"Down Memory Lane" – Insights, Anecdotes, and Adventures

Deaf children from Alberta travelled three days on a Montréal-bound train to get to school every fall. These students are enjoying a brief stopover in White River, Ont. (Sept. 12, 1954).
Courtesy of Grace Robertson (Edmonton, Alta.)

One of the joys of historical research is unearthing the unusual story or revealing little-known facts about overlooked segments of a culture. This chapter contains recollections by individuals of their deaf experiences, as well as short essays on people whose approach to everyday life was different in some way from the "mainstream" of Deaf society. Stories about such individuals and groups are often overlooked, but are a very real part of the heritage of deaf Canadians. The following illustrate a few of the many experiences in the lives of deaf people in 19th- and 20th-century Canada.

The Adventures of a Deaf Traveller

In the latter part of the 19th century, there was very little written about the everyday lives of deaf people. In Canada, the earliest deaf author known to have written such a "common man" type of book was George Samuel Cull (b. Mar. 9, 1840; d. 1904), who, in 1862, published *The Travels and Adventures of George Samuel Cull (Deaf and Dumb Cripple), Written by Himself, With an Introduction Exhibiting the State of Deaf Mute Education, &c., &c., in Europe and America by John Barrett McGann, Esq., Head Master of the Toronto School for the Deaf and Dumb*. In 1863, he revised the book under the (equally long and cumbersome) title *The Youthful Travels and Adventures of George Samuel Cull, a Deaf and Dumb Cripple, the Son of a Soldier in the Royal Artillery, Including a Sketch of Seventeen Years' Residence in the Northern and Southern Parts of England, and Five Years' Travelling Through Canada and the United States*. His plan was to peddle the books as a way of earning a living. His story, distilled from his works, appears below.

The fourth of eight (or nine) children, Cull was born in the

The Youthful Travels and Adventures of George Samuel Cull/Courtesy of Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library (Toronto, Ont.)

military town of Woolwich, in the county of Kent, England. His father was a soldier in the British Royal Artillery and a steward to a colonel who commanded the fifth Brigade. At eight months of age, Cull became deaf due to "convulsive fits" when teething.[1] The family later lived for three years in Chester, an old city in the county of Chester, and then moved to Manchester, a cotton-manufacturing metropolis in the county of Lancashire, where they lived for about 15 months.

While living in Manchester, Cull — then six years old — was sent to school at the Deaf and Dumb Institution at Old Trafford, three kilometres south of the city. He had no formal language when admitted in 1846 and was amazed to see everyone conversing through signs. At that time, the school enrolled a total of 103 pupils. Two of the five teachers, a Mr. Hogg and a Mr. Goodwin, were also deaf. Cull considered them his best teachers. After his family moved back to Woolwich, he remained at the Institution, returning home only for six weeks in the summer and three weeks at Christmas. He was not a good scholar and quit school in 1854 to return to his family at the military barracks in Woolwich. There he was given a job as a tailor for the Bugler's Military Clothes. However, he was teased by his friends, who told him that sewing clothes did not make him a man. His father then sent him to do the same work in a private business downtown on Brewer Street. After some time there, Cull was fired. A "very wild boy," he did not seem able to hold on to any job for very long.[2] He did not feel obligated to remain at work if he felt the urge to go elsewhere, and often arrived late or left in the middle of the day to wander about doing as he chose.

When Cull was 15, his father died. By the time he was 17 years old, Cull had tried many trades including carpentry, but never learned any of them thoroughly. He decided to leave England for America, thinking it was a "better country for the poor."[3] His uncle, John Robinson, lived on a farm in Newtown Robinson, a small Upper Canada (now Ontario) village near Tecumseth in the county of Simcoe. On March 2, 1857, Cull and his older hearing brother, William, left London on the steamship, *American Eagle*. For six weeks, they were tossed about by the great Atlantic waves until they reached New York City. Then they took a steamboat up the Hudson River to Albany, N.Y., where they boarded railcars for their final destination in Ontario.

Cull worked on Uncle John's 50 acres of farmland for 13 months. He found it very hard work and did not like it. Some weeks after his mother arrived in Canada on September 14, 1858, he asked for her permission to take up the trade of shoemaking in Toronto. She had reservations about this idea, so did not consent. Declining to take her advice about staying on the farm, however, he left on foot for the city. The weather at that time was severely cold, and the ground was covered with snow. Enroute, he managed to obtain free lodgings for the night, but had trouble hitching a ride on passing sleighs. He was ridiculed at times, probably because of his deafness. After reaching Toronto, Cull became frustrated when he could not find a suitable place to learn the trade of shoemaking. Instead of working, he decided to travel extensively by foot. First, he toured the city, where he saw skaters and iceboats gliding on frozen Lake Ontario. He then began to explore the areas outside Toronto. He often walked 50 to 60 kilometres in a day through the Upper Canada countryside, visiting friends and relatives.

In the spring of 1859, Cull and his mother travelled by train through Canada and the United States to the southern state of Virginia, where another uncle — William Miller — lived in the village of New Cumberland, Hancock County. This uncle tried unsuccessfully to get Cull a job in a shoemaker's shop nearby. One day, Cull showed a local blacksmith a copy of a book his mother had written. The blacksmith thought that people would be interested enough to buy the book, and encouraged Cull to try peddling it. Cull went among the village farmers and quickly sold all of the books that were brought to Virginia. He was able to raise about $7.00 per day selling books compared to the $4.00 per *month* he earned working on Uncle William's farm. He liked this easy way of earning money, as the people took pity on him and paid generously.

Cull asked his mother to write to Uncle John and have more copies of the book sent from the farm where they were stored. (The books, about 1,000 in number, had been printed in England by his father and later shipped to Canada.) After weeks passed with no response, Cull decided to return to Canada and get them himself. He walked much of the way and occasionally travelling by train. The railway supervisors would sometimes give him free tickets, and at other times he would sneak on the train without one. Many people gave him money, even though he insisted that he "never begged of the people."[4]

On June 4, 1859, Cull had an unfortunate accident on his way back to Virginia after picking up his mother's books. At Bedford, Ohio, he attempted to climb onto the platform of a train as it started to depart. He jumped and caught hold of the railing with only his right hand because the other hand was holding his carpet bag full of books. When he lost his balance as the steam locomotive began to pick up speed, he fell onto the rails, where the wheels of eight cars ran over his leg from thigh to foot.[5] He also lost the end of his middle finger on his left hand. Cull survived the mishap, but his leg had to be amputated. The attending physician, who was summoned from Cleveland (some 14 miles [22 kilometres] away), charged him $50. His mother nursed him for eight weeks in a Bedford hotel.

While there, Cull was visited by train engineers, conductors, brakemen, and villagers. One 20-year-old "deaf and dumb" girl, who was educated at the Ohio Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb in Columbus, visited him daily. She taught him the single-handed alphabet and signs used in America. (He previously knew only British signs and the double-handed alphabet.)

After eight weeks, Cull regained his strength and was able to travel to Toronto, where he was placed in the General Hospital until his four-inch stump had healed completely. One of his many visitors there was John Barrett McGann, headmaster of the Upper Canada Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Toronto. He brought "three deaf mute ladies and two little boys" with him to the hospital.[6] McGann invited Cull to become a teacher in a family where there were seven deaf children, but he declined, as he thought it was "hard, poor work."[7]

Cull learned to walk with the aid of crutches and was soon travelling around selling books once again. Later, he found the crutches bothersome, so he decided to buy an artificial cork leg in the United States. He first stopped in Bedford to try to obtain money for the prosthesis from the railway company. He received none, because the railroad claimed it was his "own fault for not having a ticket when [he] attempted to jump on the cars whilst in motion."[8] He then continued on to Philadelphia, Pa. to see a "surgeon artist" who specialized in artificial limbs. He had his stump measured and was told that the limb would be shipped to Canada after payment was made in full. The amount of $75, which was half of the regular price, was eventually paid by the Secretary of the Governor General's office in Toronto. In due time, the artificial leg arrived but was detained at the Custom House for nearly a month. Although Cull was asked to pay $20 of duty on it, he managed somehow to get it released free of charge.

Sometime around October 1859, Cull convinced his mother to move with him to Québec City, where he was to be admitted into Queen's Printing Office as an apprentice. They first travelled from Toronto across Lake Ontario to Montréal on the stately steamer, the *Kingston*. There they boarded another steamer, the *Columbia*, which took them up the St. Lawrence River into Québec City. They lived in an apartment on Nouvelle Street in the St. Louis suburbs. Cull's career as a typesetter ended 11 months later when his eyes began to fail and he almost lost his vision. However, he recovered after being treated at the Hotel Dieu Hospital. During this time, Cull became more educated and more religious. He decided to write an autobiography and sell his books for a living. It took him several months to complete his manuscript, which had to be rewritten by hand nine times.

Then he and his mother prepared to move to Toronto. On May 8, 1861, they boarded the steamer *Saguenay* at a wharf in Québec City, bound for Toronto. However, the trip was delayed for four days by order of an inspector, who had found a fault in the vessel. During a stopover in Montréal, a fire in the boiler got out of control about one in the morning. All of the sleepy passengers escaped safely, but most of their possessions perished in the flames. Cull's mother managed to save a few clothes and money, but not his wooden leg. He and his mother finally reached Toronto from Montréal after a 17-hour train ride. They lived on Uncle John's farm in Newtown Robinson for several weeks before settling in a house on a hill above the village of Bradford, Ont. Sometime after his autobiographies were published in Toronto in 1862 and 1863, Cull apparently returned to his travels and adventures as a book peddler. He died from apoplexy in early 1904.[9]

Origins of the Famous Chautauqua Salute

Another story from the 1800s tells us about a deaf man and an appreciative audience of hearing people. The event took place at the third annual Assembly of the Chautauqua Movement of Religious Education, held on Lake Chautauqua, Fair Point, N.Y., in August 1877. Samuel Thomas Greene, a deaf teacher at the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb (1870-1890) in Belleville, made a presentation to an audience of more than 5,000 hearing people.[10] Several publications of the deaf told the story of this event, including *The Silent Hoosier* of the Indiana State School for the Deaf, which printed the following in its December 19, 1912 edition:

In the early days of the Chautauqua, a distinguished deaf-mute was invited to address the assembly. In the finger language of the mute, he spoke to an audience of five thousand. An interpreter, standing at his side, conveyed the address to the audience in the spoken word. At frequent intervals, the distinguished speaker moved the listeners to great applause executed in the regulation method of clapping the hands. The speaker saw but could not hear the applause. Seated on the platform was [Bishop John H.] *Vincent. The pathos of the situation, consisting of the speaker's inability fully to comprehend the spirited volume of the applause, struck him forcibly.*

Unseen by the deaf-mute, Bishop Vincent silenced the interpreter for a moment, caught the attention of the audience, and requested them at a signal from him to each draw a handkerchief from their pockets, and wave them aloft in token of appreciation for the visitor's speech.

Presently Bishop Vincent began waving his handkerchief, following an impressive passage in the address, and instantly the great assembly room broke into a silent tumult of waving white handkerchiefs. The effect upon the speaker when the significance of the act of the audience burst upon him, was supreme. Never had he beheld such a demonstration before. The dramatic appreciation of his efforts by the audience moved him to tears, and he sank into his chair, unable to finish, while the huge audience waved and waved.[11]

This was the origin of the famous "Chautauqua Salute." For several decades, the Chautauqua Salute was fashionable among the sedate Methodists at various lectures and revival meetings, even for use with speakers who could hear. Canadian and American organizations of the deaf adopted this new custom at

their own gatherings. However, some people believed that the Salute was spreading germs. On the 7th of January, 1914, the U.S. Public Health Service and the Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis banned the Chautauqua Salute, considering the waving of handkerchiefs to be a distributor of colds, influenza, and tuberculosis.[12] The famous Chautauqua Salute was re-adopted some years later, with scarves, program booklets, flags, or hands replacing the waving white handkerchiefs.

Getting to School

Because of the small number of Canadian schools for deaf students in the 1800s and early- to mid-1900s, deaf children often had to leave their home province and travel to another to get an education. The following two stories illustrate the long, often enjoyable (but sometimes perilous) journeys these students had to make.

"A Winter's Tale"

Newfoundland did not have its own school for deaf children until 1964. Prior to this, if deaf children were to receive an education, they had to attend a residential school for the deaf in Halifax, N.S. or in Montréal, Québec. This meant travelling great distances, leaving friends, family, and home behind. In the late 1800s and the early 1900s, it was common for students to be transported back and forth between St. John's, Nfld. and Halifax via boat. The following is the tragic story of two young deaf students who, in the midst of a winter storm, tried to return to their school in Halifax.[13]

It was February 23, 1918. On this cold blustery day, the S.S. *Florizel* lay dockside in St. John's harbour, waiting for her passengers on the St. John's-Halifax-New York run. A sturdy ship, she was originally built as part of the world's first fleet of ice breakers and was manned by an experienced crew. Indeed, her 43-year old captain, William Martin, was a cautious man with a reputation of sometimes being "too careful." That afternoon George A. Moulton, a 33-year-old broker from St. John's brought his seven-and-a-half-year-old deaf son, Clarence Bertram Moulton (b. 1910; d. Feb. 24, 1918), down to the docks. It was time for Clarence to return to the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Halifax, which he had attended since September 1916. Together, father and son boarded the ship, only to discover that the stewardess who normally cared for Clarence during the sea voyage was quarantined with smallpox. Clarence, frightened at being left with a stranger, created a fuss when his father tried to depart. The senior Moulton hastily purchased a ticket, rushed home to pack, and returned to the *Florizel*. Father and son settled into room 20, a stateroom just off the starboard alleyway.

Clarence B. Moulton

A Winter's Tale, by Cassie Brown, © 1976 by Doubleday Canada Limited. Used with permission of the Brown estate.

Blanche Beaumont (b. Dec. 22, 1906; d. Feb. 24, 1918), an 11-year-old deaf girl from St. John's also enroute to the Halifax Institution, boarded the ship that afternoon as well.[14] She had been a pupil at the school since December 1913. Blanche shared a cabin — just a short distance from the Moultons — with her aunt, Margaret Keough, and a fellow passenger, Mabel Barrett.

At 4:00 p.m., all 78 passengers were on board, and the *Florizel*, with a 60-man crew, headed out to sea. The winds were strong, creating a heavy ocean swell. But Newfoundlanders were well acquainted with stormy weather, so neither passengers nor crew voiced concern. At 6:00 p.m., the call of a bugle announced dinner. People gathered eagerly for what was considered the highlight of every voyage. After the meal, the passengers gathered in the social hall, and the smokers ventured out onto the deck to watch the fading lights of St. John's. Before long, however, the mounting storm and rolling ship sent many seasick passengers scurrying to their cabins. As night deepened, the winds blew harder and snow fell. The visibility dimmed to the point where the captain could no longer get his bearings from land. Unaware that the *Florizel*'s engine had slowed, the cap-

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"A Winter's Tale" ... Cont'd

tain misjudged the distance they had already gone. Basing his decision on this incorrect information, he ordered that the ship's course be changed to southwest. Unfortunately, this command sent the ship directly towards a treacherous reef just off Hornhead Point. Suddenly, the *Florizel* hit the rocks. The angry waves lifted her high and then dropped her, leaving her impaled on the reef. The sea continued to lash at the boat, flooding the ship through holes in the starboard side and the bottom. Men tried to launch lifeboats, but waves pounded in and out, sucking boats and people away in different directions. A few individuals managed to struggle to the safety of the smokestack or the wireless house.

Meanwhile, Clarence and Blanche were among those trapped below in the alleyway. As people tried to rush from the top of the corridor stairs, they were swept away by the fierce waves. The water level was rising below decks. One resounding wave split the companion-way door, tossing those in the alleyway in all directions. As Clarence and his father were swept through the alleyway, the cook managed to grab them both and drag them back into room 19. Here they found Blanche, "crouched in the upper berth, frozen with terror."[15] George and Clarence, both in the last stages of exhaustion, collapsed on a berth. The cook left the cabin in search of a safe way out of the alleyway. Finding none, he returned to check on Blanche and the Moultons, and discovered — to his horror — that both father and son had died and Blanche had disappeared. For some unexplained reason, she had left the room and had been drowned in the mêlée.

Help was finally contacted, but rescue was still a long time in coming. Because it was impossible to board the boat until the intensity of the storm decreased, it was daybreak on February 25th before any surviving passengers were safely removed. By then 94 people, including Blanche Beaumont and both Moultons, were dead. In the long wait, the sea had strewn the bodies of the dead across the Newfoundland coast. Blanche's body was eventually found, but Clarence's was never recovered.

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"Annual Railway Trek"[16]

Prior to 1955, the province of Alberta had no educational facilities or services for deaf children. Many of these students were sent to the Manitoba School for the Deaf in Winnipeg. When it closed in 1940, the only alternative was to transport the Alberta students some 4,000 kilometres away to schools for deaf students in Montréal, Québec. This practice continued for 16 years (1940-1956). The following story is based on the reminiscences of one deaf man (David G. Mason), as he describes his (and his friends') experiences each September and June while riding across the country on the Canadian Pacific Railway. Memories of those trips are still vivid in the minds of many deaf adults today.

When the summer days became shorter and cooler, it was time to go shopping for a year's supply of new clothes and shoes. Bags and trunks were carefully packed with personal belongings and family photographs. Even the family dog seemed to understand what the preparation was all about. Neighbours waved good-bye as the entire family got into the car and drove to the railway station. After boarding the train, the children gazed longingly at their loved ones standing on the platform. The older children knew what was going to happen; the younger ones were about to find out. At the Edmonton CPR station in early September, deaf children from the northern parts of Alberta joined the Edmonton-area children on a passenger train bound for Calgary. Several more children were picked up on the way south.

In Calgary, the northern children boarded the transcontinental CPR train bound for Montréal with those who came from the Calgary area and parts of southern Alberta. In total, there were about 50 deaf children between the ages of five and 18 years, with two adult chaperones. Two special tourist cars were converted into comfortable and compact eating, sleeping, and living quarters for them. The car closest to the steam engine was reserved for the girls and the next one for the boys. On its three-day trek to Montréal, the train travelled eastward through three more provinces — Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. Deaf children enjoyed relaxing in the comfortable berths made up with freshly laundered bedding. Sleeping as the train rocked back and forth was fun, although at night the occasional smell of skunk drifted inside. In the specially converted cars, not one bit of space was wasted. James, the chef, cooked excellent meals on a small gas stove.[17] The older girls served the meals and the boys washed the dishes. The girls seemed to enjoy their assignment; the boys did not. Washing piles and piles of dirty dishes in the splashing water was not their idea of fun.

As the train continued toward Montréal, the children could enjoy the ever-changing Canadian landscape. Near Winnipeg, the land was so flat and treeless that the line between the sky and land was visible miles and miles away on both sides of the train. In Ontario, Lake Superior provided a most exciting scene to the prairie children. Entering

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"Annual Railway Trek" ... cont'd

Ottawa, the capital city of Canada, was a special treat; the tall corn appeared in the windows first, followed by grey stone buildings with light green roofs. The Rideau Canal was always fascinating. Older deaf children, after having travelled to and from Montréal for a number of years, had learned to read the train timetables and knew which stops meant passengers could get off the train to buy souvenirs or admire the huge and powerful locomotives. The distinctive smell of the steam engine was associated with these pleasant round trips across the country. The dull red horizontal stripe and the Canadian Beaver emblem on the side of the rail cars became symbols of the pride of Canada to the children.

On the train, deaf children had many new experiences that would affect them for years to come. They learned what separation from families felt like. They experienced wider social interactions with other deaf children of varying ages, as well as with hearing adult chaperones assigned to take care of them on the trip. The younger children looked up to the older ones, who helped them through the trauma of being separated from family after five or six years living at home. Usually the adult chaperones on the September trip from Calgary to Montréal did not have any sign language skills. However, the ones on return trips west each June were usually teachers of deaf students with adequate signing skills. This meant that on the east-bound trip the older children looked after the emotional needs of the younger ones, assuming the role of "big brothers and sisters."

The highly visible sign language, in combination with the closeness of interactions on the train, gave the children an excellent start in social development. The rich mixture of personalities of the 50 children and adults, as well as the variety of activities and events, opened a wider world to them. For many, it was the first time they had gained access to others through the use of sign language; many younger children acquired a working and intelligent language for the first time during this train trip. The children eventually got to know each other, learning each other's names, origins, and unique characteristics. Many of them became life-long friends. Some of the deaf children from French-speaking families were also on the train, headed to a school some distance from the Mackay Institution for Protestant Deaf-Mutes in Montréal. These two groups learned about and appreciated their differences, and were exposed to two sign languages — American Sign Language (ASL) and Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ).

Approaching Montréal, deaf children began gathering up their belongings in anticipation of the end of the trip. When the children stepped onto the platform at the railway station, the sensation of the moving and rocking train lingered for awhile. The smiling face of the principal of the Mackay Institution greeted them, and they were herded to the three-story, grey stone building that would become their home and school for the next nine months. At the end of the school year, usually in the second or third week of June, the children prepared for the long-awaited return trip home. Bags and trunks were packed with well-worn and washed clothing. The sad feelings of leaving school, with all the memories of activities and events, were soon replaced with the happy feelings of getting back on the CPR train for the westward trip. The children anticipated seeing the Canadian scenery again and being reunited with families and pets. On one return trip in 1944, the train made an unexpected stop at a small station in Ontario, where the children were surprised to see a group of German soldiers (prisoners of war) being boarded onto the train into two coaches next to theirs. This was a story they could tell again and again to family and friends.

As the three-day westward trip neared its end and the train moved into the familiar station, excitement rose in anticipation of the reunion with family and friends. The familiar faces of parents and siblings appeared on the platform, and the family dog jumped around, wagging its tail. In just two months, when the summer days became shorter and cooler, the whole cycle would start again. But somehow each time it seemed easier. Deaf children became older and more knowledgeable, more prepared to accept the inevitability of leaving home for school. ■

School Days

Their experiences at residential schools left lasting impressions on deaf students. As Richard C. Slater stated in his address at the 7th Biennial Convention of the Ontario Deaf-Mute Association in 1900 (held at the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville, July 16-19), "To them [deaf adults] the old school in which they were taught was much more than the schools of hearing children are to them. To the deaf the old school is the true home of their minds, where their understanding was first born into light and freedom."[18] The following two stories examine aspects of these life experiences. The first story, another written by David George Mason, summarizes life at residential schools between 1940 and 1970. The second describes an event that left some deaf students in Halifax, N.S. with an unforgettable memory.

"Residential Schools for the Deaf"

Deaf adults who have attended residential schools like to reminisce about their school days. This story, based on the life experiences of some deaf adults who spent years as boarding students at residential schools in Canada between 1940 and 1970, illustrates some of the reasons why they still highly value their residential school experiences. It is difficult to describe a

"typical" residential school for deaf children and adolescents. Nevertheless, deaf adults who have lived at these schools for considerable lengths of time seem to share common experiences. To many students, the residential school was a "home away from home."

Between 1940 and 1970, the main residential schools for deaf students were located in Vancouver, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Belleville, Milton, Halifax, and Montréal (which had three schools for deaf students — one for francophone males, one for francophone females, and the third for those whose families used English). The schools enrolled as few as 80 to as many as 500 students in any given year. Some of the schools were founded in the 1800s (and half of them still remained open in the mid-1990s). At some of the schools there were as many as 30 or 40 beds lined up in rows in each dormitory room. All of the schools were self-contained, with kitchens and dining rooms complete with kitchen staff to prepare and serve the meals. The students' clothes, sheets, and towels were laundered in the school laundry, and complaints about shrunken clothes or heavily starched shirts were common.

Schools with only a few students organized their single classroom with the younger children at one end and the older students at the other. Schools with larger enrolments had separate classrooms based on age. Typically, the academic classroom teachers were hearing, and few of them could communicate with their students in sign language. In those days, English-based communication methods were emphasized, and the sign language of deaf people was discouraged. Until the 1970s, the deaf teachers were assigned to teach only the vocational classes or the "manual classes" for "oral failures."

Students travelled for several hours to as many as three days from home to attend residential schools in Canada. Those who travelled the shorter distances could return home for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and summer holidays, but those whose homes were farther away went home only for summer holidays. For some of the children, travelling on a train was a special treat, especially the three-day Canadian Pacific Railway trip from Alberta to Montréal. The motion of the train, the good food, the solid berths with fresh-smelling sheets, the friendly train staff, and the ever-changing landscape will always be fond memories.

Some of the children had difficulty handling their first separation from their families. As the train started moving away from the station, even some of the returning students could feel homesick. However, many of the older children also looked forward to reuniting with friends from other parts of Canada and getting involved again in the various activities at their residential schools. Once they arrived at the school, the children experienced the sharp contrast between the long, soothing train trip and the harsh reality of walking into a building with old-building smells, dull interior decor, and worn flooring. At the doors to the school, however, a smiling principal and staff members greeted the travel-weary deaf children and ushered them to their sex-segregated dormitories. New children were eventually given sign names that remained with them for the rest of their lives.

The act of unpacking and hanging up clothes in the dormitory closets made some of the younger children finally realize that they were not going home for a long time. The anticipation of sleeping in the dormitories often resulted in more homesick feelings for the young children. Quick and efficient orientation to residential school life, combined with the support of older students, soon helped the new children overcome their homesickness and accept the inevitability that they would not be going home for a long time. Some teenagers became "big brothers" or "big sisters" for the younger children and helped them adjust to the residential school routines. Within days or weeks, the children had made new friends, whose friendship continued well into adulthood.

Eventually the children became accustomed to what in some ways was a military-like regimentation in the residential school. Boys and girls were treated the same in many ways; they were required to obey rules that emphasized conformity and equality among peers. Dormitory staff often insisted that children who received gifts from home share their candies or cookies with less fortunate children. The children were trained to make their beds very carefully and neatly. The top of the sheet had to be folded over the top part of a blanket before the entire bed was covered with a standard, school-issued bedspread. An extra blanket had to be carefully folded and laid across the foot of the bed or kept in a storage room. The children had to put their slippers in a specific place under their beds and lay their bathrobes across the foot of the beds. Their toothbrushes, toothpaste, and school-issued washcloths and towels had to be left in specified places in the washroom. The coral-pink Lifebuoy soap with its familiar odor was apparently the only soap these schools approved.

All students had to line up before meals and classes, with the smallest child at the head of the line and the tallest at the other end. While the children were standing in these lines, their clothes, shoes, and hands were inspected by student monitors or houseparents. Rooms were also inspected while the students waited; those whose beds were improperly made were ordered back to remake them to the high standards of the houseparents. Boys were allowed to wear their own clothes, but girls wore uniforms of black or navy blue tunics with white blouses, cotton stockings, and black shoes. Each child had to smile and vocalize, "Good morning, Mrs. ___" or "Good morning, Mr. ___" on their way to the classrooms.

A typical residential school for the deaf included a nurse and an infirmary on the grounds. Everything associated with this service came in one colour — white. The sight of the school nurse was usually followed by some kind of unpleasant experience, such as waiting in line to swallow a teaspoon of cod liver oil. Sitting in the school's own dental chair and facing the drill may have resulted in what is often for many a life-long "dentist-phobia." Having the nurse confirm an illness could mean confinement in the lonely school infirmary for several days.

All students were required to pray several times a day — before meals, at the start of each school day, and before going to bed. By the time some of the children had become teenagers, they could flawlessly recite the Ten Commandments, the *Lord's Prayer*, the National Anthem (*O Canada*!), and *God Save the Queen*. Some of them could also recite Psalm 23. In many schools, the children were required to say these things orally, if not intelligibly.

Keeping the older deaf teenagers motivated at the same residential school where younger children also lived and attended classes posed enormous challenges for the residential and educational staff. Pranks and other mischievous behaviour, part of the normal adolescent quest for individuality, are often among the favourite memories of deaf adults who attended residential schools. Disobeying dormitory rules and challenging the authority of staff members was often one way to win the admiration of the opposite sex, younger students, and "rule-respecting" peers. One prominent Deaf community leader recently said that, as a teenager, she thought the dormitory rules were *meant* for her to break!

By the time they reached early adolescence, many of the students had already become cunning strategists. They could keep track of the houseparents' routine — the time they would enter the dormitory after the call for lights-out to make sure that all the students were in bed, and the time they would leave the dorm. Some students set up booby traps for the houseparents. From time to time, naughty boys would tie a rope between the legs of two beds and wait for the night staff to come in to check around with a flashlight. The students knew when this rope trick worked because they could feel the body hit the floor and see the flashlight beam disappear. Students would turn on the room lights and chat into the night after lights-out. However, they always had some kind of "early warning system," because they would be back in bed with eyes shut and lights out just before the staff members returned for their next "duty check."

Chaperoned dances or group outings for young adolescents were special treats. The boys and girls could hold hands or sneak a kiss while the chaperones were busy talking to each other. The "one-foot-apart" rule during waltzes was often ignored, especially in the far corner of the dance floor. Sweethearts could always find a special hiding place in the residential school where they could meet.

Various structured and unstructured recreational and competitive activities seemed to be occurring all the time at the residential school. Deaf adults often reminisce about the wonderful time they had participating in these activities. In schools with limited budgets, there was no money to hire coaches. Educational, dormitory, or even administrative staff members would often volunteer to serve in this role and set up activities. Some even played on the teams. In addition, there were always some students who would assume leadership roles and supervise the various games and activities, encouraging the younger students to join in, at least to make sure that there were enough players to make up a team. Such leadership opportunities also helped the older students through the personal and social adjustments of the teen years.

These young adolescents also looked forward to regular activities such as swimming in a neighbourhood pool. Boy Scout and Girl Guide meetings, weekly feature movies (uncaptioned), Friday and Saturday group outings, and long Sunday walks were significant events in these students' lives. Of course, there were some regular activities the students felt they could do without. The Sunday ritual of Sunday School, sitting quietly in a neighbourhood church in the morning, and attending sermons given by deaf adults in the afternoon seemed to be too much for the young adolescents, who preferred to be outside on bright, sunny days.

Residential schools required live-in deaf adolescents to perform daily, weekly, and monthly chores. Boys and girls usually had duty lists and had to take turns doing "housekeeping" tasks. For example, students at the Manitoba School for the Deaf in the 1930s had to carry logs to feed the furnace, and those at the Mackay Institution in Montréal in the 1950s were responsible for setting up and dismantling the skating rink and lighting systems. Shovelling snow off the rinks was an unavoidable chore for boys in most schools, and both boys and girls were required to sweep, wash, wax, and polish floors in the auditorium, dining room, dormitories, and hallways on a regular basis. In addition, the pianos, brass name plates, door knobs, benches or oak pews in the auditorium, and other furniture had to be polished regularly. Some students preferred to work in the dining room, serving food and clearing tables. The dining room jobs had certain "fringe benefits"; the student workers could hide extra desserts and enjoy them when their adult supervisors were elsewhere. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, such facilities as dormitories, laundry services, and kitchen services were phased out at a number of the residential schools. As these services diminished, so too did the variety of work opportunities for live-in students.

Instructors came in all varieties. Most stressed that speech and lipreading, along with reading and writing, were important to learn, but discouraged the use of sign language in the classroom. The students typically resorted to signing behind the teacher's back or the second they were outside the classroom. In the early 1950s, some teachers justified the use of corporal punishment for such small infractions as signing in the classroom. The adolescents quickly learned to respect (or fear) the teacher's authority. However, the frequency of corporal punishment waned and became almost nonexistent in the 1970s as younger hearing and deaf teachers began to replace the older hearing teachers of the 1950s and 1960s.

Usually there was at least one deaf houseparent or one deaf teacher who became the teenagers' main source of intellectual stimulation and moral support. This person typically lived in the dormitory or in a nearby home, and spent considerable time visiting with and becoming involved in various activities with the students. There were always a few hearing staff members who would also spend off-duty time with the deaf students, but the hearing dormitory and educational staff members who had limited sign language skills were seldom seen chatting with students after work hours.

In the 1950s, administrators typically placed deaf teachers in the vocational classes or had them teach deaf students who

were "academic failures" (often so labeled because of their limited speech skills). Incidentally, the vocational programs in many residential schools had excellent reputations for high-quality work. Crafts made by boys and girls sold very well during open house days. Sometimes the money earned this way helped support a part of the school's operating budget. Deaf boys built a wide variety of oak or maple furniture that still grace the living rooms of their homes today. Deaf vocational teachers emphasized high-quality performance in their classes. They were usually very strict and demanded nothing less than excellent work from the students. Students who made even small mistakes would face harsh consequences. Today, as adults, many of the graduates still do very well in their work, which suggests that they still value the proper work attitude learned as many as 30 years ago.

So it is not so hard to see why, when deaf adults reflect on their past at such residential school, they insist that those were wonderful years. In spite of having to work hard and to put up with restrictions, they felt that much of their success in adulthood could be traced to the early childhood discipline, the encouragement and interaction with their deaf peers and deaf adults, and their struggles and eventual success establishing their own identities in such a residential and academic environment.

Insights into the Lives of Some Deaf-Blind Canadians

There are some Canadians who are both deaf and blind. Of this group, some became deaf first and then lost their sight; others were blind first and then lost their hearing; and still others were born both deaf and blind. In the past, deaf-blind Canadians lived their lives in isolation, often uneducated and certainly unheralded. Very little has been published on these

"Deaf Pupils Survived the Great Halifax Explosion"

Eighty-one deaf pupils at the School for the Deaf in Halifax, N.S. survived the famous 1917 Halifax Explosion. The following summary of their horrifying experiences during this tragic event and its aftermath is based partly on interviews conducted on November 14 and 20, 1987 with three deaf survivors — Elizabeth Christina MacNaughton (b. Sept. 20, 1907; HSD 1914-1924); Allison MacKay Pye (b. Apr. 15, 1906; HSD 1912-1924); and Jessie Florence Pye (née MacDonald) (b. Nov. 28, 1911; HSD 1916-1925) — and partly on written records and articles.[19]

On the morning of Thursday, December 6, 1917, the weather in the city of Halifax was warm and still, just like a day in spring. There was no snow on the ground, only some scattered patches of ice. Deaf children at the Halifax School for the Deaf on Gottingen Street awoke at seven o'clock. They dressed and marched to the dining room for breakfast, then returned to their dormitories for assigned cleaning duties. Shortly before nine o'clock, these pupils were getting ready for prayers to begin a typical day at school. The Protestants went to the assembly hall, while the Catholics gathered in the girls' sitting room. All were unaware that a catastrophe was about to occur.

Out in the Halifax Harbour, a French ship, the S.S. *Mont Blanc*, was proceeding inward towards the Narrows. It was carrying 4,000 tonnes of TNT and 2,300 tonnes of picric acid, worth approximately three million dollars. At the same time, a Norwegian ship on Belgian Relief Service, the S.S. *Imo*, was travelling outward from the Narrows towards the Atlantic Ocean. Seventeen minutes before nine, the stem of the *Imo* sliced into the starboard bow of the *Mont Blanc*. The impact of the collision separated both ships at once — the *Imo* drifted towards the Dartmouth shore and the *Mont Blanc* towards the Halifax shore. Sparks ignited the benzol on the deck of the *Mont Blanc* and immediately started a fire. After burning for about 20 minutes, the flames spread to the hold. At precisely 9:04:35 a.m., according to the Dalhousie University seismographic records, balls of fire shot up through the column of smoke. The explosives in the hold were completely detonated, and the ship blew up into fragments. The impact flattened about three square kilometres of the north end of Halifax, killing almost 2,000 people and leaving many thousands injured and homeless. The blast was said to have been distinctly felt or heard as far away as Charlottetown, P.E.I. The force of the explosion caused the harbour to empty and sent a tidal wave rushing through the streets, "sweeping away people and 300 loaded freight cars. Steel plates and white-hot rivets fell for kilometres in a deadly, hissing rain."[20]

The citizens of Halifax were frightened and confused. Their first thought was that the Germans were shelling the city from a fleet of gunships or submarines in Halifax Harbour. Others believed that the explosion was the result of bombs being dropped from the air by German zeppelins ("airships"). It was reported that one deaf lady, who lived some distance away from the devastated area, had assumed that the sound of the explosion was her hearing son's practice with heavy artillery.

The red brick Halifax School — which was about 300 feet long, four stories high, and situated on the top of a hill overlooking the Halifax Harbour — was shaken by a strong, earthquake-like tremor. Fortunately, the building did not collapse. However, the explosion caused fragments of window glass, lath, and plaster to shower down upon the deaf pupils and staff. Most of them sustained

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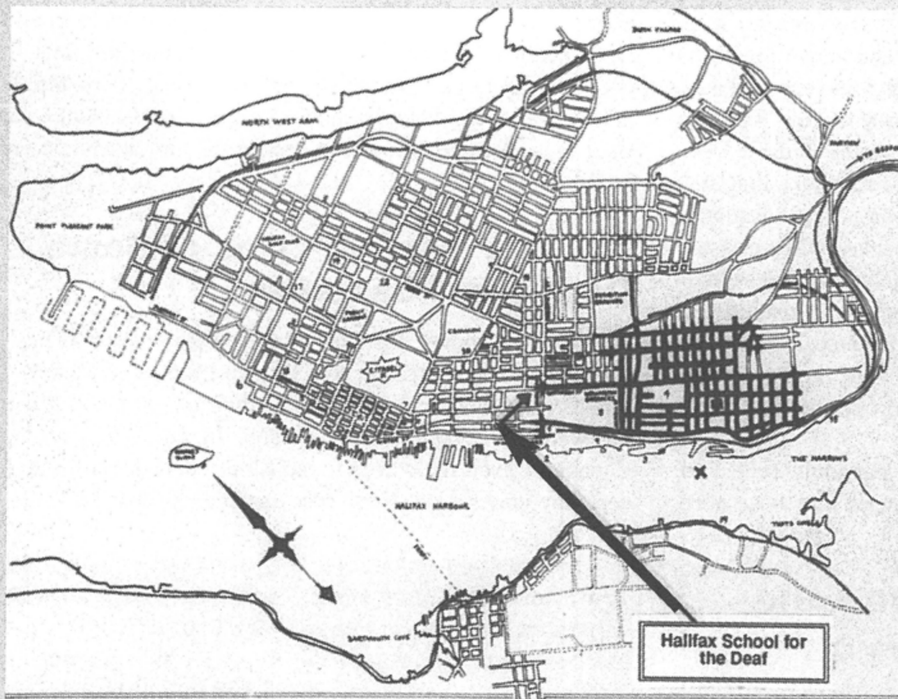

Map of Halifax, 1917

The Halifax Explosion, December 6, 1917, Graham Metson (ed.), © 1978 by McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited. Used with permission of the publisher.

"Deaf Pupils ... cont'd

50 or more cuts each from the crash of shattering glass. Miraculously, no one was killed. Had the Halifax School been located a block further north, in the devastation zone, it would have been totally demolished, probably with few, if any, survivors.

Following the blast, the deaf children panicked. The Protestants rushed along the main hall from the assembly hall and met the principal, James Fearon, who hurried them into the basement. The Catholics ran through one of the classrooms and jumped out on the lawn. Many of them were bleeding from the flying glass. Their wounds were attended to when they later assembled in the kitchen. Two boys had to be rushed to Camp Hill Military Hospital for immediate medical treatment. Soldiers soon entered the school building with

(Continued)

A typical scene following the Halifax explosion

Public Archives of Nova Scotia, N-1263

"Deaf Pupils ... cont'd

orders for everyone to move further south to the Common, as a second explosion was expected. On the streets, they witnessed a horrible scene. Many buildings were in shambles. People were searching in vain for lost loved ones. Some of the dead, the dying, and the seriously injured were being carried around, while others lay on the cold ground. Pieces of human body parts could be found in all different directions. "Such a pitiful sight!" were the words of Mary Ann MacLean (b. Jan. 22, 1884; d. Sept. 26, 1960), a deaf teacher at the school.[21]

Deaf children and staff members remained on the Common for nearly two hours. When it was officially announced that the danger was over, they returned to the school for a noon meal of hot stew. Afterwards, everyone shovelled out the debris and swept up a few areas in the building. The third floor was avoided, however, due to the heavy damage incurred when a large section of the roof caved in on the east side. The tops of all three chimneys were blown off. The building once had "between three and four hundred windows and not a piece of glass as large as your hand was left intact."[22] That evening, candles provided the only light. Mattresses and bedding were brought down to the dining room. The boys set up their beds on one side by the empty windows, while the girls set up theirs on the other side by the walls and doors. For the next three nights, the children slept wearing their hats, coats, rubber boots, and gloves to keep warm. During the night of December 6th, a snowstorm struck the city of Halifax, and by the next afternoon a blinding blizzard had engulfed the school. The students and teachers huddled beside oil stoves, because the furnace had been broken in the blast. Snow drifted through the broken windows, piling up in every room and covering the mattresses and clothing. The older boys boarded up the windows of the basement with tar paper and broken wood.

At the time of the traumatic explosion, 81 pupils attended the Halifax School. Two days later, many were taken home by their parents or relatives. Some of the Newfoundland students stayed at a teacher's residence until they were taken to their own homes. Thirty-eight pupils slept at the school another cold night, and then were taken to the Academy of Music in the city. From there, all were billeted to different temporary homes for a few more nights before their families came for them. The Halifax School was closed for about 14 months for repairs and renovations. (The school estimated the cost of repairs at $85,131.68; in addition to paying for the actual repair work, expenses included such items as teachers' salaries and board during the time of repair, and blankets, sheets, food, supplies, furniture, maps, charts, and pictures for the classroom and residence areas — all of which had been damaged in the explosion. The province supplied $20,000 toward the reconstruction costs, and the Massachusetts Relief Fund contributed much of the remainder.)[23] Classes for deaf children resumed in February 1918 at a temporary school building in Wolfville, N.S. While there, the pupils altered their name signs to reflect the scars and the injuries they had received in the great explosion. For example, Elizabeth Christina MacNaughton, one of the deaf survivors interviewed for this story, was left with a severe scar on her inside left wrist. Her name sign is now formed by moving the right index finger on a downward motion a couple of times on the inside left wrist. Stories about the Halifax School for the Deaf and this terrible disaster will undoubtedly live on in the Deaf community of the Atlantic provinces, passed on from generation to generation. ■

members of the deaf population, but the following section hopes to fill in some of these lamentable gaps in information.

Some people consider deaf-blind individuals to be members of a marginal group, neither totally part of the Deaf community nor of the blind community (if such exists). However, many deaf-blind people do identify themselves as members of the Deaf community. People with Usher's Syndrome often become deaf first, for example, with the onset of blindness occurring later in life. By the time they are blind, they may have become established in the Deaf community and fluent in sign language.

Deciding on the most appropriate school placement and the most effective ways to teach deaf-blind children has always presented special challenges for the educational profession. During the 19th and 20th centuries in Canada and the United States, a few deaf-blind children (and some adults) attended provincial and state schools for the deaf as well as public and private schools for the blind. Of these pupils, Laura Dewey Bridgman (b. Dec. 21, 1829; d. May 24, 1889), was the earliest known deaf-blind person to be successfully educated in the United States, followed by Helen Adams Keller (b. June 27, 1880; d. June 1, 1968), another American who became world-famous as a writer, lecturer, and social activist. Bridgman, a native of Hanover, N.H., was two years old when scarlet fever destroyed her sight and hearing. In 1837, she was placed in the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind in Boston, under the supervision of Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, its founder and first director. Like Bridgman, Keller was similarly affected at about 18 months of age from an unidentified illness. Her education began at home (Tuscumbia, Ala.) in March 1887 with Annie Sullivan (b. Apr. 14, 1866; d. Oct. 20, 1936), a graduate of the Perkins Institution (1880-1886). Keller later attended the Perkins Institution (1889-1893), the Wright-Humason School in New York City (1894-1896), the Gilman School for Young Ladies in Cambridge, Mass. (1896-1897), and Radcliffe College for Women in Cambridge (B.A., 1900-1904), accompanied by Sullivan, her life-long hearing teacher-companion.

Laura D. Bridgman
The Deaf Mutes of Canada/Gallaudet University Archives

Helen A. Keller
The Canadian Mute/Photo reproduction credit: Burlington Camera Ltd. (Burlington, Ont.)

The first deaf-blind Canadian on record to receive any formal schooling appears to be Catherine St. Just Taskey (b. 1848; d. Unknown), who was "partly" educated at the Protestant Institution for Deaf-Mutes in Montréal, Québec. She was admitted in February 1871 at the age of 23, but withdrew several weeks later when her parents moved to Ontario. Several deaf-blind boys were enrolled during the early history of the Institution Catholique des Sourds-Muets in Montréal. Albert Maheu and Adélard Lussier were the first to be admitted before the turn of the century. In 1902, Aimé Bélanger of Pointe-Gatineau, Québec, a 26-year-old deaf and partially blind adult, arrived for training. When his vision deteriorated to such an extent that he was unable to read, he became a permanent ward of the institution on April 1, 1917.

The next deaf-blind pupil admitted was Gaston Robitaille (b. Feb. 5, 1927; d. June 10, 1974), who became well known in the French Deaf community. He was born in Masson, a small Québec village just north of the Outaouais River in the county of Papineau. At the age of three and a half, he lost his sight and hearing due to scarlet fever. In September 1936, Robitaille, sickly and suffering from rickets, was placed in the care of the institution. He was immediately hospitalized for four months and treated for otitis, tonsillitis, infected adenoids, mastoiditis, chicken pox, and double cataracts. After his hospitalization, he returned to school but was never completely healthy. Nevertheless, under the tutelage of Rev. Brother Joseph Alfred Graveline, a long-time hearing teacher at the institution, Robitaille progressed rapidly. On April 20, 1941, local school representatives, teachers, friends, and the officers of des Dames Patronesses gathered in the chapel of the institution to witness his first communion, an unforgettable and unique ceremony. The institution became Robitaille's permanent home, as he had no other place to go. He walked freely about its halls and knew every corner from memory. However, one day, workers removed the old elevator (which was being replaced with a more modern one) and forgot to rope off the area. Robitaille fell down the empty shaft but miraculously survived. This incident led to his first real understanding of the concept of death and dying.

Another deaf-blind boy to attend the Institution Catholique des Sourds-Muets was Arthur Harvey of Lac St. Jean, Québec. Not much is known about him. He became deaf and blind at the age of two and was brought to the institution by his mother in the early 1940s. Harvey was taught by a hearing man, Rev. Brother Herménégilde Laflamme, who used both Braille and touch to educate his young charge.

In 1911, the Institution Catholique des Sourdes-Muettes in Montréal, Québec, received its first deaf-blind pupil, Ludivine Lachance (b. Feb. [day unknown], 1895; d. Apr. 3, 1918), who had become deaf and blind at the age of two years. As the child grew older, she became uncontrollable at home and "had to be shut in a cell."[24] She finally arrived at the Institution on June 29,

1911, after a "trip which was very upsetting for her and very arduous for the sisters into whose care she had been given."[25] Two nuns (Sister Angélique Marie and Sister Ildephonse, who was herself deaf) were assigned to work with the deaf-blind teenager, who had no language and no understanding of the world around her. A story about Lachance's life, *Hors de sa prison* ("Out of Her Prison"), was written by Corinne Rocheleau-Rouleau, a Worcester, Mass. native who had also attended the Institution.[26]

By the time Lachance died from consumption at the age of 23, she had become "the object of the admiration of visitors and of the legitimate pride of the sisters."[27] On her deathbed, she signed to the nuns around her that she had been happy in her life, received the last rites, and then died.

The second deaf-blind person to be enrolled at the Institution was Virginia Blais, who entered in 1924 at the age of 50. Soon other deaf-blind females (many in their 20s or older) began attending. The school set up a separate classroom for their instruction and began teaching Braille in 1929. From that time on, each deaf-blind pupil had "her own desk with lock and key, her own Braille typewriter, her personal books, and all the equipment needed for study."[28]

During the 1882-1883 school year, the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Halifax, N.S., received its first deaf-blind pupil, 10-year-old William Walter Heulin of St. George's, Nfld. When he entered the school, he was described as "very strong and with a most ungovernable temper. Woe to the boy or girl who angered him or disturbed his long fits of brooding melan-

School staff with Ludivine Lachance during a lesson
Courtesy of Archives Providence, Providence Mother House (Montréal, Québec)

choly."[29] However, as his isolation decreased, so did his temper. The first word he learned to spell via the double-hand alphabet was "apple," his favourite fruit. In January 1892, he was transferred to the city's school for the blind to learn caning and was "delighted with the fact of being able to help himself" by learning a trade.[30]

It was not until the fall of 1906 that the Halifax Institution accepted its next deaf-blind pupil, Mary Jane Veinot (b. Apr. 22, 1900; d. May 28, 1981) of Lawrencetown, N.S. She was born partially blind in Berwick, N.S., and was deafened by the age of

Older deaf-blind women at the Institution Catholique des Sourdes-Muettes (circa late 1930s)
Courtesy of Archives Providence, Providence Mother House (Montréal, Québec)

three. A curious and very clever student, she later wrote articles about her experiences that were published in school and local newspapers. After completing her training at the Halifax Institution (1906-1918), Veinot lived happily as a ward of the school for the next 43 years (1918-1961).[31] She enjoyed socializing with other deaf and blind people and taught hearing blind adults how to fingerspell into her hand so they could communicate. After 1961, her residence was Fundy Hall, the Home for the Blind in Lancaster, N.B. (now a part of the city of Saint John). When Veinot died in 1981, a memorial plaque engraved with her name was unveiled in the clubroom of the Saint John Association of the Deaf.

Other deaf-blind children known to have attended the Halifax School include Charles Allen Crane of Vancouver, B.C. (1916-1921), Annie Huckins (province unknown) (1933), Jean Watts of New Glasgow, N.S. (1943-1954), Roberta Wadman of Glace Bay, N.S. (1944-1954), Marion Day of Newfoundland (1948-1955), Kerry Wadman of Glace Bay (1955-1961), and Marjorie Golinsky of Alberta (1952-1961). Veinot and Crane were taught by Winifred (also known as Gertrude) Conrod (b. Oct. 8, 1879; d. Feb. 4, 1947), a hearing woman who joined the teaching staff of the Halifax Institution in 1905. Another hearing teacher, Louise Fearon (b. June 10, 1890; d. Nov. 2, 1981) — who began teaching at the school in 1911 — dedicated 18 years (1943-1961) to the deaf-blind pupils there. She was a niece of James Fearon, the Halifax School's second principal (1891-1918).

The Halifax School closed in 1961 when the new Interprovincial School for the Education of the Deaf opened in Amherst, N.S. The Interprovincial School did not accept any deaf-blind students until 1971. A separate deaf-blind department was officially opened on June 22, 1976. Louise Fearon, who had been a member of the Halifax School teaching staff for 50 years, had the honour of cutting the ribbon at the opening ceremonies. Her former colleagues dubbed her "the Queen of Canada's Educators of the Deaf-Blind."

The British Columbia School for the Deaf and the Blind in Vancouver served as the only dual facility in Canada for 56 years (1922-1978). Unlike the Halifax Institution, it had both a

Charlie A. Crane
Courtesy of Crane Memorial Library, University of British Columbia (Vancouver, B.C.)

deaf department and a separate blind department. When the British Columbia School opened on May 1, 1922, the first two deaf-blind children admitted were a girl named Clara from Alberta, and Charles Allen Crane (b. Apr. 10, 1906; d. Nov. 30, 1965), who, after a five-year stay at the Halifax School (1916-1921), had returned home to Vancouver. Crane's accomplishments are worthy of special mention. Born in Toronto, he was one of a family of eight children — four boys and four girls. An attack of spinal meningitis at the age of nine months left him completely without sight and hearing. His family moved to Vancouver in 1911. Young Crane was described as "the most mischievous of the mischievous. The Crane residence had all its windows screened, for Charlie loved to throw things and feel the vibration as the broken glass crashed to the floor. Many a time he crept all unseen to the top of the stairs and dropped a scuttleful of coal on the floor below. And imagine his mother's feelings when she saw her adventurous blind and deaf bairn atop a telephone pole."[32] Crane was taught the manual alphabet by his mother, who had learned it after her son became deaf, and he was soon able to identify objects. But, strictly speaking, he had no formal language until he entered the School for the Deaf in Halifax, a continent away from home, on May 10, 1916. He quickly learned how to communicate with sighted people by having them touch and fingerspelling into his left hand ("his right hand [was] not as educated to the touch as his left member").[33] He also developed fairly comprehensible speech.

A few months after arriving at the school in Halifax, Crane was taken to visit Dr. Alexander Graham Bell (an ardent oralist and the inventor of the telephone) at his summer home in "Beinn Bhreagh" ("Beautiful Mountain"), near Baddeck, N.S. Bell was so impressed with Crane's progress that he predicted that Crane would become Canada's "Helen Keller" one day. The teachers at the school agreed with Bell. In an 1917 article in the *American Annals of the Deaf*, James Fearon, principal of the Halifax School, wrote that after only one year Crane "had a larger vocabulary than the average deaf child after five year's instruction."[34] After five years at the Halifax School (1916-1921), Crane returned to Vancouver. His first teacher, Winifred (Gertrude) Conrod, moved to Vancouver in 1922 to continue working with him at the newly opened British Columbia School for the Deaf and the Blind. She retired in 1942, but continued to transcribe books into Braille until a few days before her death. Conrod was sometimes the recipient of Crane's highly developed sense of humour. Once, for example, she decided to start calling him pet names, to see how he would respond. "She said, 'You are my lamb of lambs.' He thought for a moment and replied, 'You are my cow of cows'."[35]

The following story also illustrates Crane's sense of humour, as well as his determination to communicate:

> *One time Charlie was taken ill. His hands had to be bandaged and consequently he had no means of communication. He longed to converse with someone, so kindly Mrs. Bateman, the wife of the present Principal* [of the Halifax School], *talked to him by means of the touch system — on his toes. Charles thought this a great joke, but wishing to carry the humor a little further he used his voice to exclaim: 'Please take off your shoes and stockings and use your toes to talk to me!'* [36]

As a youth, Crane was described as "a big, healthy, good looking young man, very fond of gymnastics ... [with] a pair of biceps which might well be the envy of any athlete."[37] As an adult, he was a "gentle self-effacing man."[38] In 1931, he became the first deaf-blind Canadian to undertake university courses. According to a report in *The Manitoba Echo*, Crane's "astounding intellectual feats attracted attention of several prominent Vancouver citizens who gave substantial donations which together with an eventual grant of $600 by [the] B.C. Government enabled Charles to enter the University of British Columbia last fall for a special course to prepare him for journalism."[39] He studied at the university for two years (1931-1933), where he was also a reporter for *The Ubyssey* (a student publication), a varsity wrestler, and a member of the Classics Club. Between 1934 and 1937, he began translating books into Braille, with the assistance of a sighted reader. Over the next three decades, he collected some 2,500 Braille volumes, which he bequeathed to the University of British Columbia in his will. Thanks to this donation, the Charles Crane Memorial Library opened on April 4, 1968 in Brock Hall. Today, it remains the largest comprehensive Braille library in Canada.

A "philosopher, a writer, and a master mechanic," Crane was an employee at the Vancouver agency of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). While there, he worked "at various times [as] a loom operator, rivetter, and assembler of intricate mechanical equipment."[40] An active member of the Vancouver Association of the Deaf (VAD) and the Western Canada Association of the Deaf (WCAD), Crane died at the age of 59 while he was at the barber shop. Despite everyone's admiration and respect for him, he never became as famous as Helen Keller.

Some deaf-blind Canadians have devised other ways to keep in touch in addition to the manual alphabet and/or sign language. Soon after founding the Canadian League of the Deaf-Blind in 1952, Lillian Marjorie (née Dick) McGuffin-Wood (b. Oct. 30, 1903; d. Nov. 18, 1988) of Vancouver, B.C., started publishing a small magazine called *Dots and Taps*. ("Dots" in the title refers to Braille and "taps" to the manual alphabet tapped on a deaf-blind person's hand.) This publication (Canada's first for deaf-blind residents) linked deaf-blind Canadians living across the country. The first issue, hand-Brailled by McGuffin-Wood herself and bound by string, was sent to 11 homes. Soon that number grew. Its author, who had become deaf at the age of seven and was totally blind by age 40, later became well-known in Canadian deaf-blind circles. She was a "one-woman fund-raising committee," who "would knit from dawn to dark to make items that she could sell to purchase braillers for other deaf-blind Canadians (whom she then expected to use to keep in touch with her — if they didn't, she might take the brailler back)."[41] In 1957, she was appointed national deaf-blind consultant by the CNIB. In this capacity, she travelled across Canada in 1958, visiting some of the other deaf-blind adults (estimated to be about 300 in number at that time).[42] In 1958, she won an award from the Canadian Women's Press Club for the best feature article of the year. Her autobiography, *Trudging Up Life's Three-Sensed Highway*, was published in 1978.[43] And in 1988, she was a recipient of the Order of Canada. (The Canadian League of the Deaf-Blind, which she founded, seems to have died out following her death.)

Another deaf-blind woman who devoted much of her time to communication issues was Mae Sophia Brown of Thunder Bay, Ont. (b. May 22, 1935; d. Nov. 4, 1973). Brown started losing her hearing and sight in her childhood or early teens, and at the age of 19 developed a brain tumor. Surgery saved her life but left her completely deaf and blind. To earn money for college, Brown worked for the CNIB as a Braille proofreader. She entered the University of Toronto in 1967, and received her bachelor of arts degree in 1972, making her the first known deaf-blind Canadian to receive a university degree. After completing college, she worked as a counsellor for other deaf-blind Canadians in CNIB's social services department. She was also active in public relations, and "concentrated on improving communication between Canada's 400 deaf-blind. She started the Braille newsletter, *Communication*, and developed the Hand-Highway club which exchanged ideas monthly among its members by manual alphabet."[44] Brown's "Annie Sullivan" was Joan Mactavish (b. July 15, 1920), who began as her tutor and intervenor in 1967. After Brown died suddenly in 1973 of a brain tumor, Mactavish continued in her work with deaf-blind Ontarians. She is currently writing a book about Brown's life.

As the needs of the deaf-blind population became more well known, a few more services and programs were developed. The W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind in Brantford, Ont. set up a separate deaf-blind program in 1971, with an initial enrollment of seven students. Deaf-blind children from Ontario and other provinces were eligible to apply for admission, but it was often difficult to determine whether or not the child functioned more as a blind person or as a deaf person who might benefit more from the provincial school for deaf students. Courses for deaf-blind students are also located in the Fearon Unit for the Deaf-Blind, a program housed in the Atlantic Provinces Resource Centre for the Hearing Handicapped in Amherst, N.S. (until June 1995); the Richmond Deaf-Blind Program at Bridge House School in Richmond, B.C.; the Aden Bowman Collegiate Deaf-Blind Program in Saskatoon, Sask.; and the Institut Raymond-Dewar in Montréal, Québec.

A task force report issued in 1984 stated that one of the problems facing deaf-blind Canadians was their lack of awareness of self-help groups available to them. Another problem involved the uncertainty of the actual number of deaf-blind residents in the country; because some were not registered with the CNIB, their existence was unknown and therefore they were receiving no services.[45] Fortunately, several organizations now exist to serve deaf-blind Canadian adults, including the CNIB's Deaf-Blind Services (main office in Toronto, with branches in Ontario [Hamilton, London, Ottawa] and B.C. [Vancouver]); the Canadian National Society of the Deaf-Blind (a Toronto-based, consumer-oriented association incorporated in November 1985); and the Canadian Deaf-Blind and Rubella Association (which publishes a bi-annual newsletter called *Intervention*). In addition, several retirement homes for deaf-blind senior citizens have sprung up. In Willowdale, Ont. (a suburb of Toronto), architects designed an apartment building especially for deaf-blind tenants. The 16 units were all filled by the time the building opened in May 1992. The apartments are in a residential neighbourhood close to subway stops, and provide the residents with state-of-the art communication devices (such as a TeleBraille system that allows visitors to call a resident's room from the lobby to announce their arrival).

In 1991, reports still painted a dismal picture for the majority of Canada's deaf-blind citizens. It was reported that

services to deaf-blind Canadians is [sic] *extremely limited for the most part; non-existent in some parts of the country. It is painfully difficult to get the concept of self-advocacy to deaf-blind people for two major reasons: firstly, we are geographically separated in isolated institutions and residences...; secondly, communication is poor due to inaccessibility to training in alternative communication methods, including reading. The CORNERSTONE missing is INTERVENTION. Without Intervenors, the deaf-blind community does not even know it is missing out on the larger fabric of society.*[46]

In September 1991, George Brown College in Toronto, Ont. began an Intervenor Training Program for people who wanted

to work with deaf-blind children and adults. Intervention is defined by the Canadian National Society of the Deaf-Blind as:

the provision of a professional service, paid or voluntary, to facilitate the interaction of a deaf-blind person with his environment. As a process of facilitating, the intervention can include translation, interpreting, transliteration, guiding and habilitation and rehabilitation teaching in the individuals' preferred adapted receptive communication methods.[47]

In the opinion of Dr. Jerome D. Schein, noted American author and holder of the 1989-1992 David Peikoff Chair of Deafness Studies at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, "Every deaf person is potentially a blind person, and every blind person is potentially a deaf person."[48] The general population is aging, and by the year 2000 Canada could have a large number of older deaf people who have become blind and older blind people who have become deaf. Thus, there needs to be increased training for service providers who work with deaf-blind Canadians, to accommodate the increased needs that will certainly be coming in the future.

Acts of Heroism

Over the years, deaf Canadians have exhibited strength, courage, and quick thinking in the face of danger. The next two stories are examples of these heroic acts.

"Danger in the Rapids"

On April 24, 1905, Arthur Hall Jaffray of Toronto, Ont. (b. Oct. 24, 1882; d. Aug. 27, 1954) and John Wesley McCandless of Londonderry, Ireland (b. Mar. 16, 1884; d. Mar. 12, 1965), both students at Gallaudet College, rescued Mrs. Michael O'Connor, a hearing woman, from the rapids of the Potomac River near Washington, D.C. A native of Winnipeg, Man., Jaffray was deafened at about three years of age following a bad cold. He attended the Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Belleville (1892-1901), and also studied at Kendall School for two years (1901-1903) before entering Gallaudet College (1903-1905). McCandless, the son of a Justice of the Peace, lost his hearing from scarlet fever when he was 10 months old . He attended a school for the deaf in Glasgow, Scotland for five years, then transferred to Langside Institution for the Deaf in Belfast, Ireland where he stayed for two years. His desire to further his education led him across the Atlantic Ocean to study at Kendall School (1901-1903) and Gallaudet College (1903-1906).

O'Connor was the wife of a canal lock-keeper who lived near the Potomac River at Great Falls, Va. She had been out on the river in her skiff and was rowing across to the Virginia shore, unaware that the river was rising and the currents were becoming stronger. The swift currents suddenly carried her away towards a dam, where her boat overturned. She managed to swim to a rock jutting above the water in the middle of the river. On the day of the incident, Jaffray and McCandless were walking to Georgetown along the bank of the canal. About two miles (three kilometres) from the Cabin John Bridge, they saw the woman clinging to the rocks. Jaffray immediately ran for a boat and some ropes, while McCandless swam through the dangerous waters to her aid. Soon Jaffray arrived in a boat with the woman's father, and threw a rope to McCandless. He and the nearly unconscious woman were then pulled to the boat. On the perilous voyage to the shore, however, they lost an oar overboard and the boat capsized. All four were thrown into the rapids, but managed to get onto the rocks. Jaffray swam to the Virginia shore where he summoned help. O'Connor's father, and McCandless — with O'Connor tied to him — were later safely pulled to shore. The whole rescue lasted four hours.

Dr. Edward Miner Gallaudet, then president of Gallaudet College, wrote to the British authorities about the episode. He recommended that Jaffray and McCandless be awarded the highest civilian commendation in Britain and the British Empire at the time, the Albert Medal (now known as the George Cross Medal). However, the only recognition given to the two was a letter of appreciation from the Under Secretary of State in London, England, delivered through the British Embassy in Washington, D.C. to Dr. Gallaudet, who in turn gave it to the students. The letter read:

I am directed by the Secretary of State to acquaint you that his attention has been drawn to your gallant action in assisting at the rescue of Mrs. Michael O'Connor from a rock below the Little Falls of the Potomac on Easter Monday, the 24th of April, 1905. Mr. Gladstone has made inquiry into the circumstances under which the rescue was effected, and he is glad to take this opportunity of expressing his appreciation of the courage and presence of mind displayed by you in circumstances of great danger. He is sure that the success which attended your efforts will always be a source of gratification to you, and he feels proud that a fellow-subject of the King has performed his duty with so much bravery and devotion.[49]

For unknown reasons, Jaffray left Gallaudet College in 1905 before graduating. He worked in a Toronto branch of the Canadian Post Office for 44 years and was a very active member of the Deaf community in Ontario (among his activities, he served as president and treasurer of the Toronto Division No. 98, National Fraternal Society of the Deaf; was a faithful member of the Toronto Evangelical Church of the Deaf, conducted services through its missions as a layreader, and served as secretary of its Board of Trustees; and was president of the Canadian Chapter of the Gallaudet College Alumni Association). In 1906, McCandless also dropped out of Gallaudet. Because Britain did not allow deaf teachers in its schools at that time, he remained in the United States, where he worked for 12 years (1909-1921) at the Alabama School for the Negro Deaf and the Alabama School for the Deaf, both in Talladega, and 36 years (1921-1957) at the Mississippi School for the Deaf in Jackson. After his retirement, he and his wife Ella (née Clarkson), a 1924 graduate of Gallaudet College, moved to Columbia, S.C., where McCandless died at his home in the spring of 1965.

"Highway Rescue"

James Michael Zell (b. June 6, 1967), a deaf man from Burlington, Ont., has been recognized for his role in saving many lives when a bus driver was attacked by a passenger and lost control of the vehicle. His heroic actions began when he was riding home on a bus bound from Burlington to Oakville. At one of the stops, an elderly man approached the bus. The man hesitated, boarded the bus, turned around and got off, only to change his mind again and finally get back on board. As the bus started to move, the man apparently changed his mind again and wanted to get off. However, the bus was now moving through heavy traffic on a bridge, and the driver would not stop. The man became agitated and began punching the bus driver in the face, trying to pull him from his seat. The driver then lost control and the bus swerved out of the lane, causing the passengers to panic. Zell remained calm and acted quickly. He pulled the older man away from the bus driver and into a seat. Other passengers then helped Zell control the elderly man. The driver was able to regain control of the vehicle, and everyone was safe. When the police arrived, Zell was praised for his rescue.

Zell was born deaf and attended the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf in Milton, Ont. (1972-1986). He had also attended the North Central Bible College in Minneapolis, Minn., where he majored in Deaf Culture Pastoral Studies (B.A., 1994). Upon his return to Canada, he began working as a youth pastor and assistant pastor to Rev. Pastor John R. Graham (deaf) of the New Life Deaf Church, a newly formed Pentecostal church for deaf people located in Milton, Ont.

Insights into the Issue of Peddling

As has been mentioned in other chapters, the public image created by deaf peddlers (and hearing imposters) has been of concern to the Deaf community for many years. The following section depicts some of the issues surrounding the "profession" of peddling.

"The Deaf Never Beg"

Peddling has always been viewed by certain members of the Deaf community as an undesirable activity. The feeling was that the practice gave hearing society false impressions about deaf people and their capabilities. The Deaf community was especially concerned when unscrupulous hearing people pretended to be deaf to collect money from an unwary public. Publications such as *The Canadian Mute* often contained stories about these imposters, who were unable to sustain their "deafness" in the face of police officers and courtroom judges. For example:

An undated *Toronto Telegram* newspaper reported that a person was caught begging by handing people a piece of paper on which the following was written in pencil: "Please give me a little assistance to help pay my fare to the Deaf and Dumb Asylum at Belleville. I am a deaf mute... through sickness, I lost my position as a barber." The beggar was charged with being a vagrant and a professional beggar when it was learned he could both hear and speak. Because he could not pay the alternative of a fine and court costs, the beggar was sentenced to 60 days in jail.[50]

A "deaf" woman was going from house to house and shop to shop, soliciting funds for a Christmas party for deaf children. She used a phoney name and address, and convinced some prospective victims that she was the niece of a well-known columnist for a local Canadian newspaper. However, some townspeople became suspicious, because at that time the majority of deaf children attended a school for the deaf some 500 miles (800 kilometres) away. An investigation by the Business Protective Bureau of the local Chamber of Commerce found that the "deaf" woman was only pretending to be deaf and was not really helping deaf children.[51]

For a number of years, Canadian newspapers and publications of the deaf printed articles about "deaf" imposters, trying to counteract their negative impact on the Deaf community. Law-abiding deaf citizens complained more and more that an endless number of hearing people were posing as deaf persons. To protect their reputations, members of the Ontario Association of the Deaf introduced a slogan in 1915 which read, "BEWARE OF IMPOSTERS: THE DEAF NEVER BEG." This popular public notice could be seen in publications and on the walls of deaf clubs for some time.

By the 1940s, peddling by people who really were deaf was also becoming a problem in the eyes of Deaf society. Following World War II, peddling in general was on the increase and soon became widespread in Canada and the United States. Hundreds of deaf workers were laid off when production of war materials and equipment was no longer in demand, and soldiers returned home wanting their old jobs back. Unable to find employment in the highly competitive job market of that period, some deaf people turned to peddling as a temporary means of subsistence. To others, it became a "get-rich-quick scheme." Most peddlers tried to legitimize their activities by selling (at highly inflated rates) needles, paper clips, adhesive

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

BEWARE OF IMPOSTORS

The Deaf respectfully ask the co-operation of the public in suppressing the ever-increasing "deaf" impostor evil. The Deaf do not seek charity in any shape or form; they are well able to take care of themselves. The hearing public would confer a great favor on their deaf fellow-citizens by promptly handing all impostors over to the police.

ALWAYS BEAR IN MIND THAT

THE DEAF NEVER BEG

A 1915 advertisement against "deaf" imposters
The Deaf Canadian/Gallaudet University Archives

Distributed by the Toronto Better Business Bureau in the 1940s, this poster was reprinted in many Canadian newspapers
Courtesy of Blair & Hendrika Conrad (Calgary, Alta.)

tape, pencils, manual alphabet cards, erasers, and pads. Some peddled independently, while others worked for "masters" who ran their own rings of peddlers.

Deciding that it must wage war on this peddling racket, the Ontario Association of the Deaf called for full inter-provincial co-operation of organizations of deaf Canadians. This led, in part, to the establishment of the Inter-Provincial Association of the Deaf (IPAD) in 1940. Publicity on behalf of the concerns of the Deaf community found its way into a variety of publications, including those of public service agencies. The Better Business Bureau, with its head office in Toronto, received an interesting collection of complaints about deaf peddlers from its 800 affiliated offices across Canada. The *IPAD Bulletin* reproduced the following story about deaf peddlers that appeared in a December 1945 Better Business Bureau publication:

The Canadian Association of the Deaf has advised us that they plan drastic action to eradicate the alphabet card peddling racket. This racket is defined as door-to-door canvass by persons who present householders with a card bearing a tale of woe, beginning with "I am deaf and dumb," as the prelude to the sale of articles and trinkets. Another form of this racket is that in which poolrooms and beverage rooms are visited and cards, with a hard-luck story, left on each table — then collected a few minutes later with the contributions of sympathetic patrons.

The Bureau has been informed that "this nefarious activity by certain types of deaf drifters and downright panhandlers in Canada, carries harmful advertising for decent deaf citizens, who through their associations have spent years and money in informing the public, industry and business concerns with the merits and capabilities of the well-educated and properly adjusted deaf adults."

Some of the panhandlers travel across Canada working their game — while supporting their families in Ontario, and so lucrative has it been found that other persons, who work during the day, play it at night as a means of adding to their income — and incidentally paying no income tax on their spoils. Our members and the public should not let sentiment stand in the way of refusing to contribute to these beggars, who, in nine cases out of ten, are young and physically capable of honest work.[52]

About the same time, similar stories were published in the *Police Gazette*, a publication for police departments disseminated by the headquarters of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Many other local organizations of the deaf joined in the anti-peddling campaign, spending much time and money advertising their opposition to such panhandlers. Leaflets were distributed to police stations, newspaper editors, stores, and the general public. The Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf (WCCD), under the presidency of Charles W. White, was the most active organization in combating the "manual alphabet card" racket of the 1940s. (Interestingly, Deaf community publications often carried advertisements from deaf printers who printed and sold these alphabet cards. Some in the Deaf community rationalized this apparent contradiction in attitudes by claiming that the cards advertised in these publications were for legitimate purposes only — to be given out free as part of public awareness activities or sold as fundraisers for deaf organizations — but were not intended for use in begging or peddling. Nevertheless, deaf peddlers probably obtained their supplies of cards from these same sources.)

The WCCD continued its anti-peddling campaign into the 1950s. In 1952, the following notice appeared in the *WCAD News* (a publication of the Western Canada Association of the Deaf):

To deaf peddlers: When you come to the WCCD Hall, you will find a framed notice on the wall of the vestibule stating the wishes of the members that YOU ARE NOT WANTED IN THE HALL and that means all peddlers with alphabet cards.[53]

In the 1960s, the Ontario Association of the Deaf, with the support of the Canadian Association of the Deaf and various other groups interested in the well-being of deaf people, submitted a brief on peddling to the Federal Government. It is not clear whether bills outlawing nationwide peddling were ever formally proposed or considered by the government. Today, deaf peddlers continue their practice where law enforcement and Deaf community opposition is weak or non-existent.

Nature Lovers

While most deaf people like to live in cities and towns, the following deaf individuals preferred living closer to nature.

"A Deaf Hunter"

Hans Farret, one of the best hunters and trappers in the Lake Mimmiska region (some 440 kilometres north of Sprucewood, Ont.), spent over 30 years living in the wilderness with his wife and son. Details of Farret's childhood and youth are obscure, but it is known that he met his future wife — who taught him to read and write — while living in the Lake St. John district. Both his wife and son were hearing and communicated with Farret in sign language. An eye-witness account of the family's life in the woods was given in the early 1900s by a sportsman from Toronto named Judson Morse. The following excerpts are from his account entitled "A Deaf Hunter: Supports Wife and Son in Canadian Wilderness" (originally published in *The New York Evening World* and reprinted in the November 22, 1906 issue of the *Deaf-Mutes' Journal*):

I naturally supposed the hunter was forced to depend wholly upon his eyes to detect both game and warnings of danger, but in this I was mistaken. He told me through his son, who acted as interpreter, that he had developed a sense, which he declared was undefinable [sic], *but which hinges upon vibration.... He "feels" a lynx cry, a bear howl, a gun explode, but the voice of his wife has no effect at all.*

So acute has this sense become that Farret is sometimes aware of the approach of deer or moose as they crash through the timber. He is, therefore, in little danger from beasts who attack him openly and make a noise about it. His greatest peril lies in lynx, wildcats, and fishers, which lie in wait for their prey along the branches of trees. In daylight Farret can detect these where an ordinary hunter would miss them, but at night he is at their mercy unless his keen sense of smell gives him warning.

Farret himself says that his nose is almost as good as a hound's, and that when the snow is on the ground or the leaves are wet, he can tell which way a deer is going by smelling of four or five tracks. He has been blindfolded to prove this and has never failed.[54]

Although Farret was an excellent shot, bagging hundreds of bears, lynx, deer, and other animals, he relied on traps, set in a nine-kilometre-radius from his cabin, for the majority of his game. His income came from the sale of furs, which he took to the most convenient post of the Hudson's Bay Company, or sold to fur traders who periodically travelled through his area. Farret used most of his income from selling furs to buy provisions and ammunition, but managed to save a little each year in hopes of buying a small farm. As he explained to Morse, "I love the woods, but I realize that I can't live here always, so I am gradually making up my mind to settle down where my wife can see a neighbor now and then and my boy can go to school."[55] Unlike his father, the son (Arthur) preferred fishing and was a poor hunter and a worse trapper. Arthur was a naturalist, familiar with the birds, animals, trees, and plant life around his woodland home. With his knowledge of the medicinal properties of herbs, Arthur also served as the family doctor.

It is not known whether the family actually moved from the woods to their hoped-for farm, but it is clear that the encounter with Farret left a strong and positive impression on Morse. In his account, Morse noted that "the family of three live in a neat log cabin of four rooms and are devoted to each other .... [Farret] is ... the best student of animal life I ever saw."[56]

"Tree Twins"

Redwood Park is regarded as one of North America's most interesting collection of evergreen trees. It is located in the Vancouver suburban municipality of Surrey, B.C., off the Pacific Highway (176th Street) between 16th and 20th Avenues, just north of the Canadian/American border. The park stands today as a living monument to two deaf brothers — identical twins — who were responsible for its beautiful and unique development in the early pioneering days of the municipality.

Born in Pocohauntas County, Iowa, David Williamson Brown (b. Aug. 31, 1871; d. Nov. 2, 1949) and Peter Sinclair Brown (b. Aug. 31, 1871; d. Dec. 9, 1957) were six years old when they immigrated to Canada in 1878 with their parents, two sisters, and three brothers. The family travelled by covered wagon to San Francisco, Calif., and then by ship until they reached Seattle, Wash. From there, they went north in a small boat to Whatcom, now Bellingham, and then further north by Indian canoe to Ferndale, both within the state of Washington. The father and three of his sons then crossed the 49th parallel into the province of British Columbia and acquired 160 acres of heavily timbered land on the Clover Valley Road in Surrey. Soon after a log house was built on what is now Bamford Road,

David Williamson Brown, Jr.
Courtesy of Alexander Stewart (Surrey, B.C.)

Peter Sinclair Brown
Courtesy of Alexander Stewart (Surrey, B.C.)

they returned to Ferndale and brought the rest of the family to their new homestead by "a stoneboat drawn by a yoke of oxen."[57] The Brown family later increased to 11 with the birth of four more daughters (two of whom were twins).

Sometime after completing their formal education, the male twins, David and Peter, contracted scarlet fever. They recovered, but both had become totally deaf. On their 21st birthday in 1893, their father presented each with 40-acre adjoining parcels of land on a tree-studded hilltop. David and Peter went into seclusion and lived on these 80 acres for the rest of their lives. They withdrew from society, perhaps because of their deafness, and had little contact with their family members and neighbours. After the land was cultivated, the brothers planted an orchard and started the evergreen forest from a pocketful of redwood seedlings that they had brought back from a trip to Santa Clara, Calif. They interspersed the trees with flower beds and created a lily pond that had both aesthetic and practical purposes. The water for the pond was channelled from springs at the bottom of the hill and then pumped from the pond via a hydraulic water ram to the hilltop where it was used to irrigate the orchard and flower beds. The twin brothers then began collecting and planting native conifers and other evergreen seeds and seedlings which they ordered from Austria, Russia, Japan, France, and Italy. David personally made several trips to the United States in search of new varieties. They proudly marked each species with a metal plate bearing its Latin and common name.

After their first home caught fire, David built a large, two-story house that was nicknamed "The Hotel." He collected china plates and bric-a-brac, but the house was also filled with junk, paper, and even bundles of dried Pampas grass. One day a fire started. Fuelled by the extremely flammable Pampas grass, it spread quickly through the house. The twin brothers then moved into a shack. This building caught fire too, but this time the brothers assumed their home had been deliberately torched by someone trying to scare them off the land. The next house — a two-stage tree house that sat on stilts and was supported by trees 20 feet in the air — was secured against intruders. Each level had a retractable ladder, and the brothers also built an observation deck — a sort of crow's nest atop a nearby tree from which it was possible to see for miles around. It was rumoured that they also kept a gun to shoot at trespassers.

One day while clearing land, Peter accidently ignited some dynamite with a shovel. The force of the explosion broke both his legs, and one leg healed improperly. As a result of this accident, Peter was unable to climb ladders, so he was forced to abandon life in the treehouse and live in a small building on the grounds, just west of the main redwood forest.

Over time their extensive orchard disappeared except for a grove of English walnuts, which proved to be a boon to the twins. During World War II, Peter and David refused to pay their property taxes and were in danger of losing their acreages to the municipal government. Two other family members saved the day by gathering and selling the walnuts in Vancouver marketplaces to raise the $600 needed to redeem the land.[58] Surrey municipal authorities, recognizing the beauty and the potential value of the property, negotiated a verbal agreement with the brothers for the eventual purchase of the land. If the brothers ever decided to dispose of the tract, Surrey was to be the first to have an opportunity to buy it.

David died in 1949, leaving Peter to maintain their preserve of evergreens. Peter lived for eight more years, spry and agile despite his advancing age. In his later years, he became intensely religious and, despite earlier oral agreements to leave the land to the municipality, deeded all his possessions to the Jehovah's Witnesses. After he died and his will was made public, his family challenged its legality. The prospect of a court battle loomed for at least a year. Finally, an out-of-court settlement was reached, resulting in a three-way split. The three remaining family members as well as the church received cash settlements and a few acres of land. The municipality of Surrey expropriated 64 prime acres, which is now Redwood Park. In accord with the Brown brothers' wishes, Surrey has left the land in its natural state. Today, the lily pond, orchard, and most of the flowers are gone, and the evergreens have taken over. The cedars, redwoods, pines, thugas, cryptomerias, auracarias, firs, beech, hemlocks, chestnuts, and birch still stand as a living monument to the deaf twins who treasured trees.