In 2000, after 30 years of being hard of hearing, I became deaf. I did not go deaf. “Going deaf” implied that I went somewhere against my will. No, profound deafness was a new coming into being for me.

During the final years of my hard of hearing life, I had such difficulty communicating, I pretty much checked out of society. Though I tried to understand what people said, and hearing people assumed I could still hear if I wore one hearing aid, I missed 95 percent of their talk.

Profound deafness was a relief! I embraced becoming a deaf person. No more pretending I understood when I didn’t. Being deaf taught me to be the whole and real person I’ve always been, deafness notwithstanding. Being deaf taught me what people with disabilities face daily and it taught me to have patience with hearing people. Being deaf taught me to enjoy the silence and to listen to the spirit within.

Writing those preliminary thoughts showed me I was mixing together what deafness had taught me at first with what I am learning from deafness now. Undeniably, a difference exists between facing the fact of profound deafness when it first occurs and living with deafness for a decade or so. Defining that difference for me may reveal something useful to others. In the first few years, along with the shock, sadness, and disorientation, came curiosity and some anticipation. I reacted in the spirit of the saying, “If life throws you a lemon, make lemonade.”

“Ok, I got the gift. Thank you. Now, what kind of gift is this?” Being an optimist (becoming deaf is for optimists), I have only positive feelings about gifts. All gifts are good. I sensed that there was something positive and beneficial in losing my hearing. I just had to figure out what that was. There were the little gifts: I joined ALDA and made lots of friends; I joined a disabled sailors association and made more friends (as well as learned to sail); I learned some ASL signs and experienced the intrigue of that language.

After five years of being deaf and with newly implanted electronic sound via a cochlear implant, I became angry. I had hardly ever done that before. I became impatient and assertive about what deaf people need. I began to view myself in the hearing world in new ways. I began to understand the hearing-centered reality, which becomes abundantly clear to those of us without hearing. What was happening to me over several years of being deaf? Could my personality be changing, was I becoming a different person? Since I knew that a profound experience generally affects a person’s behavior, I told myself that these changes were merely the necessary adjustments I had to make to continue to thrive in a hearing environment.

With the CI, I was happy to have sound again. I could now be deaf or hearing, a choice I didn’t have before. I became persnickety about the sounds I was going to let in. I would not pollute my hearing with angry, false, loud, or unpleasant sounds, at least as much as I was able to avoid them. I let gossip go because it tends to use a conspiratorial tone that I could not hear well. Pompous, unenlightened talking heads on television got lost on me if I did not use captions. I walked out on family shouting matches. Being by myself was not lonely; I was welcoming the silence.
One of the most important things I’ve learned from deafness is that we’re more than just the sum of our parts.

I didn’t always believe this. I once told my mother that I felt like a beautiful dress with a big spot on it, and it wasn’t until many years had passed that I came to realize that deafness didn’t diminish my worth as a person.

In earlier years, I was also acutely aware of the many things that deafness prevented me from doing—essentially anything that required good hearing. (Today, advances like captioning, telephone relay, and cochlear implants have opened many of those doors.) Then I read a comment that moved me profoundly, by Jill Kinmont, a skier with Olympic potential who became a quadriplegic at 19 after a skiing accident. She refocused her goals, saying, “I believe in doing what you can do with what you have.” Gradually, I learned to focus on what I could do rather than on what I couldn’t.

Losing my hearing has made me more sensitive to the needs of all minorities and more aware of the difficulty of fully understanding what we haven’t personally experienced. I’ve met professionals who think they know just what I need but don’t. Some are willing to learn, but sadly, there are others who are sure they already know everything necessary.

Deafness also taught me how important it is to speak up about my needs. When I first became an advocate, I didn’t know how to do this, and I remember attending a disability forum where the microphone blocked my view of the speaker’s mouth, preventing me from speechreading (at that time, I had enough hearing left to be able to combine speechreading and listening). During a break, I asked the event coordinator to lower the microphone so I could speechread, but she huffily responded, “We have an interpreter!” (CART wasn’t yet available.) I was totally taken aback and rendered speechless. Today, I would have no difficulty explaining that most people with hearing loss don’t know sign language. Deafness also helped me to become more diplomatic and patient. I’ve learned that change usually comes a lot more slowly than we would like.

And one of the most important lessons that deafness taught me is the value of community with others who share my struggles, as a source of emotional support, information, and advocacy. ALDA has been a shining light in that area.

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

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Hey! Look who’s back! Don’t get used to it, though. I’m just filling in for Eileen Hollywood while she takes a brief hiatus. Eileen returns next issue and everything will be back to normal—I promise!

I was really excited when Nancy suggested the theme for this issue, “What Deafness Has Taught Me About Myself.” That was something that never came up in all the years I did this job before. I was really looking forward to what everyone had to say on that subject—and I was not disappointed.

Reading the articles that follow brought me back—way back. I started losing my hearing in my early 20s while serving in the Navy. It was a bilateral progressive loss that slowly deteriorated over the course of sixteen years. Sixteen years of my brain being forced to develop ever-changing repair strategies. Sixteen years of needing more and more powerful hearing aids. Sixteen years of overwhelming stress, struggling to guess what my defective ears could not understand.

I had a conversation one time with someone who had lost their hearing quickly. They regretted they did not have more time. More time to hear. More time to prepare for the transition. More time to put off the inevitable. Well, I did have more time. And I smiled as I thought to myself, “no matter which side of the fence we are on, the grass is always going to look greener.”

I likened the difference between our hearing losses to a chef who tossed one lobster into a pot of boiling water and placed a second lobster in a pot of cool water, then turned a low flame on under the pot. That second lobster is going to feel comfortable early on, but believe me, the chef did not do it any favors.

What I’m leading up to is that sixteen years of progressive hearing loss taught me nothing. Nothing positive, anyway. I denied my hearing loss and put off getting my first pair of hearing aids far too long. I was embarrassed and felt defective and ashamed that I could not understand what was being said. I would pretend that I understood what someone told me, even though my response sometimes left folks wondering whether I was psychotic.

Fast forward to September 30, 1995. I made a phone call. I cranked up my power BTE, maxed out the volume on my Walker Clarity phone, and strapped a portable amplifier onto the earpiece of the handset. All that assistive technology barely got me through the call, and yet it never occurred to me how much easier it would have been to use my TTY to make a VCO call through the relay service. (I owned a TTY but only used it to call my deaf friends.)

The next morning, I woke up profoundly deaf. And to tell the truth, I just was not prepared. Like the second lobster when the water continued to get hotter and hotter, I felt frantic and trapped, and I struggled to claw my way out. But there was no escape.

As luck would have it, just three days later I attended my first ALDAcon at the Clock Tower Resort in Rockford, Illinois. It was there I met Nancy Kingsley, Kathy Schlueter, Laurieann Chutis, Geoff Brown, Steve Larew, Tom Davinroy, Bob Elkins, and others who would become my mentors and role models (whether they knew it or not). I saw a note that Larry Littleton had tacked up on the bulletin board by the registration table that said “Lost my hearing; found my family!” and I realized that was true for me, too.

Beginning a new deaf life pushed me to face my challenges head-on instead of trying to run away from them. I discovered I had skills and abilities I could use in service to others. I could make a contribution—no matter how small—that bettered the lives of others and gave me reason to feel good about myself. I guess the most important lesson deafness taught me was that I am a person of value. I can hold my head up and feel worthy of the love and friendship I found in my ALDA family.

On that note, I bid thee adieu and head back into retirement where I belong. I love you all!

Mark Dessert
Losing My Hearing? Oh, No! Is My Life Over?

By Maryruth Dilling

Twenty-five years ago it started. An insidious muffling of sound. A bit of dizziness. Pressure. After testing, I received a diagnosis of Meniere’s.

I was young. I still thought I was invincible. I had no worries. I could cope with the dizziness. The small loss of sound was not that important. I was ok.

Fast forward to my late 40s. The dizziness and hearing loss are severe and are interfering with my quality of life. Now I am paying attention.

Me…wear hearing aids? My audiologist told me I was a little young for this degree of hearing loss. My insurance would only pay for one set of hearing aids. I told her I needed them now because I was working on my master’s degree and had to be able to hear my instructors and fellow students.

So what has my hearing loss taught me about myself? I have learned that I am very innovative. I think out-of-the-box in order to accomplish things. When I first started back to school, I had large issues with hearing everyone. What did I do? I switched to online schooling, where everything is communicated through writing. As I advanced in my classes, audio was added to the requirements. No problem. I obtained a letter from my audiologist about my hearing loss, and transcripts were provided.

I have also learned to become more aware of the actions of others that I used to not notice, and of how I can help people who also have a hearing loss but will not ask for assistance. I have become more outspoken in asking for what I need. I alert people to face me while speaking and to slow down if they are talking too fast for me to understand. If I hear something I think is weird, I ask for clarification. I no longer ignore what I miss—I ask for repeats.

Some of the most important lessons have been that I can survive. Even if my hearing totally goes, I can make it. I can still be a success. I can still contribute to society. Will it be harder? Yes…but not impossible. There are many assistive technology devices out there to help me in today’s world. If the needed items are too expensive, there are organizations to assist me in purchasing them. I do not need to give up on life and exist in silence. The last lesson is to appreciate all the more those sounds that are in the perfect frequency level for me to hear. I’m thankful for what I can hear and don’t dwell on what I can’t.

I’ve learned that losing one’s hearing does not mean a death sentence to one’s previous life. Adjustments can be made. Assistance can be given. Life, still precious, can be enjoyed.

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

Contacting the Author of Listening Closely

Anyone who wants to contact Arlene Romoff about her book Listening Closely, which was reviewed in the summer issue of the ALDA News, can write to her, care of the publisher, at the following address:

Charlesbridge
85 Main Street
Watertown, MA 02472
In 1993, when I was 28 years old, I lost all the hearing in my right ear.

I grew up with a hearing loss that was discovered when I was four years old. Nobody knew the cause, but we suspected a high fever from roseola. I always thought my hearing would stay the same; in fact, I never really gave my hearing (or lack thereof) much thought at all. I treated my hearing aid like I did my glasses...just a device to help me with one of my senses. I certainly never thought I might lose all of my sight someday, so why would I think I might lose all of my hearing?

Losing all my hearing in one ear, virtually overnight and for no known reason, rocked me to my core. Suddenly a whole host of worries presented themselves to me, including the possibility of going completely deaf someday. I woke up terrified every morning, wondering if I would lose the rest of my hearing that day. I lived in the hearing world, not the Deaf world. I didn’t know sign language, and my family and friends didn’t know it. I spent two weeks without my hearing aid, because I had worn the aid in my right ear and it was suddenly unaidable. My dispenser made an ear mold for my left ear and ordered analog bi-CROS hearing aids for me. While I waited for my ear mold to be made, I had to navigate my hearing world using nothing but the hearing that remained in my left ear. I did word processing for a supply company; I could still type and do my job, but communicating with my coworkers was very, very difficult.

When my new ear mold and hearing aids were fitted, I was weak with relief. Things sounded normal again. The bi-CROS aids picked up sounds from my now-deaf right side and transmitted them to the left. My hearing remained stable and slowly, I began to stop worrying and started taking my new level of hearing for granted again. I mean, this couldn’t happen to the same person twice, right?

In early April 2008, I realized my hearing was getting a little strange, but I chalked it up to an illness because it was that same kind of faint “hearing things from the bottom of a tunnel” type of hearing that I get when I’m fighting a fever or virus. I wasn’t sick, but assumed I was on the verge of something, and my husband scheduled an appointment for me with my doctor.

The day before my appointment, I woke up and realized I was completely deaf. My teenage children were leaving for school, so I tried to keep it together until they left, but I couldn’t. I burst into tears in front of them, wailing to my husband, “I don’t want to be deaf! I can’t believe I’ll never hear you guys talking to me again!” I was completely hysterical.

It was only a few days before I realized I could only do so much crying and feeling sorry for myself. I was still sad and scared, and I used my blog to express my feelings during this time. But I also decided I had to move on and decide how I was going to live my life as a deaf woman.

My first concern was communicating with my family. I had remarried in 2002 and my husband knew some sign language, so he began teaching signs to me and the kids. We rented sign instruction DVDs, bought books, and learned to fingerspell the alphabet. We never did learn ASL, but we learned enough signs to communicate and get the message across. My speechreading skills kicked into high gear, and these really saved me. My family was very, very patient—they made sure to face me, speak at a rate that was easy for me to speechread, and repeat words or fingerspell until I got it all. They never said, “Oh never mind” or “It’s not important.” They knew I wanted to be part of the conversation, whether or not it was important.

After I had a few big scares, my husband put up mirrors around my desk so I could see if someone was approaching from behind. (It’s pretty terrifying to suddenly feel a hand on your shoulder when you aren’t expecting it!) We ordered a TTY from the state and got a flashing light for the phone. I used online relay as well. I already had a bed shaker alarm clock, and of course we were using captions on the TV. (My husband has a hearing loss as well, so he uses these accommodations too.)

I found out that I qualified for cochlear implants, and I began the process of testing and insurance approval. My hearing tests were easy; I sat in the soundproof booth, listening to nothing, until they opened the doors and said I was done. I asked if I could get a cochlear implant in each ear at the same surgery. Although it wasn’t done very often, they said it was no problem as long as my insurance approved it...which they did. The whole process was quick: I had my testing in May, my insurance approval in early June, and my

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President’s Message

By Brenda Estes

It is an honor to be serving as your President this year, and I look forward to working with our Board towards achieving these goals.

- Identify and pursue funding sources relevant to ALDA’s mission and vision to support existing and new programs
- Develop a marketing plan to increase membership (for both new and renewal memberships)
- Develop an outreach packet for our chapters and groups
- Create a mentor program for ALDAcon newcomers
- Create a chat room on ALDA’s website to provide the members an opportunity to share their ideas/concerns with the Board
- Continue networking with other organizations to advocate for everyone with a hearing loss

We need your help to achieve these goals. By working together, we can make ALDA a stronger, more visible organization serving not only late-deafened adults but everyone with a hearing loss. Please don’t hesitate to contact me anytime—my email address is president@alda.org
I became deaf when I was 19, over 35 years ago (yeah, I know, I don’t look it!). So it’s hard for me to know what I’ve learned from being deaf as opposed to what I have learned just maturing. I’ve learned that cars can break down, furnaces can stop working, kitchens can flood, and it can all be fixed. But I don’t think that’s related to being deaf.

I have met some of the most amazing people—both culturally Deaf and late-deafened—who are at the top of my gratitude list since I became deaf. Because of them, my life is so much richer. My friends have laughed with me and dried my tears, and I have spent many holidays with them that would otherwise have been very lonely. I have also developed leadership skills from my involvement with both the Georgia Association of the Deaf and ALDA.

I have learned a new language. Communication is “whatever works” in the land of ALDA, but I just had a knack for signing, I guess. Between my patient culturally Deaf friends and going to a lot of workshops geared to interpreters, I became fluent. A few times I have been mistaken for a native signer, which is a supreme compliment. Because of sign language, I could again go to worship, plays, and meetings. CART hadn’t yet been invented, so there was no other way I could have communicated in those settings.

I’ve learned to be patient. Some of my ALDA friends don’t sign, so we write. It’s slow but worth every minute. Every person has stories to share, and some need to take longer to express theirs, and that’s fine.

I learned I could dance! Thanks to Steve Larew and the late Jerry Barnhart, I have participated in ALDA karaoke. That NEVER would have happened had they not dragged me out onto the dance floor. I doubt there is anything I wouldn’t do after that!

I remember the early years and the Kleenex. It was not an easy journey. But am I glad I am deaf? Right now, I wouldn’t want it any other way!

Robin is a former president of ALDA and was originally from upstate New York, but she has lived in Georgia for over 30 years. When not volunteering for ALDA-Peach, she can be found hugging the furries, cheering the Braves, or reading. She can be contacted at furriesmom@comcast.net.

Journey from Sudden Silence to Sound (continued...)

Continued from page 6

On August 20, 2008, the hearing world came back to me. The sounds that came into my brain that day were nothing like anything I’d ever heard before... but they were sound and I was speechless with delight. If someone had told me back in 1993 that someday I would have little computers in my head and would hear sound again in an ear that hadn’t worked since 1968, I would’ve just laughed.

As my brain learned how to hear with my new cochlear implants, my tinnitus faded away to nothing. Every day, I asked my family to help me identify what I was hearing, until finally I could identify sounds on my own. With each mapping, things sounded more and more the way I remembered them. I heard the voices of my husband and children, music, my cats meowing, and my dog barking. One day, as I was leaving the audiologist’s office, somebody behind me asked me for directions, and I heard the request clearly without speechreading!

It’s been 2-1/2 years now and I never, ever take what I hear for granted. It’s been gratifying to know that I can deal with my deafness even if something happens to my CIs someday. But every day that I wake up, put on my processors, and hear the rush of sounds once again, I am thankful, amazed, and humbled.

Wendi is 46 and lives with her family, five cats, one dog, one guinea pig, and one hedgehog in Glendale Heights, Illinois. She writes a personal blog on hearing loss and life in general at http://suddensilence.wordpress.com. She and her husband, Dave, own Contemporary Candles, where they hand-pour scented candles and candle party favors. Her email address is wendi.wendy@gmail.com.
**Chapter Happenings**

*By Ann Smith, Curator*

Marlene Thometz reports that in October, a group of ten people came out to walk for Team ALDA-Chicago at the Walk4Hearing event in Lincoln Park. Forty percent of the money raised at the event went to the Chicago chapter, and team captain Marsha Kopp announced that this money would be used to cover captioning costs for more than a year. (The rest went to the Hearing Loss Association of America, which sponsored the event.) Marsha Kopp reports that also in October, ALDA-Chicago sponsored a New Members’ Luncheon where new members had the opportunity of meeting with the Board of Directors and Team Leaders from the Elmhurst Neighborhood Support Group. It was an informative afternoon for new members learning more about ALDA-Chicago. The November activity was a pizza party at Aurelio’s.

Martha Mattox-Baker reports that ALDA-Midwest members enjoyed seeing each other at ALDAcon 2011 in Indianapolis. Distance prevents the Midwest group from having regular meetings, so it was wonderful to have ALDAcon in a location that was convenient for them.

Ann Smith reports that in September, ALDA-Peach members traveled to a local hearing aid center, where a variety of high-power hearing aids and assistive devices were described and demonstrated. Robin Titterington and Ann Smith represented ALDA-Peach at the annual health fair sponsored by the Georgia Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (GACHI). The Peaches brushed up their technology skills at the October meeting, with Yael Shaner and Marge Tamas demonstrating “Graphics 101 with PowerPoint Basics.” November brought the annual business/election meeting, where two new board members, Xan Burghardt and Kristin Stansell, replaced outgoing officers Marge Tamas and Belinda Miller. Robin also gave a report on ALDAcon 2011.

Send information about your chapter’s happenings to Ann Smith at fabsmith@att.net by February 21.

**I Hear With My Eyes**

*By Christina Scardino*

Deafness has taught me to struggle in the hearing world. I became a lip reader and finally learned to speak at the age of ten with the help of a hearing aid. I went to regular schools and was put in special education classes for aphasia. By my senior year of high school I had all regular classes and a GPA of over 3.4. At this time I wanted to be “normal” (just like the kids in the hearing world) because I didn’t fit in and felt alone. However, I learned to deal with and adapt to the hearing world. When I was in high school I was told that I wouldn’t be able to go to college and would become a bus person cleaning tables at a restaurant, but I proved them wrong. I got a B.S. in business management and held a job with New United Motor Manufacturing, Inc. (NUMMI) for 21 years until the plant closed last year due to the poor economy.

Since I lost my job, I had to focus on dealing with my hearing loss. I didn’t really have to face this until now. Recently, I got involved with a late-deafened support group. A friend met a woman who is late-deafened, and I met with her and learned about the meetings. I began going to them and found out that I wasn’t alone. The late-deafened experience is similar to what I’ve been going through. A door has opened up to possibilities for me to grow and learn about myself more than I ever did before.

I recently had a hearing test and learned for the first time that I only hear vowels. I also found out that my hearing aid was way outdated and I was behind with technology, so I will be getting a new and better aid. I also decided to sell my own merchandise called “I hear with my eyes.” My products can be found at [www.zazzle.com/ihearwithmyeyes](http://www.zazzle.com/ihearwithmyeyes) and represent people who are hard of hearing, late deafened, and Deaf.

I have come a long way. I’m between two worlds, the hearing world and the deaf world. Now that I found the late-deafened community, I know there is a group that I belong to that understands what I have gone through. We all can share our experiences and learn from one another.

Christina can be contacted atc_scardino@yahoo.com.
One of Us

By Karen Krull, Curator

I first met Rick when I was doing registration for the Chicago ALDAcon in 2008. I thought he was a newbie then, but it turned out that his first conference was in Rochester the year before. He made it to Seattle in 2009, too. Last year in Colorado Springs, he got off at the wrong airport and had to take a $150 cab ride from it, but he made it to ALDAcon. Like so many of us, Rick was born hearing, grew up hard of hearing, and became late-deafened progressively. He never wore hearing aids; his hearing profile was not helped by them. He’s now a cochlear implant recipient, uses the phone, and runs a construction company. A hard worker, he’s very active in the hearing loss community, attending socials, meetings, and support groups, and he was a plaintiff in the recent successful California lawsuit to get Cinemark to provide captioning in its movie theaters. He tried learning ASL but has settled for a very smooth version of “ALDA Crappy Sign.” Rick is definitely one of us. You can contact him by email at rdrutherford@aol.com.

Name: Richard (Rick) Rutherford

Where were you born? I am an Army brat. I was born in Japan and grew up in Germany, where I was the interpreter for my parents, absorbing German like only children can. We moved all over the place.

What is your current residence? I live in the San Francisco Bay Area, just north of Berkeley in El Cerrito.

What is the cause of your deafness? After many doctors, over the years, diagnosed my continuing hearing loss as this...or that...definitely this...and so on, Dr. Schindler at UCSF diagnosed it as genetic. I’m 1/4 American Indian, and the Native American population has the highest incidence of hearing loss at 20%.

Age/year you became deafened? I don’t know the exact time I became deaf. I received a cochlear implant (AB) in 1994 as part of a clinical trial (very successful, I might add) and I had some residual hearing in my other ear. This hearing decreased until one morning, several years after receiving my cochlear implant, I woke up and realized, “I am deaf! Yawn...finally! Can I go back to sleep now?” In other words, it was very anticlimactic. I was about 57 or 58 at that time.

Marital status? I was married twice and divorced twice (both ex-wives are hearing). I have four children, all girls and all hearing. I’m dating hard of hearing and hearing women.

What is your present job? Responsible managing employee (RME) of a construction company. We are stabilizing and moving into a higher niche market (the only niche in construction that has any profit).

What is the worst job you ever had? Assembling huge nut and bolt assemblies when the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) was being built.

Movies you want to see again? Ghost (with the right person) and Avatar. I love the line “all energy is borrowed—when we die we must give it back.”

Books you tell others to read? Morrie: In His Own Words by Morrie Schwartz, a nice book to live by. [Editor’s note: This is the hero of Mitch Albom’s best-selling Tuesdays with Morrie, an account of the author’s visits with Morrie, a former professor who was dying of Lou Gehrig’s disease.]

I stay home to watch: mainly the History Channel, NCIS: Los Angeles, IRT: Deadliest Roads, and Deadliest Catch (because I grew up in Puget Sound and worked briefly on a trawler).

Favorite pig-out food: that would be pulled pork. Now my comfort foods are tapioca pudding, chocolate, and sugar.

Hobbies: Working with my hands, going to almost any hard of hearing, late-deafened, or Deaf event or meeting and socializing with same.

If I had more free time, I’d: probably waste it.

The hardest thing about becoming deafened is: learning to accept and love myself as I am, not the way someone else thinks I should be.

I began accepting my deafness: the moment I got a CI. This allowed me to finish the grieving process (which continues if your hearing continues to deteriorate), and begin building my coping strategies. This acceptance continues and deepens as time goes on. Socializing and doing service in the hearing loss community helps this process of acceptance.

The worst thing about deafness is: that I can’t communicate the joy I have found with my hearing friends. This late-deafened thing separates us now—I am on one side with all this joy and serenity and they are still over there, where I used to be...clueless. They haven’t figured out the truly important things in life or learned how to be grateful for what they have, and they don’t have open minds and hearts. I used to be like that too. It’s not their fault.

The best thing about deafness is: that

Continued on page 11
it brought me to my knees. It stripped away my defenses and my artificial view of the world. It created a void that has become filled with positive things I never would have allowed in otherwise. Nothing less would have broken down the barriers that I had built in my life. Before losing my hearing, I thought I was becoming a strong person, but I was really becoming a smaller, weaker person. I have had a second chance to build a better me, and for that I will be forever grateful. I could never have done it on my own.

How did you learn about ALDA? ALDA was thrown in my face in 1988-1989 by Edna Shipley-Conner, who dragged me, kicking and screaming, into the hearing loss community. She was the first positive role model I had of a late-deafened person who liked herself and was having fun.

In what ways has ALDA enhanced your life? I cannot think of all the ways that ALDA has enhanced and enriched my life. The greatest thing is that I was able to meet other people who trudge this road of happy destiny, like I. King Jordan, Bob Davila, T. Alan Hurwitz, and countless others. I would look at them and think, “Wow! So THAT’s what you do...and THAT’s how you do it! I want what you have!” I found that I am not alone—there is a group I can identify with. That’s my social identity. The other part is that there are many things I can do within this group to help me feel good about myself, individually. That’s my personal identity.

What do you do when you are depressed? For me, isolation is depressing, but the social fabric of the hearing loss community gives me opportunities to break through the isolation.

My most irrational fear is: Fear of the dark, since childhood

If I could hear again, the first thing I would do is: pick up with music where I left off. Violin, guitar, and piano. I’d go back to writing music and going to concerts and meeting the musicians, like I did during the 60s.

The thing I like best about myself: I’m a happy person, I’m a grateful person. I feel fortunate to have lost my hearing and fortunate, because of that, to have found a profoundly deeper part of myself that I would not have found any other way.

Nobody knows: There is no middle speed for me. I’m either going 150 mph or procrastinating.

What I can’t stand is: narrow-minded people.

Favorite memory: 1968, People’s Park, Berkeley. Looking west, down Dwight Way. The large, straight street was full of the protestors as far as I could see. We had come together in unity. We had shown the Establishment that we were real, we were organized, and we weren’t going to go away...and we changed the world. Today, we are in almost exactly the same place, faced with another Establishment.

Favorite sayings: The work you do is the joy you get. You can’t give away what you don’t have. The only thing you take with you when you die is that which you have given away.

The bottom line is: It’s not about the money, it’s not about the power or the prestige or the people or places or things...it’s about sleeping at night and feeling that you are living a clean life. First do no harm, do not be a burden to others, and live a useful life.
People think that, because I lost my hearing after I learned to speak, I am missing so much out of life. And I agree that it takes some working on to not go totally bananas. Before deafness I was an actress doing musical theatre. This is not exactly something I can pursue anymore. Movies aren’t the same experience as before, but now, being deaf for a long time, I enjoy captioned movies just as much as I remember enjoying movies when I could hear. Finding theatres that offer captions for first-run movies is a bummer, though, and I admit it grates on my nerves. [Editor’s note: This should change in the near future, since the major chains have recently agreed to start providing captions as a result of several lawsuits, including one by ALDA.]

Plays and musicals are definitely not as exciting as I knew them to be. Watching an interpreter (when one is provided) and the action on the stage at the same time can be difficult (though there are theatres that address this situation by having the signers on the stage acting along with the hearing actors). I really miss theatre. I will say, though, that I took one of my kids to see an UNinterpreted production of To Kill a Mockingbird last year and believe I enjoyed it every bit as much as my daughter did.

I also miss being able to sing (well). I used to have a great voice. Now, because I can no longer control my voice when I sing, dying dolphins would sound lovelier. I’ve told my kids over and over how well I used to sing, but, after hearing me as they’ve known me, I think they need more evidence.

Then there’s small talk, something I can no longer participate in with hearing people...at least not casually. I never liked small talk before, but have found that it does feel a LOT more isolating when you can’t easily joke around with people. I still use a lot of sarcasm in my conversations, but many people don’t realize I’m just being a silly smart-mouth and just think I’m basically a witch.

But last night changed things for me and made me see something more about my life than what I was missing.

One of my kids was going to be playing two different instruments in the school band concert. Because there’s no choir at this school (GASP!), it was a totally musical night—not something that really interests me anymore. And, no, if you’re wondering: feeling the musical vibrations in my butt does NOT excite me. After knowing and then losing music, vibrations and lights just don’t compare to what I know those hearies were hearing.

Anyway, my daughter was supposed to play the xylophone in one song. This was the first time for her, and I wasn’t thinking much of it. I mean, it’s the xylophone. I remember playing “Mary Had A Little Lamb” on that thing as a kid. Ooooo. (That was a sarcastic ooooo, if you missed it.) But when it came time for her to do the song with the rest of the band, I was flabbergasted! Amazed! Tickled pink! Stunned! I don’t know much about the song, but she was the star. She was banging on the instruments, going back and forth between two of them. Her sticks were flying and all eyes were on her. This was no “Mary.” This was like Flight-of-the-Bumblebees-fast. And she ROCKED IT. I didn’t need to hear to know that.

After the concert, people she or we didn’t even know were running up to her and saying how COOL she was, and I just stood there and glowed. That’s my daughter, I would’ve said if anyone had actually talked to me. She was good. I got to see it. And, even with the absence of sound, I knew I had witnessed something truly great. Do I feel like I missed out, because I’m deaf? Not. One. Bit.

I guess I’ve been deaf loooooong enough to be OK with it, though I know many who aren’t. One of these days everything is going to be accessible to people with a variety of special needs—including deaf people. I don’t know if I’ll still be alive when that finally happens, but I do know that I’m not going to sit around and be sad about it and waste my life concentrating on what’s been “taken” from me. I mean, really! If I were doing that, I would have missed my rock-star daughter’s solo. And that would have been a tragedy.

Michele is a freelance writer and ASL instructor in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she lives with her hearing husband, Kenny, and three hearing children, Mollie, Jacob, and Natalie. Contact her at DeaffExpressions05@gmail.com and visit her website at www.DeaffExpressions4t.com.
What Deafness Has Taught Me About Life
By Tess Cruz

When I lost my hearing, I felt like my whole world had collapsed on me. I lost my job, and I felt so alone. Then I accidentally found ALDA, and it helped me a lot to know that there are many other people who are deaf like me.

Now I realized that my illness and the resulting loss of my hearing has actually been a blessing for me. Before I lost my hearing, I took it for granted that I could hear, sing, dance to music, and talk to my family on the phone. Becoming deaf has given me new eyes, not literally, but a new way in which my eyes see everything differently.

Now I enjoy the beauty of everything I see and experience. I enjoy walking on the beach and watching the sunset, the birds, the ocean waves, and children playing. I like feeling the wind hugging me. I enjoy walking barefoot and feeling the sand molding around my feet. I even see the beauty of dark clouds just the same as white ones. I love to sit and watch everything.

I always have something to be thankful for because I can see all those beautiful things that surround me. I look at the trees and plants when a breeze or wind is blowing and see that the wind is music and the trees and plants are dancing to it. Before I was deaf I didn’t see it that way. Being deaf has taught me to enjoy what I have, and to thank God for it.

There will always be challenges as I go through life being deaf, but that makes me stronger. All I need to do is to ask God for strength. There will be frustration, but that is the way to grow in patience. These problems and difficulties create opportunities for me to grow closer to God. Through reading the Bible, I came to know that He’s inviting me to go with Him on a long walk through this life. The most important thing that I learned from being deaf is how much He loves me.

I know that God created me with a specific purpose, and maybe being deaf is a part of it. Losing my hearing was His way of getting my attention. He gives me words of love, forgiveness, and consolation during those times when I feel down. I still have a lot to learn, but Jesus’ patience, kindness, and love are all I need, and they are always there for me.

I compare my earlier life to the present. When I could hear, I was working a lot and doing well financially. Now I have to live with what I get from Social Security and cut down on expenses, but I’ve never felt such peace and happiness because now I have time to spend with God. I realize too that the more money I made in the past, the more I would work to make even more. I don’t have as much as I did before, but I feel content, and I’ve learned that I have a choice to be miserable because of what I don’t have or to be happy with what I do have.

Tess grew up in the Philippines and has three children. She was an RN until she lost her hearing as a result of radiation treatment in 1992 for stage 4 nasopharyngeal cancer. After becoming deaf, she lost her job and some friends. At first she was angry at God, but she now believes that she had to lose her hearing to hear Him. She can be contacted at tescruz@aol.com.

Driving a car became stressful, so I sold my car and used public transit. One time when I was waiting for a bus, a man next to me asked me if I had a cellphone. I thought he wanted to borrow it and moved my hand to my jeans pocket. “Um…it’s ringing,” he said. He’d heard it, I hadn’t. We laughed. I began to appreciate a community with people I had never connected with in my car-driving days.

As a child, I had an active imaginary life. As a late-deafened adult, I again found the time for whimsy and letting my mind wander. What I am learning now is that I love being deaf. Deafness has taught me to look around and live in the moment, to listen to the quiet and ditch the image making. I can share my deaf self with whatever the world brings me.

After ten years, I have discovered that a profound, life-changing gift can be wrapped in a shocking and frightful package.

Margreta retired after 25 years as a college English teacher and moved to the San Francisco Bay area. She can be contacted at mvpein@yahoo.com.
I cannot hear the elevator ding! I was attending an SHHH (now HLAA) convention in a large hotel where the elevators surrounded me and I couldn’t watch all the lights at once. What to do? I kept missing elevators that were dinging behind me. Finally I moved to a location where I could observe all the “up” lights and got to my floor.

That’s one small instance of what a person who becomes deaf has to contend with. Missing conversations is just part of being deaf. Deafness has been a constant surprise and challenge for me to overcome in order to live a somewhat normal life in a hearing world since becoming totally deaf after years of being hard of hearing and wearing hearing aids. I always loved puzzles, and now my life deaf is a daily source of solving them, and I rejoice every time I do.

Recently, I was invited to a card party (I love to play bridge). The game was at an apartment complex with a security gate, and to open it you had to phone your friend to buzz your car in. Obviously, I couldn’t do that. What to do? I watched people coming into the complex and noted how long it took for the gate to close behind them. “Yes,” I figured, “I’m sure there is time for my car to get through after the first car enters,” so I waited for another car to go through and speeded up to make it through the gate and to my card party. I mentally patted myself on the back. Another puzzle solved.

Sometimes I feel like I am walking around in a disguise. Why? No one looking at me can tell that I am deaf, and thanks to my mother’s genes, I don’t look like the little old deaf lady that I am. Every day, wherever I go, whether grocery shopping or to the drugstore or cleaners, I have to decide whether to go through the routine of explaining that I am deaf in order to find out what my bill is, or whether to just fake it.

You guessed it—I usually fake it. Most of the time I can see the cash register and know how much I owe. I also know what the cashier will probably say—“How are you?” or remarks about the weather or a request for my credit card, absolutely nothing of importance, and I can usually read the cashier’s lips. A smile or shrug of my shoulders is enough for me to get by without giving an explanation that I don’t hear a sound.

How about driving a car? I can’t hear anyone who is honking at me. Most of the honking occurs because I am in the wrong lane or straddling the line, so as much as possible, I stay in the right lane so that no one has to pass me on that side. Obviously, I have to be sure my mirrors are adjusted correctly and watch them constantly. When I had to renew my driver’s license, I watched what people were asked, and I don’t think that anyone suspected that I didn’t actually hear a thing.

Why am I telling you all this? I hope that it will make it easier for those who are facing deafness with dread and depression. I found that it isn’t the end of the world and there are many ways to live a full and useful life. I have been inspired by the people I have met at ALDA and SHHH (now HLAA) who didn’t have the benefit of hearing sounds for as many years as I have. Some of them have additional physical problems as well, but they persevere. Many use sign language or have a companion to help. I don’t sign or have someone to assist me, but I do have many friends whom I am teaching to use body language and pantomime to help us communicate with each other.

I encourage everyone with a hearing loss to take advantage of all the mechanical devices available. I use flashing lights to alert me of phone calls and visitors at my door. I have a voice carryover telephone and watch television and DVDs with closed captioning. I see wonderful foreign films with English subtitles. I watched a Frank Sinatra retrospective with captioning and in my mind’s ear, I heard him singing again. There is a big, wonderful world out there, and I’ve learned that deafness doesn’t have to stop anyone from enjoying it.

Reprinted from Twenty-Five Chats with Harriet. Readers can contact Harriet at harrietfrankel@hotmail.com.
Do you find it difficult to participate in community activities and events due to your hearing loss? How do you deal with or overcome such challenges?

Twenty-some-odd years ago, when I considered myself hard of hearing (and was not yet conversant in sign language), the only way I could participate in certain community activities was to approach the facilitator before the event started and get permission to jury-rig my personal FM system and its mic to the podium microphone. My Phonak FM receiver would faithfully beam to my telecoils everything that the speaker said…usually.

One event I attended was a professional development workshop my employer sent me to. A key presenter, while highly knowledgeable in his field, was also highly uncomfortable on a stage. He fidgeted and spoke in a very subdued voice, so I raised the volume of my hearing aids and my Phonak all the way and strained to understand what he was saying.

Just about that time, the beige color of my FM system mic—which was wrapped around the podium microphone he was supposed to be speaking into—caught his eye. Apparently he was grateful for the distraction, because he began playing with my FM mic.

BANG!...POPI... CRACKLE!... BANG!!!...drilled into my dysfunctional ears!

My recruitment back then was so severe that mildly amplified sound was painful; this was just plain excruciating! Now, my employer not only paid the fee for me to attend this all-day workshop, he was also paying me time-and-a-half overtime for being there. I did not have the option of turning off my hearing aids and sitting like a lump; I had to learn something by the end of the day!

It’s nearly impossible for me to attend community activities and events that are presentation-driven. Watching a talking head is about as much fun as watching flat paint dry. It’s not even gloss or semi-gloss or satin. Just flat. And that’s exactly how I feel when I’m done suffering through an event like that.

A few things I do:

1. Choose events that have good visuals, like art shows or plays that have a lot of movement and color.
2. Accept invitations to attend events that have been specifically set up to accommodate those of us who are late-deafened. If we don’t go, they might not do it again.
3. Be proactive, not reactive. When an event is listed that I’m interested in, I call or email ahead about accommodations. If nothing is provided, I let them know what I need. Maybe someday they’ll get it. If not, I’m not worried. I have my group.
4. Bring another late-deafened friend when I just have to go to an event where there’s almost nothing but talking heads. If I’m going to suffer, I want to share it. At minimum, we can talk/sign to each other. I’ll also have my smartphone with me so I can take care of important things like updates, re-arranging icons, and posting notes of extreme boredom on Facebook.
5. Make our own events. We have two coffee nights and one meeting a month. (Some of us also go to the same church, which specifically changed their sanctuary to accommodate us.)
6. Join email lists for local interests and mention accommodations for people with disabilities whenever an event is being talked about. Some of these people have never even thought about disability access, so raising community awareness increases the possibility of accommodation.
7. Make sure deafness is not invisible, wherever I go and whatever I attend. I tell the people running the event that I’m deaf. I sign to other deafies I’ve brought along with me and ask people if they sign.

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ALDA News

ALDAAnonymous (continued)...
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It is hard to participate in community events. I can still hear well enough to tell there is sound. When there are a lot of people, it is so noisy. It is like loud static amplified by my hearing aids. This is especially hard when the group is filled with children. I have dropped out of many activities due to it not being worth the effort.

If I find I want to go, I leave my aids at home. If someone wants to talk to me, they have to get real close and talk loud. Many times I ask for a few repeats. Those who are my friends don’t mind. I do get a lot of “never mind’s,” which is irritating. I cannot allow my hearing loss to make me into a recluse, so I continue to go to things, just not as much.

When my nerves have had it due to the static, I simply leave. I leave early many times. My family is normally ok with this. They know I do as much as I can.

This static will get better as my hearing worsens. Then that will bring its own problems and the need to find new ways to cope.

I ask for interpreters at some events, but some gatherings are SO small I still don’t feel right doing that. I do enlist interpreting training students when possible. If it’s a visual event, such as an art display, I go with another signer so at least the signing will be visible and perhaps things will get better. I have also asked for scripts at some events and have been surprised how often they are available. So, it’s getting better, but it’s still not as good as I wish it were.

Next ALDAAnonymous question: What books or advice have helped you in dealing with hearing loss?
Send your responses to Bill and Robin at aldanonymous@gmail.com by February 21.

Our World—News from the International Committee

By Muhammad Akram, Chairperson

On behalf of the IC we congratulate Lauren, the former IC chairperson, for winning the 2011 ALDA Brainstorm Award for establishing the Collaborative for Communication Access via Captioning (CCAC)! She is always so active and has great ideas.

Readers may remember that Asia-Pacific hard of hearing and deafened people are trying to establish their own platform, and the Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on Hard of Hearing and Deafened People was scheduled for November 2-4, 2011. Unfortunately, it had to be postponed due to flooding in Bangkok, Thailand (the intended venue of the workshop). But there is hope that it will be rescheduled soon.

IC member Liisa Sammalpenger reported that the 20th Nordic Summer Week for the Late-Deafened was held in July, hosted by Finland. Four Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden) take turns hosting this biennial event, and the next one will be held in 2013 in Denmark, near Copenhagen. (The first one was held in Denmark in 1981.) The program was translated into four languages and provided in two languages via CART.

Photos of this summer’s event can be accessed at www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10150241282113533.33884.576228532&type=1.

The next International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH) World Conference will be in Norway—the land of the midnight sun—from June 25-28, 2012. Online conference and hotel registration is available. For details, visit the IFHOH website at http://www.ifhoh.org.
GA to SK

By Ann Smith, Curator

Congratulations and best wishes to ALDA-Carolina Pride’s David and Rebecca Litman, who were married this summer. Dave is a long-time ALDAn and a former Region 3 Director.

ALDA-Peach mourns the death of Dr. Iris Criscoe of Eatonton, Georgia in September. Iris was the first dues-paying member of Peach.

Harriet Frankel, a beloved member of ALDA-Peach and ALDA, Inc. celebrated her 95th birthday at ALDAcon. Harriet grew up in Indianapolis, so ALDAcon’s location there had a special meaning for her. ALDA made the birthday celebration a memorable event with two cakes, a DVD of photos about Harriet’s busy life, and the publication and sale of her book. ALDA President Cynthia Amerman also joined Harriet and her daughter Ellen on a tour of sites that Harriet remembered from her childhood.

A recent article in The Manila [Philippines] Bulletin Newspaper Online reported on the Visual Shot Club (VSC) for deaf photographers, which was established in 2009 and now has 30 members. The article included the following information about a fellow ALDAn: Raphael Torralba, member and project coordinator of VSC, is another empowered deaf person. An accident when he was a child left him hearing-impaired. ‘When I was young, I used to be ridiculed. People would say that I would not reach my dreams. But I didn’t lose hope. I trusted in the Lord, for He alone can help and guide me,’ recalls Torralba, who earned a college degree from a regular school and now works for a wellness company. Torralba laments the fact that most able person[s] want to be understood more than they are willing to understand people with disability. But [it was] only after he showed his photos and what he is capable that he gained respect.”

Send news about what is happening in your life to Ann Smith at fabsmith@att.net by February 21.

SKSK

What happens to you is less significant than what happens within you.

—Louis L. Mann (paraphrased)
ALDA President Cynthia Amerman noted that the annual I. King Jordan Award is ALDA’s most prestigious. This year’s award was presented by Dr. T. Alan Hurwitz, Gallaudet University’s president, who noted that the award honors individuals who have made an enormous contribution to better the lives of people who are deaf and hard of hearing. ALDA Past President Linda Drattell then described the recipient, John Waldo:

He is an attorney whose practice focuses on the unique legal needs of deaf and hard of hearing people. He fights for equal access to social, civic, educational, and cultural events. He works to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing people have equal educational and employment opportunities and to obtain appropriate benefits for those who have lost their hearing at work.

He was instrumental in overturning the court ruling in the State of Arizona versus Harkins Amusement that has resulted in movie theaters in Arizona being required to provide movie captioning. He was involved in a similar court case in Washington State and has supported efforts in Oregon and Utah. He worked together with Disability Rights Advocates to represent ALDA in filing a lawsuit against Cinemark in California to compel them to provide movie captioning in all of their first run theaters.

He works on communication access and advocacy issues through the Washington Communication Access Project (Wash CAP), and he represents individuals on issues involving job discrimination, workers’ compensation, education, and private insurance matters.

He spoke at this year’s TDI conference along with national advocates from NAD, HLAA, ALDA and others. His model at Wash CAP is now being used for advocacy efforts elsewhere. In Utah, the Popcorn Coalition, with representatives from UAD, AGBell, HLAA, ALDA and Cued Language are now reworking their coalition to follow his model at Wash CAP.

He has provided numerous workshops at several organizations’ conventions, written articles, submitted statements to the Department of Justice, submitted friend of the court briefs, and argued in court for all of our rights. The Department of Justice does not consider responses to its Notices of Proposed Rulemakings complete regarding issues that affect our community without hearing from him first.

He received his law degree from the University of Utah School of Law and is admitted to three state bars: the Washington State Bar Association, the Utah State Bar Association and the State Bar of Texas.

John Waldo’s acceptance speech follows:

I. King Jordan Award Presentation and Acceptance Speech: John Waldo

I suspect that I was born with reasonably good hearing, but by the time I was 10 years old watching cartoons on television, I was the only kid who didn’t realize that Donald Duck actually spoke. I thought it was just random, meaningless quacking.

I went to junior high school and high school at an Episcopal school in Salt Lake City, Utah. Imagine what an Episcopal school in Salt Lake City, Utah, was like. It was very, very small. And actually that was a good thing for me. Being in classrooms that were no larger than half of this stage, it wasn’t done as an accommodation because I didn’t know at that time that I had a loss. But it was probably as good an accommodation as we could have come up with. When I went to college, though, and in a normal size classroom, I thought the lectures were boring. I thought that drinking coffee in the student union and playing pool was much more interesting than going to class. And I did not do well in school. I realized in retrospect that maybe if I would have been able to hear and understand the lectures, I would have found them a good deal more compelling.

After college, I got drafted. It was 1967. The Vietnam buildup was at its height. I went in to take my physical and I flunked because of my hearing. And I thought to myself: “I don’t think the threshold for being able to carry an M 1 through the rice paddies of Vietnam is all that high, so if I can’t do that, my hearing loss must be of some significance.”

I spent 10 years kicking around in the newspaper business as an editor, where I didn’t have to listen a lot. Then I went to law school. By this time, I was acutely aware of the fact that I had a hearing loss.

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and had to do something about it. So I made sure that I sat in the front row of the classes where I could look behind me to read the lips of the students who were talking, and read the lips of the professors. And by accommodating my loss this way, I was actually able to do very well. So I got kind of cocky and thought, “I don’t hear very well, but I can be Perry Mason, be a courtroom lawyer, do all this stuff that always seemed like it’s so much fun when you see it on television.” I went out and started doing that for four, five, or six years.

In 1990, I spent three months in Dallas trying a case. We got a terrific victory for my client, and the other side appealed, so I had to write an appeal brief. When you have to do that, you get a written verbatim transcript of everything said during the trial. It was three months long, 32 volumes of transcripts. I started reading, and if you want to see something that is going to shock you out of denial, read verbatim what you and other people say. I thought I had knocked it out of the park, but I was asking the witnesses half the time, “could you repeat yourself?” or I was responding to something they didn’t say.

So I started doing appeals, where instead of talking to a jury, you’re talking to a judge or a panel of judges. And when I’d start arguing an appellate case, I would tell the judges, “I don’t hear well. I really want to be able to respond to your questions, but I won’t know who it is that’s trying to talk to me unless you indicate it in some way.”

When I began doing this, the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court looked down at me and said, “Mr. Waldo, are you asking us to raise our hands before we talk to you?”

I said, “Yeah, I hate to admit it, but I guess I kind of am.”

He said, “Okay. Great. We’ll be happy to do it.”

So I found that there was actually a lot of empathy to be gained by simply being up front about my hearing loss, asking people for the accommodation I needed. They were very happy to provide it.

I’m going to fast forward now to about 2007 when I was living in Washington State, in a small, bucolic, wonderful community. I made the biggest mistake you can make in such a community—I ran for public office, where everybody talks about all the things they don’t like about you. Fortunately, the voters of Bainbridge Island decided that politics was not going to be my future.

One of the things that happens when you get smacked down like this is that you think, “Why in hell did you ever want to do this?” And the answer was that I really wanted to do something useful. So I asked myself, “What else can you do that’s useful?” Then I thought, “You’ve read the ADA and the Washington State law against discrimination. You know what kind of world they promised to us, and you know how far away we are from being there. Maybe you should start applying some of your legal background to bridging the gap between where we’re supposed to be and where we actually are.” I wondered how to do this, and the answer that came to me was to put together an advocacy group. So we organized the Washington State Communication Access Project, a nonprofit membership corporation that would advocate on behalf of the needs of any of our individual members.

Working as a group has some real advantages over individual advocacy or class action lawsuits. First, a group can come up with solutions that will work for a lot of people as opposed to individual solutions that tend to be tailored to a specific, individual problem and, maddeningly enough, are oftentimes required to be confidential. Why somebody would do something that would help a lot of people but then say “keep it quiet” baffles me, but that’s what happens.

Second, working as a group allows us to be strategic and systematic in our approach, to try to create changes that will really make a difference over the long run. We can pick our battle, our case, and our plaintiff. In other words, we can set it up in the best possible way.

The game plan we followed is: First we’re going to ask nicely. We’re going to get in touch with people and say: “Here is what we’d like you to do. Here is why we need it. Let us help you figure out how to make this work.” And as long as people were willing to communicate with us, we tried to be a resource for them and be as helpful as possible.

On the other hand, if they either ceased communication or just told us “no, go away,” then we would walk into the courthouse.

In the state of Washington, we were able to get the three largest live theaters to start offering captioned performances. We got the arts and lecture series to caption all of their author readings. We got Washington state ferries to start doing dropdown, visible captioning on the announcements they made on the boats and in the terminals. All the professional teams started doing captioning of their public address announcements. We only had to file a couple of lawsuits, and both of those were resolved very, very quickly. Most of
Current and former ALDA presidents, L to R: Ken Arcia, Roy Miller, Linda Drattell, Cheryl Hep- pner, Kathy Schlueeter, Marylyn Howe, Mary Clark, Bill Graham, Jane Schlau, Cynthia Amerman (current), Bernie Palmer. Seated: Robin Titterington.
Not present: Edna Shipley-Conner (deceased), Tom Davinroy, Karen Keefe, Christine Seymour

Cheryl Heppner, center, receives ALDA Angel Award. L: Cynthia Amerman, R: Kathy Evans

Harriet Frankel autographing her books (photo by Robin Titterington)

Photos taken by Ken Arcia

Singing at the annual ALDAcon karaoke party

L to R—Cynthia Amerman and Karen Krull present the Able ALDA Angel Award to Gloria Popp
A special event at this year’s ALDAcon was ALDA News columnist Harriet Frankel’s 95th birthday celebration at the ALDA Awards Luncheon on October 29, which was attended by Harriet’s daughter, Ellen Matson. ALDA also recognized this milestone birthday with the publication of Twenty-Five Chats with Harriet, edited by yours truly, which was sold during the ‘con and autographed by the author.

Robin Titterington, a former president of both ALDA and ALDA-Peach, Harriet’s chapter, gave a short presentation about Harriet, saying:

I feel like I’m representing all the ALDA Peaches. We share Harriet with you, and we’re proud to have her as part of our family. Harriet was born on October 29th, 1916. We’re so glad we can celebrate her birthday with her, and we will always have a party for anybody turning 95 at ALDA. I’ve known Harriet for about 10 years. She’s been on the ALDA-Peach board of directors, and she’s also been our newsletter editor. You have read many of her articles in her ALDA News column. Harriet grew up hard of hearing and later became deaf. She had a cochlear implant but it was not successful. She doesn’t know sign language and can only lipread some conversations. But if you’ve ever taken the time to get a pen and paper and write with Harriet or type on your laptop, you will be richer for it. She has traveled the world and owned her own business. She loves playing bridge and told us many times, “You don’t have to hear to play bridge.” She tried to teach me once. I don’t think it was my ears that were the problem.

Harriet has a beautiful home in the heart of Atlanta. It’s a pretty big house for one person, so she has several tenants. They better pay their rent, because if they don’t, she will take them to court. She’s done it. And she gets what she’s owed.

How many 95-year-olds do you know who use a computer? You can send emails to Harriet. She uses CapTel to make her phone calls. She’s probably better at technology than I am. Harriet is very proud of her Jewish heritage. When we went to the Jewish museum, she pointed to the names in stone in the lobby, mentioning the people she knew. Her late husband’s photo is in that museum, and she has donated some things to them. [Editor’s note: Harriet learned drafting at Georgia Tech and is also proud of her role as “Rosie the Riveter,” helping to build B-29 bombers during World War II.]

When we went to ALDAcon in Las Vegas a few years ago, there were four of us from Atlanta, including Harriet. We were walking through the lobby to go to dinner when some ALDAns from Boston said, “We’re going to Chippendales [a male strip joint]—want to come?” Remember, we’re from the South, so I didn’t think so, but Harriet decided to go. The next morning, she came in to breakfast and told us that those men were gorgeous. I think she was about 87 at the time. She saw more of Las Vegas than I did.

ALDA President Cynthia Amerman then displayed a short slide show about Harriet’s life that celebrated her sense of adventure, her sense of fun, her athletic ability, her creativity, and her devotion to ALDA. One shot showed Harriet’s trip to the Grand Canyon when she was in her 80s. She was also shown at work for the ALDA Peaches, who gave her an award for her contributions. Another photo depicted Harriet winning ALDA’s Able ALDAn Award. (Harriet commented that she’s also a pioneer in her neighborhood, where there’s a stone plaque on the street noting that she was the first one to renovate her house.) Another photo was taken at Harriet’s 90th birthday party at a neighbor’s house, with 70 people attending.

Cynthia then reminisced about her experiences as Harriet’s roommate at the 2007 ALDAcon in Rochester. Every morning, Harriet stretches to keep herself limber, and one day Cynthia watched her stand up and palm her hands on the floor. Cynthia was so excited by the fact that a 91-year-old could do this so easily that she had Harriet demonstrate this feat to others. She and Harriet went out to dinner one night in the hotel restaurant, and Harriet told Cynthia the story of a trip she took to Mexico, driving a group of teenage girls with her. While Harriet was talking, all the hearing people in the restaurant were listening and laughing the whole way through.

It’s obvious that everyone who knows Harriet has a special story to tell about this remarkable woman, and ALDAns who were fortunate to be present at her 95th birthday party will always remember it.

By Nancy Kingsley

Harriet Frankel’s 95th Birthday Party at the ALDA Awards Luncheon

ALDA News columnists Harriet Frankel celebrates her 95th birthday at ALDAcon
ALDAcon: Going to Happy Treatment

By Antonia Lindsey

As a full-fledged member of the Kelp Tribe, Meniere’s folk living in that underwater world of aural pressure, pain, nausea, and disequilibrium after the disease has burned away hearing and left but a semblance of balance, ALDAcon was the prize worth the process. I braved the terrors of travel and will use every chance I can to go to future ‘cons. Thrilled as I was to get the scholarship to attend, the 10-hour roundtrip plane ride from Oregon to Indianapolis lived up to its evil reputation, but the nausea and dizziness I experienced pale in comparison to this phenomenon that is “the ’con.”

Robin Titterington (aka Meryl Streep, the Prophet in the Chair) predicted this, and her veracity is unquestionable as her presence is gracious. Terri Singer’s humor was another sign to let my hair down because she has the right bad-girl-kicks-ass vibe to say all sorts are truly welcome, even us black sheep gone grey. Which is good, otherwise I would have been utterly gobsmacked by Ken Arcia’s wig at the karaoke party; more on karaoke momentarily.

The presentation on dual disabilities was water in my desert of the past 11 years’ struggle with Meniere’s and eventual deafness. Dr. Ellen Kaitz, Rachael Morris, and equally marvelous Marty Mattox-Baker (my Meniere’s mentor in the photo) gave me back my hope and a better plan going forward to stop shrinking in the face of disparities with the Hearing Well-Bodied World. Sharaine Roberts, by her example of inclusion and use of “whatever works,” Kathy Evans’ and Kim Mettache’s strategically dosed tactile medicine (hugs), and Rebecca Herr’s compelling presentation all helped me map my experience in this new terrain of REAL community. My discussion with Eve Waldo, who is sheer blessing in human form through her authenticity, gave me strength in the most awkward moments, when my barriers were up in front of my face and shame over my differences engulfed me.

I missed a lot of workshop content because of the nausea and dizziness in elevators that prevented my personal “plane” from ever landing (it actually took another solid week after I arrived home in Portland, Oregon). I worried that those who gave me the scholarship might think they had wasted their effort on one too broken to really engage with the events. Deborah Scott (who generously traveled with me) and Lisa Bothwell, who were my roommates, were champs; their kindness was endless and I am fortunate to count them as friends. The power and presence of the wonderful people and connections throughout the conference brought me a safe place to grow new skills, grieve, and gain new ground. Now to highlights.

Karaoke was a grand in Deafland and the joy of it is that everyone sings all at once, together, signing, singing, all-inclusive, which is a tradition ordained by the Karaoke King (aka Ken Arcia) and which I heartily endorse. I enjoyed every moment and was even handed a balloon by the lovely Georgia Van Der Gen of the Stichting Plotsdoven contingent from Holland. But my highlight was the magic moment at my mentor’s...um...claws.

My roommate Deborah surreptitiously pulled out her camera at just the moment Marty came around my walker and surprised me, helping me morph into a Halloween Monster. My tonsils and nostrils are enough to frighten the dead. Our devoted Marty, who manned the orientation table and volunteer area, is the scary tiger behind me. The laughgasm that followed was the needed remedy to slay remaining Ghosts of Fear. It made karaoke and more possible. I could inch my walker up there, participate, give something back, be with friends, and later find my way to Anita Dowd, a deaf musician, so we could grab each other’s throats (to feel pitch changes through vibration) and make some joyful noise, with the encouragement and company of Karen Griffard Putz and Dutch Dancing Queen Margot deVreede. Life can be full when we give up, give in, and get over it.

ALDAcon gave me an experience of inclusion that I haven’t had for six years after so much time bed-ridden between surgeries, failed medical attempts to manage a chronic disease, family members who don’t sign or visit much, and living in a land beyond the former world of my clinical career and side work of music performance.

What has deafness brought me and taught me?

Being in a Dizzy Deafugee body is an adventure summed up by David Byrne (of Talking Heads) in his famous line: “How do I work this?” I have indeed had some losses. When Dr. Bill (that’s Dr. Bill Travolta Pants, in case you’ve not met him) came up to me at the very end of karaoke and administered THE HUG, that moment gave me permission to crumple in total grief and honor the sprouts of life left like kelp adrift in my ocean. Despite loss, there is Hope and Happiness

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ALDacon: Going to Happy Treatment (continued)...

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in the Stream of Others. I know Dr. Travolta Pants did this with the same wisdom of the group of elders who were providing the medicine hugs at the proper times, the Wigs of Wonder and all the other measures this community knows from experience to share together to bring back Life in its Tiger Suit of Joy. ALDAns live in the Country of Immense Heart. AND:

I came back with…freedom. I choose to exercise it more fully and strongly, thanks to all of the experiences I had, from watching the interpreter share the stories of Dr. Kaitz aka Murderball Ellen, Boots Morris (Rachael), Marty Tiger, to being ministered to by the entire medical team of the ALDA Board & Conference Committee that planned and executed this healing program. It could be a treatment program for those whose souls are shrinking—that's how restorative it is.

Deafness has brought me community. Who knew?? I belong in ALDA, a diverse bunch of tolerant and talented Deaf/deaf/late-deafened/hard of hearing people, a claim of inclusion many political parties, organizations, and even churches cannot live up to. The variety, diversity, and acceptance renews my faith that showing up just as we are, being present to each other over time no matter what the horizon holds, is what life is for. As a deafened person, I have one guarantee: I don't have to do this ALONE because of ALDA. You are ALDA and I thank you today and every day. I'll see you next year at the ’con (aka Jerusalem). You will know me by my walker but I'll try to keep my tonsils in my own yard so you're not scared to hug me. I like those…hugs, and yeah…even my walker. Attitude of gratitude. It works. I conclude with waves of appreciation.

Antonia Lindsey Rathbun is 56, late-deafened, and living with Meniere’s as a semi-retired art therapist/artist. She resides with her husband Jeff and three cats (the Persian Brothers Fine Feline Wool Mfg. & Distributors, Ltd.) near Portland, Oregon, enjoying the endless green and watery wonders of the Pacific Northwest. When she is not in the studio, she consults and publishes on clinical intervention with children and families who have alcohol and drug-related disorder and, neurobehavioral and communication differences at www.antoniarathbun.com, and she also heads the art therapy department at MundoPato, an international virtual therapies gateway for autism. Antonia can be reached at Antonia@antoniarathbun.com.

I. King Jordan Award Acceptance Speech (continued)...

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the time, once people understand what we need and why we need it, and if we can point them to ways it can be done, they are more than willing to help.

Then in Oregon, we put together a sister group. Portland Center for Performing Arts and the Oregon Festival have come around big time. We asked the University of Oregon to provide captions for all their sports venues, and they agreed to do it. They also agreed to put the captions on the Jumbotrons that are visible to everybody. If you look at a University of Oregon football game on television and you see the Jumbotron scoreboard, you’ll see the captioning there. More to the point: Millions of other people will see it. Visible compliance lets people know that this is the way the world can and ought to be and there's no harm to them from doing it.

Movie theaters have been very resistant, so we filed a suit in Washington State. I worked as a friend of the court on the federal case originating in Arizona. We got a couple of decisions that said “you have to offer captioned movies to the extent that you can afford to do it.” Now what extent is that? We don’t know. We’ll go back to court and find out.

After that, we went to California, where those who don’t comply have to pay big damages. I worked with Disability Rights Advocates, which wanted to pursue a California movie captioning case. I had been talking to Linda Drattell and Rick Rutherford about a plaintiff for this case, and they said they and ALDA would do it, so we filed suit against Cinemark, which had been conspicuously bad about providing movie captioning. We got great press coverage, and it didn’t take long before Cinemark agreed to provide captioning, but only in California. Then they realized, “We already lost in Washington State. That son of a gun Waldo is going to be chasing us around the country. Why not just give it up? So we’re going to do it nationwide.” Very shortly after that, Regal also said they would provide captioning nationwide, and AMC just made the same announcement. The movie chain whose case started it all, Harkins, also said they would do it all over. So we’re going to get closed captioning for movies that the big theater chains show all around the country.

Forty years ago, almost nobody thought about providing wheelchair ramps or wheelchair access; it simply didn’t happen. But today, they just do it. We are now getting people to think about providing access for those of us with hearing loss, and I hope it won’t take us 40 years before people just do it. I am so proud to be an ALDAn and to be your lawyer. I hope we can keep working together to make that ultimate goal a reality.
We have some good news for you! Coming soon: a redesign of our website that will make it easier to use and provide more information. Many thanks to Past President Linda Drattell for raising the money needed for this project through the ALDA Fundrace and to Treasurer Matt Ferrara for keeping our financial records. Thanks also to Paul Wummer, who joined the Technology Committee and has done a great job replacing Matt as RD 1 when Matt left that position to fill in as treasurer.

Our secretary, Karen Krull, has been diligent in updating the Board Manual and making it more accessible with a table of contents. We have included the chapter/group start-up kit so that the regional directors, as well as the chapter/group coordinator, will be able to send information to people interested in starting new ALDA groups and chapters. Brenda Estes, your new president as of January 1, will appoint a new chapter/group coordinator soon. Many thanks to our previous coordinator, Kathy Schlueter, for her work over the past several years.

Brenda was a great help to all on the board this year because of her knowledge of the bylaws, policies, and accessibility issues.

Paul Wummer, Marsha Kopp, Kathy Evans, and Rachael Morris worked hard on making connections for ALDA in their regions. Marsha is our NTID liaison, and Rachael worked on the Volunteer Committee with Marty Mattox, with great results. Kathy Evans has become our new ALDAcon Advisory Committee chair and is updating the guidelines, using her experience working on the last six ALDAcons.

Speaking of which, we had a fabulous ALDAcon 2011 in Indianapolis thanks to the many hours put in by ALDAcon Chairs Terri Singer and Kim Mettache and their committees. We attended a captioned first-run movie and a captioned Shakespearean play, and we celebrated Harriet Frankel’s 95th birthday! We thank Harriet for her many contributions to ALDA, not the least of which is the donation of proceeds from selling her book, Twenty-Five Chats with Harriet, edited by Nancy Kingsley. The book takes the reader on Harriet’s adventures related to her deafness, and copies sold like hotcakes at the ‘con. If you would like to purchase one or more ($5 each), contact me at cynthiamerman@gmail.com. Thanks, Nancy and Harriet!

Our five Dutch visitors and two race car drivers Tomas and Jaki Scheckter (Jaki came all the way from South Africa) added an international flavor to a memorable ‘con.

ALDA settled an accessibility complaint with AMC, the last of the big three movie houses, on Saturday night at the convention. Thanks go to Linda Drattell and John Waldo for their work on movie captioning advocacy over the last year plus. Their efforts were also successful in a captioning suit against Cinemark, and I’m already able to attend first-run captioned movies at the Cinemark in Tucson.

This year the ALDA Board has met many of the strategic planning goals set out for us by the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee with help from the membership at the convention meeting in 2010. It has been a pleasure working with such a cooperative Board during my term as President. But we wouldn’t be here were it not for you, our membership. A very big thank you to all of you for making this a year full of changes and for pitching in to turn challenges into opportunities for improvement!
Past President’s Report (continued)...

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felt in other areas of the country, where Cinemark and AMC are in the process of providing or planning to provide movie captioning.

I was also chair of the Nominations Committee and ALDA Reader, a member of the ALDacon Program Committee, and Board Liaison to the ALDacon Scholarships Committee. In addition, I helped to raise over $4000 through a Fundrace fundraiser to improve our website.

It has been a pleasure to serve ALDA members these past four plus years, beginning as RD4. I replaced Edna Shipley-Conner upon her passing and worked hard to fill her enormous shoes. Edna had taken me under her wing, as she did so many of you, and I try to pay it forward as best as I can. I look forward to my position as Chapter Coordinator as I leave the Board.

Secretary’s Report

By Karen Krull

Since my last report in April, I continue to update the Board Manual regularly, keep the minutes of board related business emails, and track motions and tally votes. The Board voted to form a Social Media Committee. We applied for and investigated the pros and cons of accepting website help from Google as a nonprofit organization and decided against accepting their assistance. The Board voted to redesign ALDA’s website, and we are currently in the process of fixing its functioning. The Board also voted to make permanent the provision of placing $10 from each ALDacon registration in the ALDacon Scholarship fund. This will assure that there will be funds for scholarships in the future. We created the position of Director of Community Relations to enable ALDA to seek out and improve our relationships with other hearing loss groups. We proposed some bylaws changes to strengthening ALDA.

Treasurer’s Report

By Matt Ferrara

Because of my appointment to finish the previous treasurer’s term, I could no longer serve on the Board as the regional director for Region 1, and I want to thank Paul Wummer for accepting the appointment to complete that term.

Although ALDacon 2011 attendance was smaller than usual, it was a very enjoyable event. At this point,

Treasurer’s Report (continued)...

I cannot give the exact figures for the ’con because the final bills and accounting are in progress. The bank accounts as of Nov. 30, 2011 have an estimated total of $44,235. The balance sheet for these accounts is:

- ALDA operating expenses: $17,311
- ALDacon 2011 account: $3,500 (est.)
- Scholarship funds: $18,293
- Newcomer funds: $5,131

All outstanding bills have been paid. We are on or near budget with our expenses.

ALDA, Inc. is a non-profit corporation, so donations may be tax-deductible. In addition, some employers have matching donations plans. If you have any questions regarding donations, please contact me at treasurer@alda.org.

Region 1 Report

By Paul Wummer, Regional Director 1

I have enjoyed filling in for Matt Ferrara as RD1 this year. I attended ALDacon in Indianapolis last October and thought it was one of the best ’cons. Highlights (bright lights!) included walking to a nearby community theatre to see the play “Julius Caesar” captioned. I’m looking forward to continuing as a member of the Technology Committee.

Region 2 Report

By Marsha Kopp, Regional Director 2

ALDA-Midwest (Ohio) is led by Martha Mattox, who continued to monitor the group through emails and a Yahoo! group.

ALDA-Northwest Indiana’s president is Kim Mettache. In September, ALDA-NWI hosted a dual picnic with ALDA-Chicago in Dyer, Indiana. ALDA-NWI celebrated its fifth anniversary in October, and in November, the chapter joined ALDA-Chicago for a pizza party on the Chicago side.

ALDA-Chicago’s president is Marsha Kopp. In June, ALDA-Chicago participated in an exhibit at a western Chicago suburb’s festival. Two social events were held in August—an evening minor league baseball game and a Sunday afternoon at the racetrack. In September, the chapter participated in a Deaf Awareness Day exhibit and in October, a team of 12 walkers

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Region 2 Report (continued)...

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joined the Walk4Hearing to raise funds for captioning chapter board meetings and workshops. ALDA-Chicago hosted a pizza party in November, with ALDA-NWI joining in. The year’s final event was a holiday party at the home of long-time ALDAn Mary Clark.

Region 3 Report

By Rachael Morris, Regional Director 3

I continue to send lots of resources to people with specific inquiries. I received many questions about financial assistance, particularly for individuals whose parents had a hearing loss, and about specific types of hearing aids. I received a request for doctor referrals for one woman’s young child. I did not feel equipped to give this type of information, so I researched what I could and sought help from a former RD. In time, a doctor who specializes in ear diseases was found in the child’s area and an appointment was made.

In another case, after researching on my own, I was able to suggest some “speech to text” mobile devices and programs that could assist in a college classroom. I also faxed ALDacon information to a person in Tennessee who writes for a monthly newsletter at the Communication Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Johnson City. I made Carolina Flight, Peach, and Houston ALDA chapter referrals to people seeking ALDA support. There were two in Tennessee, one in South Carolina, one in Atlanta, and six in the Texas and Louisiana areas.

Outside of RD3 business, I had several other accomplishments. A woman was referred to me based on my hearing loss due to NF2. She has a 10-year-old nephew with NF2, and his hearing is starting to fluctuate. She was seeking resources and guidance for his parents in preparing for the future. As co-leader of our Volunteer Committee, I helped design a catchy “Volunteer with ALDA” advertisement that debuted in the ALDAcon program booklet. We had a “volunteer sign-up” table at the ’con and recruited in several different areas. Also at the ’con, Ellen Kaitz, Martha Mattox-Baker, and I gave a well-attended “More than Just Deaf: Living with Dual Disabilities” workshop, during which we told our personal stories of having hearing loss along with other disabilities.

Region 4 Report

By Kathy Evans, Regional Director 4

There are six groups and chapters in Region 4. We lost a chapter in Washington; hopefully, late-deafened people in that area can get to the meetings of the remaining chapter. We have a new group/chapter starting in Boulder, Colorado that will probably have papers in to us at the beginning of the year. There is strong interest in Denver, Colorado, too, and they’re hoping to formalize their efforts soon. People in Oregon and Santa Cruz, California are talking about forming a chapter, and a member in Montana wants a group there. If you live in any of these areas and would like to be involved, please contact me at RD4@alda.org and I’ll put you in touch with the local people.

One of the real challenges in the West is the wide open spaces! Our members are scattered around, and places without chapters are looking at drives of three hours or more to get a handful of people together.

Riverside, California has a deaf and hard of hearing agency that wanted to start an ALDA group. However, they decided to form their own group because they couldn’t support our membership fee and keep their nonprofit status. I’m glad to have support services to refer people to, but I wish they were ALDA.

I’ve come to realize how important it is to connect with our chapter leaders, who are looking for support from ALDA, Inc. Regional directors need a “job description.” Each of us has been starting from scratch, so guidelines, suggestions, and a list of things that have been done would help new regional directors. That’s what our group of regional directors is starting to work on now.

Advertising Director’s Report

By Matt Ferrara

For 2011, we had a continuing ad in the ALDA News from Harris Communications and a barter ad from TDI. We also had a one-issue ad for the peer mentoring program at Gallaudet University, and I had a request for ad information from Krown Manufacturing.

Gene Romero volunteered to be on the advertising committee and has been sending emails and letters to various companies that advertise in the periodicals of other hearing loss organizations. We have had two responses and are following up on them. If you know of any potential advertisers, please contact me at mattf812@verizon.net.
ALDAcon 2012 Bid Report
By Karen Krull, Bid Chair

ALDAcon 2012 will be held in at the Columbia Marriott, 1200 Hampton Street, in beautiful Columbia, South Carolina. The dates to save are Wednesday, October 17 to Sunday, October 21. ALDA's Carolina Flight chapter will be on hand to bring you the best of Southern hospitality.

ALDAcon Planning Chair Report
By Kim Mettache

It was a great pleasure working with Program Chair Terri Singer on this convention, and it was fun going with the Indy 500 theme. I hope that in future years, ALDA will continue to select a theme for each 'con. While the slow economy made for a smaller attendance, those who came were in for a treat!

I have plenty of emails to share with the next 'con chair, whoever that may be, and I’m sure Terri has a lot to share as well. These include updates to promote the 'con; the registration page; and the payment page, which need to be among the first things on the agenda for next year’s 'con. There were many steps that we found out about later rather than earlier, and I would like to keep all these “pop-ups” to a minimum for the next person.

The ALDA500 Club (for prepaying 'con expenses over time) was a good idea, and I wish more people had taken advantage of it.

Bylaws Committee Report
By Nancy Kingsley, Chair

The Board proposed several related bylaws changes affecting the makeup of the Board, in order to promote continuity and be more in line with other organizations. These proposals, which were passed by the membership, will (1) replace the three-year term of one year each as president-elect, president, and past president with a four-year term of two years as president and two years as past president and a separate two-year term of vice president (the vice president wouldn’t automatically become president); (2) have the president and vice president elected in even years and the secretary and treasurer in odd years; and (3) give the secretary the option of running for a second term, in keeping with other Board positions.

Membership Committee Report
By Karen Krull, Chair

With the redesign of the ALDA website, we hope to eliminate previous problems encountered during membership renewal. A limited exit poll I conducted with members who did not renew yielded the following result: If they planned on going to ALDAcon, they renewed. If not, they let their membership lapse. Look for info on a membership drive in the near future that will also benefit chapters and groups. There are plenty of reasons to be a member of ALDA, Inc. The success of the Cinemark lawsuit, and ongoing agreements with other movie theaters to provide captioning, came about chiefly because of ALDA’s participation. We have also advocated for live theaters to provide captioning for their plays. We can only continue to advocate with a healthy membership base. Check your address labels on your newsletter, and please keep your membership current.

Nominations Committee Report
By Linda Drattell, Chair

The Nominations Committee for this year was comprised of Karen Krull, Rachael Morris, David Litman, Fred Heppner, and John Waldo. The committee was responsible for seeking out potential candidates and reviewing the nomination form, letter, and ballots to be mailed. They also reviewed ballot counting and reporting procedures for the elections.

We revised the nomination form to better reflect what is expected for the regional director (RD) position. We also revised the letter accompanying the ballot to explain voting procedures in a clearer fashion.

The League of Women Voters in the Pleasanton-Livermore area of California agreed to oversee the election process.

Scholarship Committee Report
By Carolyn Piper, Chair

The committee included Karen Krull and Linda Drattell. This year, we were able to make it possible for four members to attend the 'con. The scholarship program is a very positive force both for those it enables to attend and for ALDA itself, as is evident at each ALDAcon. Taking a nose count at this year’s 'con showed that past scholarship recipients have an extremely high retention rate for continued ALDA membership and 'con attendance. Many are also active in volunteering for ALDA in various

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ways. Scholarship is thus a winning effort not just for the recipients, but also for ALDA itself.

Notice of scholarship availability for ALDAcon is sent out as soon as the ALDAcon information is on the ALDA website. More information on scholarships, as well as how to donate to our scholarship funds, may be obtained by contacting Carolyn Piper at wicwas@wcvt.com.

Scholarship Committee Report (continued)...
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The SPC was created by the President to formulate recommendations for planning ALDA's future, and SPC members and advisors worked diligently to provide relevant input to the Board.

As we discussed each of our five topics (continuity, growth, finances, education, and communication), the focus always zoomed in on one issue: to succeed in our mission in today’s networked world, ALDA needs an easily accessible, well designed, continually updated website.

The website envisioned by the SPC would serve as our virtual office; a place where the Board, members, sponsors, guests, and anyone interested in “things ALDA” could meet up. Layered access (nonmember, member, Board), news, announcements, events calendar, online meeting tools, online events (such as silent auctions), chat rooms, links to other organizations as well as local chapters, historical data...all this and more could make our website “the place” where late-deafened adults worldwide connect and learn.

The SPC also discussed many other important issues including: advocacy; ways to raise funds; outreach to special groups such as veterans, younger adults and seniors; improving organizational continuity; and spreading the ALDA message.

I’d like to thank all the committee members and advisors for their valuable and insightful input, and the Board for its support. It was my pleasure to work with you all.

Strategic Planning Committee Report

By Marta Watson, Chair

We have continued to send out eNews blasts regarding important announcements for our members, which also included updates on ALDAcon 2011.

As webmaster, I have made changes to the ALDA.org website as needed. At the ALDA Board meeting at ALDAcon 2011, it was voted to revamp the website, which will take several months.

If you are interested in helping with the Technology Committee, please contact me at alda96ken@dslextreme.com.

Technology Committee Report

By Ken Arcia

ALDA Award Winners

I. King Jordan Award:
  John Waldo

Robert Davila ALDA Angel Award:
  Cheryl Heppner

ALDA Brainstorm Award:
  Lauren Storck

Bob Hawley Fearless Leader Award:
  Jim Laffer (ALDA-San Jose)

Able ALDAn Award:
  Gloria Popp

President’s Special Recognition Award:
  Carolyn Piper
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)

□ 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)

If paying by check, please mail this form to:

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

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

Education  Advocacy  Role Models  Support

ALDA provides networking opportunities through local chapters and groups as well as at the annual ALDA conference (ALDAcon).
Be sure to check your address label. It shows the date your dues will expire. Don't let your membership lapse!

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

Make a Difference! Become a Lifetime Member!

**Why a Lifetime Member?**

A. ALDA and the work it does to support the empowerment of deafened people means a lot to me; I want to support ALDA financially.

B. I don’t have to worry about forgetting to renew my dues.

C. I plan to live to be at least 130 years old; think what a bargain Lifetime Membership will be!

*Ann Smith, Lifetime Member*

**Lifetime Membership Tier**

- **Bronze** $500 - $1,499: receive a personal letter from the President, bronze plaque.

- **Silver** $1,500 - $2,999: receive a personal letter from the President, silver plaque and priority seating at future ALDAcons.

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

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