or on Facebook, as well as to meet and make new friends. ALDAcon is special and I hope you will save the dates of October 11-15, 2017 to join us in Orlando at the B Resort and Spa.

Congratulations to the 2016 ALDA Award winners. The recipients were as follows:

**Able ALDAn Award**—Carolyn Piper for her work with the ALDAcon scholarship committee

**Robert Davila ALDA Angel**—Ken Arcia for his work with ALDAcon karaoke, social media, and other activities

**Fearless Leader Award**—Kim Mettache for her work with the Northwest Indiana chapter

**Brainstorm Award**—Joe Duarte, CEO of Innocaption, for revising this captioned phone service

**President’s Appreciation Award**—John Waldo for his work with the ALDA Advocacy Committee and for helping ALDA members obtain communication access for various sites and events

**I King Jordan Award**—Edgar ‘Bernie” Palmer for his contributions to ALDA and the achievements he has attained as an administrator at Gallaudet University

Photos of all the recipients (except Carolyn Piper, who was not present to accept her award) are included in this issue.

In 2016, the ALDA Board approved or initiated several new policies and projects. These are listed below:

- Established a policy for ALDA chapter members to become ALDA, Inc. members at the lower rate of $25 per year. Members need to pay this reduced rate through their chapter treasurer.

- Contracted with Communication Services for the Deaf (CSD) to revise the ALDA website to be more accessible to members, to allow a page for ALDA groups and chapters, and to eventually allow for blogs. The process to update ALDA member information will be easier, and ALDA news and ALDAcon information will continue to be on the site. Brian Patrick Jensen led this project, and the plan is to go public on October 1, so all should be ready before you receive this issue.

- Gave permission for John Waldo, ALDA Advocacy Committee chair, to begin “The Broadway Project.” The goal is to make all live theater performances accessible through captioning. The project will be similar to the one that made most movie theaters accessible through captioning. John has already been providing assistance to ALDA members in obtaining captioning access in theaters and other entertainment sites, and his work on these projects is the reason he was selected for the President’s Appreciation Award.

- Increased marketing of ALDA. This will be a priority for the ALDA Board. We are in the process of revising and updating brochures that will be available to display at exhibits or share with others. The website will also assist with marketing, as we will be able to capture more information from social media.

ALDA’s success depends on the involvement of its membership, so we hope that you will choose to assist us with one or more of our projects.
I was 26 when I had my first hearing loss. Up to then, I had normal hearing—at least I assume it was normal. I was never tested for hearing loss and never noticed a time when I could not hear as well as my friends. I enjoyed music, went to movies without captions, and watched TV unaided. I went to concerts and had no problem hearing in noisy situations like sporting events or crowded bars.

When I developed a sudden severe hearing loss in my left ear in March 1990, I went through several months of testing, steroids, and other medical treatments, but nothing worked. These treatments were expensive and eventually I just gave up. The treatments weren’t helping, anyway. I did not get a hearing aid at that time, which turned out to be a mistake. Six years later, my right ear experienced the exact same type of loss. On the advice of my doctors, I spent a week in the hospital, where I received an MRI and several other tests, including a spinal tap to check for multiple sclerosis. Everything came back negative and I was given a clean bill of health other than the hearing loss. I didn’t (and don’t) suffer from dizziness or tinnitus, either. My diagnosis was idiopathic hearing loss, which I translated as, “Good news, Jim—you’re not dying.”

At that point, I got a hearing aid for the ear with the recent hearing loss. Six months later, on the advice of a new audiologist, I also got one for the other ear. Of course, since I hadn’t used the hearing in my left ear for six years, my comprehension with it was shot. While my understanding was around 50-60% in the right ear under ideal conditions, the left ear was closer to 5%.

I had been working in restaurants and was employed as a bartender in a moderately upscale French bistro. I thought I was going to be in the profession forever and expected to eventually graduate to sommelier [wine expert], but when I returned to work, the restaurant immediately cut my hours and responsibilities. My pay took a big hit and I was eventually let go from the position, which I already had experience with.

With my professional options limited, I decided to return to school. I already had a few years of classes in restaurant management and was able to transfer 1.5 years of credits. I decided to focus on business computers, which I enjoyed and I figured would allow me more flexibility to focus on work instead of being in a people-oriented position. I graduated in December 2000 and found work with a data processing consulting firm the following March. Unfortunately, I absolutely hated the job and missed the human interaction that had been so much a part of my previous career. I was also working nearly 70 hours a week and taking work home with me every single day. I had no life and the isolation brought on by the extreme work hours and hearing loss was hard to bear.

Six months later in September 2001, the world changed forever. Within a few weeks of 9/11 I quit my job, deciding I could no longer do something I hated so much in a world where the future seemed uncertain. I returned to doing delivery work and tried to figure out how to proceed.

During all this my social life was taking a huge hit. I learned that when you have a hearing loss, you find out really quickly who your true friends are. I was lucky in having several very close friends, but most of the more casual friendships faded away. I lost touch with many people and suffered from the isolation that so many people with hearing loss struggle with every day. I had also lost my father in January 1999 to a heart attack and felt less grounded than before. He had been my rock that carried me through the early years after my hearing loss, paying for second opinions and going with me to many of my appointments.

One of the good things about the timing of my hearing loss was that the world was becoming more accessible. Within a year the Internet started to take off, and email became a common means of communication. A few years later in 2000, the first versions of captioned telephones became available, and Chicago was part of the pilot test program. I applied and was able to get one of the phones. Around the same time, the first captioning system came out for movie theaters. I was able to start going to movies again using this Rear Window captioning system, which was fairly com-
ALDA’s Advocacy Corner: Captioning for Live Theaters

By John Waldo, Curator

At last year’s ALDacon in Scottsdale, ALDA members Roselle Schwartz and Carrie Levin told me that they want to attend live theaters in their community but did not do so because they couldn’t understand what was being said on stage. That’s a fairly easy problem to address. Captions can be prepared in advance from the final script and then shown on a portable reader-board. A live operator, usually the captioner, scrolls the captions in sync with the pace of that particular performance. [Editor’s note: a theater staff member can be trained to enter and advance the captions.] Patrons needing to read along with the dialogue and “hear” with their eyes are seated in such a way that they can see the stage and read the captions in the same line of sight.

This kind of accommodation is mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and by many corresponding state laws, which require businesses (including theaters) to provide “effective communication” for people with hearing loss. A number of live theaters still seem to think that if they provide assistive listening systems and American Sign Language (ASL)-interpreted performances, they have fulfilled those obligations. Often, simply educating the theaters about the fact that a lot of people are in a sizable gap between these two accommodations does the trick. But sometimes, more is required.

So in response to the concerns from Roselle and Carrie, I contacted the theaters in San Jose and Mountain View, California. After a certain amount of huffing and puffing, they agreed to begin offering captions. Better yet, the Mountain View theater tossed in four free tickets to every show this season, which Carrie is passing out to ALDA-San Jose members to promote the service and encourage people to go back to the theater.

Sometimes, persuasion involves reminding people that they do have legal obligations. In August, I went to the SayWhatClub convention in Boise, Idaho. One of the organizers asked the Idaho Shakespeare Festival (ISF) to do a captioned performance of “Twelfth Night,” which was opening during the convention. ISF said it couldn’t be done, so the convention organizers asked for some help. I wrote a letter and sent it certified mail, return receipt requested, stressing the theater’s legal obligations. (A certified letter from on law-firm letterhead generally attracts attention, but not always, as we shall see.)

This time, we got a much better response—in fact, it verged on priceless. The theater said that “discussions with friendly counsel caused us to think positively about the opportunity presented by your advocacy efforts,” which is an interesting way of saying, “our lawyers agree that we’ve got to do this.” And they did. They loaded the captions onto a teleprompter program and showed them on a large television monitor visible on the side of the theater where 30 or so of us sat. It worked great.

Once in a while, the businesses don’t take the step of consulting “friendly counsel”—they simply ignore us. That’s what happened at the Fabulous Fox Theatre in St. Louis, Missouri. They told Tina Childress that they did not provide captioning, and they had no plans to do so. Then they ignored a letter from me. So we filed a lawsuit. Unlike letters, lawsuits always find their way to “friendly counsel.” When that happened, counsel got in touch, and that theater is now actively investigating the best way to provide captioning, not only for Tina but also for their audiences generally. It’s by no means resolved yet, but the auguries are good.

Reader-board captioning works but is far from perfect. The patrons who require captioning need to be seated where the reader-board is between them and the stage, with both visible in the same line of sight. This requires that specific seats be made available, and when the reader-board is set up near the stage, as is often the case, those are prime seats. The logistical difficulties of displacing other patrons from those seats—and sometimes the financial impact—is often more of an impediment to providing captioning than is the cost of captioning itself. And this can be inconvenient for us as well, because there are usually fairly strict limits on how many people who don’t need the captions are allowed to sit with the caption user.

Theaters and patrons need

Continued on page 16
The worst thing about deafness is: Not being able to understand with ease what people say to me

The best thing about deafness is: It introduces me to people I would not have otherwise met and has enriched my life

How did you learn about ALDA? It was so long ago, I don’t remember. I must have come across the information during the course of my workday—I have worked in the field of deafness and hearing loss for 35 years.

In what ways has ALDA enhanced your life? ALDA has introduced me to so many wonderful people, offered invaluable coping information, and provided me with a perfect volunteer opportunity—serving on the ALDA Board.

When I am depressed, I: Cry, get anxious. I find spending time with my husband, walking my dogs, and reading help me to cope and come out of it.

My most irrational fear is: That I will misunderstand someone at a conference and the result will be that person thinking I’m incapable or not intelligent

If I could hear again, the first thing I would do is: Go to a Garth Brooks concert

The thing I like best about myself: I am genuine and caring.

What I can’t stand is: People who are rude, intolerant, or lie

Favorite memory: As a little girl, spending time every summer with my grandparents and cousins in Mount Vernon, Illinois

Favorite saying: “A man who is not courageous enough to take risks will never accomplish anything in life.” —Muhammad Ali, 1984

The bottom line is: Being deaf opens our eyes to other things around us and gives us opportunities to grow.

Name: Sharaine Rawlinson Roberts
Where were you born? Albuquerque, New Mexico
What is your current residence? Rio Rancho, New Mexico
What is the cause of your deafness? Bacterial spinal meningitis
Age/year you became deafened? 14
Marital status? Happily married
What is your present job? Marketing & account manager for Caption First
Movies you want to see again? Spotlight, Top Gun, and Mr. Holland's Opus.
Books you tell others to read? The Exact Same Moon: Fifty Acres and a Family and Fifty Acres and a Poodle, both by Jeanne Marie Laskas
I stay home to watch: Untold Stories of the ER, Mystery Diagnosis, and Broncos/Vikings football
Favorite pig-out food: Peanut butter and apples.
Hobbies: Gardening, traveling, and photography
If I had more free time, I'd: travel to Australia again
The hardest thing about becoming deafened is: Feeling cut off from other people and deprived of the easy communication I used to have
I began accepting my deafness: When I attended Rochester Institute of Technology through the National Technical Institute for the Deaf
Going Home to ALDA
By Marta Watson

In his 1998 book *Odyssey of Hearing Loss*, psychologist Michael Harvey (who has given a number of ALDAcon workshops) profiles an amazing woman—someone who, in spite of a tragic accident resulting in a traumatic hearing loss, overcame many unbelievable obstacles to triumph over her circumstances. I don’t know this woman’s real name, but I’ve probably met her because she is one of us; she is an ALDAn and a frequent ALDAcon attendee. While the specifics of her life story are unique to her, the emotions and experiences we all share with her as late-deafened adults are not.

In one passage, “Carol” talks about why she loves ALDA:

*A critical part of my journey toward understanding what it means to be a deafened person is to be with other people who have lost their hearing later in life. Although I also need other people different [from] me, i.e., hearing and culturally Deaf people, African-Americans, Asians, etc., I also need other people like me. Attending ALDA conventions, for example, feeds me in a way that nobody or nothing else can. In a way it is like going home.*

That sentiment describes the attitude of many ALDA members who have been able to attend one of our conventions or group/chapter meetings. We nod our heads as if to say “yes, yes! I know what you mean!”

At an ALDA event, whether large or small, for a joyous brief period we are “normal,” there is no need to explain, no sense of being left on the sidelines, no fear of asking for repetition or for writing something down. The “whatever works” environment removes the barriers that we so often face in the hearing world. We share, learn, celebrate, laugh, and sometimes cry. We have almost instant rapport with one another, which is difficult to come across elsewhere. We discover people who become part of our lives, whom we would never have encountered without ALDA. And those people help us to move out of ourselves and give us support as we find our way. ALDA was a major step in my really accepting my hearing loss, and I am so thankful for that.

One of the goals of the convention was to stimulate members to reach out by starting ALDA groups and chapters in their hometowns. Local chapters and groups offer late-deafened people who may not be able to attend conventions the opportunity to enjoy the sense of belonging that, as “Carol” said, “feeds us in a way that nothing else can.”

Because I am involved in getting an ALDA group going in my small community of Libby, Montana, I made it a point to attend workshops at ALDAcon 2015 that focused on how to get started, and I also spoke with attendees one-on-one about their experiences.

Rebecca Herr’s presentation provided fantastic information that helped me in creating my action plan. Angie Fuoco directed me to several people and publications that I was unfamiliar with, and she encouraged me to keep at it in spite of obstacles. Her workshop list of hearing loss superpowers (actions and attitudes for coping, all beginning with the letter “A”) gave me a basis for planning a first meeting. I was unable to attend the session conducted by Michele Michaels, the hard of hearing specialist for the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing but, we exchanged emails, and I know her expertise will come in handy, I am hoping she can connect me to her counterpart in Montana.

For me, starting an ALDA group in Libby would make the sense of belonging, of “coming home” available on more than an annual basis (and maybe provide me with some great roomies for future ’cons!). But I am not doing it only for myself, because I want to help other late-deafened folks connect with each other and with ALDA.

Reading books like Harvey’s *Odyssey of Hearing Loss* can indeed help people cope with their hearing loss, but as “Carol” said, there is nothing quite like “going home” to ALDA. If you are interested in starting a group or chapter in your area, contact your regional director (the contact information is on page 2 of every issue of the ALDA News).

Marta lives in Montana and is a wife, mother of two, and grandmother of four. Due to NF2 tumor removal, she completely lost her hearing, and her main form of communication is auditory brainstem implant (ABI)-assisted speechreading (and talking, which she says she does a lot more of). Marta would love to become proficient in signing, but her only opportunities to practice are when she is with other ALDAns. Her hobbies include gardening, knitting, reading, writing emails, and watercoloring. Contact her at aldamartacitaw@gmail.com.

Marta Watson
My Wonderful ALDAcon Experience

By Prem B. Gurung

Congratulations to the organizing committee members for the grand success of ALDAcon 2016. I had the opportunity to obtain information about the latest technology for hearing loss, and I wish I could have brought some deaf fellows from my home country to the ‘con. They would be astonished to see the technology used for information sharing and communication for deaf people in the U.S. After my return to Nepal, I will tell them what I learned, including the touching stories of the successful scholars, service providers, and business people who overcame their hearing loss through their hard work. The knowledge I received from the presentations will be very useful to me in the work I have been doing for the last 20 years as a Nepali Sign Language interpreter. Hence, my attendance at the ‘con, flying to Milwaukee for more than 22 hours from my home country, will not go in vain.

I would like to thank the ALDAcon 2016 Scholarship committee, including Scholarship Chair Carolyn Piper, who chose me as a scholarship winner. And how can I forget my friend Cynthia Amerman, who recommended me and my friend Nawaraj Bhattacharai for the scholarship? I was supposed to attend the con along with him, as he also received a scholarship, but unfortunately he could not obtain approval from the U.S. consulate for a visa.

Thanks go to Newcomers’ Chair Sarah Wegley, who invited me to the newcomers’ breakfast. I loved her welcome presentation. Later, ALDA President Steve Larew introduced me as the attendee from the farthest location, for which I received huge applause that was a great honor for me.

I missed Carolyn very much at the ‘con. Her emails made my arrangements for attending easy and clear. Karen Krull said that unfortunately, Carolyn could not attend but had told everything about me to Karen, so she assisted me in Carolyn’s stead.

I was known as a friend of Hitman Sherchan (also from Nepal), who had made a great impression on ‘con attendees last year, so everyone welcomed me enthusiastically. Steve wished for the tradition of people coming to the ‘con from Nepal to continue in coming years.

I enjoyed all the presentations I attended. They were “Eye Hear You-Basic Signs” by Sharaine Rawlinson Roberts and Dr. Tina Childress; the President’s Luncheon speech by Dr. I. King Jordan; “Legal and Advocacy Updates” by John Waldo; “A Word from Our Sponsors” by Kathy Schlueter; “The Art of Self-Accommodation” by Jason Anderson; “Find Your Answers Here” by Dr. Neil G. Bauman; “How to be Happy, Dammit!” by Tess Crowder; “Quality of Life in Late-Deafened Adults” by L’Tanya (Terrye) Fish; and “Walking in Our Shoes” by Kristin Johnson. I could not understand the ASL interpreting, but the CART service was awesome. It was the newest technology I had seen in this field, and I was amazed by how fast the CART providers could perform their job!

I cannot mention the names of everyone who personally welcomed me to the ‘con. Their beautiful smiles will remain forever in my heart and mind.

The author’s email address is secretary_ncadnepal@yahoo.com.
Nomination of Edgar “Bernie” Palmer for the I. King Jordan Award

By Lisa Harbour

Editor’s note: when the I. King Jordan nomination speech is given, the award recipient’s name isn’t mentioned until the end. In the published version below, it is used where appropriate.

The I King Jordan award is the highest award that ALDA presents each year. It is voted upon by the board of directors and is given to a late-deafened individual who has achieved the following.

a. Had a successful and distinguished career in their chosen field of endeavor
b. Made significant contributions to their community, profession, and/or nation
c. Provided an outstanding role model for late-deafened adults everywhere
d. Clearly demonstrated to the hearing community that a person’s competence, integrity, and human worth are not necessarily diminished by the fact they are deaf.

This year’s recipient has demonstrated all of the above and lives his life with honor, integrity, and compassion, as well as a passion for helping all deaf people be the best that they can possibly be.

Our winner lost his hearing in 1972 at the age of 18 in a car accident. He was a passenger in the back seat but sustained the most severe injuries. He readily admits that at that point, this was the single most depressing, devastating, and life-changing episode in his life. He had dreamed of becoming a cop, but the accident crushed that dream. He was totally lost and had no clue as to what deaf people could accomplish or even do because he had never met another deaf person. He assumed that all was lost, and he had a lot of anger, depression, and resentment (“Why me?”) in the immediate aftermath, as well as many truly dark days.

I think that most of us have learned that you can either let deafness define you or you can pick yourself up and still be a happy, successful adult. It’s not always easy and yes, as deafened adults in a hearing world, we have to work just a little bit harder than everyone else.

Eventually, Bernie discovered that it was okay to be deaf, and he decided to become a teacher, so he entered Gallaudet and obtained a bachelor’s degree in history, then a master’s degree in deaf education from William McDaniel College (formerly Western Maryland College) and a second master’s degree in special education administration at Gallaudet University. He also earned a certificate in strategic diversity and inclusion management from Georgetown School of Continuing Studies. He has served as president of ALDA and is currently vice chair of the National Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network (DHHCAN).

Bernie is also a proud Jamaican-American who has a strong interest in equity and social justice. This led to his current position as the executive director of the Office of Diversity and Equity for Students (ODES) at Gallaudet University, where his responsibilities include providing leadership, direction, and management for all program units and office initiatives, including personnel and strategic planning. He is also tasked with managing the office’s budget and payroll and its educational and informational programming, as well as overseeing events, workshops, and activities. In an effort to provide exemplary services to university students, ODES incorporates best practices within higher education and facilitates the continuous evaluation and assessment of all ODES units, including Multicultural Student Affairs, Keeping the Promise: Equitable Outcomes for Students, and the University’s LGBTQ Resource Center.

Additionally, Bernie collaborates with academic and non-academic departments and services to ensure quality delivery to students, and

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ALDAcon 2015’s “An Afternoon with Hearing Loss” Workshop Wins Award

On September 8, 2016, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Phoenix chapter held its annual Copper Anvil Awards, which recognize outstanding public relations projects.

Michele Michaels, the hard of hearing specialist for the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ACDHH), informed ALDA that the ACDHH’s public relations firm, HMA, had submitted the “An Afternoon with a Hearing Loss” program from ALDAcon 2015 in Scottsdale, and it received a Copper Anvil Award of Merit at this event.

Nomination (continued)...

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with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to support and enforce Gallaudet’s overall diversity mission. Besides his administrative responsibilities, he regularly teaches undergraduate courses in history and other areas.

I asked Bernie what he enjoyed most about his position, and his answer was simple: “The best part of my current job is helping others understand that we are more similar than we are different and that everyone brings something to the table. One of the adages I often use in my work is ‘You catch more flies with honey, than you will with vinegar.’ I believe in the power of random acts of kindness and understanding, and I believe such acts can never be underestimated.”

Bernie discovered ALDA when he was serving on the Gallaudet University Marketing Committee (GUM) a zillion years ago, or so it seems. It happened that Gallaudet’s president at the time, Dr. Jordan himself, was unable to attend the Alexandria, Virginia ALDAcon in 1999 due to a previous commitment (he thinks it was a conflict with Homecoming). Upon realizing that Bernie was late-deafened, the committee asked him to attend in Dr. Jordan’s stead. Needless to say, Bernie was quite taken with the ALDA members and spent some time reacquainting himself with people like Steve Larew who had also attended Gallaudet and had been in the same new student orientation group as Bernie many years ago. Bernie noted, “It was also a good feeling being around a lot of people who knew what I had gone through being late-deafened, and the karaoke party was like—WOW!”

I met Bernie at ALDAcon, either in 2012 or 2013. He signs pretty much exclusively and I like to run my mouth. I have always been intimidated by those who use signing as their main language and figured that trying to meet him would be a disaster. But his demeanor and personality intrigued me, so I gave it a shot. Through social media and my learning basic sign language (and I do mean basic—my signing is abysmal), I have gained an enormous amount of respect for him. This, along with the brief biography I have just given you, is what inspired me to nominate Bernie for the 2016 I. King Jordan award. This quote by Bob Marley fits our winner to a T: “The greatness of a man is not in how much wealth he acquires, but in his integrity and his ability to affect those around him positively.”
ALDAcon 2016

SEPTEMBER 14 THRU 18, 2016
BROOKFIELD, WI

ALDAcon 2016 newcomers

Joe Duarte, Innocation CEO
ALDA Brainstorm Award

John Waldo
President’s Appreciation Award
Former presidents: (Front row) Lois Maroney, Brenda Estes, Jane Schlau, Linda Drattell (Back row) Bill Graham, Steve Larew (also current), Ken Arcia, Bernie Palmer, Kathy Schlueter

Kim Mettache
Bob Hawley Fearless Leader Award

L to R: Steve Larew, Sharaine Roberts, and Robert R. Davila
ALDA Angel Award recipient Ken Arcia
Cleo in the Spotlight

By Cleo Simmons

I was hearing for 50 years and have been deaf for the past 32 years. I hear nothing, not even my own voice. I became deaf on April 1, 1983 (Good Friday) when my second acoustic tumor (caused by neurofibromatosis type 2) was removed. I worked at Mercy Hospital in the A. C. Buehler Foundation’s cochlear implant department for 6-1/2 years, thanks to Dr. Jack Clemis, who removed my bilateral acoustic tumors. I even got to write a column in the cochlear implant bulletin. It was called “A Gift from Cleo,” about what I was going through as a late-deafened adult. I then worked in the special needs department at Richard J. Daley College for almost eight years. After that, I worked three days a week in the business office for the rehabilitation director at Brentwood Sub-Acute Healthcare Center in Burbank.

I have five grandsons, one great-granddaughter, and one great-grandson. I lost two brothers—Tashie died in 1990 and Bobby in 2005. Mom died in 1992 and Gene, my husband of 43 years, died in 1995. Both of my sisters also lost their husbands, so all three of us are widows. I was very lucky that Mom and Gene were such a big help in getting me to be independent. Of course, I am also thankful for the rest of my family, friends, and ALDA.

I was involved with ALDA before it became ALDA. It started at the Kennedy Job Training Center with the late Kathie Hering (who Bill Graham said was “our group’s royal matriarch”) taking me under her wing. She knew I wrote to late-deafened adults and asked me for their names and addresses. She always tried to get me to go to the support group that she started at Ravenswood Hospital, and she also told me that Bill Graham was going to have a party at his home and encouraged me to go. Donna McGladdery, my sign language teacher, offered to go with me. You have to remember that I was still adjusting to being deaf and had never known another deaf person. According to the first letter Bill Graham wrote right after the party, 22 people attended. I mostly sat and enjoyed watching those who could communicate with each other. It was just a good feeling of belonging.

Bill’s letters kept all of us in touch and drew us together. These letters later turned into ALDA’s newsletter, and I will always keep them. For quite a while, the Buehler Foundation of Mercy Hospital paid ALDA’s printing and postage costs. The ALDA-Buehler connection began while I was working with and a patient of Dr. Clemis, who then became aware of the special challenges faced by late-deafened adults and encouraged Mercy Hospital to help us out.

In ALDA’s early years, Bill Graham, Steven Wilhelm, Mary Clark, Marylyn Howe, and others gave me letters that people wrote asking for information about ALDA. I answered each letter with a personal note so that the person I was writing to knew a live person read their letter. I would enclose an ALDA newsletter and a Mercy bulletin and put my response in the mail. Mercy Hospital covered the cost of this, too. I also added the person’s name to my ALDA and Mercy mailing lists. When I left there, I had over 2000 names, and I still have every letter I answered. It was as if late-deafened people were coming out of the woodwork (smile). It was all snail mail, too—no emails.

On May 16, 1987, ALDA had its second social. This time, it was at my house and really turned out nice. My daughter Cindy, her friend Lori, and my daughter-in-law Laura did the serving, cooking, cleaning, etc. We sat outside by the pool until the mosquitoes, bugs, and darkness came. Then we went back into the house, shot pool, and became better acquainted. I've had a pool party every year since except for the year that Gene died. He had even helped that year, along with Kathie Hering, to send out the invitations. The event is now called “Cleo’s Pool Party,” and this year’s was my 28th.

From the beginning, we were a social group. In the first years, someone would volunteer to host whatever at their home, like ALDA’s birthday parties. We had get-togethers at people’s homes whenever we could—Christmas parties, barbecues, etc.—and I saw my first captioned movie, *Children of a Lesser God*. We relied on snail mail, TTY’s, and Bill’s newsletters to stay in touch with one another. I could fill a book about how Kathie Hering kept us all on track, working for the good of ALDA. I’m sure she is in a special place in heaven for all she did for us.

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The first ALDAcon was at Mercy Hospital from October 20-22, 1989. It was actually called “First ALDA Leadership Workshop.” and it was free. If people could get to Chicago to attend, we housed them. I think 42-45 came. Steven Wilhelm set up “ALDA Crude” captioning, and we broke into small groups and went into different rooms for the training. Steven ran from room to room keeping the computers running and helping the typists. It was very crude compared to today’s CART technology, but it worked!

If I had a magic wand and money were no object, I would make it possible for every ALDA member and their spouse, significant other, or a companion to attend ALDAcon. There are many people who have wanted to come but can’t afford it. It would also be much easier to have monthly meetings or social gatherings if we didn’t live so far apart.

In his closing statement at the first ALDAcon, Bill Graham spoke of envisioning “a time when late-deafened adults have access to communication whenever and wherever they need it.” When I first became deaf, I would write to the TV stations and ask/beg them to caption my program. Now they HAVE to.

I could always request an interpreter from CHS (Chicago Hearing Society) for any occasion. I just had to pay $5 and the rest was covered with a grant. Awhile back, I wanted to learn how to shoot pool the right way and called CHS to get an interpreter for that. I asked for LJ, an interpreter who had been good with me at my daughter’s wedding years ago. I couldn’t use the grant to cover interpreting at a doctor’s office or hospital, because doctors and hospitals are required by law to provide the access.

However, my signing was not very good. When I could catch a word or two, I’d pat myself on the back. Now I can request CART and not miss anything, but sadly, the grant is no longer available. But with all this new technology—CIs, captioning, email, computers, etc.—there is hope for more inclusion.

It’s still hard to be deafened, newly or long-time. Maybe “hard” is the wrong word. There are always challenges and disappointments, but we just have to cope and find new ways. I never thought I could travel by myself to ALDAcon. When Gene died in 1995, I had already registered both of us (he was always with me). My daughter-in-law Laura offered to drive me to Rockford and stay with me—such a baby I was/am (smile). After that, I pushed myself to go with help from family and ALDA friends. I was fortunate because my son-in-law David always took me to the airport and stayed with me until I boarded. Actually, I found out he did not leave until my plane was in the air—such a good man. When I return, either my son Gary, along with Laura or David, will be waiting at the airport. Yes, I am fortunate. Since David has a new job and Gary is retired, Gary gets to take me now. For the last three ALDAcons, Karen Krull and I have been on the same return flight, and she and her husband Bob have been nice enough to drive me home.

Finally, I’d like to share a favorite little bit of philosophy: “Life doesn’t consist of holding good cards but of playing a bad hand well.”

Edited from the Spring 2015 edition of ALDA Chicago Style. Cleo can be reached at Cleosimmons@aol.com.
a system that allows captions to be available for any performance, from any seat, sort of like the closed captions that most movie theaters offer. There are a couple of efforts under way to create systems that meet those criteria.

A system called iCaptions is available at a few theaters in New York City, San Francisco and Los Angeles for certain shows. [Editor’s note: iCaptions are also provided by Sight & Sound Theatre in Ronks, Pennsylvania.] That system displays the captions on a hand-held display device, and instead of a live operator, the synching is linked to the lighting cues. This has a lot of promise, and when it works, it works well. But it isn’t foolproof, as I found out when my wife and I went to see The Book of Mormon in New York. The system failed spectacularly, and with no live operator onsite, there was no one who could determine why it wasn’t functioning, much less do anything about it.

Another product, from Figaro in Santa Fe, is an Internet-based system that stores the captions in “the cloud,” whatever that is, and projects them wirelessly to smart phones or tablets. The synching is done by a live operator, and a small theater in Baltimore uses this system. It includes a viewing device and a flexible clamp that holds the device and attaches to the armrest. The viewing device can be adjusted so that from the viewer’s perspective, the captions appear just below or on the front edge of the stage, very much like the CaptiView devices that some movie theaters use. And the system can display multiple languages. A company in New York called Globetitles is working on a similar system.

This emerging technology got me to thinking that perhaps it is time for a more systematic effort regarding live theater captioning, much like what we have been doing with the movies for the last half-dozen years. We started with the major movie theater chains, and once they conceded that they needed to provide captioning in all their auditoriums, things began falling into place. (We still await the Department of Justice regulations requiring movie captioning nationwide, but we maintain hope that this will actually occur, as promised.)

The equivalent approach to live theaters would be to start at the wellspring—Broadway itself. I learned that Broadway theater is actually a very tightly defined universe of 41 theaters in and around the Times Square area, each with a capacity of at least 500 seats. Those 41 theaters have an annual attendance of over 13 million people, two thirds of whom come from outside the New York City area, and their annual gross revenue exceeds $1.3 billion. Ownership is surprisingly concentrated. Three companies—Shubert, Nederland, and Jujamcyn—own 31 of those 41 theaters.

Despite their ample financial resources, those three owners provide a sparse menu of accommodations for people with hearing loss. The one-time up-front expense of the iCaption system is considerable, so that system is mainly available for productions that are expected to run essentially forever, namely Phantom of the Opera, Book of Mormon, Lion King, and Wicked, among current shows. (It does appear, though, that the iCaption system can and sometimes does travel to other cities with the touring companies for these long-running shows). For other shows, the three major owners are offering only 16 captioned performances over the next six months. Ten of the productions at those theaters, including Chicago and Fiddler on the Roof, offer no captioning at all.

Those minimal efforts that effectively deny access to a substantial segment of the population—including most of us—are unacceptable. The ADA states that businesses like theaters can avoid their obligation to provide effective communication only if the businesses can demonstrate that doing so would fundamentally alter their services or impose an undue financial burden. Nothing in the statute suggests that providing effective communication every now and then is sufficient.

Several hard of hearing theater-goers are interested in addressing this issue. Our plan is to ask the three major Broadway theater owners to meet with us in a process known as “structured negotiations “and develop a specific plan to provide captioning for every performance. Because we know that the reader-board method works, we could agree that providing that service for every performance would be satisfactory. Absent that, though, we would ask for rigorous testing of some of the emerging technologies that show great promise but have not been widely deployed.

While it may initially appear that this effort would have only limited impact, we believe that just the opposite is true. We foresee an arc very much like what we experienced with the movie theaters. For years, movie
Married to Bill (continued)...

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at home who would hear an intruder. (Thank God for dogs!) But even though I’m hard of hearing, I was the “hearing” one and I wasn’t sure what that meant for us. I had one good ear and we had to manage with it.

Early in our relationship, Bill and I had to deal with some financial transactions, and I was doing all the heavy phone calling. I soon realized that if we were going to be happily married, I couldn’t be the only person doing this kind of work in our marriage. I threw down the gauntlet and told Bill that I didn’t care how, but he had to go have the next discussion with the bank. He could go downtown and talk with the staff via pen and paper if need be, but I could not be a wife-interpreter. I wanted to be a wife full time, and the hyphenated title wouldn’t work. From then on, each of us did some of the transacting, and sometimes I interpreted and we transacted together. There would be no assumption that I was in charge of all “hearing-seeming” interactions.

Some of our deaf friends questioned this stance of mine. Since I was the one who could hear better, wouldn’t it make sense for me to take care of those interactions? In a sort of Marxist auditory world, shouldn’t I do what I had the most skill doing? I don’t think so, and all these years later, I don’t feel burdened by our hearing difference. I can ask Bill to answer the door or figure out how to contact someone and it will happen. This creates some parity in our marriage, which is important for all relationships.

In time, we decided to adopt the first of our two babies, and that was a turning point for us in many ways. It was a part of what prompted Bill to get his first cochlear implant. Although we do sign with each other, most of his communication with our children is aural/oral, and I believe Bill really wanted to be able to hear them. When he got the implant, I went from being married to a deaf person to being married to a hard of hearing one, and this was a strange transition for me. Suddenly I could now call Bill from another room, and he went from being a very poor speechreader to being an excellent one. He could even catch some things I was saying without looking! He worked hard at his aural skills and used the implant well. He could now interact one-on-one with visitors and family. I was still the better “hearing” of the two of us, but in some situations not by much.

Bill got another implant and we got another baby. We moved to Seattle and then back to the Chicago ex-
mon in Chicago. I like to joke that I became deaf at the right time. Other people went their whole lives waiting for technology that I had available almost immediately.

In late 2000, my delivery job was outsourced, and I proceeded to flounder for the next year trying to figure out what to do next. I had savings from my father’s estate to help keep me afloat as well as unemployment from the job, but I had no clear career path anymore. Because of that lack of direction, I decided to leave Chicago in the fall of 2003. My mother had retired to North Carolina with her partner a few years before and offered me a room and the chance to get back on my feet. I accepted and in February 2004 I moved to New Bern, a small town in North Carolina.

With some backing from friends and family and using my remaining savings, I opened a Chicago-style pizza restaurant. It took about five months to get the place open and unfortunately we closed it forever about six months later. That failure ended up having a silver lining, though, as it led me to a position managing a major chain restaurant in Jacksonville, North Carolina about 40 miles south. That job started in May 2005. I thought it was going well, but in May, 2007 the company terminated me. I didn’t know it yet, but at that time but my right ear was in the process of going completely deaf. By the end of the summer it had flatlined and I was left with only the meager hearing and comprehension in my left ear.

Of course, my hearing wasn’t the only thing that crashed in May 2007. The US economy fell off a cliff, making it even harder to find work. The good news was that unemployment benefits were extended out to 99 weeks. Over the next three years I went through all 99 weeks while maxing out two credit cards in order to stay afloat. Early on, I visited Gallaudet University to see if there was a way for me to get a higher degree, but it was too expensive, so I went back to trying to find any work I could. I was unsuccessful.

Mom passed away in January 2010 from complications related to her Parkinson’s disease, and with nothing to tie me to North Carolina anymore, I accepted another room offer from one of my sisters. In April of that year, I moved to San Jose, California. Being back in a big city, I began to explore the local deaf and hard of hearing community and my life started to improve immediately. I had started to do this in Chicago, but those efforts came to a halt once I started living in small towns where resources and organizations for people with hearing loss are scarce. Fortunately, that’s not true in NorCal. The Bay Area is a hotbed of Deaf and hard of hearing activity.

I immediately started pursuing support options, and on the advice of the Linda Drattell, the late-deafened/hard of hearing specialist with the Deaf Counseling Advocacy and Referral Agency (and former local ALDA group leader and ALDA president), I got involved with the local ALDA group and started taking ASL classes. My social contacts immediately started to expand as I met many new people, some of whom have become my closest friends. I found most of those new friends through the local ALDA group, and those people offered not just companionship but also lots of information about how to cope with my hearing loss, which by then was so bad that I was almost completely deaf. Those same friends suggested that I apply for disability—something I had not even considered. I did and was approved on my first try. My claim was even backdated to May 2007 and I was paid me back benefits for 15 months, the maximum period allowed. As much as the extra money helped, the truly great news was that I was now eligible for Medicare. Normally it’s a two-year wait, but because the earlier date for my claim was accepted, my two years were up a mere nine months later, in May 2011.

As part of my efforts to cope with my hearing loss I had explored cochlear implant (CI) surgery since moving to California. Those initial efforts had forced me to accept that I simply could not afford it, but I still felt it was my best path forward. Now with insurance back in hand, I was able to start pursuing it again. I had my first CI surgery in late September 2011 (the best decision I’ve ever made, bar none). Activation was a raging success and I was able to understand human speech at a high level almost immediately. A year later I was able to return to work and accepted a part-time position with my current employer. Four months after that I went full time. That led to new insurance and a paid vacation. Six months later, in August 2013, I had my all but useless left ear implanted (the second best decision I’ve ever made).

Since the two successful surgeries, my life has improved by leaps and bounds. I have been able to enjoy music again. I have received promotions at work, and I continue to try to reach out to the Deaf/hard of hearing/late-deafened communities to guide people toward a better, more rounded life. Recently I took a vacation and, with two friends who met...
me in Las Vegas, went to see the Cirque Du Soleil show “Beatles Love.” This was an amazing experience not only for the visual effects but also because I could understand the music so well, something I would have brushed off as an impossible fairy tale five years ago.

I took over the lead of the local ALDA group a few months before my first CI surgery, and I’ve been leading ALDA-San Jose ever since. The people in this group have been my main source of both social contact and advice/guidance since I moved to California. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to all of the people who helped guide me to the successes I have had. It is their support that put me on the path to becoming whole again. Their friendships continue to embrace me to this day. I can never truly pay them back, so I am attempting to pay it forward.

This is part of what I have experienced during my journey from normal hearing to nearly deaf and back to hearing that tests in the normal range in the sound booth. I still don’t understand everything and have to ask people to repeat. I still use captions at movies and for TV shows and still prefer a captioned telephone. However, after so many years running from my hearing loss, I finally managed to get to a point where I’m comfortable with who I am and how well I hear. The change has been dramatic in terms of both what it cost me and what I gained from the experience. I am not the same person I was before my hearing loss. I am stronger and improved, more involved in the world, more caring of other people, and less shortsighted in how I live my day to day life. As bad as things got I find myself actually thinking of my experience as a positive one. While I wish I had perfect hearing back, I don’t want to return to being the person I was before my hearing loss. The growth may have been forced on me, but it’s led me to so many new friends and possibilities I would never have discovered otherwise. My life is complete and well rounded, and all of that started because of my hearing loss. As I like to say to people who ask, “I don’t recommend a hearing loss as a path to personal growth, but it seems to be working for me.”

Jim is an account manager with CaptionCall. He has a bachelor’s degree in information and decision sciences from the University of Illinois, Chicago. He spent the majority of his working years in the restaurant field until hearing loss forced him to change professions. He is the group lead for ALDA-San Jose and is interested in helping to improve the lives of and access for people with hearing loss, and helping people learn about cochlear implant technology. His email address is jlaffer@hotmail.com.

When the major movie-theater chains did decide to provide universal captioning—a decision made after successful court actions by ALDA, among others—potential suppliers got very interested. Assured of a market, suppliers were able to develop more effective and less expensive technology. As a result, smaller theater chains discovered that they, too, could provide captions. And when the Department of Justice in 2014 proposed a rule that would require all movie theaters everywhere (with very limited exceptions) to provide captions, the National Association of Theatre Owners actually agreed to support that proposal.

We think the time is right to undertake a comparable live-theater initiative. The newer technologies that could allow captioning for every performance and from every seat are in their infancy and could wither away if they cannot find a market. If the large and prosperous theaters that can afford do so decide to provide captions for every performance, they will have every incentive to find ways of doing this at the lowest possible cost. That development of low-cost technologies, in turn, will enable smaller theaters to provide captions. That approach worked with the movies, and we think it can work as well for live theaters.

The ALDA Board of Directors has formally approved participation in this project. Just as ALDA took the lead in prompting the movie theaters to provide caption-viewing devices in all auditoriums, we believe ALDA can lead the way to greatly expanding captioning access in live theaters.

John can be contacted at johnfwaldo@hotmail.com.
Chapter Happenings and GA to SK

By Ann Smith, Curator

Francine Stieglitz reports that on April 9, ALDA-Boston “went to the dogs.” Carl Richardson and his guide dog Merrick and Carol Agate and her service dog Molly “provided an informative and pawsitively awesome afternoon.” It was also ALDA-Boston’s 27th anniversary and annual business meeting. Membership Chair Karen Rockow reported that the three incumbents on the ballot were reelected and Ellen Perkins was elected on write-in ballots. At the board meeting afterwards, Linda Sakin moved that the board members keep the same positions that they had in 2014-2016, and the motion passed unanimously.

Some ALDA-Boston members were at the HLAA convention and missed the fantastic 4th of July party, held a week before the holiday at Jeanne and John Kennedy’s house. Lou Sakin reported that 22 people attended. Appetizers included deviled eggs, dips and chips, little meatballs on toothpicks, cheeses, and crackers. Two guests ventured into the pool, and the picnic was topped off with a viola musical interlude by new member Betty Hauck.

The chapter’s most recent assistive listening tour at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts was on September 24, to visit the “Della Robbia: Sculpting with Color in Renaissance Florence” exhibit. On August 20, the theme was “The Art of Europe,” focusing on the Museum’s extensive collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art. Due to renovations at the Lexington library, the chapter can’t currently use the looped meeting room, and because of the drought, apple picking will have to wait until next year.

Sara Thompson reported on ALDA-Peach’s activities. The chapter had a quarterly meeting on July 9. President Yael Shaner had invited representatives from the Georgia Center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GCDHH), previously known as the Georgia Council for the Hearing Impaired. GCDHH is a state-funded program with six offices that provide services for Deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, and deaf-blind Georgians. Programs implemented through GCDHH include the Georgia Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program (GATEDP), the state camp for Deaf children, and employment services. Additionally, the iCanConnect Program (ICC), which is federally funded, supplies equipment for deaf-blind clients. ALDA-Peach hopes to collaborate with GCDHH in the future in educating and supporting late-deafened adults.

ALDA-Peach has been updating its website and pamphlet, hoping to enlist new members. Currently, there are very few attendees below the age of 60. What would make the chapter attractive to younger late-deafened adults? How can the chapter reach out to them? What avenues are available for networking? If your chapter has suggestions to offer, please contact ALDA-Peach’s secretary, Sara Thompson, at ssthompson105@hotmail.com.

On August 23, former ALDA president Marylyn Howe wrote in connection with her “summer vacation” working for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in Appalachia: “Today I found out I’m being deployed to Louisiana to assist flood survivors there, and the way things look, I’m probably going to be there for months. This means no ALDAcon for me this year. Rather than ask for my registration returned, would it be possible to add it to the Candis Shannon Scholarship fund? I’d much rather use it to fund a newcomer next year.” (This will be done.) Marylyn provided the following link to a three-minute open-captioned and ASL-interpreted Federal Emergency Management Assistance (FEMA) video, “Disaster Survivors Assistance Partners with Disability Integration Working Together to Assist Survivors”: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylKLlo-6fr8&sns=em

Send your chapter news (for “Chapter Happenings”) and personal news (for “GA to SK”) to Ann Smith at fabsmith@att.net by November 23.
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...

Join TDI as a member and help us fulfill our mission for accessible telecommunications, media, and information technologies!

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TDI - Shaping An Accessible World

SKSK

If you would know the road ahead, ask someone who has traveled it.

–Chinese proverb
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, may or may not use speechreading/lipreading, 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 connects 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

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

✓ Education  ✓ Advocacy  ✓ Role Models  ✓ Support

ALDA provides networking opportunities through local chapters and groups as well as at the annual ALDA conference (ALDAcon).
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 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

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