The Second Time Around

By Mary Clark

Sometimes pets are the best communicators, especially when their owner is late-deafened. Belina, the hearing cat I recently gave to my former mother-in-law, was a skinny, scrawny stray picked up in the woods near Oak Park, Illinois ten years ago. She would sit on the back of my office chair and tap me on the shoulder if she needed something...we understood each other so well! I'm positive she knew I was deaf, and I miss her taps! Cooper, the puggle (part pug and part beagle) is still around, and he lets me know when someone is at the door or he hears a noise. I talk a lot to him, and I swear he understands me and knows I am deaf. He never barks at me, as he knows I am not going to hear him. Instead, he puts his paws on my lap and makes eye contact. When I say, “Let’s go,” he runs, showing me exactly what it is he wants—a treat, a walk, dinner, or going outside in one of the yards. (He picks which yard and which door.) He’s sitting at my feet as I type this, and I just said to him, “I’m writing about you.” Without lifting his head, he wags his tail. He understood!

Three years ago on Sept. 11, 2009 (yes the real date...it wasn’t my choice), my husband Jeff and I were granted a divorce. We were married for 28 years. He wanted out, and to protect his privacy as the father of my children, I will merely say that he had a problem with my deafness. Evidently he had it for many years. When he told me this, I was devastated. I thought we were done with that issue 19 years earlier when I could no longer hear anything at all and was involved in ALDA. He had told me it didn’t matter. We would get through it, he said. We didn’t, and according to statistics, that is no big surprise! He then proceeded to tell me four other things about me that were not right for him (I had stupidly asked him to give me the top five), none of which I could do anything about, either. They were all a surprise, but I merely smiled and said nothing. (Speechless Mary??)

For the last five years (including the separation time), I once again went through terrible grief. It was probably worse than when I became deaf, at that time I had the support of my nuclear family—a husband and babies I had to take care of. The babies are now all beautiful adult women and have their own lives. I lost a lot of confidence in myself and my ability to communicate effectively with people the second time around despite support from friends and family members. I basically viewed myself as a deaf rejection, and I convinced myself I would feel a lot better if I were a hearing rejection. Divorce is said to be a problem related to communication. Again I felt 100% responsible for the communication that obviously had not happened, as I was the deaf person and not pulling my weight with the communication stuff. It took me awhile to realize that it takes two to communicate, even if one person is hearing and the other is deaf.

My communication with the kids is good, and maybe better than it’s ever been. We have had numerous tough patches, as we have all had to adjust to this new chapter in our lives, but it’s good as I write this, and I thank my lucky stars I have

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It’s nice to be back after a brief hiatus to complete another project. I’d like to thank Mark Dessert for graciously filling in during my absence and helping to produce a fabulous winter issue of ALDA News.

Our theme for this issue is “Hearing loss and its effects on family/friend relationships.” Although this is a potentially sensitive topic, we thought it could be helpful for our readers to hear from other late-deafened adults whose relationships have been tested by hearing loss. As those of us with acquired hearing loss know all too well, hearing loss can pose a challenge to the tenacity of any relationship. Sometimes the bonds with our family and friends are strengthened, but unfortunately, at other times they are weakened.

Starting off this issue is “The Second Time Around” by our well-known ALDAmom, Mary Clark, who provides an honest and open account of the trials and triumphs in her family relationships. Our next article, “Relationships Are Affected by Hearing Loss,” is Chelle George’s personal story about how hearing loss is testing her relationship with her boyfriend.

We have a reprint of an oldie but goodie—David Coco’s light-hearted article on facing the hurdles in a fast-food restaurant: “Overcoming Communication Barriers: The Sonic Challenge.” Next, you can learn about a lesser-known hearing device in “Bone-Anchored Implants,” a brief report by Kathy Evans. And back on our theme, our resident humorist, Michelle Bornert, will once again have you laughing with her column about her “mixed” marriage.

Many of you who know what it’s like to be on the receiving end of the CART steno machine. Now, in “In the Mind of a CART Provider,” Tess Crowder (CART provider extraordinaire) gives us a glimpse of life on the other side. Lauren Lundin’s poem, “If I Could Hear,” provides a reflective look on living with hearing loss that will resonate with many readers. “Uncle Bill and Aunt Mary,” a theme article by Carol Granaldi, recounts how difficult it can be for a relationship to weather the storm of hearing loss.

Bill Reese’s wonderful tribute to his chapter’s leaders, “ALDA-Suncoast is People,” may be just the shot in the arm that other chapters need to get their members motivated and energized. In “Relationships and Communication: Some Learning Experiences,” Janis Aaron Moore writes about various events that have been both challenging and enlightening for her.

As always, we thank all of our writers who generously contributed their time and talent.

ALDAbest,
Eileen

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I was fortunate that my hearing loss (which started in childhood) didn’t have a significant negative impact on my relationships with my family or close friends. However, because my parents were misinformed about the nature of my loss (being incorrectly told by doctors that it was psychological rather than physical), my father tried to get me to do impossible things like listening to the radio and talking on the telephone. I recall him telling me that if I didn’t respond to people who said hello to me (because I hadn’t heard them), I wouldn’t have any friends, and he also complained when my mother repeated things that I missed on TV because our conversation made it harder for him to follow the program. In his later years, he developed a hearing loss himself, at which point he asked me to try using a PockeTalker type device that worked well for him. I knew that it couldn’t possibly help me because my loss was much greater, but I humored him by trying the device, and he accepted my response that it didn’t do me any good.

During my school years, I couldn’t socialize in most group settings, but I always had a best friend. As an adult, I found some small groups where I was able to participate reasonably well. One factor that I always had to consider when choosing friends was whether I could easily understand them. A few friends have had a sixth sense about what I miss in group conversations, and they repeated those things to me without my having to ask. But I was once part of a group that included a woman with a foreign accent that I couldn’t understand. When I first met her, I didn’t know she would become a regular part of my social circle, and I faked understanding what she said to me. However, as time went on and she continued to be part of our interactions, I began to worry that she would eventually see through my nods, smiles, and noncommittal comments and realize that I didn’t have a clue as to what she was talking about. Somehow, she never did, and she continued to chatter animatedly with me. I was extremely uncomfortable with this bluffing act, but I didn’t see how I could come clean and tell her that I had always just pretended to understand her.

My late husband, not surprisingly, was very easy for me to understand—when we first dated, I could even have a brief phone conversation with him, something that was impossible with anyone else. He was always patient and understanding regarding my communication difficulties, and I felt fortunate in being able to ensure that I wouldn’t end up married to someone who wasn’t. If my hearing had been normal when I got married, it’s quite possible that I would have selected a mate who wouldn’t have been so considerate of a hearing loss that developed afterwards. Another plus was that my husband wasn’t a party-loving extrovert, since I couldn’t function effectively in large groups.

Similarly, I didn’t have to worry about losing friends due to my hearing loss—only people who could deal with it became my friends in the first place. At times I’ve felt badly that being able to understand someone needs to be a factor in whether I develop a relationship with that person, but on the other hand, this requirement does ensure that the people who become my friends have a decent amount of patience, sensitivity, and caring.

For many years, I attempted to cope without causing any waves. When I attended a lecture, I made sure to sit up front, but my ability to follow the presentation varied, and I often ended up sitting through a talk I couldn’t follow, which I found upsetting. Finally, one such occasion, I whispered to my husband that I couldn’t hear and wanted to leave. Since we were in the front row, he was concerned about how this would affect the speaker’s feelings. I shot back, “What about MY feelings?” We left.

Since my hearing loss was progressive, I eventually crossed the border into deafness. I had always been a good lipreader, but I hadn’t realized how much I depended on a combination of lipreading and residual hearing. As my residual hearing began vanishing, my lipreading skills likewise plummeted. This happened shortly before the availability of cochlear implants, so I decided to learn sign language. My husband and children also took lessons, but only my daughter became proficient. I started attending Deaf events, but I discovered that (1) my receptive signing skills weren’t sufficient for me to understand ASL and (2) my life experiences were very different from those of the Deaf community. Just as it seemed I was about to hit the wall, I found ALDA, and some years after that, a cochlear implant gave me the ability to interact in small hearing groups again.
I have a hearing loss and my boyfriend has attention deficit disorder (ADD). That means one of us has a hearing problem and the other a listening problem (auditory processing and focusing). It's a true challenge at times. Last April I attended a banquet with him for his ski patrol. We went to one a few years before and had a great time, so both of us expected to have fun again.

Music played as we walked in. I chatted with a few people I knew, and the place quickly filled up. More people seemed to be there than before, and the hum of chatter became a roar. I leaned closer to people, but they kept having to repeat for me. They didn't stay long to chat with me, either because it was too difficult or because they wanted to talk to others, and soon I stood there by myself.

My boyfriend bounced all over the place, talking to all his friends and setting up a gag award. I sat down at the table to have a glass of wine and tried shifting gears to people watching. Others came over to talk to me for a few minutes, but I couldn't understand what they said. I changed programs on my hearing aids and even took them out to see if that would make a difference. It didn't matter either way, so I put them back in and left them on the reduced-noise program. As I sat there alone—and being alone in a crowded room is much worse than being alone at home by myself—my boyfriend took a break from talking to friends and came over.

“What's wrong?” he asked.

“I can't hear,” I told him.

He said something to the effect of “That's nothing new” and went back to mingling. It was ADD heaven.

Upset, I went downstairs and started texting a girlfriend who is also hard of hearing. At least I didn't have to “hear” while doing that. She suggested that I bring a friend next time to keep me company, but all my girlfriends live out of state. I pulled myself together and went back upstairs.

The dinner buffet was ready, so I lined up next to my boyfriend, who still chatted with everyone but me. The guy in front of me made small talk, and right away I had to let him know I was nearly deaf.

“Do you read lips?” he asked, talking a little louder.

“I do a little, but I'm no expert.”

He asked a few more questions and then turned around to talk to someone else.

I picked through the buffet because I didn't feel like eating, and then I sat down at the table. The lady who sat next to me also had a hearing loss, but hers was not as bad as mine. She tried talking to me, but she was a ski patrol volunteer and wanted to visit with the others. I began walking and stood near a window looking out over the snowy landscape, and my boyfriend came over again.

“What are you doing over here, what's wrong?”

“I can't hear,” I said, near tears.

“So what, you came knowing you wouldn't hear everything. Come on, they are going to do the gag award soon, and dancing will start after that. You know you like dancing.”

I didn't answer. He brought me back to the table and started conversing with others, and I sat there alone again. I couldn't hear him well, and I usually understand him best. Then it dawned on me that speechreading was my only resource, because in this environment, I was deaf.

My boyfriend jumped up to present the gag award and I sat at the table reeling from my epiphany. I wandered back to my window and watched the gag award from there, not understanding a single word. People all around me laughed as a narrator told the story and my boyfriend and another person acted the incident out. I knew the event that brought about the award, but I wanted so much to hear how they were telling it.

After his gag, other more serious awards were presented, and my boyfriend sat down at the table and continued talking to the others. Eventually he noticed I wasn't among them and looked around to find me by the window again. He came over to ask me what was wrong once again, to which I gave the same answer: “I can't hear.” I was stuck on those words. Impatiently, he brought me back to the table, telling me he would help me hear. In his thinking, I was not giving a good time. He sat down and joked back and forth with the others as the speeches went on, but he also leaned close to my ear and repeated what he just told them.

“What are the current awards for?” I asked, only wanting to know that, not names.

His eyes darted around the table to see if we were disturbing the others, and then he told

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Overcoming Communication Barriers: The Sonic Challenge

By David Coco

There is a peculiar institution in Texas, and in other civilized parts of the South, which presents a unique challenge to ALDAns. This institution is called SONIC, a drive-in hamburger joint where you order from a bleeping box and lovely young ladies in matching red outfits bring out your order with a smile. I thought it would be helpful to share some of my SONIC coping strategies with y’all non-Texan ALDAns, so that y’all will be better prepared to enjoy the fruits of civilization when you visit Texas.

First, I need to explain the layout of a typical SONIC. There are several rows of drive-in parking spots and each parking spot has its own order station. The order station is quite simple: a SONIC menu and a speaker/microphone combo for placing your order. In the middle of the parking lot there is a rather small building where they prepare these wonderful SONIC burgers, with a large sign on the front door which says, “EMPLOYEES ONLY.” This layout makes it very clear that the SONIC management expects you to stay in your car and place your order from the order station.

This is a great idea, in general, but it presents some challenges for ALDAns. Now the typical ALDAn’s first inclination might be to try to flag down one of these young ladies and ask her to take your order in person. This method, however, is discouraged and, in fact, may even be hazardous to your health. These gals are trained to ignore people waving at them from their car windows. Once, however, I did manage to stop one of these gals by grabbing her arm, but I quickly decided that I did not really want a SONIC burger after all when I noticed two very LARGE cowboys climb out of their pickup truck and rush over to her aid.

In order to enjoy the jobs of SONIC cuisine I have developed a set of almost foolproof coping strategies for ordering at SONIC. These strategies only require a sensitive index finger and a bit of self-confidence. What you do is push the button at the order station to get the inside SONIC man’s attention and then you place your index finger very lightly on the speaker. When your finger hears “May I help you?” you proceed to order very slowly and distinctly. Now you have to listen carefully because the SONIC man sometimes comes on and instead says, “I will be with you in a minute.” If you misfingerread this phrase you will find yourself wasting your breath ordering to a dead microphone and will remain hungry for quite some time.

After you place your order the SONIC man will repeat the order and then ask you, “Will that be all, sir?” Now listen closely with your finger to the part when he repeats your order because this is the most crucial step. If you flub this step it can mean paying for ten SONIC burgers when you only wanted one.

It is a challenge to speechread with your index finger, but I assure you that it can be done. A well-trained finger can easily distinguish between a hamburger, which is “bubhuhbubhuh” and a double cheese-burger, which is “bubhuh bubhuhbubhuh.” If you have any doubts about your fingerreading ability, however, just repeat your whole order twice and cross your fingers. When you are fairly confident that he has your order straight you say, “Yes, that’s all,” and then he tells you how much you owe. I generally skip this part and look for a twenty dollar bill since it is a bit difficult to finger read “two dollars and fifty seven cents,” especially with a Texas accent. Then all you have to do is sit back and wait. I assure you that nine times out of ten the SONIC gal will bring you exactly what you ordered…or at least, what they thought you ordered.

There are some dangers in using these coping strategies. I won’t tell you all of them, because that will only make your future SONIC visits less interesting, but I should warn you about one particular situation. Don’t try this strategy right before closing time.

One evening I pulled up to my local SONIC at 11:00 and proceeded to order in my usual self-confident manner. I thought it was kind of odd that the SONIC man asked me to repeat my order five times but I thought, “Hey, maybe his hearing aid is on the bleep,” and patiently repeated my order each time. You gotta be nice to these hard of hearing folks, you know.

I waited and waited and waited for that SONIC burger. Finally, all the other cars left, the parking lot lights went off, and the manager came out of the building and approached my car. He looked at me kind of weird and said, “I just told you five times, we are closed! Whaddaya want?” I just smiled back at him and, in my most sincere voice, replied, “I’m sorry sir, I must have misunderstood you. My finger is kind of tired tonight.”

It should be apparent to the reader that I have not yet fully accepted all the ramifications of my deafness. I still expend enormous amounts of creativity and energy trying to fit into the hearing world. These SONIC coping strategies represent just one example...
Bone-Anchored Implants

By Kathy Evans

I have a hard time separating my various activities related to hearing loss and deafness. In February I was invited to participate in a meeting to organize an advocacy effort in Utah to provide insurance coverage for bone-anchored auditory implants, such as the Baha. Insurance companies in most other states cover this, but in Utah we have to fight for everything. A similar advocacy effort took place six years ago here to effect coverage of cochlear implants, with success; so we are hoping for equal success for another group of people who experience deafness.

Learning so much at that meeting, I realized that others in ALDA might want to be aware of these implants and when they should be considered. They use bone conduction to get sound vibrations to a healthy cochlea. So if there is disease or damage to the outer or middle ear(s), a bone-anchored auditory implant can circumvent it (this could occur from an accident, tumors in the middle ear, chronic infections, etc.). Single-sided deafness (SSD) is probably the most frequent reason for use of these implants, which move sound from the deaf side to the healthy cochlea on the other side to restore bilateral hearing.

In ALDA we recognize that whatever works, works! For some people, this is exactly what they need. I encourage ALDAns to become knowledgeable about it and encourage those who could benefit from it to investigate a bone-anchored auditory implant. Everyone with hearing loss deserves the best help they can get.


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

FCC issues Rules Concerning Internet Captioning


PREVIOUSLY TELEVISED VIDEO PROGRAMMING: The rules require video programming that is shown on television with closed captions after the effective date of the rules to be closed captioned when delivered using Internet protocol (IP). These rules will be phased in over a two-year period.

EQUIPMENT DISPLAYING VIDEO PROGRAMMING: The rules require equipment designed to receive or play back video programming (such as televisions, set-top boxes, computers, smartphones, and tablets) to be equipped with built-in caption decoder circuitry or capability to display closed-captioned video programming. Equipment that uses a picture screen that is 13 inches or smaller and devices designed to record video programming must comply only if doing so is achievable (with reasonable effort or expense). These rules apply to equipment manufactured or imported into the United States on or after January 1, 2014.

[Editor’s note: ALDA was proud to be involved with this effort!]

Overcoming Communication Barriers (continued...)

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of how I still cling to the idea that real life is doing what hearing people do. Through ALDA, however, I have come to realize that these coping strategies are merely stepping stones in a lifelong personal struggle to accept my deafness. Someday, real soon now, I will take one step further along this path of self-acceptance and give up this SONIC nonsense. Watch out, McDonald’s, here I come!

Reprinted from the ALDA News, January-February 1992. David has a Ph.D. in space physics and astronomy and was a senior research physicist at the University of Texas in Austin for over 20 years. He is currently an outreach specialist with the Educational Resource Center on Deafness at the Texas School for the Deaf. David was born hard of hearing and lost the rest of his hearing during high school. He uses sign language and a cochlear implant.
Webster defines “marriage” as “the state of being united to a person... as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law,” and they define “contract” as a “binding agreement.” Also listed as a definition for “contract” is “an order or arrangement for a hired assassin to kill another person or people.” Coincidence? I think not.

When my husband, Kenny, and I were married back in 1994, I still had hearing in my left ear. I had spent my whole life walking on the right side of people and using my left ear as a satellite to hone in on the sounds I was trying to hear, so I did the same with Kenny, and my sudden total lack of hearing was bound to cause some riffs in our happily ever after.

I must give my hubby a lot of credit, though—when my deafness struck, he didn’t run for the hills. He not only stayed with me, he even learned sign language to help me communicate. I was lucky. I knew it then and I know it now. But, hey, he’s lucky, too. I ain’t no consolation prize.

After my complete hearing loss occurred, I discovered just how scary deaf people are to hearing people. I started noticing a change. The kind that made me think I might need to change my clothes, because I must stink. There couldn’t be any other reason why hearing people (whom I now called “hearies”) were avoiding me. I’m talking dodge ball. I entered the room and people practically dove behind the furniture to keep from having to encounter my presence. I noticed it and Kenny started to notice it, too.

Now that I’ve been stone deaf for 13 years, it’s quite evident to me that I intimidate people. How Kenny and I have chosen to deal with this varies but almost always incorporates humor.

At our church here in Grand Rapids, we enter the building and immediately separate till the service starts. As long as he’s standing with me, signing, no one wants to approach. So he sneaks off into another section of the congregation to schmooze with his “people,” and I make a beeline for the Deaf Ministry section to save our seats. His instruction is to wait 10 minutes into the service and then crawl on his hands and knees to my section and pop up into the seat next to me without being noticed. If anyone asks, he says he dropped his tithe. That usually shuts them up.

We walk into a furniture store to find what’s on clearance because our smelly dog has thoroughly infested our couch with her odor. The salesmen, whom I endearingly call “the buzzards,” are standing there, ready for the kill. How do I keep them away? Simple. I start signing to Kenny. That shakes them up, and they suddenly find spots on the ceiling that need to be stared at. We get all the way to the back where the clearance items are without anyone trying to show us the stylish new recliners. If Kenny wants help, there are usually three or four salesmen slowly guiding themselves along the floor. When he approaches them and begins to talk, all of sudden you can see two other salesman snapping their fingers and counting their loss. Man, I should have talked with the death people, they think. Should have. We death people have money, too. (Though I whole-heartedly admit that I’m thankful when they don’t approach until I give them the clue that I’m interested.)

In a crowded Applebee’s, Kenny and I are studying the menu, trying to figure out what we’d like for dinner. The waitress comes over to our table and sees me signing to Kenny. “Oh, is she hearing impaired? I just love those people. They’re so much fun to watch! What do you think she wants to eat for dinner tonight?” Hmmm. Kenny’s intestines on a plate if he answers her. Just kidding. He would never do that. I’m far scarier when I’m angry than when I’m simply confused while out in public.

Kenny and I are pretty outgoing with the people we encounter. Because of this, we get asked a lot more questions about my deafness than do those who give the impression that they’ll bite you if you speak to them. In fact, some of the things we’re asked amaze me. Sure, hearies are curious, and many of their questions make sense. But sometimes I gotta wonder what these people lack in their lives—I mean, do they just sit around and think up these queries? Most of the time, I’m not surprised...most of the time.

Sitting in the mall, taking a break from Barnes & Noble, Kenny and I signed away. “You two are such a cute couple!” A woman, clad in hot pink leggings and little on top was standing over us, gushing away.

“Thanks,” we nodded to her and smiled.

“Can I ask you a question?” She was
In the Mind of a CART Provider

By Tess Crowder

[Editor’s note: For those who are unfamiliar with CART, the term is an acronym for “Communication Access Realtime Translation,” which is performed by a specially trained court reporter using a stenotype machine to instantly transcribe spoken words onto a laptop, computer monitor, or screen.]

I believe that the minds of CART providers must be wired differently from those of people in other professions. The way we hear and process words, sounds, and information in our everyday life is truly unique.

The words typed through our fingers have been so indelibly drilled into our heads that the brain processes this information in a mechanical type of way. How many times have we been typing for hours while our mind wanders to our dinner plans, our families, our responsibilities, our vacations, our relationships, etc.? Yet, our notes are perfectly typed for all to see.

After I finish a full day of typing, sometimes this mechanical thinking continues as I listen to the radio on the drive home. Instead of understanding the meaning of the words, my mind is in “stenography.” On numerous occasions, I have waited for the traffic report, only to realize that the announcer just finished giving the information, which was “stenotyped” in my head, with the comprehension element left out of the equation.

It is interesting to hear conversations from CART providers and captioners discussing and critiquing the speech of others, with our likes and dislikes based on their articulation.

During our conversations, we often interrupt others to ask how an unfamiliar word or name is spelled, and we are diligent in adding this term to our stenography. Similarly, when we come across an unfamiliar word in our reading, we need to determine how the word is pronounced so we can properly incorporate it into our software.

We constantly challenge ourselves to come up with simple ways of writing monosyllabic words—“I can write this word in one stroke!”—and we are very excited over our creativity and ingenuity.

I believe the following observations are true not only during our work but also in our everyday lives because of our mindset and profession:

- When we come across a name, especially a common name, that is spelled in a very unusual way, we cringe as we search our brains for a combination of letters to stroke on our stenography that won’t conflict with any other words, names, or phrases.

Examples: Mary, Marye, Mari, Maree, Maryee, Marri, Mairy
Kathy, Kathie, Kahi, Kathie, Cathy, Cathie, Cathi, Cathee
Etc., etc., etc…

- When major global events take place, why is it that they never involve a name like Smith or Jones as opposed to Ahmadinejad or Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab?

- When CARTing meetings and public events, we pray that speakers from the audience can speak distinct and clear English, as opposed to having a heavy regional or foreign accent, especially when it comes to medical or technical terminology.

- Our blood pressure rises when we are exposed to a conversation with multiple speakers all talking at once—no listeners, all talkers. In a working situation, this could send us right over the edge if we are not able to let it go and simply type “(Everybody is speaking at the same time),” or “(Overlapping conversations),” or something to that effect.

- When speakers produce noises, we scramble to instantaneously find accurate ways to describe these sounds, usually within fractions of a second, while keeping up with all of the words spoken before and after.

- With good reason, we avoid auctioneers and speed speakers—they send our brain into overload. Remember the Fed Ex commercial from years ago?

- We are also challenged by quiet speakers. Their voices barely rise above a whisper, and they just won’t speak into a microphone. I find it amazing how many people believe we all have bionic ears.

- Next we have to deal with the speaker who likes to combine speed, an accent, and technical terminology; doesn’t speak into the mic; and talks over all the other speakers in the room. This sends us right to “happy hour” any time of the day or night.

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If I Could Hear
By Lauren Lundin

I’ve often wondered
As I always do
If my life would have been different
If I could hear
Like you

Growing up wasn’t easy
Kids would taunt and jeer
They knew I was different
They called me queer
No one knew
I just couldn’t hear

They tested my hearing
They said it was fine
The experts were baffled
Said it must be my mind
They tested my psyche
Fitted me with eye gear
They had no clue
I just couldn’t hear

I made it through high school
And found some work
With great co-workers
Who didn’t think I’m a jerk
They didn’t taunt
And they didn’t jeer
They realized that
I just couldn’t hear

My next job was better
I made some new friends
When I got a promotion
They made some amends
They amped up my phone
Which relieved my fear
That over the phone
I could finally hear

For the hearing impaired
Progress has been steady
And deaf little children
Will someday be ready

To face the world
Without any fear
With sign language and aids
They can actually hear

I’ve often wondered
As I see changes made
Would my fate have been altered
My dignity saved
If I had been born
In a different year
And they found out sooner
I just couldn’t hear

Lauren Lundin currently resides on Lake Hopatcong in New Jersey and enjoys anything water—boating, swimming, sailing, kayaking, and fishing. Closer to retirement than she cares to admit, she anticipates her imminent snowbird life in Florida. She will take her faithful companions with her: four dogs, a cat, and a duck. Lauren’s email address is lholly_l@yahoo.com.
I had an uncle and aunt whose lives were affected by his late-deafness. Uncle Bill was a World War I veteran, and he suffered from what was called in those days “shell shock,” which damaged his hearing as a result of firing artillery rounds. Back then, soldiers didn’t protect their hearing during warfare, and many returned from military service with damaged hearing. [Editor’s note: hearing loss is the most common combat disability among currently returning soldiers as a result of bombings and IEDs.] My Uncle Bill wore a large, black hearing aid with a black harness. The aid, which used two D-size batteries, must have been uncomfortable to wear and didn’t help him much, either. Most of the time, it lay on the end table next to his chair, and he wore it only occasionally when visitors came to see him and Aunt Mary.

Uncle Bill was largely uncommunicative, didn’t engage much in conversation, and puttered around the house and yard in silence. Aunt Mary, by contrast, had normal hearing, was a social butterfly in her young years, and spent many hours on the telephone gossiping with friends. Sometimes she’d ask Uncle Bill to come to the phone and talk to her friends and family members, but he would only shout “hello” and then walk away. He was introverted because of his deafness, and since his wife was very extroverted, this difference affected their relationship considerably.

When I was 10 years old back in the 1940s, I related well to Uncle Bill because I wasn’t hearing too well either, although I was not as deaf as he was. I always felt sympathetic toward Uncle Bill because my Aunt Mary was so cross with him when he didn’t hear or understand when she spoke to him. She had a shrill, high-pitched voice, spoke very rapidly, and didn’t project her voice well, nor did she address him by name first to get his attention. I always had trouble understanding her, but I had begun to speechread, so I fared a little better than he did when talking with her. He wouldn’t use eye contact when we spoke to him, so he didn’t learn how to speechread. Often, when people become late-deafened, they don’t acquire speechreading skills because their once normally-hearing habit of listening without looking at people is hard to break. [Editor’s note: In addition, language skills are usually easier to acquire in childhood.]

Aunt Mary would often call my uncle from another room, saying his name in two syllables: “BI IL, BI IL, BI IL,” but since her voice didn’t carry very far, he frequently didn’t hear her. Often, exasperated when he didn’t respond, she would storm up to him while his back was turned and go: “WOOOO WOOOO WOOOO!” This would startle him and me, too. I hated for her to do that because it seemed sadistic. Once she saw me watching her do this and said self-righteously: “I HAVE to do that! He doesn’t LISTEN to me! That’s the only way I can GET his attention!” I wished that she would approach him and touch his shoulder so he could turn around and hear her better. But Aunt Mary didn’t have much sympathy for his deafness and was irritated because of the inconvenience to her.

Sometime during the 1950s, Uncle Bill underwent an ear surgery known as a fenestration procedure. It was hoped that by opening a “window” in his ear, he’d be able to hear better, but unfortunately, his hearing was not improved. Uncle Bill bitterly said that the doctors shouldn’t have been paid because the surgery was not successful.

In 1957, when my aunt and uncle were in their sixties, they moved to Florida, so I didn’t have as much opportunity to spend time with them during summer vacations and holidays. I did travel a few times to visit them, and I sadly noticed that my uncle’s withdrawn behavior had gotten worse. He rarely engaged in conversation with Aunt Mary and almost never started a conversation with others. It was so hard to reach him through the wall of silence that hemmed him in. By this time, Aunt Mary was starved for companionship, and when there were visitors she was so relieved to have someone to talk to that she became rather garrulous. If only she understood what her husband’s life without sound was like! If only she had some sympathy for his inability to interact with others! Instead, she remarked that they did not have any social life together and didn’t even socialize with each other at home.

I think that all the stresses, sorrow, and isolation of deafness took its toll on Uncle Bill’s health, because by age 70, he became ill with heart disease. He spent his last days in a hospital, suffering from pulmonary edema and frightened by not being able to hear the doctors or nurses talking to him. Aunt Mary later said that he was afraid to close his eyes and not see anyone, because he couldn’t hear them.
Candis Shannon Memorial Scholarship Fund

This year we are proud to sponsor our very first scholarship to ALDAcon in memory of Candis Shannon, our dear colleague and former ALDA News Editor-in-Chief. Candis was not only known for her infectious smile and endearing personality, but also for her intrepid excursions to each ALDAcon from her faraway home in Fairbanks, Alaska.

On November 5, 2011, Marylyn Howe—who morphs into Marilyn Monroe during ALDAcon’s infamous karaoke parties—jogged in the Rock’n Roll Marathon in Savannah, Georgia. Marylyn seeks your support in helping to raise scholarship funds in Candis’ name. All donations are tax deductible and will go to sponsoring a newcomer to a future ALDAcon. You can help! Please make a pledge either for the entire 13 miles that Marylyn agreed to run or for each mile you think an old washed-up glamour-puss like Monroe can limp.

Email your pledge amount or your questions to Marylyn at juneymoon@aol.com. Checks should be made out to ALDA, Inc. and sent to Marylyn Howe, 39 Log Landing Rd., Savannah, GA 31411. But don’t wait. Pledge today and help a newcomer attend a future ALDAcon in Candis’ memory.

The Second Time Around (continued)...

Continued from page 1

started to become the Mary I used to know and like again. The girls still have their own ways of communicating with me, and I now let them communicate among themselves without my constantly needing to know what is going on. I smile as I leave the room where they are all talking about something, and I don’t feel the need to know everything anymore. I smile because they are my daughters and they are all having fun together and at my house. That is a big improvement on my part. They will tell me what they need or want me to know and it works well. I make time for them one on one as well, which is a real treasure for me. I am still an ALDA mom and realize I will always be one.

I recently visited my dad in Maine and was terrified. He does not know sign language, and I can’t lipread him at all. He was having an operation, and once again I felt responsible for the communication, as I had volunteered to drive from Chicago to see him through this. Our roles had been reversed, and I worried. What if I couldn’t do this drive by myself? (It did take me four days vs. a normal two.) What if I goofed up? What if I didn’t understand anyone? This was not about me...this was about him! But my fears turned out to be groundless, and everything went well. My dad made fun of my driving as we drove to doctor appointments two hours away, and I made fun of him for not following doctor’s orders! Even though he could not see well, he wrote things down for me when we were finally back at his house. We laughed a lot, and it was a great two-week visit!

I am still working on a reinvention of myself. Dating as a deafened person is different from dating as a hard of hearing person who isn’t involved in the hearing loss community, which I was not involved in at the time I married. Communication is still a never-ending struggle. I want my date to offer the stimulation of a great conversation, but I need the ability to understand it. (Did I mention that my date should also have the looks of Richard Gere?) As a person who is not purely signing, not purely oral, and not always good at lipreading, I have limited access to what I’d really like. There is still never a day that goes by when I don’t have to advocate for myself or explain about late-deafness. It will always be part of my life!

Looking at myself in the mirror that Dr. I. King Jordan so eloquently talks about in his speeches at ALDAcon, I say out loud, “Hey, I am deaf, I will always be deaf...but I can do this again!” (Cooper is looking me in the eye and wagging his tail.)

Mary (and Cooper) live in the Frank Lloyd Wright historical district of Oak Park, Illinois. Mary is a former teacher for Deaf and hard of hearing students and is now a private consultant for Deaf/deafened issues. She has three daughters, Lauren (27), Lindsay (25) and Emily (19). She can be contacted at ldmpoppins@aol.com.
ALDA-Suncoast is People
By Bill Reese

[Editor’s note: Bill submitted the following report for the “Chapter Happenings” column, about the key folk of ALDA-Suncoast (Tampa Bay, Florida) and a recent chapter meeting, He noted that “our chapter happenings are our people and this is what they’ve been doing.” Bill’s humorous and informative report is an article of its own and is being published as such.]

Vice-President Tim Kimball says he had brain surgery, but the only evidence is a two-month hospital stay, some temporary paralysis, and a scar. But he’s still himself, cracking jokes at his expense (we’d be rich if he paid up) and very much involved in the chapter. So what part of his brain is missing?

Our treasurer had stepped down last year, but it’s worth mentioning that she’s an angel. We don’t get to watch Marion Roset fly, but that’s only because we don’t see her off at the airport, where she seems to go quite a bit. This gal is 70+ going on 29 and is just about any deaf social or meeting in the Tampa Bay area. She accompanied member June Hogan on two trips to Bethesda, Maryland, for...brain surgery. (I think Tim and June have discovered a loophole in chapter responsibilities!) June was our newsletter writer/editor/publisher for a few years before moving to Texas, and she still chimes in on our online group list.

Secretary Sharon Milian stepped down after a bullet went through a window of our meeting place. It didn’t happen when anyone was there, but the shooting spooked her enough to be the last straw on the camel’s back. She’s still very much involved in a coffee night social once a month and in HLAA meetings closer to her home. (She used to drive an hour each way to our meetings!) We love her for committing herself as long as she can. June have discovered a loophole in chapter responsibilities!) June was our newsletter writer/editor/publisher for a few years before moving to Texas, and she still chimes in on our online group list.

Director of Communications Access, Inc. (CAI), which has yearly fundraisers and expositions. She has been our volunteer CART reporter for 15 years. She also schedules our presenters, provides CART for two HLAA chapters in the region, and sits on their boards (until they say “uncle”). I really don’t think we’d be a chapter today without her. She’s facilitated our communication not only with CART but also with sign language interpreting when we needed it. A local TV station interviewed her for their “Everyday Heroes” segment that aired January 2.

Tess Crowder is one of our members-at-large, and she’s a dynamo. She has her own nonprofit, Communications Access, Inc. (CAI), which has yearly fundraisers and expositions. She has been our volunteer CART reporter for 15 years. She also schedules our presenters, provides CART for two HLAA chapters in the region, and sits on their boards (until they say “uncle”). I really don’t think we’d be a chapter today without her. She’s facilitated our communication not only with CART but also with sign language interpreting when we needed it. A local TV station interviewed her for their “Everyday Heroes” segment that aired January 2.

Gayl Hardeman, who just beat cancer, CARTS for us when Tess can’t make it (which is often, given her busy schedule). She loves being involved in our group and on Tess’s CAI board. She’s always smiling and just sent me a link for a yoga exercise I can do when I’m at the computer.

Chris Littlewood is our representative on the Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (FCCDH). Chris is also involved with state and local emergency preparedness agencies, making sure that they understand the specific needs of late-deafened people, and was recently asked to serve on a council in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). He’s a good guy to have a beer with, too!

Marjie Anderson is our webmaster, doing a fine job of keeping our website updated. She also extended our outreach to the north Pinellas County area by setting up a coffee night social there once a month. This was much needed, as we’re the only ALDA chapter in Florida. She also belongs to HLAA and recently took on the responsibility of serving as president of their Clearwater chapter. She keeps on keeping on despite health problems that are limiting her travel.

We lost a young, dynamic member in November. James Fehl was the fiancé of Cindy Rubin, who woke up deaf a few years ago and sought us out. It’s rare when couples come to meetings together in support of the one who has become deaf. It’s even rarer when the one who is hearing dives right in, learns sign language, and shares his joy of life with us the same way he does with anyone else. James had a gung-ho attitude about life, was a firefighter, and helped anyone who asked. A car pulled in front of him one night while he was riding his motorcycle, and 10 days later he was taken off life support and his organs were donated. We miss him greatly. Rest in peace, James.

I’m mentioning Cindy Henrion last because I want you to remember what this woman has done in the face of adversity. She’s been the rock that breaks the window of expectations, going above and beyond in carrying out the responsibilities for our chapter. She’s been our social director for as long as we’ve been a chapter (and maybe a couple months before that). She’s been involved with the newsletter for just about every issue and is now doing it single-handedly. She plans nearly all our events. She’s served as president and vice president and has now taken on the responsibilities of both secretary and treasurer. She has brought snacks to so many

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me.

The speaker went to the next award and I asked again and he told me in the same way. Clearly, this made my boyfriend uncomfortable, and it was not going to work. He seemed resentful about the responsibility, so I got up again, tears ready to start flowing. I didn’t want to cry in front of the whole table.

“What are you doing?” he demanded as he grabbed my arm.

I didn’t know—maybe going back to the window or to the bathroom? I couldn’t answer, my throat tight with my last bit of restraint.

“Well, if all you’re going to do is cry, then go home,” he told me.

Wow, that hurt. Luckily we had taken different cars, so I grabbed my purse.

“What are you doing?”

“Going home.” My sadness drained away and anger replaced it.

A tug of war ensued—stay...go home—as I marched out of the banquet hall, down the stairs, and outside, where my boyfriend finally let me go.

My family likes to call these learning experiences. I now fully understand that ADD people don’t like to be tied down by this kind of responsibility; it’s hard for them to focus during an event. So it’s my job to make my needs known ahead of time by asking for CART or copies of speeches or by bringing my FM system. Bringing a friend to assist when my boyfriend can’t would also be nice.

Luckily, there are other situations that balance out the bad ones and give me hope for future social occasions. A couple of months after the above event, I went south to Arizona to watch my youngest son graduate from high school. Ten years ago, his dad and I divorced. We were only meant to be best friends and should have stayed that way. During the divorce, bad feelings tumbled out, but after a few years of cooling-off time, we came around to being good friends again.

The graduation was held in a large stadium that’s also used for concerts and rodeos. Hordes of people were there to watch family and friends receive their diplomas. My ex, his partner, and I were among the chosen few who got to sit on the main floor near the stage. We picked a row with some empty seats, and as we filed in, his partner wound up sitting in the middle. The stadium was at a full roar with lots of high school kids running around and hundreds of parents. I knew I wasn’t going to be able to hear much and accepted the fact. I also knew the three of us would be watching the line of graduates for my son, so I had no worries about missing him on the stage.

As I sat there surveying the stadium, I noticed my ex and his partner in discussion, and then they swapped seats, with my ex sitting next to me instead. He cupped his hand and leaned in close to my ear. “I told him if you look at him, it means you want to know what was said, so he switched places,” he said laughing.

I could understand that because his partner and I didn’t know each other well, and who would want that responsibility? But my ex didn’t seem to mind taking it on, and this touched me. After the last social fiasco, I was grateful to have uncomplicated help. Furthermore, I wasn’t aware I had a “look” that meant I wanted a repeat.

The ceremony started, and I only caught some words here and there. A young, enthusiastic teacher gave a short speech and said something to make the whole audience laugh. Force of habit had me turning to face my ex, who finished laughing and leaned into my ear the same way as before and repeated the corny joke without resentment. I didn’t even have to ask and him for the repeat, proving to me that I do have a certain look on my face when I want to know what was said.

A few more times, my ex repeated something for me but I asked for no more after that. Perhaps hearing loss was a blessing in disguise as speech after speech wore on. Soon they were calling names, and the three of us were on the edge of our seats looking for our boy. We all saw him in line for the stage, elbowed each other, and waited until his name was called out so we could clap and I could yell out, “I love you, baby!” like I did for his older sister and brother. The graduation ceremony reminded me there are hearing people who understand.

However much the banquet with my boyfriend had hurt, it did lead me to successfully attending a conference some months later. Because of the banquet disaster, I prepared ahead of time by making sure speakers would wear my FM system. I knew to sit up front, and I personally introduced myself to the presenter before each class. My preparation made for a smooth event, and I walked away from it on cloud nine, knowing I could still do anything if I set my mind to it. As ugly as the banquet scene had been, it taught me to take responsibility and prepare ahead.

Thinking about the banquet still hurts. Sadly, it lowered my trust in my boyfriend and gave me doubts about the future of our relationship, because my hearing is only going to get worse. Thinking back,
1. Hearing People Miss Things, Too

I decided to complete my college degree when I was in my late 50s. I was transferring from a community college to Evergreen State College to earn my Bachelor of Arts degree. I knew I would have difficulty with Evergreen’s primary method of teaching—what they call a “seminar,” where 15 to 30 students sit in a circle and have conversational free-for-alls. Even with a CART provider, I anticipated problems, so I decided to take the independent learning contract path. In independent learning, the student finds a faculty member who is willing to oversee the student’s education process for a quarter. The student writes up a contract outlining what will be studied during the quarter and has periodic meetings with the faculty member to discuss what has been learned and what should be done next.

During my first quarter, I still had to take several classes with “seminar,” and it was very difficult for me to keep up with student dialog. When I commented about this to my faculty member, she replied, “Hearing people miss things, too.” The first few times this happened, I would think, “Oh, right! I remember that, back when I could hear better.” As my education continued and my hearing loss progressed to late-deafness, I kept commenting to my faculty member that I was having problems because I was missing things. Again I was reminded, “Hearing people miss things, too.”

The umpteenth time this happened, I stomped out of my faculty member’s office, stomped to my class, and griped to my CART provider. She responded that the faculty member was insensitive and demeaning, which made me feel a little better.

I pondered this pattern long after I completed my degree, and finally—through attending hearing loss lectures and talking with friends who also have a hearing loss—discovered for myself the difference between “hearing people missing things” and people with profound hearing loss “missing things.” Hearing people miss a word or phrase here and there, but they essentially hear whole sentences. People with hearing loss miss 25 to 50% of what is being said and are constantly trying to make sense of the message. This is exhausting and frequently results in failing to comprehend what is being said and walking out of a classroom wondering how much was missed. It’s just not the same!

Several years after I graduated, I met my faculty member at a community event in Olympia. We had a great time reminiscing about working together on my contracts. Then I remembered her repeated “Hearing people miss things, too” comment and shared my realization about the difference for people with hearing loss. I explained that I was not finding fault with her—that, indeed, many hearing people have made the same remark. I also shared that I realized that her comments were meant to make me feel better about my circumstances, and that this experience helped me come to a better understanding of the difference and be able to explain more effectively, when someone says “hearing people miss things, too,” that it’s not the same and why.

2. Whispered Sweet Nothings

When I was attending college, I studied hearing loss in several of my individual learning contracts. At one point, I had a question I wanted to ask the hearing loss community, so I sent my question in a mass email and asked the recipients to pass it on to others. I started communicating via email and online chats with a man I met over the Internet, and we finally met in person several months later. We lived several hundred miles apart and arranged for our first meeting to occur at a large hotel. Like me, he has a bilateral hearing loss and wears two hearing aids. We spent more than six hours talking together, tucked away in a booth separated from the Muzak and other noises. After that, I went to the city where he lived and we attended a sporting event together. At some point we commenced an intimate relationship.

Now, when you’re getting lovey-dovey and you both wear two hearing aids, communication gets a little tricky. Hearing people can turn off all the lights and whisper sweet nothings in each other’s ears, and know they are being understood (and appreciated). However, when two people have a profound hearing loss, turning off the lights can be problematic—how can you speechread? And when you’re lying side by side in bed, it’s not comfortable (or even wise) to put your head on the pillow when your hearing aid is in your ear.

We worked past these little problems by keeping a small light turned on and each of us removing our hearing aid from the “pillow ear.” All it took was a little creativity and the strong desire to communicate.

3. “Helpful Hannashs”

At my first appointment with an
Life in ALDAland: Go Ask Alice

By Donna Maderer

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

—Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

It has always amused me mightily that people are, forever and a day, stopping me on the street to ask for directions—even way back during my hearing days. I’ve been stopped by tourists—fellow tourists, mind you—in Galway, Prague, Berlin and Rome, in addition to here at home in Boston. I must emit some sort of a vibe, a she-knows-the-right-way beacon, a tractor beam for the map challenged.

I really thought this would change when I lost my hearing. How could I help? The language barrier would be all barrier-ish. Right?

Today’s funny happened when I pulled into a parking spot in Kendall Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A place where parking spots are as rare as ocelots in Maine (or Cambridge, for that matter). As I was rifling my wallet for quarters, I noticed a man standing by the parking meters. He looked at me and I quickly went back to purse excavation. He didn’t appear to be a predator, but I’ve been wrong before—more than once.

The man seemed to be waiting. Waiting for a friend? Waiting for a fast train? Waiting to rob me blind? Waiting to witness to me of his faith in Rush (the band, not the fat man), Jesus, or Gold Bond Foot Powder?Couldn’t know until I took the next step, could I?

So, I got out of my car, Horace the Silver Beetle, and plunked my two bit pieces into the meter. When I glanced out of the corner of my eye, it looked like he was speaking to me (remember, I’m deaf, so I had to see him speak in order to “hear” him). I used my handy dandy first line of defense, always employed when I’m feeling nervous, insecure or anti-social: “Sorry, I’m deaf. I don’t know what you’re saying.”

Hey, convenient but true!

The poor guy responded by looking even more forlorn than before. It occurred to me, only then, that my poor lost amigo wasn’t from around these parts. Like not even from this continent. So I asked, “Are you lost? Speak slowly and maybe I can lipread you.” Yeah, I’m a real helpful soul like that.

Turns out he couldn’t sort out the parking meter. Which coin should he put in and how many for what period of time and all. His accent was so heavy that I could see it even as I lipread him, but funnily enough, hilariously even, I COULD lipread him!

So there I am, deaf old me, on a cold snowy night on a dark Cambridge street corner, chatting with a man who barely spoke English and needed a bit of assistance. AND we understood each other!

God, I love my life!

This is a version of Donna’s article at http://donna-tellmeastory.blogspot.com/2012/03/go-ask-alice.html.
One of Us

By Karen Krull, Curator

Ann Lovell is a very outgoing person whom I met at ALDAcon 2010 in Colorado Springs. I recently learned that she is the second deaf child in her family; her sister Paula Titus is the first, and she has two other hard of hearing siblings. There was no hearing loss history in her family prior to that. Ann has bilateral cochlear implants and is a volunteer advocate for Cochlear Americas.

After several career changes, Ann currently works as an orientation specialist in an early intervention program for children from birth to three years of age, for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind. She travels the state with another deaf colleague, visits the homes of newly identified babies and toddlers with hearing loss, and helps their parents explore and choose a language option for their child. When the parents make their choice, Ann sends in therapists to help them build their child’s language.

Ann serves on the board of AG Bell’s Utah chapter as the liaison with the Deaf community. Along with Kathy Evans, she co-chairs Utah-CAN (Communication Access Network). One of Ann’s favorite things is public speaking, and her dream is to eventually find a way into a career doing just that! She prefers to be contacted on Facebook rather than by email. Read on, and I’m sure you’ll agree that Ann is, without a doubt, “one of us.”

Name: Ann Lovell

Where were you born? Pocatello, Idaho

What is your current residence? Cottonwood Heights, Utah (a Salt Lake City suburb)

What is the cause of your deafness? Unknown. A geneticist I consulted felt it was due to a recessive gene.

Age/year you became deafened? 4 ½

Marital status? Single

What is your present job? I’m a teacher by profession, currently serving at Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind as the orientation specialist in early intervention.

What is the worst job you ever had? Working graveyard shift in a nursing home

Movies you want to see again? Somewhere in Time. I rarely like to see movies more than once, but that’s one I just don’t get tired of!

Books you tell others to read? I don’t generally recommend them, because most people don’t have the patience needed for reading them, but I love the Outlander series by Diana Gabaldon. There are seven books, each around 800 to 900 pages! I haven’t had time to read the last two books, but I WILL! I’m downloading the series bit by bit to my Nook, so I can start wending my way through them again.

Favorite pig-out food: Anything!

Hobbies: I enjoy reading but haven’t done much in a while. I enjoy socializing with friends and hanging out with the little ones in my life. I’ve been getting into working out; but I don’t know if I’d call that a hobby—it’s more of a commitment to improve fitness. I rarely have much time for hobbies. I work, and I’m on the board of AG Bell Utah, co-chair with Kathy Evans of Utah-CAN (Utah Communications Access Network); on the Relay Utah Consumers Council, and a volunteer with Cochlear Americas.

If I had more free time (and money) I’d: travel.

The hardest thing about becoming deafened: Was isolation, but changes in my life, technology, etc. made that no longer an issue.

I began accepting my deafness: When I matured and learned who I was as a person and valued that.

The worst thing about deafness: Was social isolation, but as I got older and technology improved, my inner social butterfly came out to play and stayed out, while the withdrawn introvert that was scared has fled!

The best thing about deafness is: The awesome technology available today.

How did you learn about ALDA? First through people on a committee I was on in Utah. Later I attended a convention to support my sister (Paula Titus), who had joined (unbeknownst to me) and was one of the people helping to put it on in her home state.

In what ways has ALDA enhanced your life? I love the ALDAcon karaoke—dancing on the floor all night and being silly! Through Facebook, people I met at ALDAcons have become online friends. As I’ve begun to form stronger connections to many ALDAns, I’m starting to feel more a part of the ALDA family than I did in the first couple of years.

When I am depressed, I: Count my blessings and think of the five things I’m most grateful for in my life: the wonderful parents I had; the family and little ones in my life; my cochlear implants; being able to have a positive impact on the deaf children I taught in my classroom and now on the parents of deaf...
For several years, I had two sets of ears. One set was mine, which was not working well and getting worse, and one set was my husband’s, which were perfect. I gave him many jobs for his good ears.

When I could no longer hear on the phone, my husband made my appointments. He volunteered and did this cheerfully, as he was quite horrified that I was going deaf and wanted to help. However, I over-used his kindness and his own sadness and discomfort with my hearing loss.

Have you noticed that guys seldom talk on the phone the way women do? My husband wasn’t thrilled to convey messages from my women friends. He thought that such conversations were way too long and involved and that planning to meet for lunch should just involve deciding time and place. Why discuss what we were going to discuss at lunch on the phone ahead of time?

We lurched along with this method of communication for some time. My world was beginning to feel small. I was avoiding many situations where I knew the crowd to be too large for me to understand anything, and movies were gone from my life. I was no longer in the hearing world, and what else was there? I did not know and did not check.

My husband died suddenly, and I entered a time of profound grief and isolation. Looking back on this, I realize that wandering in the shadowlands of grief for the death of a loved one and processing the loss of hearing are not so unrelated. But that is another topic.

I had to reach out and act on my own if I wanted to be involved in the world at all. I got on the trial in Pennsylvania for the CapTel captioned phone, made a call to the only hearing loss group in Pittsburgh, HLAA, and became involved. I learned what a mistake I had made by turning over my hearing “problem” to my husband. There are books everywhere about taking responsibility for ourselves and our needs and I had read many of them, but I did not do it.

I grieved for everything for a while—my husband, my hearing, my secure and stable life—and then I moved on. I moved to Seattle and joined ALDA. I attended the 2011 ALDAcon, and as I moved through the sessions, I thought, “We are an amazing bunch.” Hearing loss brought us together and soon we found much more in common.

I’ve gone from hearing to deaf to bilateral cochlear implants and a very interesting, fun-filled, dynamic life.

Ann was born in Duluth, Minnesota, a long time ago! Her family moved often and eventually settled in Western Pennsylvania, where she finished high school and college. She began teaching and loved it. After the birth of her first son, an autoimmune illness took all hearing in her left ear overnight. The illness was never given a name or prognosis. The same type of illness occurred about 20 years later, and the hearing in her right ear began to deteriorate. Ann received her first cochlear implant in 1999 in her left ear, but it was considered unsuccessful due to calcification. Her second cochlear implant surgery was in 2008; it was very successful, and the first implant enhances the results. Ann moved to Seattle to be near family after the death of her husband and has found a great group of hard of hearing and deaf friends near and far. She can be contacted at annrodgersseattle@gmail.com.
meetings that we could feed an army for a day with the food (although the soldiers would be bouncing off the walls from the sugar). She fights NF2 (neurofibromatosis type 2), an inherited disorder in which tumors cause deafness and can also grow in the brain, the spinal cord, and other nerves. She helped set up a nonprofit organization, Advocure NF2, to support research into finding a therapy and, hopefully, a cure for this debilitating disorder, which (besides causing deafness) can cause paralysis and can affect balance, walking, eyesight, swallowing, etc. Even though she’s suffered greatly from the condition, she managed to hold on to her job for 15 years, finally retiring at the end of 2011. She’s also my companion, and I love her dearly.

As a chapter, we have complained to local theaters about poor captioning, we have set up display tables at the CAI events, and we have two monthly coffee nights where we do outreach and help local sign language students learn our special style of signing. We also have 50/50 raffles each month.

Four members enjoyed Valentine’s Day together, going to the Florida State Fair in Tampa.

Afterwards, we arrived at our group’s monthly meeting 15 minutes late because of traffic. About 12 others were outside waiting for us (I had the key). I made a beeline for the door, only to be greeted by the security alarm going off when I opened it. The day staff had forgotten to turn it off for us. We all filed in anyway. While most sat down and proceeded to have a meeting with the alarm blaring (ain’t being deaf wonderful sometimes?), three of us texted and voice called (thanks to a hearing member) people of the day staff, to no avail. Finally, we called the police. They didn’t arrest us, dagnabit—that would have made for a more interesting story. We ended the meeting then, as the officer thought the motion detectors were being set off, not allowing the system to reset. Half of us went to a local restaurant for our “meeting after the meeting,” where we had beer and dinner while chatting away and watching the hockey game.

Now, the amazing part of that whole day wasn’t necessarily the events but that we communicated effectively throughout the day. Thanks to our smart phones, we were able to text each other at the fair when separated, to send fair photos to Facebook friends (say that ten times real quick), to text those waiting for us at the meeting so they knew we’d be late, to text for help about the alarm, and, ultimately, to call the police. In days gone by, it would have been more like this: We were separated at the fair and so went to the car to wait for the others. They showed up about two hours later after having the police at the fair look for us. We drove to the meeting place and arrived half an hour late, where two people had stayed to wait for us, just in case. The others had gone home, worried that something had happened. After the alarm went off when we opened the door, we fled in fear, afraid that the police would arrive and shoot us.

Bill was born in Dayton, Ohio and became hard of hearing as a toddler. He was mainstreamed in school, creating the problems many ALDAns are familiar with: lack of social life and difficulty in noisy situations. These continued in college and then the workplace, where Bill was a civil engineering designer. He had joined a couple of churches, but it became increasingly difficult for him to understand sermons and to fit in. It wasn’t until he joined ALDA-Suncoast in 1996 that he was able to feel part of a group. He joined the board the next year, serving as secretary and then vice president, and about eight years ago he became president, a position he’s held ever since. ALDA acknowledged his contributions with its Fearless Leader award. Bill is on the board of Communication Access, Inc., and he recently joined Our Savior Lutheran Church in Clearwater, which merged with a Deaf congregation. He supports Advocure NF2, Inc. and SignWriting, a way to write signed languages. Bill can sign, and he lipreads fairly well. He has two adult children who know enough sign language to communicate with him. His grandson doesn’t sign but is quick to pick up paper and pencil. Bill keeps house with Cindy Henrion, takes care of a couple of old dogs, and is trying, for the third time, to grow a veggie garden. He can be contacted at reeseb2b@gmail.com.

ALDA-Suncoast is People (continued)... Continued from page 13...
ALDAcon will be held this year in Columbia, South Carolina from October 17-21. As in years past, ALDA, Inc. will provide a limited number of scholarships to help those in financial need who want to attend. Applicants for a scholarship must be members of ALDA, Inc., and be in actual need of financial assistance in order to attend. Priority in awarding scholarships will be given to first-time attendees. Inquiries regarding scholarship applications should be sent to Carolyn Piper at wicwas@wcvt.com. While email is preferred, you may also contact Carolyn at 82 Piper Place, Huntington, Vermont 05462.

The deadline for application submissions is August 17, 2012.

Donations to the scholarship fund are always appreciated. For information about donating, contact Carolyn at the email or snail mail address above.
Relationships and Communication (continued)...

Continued from page 15

audiologist in 1977, I was advised that I needed hearing aids. I declined. (I wrote about this experience in my article “Overcoming Denial” in the winter 2008 issue of ALDA News.) I finally purchased my first hearing aids in 1997. At that time I was self-employed, working with two other people creating custom software applications.

Developing custom software for a large company frequently necessitates meetings with groups of people, sometimes in a large room, and it is essential to understand what is being said. Karen, one of my partners, would frequently, “helpfully” make a loud announcement at the beginning of our meetings, “Janis has a hearing loss and you have to talk loud.” Sheesh! Karen’s announcements were embarrassing and annoying to me, but I never expressed these feelings to her.

It’s hard, now, to understand why I failed to make an introduction like this for myself. I was a newbie with hearing aids, living in a rural community with no resources to help me learn the ins and outs and no knowledge of assistive listening devices. I had not yet been introduced to organizations like the Hearing Loss Association of America or ALDA.

4. Patience and Understanding

Last year I was reunited with a friend after a 20-year separation. He had moved to Mexico, was traveling up the United States coast, and had found me through the Internet. What a wonderful surprise! When he arrived in Seattle, I drove to meet him several times, and one time he took me to dinner at a restaurant. By now, I had a cochlear implant in one ear and my trusty hearing aid in the other. I was still learning how to control my cochlear implant processor, and the restaurant, of course, had Muzak and lots of background noise.

After struggling to understand what he was saying, I asked if he would mind if I fiddled with my processor settings. I had forgotten that he once had a business where his employees were Deaf. He had no objection and patiently waited while I pressed buttons and changed settings. I asked him to just talk while I experimented, and he chattered on until I found the right combination of volume and sensitivity to understand him well. What a relief and a blessing!

I met with him several more times before he returned to Mexico. During our last meeting he urged me to always “stick to my guns” and ensure that my companions have patience and understanding and work with me to facilitate our conversation. What a friend!

5. The Journey of Relating and Relationships

Another friend, Bruce, has a bilateral hearing loss but can only afford one hearing aid. After I had my cochlear implant, I offered to loan him my “spare” hearing aid. He replied, “Maybe after the summer or in the fall.” I wondered why a person would turn down the opportunity to be able to hear better in both ears. Then I had to wonder about my own actions over the years. Why didn’t I tell Karen to stop blurting out “Janis has a hearing loss”? Sometimes, as in the case with my faculty member at college, the realizations and solutions occur long after the incidents. Sometimes, lessons learned are forgotten or ignored in new situations or with new acquaintances, when it seems awkward to, once again explain, “I have a hearing loss, and I need you to...”

My constant “companions” now are my “Please face me” buttons. I wear them on my jacket or coat. I also have a custom-made name tag with a replica of my “Please face me” button. Of course, things have changed immensely for the better now that I have a cochlear implant, but I still have problems in certain settings. I need to constantly remind myself that it’s okay and even preferable to explain my needs and keep learning about options, equipment, and helpful hints to ensure successful communication.

Attending meetings with others who have a hearing loss is extremely beneficial. For one thing, it helps to know I am not alone and my problems are not unique. It’s also a wonderful opportunity to learn how others handle and overcome their difficulties. Best of all, such gatherings provide the means to share what I have learned to help others.

We are living in a wonderful age of technology and services to help us communicate better with/despite our hearing loss, and organizations, like ALDA exist to help us learn techniques and share our stories. As the number of people with hearing loss increases—all those aging baby boomers, people who have lost their hearing due to ototoxic medications or military activities or loud noises—there are more of us to help each other. Let’s do it!

Janis has written several previous articles for the ALDA News. She has a progressive sensorineural hearing loss and is now “bimodal,” wearing a hearing aid in one ear and a relatively new cochlear implant in the other. She gave a presentation on “Empowering Strategies” at the 2008 Canadian Hard of Hearing association/International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (CHHA/IFHOH) Congress in Vancouver, BC, Canada, and has given presentations on assistive technology and other hearing loss-related topics at both HLAA and ALDA chapter meetings. She uses a web captioning service to facilitate telephone communication. Many of her articles...
**One of Us (continued)...**

Continued from page 17

children; and the opportunity to reinvent my life, change direction, and grow.

My most irrational fear is: Failure of any of the technology I’ve come to rely on in my life, from cochlear implants to my connection to the world through the Internet!

If I could hear again, the first thing I would do is: Listen to music and compare how it sounds to my cochlear implant music.

The thing I like best about myself: I genuinely like people and enjoy connecting with them. I also tend to see, think, and expect the best of people. If you look me in the eye, you will get a smile in return!

Nobody knows: I’ve got a three-year-old great-nephew who rocks my world! I’m lucky to rent my niece’s basement. Her youngest son was born after I started living with her, and he’s become the closest thing to both a child and a grandchild that I will ever know!

What I can’t stand is: Negative or judgmental people. If you’re negative, you’re not only begetting negativity and depression in your life but also spreading it to those around you. If you’re judgmental, you’re failing to see the value of each person and to realize that no one is perfect and we are all on the journey of life, trying to do our best to survive and grow.

Favorite memories: Lambing season on the Idaho farm where I grew up, and bottle-feeding and raising twin rams after their mother died at their birth.

Favorite saying: “If you change your thinking, you change your life!”

The bottom line is: A quote on Facebook that embodies what I think. It was attributed to someone named Cherralea Morgen and said, “Don’t let your past steal your present.” Every day is a new opportunity to reinvent ourselves, to forgive ourselves for our mistakes and vow to do our best, and to be equally kind and forgiving to others for their mistakes. My past few years have been all about finding the joy and happiness in each day. I no longer allow myself to wallow in depression and isolation or even to feel sorry for myself. The best years are ahead!

**In the Mind of a CART Reporter (continued)...**

Continued from page 9

- We thank our dear Lord for not making us the CART provider or captioner on duty when Robin Williams or Ozzie Osbourne appears on television or radio.

Best of all are the speakers who speak clearly, audibly, and with slow to moderate speed; use no new technical terminology or proper names; and wait their turn—which gives us the confidence that we can do a good job and continue on another day in this fast-paced, stress-filled, but interesting and enjoyable profession.

Now, I understand that these are generalizations and I am speaking from my own experiences as a CART provider and captioner, but I believe I am not alone.

Tess Crowder can be contacted at TMT.Tess@Verizon.net. She is a Registered Professional Reporter, Certified Realtime Reporter, Certified Broadcast Captioner, and Certified CART Provider. Tess serves as the executive director of Communication Access, Inc. and the president of Realtime Communication Services, Inc. (Realtime CSI).

**Relationships and Communication (continued)...**

Continued from page 21

and presentations are available on her website, www.talkshop.info/hoh, and her blog about her cochlear implant experience (from just before surgery to her three-month check-up) can be viewed at www.talkshop.info/blog. She can be contacted at JAMoore@talkshop.info.
The Late-Deafened Experience (continued)...
Continued from page 8

Going to ask anyway, so we just continued to smile. “Being deaf, are you guys even able to, you know, be intimate?” I’d heard it all, or so I thought. But someone asking me if I could have a sex life with my husband was the ultimate befuddlement. What I wanted to say was that, if she gave me her email address, we would gladly post a how-to vlog once we got home. I didn’t want to embarrass Kenny though, so I said the next best thing.

“Oh, we’re able to be intimate. The only hassle is that we have to plan it 24 hours in advance. You know, in order to get an interpreter in there with us.”

The woman looked quite confused, at which point her friend came along and pulled her away. I was left feeling rejuvenated. How nice it is to educate the general public. That woman will have an image burned into her mind for years to come.

My point is this: although Kenny and I have had our share of very stressful times, there’s going to have to be far more than deafness to break us apart. We love each other “till death do us part,” and nothing’s going to change that. Now please excuse me while I go make a phone call. Hey, an interpreter isn’t going to show up on her own. They need 24 hours’ advance notice, remember? (Wink.)

Michele J. Bornert is a freelance writer and ASL/Deaf Culture teacher in West Michigan. She owns Deaf Expressions, where she teaches ASL, both in person and online. Her website is www.DeafExpressions.net, and readers can follow her Deaf humor blog at http://deafexpressions.blogspot.com. She can be contacted at DeafExpressions05@gmail.com.

Uncle Bill and Aunt Mary (continued)...
Continued from page 11

Aunt Mary reached age 93, outliving my uncle by more than 20 years. In her old age, she, too, became deaf and had to confront the same disconnectedness that had bedeviled Uncle Bill for all of their married lives. Although she was given a hearing aid, she complained that it did her no good. She no longer could converse with others in the nursing home or over the telephone, and she, too, became isolated just like Uncle Bill. She was sullen and withdrawn and didn’t join in the social activities in the nursing home. She died alone and was brought back to New Jersey to be buried alongside her husband. It was my task to carry out the burial arrangements and order the gravestone for her. I had it made up exactly like Uncle Bill’s, with her name and birth date on the first two lines. I needed a third line to balance Uncle Bill’s “WWI VETERAN,” so I had it inscribed “TOGETHER FOREVER.” Poor Uncle Bill!

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.

Relationships Are Affected by Hearing Loss (continued)...
Continued from page 14

Social scenes haven’t been our strong point, and other instances of his impatience with repeating have popped up. I don’t know if it’s worth the frustration on either of our parts. Having ADD is not his fault any more than having a hearing loss is mine, but at least I deal with my hearing loss and he chooses not to deal with his ADD. I don’t know if this is a match made in heaven, but I do know that my hearing loss adversely affects our relationship.

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.
The only real security in a relationship lies neither in looking back in nostalgia, nor forward in dread or anticipation, but living in the present relationship and accepting it as it is now.

— Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Our World—News from the International Committee

By Cynthia Amerman and Liisa Sammalpenger

From our Asia-Pacific member Ishaque Mia of Bangladesh comes the exciting news that hard of hearing and deafened leaders of Asia-Pacific formed an Asia-Pacific Federation of Hard of Hearing and Deafened (APFHD) on March 2, 2012. The newly elected five-member executive committee includes three ALDAns: Hanh Duong Phuong of Vietnam, president; Muhammad Akram of Pakistan, secretary general; and Maheshwar Ghimire of Nepal, treasurer. The organization is now busy developing its website. Congratulations to all who were involved in the founding of APFHD, and we send best wishes for much success in improving the lives of deafened and hard of hearing people in Asian and Pacific nations.

Liisa Sammalpenger of Finland recently returned from Myanmar (Burma), where she learned what life is like there for people with hearing loss. Liisa reports she had two CART/signing interpreters accompanying her because Finnish law allows people with communication disabilities to take interpreters along on trips to other countries. Two weeks’ vacation is considered normal, and if someone needs to travel outside Finland longer for work, conferences, etc., application can be made for additional interpretation. Portable CART was provided on the bus, at tourist destinations, and even at the dinner table. On her first day in Myanmar, Liisa, her interpreters, her roommate, and the group leader visited the Mary Chapman Deaf School in Yangon. Liisa noted that noise is damaging the workers’ hearing in the Buddha sculpture workshops and gold leaf factories that she visited.

The International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH) will hold its World Congress in Bergen, Norway from June 24-28. Information is available at www.ifhoh.org. ALDAns who will be attending include Hanh, Akram, and Cynthia (as the ALDA delegate), and additional members may also go.
Registration Form

Please complete all pages of this form, print and mail, OR register online at http://www.alda.org

Name: __________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________
City/State/Zip: __________________________________________ Country: ____________
Phone: (___) __________ Voice ___ TTY ___ CapTel ___ VP ___
Fax: (___) __________ Email: __________________________________________

I am: (Check all that apply)

___ Late-deafened ___ Hearing ___ Hard of hearing ___ Deaf at birth
___ Bringing a hearing/service dog (Dogs must remain on leashes in public areas.)
___ Member of ALDA chapter/group
___ Spouse/companion (Copy and complete this form, select the appropriate rate, and attach with your form.)
___ Newcomer (attending my first ALDAcon)
___ Other (explain) __________________________________________

Special Needs

My special dietary needs are: ________________________________
Allergies: __________________________________________
Mobility or ADA in-room kit needs: ________________________________
Any other needs: __________________________________________

All workshops and ‘con events in the hotel will have sign language interpreters and CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation).

FM assistive listening devices will be provided at no cost. To make sure enough devices are available, you MUST reserve now. You will be asked to turn in your driver’s license when you receive the device. Your license will be returned when the equipment is returned.

___ I need an FM device. Check what you need to use the FM: ___ Neck loop ___ Headphones ___ Other___

ALDA, Inc. Membership: Include payment with your registration.

Note: Membership in ALDA, Inc. is NOT the same as an ALDA chapter/group membership. You must be a member of ALDA, Inc. to obtain the member rate for the convention.

___ New ___ Renewal ___ Already a member; my membership expires on ____________
___ Age 62 or older ($25.00) ___ Age 61 or younger ($30.00) ___ Business membership ($50.00)
Registration Fees

**Full registration** includes Thursday Welcome/President’s Luncheon, Friday Buffet Luncheon, Friday I. King Jordan Banquet, Saturday Award Luncheon, Saturday Karaoke Party, Sunday Brunch, Exhibit Hall, and all workshops.

**Spouse/companion registration** (limited to 1) includes all meals, workshops, and Exhibit Hall.

**Veterans/Scholarships:** Early Bird registration fee level applies until Sept. 15th 2012; then the Tortoise level applies. A limited number of scholarships are available. Contact Carolyn Piper, Scholarship Chair, at wicwas@wcvi.com for more information.

<table>
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<th>FULL REGISTRATION</th>
<th>Early Bird (Registration Mar. 1st – July 15th)</th>
<th>Regular (Registration July 16th – Sept. 15th)</th>
<th>Tortoise (Registration Sept. 16th – to onsite)</th>
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**Day registrations** include access to the Exhibit Hall, workshops, and the luncheon on specified day(s).

**Day Rates do not include I King Jordan Banquet.**

- One day $60.00 Amount due
- Two days $110.00 Amount due
- Three days $185.00 Amount due

**Day(s) selected: indicate which day(s) you will be attending:** Thursday______ Friday______ Saturday______

**A la carte meals:**

- Thursday Welcome/President’s luncheon - $35
- Friday Appreciation Luncheon $35
- Friday I. King Jordan Banquet $55
- Saturday Award Luncheon - $35
- Saturday Karaoke Party $30
- Sunday Brunch $30

**Total due:** Add membership and registration (or partial registration and/or a la carte meals) = $________

**Method of Payment**

- Credit card (check one): __**MasterCard**__ __**Visa**__ __Check__ __Money order (payable to ALDAcon 2012)
- **Card Holder’s Name:** __________________________
- **Card Number:** __________________________
- **Expiration Date (month/year):** __________________________
- **Signature:** __________________________

**Mail to:** ALDAcon 2012 Registration
22 Barker Square Dr.
Pembroke, MA 02359

Questions? Email registration@alda.org

To pay through PayPal, go to www.alda.org and register online

I wish to use the ALDA EZPlan and will make periodic monthly payments of $________. The final payment is due by September 30th, 2012.

**Refund Policy for Registration**

Requests for refunds (minus $50.00 processing fee) will be honored until **September 30th, 2012.**

Contact ALDAcon 2012 planning chair Dave Litman at litmanaldacon12@hotmail.com for consideration of unique circumstances, such as illness or a death in the family and for registration transfer information.

**Reserve Your Hotel Room TODAY! Use Group Code ALDALDA.**

The ALDAcon room rate of $130.00 ends September 16th.

Reservations may be made online at www.marriottcolumbia.com

Marriott toll-free number is 800-880-1885. The direct number is 803-771-7000.

For more information, go to www.alda.org.
Roommate Information

Complete this section only if you wish to be contacted about a potential roommate for ALDacon 2012, otherwise skip this section.

I would like the roommate registrar to attempt to locate a potential roommate for me.
___Yes ___No

By checking YES, I agree to allow the roommate registrar to share my information via email with any ALDA attendee of the same gender. Also, I agree to coordinate with my potential roommate to determine if we are a match and notify the roommate registrar by email of our decision. (Determining whether to room together and share expenses, and masking room reservations are the responsibility of the agreed-upon roommates.)

Roommate Information

I am ___female / ___male
I am a ___smoker / ___nonsmoker
I will room with a ___smoker / ___nonsmoker (check all that apply)
My pet/assistance animal will attend the convention and share my room with me: ___yes / ___no
I prefer a roommate without a pet/assistance animal ___yes / ___no
Allergies or special conditions my potential roommate needs to know about me:

______________________________________________________________________________

Complete this section only if you want your name and other contact information included in the ALDacon Attendees List. This list, including only the information you provide below, will be given to all ALDacon attendees, who may use it to contact each other after the convention. (Leave blank the communication methods that you do not use.)

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Email: ____________________________________________________________

Text: _____________________________________________________________

Relay: ____________________________________________________________

Voice: ____________________________________________________________

Face book: _________________________________________________________

Twitter: __________________________________________________________

Postal Address: ____________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
I. King Jordan Award for Distinguished Achievement

Nomination Form

This award will be presented at the discretion of the ALDA Board of Directors to a late-deafened person who has (a) had a successful and distinguished career in his or her chosen field of endeavor, (b) made significant contributions to his or her community, profession, and/or nation, (c) served as an outstanding role model for late-deafened adults everywhere, and (d) clearly demonstrated to the hearing community that a person's competence, integrity, and human worth are not diminished by the fact that he or she is deaf. The recipient will be chosen by the ALDA Board of Directors.

Nominations for the 2012 award should be submitted by August 1, 2012, to:

Brenda Estes
I King Jordan Award
C/O ALDA Inc
8038 Macintosh Lane, Suite #2
Rockford, IL 61107
Email: president@alda.org

Name of nominee ____________________________________________________________
Address ______________________________________________________________________
City/State/Zip: __________________________________________________________________
Phone____________________ Voice __ TTY __ CapTel __ VCO __
Age of onset of deafness __________________________
Title / Occupation __________________________________________________________
Is the person you are nominating aware of the nomination? Yes___ No___
Has the person consented to having his/her name place in nominations? Yes ___ No___
Name of person making this nomination: __________________________________________
Phone: ____________________ Voice __ TTY __ CapTel __ VCO __ Email: __________________________________________________________________

Please provide the following information in a narrative attached to this form:

1. What are the nominee's significant accomplishments in his/her field of endeavor?
2. What significant contributions has the nominee made to her/his profession, community, and/or nation?
3. In what ways has the nominee been a role model for late-deafened adults?
4. How has the nominee demonstrated to the hearing community that a person's competence, integrity, and human worth are not diminished by the fact that he/she is deaf?
WHO? Adults of all ages who have slowly or suddenly lost their hearing from a variety of causes. If you are feeling lonely, isolated, discouraged, confused, or frustrated due to losing your hearing as an adult, then ALDAcon is for you! Are you a spouse, sibling, parent, friend of someone feeling these reactions and want to learn everything you can to support your loved one? If so, ALDAcon is for you! If you want to meet people just like you and feel welcomed and inspired, then ALDAcon is for YOU!

WHAT? ALDAcon 2012. The Association of Late-Deafened Adults (ALDA, Inc.) is an international organization that supports the empowerment of individuals who have lost any amount of hearing after acquiring spoken language. We all come together once a year for this exciting convention. ALDA believes in “whatever works” as our communication strategy. Some use CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation), with words projected onto a large screen. Some have hearing aids or implants, and some just rely on their residual hearing. Some lipread, and some write. No matter how severe your loss or what communication method you prefer, you will be accepted & accommodated at ALDAcon.

WHERE? Down south in Columbia, SC at the Columbia Marriott, located in a vibrant and historical part of downtown and within walking distance to the state capitol building. Columbia’s Museum of Art is just across the street, and you will not want to miss out on the downtown Vista area, full of shopping, dining, and nightlife. Something will surely “tickle your fancy!” You may also be interested in visiting the Riverbanks Zoo or exploring the home of the South Carolina Gamecocks, on the campus of The University of South Carolina. You can take a break to splash in the Columbia Marriott’s indoor pool or head to the gym for a workout. After an exciting day of workshops and activities, you may want to wine and dine and experience southern hospitality with your ALDA buddies in the City Center Grille or Garnets Sports Bar.

WHY? ‘Cause YOU are worth it! YOU need it and darn by golly, YOU deserve this! The con itself will be full of keynote speakers and workshops that will boost your emotional, spiritual, social, and mental well being. You will learn the latest and greatest communication advances. You will find exhibitors showcasing helpful technology and many other services. Of course we cut loose and have fun during group meals, scheduled social events, and our very popular “Saturday Night Karaoke Party.” Put on your dancin’ shoes and leave the hearin’ aids in your room! THIS you won’t wanna miss folks! Ya never know... there may be a Rhett Butler or Scarlet O’Hara sighting somewhere.

I reckon I will stop the naggin’ atcha now and give you a chance to let Carolina settle in your mind. Don’t worry, the slang and twang will come naturally when ya get here and experience all of this goodness! See y’all soon at ALDAcon 2012! Contact Rachael Morris at aldarach2012@hotmail.com for more info 😊
What Is ALDA?

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:
Name _____________________________________________
Organization: _______________________________________
Address ____________________________________________
City _________________________________________________
State: _______ Postal Code: __________ Country: __________
Home Phone: ______________ TTY □ Voice □ Cap Tel □ VP □
Work Phone: ______________ TTY □ Voice □ Cap Tel □ VP □
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):
□ Electronic (Email) □ Paper (U.S. Mail)

If paying by check, please mail this form to:
ALDA, Inc.
8038 MacIntosh Lane, Suite 2
Rockford, IL 61107

□ General Member, Age 61 or under......$30.00
□ Senior Member, Age 62 or over.........$25.00
□ Veterans Membership $25.00...............$25.00
□ Business Membership.......................$50.00
□ Tax-Deductible Donation..............$ _______
□ New □ Renewal

If paying by check or money order, payment must be in U.S. funds and drawn on a U.S. bank. If paying by credit card, complete the section below or Renew online by going to: www.alda.org/alda_membership_form.htm

For Credit Card Payment by Mail:
□ MasterCard □ Visa

Amount _________________________________
Account # _______________________________
Expiration Date ___________________________
Signature __________________________________
(For Credit Authorization)

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

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

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.