

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

THROUGH DEAF EYES

WETA AND FLORENTINE FILMS/HOTT PRODUCTIONS, INC.

JANUARY 10, 2007

THIS SCRIPT INCORPORATES THE CORRECTED NARRATION.

###MARKS THE BEGINNING AND ENDING OF OPEN CAPTION SECTIONS. THESE SECTIONS DO NOT REQUIRE CLOSED CAPTIONS.

Words Appear: “The following program is available in high-definition TV.”

Now, Actor and Director CJ Jones signs as he speaks.

CJ JONES:

I was driving down on the freeway, oh it was a beautiful day. All the birds were flying and all the birds were singing and all the birds dropping, hey you, quack quack quack, I got you. **He swerves and shows a bird hitting his face, then falling.** All of a sudden I look through the rear view mirror, the guy behind me was so angry, honk, honk, honk. “Hey you, what are you deaf, huh?” Well that makes me angry, of course I’m deaf and proud. So I step on the gas. Oh, by the way I have a Mercedes 500 ACL. I’m rich and deaf, thank you very much. Finally I caught up with that car. Automatic window. **It rolls down.** Hey you, what are you hearing, huh?

I. King Jordan, former president, Gallaudet University, signs as he speaks.

I. KING JORDAN:

When you talk to people who can hear and you ask them what do you think it would be like to be a deaf person? Then all of their thinking is well, I couldn’t do this. Can’t, can’t, can’t, can’t, can’t. They would start listing all the things they can’t do. And I don’t think like that. Deaf people don’t think like that. We think about what we can do.

Professor of Communication, Carol Padden, signs as an interpreter voices.

CAROL PADDEN:

We sign, we make movies, we do stage performances, we can write books, but we make ourselves understood.

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##OPEN CAPTIONS BEGIN ###

TEACHER:

Say the word airplane.

A teacher shows a cartoon-plane. A white-gloved hand glides forward, like a plane flying. A home-made flying-machine falls over. A girl responds to the teacher.

LITTLE GIRL:

Airplane.

Now, the band “Beethoven’s Nightmare” plays “It’s Just a Deaf Thing.” A woman dances as she signs lyrics.

NARRATOR:

Let’s take a quiz. Ready? True or False: **The performer waves her hands.** All deaf people use sign language. Sign language is universal. Deaf people live in a silent world. Having a deaf child is a tragedy. All deaf people would like to be cured. **Signing “I love you,” audience members pulse their bodies.** Hint: The answers are all going to be false.

As the band plays, a young girl prances across the stage.

[SHORT PAUSE] Now, colorful circles radiate and overlap. A title: “Through Deaf Eyes.”

##OPEN CAPTIONS END ###

TITLE: THROUGH DEAF EYES

Now, Professor of ASL and Deaf Studies Samuel Supalla signs as an interpreter voices.

SAM SUPALLA:

There was a little girl, a neighbor girl that came over and played with me. And we used gesture with each other. One time I went over to visit her, and I saw her using her lips to communicate with her mother. They weren’t using their hands at all. And so I ran home and I asked my mother what was happening. Why aren’t they using their hands? My mother said, “they’re hearing.” And I said, oh, well what are we? She said, “Daddy and I are deaf. You’re deaf, your

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brothers are deaf.” And I said, is everyone deaf? Is that little girl the only hearing girl in the world? She said, “No, everyone else is like them.” And I said, oh, now I get it.

A title: “Graduation. The Clarke School for the Deaf.” Teenage-boys wearing suits and girls in party-dresses exchange hugs. Some wear hearing-aides.

NARRATION:

Deafness is almost always one generation thick. Over ninety percent of all deaf people have parents who can hear. And most deaf parents have children who can hear. So deaf people interact on a meaningful and intimate level with hearing people all their lives. Yet most Americans have very little understanding of what it means to be deaf.

Actress Marlee Matlin signs as an interpreter voices.

MARLEE MATLIN:

I was doing an interview once with CNN. And the woman and I were getting ready, getting our makeup ready. And I mean this is live in front of millions of people. And I was ready to be interviewed. And everybody was in their positions. And with three seconds before the light was to come on the camera, the interviewer needed my attention and she said Marlee, “My dog is deaf like you.” And the next thing I know the light is on the camera. And there I am live. And I’m thinking in the back of my head, does she want to throw me a bone? Does she want me identify with her dog? I had no idea what the significance of that was.

Teacher Rory Osbrink signs as an interpreter voices.

RORY OSBRINK:

People need to realize that we’re normal. Don’t just look at my ear. Don’t look at it as a physical handicap. We’re normal really. Yes, we do have some accommodations to be made to survive in a society where it’s dominated by hearing people. But at the same time if you were to come into the room and it would be full of deaf people, then you would need the accommodation too.

A title: “Reunion, The Clarke School for the Deaf.”

NARRATION:

Thirty-five million Americans are hard of hearing to some degree. Of these, an estimated 300,000 people are profoundly deaf. Deaf people can be found in every ethnic group, every region, every economic class. **Two women**

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hug. Some deafness is hereditary; some is caused by illness or accident. To be deaf is to be part of a tiny minority in a hearing world, but it is far from the uniform and tragic experience that most hearing people imagine.

Math Professor David James.

DAVID JAMES:

Being deaf is, well, it's part of me. It's something I have to deal with but it doesn't keep me from being happy. It doesn't make me either happy or sad. It's just like being a man instead of a woman or being tall instead of short.

Professor of ASL and Deaf Studies Carolyn McCaskill signs as an interpreter voices.

CAROLYN MCCASKILL:

Maybe a person can't see and is that normal? Maybe it is. And maybe a person walks with a bit of a limp. Perhaps that's normal to one person and not to another. What about left-handedness? Is that abnormal or is that normal?

Superintendent James E. Tucker, Maryland School for the Deaf, signs as an interpreter voices.

JAMES TUCKER:

We have two children. We have Bradford here who's probably the only kid in town who can talk on the phone and play basketball at the same time. **Holding a cell-phone to one ear, a teenager dunks a basketball.** He is our only hearing child. He has to sign all the time because there's no one else in the family who is hearing.

Karen Sheffer-Tucker signs as an interpreter voices.

KAREN SHEFFER-TUCKER:

Our daughter's eleven. She's deaf. We have just the two, and we don't want anymore. We have a boy and a girl and that's enough for us. I guess we're the all-American family. Just the four of us. It's a nice number.

NARRATION:

Today it's entirely possible for a deaf family to call itself an all-American family, but that isn't how the story begins. For centuries hearing people saw deafness as a horrendous misfortune. When a Protestant revival swept through 19th-century America, fervent Christians labored to bring the gospel to unbelievers. But one group of souls seemed locked away forever from the word of God.

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Historian Douglas Baynton signs as an interpreter voices.

DOUG BAYNTON:

Most of the deaf people in America in the early 1800s lived in rural areas. They were separated from each other, they were isolated. Most had very little communication with the people around them. Deaf people had a limited understanding of what they could do – of their own possibilities. And people with deaf children really had no idea of what their children could achieve.

Trees stand in silhouette against a golden sky.

NARRATION:

Very few Americans believed that deaf people could be educated at all – until 1817, when a Connecticut clergyman named Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet discovered his mission in life: to bring the Gospel to people who could not hear. In Hartford, he opened the first permanent school for deaf children in America, with just seven students – and a head teacher from France who is now a legend in the Deaf community.

JOHN VICKREY VAN CLEVE:

Laurent Clerc was a teacher at the Paris Institution for the Deaf. And he was an extremely well-educated, sharp, witty man, who was very, very deaf, and had been very, very deaf since infancy. **Carved wooden hands form the letters: “D.E.A.F.”** One of the things that Clerc brought to the United States was French sign language.

NARRATION:

Laurent Clerc taught using his hands: he communicated with sign. To Gallaudet, the language was a revelation. He called it "highly poetical." **Carved hands spell alphabet.** To Clerc, and to many deaf people, signing was natural, and practical.

Historian John Vickrey Van Cleve.

JOHN VICKREY VAN CLEVE:

Clerc discovered that there were already some signs in use by some of his students. Clerc took his native French sign language and he blended it with a little bit of the signs that he saw students using here in the United States.

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NARRATION:

The result was an American sign language that spread west and south as new schools for deaf children opened. **In archival photos, students pose for the camera.** New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, Illinois. In 1864, Abraham Lincoln signed a law founding the first college in the world for deaf students – eventually it would be called Gallaudet University. And *all* these schools used sign.

Now, a black-and-white film.

ARCHIVAL FILM

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL:

My dear sir, the organs of speech are in no way effected by deafness. The deaf person is mute simply because he cannot hear, and hasn't been taught to speak.

A contradiction in terms sir, a most illogical contradiction, the deaf mute's speech organs may be intact...

NARRATION:

In April, 1871, a bright young Scottish immigrant, Alexander Graham Bell, began teaching deaf children in Boston. Like Gallaudet, he had a passion and a mission: to bring language to deaf people.

ARCHIVAL FILM

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL:

Nature inflicted upon the deaf child but one flaw. One little flaw, imperfect hearing. But we deny him speech by not teaching him to speak.

BRIAN GREENWALD:

Society in general views Alexander Graham Bell as an American hero, as the inventor of the telephone. He was famous, wealthy, and influential. His wife was deaf. His own mother was deaf. He was always associating with the Deaf community. **Historian Brian Greenwald signs.** He was a teacher of deaf children at a day school in Boston. He was very familiar with the deaf world.

Author Tom Humphries signs.

TOM HUMPHRIES:

www.pbs.org/weta/throughdeafeyes

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Alexander Graham Bell is a very important figure in Deaf folklore. He offers an antagonist perspective because he's like the boogie man. **Humphries fingerspells the word "boogieman." An interpreter voices.** And even though he's a great man in his own right, but he did put forth the idea that a life without signing, would be a better life.

In a photo, children sign different letters.

DOUG BAYNTON:

Bell thought that signing prevented deaf people from learning to speak, so he was against deaf people using sign, their natural language. **Douglas Beynton mouths words as he signs. An interpreter voices.** Bell believed that sign language marked them as different and kept them in the lower classes. He believed that earlier in the 1800s sign language had been their only recourse. But now there's a better choice, the technology to teach them to speak and lip read. The oral method.

K. Todd Houston

K. TODD HOUSTON:

Bell thought, over a hundred years ago, that if every deaf child who received the right type of education and the use of the right technology, that those children could learn to use spoken language.

NARRATION:

Oral schools for deaf children opened in the late 1860s. They did not teach sign and, in fact, outlawed its use. Instead they began speech training, teaching deaf children to generate sounds, to mimic the mouth shapes and breathing patterns of speech. And if children knew what speech looked like, the oralists thought, they could learn to read lips. This was an idea that divided educators of deaf children, and it still does today. BEGIN OPEN CAPTION ###Here's one man's take on lipreading, from *Audism*, by deaf filmmaker Rene Visco.

Now, different telephones flash by. Captions appear as a young man mouths his words: "Can you read lips? CAN YOU READ LIPS?" A montage shows telephones and the human ear.

MAN (SIGNING) –

Can you read lips? CAN YOU READ LIPS????

Almost all hearing people I meet can't read lips. I know they can't. Yet they will judge deaf people on our ability to READ LIPS. If I want to read lips, I'll go to my girlfriend.

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A montage: Men and women talk on the phone.

END OPEN CAPTIONS###

Now, Carol Garretson

CAROL GARRETSON:

Oh, do you lip read? That's a very dangerous question because if you say yes they blah-blah-blah. Whoa, wait, wait a minute. No, you have to go slower, then – **Carol's mouth gapes open.** No, no, no, no, no. Just talk normally.

GENEVIEVE JAMES: It was a bit hectic. We didn't really have a lot of time to prepare. But it's a take home. I mean we had all this homework and quizzes and stuff so I just lucked out.

Genevieve and David James.

DAVID JAMES:

Did you take a look at it?

DAVID JAMES:

I can understand people who speak directly to me in good light. And without too much background noise. And a lot of what I do in speaking is arranging these circumstances. And if that doesn't happen, I don't hear things. I can be part of the conversation without knowing what the other people are saying.

A photo shows children in a classroom.

NARRATION:

Speaking, lip reading and participation in "normal" conversation was, from the beginning, the great goal of the oralist method. In 1880, the method was endorsed by an important international conference of educators in Milan, Italy. Oralism was beginning to win.

Carol Padden, signs as an interpreter voices.

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CAROL PADDEN:

Schools for deaf children all over the United States started, one by one changing, deciding that their particular school was not going to use sign language in the classroom anymore. They changed their hiring practices. The teachers were forbidden to sign, and the children were forbidden to sign.

Photos show teachers and students.

JACK GANNON:

After the Milan Congress the percentage of deaf teachers went way down because they couldn't teach speech. Those schools that were strong supporters of deaf teachers moved them to the vocational programs to avoid the parents' objections to them. **In a photo, boys wear aprons over their school-clothes. Now, Jack Gannon signs as an interpreter voices.** Those were the dark ages for deaf education in America.

NARRATION:

Bell subscribed to two popular American movements that greatly bolstered the oralist cause. One was Nativism -- the belief that the current flood of immigrants was threatening the American way of life.

In grainy footage, immigrant families file past a guard.

DOUG BAYNTON:

Many people were immigrating to this country from eastern Europe and southern Europe, and this made a number of Americans very nervous. **A girl does a folk-dance.** Ethnic groups often set up their own schools here; **Historian Douglas Baynton signs.** they published newspapers in their native languages. The Deaf community, too, had their own newspapers, their own schools, and their own churches, and used a separate language. And so people began to think of deaf people as an ethnic group, a group that should be assimilated into the general population.

JOHN VICKREY VAN CLEVE:

Bell was famous for going to school boards and state legislatures and arguing that American Sign Language was in fact a language borrowed from France. Sign Language was not supportive of American society.

Historian John Vickrey Van Cleve.

NARRATION:

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Bell was also a prominent leader in another movement that was newly-popular in America. Eugenics, the idea that planned breeding can improve the human race. "A defective race of human beings would be a great calamity" Bell wrote. "We must examine the causes that lead to the intermarriage of the deaf with the object of applying a remedy."

Alan Marvelli.

ALAN MARVELLI:

He was an early eugenicist. He was quite concerned that if the deaf married other deaf individuals there would be an expansion of the Deaf community. He did not see this as a desirable thing.

JOHN VICKREY VAN CLEVE:

He wanted to try to eliminate deaf organizations if he could, find other ways to socialize deaf people among hearing people rather than deaf people.

GINA OLIVA:

I think that Alexander Graham Bell's greatest crime was keeping deaf people apart from each other. It wasn't so much that he thought speech was important. Worse than that was that he didn't want deaf people to marry each other. He didn't want them to be near each other. He wanted them to be apart.

Professor of Physical Education Gina Oliva signs.

NARRATION:

But deaf children had to be educated, and the only practical way was in all-deaf schools, for the most part, residential schools. Here deaf children played together, shared stories, invented games, passed on unique customs and basic values. Even at oral schools, students would teach each other signing on the sly. It was all part of what would, in time, become Deaf culture.

Actor and Director Patrick Graybill signs as an interpreter voices.

PATRICK GRAYBILL:

The schools for the deaf really were the first place where deaf people came together. And they shared their language, they shared their culture, they shared their stories about growing up.

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At times they had to grow up quickly.

Children were often dropped off at boarding schools without understanding what was happening; **In old footage, a little girl cries.** Many arrived without even knowing their own names. From the age of four on up, they might be away from their families for months at a time.

Actor and Director Bernard Bragg signs as an interpreter voices.

BERNARD BRAGG:

The first day at school, my mother said, Oh Bernard, now you're in school. And I want you to be a good boy. Work hard. Learn all you can. And I said yes, I understand, but what? She said Good-bye. And she gave me a hug and she turned around and left. And I thought, why? And suddenly the superintendent took me by the hand and pulled me down the hallway. **Bragg scratches his forehead.** Well, years later I spoke with my mom and I said why did you leave me like that? Why didn't you sit and explain that this school was a boarding school? And that I would stay there Monday through Friday, why didn't you explain all that? You just left. And my mother said, I know, I just couldn't bring myself to say that. And then I understood. It was hard for her too.

A note reads: "We will see you soon, Mike. Love, Mom." Archives Technician Michael J. Olson signs.

MICHAEL OLSON:

When I went in to the school for the deaf I was about five and I was so thrilled to get mail. A letter from my mom. My favorite holiday was Christmas. I always looked forward to the Christmas holiday. My mother would write on a card only two more sleeps and you will be home. **A drawing shows two single beds labeled "Mike."** It was counting the days for me to see how many days I would have to sleep at school before I was sleeping at home in the bunk bed with my brother. So it helped me have a sense of counting down to the time when I would be going home. **In archival footage, students do sit-ups together on a lawn.**

ROSALYN GANNON:

The students always had each other. It was like a big family. **Rosalyn Gannon signs.** And we learned a lot from each other. Maybe some things we learned were wrong and we may have had the wrong information sometimes but we were a family. And some of us had no communication at home. So we could share with each other, advise each other, help each other.

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One tradition was a special sign that students invented for each other, a sign they might keep for life: their name sign.

Professor of ASL and Deaf Studies Carolyn McCaskill signs as an interpreter voices.

CAROLYN McCASKILL:

When I got to the campus of the Alabama school for the deaf I didn't have a name sign yet. And after thinking about it for awhile and this is pretty typical of deaf people, they look to see what your character is, how you behave, a personality trait and then they give you a name sign that sort of ties into that particular trait that's unique to you. Well, after time went by my friend said, "I got it. I know the way you swivel your hips when you walk and so we're going to give you this name sign." So it went from my elbow down to my hip. I didn't know I had that little bit of a swivel of a hip, I thought I walked like everyone else but that name sign was given and it's stuck ever since.

Words appear: "The babies are taught rhythm from the beginning." In footage, a teacher and her students wave batons around a piano.

NARRATION:

Students might sign to each other – but not in class. For most of the 20th century, the vast majority of deaf teaching was based almost exclusively on spoken language.

Wearing stethoscopes, four students sing as a teacher plays a keyboard. Patrick Graybill signs as an interpreter voices.

PATRICK GRAYBILL:

You weren't allowed to use sign during class. If you used sign during class you would be punished. They would make you put on white mitts and they would have strings attached to them so you wouldn't be able to use your hands.

RODNEY KUNATH:

###BEGIN OPEN CAPTION

The rules in Clarke School as well as downtown Northampton, we had to keep our hands down and talk. **Captions appear as Clarke School Alumnus Rodney K. Kunath speaks: The rules in Clarke School as well as downtown Northampton, we had to keep our hands down and talk. We had to keep on talking and lip read. If we waved our hands, the teachers were afraid that if we used our hands, we would lose the quality of our speech. So when I went downtown there was a policeman in plainclothes. I did not know that he was watching me. When I went back to Clarke School the teachers told me, "Rodney, you were waving hands downtown." And warned**

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me not to go downtown again. The rules in Clarke School as well as downtown Northampton, we had to keep our hands down and talk. We had to keep on talking and lip read. If we waved our hands, the teachers were afraid that if we used our hands, we would lose the quality of our speech. So when I went downtown there was a policeman in plainclothes. I did not know that he was watching me. When I went back to Clarke School the teachers told me, "Rodney, you were waving hands downtown." And warned me not to go downtown again.

Now a woman places a girl's hand on her cheek as she forms sounds.

END OPEN CAPTION###

ROSALYN GANNON:

And many people don't realize that when children learn speech it's all repetition and speech training over and over again. **Rosalyn Gannon.** Think of all the time I spent on it when I could have learned other things, be educated in other things. I spent so much time learning how to talk, how to say milk, cat, dog. **Rosalyn presses a hand against her cheek.** Hours. Holding my face, pushing my mouth, making things go back and forth trying to make the right movements. This is an M. Awful.

K. Todd Houston.

K. TODD HOUSTON:

There have always been what's referred to as oral failures. The technology of the day was limited and those children may have had more difficulty developing spoken language.

ARCHIVAL FILM NARRATOR:

Over a period of a few months, our class has been able to learn approximately 50 nouns. Now their skills are being advanced by writing and saying from memory.

STUDENT: Bike

TEACHER: Write it.

In archival footage, a girl writes on a blackboard with chalk.

K. TODD HOUSTON:

Even the adults today who talk about oral failures, they are thinking about their own experiences going to the speech teacher or being at an oral school for the deaf and not being successful or really struggling to communicate.

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ARCHIVAL FILM

TEACHER: Right. Finish it. You're not finished. You forgot. **The teacher helps the girl add an "e" and dot the "i."**
That's right - sit down, Lynn.

English Professor Kristen Harmon signs as an interpreter voices.

KRISTEN HARMON:

I can say that I was considered a successful oral person, for many years I was mainstreamed in a public school. I was able to use my speech with my family and my friends. I had a lot of speech training. I used hearing aids and was trained auditorally, but in my mid-twenties when I went to graduate school or I was in graduate school, I realized how hard I was working just to get my work right. It would just completely wear me out.

Teacher Rory Osbrink signs as an interpreter voices.

RORY OSBRINK:

My oral abilities were limited. I learned vocabulary in English but I couldn't speak it. My parents were relying on my speech, so I couldn't show them my intelligence.

Kristen Harmon.

KRISTEN HARMON:

You asked me to speak so I can demonstrate how successful I was as an oral deaf person. But understand that speaking is only one way. And that if I speak the other person hears me. They assume that I don't need any sort of interpreting or any kind of sign or anything like that. They assume that I can hear them. And that's the problem with speaking. It's a two-way communication. That's why I don't. I don't want people to assume that I can hear them because I can't. It's much easier just to turn off my voice.

Psychology Professor Irene W. Leigh signs and voices.

IRENE LEIGH:

I have always had my feet firmly in both the hearing world and the deaf world. I've always been very comfortable in both worlds. I've always been hungry for information about both worlds. I've always wanted to be connected to people, to humanity. It didn't matter whether they were hearing or deaf and I'm very fortunate that I had the communication

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skills to do so relatively, comfortably. I know that my speech is not exactly normal. But it's very understandable. That's gotten me through situations in communicating with hearing people.

NARRATION:

It's common for deaf people to talk about two worlds, one hearing and one deaf. At times these worlds seem to be two different planets – and so a special notion has evolved in the Deaf community. A separate planet of sight, without sound.

In animation, a planet winks! Performance Artist Mark Morales signs.

MARK MORALES:

We have this planet which we call earth. We spell it E-A-R-T-H so it relates to the ear, to speaking and hearing. There's this other planet E-Y-E-T-H. And that relates to the eye and the visual. So there are two worlds. I grew up on Earth. Now, I'm on this other planet, E-Y-E-T-H, a world where all these possibilities are open to me.

NARRATION:

BEGIN OPEN CAPTION####And now, an attempt to reach the deaf planet: *Destination Eyeth*, by Deaf Filmmaker Arthur Luhn.###END OPEN CAPTION

Words Appear: "Today, I am going to Eyeth!"

In an old-fashioned silent movie, a scientist with bushy hair wears a white lab coat. A diagram shows a plan to send the scientist to Eyeth.

A helper uses a rope to hoist a one-ton weight up to a roof. The scientist stands on one end of a slanted board propped over a cinderblock. The weight falls onto the other end and BREAKS the board! The scientist shakes fist.

A new diagram shows a flying machine. The scientist climbs up a ladder and sits in a home-made airplane. The plane flaps its wings. It slides down a ramp and falls over!

The scientist and his assistant jump up-and-down and shake their fists.

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Now, in archival footage, motorcars share a road with horse-drawn carriages.

NARRATION:

But back in the early 20th century, America was on the planet Earth, not on the imaginary planet of Eyeth. On Earth, discrimination against deaf people was so much a fact of life that, by 1880, they had founded an organization to protect themselves -- the National Association of the Deaf. In 1906, the U.S. Civil Service flatly stated that it would no longer allow deaf people to work for the government. So the N.A.D., and its president, prepared for battle.

BRIAN GREENWALD:

George W. Veditz was the seventh president of the NAD. **Historian Brian Greenwald signs as an interpreter voices.** He was loud, forceful, clear and not ashamed. He got up and spoke out.

NARRATION:

The fiery Veditz launched an aggressive grassroots campaign against the Civil Service decision. Letters poured in to elected officials. After two years of protest, Theodore Roosevelt repealed the guidelines. Deaf people had won the right to work for their country. "The deaf themselves fought shoulder to shoulder," a proud Veditz wrote.

Merv Garretson signs as an interpreter voices.

MERV GARRETSON:

George W. Veditz was one of the most well known presidents of the National Association of the Deaf. He was a beautiful writer, a beautiful signer, really a genius in every sense of the word.

NARRATION:

George Veditz knew four languages. He raised chickens, wrote poetry, and worked as a printer, teacher, and newspaper editor. He won horticultural awards for his dahlias at the Colorado State fair, and once earned a draw with the world chess champion in an exhibition match. In 1910, he started yet another project. Making movies.

A black and white film shows George Veditz, a slim man with center-parted hair. As he SIGNS, words appear:

"As long as there are deaf mutes, we shall have signs. These films will preserve our beautiful language."

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VEDITZ (Signing) ###OPEN CAPTIONS BEGIN###

As long as there are Deaf Mutes we shall have signs.

These films will preserve our beautiful language.

OPEN CAPTIONS END###

Now, Historian Susan Burch signs, as an interpreter voices.

SUSAN BURCH:

Starting around 1910 the NAD produced films in an effort to preserve sign language, shooting footage of signing masters. They raised funds and then produced a variety of films that showed these masters telling deaf people stories.

In black and white films, George Veditz and others communicate with sign language, making fluid movements with their hands and arms.

STAN SCHUCHMAN:

Before the invention of film, when sign language was shown, it was static. A drawing couldn't show the movement.

Historian John S. Schuchman signs and voices. The Deaf community finally had a way to show what real sign language looked like.

In a film, a woman signs: she traces two fingers across her cheeks, indicating a smile.

NARRATION:

The NAD films were like all the other films from their era: silent. Deaf actors were made for the medium. They could play hearing characters, or deaf ones.

In a film, police question a deaf man. Dialogue appears: "Don't try to pull that deaf and dumb stuff." A character fires a gun behind the deaf man, who doesn't notice.

STAN SCHUCHMAN:

Silent films showed deaf characters as being dummies, objects of humor. But at least a deaf person could watch the film and understand it. That was lost after 1929.

Newsreel footage.

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ARCHIVAL NEWSREEL:

Now a gala event ushers in a new era in motion pictures. With the premiere of "The Jazz Singer," starring Al Jolson, sound comes to the screen.

A scene from the film. [(singing) "MAMIE-"] Jack sings to his mother.

STAN SCHUCHMAN:

The transition from silent movies to talkies was a disaster for deaf people.

Now, scenes from a black and white film.

ARCHIVAL FILM

Secretary: Another party?

Woman: And what a party. [fades out]

Words appear in a crawl at the bottom of the screen: "Do not adjust your TV. This is what movies were like for deaf people after 1929."

NARRATION:

The talkies didn't change one thing: deaf characters were still stereotypes.

Susan Burch.

SUSAN BURCH:

Johnny Belinda won an Academy award in 1948. The character Belinda is seen as this poor, innocent, weak woman. Her deafness makes her even more vulnerable.

John Schuchman.

STAN SCHUCHMAN:

The fact that this dummy character blossoms by using sign language was enough - the Deaf community was excited and proud of the film, even though the stereotype itself was terrible.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

FILM ANNOUNCER:

Belinda, searching, ever searching for happiness and understanding, but ready to fight with primitive fury...

STAN SCHUCHMAN:

I was concerned that my friends would see that character and think that all deaf people were, were like that.

In the film, Belinda fires a rifle.

NARRATION:

Hollywood films weren't made for deaf people, but they had been creating their own diversions for years. Deaf communities had theatrical societies, literary circles, masquerade balls, organized debates, sports teams, and travel groups. **Deaf people visit Niagara Falls.** The Deaf culture that had taken root in the schools for deaf children cropped up all across the country in deaf clubs, for adults. **In archival footage, people sign and enjoy drinks.** People came together to sign, to help each other, and, quite simply, to have a good time.

At a microphone, a smiling, dark-haired man signs to other club-members. Around the room, people break into laughter. The dark-haired man pulls off the microphone, and pretends to SHAVE with it.

Now, John Schuchman signs and voices.

STAN SCHUCHMAN:

My parents were deaf. My parents had many deaf friends. They had an active schedule. We went to the deaf clubs. We went to deaf people's homes. It was a natural community for me as a kid growing up. **Several men sign in front of a shop.** It was like a kid who grew up in an immigrant family where many of the friends spoke a different language. Instead of speaking Italian, our family spoke sign.

A girl signs as an interpreter voices.

LITTLE GIRL:

I love you. I love George Washington. I love my country too. I love the flag, the dear old flag of red and white and blue.

In a film, words appear: "Slide for home' in sign language."

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

**A third base coach signals to a baserunner. He slides his hand through the air, then the runner sprints home!
More words: "Inability to talk does not stop this team from showing their disapproval of the umpire's decision."**

SUSAN BURCH:

In Akron, Ohio, for example, they had a football and a baseball team that consistently trounced hearing teams. **Susan Burch**. Deaf people were intensely proud of that accomplishment, proud that their team could defeat a hearing one. In broader society the status of deaf people frequently seemed inferior. But here they could level that distance, be seen as equal to anybody else.

In a photo, football players wear striped uniforms.

NARRATION:

Gallaudet had one of the first college teams in the Washington D.C. area. And legend has it that in the 1890s, deaf players made an innovation that would change the sport of football.

Academic Administrator Dwight Benedict signs as an interpreter voices.

DWIGHT BENEDICT:

The team would get together and they would sign to each other and they realized somebody that they were playing against on a hearing football team knew sign language and could read their plays. And so instead of just standing around discussing their strategy, they stood together in a huddle.

NARRATION:

Deaf athletes were anyone's equal on the gridiron or the baseball field, but this equality did not apply in the wider world. Most hearing people regarded deafness as a problem, pure and simple, and the general inclination was almost always: fix it.

Jack Gannon signs as an interpreter voices.

JACK GANNON:

If you read and study history of deaf America you'll find that some parents will try anything to, quote, "cure" their deaf child.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

ROBERT PANARA:

###OPEN CAPTION

Fathers like mine, **English and Drama Professor Robert Panara, signs and voices. Captions appear: Fathers like mine, who tried different ways for their deaf sons to get their hearing back again. Most common one dealt with airplane flights.**”

Archival footage shows a biplane lift off a dusty runway.

Captions continue: **“They would charter a plane, bring the deaf boy in the cockpit. The plane would take off and do loops, hoping the boy would get his hearing back again.”**

who tried different ways for their deaf sons to get their hearing back again. Most common one dealt with airplane flights. They would charter a plane, bring the deaf boy in the cockpit. The plane would take off and do loops, hoping the boy would get his hearing back again.”

END OPEN CAPTION###

NARRATION:

A surprising number of American parents turned to aviation for a cure. In his early career, the pilot Charles Lindbergh charged fifty dollars for what he called Deaf Flights. But more often, parents put their hopes in medicine.

ROBERT PANARA:

###OPEN CAPTION

The doctor put on like a helmet, **Robert Panara: The doctor put on like a helmet, strapped and put ear plugs with rubber caps in my ears. And it was attached to a box...**” Panara holds out his hands, indicating a box the size of a toaster. **“...a remote control or something. He said, “I’m going to turn it on.” And he slowly increased heat waves.”**

The doctor put on like a helmet, strapped and put ear plugs with rubber caps in my ears. And it was attached to a box, a remote control or something. He said, “I’m going to turn it on.” And he slowly increased heat waves.

END OPEN CAPTION###

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

NARRATION:

And if medicine did not work, maybe baseball?

ROBERT PANARA:

###OPEN CAPTION

My father thought **Robert Panara: My father thought maybe if Bob can meet Babe Ruth, “The Bambino”, maybe he’d get a shock, a thrill, and get his hearing again. Panara smiles. “The Babe comes out, says ‘Hiya, kid.’ And I shook hands. I was thinking I shook hands with the Babe.” Panaras’ smile widens. “It was wonderful, but I never got my hearing back. I was deaf as a post still.”**

My father thought maybe if Bob can meet Babe Ruth, “The Bambino”, maybe he’d get a shock, a thrill, and get his hearing again. The Babe comes out, says “Hiya, kid.” And I shook hands. I was thinking I shook hands with the Babe. It was wonderful, but I never got my hearing back. I was deaf as a post still.

Now, a photo shows a large white tent.

END OPEN CAPTION###

JACK GANNON:

My aunt took me to this revival. **Slogans cover a bus: “Miracle Revivals. The Blind see, the Deaf Hear, the Lame Walk.” Footage shows a preacher hands on a line of people.** Then they called me and took me up there and I stood there in front of the preacher. **Jack Gannon signs as an interpreter voices.** And he touched my ear and just sort of shook and he started praying and shouting and shaking me. I was so embarrassed. I didn’t know what the hell he was trying to do. I had no idea. **Rosalyn Gannon smiles and shakes her head.** And after a while he gave up. Later I learned that it was my fault because he said I didn’t have enough faith. So that’s why you are speaking to a deaf man today.

They chuckle. Now, Marlee Matlin signs as an interpreter voices.

MARLEE MATLIN:

I’m a proud person who happens to be deaf. I don’t want to change it. I don’t want to wake up and suddenly say, oh my God, I can hear. That’s not my dream. It’s not my dream. I’ve been raised deaf. I’m used to the way I am. I don’t want

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

to change it. Why would I ever want to change it? Because I'm used to it, I'm happy.

KEVIN NOLAN:

###BEGIN OPEN CAPTION

After my third child was born, **Retired Clarke School Counselor, Kevin Nolan, signs and voices. Captions appear: "After my third child was born, our doctor came up to us saying that our baby might not be able to hear. My response was 'Oh, for crying out loud. We have two children who are deaf. I'm ready to take my child home. Don't worry about it.'" Nolan smiles.**

our doctor came up to us saying that our baby might not be able to hear. My response was "Oh, for crying out loud. We have two children who are deaf. I'm ready to take my child home. Don't worry about it."

END OPEN CAPTION###

NARRATION:

Even in the first decades of the 20th century, deaf people wanted to focus on what they could do, not what they couldn't. In residential schools they were taught manual trades – shoemaking, woodworking, printing – frequently with great success. When they encountered a problem, they often came up with their own solution. Few companies would sell life insurance to deaf people; so deaf businessmen founded their own company to do exactly that. And when deaf people felt excluded from church services, they held their own.

Newsreel footage.

ARCHIVAL NEWSREEL:

The congregation which can neither hear nor speak comes to the evangelical church of the deaf each Sunday to worship together. The congregation, through sign language, brings new beauty and majesty to age-old church rituals.

Now, at the Christ United Methodist Church of the Deaf, choir-members use sign language and bang on a drum.

(Chorus entering church and signing hymn)

LASANDER SAUNDERS:

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

I was born hearing and then later I became deaf. I started going to a hearing church to worship, but I was missing so much. When I found out about a deaf church, I thought I'd try that. **LaSander Saunders signs as an interpreter voices.** And I saw the choir signing music. And the drum. And I felt so inspired. The preacher was good. And I could get worship here with deaf people. It was a great change in my life.

Pastor Peggy Johnson signs as an interpreter voices.

REV. PEGGY JOHNSON:

Most of the people who are deaf in the US today are more typically like this church here, average, or poor, working class people. And economic things are tough. And by the end of the month it's tough here. But at the same time this church can make a difference.

Parishioners sign to each other. Stephon Williams signs as an interpreter voices.

STEPHON WILLIAMS:

After church, it kind of feels like a club. Good relationships, close. I can talk with all different kinds of people, tell them how I feel, my emotions, get them out. It's like a family. Good relationship. A lot of love and sharing, understanding, openness from everyone.

NARRATION:

But deaf society was like American society. And that wasn't always good. In 1925, after an African American couple tried to attend the NAD convention, the deaf organization explicitly banned black people from joining. The ban was in place for forty years. **White and blacks pose in separate photos.** In the South, deaf schools, like all schools, were segregated for decades.

CAROLYN McCASKILL:

At the black deaf school, our black Deaf culture flourished. We had basketball games. We had our dances, we had black teachers. Moving then to the white deaf school, we all used sign language. But the signs that were being used were very different. The white deaf students would finger spell and then add some signs. As a black deaf person they would look at my signing and say that doesn't look like what they did as white deaf students. And so I found myself humiliated. I thought I was inferior and that somehow our signs were inferior to the white signs that they were using. And so I tried to put away my signs and instead adopt the signs that were used by the white students.

NARRATION:

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

But deaf students, black and white, had many school experiences in common. For one thing, many had gone through the audiogram – a test that measures the ability to detect sound. BEGIN OPEN CAPTION####And now, an (irreverent) introduction to the Audiogram: *Listen*, by deaf filmmaker Kimby Caplan.###END OPEN CAPTION

KIMBY CAPLAN:

Now the audiogram is essentially a graph of a person's hearing. **Words appear: “Kimby, Legally Deaf with a sense of humor.”** The only thing I have in common with an audiogram is that I have one done every single year. So if this doesn't make sense (gibberish).

The film fast-forwards.

My audiogram reads at ninety in the left ear which is my "good" ear. Which means that if I ever have children, God help 'em, because I ain't. And that means if I get an important phone call from the president, oops, she missed that one.

Words appear: “This is how speech often sounds to me.”

A lot of people find it annoying, especially when I'm eating and my jaw is moving a lot and it's going eeeeek. **She touches a hearing aid in her ear.** Or I'm having a conversation with you and my jaw moves and it Or when you are getting hot and heavy with someone and that starts to go off again.

Kimby rolls her eyes.

Most people think when they look at somebody if they're wearing a hearing aid in one ear and not in the other, they can hear in the hearing aid that they're not wearing, **The film speeds up.** (speedy audio) which is not always the case. I have a lot of people just immediately start talking to my right ear. At that point I immediately dance around them. They immediately think, oh my God what a freak, and then we proceed from there.

The audiologist gets your headphones adjusted, and the way he or she goes at having you repeat the same list of words you've repeated all your life -- baseball, hot dog, rainbow.

In a sound booth, Kimby wears headphones and takes an audiogram. Fade to black. Now, in footage, a young girl takes the test.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

NARRATION:

Audiograms and hearing aids are relatively recent steps in the long parade of deaf technology. Predecessors included the ear trumpet, the ear dome, the vacuphone. **Now, a black and white telephone ad. But** deaf people were unable to use one piece of technology, Alexander Graham Bell's invention, the telephone, for the first ninety years of its existence.

PAUL TAYLOR:

###BEGIN OPEN CAPTION THAT GOES ON FOR SEVERAL INTERVIEWS

I was always trying Engineer **Paul L. Taylor signs and voices.** **"I was always trying to find a way to use the telephone. I even thought about Morse code. I had enough hearing that I could use Morse code, but the problem is who else wants to learn Morse code?" No one. He smiles.**

I was always trying to find a way to use the telephone. I even thought about Morse code. I had enough hearing that I could use Morse code, but the problem is who else wants to learn Morse code? No one.

HARRY LANG:

Deaf Studies Scholar Harry Lang signs and voices. Captions:

"Deaf people had to depend on hearing people to make calls. Call if you're sick, call to inform your boss, you can't go to work. I remember myself when I was a young boy, I was in college and my father had heart surgery, and I couldn't call home. I had no TTY at that time. There are many stories of deaf people who died, they couldn't call for an emergency."

Deaf people had to depend on hearing people to make calls. Call if you're sick, call to inform your boss, you can't go to work. I remember myself when I was a young boy, I was in college and my father had heart surgery, and I couldn't call home. I had no TTY at that time. There are many stories of deaf people who died, they couldn't call for an emergency.

SALLY TAYLOR:

Sally Taylor signs and voices.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Captions: "We had to write letters or go to the person's house. Knock at the door. Nobody home. Leave a note. They come over, we're not home. Leave a note."

We had to write letters or go to the person's house. Knock at the door. Nobody home. Leave a note. They come over, we're not home. Leave a note.

KEVIN NOLAN:

Retired Clarke School Counselor Kevin Nolan signs and voices.

Captions: "When I was in high school and a lot of my friends had their own dates on weekends. I didn't want to be left out or be different from others. I want to show my friends that I do have a date. But I don't know how to approach a girl. I'd rather use a phone and ask for a date." Nolan looks down and shrugs his shoulders.

"So, I have to ask my mother or father, mostly my mother because my father feels very uncomfortable calling for me." He makes the sign for telephone, then frowns and shakes his head.

"It is unreal. I'm sorry to say I don't want to try again because how can you expect me to ask my mother or my sister or brother to make a phone call and ask for a date for me?"

Looking down, Nolan gently shakes his head.

When I was in high school and a lot of my friends had their own dates on weekends. I didn't want to be left out or be different from others. I want to show my friends that I do have a date. But I don't know how to approach a girl. I'd rather use a phone and ask for a date. So, I have to ask my mother or father, mostly my mother because my father feels very uncomfortable calling for me. It is unreal. I'm sorry to say I don't want to try again because how can you expect me to ask my mother or my sister or brother to make a phone call and ask for a date for me?

END OPEN CAPTION###

NARRATION:

Deaf people needed something that seemed like a contradiction in terms: a deaf telephone. In 1964, a California scientist took a shot at inventing that very thing. Robert Weitbrecht was himself deaf. A brilliant physicist, he'd worked on the Manhattan Project; he lived by himself, in a house crammed with spare electrical parts.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

HARRY LANG:

###BEGIN OPEN CAPTION

He was very much a loner, **Harry Lang signs and voices. Captions appear: “He was very much a loner, he was a very lonely person too. His best friends were dogs. He loved dogs.**

He had a personality that was sometimes hard to get along with. He never married. He was married to an ideal. That ideal was access to telephone communication. He was obsessed about that.”

He was very much a loner, he was a very lonely person too. His best friends were dogs. He loved dogs. He had a personality that was sometimes hard to get along with. He never married. He was married to an ideal. That ideal was access to telephone communication. He was obsessed about that.

END OPEN CAPTION###

NARRATION:

Weitbrecht developed a way to make telephone communication visible, using a modem and a teletypewriter.

HARRY LANG:

###BEGIN OPEN CAPTION

Captions appear. Harry Lang: “Each key, each letter, each number on the keyboard, would convert to a sound. The sounds were transmitted through the telephone lines. At the other end of the line another modem would convert back to printed word.”

Each key, each letter, each number on the keyboard, would convert to a sound. The sounds were transmitted through the telephone lines. At the other end of the line another modem would convert back to printed word.

END OPEN CAPTION###

NARRATION:

With partners James Masters and Andrew Saks, he tested the system. At first, all they got was gibberish; then, in May 1964, the teletypewriter printed out, in clear English, the first deaf telephone conversation in history. It worked, and deaf people began to build their own phone network, one household at a time.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

###BEGIN OPEN CAPTION

SALLY TAYLOR:

I remember that first conversation. **Sally Taylor signs and voices. Captions appear: “I remember that first conversation. Paul called me, started typing. Came words.”**

Her mouth drops open.

“Then I started typing. Paul said, ‘Why are you typing so slow?’ And I said I just can not believe you are typing to me and I’m getting it. But then soon I was typing.”

She smiles.

Paul called me, started typing. Came words. Then I started typing. Paul said, “Why are you typing so slow?” And I said I just can not believe you are typing to me and I’m getting it. But then soon I was typing.

END OPEN CAPTION###

NARRATION:

Each user needed to find a phone, a modem and a teletypewriter. This was not easy. The teletypewriters weighed about 200 pounds, and most were owned by telephone companies – which wouldn’t give equipment away, even broken-down equipment. But deaf people found their own – locating office machinery in warehouse sales and scavenging teletypewriters from scrap yards.

SALLY TAYLOR:

###BEGIN OPEN CAPTION

We got old Western Union telegram machines **Sally Taylor: “We got old Western Union telegram machines. We put them in our basement, and put them in our garage. I saw the wall between the two deaf communities break down. Because for once we could communicate with other deaf people who did not have similar communication methods.”**

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

We put them in our basement, and put them in our garage. I saw the wall between the two deaf communities break down. Because for once we could communicate with other deaf people who did not have similar communication methods.

END OPEN CAPTION###

NARRATION:

By 1982, the number of TTYs had grown from Weitbrecht's initial two to 180,000. **Two men sign via videophone.** The TTY was a giant step for deaf people. But it was just the first one. Over the next twenty-five years there would be closed-captioning for TV, relay calls, pagers, and videophones. Technology was working for the deaf world.

Merv Garretson.

MERV GARRETSON:

When we decided to build here on the beach for our retirement house, we decided that we wanted to have a house that was open and clear, accessible, **Carrol Garretson.** and deaf-friendly. **They sign throughout the house.** What makes it a deaf house? It has to have a lot of open spaces. It has to let people see each other. Every time somebody rings the doorbell the lights flash throughout the house.

Rosalyn and Jack Gannon sign as an interpreter voices.

JACK GANNON:

Technology has really had a strong influence on us. **Jack signs as an interpreter voices.** Now we can watch TV and see things that are captioned. It's easier to sit down in our living room and watch TV than get in your car and drive to your local group where they had an old 16mm projector to see a film. Now we will just turn on the TV and the captions are there, the captioned films are there. It is great but it takes away from the fellowship.

Archival footage shows workers assembling electronics.

ARCHIVAL NEWSREEL:

New Englanders manufacture a variety of valuable products from inexpensive raw materials. The making of tiny microphones to be used in hearing aids for deaf people is one of Camden's newest enterprises.

NARRATION:

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

In the second half of the 20th century, technology changed life for deaf people. In that same era, sign language made a stunning comeback. The change began in 1955, when a young professor named William Stokoe came to teach at Gallaudet. Stokoe was a hearing man, but his subject for research would be sign language – a method of communication about which Stokoe himself knew almost nothing.

Merv Garretson signs as an interpreter voices.

MERV GARRETSON:

We thought who the hell are you? You don't know deaf people. You didn't grow up with us. You come from another university and you decide that you know all about sign language?

NARRATION:

In fact, very few people knew all about sign language. Hearing people considered it a set of gestures that conveyed only the simplest ideas. Many deaf people used it, but they'd been taught to believe that sign was a pale imitation of the spoken word.

RORY OSBRINK:

I grew up oral until about seventh grade. **Teacher Rory Osbrink signs.** When I did see other deaf people signing, I thought they were apes, monkeys. What's that funny behavior? What are they doing? Why don't they just talk.

NARRATION:

At Gallaudet, Stokoe observed sign language in the hands of masters. **In footage, a man signs in front of a classroom.** He saw that students and deaf faculty were not simply putting English words into signs. There was nothing "broken" or "inadequate" about sign, he wrote. On the contrary: it was a complete language of its own.

Author Tom Humphries signs as an interpreter voices.

TOM HUMPHRIES:

Bill Stokoe did something that shook people up. He offered the idea that it was possible to have language in sign. Even deaf people themselves were pretty upset when Stokoe had suggested that sign was a language. They had really bought that idea that ASL was not a language.

NARRATION:

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

William Stokoe was not the typical professor. He rode a motorcycle, played bagpipes on the Gallaudet campus, and stubbornly persisted in his research, though he received little encouragement. In 1960, when he presented his early findings on sign language structure, he was criticized -- by the hearing faculty for taking sign too seriously, and by the deaf faculty for openly discussing a topic that many deaf people kept to themselves.

Rosalyn Gannon signs.

ROSALYN GANNON:

Many of our deaf friends recall the embarrassment of signing in public. They'd sign low, or smaller if they went to a restaurant or to any other public place.

Donald Tucker signs.

DONALD TUCKER:

During our lives, my wife and I were brainwashed. We were made to believe that signing was a shameful thing.

NARRATION:

In 1965, the team of William Stokoe, Dorothy Casterline and Carl Cronenberg published a dictionary of American sign language. Their dictionary was not alphabetical, but visual, arranging words by the sign's hand shape, location and movement. "We were perceived as the lunatic fringe," Stokoe wrote, "and we enjoyed that." But their work showed beyond a doubt that ASL is a true language, with its own structure and its own rules -- a language that uses the entire body, that accommodates nuance, metaphor, and even mistakes. What's called a slip of the tongue in spoken language is, in sign, a slip of the hand.

JAMES TUCKER :

The linguistic study of ASL that emerged in the 1960s and 70s helped the Deaf community. The deaf education community realized that signing has an important place in the classroom.

Maryland School for the Deaf Superintendent, James E. Tucker signs as an interpreter voices.

CJ JONES:

Deaf people use different kinds of ASL, depending on the circumstances. And people have their styles, it depends on where you come from. **Actor and Director CJ Jones.** People from southern states have their own dialect. **He signs**

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

as an interpreter voices. And that dialect is different from the north, the west or the eastern states. And there are different signs in different regions. And each region will have its own popular lingo as well.

ASL and Deaf Studies Professor Benjamin Bahan signs as an interpreter voices.

BEN BAHAN:

People always considered my Mother an "oral success." She spoke well and could write English fluently. My Father's speech and writing was not so good. He was called an "oral failure." So they were quite different linguistically and we saw my Father as a failure and my Mother as a success.

Growing up I thought of my Father as not very smart and my Mother as quite intelligent. Later I went to college and studied ASL grammar and structure. When I went home and saw how my Father signed I was astounded. He signed beautiful ASL with grammatical features and structure - exactly what I had learned in college. My Mother, on the other hand, had less of those features. Her ASL was so-so. My Father's ASL was outstanding. His English was not great; my Mother's was better. But all my life I'd thought of my Father as a language-less person - the "dumb" one. After learning about ASL I saw him completely differently.

Ted Supalla, Professor of Cognitive Sciences, signs as an interpreter voices.

TED SUPALLA:

People have recognized that our family had a unique style of sign language because we were so close to one another. And they identified it as a Supalla family accent, if you will.

Now, home-movies show the Supalla brothers in their teens. They raise their eyebrows and move their mouths expressively as their hands and fingers form smooth, flowing signs. Now, a group of black people watch a tall man sign.

CAROLYN McCASKILL:

I notice there are some signs that black deaf people use that white deaf people would not use. **Carolyn McCaskill signs animatedly as an interpreter voices.** Black deaf people show more expression and physically get more into it like when they sign girl, you see that with the head nod and the body language to reflect that. And that's just a black way of communicating as opposed to how a white person might say it, just girl whereas a black person would say yeah, girl! I mean they'd really show that black way of signing and that comes through very clearly.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Benjamin Bahan signs as an interpreter voices.

BEN BAHAN:

Watching a person tell a story in American Sign Language is like watching a movie. You can see this particular hand movement, indicating a person walking a particular path. **An actor demonstrates.** And you can create dialogue by the way people use body shifts, eye gazes and head shifts. **The actor signs to one side, then the other.** Special effects, too, you can actually do slow motion. **The actor arches his arms above his head, then gracefully lowers them.** So you see a lot of techniques in ASL story telling and film that are strikingly very similar.

NARRATION:

BEGIN OPEN CAPTION####And now, a story of life and death in film and ASL -- *Vital Signs*, by deaf filmmaker Wayne Betts.###END OPEN CAPTION

In a black-and-white film, the young actor rhythmically PULSES his hand, curling, then STRETCHING his fingers. Slowly, he brings his pulsating hand to his chest and holds it in front of his heart. He stares at us, his dark eyes intense. A title appears: "Vital Signs." Squaring his shoulders, the actor signs as a narrator voices.

DOCTOR: "Your heart is having problems. You may only have a week to live."

The actor's signs become jerky.

MAN: What? Only one week left to live?

NARRATOR

The world stops making sense.

Hazy images flash behind him.

He sees the doctor talking to him,
and then he turns and sees the interpreter signing
and then he gets up and walks out.

Projected behind the actor, a man sits-down on a bench in a grassy meadow. As the man looks-up toward the sky, the actor lifts his own head, signing.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Outside, he sits down and wonders, how am I going to tell my wife?

The actor stares-downward as the MAN stands on a bridge.

Looking out over the rail of a bridge to the river below. He turns around, sits on the rail, and he thinks - I'll just let myself go.

The man and the actor both lean back.

Falling, falling, **The actor signs in slow-motion, then RIPPLES his fingers.** sinking, sinking... blacking out.

Underwater, air-bubbles veil the man's face.

Suddenly he wakes up, he looks over at his wife.

The actor turns his head as, in his bedroom, the MAN watches a darkhaired woman sleep.

And she starts to wake up.

The actor turns the other way.

She says "Hey, honey, what's wrong with you?"

The actor looks over.

"I'm fine".

She gets up, hurt and angry, and she storms out.

He lies down, but feels his heart. His heart.

The actor fingers FLUTTER as they pulse at his chest.

"I've got to tell my wife!"

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

But she's gone. He rushes to the window and looks down; he can see her taking off in her car.

The actor signs the movement of the car.

He jumps into his car....

His hands MIRROR the tachometer-needle.

turns, gets on the highway.

Images show the car on the road. The actor makes big, sweeping motions with his arms, his whole body swaying as he signs. The car stops, and the man gets out.

Finally he sees her car. But its empty. Where is she?

He jumps out, starts walking.

"There she is. My wife. But my heart... it hurts."

She gets farther and farther away. **The actor's hand PULSES.**

He tries to catch up, but he falls.

To his knees.

Reaching out his hand, the actor holds his thumb and forefinger an inch apart as the projection shows the WIFE'S receding form.

To the ground.

The actor lets his right arm fall limply onto his left.

His heart.

He grimaces, his fingers pulsating. The heartbeat SLOWS, then stops.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Now on STAGE, figures move beneath a large blue sheet like rippling water.

NARRATION:

For decades, deaf clubs had their own drama groups, but they always played to an entirely deaf audience. **Actors emerge from the sheet.** In the 1960s, as sign language itself gained respect, a startling new company began to perform in sign for the general public: the National Theater of the Deaf.

An interpreter voices an actor's signs.

NTD ACTORS ON STAGE

BERNARD BRAGG:

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to be really deaf?

Another man speaks and signs. He touches his forehead.

SECOND ACTOR:

I don't know. It's not an easy question.

BERNARD BRAGG:

What would you miss most?

SECOND ACTOR:

Probably music.

Later, an interpreter voices as the first actor signs with a woman.

THIRD ACTOR:

Tonight. I'm not teasing you, Bernard, **Actor and Director Bernard Bragg.** we have a performance tonight.

BERNARD BRAGG:

I was born during the time of the Great Depression. So many people were out of work. My father and so many of his friends would sit and talk and complain, express their frustrations in terms of looking for jobs, not being able to find any, and discrimination against the deaf.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Onstage.

ANNOUNCER FROM *MY THIRD EYE*:

These are dreams, fantasies, wishes and pressing memories.

Bernard wanders uncertainly, signing to other actors.

BERNARD BRAGG:

I started to feel afraid for my own future.

ANNOUNCER:

Bernard's fear: finding himself on stage, suddenly, unprepared.

The actors form a circle around Bernard, trapping him.

BERNARD BRAGG:

What would become of me? What would my life be like?

In the center of the circle, Bernard's eyes BULGE.

Bernard Bragg.

BERNARD BRAGG:

NTD was established in 1967. **He signs as an interpreter voices.** We had no idea what it would mean to us as deaf people and mean to hearing people in general. **Onstage, Bernard bows.** No idea until we opened in New York and I read the reviews.

ACTOR:

Welcome to our world.

BERNARD BRAGG:

And they were all so positive.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Actor and Director Patrick Graybill signs as an interpreter voices.

ACTOR:

Let us sing together.

PATRICK GRAYBILL:

At NTD we performed a lot of different kinds of theater, from children's drama to Shakespeare. But we created a new play, "My Third Eye," by experimenting with our own stories. To introduce the hearing audience to ASL, we would sign "Three Blind Mice," and we would invite people to learn how to sign it. But that was too fast. People weren't able to do that. The whole play was built on our own dreams and memories and imagination. **Onstage, an actress kneels on the blue sheet, then looks back at a woman on a raised pedestal.**

It was easy for deaf people to follow because it was part of the deaf world.

The woman on the pedestal touches her lips and throat.

WOMAN ON LADDER:

Buck – et.

The student on the sheet mirrors her motions.

GIRL:

Buck – et.

On her pedestal, the other woman points one finger into the air, then nods to a man. He grabs the student by the back of the neck, then dunks her face against the blue sheet. The teacher.

WOMAN ON LADDER:

Buck – et.

The man nods toward the teacher, then wraps his arms around the student's shoulders. He forces her face down to the sheet, but she pushes him away, shaking her head. The teacher continues the lesson.

GIRL:

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Buck – et.

NARRATION:

NTD introduced thousands of hearing people to Deaf culture -- to the fact that deaf people had for decades shared language, performance, and even poetry, which can be created in sign language, or written first in English and then interpreted through sign.

Onstage, the actors CRAWL on the sheet. Now, Bernard Bragg signs as an interpreter voices.

BERNARD BRAGG:

I'd like to do a poem for you that I think is really evocative, so very visual **He SIGNS the poem.** and the name of the poem is "Flowers and Moonlight on the Spring Water".

Bernard takes a deep breath. The words of the poem appear beside him as he signs. He moves his hand like a setting sun.

OPEN CAPTIONS BEGIN ###

Evening **Pressing three fingers to his lips, he ripples his other hand like water.** river

Spring flowers He makes a crescent above his head, and lowers it onto the river.

Moonlight **He watches the moon follow the current. Next, he wiggles his fingertips briskly.**

Stars **His twinkling fingers BECOME the gently flowing river. Lowering his hands, Bernard smiles and nods.**

Now, footage shows a university.

OPEN CAPTIONS END ###

NARRATION:

By the late 1960s, deaf people could claim a recognized language, a renowned theater company, and their own technical college – the National Technical Institute for the Deaf opened in Rochester in 1968. **Professors sign to their students.** Other colleges, too, began offering courses in Deaf culture and American Sign Language.

Benjamin Bahan signs.

BEN BAHAN:

A while back I was teaching ASL, and I noticed a sharp increase in hearing students coming in. I was curious. I said, why do you want to learn sign language? And they said, oh, I saw "Children of a Lesser God."

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

In a clip, William Hurt signs to Marlee Matlin.

TRAILER ANNOUNCER:

Children of a Lesser God.

MAN:

Help me, teach me.

ANNOUNCER:

Love has a language all its own...Marlee Matlin.

Now, Marlee Matlin signs as an interpreter voices.

MARLEE MATLIN:

I was doing the stage production of "Children of a Lesser God" in Chicago, a small role. My agent called to ask me one question. She said "Would you be willing to be nude?" And I had to think of a good answer. I said, "I'm an actor. Go ahead", as I said on the teletypewriter. Two minutes later she called back and she said, "You got it."

Merv Garretson signs as an interpreter voices.

MERV GARRETSON:

First, she was beautiful. She had a good figure. Very attractive. And she swam in the nude, and boy, people woke up. And they realized that she's deaf. But she does everything else. I was really excited about the movie because it was the first time deaf people had had a star.

Now, Susan Burch signs as an interpreter voices.

SUSAN BURCH:

"Children of a Lesser God" was a seminal film for many reasons. A deaf person had a leading role and used sign language throughout the whole film. It also shows relationship of deaf people not just being in isolation by themselves but interacting with a community and a variety of different ways of use of sign language.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

John Schuchman signs as he voices.

STAN SCHUCHMAN:

It was an important success for deaf actors but it had problems as well. Some of the editing cut off signs and that was important because most of the films of "Children" that were shown around the United States in 1986, 87 didn't have captions.

Marlee Matlin signs as an interpreter voices.

MARLEE MATLIN:

When I got the Oscar it was great. Obviously it was great. And I got a review from a few movie critics who said, one would say that, "She was great, she won the Oscar, congratulations. Marlee Matlin did great. But it was a sympathy vote, because essentially she's just a deaf actress playing a deaf role."

In footage, Marlee Matline steps-up to a podium, dressed in a strapless burgundy gown.

MARLEE MATLIN:

When I went back to the Oscars to present the Oscar for best actor –

An interpreter voices her signs.

ARCHIVAL OSCAR FOOTAGE

MARLEE MATLIN (signing) : By nominating the following actors for best performance in a leading role, you have honored each one magnificently. **Matlin smiles.** (speaking) The nominees for best actor in a motion picture are...

MARLEE MATLIN:

I spoke the names of the actors. The right person got up and got the award so I must have said something right.

Mark Morales signs as an interpreter voices.

MARK MORALES:

Many people had hoped that she would be a pioneer from our community, **Morales finger-spells, then widens his eyes in mock admiration.** that she would sign at the awards and that would impress the audience.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Marlee Matlin.

MARLEE MATLIN:

Just a few days later, there was a magazine, a deaf magazine, that said "offensive" and I was like, what now? I got used to hearing people making comments about me but now I was getting it from deaf people because I chose to speak.

Mark Morales.

MARK MORALES:

And we all looked to her for validation but when she spoke our hopes were dashed.

MARLEE MATLIN:

I wasn't thinking, I'm standing in front of hearing people and I'm deaf and I'm Marlee Matlin and don't forget it. I didn't think of it that way. I'm just a normal human being who was giving an award.

Now, picket-signs demand "Equal Rights."

NARRATION:

Marlee Matlin's decision to speak at the Oscars was controversial within the Deaf community, but in the wider hearing world her award was a symbol of the changing times. For decades minorities in the US had been demanding greater rights. Deaf people now joined the struggle.

Now, CJ Jones signs as an interpreter voices.

CJ JONES:

We rode on the wave of the civil rights movement to make some changes. We had the right to education, we had the right to interpreters, we had the right to captioning. And we need to be thankful to the civil rights movement.

Footage shows crowds at the capitol building.

NARRATION:

The most significant civil-rights struggle in deaf history began small – with a group of young Gallaudet alumni who shared a dream – a Deaf president for Gallaudet.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Academic Administrator Fred S. Weiner signs as an interpreter voices.

FRED WEINER:

There were very, very few people who could envision having a deaf president of Gallaudet. During the summer of 1987, when we knew the president was leaving, we felt it would be a good idea to start talking about a deaf president, to get the word out.

Dwight Benedict signs as an interpreter voices.

DWIGHT BENEDICT:

We looked at other universities, such as historically black colleges. Their presidents were black. And we thought, well, you know, they're already doing it. Why can't we have a deaf president at Gallaudet?

Attorney Jeffrey T. Rosen signs as an interpreter voices.

JEFF ROSEN:

Some people said, how could a deaf president be a good recruiter for students? How could they do fundraising if they were deaf? How would a deaf person be able to communicate well? And so, in a way, they were asking questions about our own value and our own ability to get along in the world.

NARRATION:

The crucial moment arrived in March, 1988. The board of Trustees had chosen three finalists -- one hearing, two deaf. But on March 6th, the board made its choice: the new president was Dr. Elizabeth Zinser. The only hearing candidate. As the news spread, a protest began.

In footage, a young man in a striped shirt addresses the crowd, signing vehemently.

ARCHIVAL DPN FOOTAGE

PROTESTER:

OPEN CAPTION BEGINS #####

What? When? The world can't stop us!

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

A caption: "The world can't stop us!"

OPEN CAPTION ENDS #####

FRED WEINER:

Everybody was mad. We were ready to get arrested. **Protesters pump their fists. Fred Weiner signs as an interpreter voices.** Then Gary Olson, who was the former executive director of the NAD, stood up and got everybody's attention. And he said, we're standing here in the middle of the street, in the middle of the cold, and we don't know what to do. The board is over there at the Mayflower Hotel drinking their fancy wine, eating delicious food, and laughing at us. Talk about inciting a group of people. Then we just all started to move.

Jeffrey Rosen signs as an interpreter voices.

JEFF ROSEN:

We didn't even know where the hotel was. We had no idea where we were going. We just came out of the front gate and started marching. And the police kept coming up and saying you can't march, you don't have a permit, but we just kept on walking.

Now outside the hotel.

DPN ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

MAN:

According to the DC police, you'll be arrested...

WOMAN:

Wait, wait, wait! I have an announcement. The board will meet with two representatives - Tim Rarus and Rosen.

Jeffrey Rosen meets with the Chairman of the Board.

JEFF ROSEN:

The people in the group, 600,700 people, 1000 people will not wait for you any longer. They cannot wait for you. They will move, they will keep up.

Fred Weiner.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

FRED WEINER:

That was just mind boggling to the board. Because we as a group showed up wanting an answer. Why did you pick Dr. Zinser?

DPN ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

PROTESTER:

You say that the woman Zinser is the best qualified. The best qualified? I don't know what Zinser can do that King and Corson can not do. **An interpreter signs for Chairman of the Board Jane Spilman.** But what? Exactly what?

JANE SPILLMAN:

I want you to try to give her a chance. Let her talk to you. **Nearby, men wave their arms, stirring-up their fellow protestors.** (Students start chanting "Deaf President Now.")

Dwight Benedict.

DWIGHT BENEDICT:

A lot of student leaders started emerging when the protest began. And they immediately went and hot-wired some school buses. **Benedict's fingers make SNIPPING motions.** Hearing people were shocked to learn that deaf people knew how to hot-wire. But they took all the busses, blocked all the exits and flattened the tires.

A protestor's sign reads "We Won't Give Up Until We have a Deaf President."

NARRATION:

What followed was the most celebrated event in deaf history. For seven days, the Deaf President Now movement held rallies and press conferences, took over the campus TV station, and shut down classes. **Crowds demonstrate on a lawn.** The protestors controlled the campus. Even the vice-president found himself locked out.

Now, Jane Spilman strides-up to a podium.

Fred Weiner.

FRED WEINER:

The board refused to change their minds, but agreed to a public meeting in the gym on Monday.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

An interpreter signs.

DPN ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

JANE SPILLMAN: Good afternoon everybody. **A MAN steps up beside the interpreter. He signs to the crowd.** Tim Rarus, I don't know where you are, are you around somewhere?

FRED WEINER:

As soon as the chairman Jane Spillman started talking, Dr. Harvey Goodstein cut her off. And he said, "The board has not agreed to our demands, there's no point in listening, let's go." And then the fire alarms went off. There were a lot of lights, it was noisy. But for deaf people you know there was no noise, it was just some flashing lights, time to get out of the building. And Spillman, you could see Spillman waving her hand trying to get people's attention. And they just ignored her and left. And then she said "How can you understand me with all this noise?"

Fred Weiner shrugs sarcastically.

DWIGHT BENEDICT:

The world jumped into the wagon with us. **Dwight Benedict.** Really. That's what hit me the most. I could see students' faces, you could see it in their eyes. They just started to light up. This is something we can do. Students were realizing wow, the press. The press actually showed up and listened to us. And that's when I said, uh-oh. This is for real.

Now, a News Hour interview with Student President Greg Hlibok.

MACNEIL-LEHRER NEWS HOUR

JUDY WOODRUFF:

What are you and other students going to do if the board does not change its mind and Ms. Zinser does become the president?

An interpreter voices Hlibok's response.

STUDENT:

We will stay with our demands. We will not give up, we will not concede. We do not feel at this point that we can compromise. We have been conceding so many things for so many years that we feel that this time it's their turn to compromise and make the concessions.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

JUDY WOODRUFF:

They are not going to give in, what will you do?

Elisabeth Ann Zinser.

ELISABETH ZINSER:

Well at this point in time I am serving as president. I came into Washington today ...(fades out)

NARRATION:

But when the newly appointed president came to Washington, she could not set foot on the Gallaudet campus. The protestors simply refused to budge.

A press-conference.

PRESS CONFERENCE

REPORTER:

Are the students prepared to continue blocking the entrance as long as the board refuses to meet the demands?

A student signs an intense response. An interpreter speaks.

STUDENT: We'd give up our soul in order to get a deaf president.

Superintendent James E. Tucker, Maryland School for the Deaf.

JAMES TUCKER:

I remember being interviewed by a reporter from Jerusalem **Tucker spells out "Jerusalem" with his finger, then shakes his head with a frown.** and he wanted to know what was happening, why we were doing this and I just said "I'm doing this for my parents." They have suffered, they have been discriminated against and oppressed.

Tucker pushes on one hand with the other.

FRED WEINER:

We tend to view the majority as being the oppressor and that they really don't want us to succeed. **An interpreter voices as Fred Weiner signs.** But during that week, during the protest, ABC News took a poll and they asked people

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

if they supported the protest. They found ninety-three percent of the population supported us, ninety-three percent, I have never seen ninety-three percent in a poll like that before.

A rally.

MOE BILLER

PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION:

I want to say to you in your own language, I love you. **A man's fingers combine the signs for "I" "I" and "Y."** This is where the American Postal Workers Union stands... **He signs "Deaf President Now."**(fades out)

NARRATION:

Support came from all over. Groups across the country sent money and help.

President Moe Biller, American Postal Workers Union.

MOE BILLER

PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION:

... (Crowd Cheers) Please let's sign three times for the people here "Deaf President Now."

He touches his ear and chin, then draws his hands away from his head.

NARRATION:

Everywhere, students shut down deaf schools; even politicians chimed in – Jesse Jackson and the Vice-President, George Bush, sent letters of support.

Now, Dwight Benedict signs as an interpreter voices.

DWIGHT BENEDICT:

We felt a real connection to the civil rights fight. We even borrowed the banner "We have a dream" that came from the civil rights marches. We were so proud to be able to carry that.

A news-clip shows Dan Rather.

DAN RATHER REPORT:

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

In Washington today, some 2500 jubilant Gallaudet students and their supporters rallied on Capitol Hill after forcing the resignation of the newly named president at the school for the deaf. Elizabeth Ann Zinser resigned last night after being named to the post Sunday. Students shut the school down all week with their protests. Today, they vowed to press for other demands.

Jane Spillman gives a press conference.

PRESS CONFERENCE

JANE SPILLMAN:

Today I submitted my resignation from the chairmanship of the Board of Trustees of Gallaudet University and from the Board.

NARRATION:

Unconditional surrender. After a nine-hour meeting, the trustees accepted all the student demands. **The protestors embrace.** DPN changed American politics. People who were supposedly unable to handle responsibility had organized a powerful protest, taken over a college, and won. Two years later, Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act, a law that made it illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities.

Dwight Benedict.

DWIGHT BENEDICT: It's interesting, when I talk to my kids about what happened, they were so surprised. There was a hearing president? And I'm like, Yes! There was a hearing president.

I King JORDAN:

All of the future presidents of Gallaudet will be deaf. I would guess they'll all be deaf in different ways. **Former President I. King Jordan.** One person will be deaf in his or her way and another person will be deaf in his or her way. And that's fine and so I work to encourage people to understand that there's not one way to be deaf.

NARRATION:

Deafness, in a sense, is a pliable state, a way of being that can be changed or shaped – like a marshmallow.

###BEGIN OPEN CAPITON And now, *That's My Marshmallow*, by deaf filmmaker Tracey Sallaway.

Two hands SIGN. Captions: This is the sign for story” The hands stretch an unseen string. “And this is my story.”

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

“Back in 1964, my grandmother encouraged my mother to take me to see a doctor.” In the film a little girl watches TV.

FILM NARRATOR:

This is the sign for “story.” And this is my story.

Back in 1964, my grandmother encouraged my mother to take me to see a doctor.

END OPEN CAPTIONS ###

WOMAN:

Anna, you're blocking your sister's view.

As her mother CLAPS, the girl's eyes remain fixed on the screen.

WOMAN:

Anna's not responding. Maybe something is wrong with her.

Later, the mother leads the toddler into a doctor's office.

DOCTOR: I've completed the physical examination of your daughter. Unfortunately she has difficulties with communication and shows signs of cognitive impairment. Basically she's mentally retarded.

Anna and her mom walk across the hall, and visit DIFFERENT doctors.

DOCTOR 2: There's nothing wrong with your daughter's behavior.

DOCTOR 3: I don't see anything wrong with the child, she will be fine.

DOCTOR 4: Ma'am, go home, there's nothing wrong with your daughter.

DOCTOR 5: Diagnosis shows that your daughter is deaf.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Now, the hands stretch the marshmallow. “Then I started auditory and speech programs that would take years of practice.”

OPEN CAPTIONS BEGIN #####

FILM NARRATOR:

Then I started auditory and speech programs that would take years of practice.

OPEN CAPTIONS END ###

TEACHER:

Say the word “airplane.”

GIRL:

Airplane

A therapist works with young Anna.

TEACHER:

Say the word “cowboy.”

GIRL:

Cowboy.

Captions: “When I was 12 years old, I had my first slumber party. I tried to hide the fact of my deafness.” The girls laugh at a shaggy collie-dog.

Anna: “Are you laughing at me?”

Anna’s friend: “Are you deaf?”

Anna: “No.”

Later, the girls have a pillow fight.

FILM NARRATOR:

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

OPEN CAPTIONS BEGIN ###

When I was twelve years old, I had my first slumber party. I tried to hide the fact of my deafness.

Are you laughing at me?

Are you deaf?

No.

END OPEN CAPTIONS###

MOTHER (off camera):

Okay girls, it's time to go to sleep!

As the girls slide into their sleeping bags, Anna quickly hides her hearing aids beneath her pillow. Now, the stretching marshmallow grows STICKY.

"I wanted to admit I was deaf, but I was afraid to show my true self. It was as if I didn't yet know how to be deaf."

At school, Anna POKETS her hearing-aids.

OPEN CAPTIONS BEGIN###

FILM NARRATOR:

I wanted to admit I was deaf, but I was afraid to show my true self. It was as if I didn't yet know how to be deaf.

END OPEN CAPTIONS ###

TEACHER:

Good morning boys and girls. Let's begin with the pledge of allegiance.

BEGIN OPEN CAPTIONS ###

FILM NARRATOR:

I was confused.

"I was confused. Did I want to have deaf friends?"

Did I want to have deaf friends?

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Did I want to speak or sign?"

Did I want to speak or sign?

Anna mumbles the pledge.

END OPEN CAPTIONS ###

TEACHER:

Now we're going to begin a spelling test.

Anna takes-out a pencil.

Spell the word "magic."

Anna leans over her paper and writes.

Spell the word "secret."

She holds a magnifying-glass up to the teacher's mouth.

Spell the word "deaf."

A dark-haired girl taps Anna, and Anna signs: "Are you deaf?"

Pointing to a friend, the girl signs: "No, SHE is."

The friend nods: "Yes, I'm deaf. Are YOU deaf?"

Anna smiles: "Yes, I'm deaf."

BEGIN OPEN CAPTIONS###

STUDENTS (signing)

Are you deaf?

No, she is.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Yes, I'm deaf.

Are you deaf?

END OPEN CAPTIONS###

Yes, I'm deaf.

BEGIN OPEN CAPTIONS ###

FILM NARRATOR:

I have developed my connection with people **Now two hands SIGN. Captions appear: "I have developed my connection with people who know sign language. I support oral and American Sign Language methods.**

That is myself, inside and out. My marshmallow, my story. What is yours?"

Now, a toddler clicks two balls together.

who know sign language. I support oral and American Sign Language methods. That is myself, inside and out. My marshmallow, my story. What is yours?

END OPEN CAPTIONS ###

NARRATION:

Today, the parents of deaf children face some forbidding and agonizing questions. How should we teach our deaf children to communicate? What kind of school should they have? Should we put our faith in technology?

Jennifer Rosner.

JENNIFER ROSNER:

Juliet failed the hearing screening in the hospital. They said she wasn't hearing up to a hundred and twelve decibel levels which means you could not hear a jet engine if you were standing right next to it. And that's when the audiologist gave us a binder about cochlear implants.

AUDIOLOGIST:

They took some food outside.

STUDENT:

They took some food outside.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

NARRATION:

Since the mid-1980s, a powerful medical technology has become increasingly popular. The cochlear implant bypasses part of the ear and sends electrical impulses directly to the auditory nerve. Part of the device is internal -- surgically embedded within the ear. The implant is permanent, and the procedure destroys any residual hearing in the affected ear.

JENNIFER ROSNER: I just couldn't believe we could actually do this, which seemed so invasive. But you might be able to see. **Jennifer points to a circular device on the back of her daughter Juliet's head.** There's a little, there's like what's essentially a magnet kind of globs on like the refrigerator magnets. And this is just a microphone and she's wearing a box at her body level, which is a processor.

SALLY TAYLOR:

OPEN CAPTIONS BEGIN ####

When I put this on, Sally Taylor puts on a microphone behind her ear. **Captions: "When I put this on, I hook it over the magnet. Then I turn it on and I hear sound.**

It has nothing to do with the ears, there's no ear mold or anything. The first time I went for my mapping when I heard sound for the first time they put it on.

And because I have experience with a hearing aid, with an ear mold, I sort of tried to listen here.

Sally points to the inside of her ear.

The first sound I heard was up here. She points to the top of her head.

I said there's something up here. He said, 'Yeah, that's sound.' And I thought my ear's up here. The hearing went through my head, not here."

I hook it over the magnet. Then I turn it on and I hear sound. It has nothing to do with the ears, there's no ear mold or anything. The first time I went for my mapping when I heard sound for the first time they put it on. Processor. And because I have experience with a hearing aid, with an ear mold, I sort of tried to listen here. The first sound I heard was up here. I said there's something up here. He said, "Yeah, that's sound." And I thought my ear's up here. The

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

hearing went through my head, not here.

OPEN CAPTIONS END ###

OPEN CAPTION BEGINS###

IRENE LEIGH:

Irene Leigh.

Captions: “People think the cochlear implant is an automatic way to learn spoken language. However, there are millions of hair cells that pick up and transmit sounds to the brain that the cochlear implants cannot replicate.

The cochlear implants only have about twenty-six channels. And it’s not enough to really parallel normal hearing. It means the deaf child has to work hard to learn what the sounds mean.”

People think the cochlear implant is an automatic way to learn spoken language. However, there are millions of hair cells that pick up and transmit sounds to the brain that the cochlear implants cannot replicate. The cochlear implants only have about twenty-six channels. And it’s not enough to really parallel normal hearing. It means the deaf child has to work hard to learn what the sounds mean.

OPEN CAPTION ENDS ###

Jennifer Rosner.

JENNIFER ROSNER:

Before she had her cochlear implant we all decided we would try to learn how to sign because it just gave her access to concepts. I mean even before the implant went in she had maybe ten signs at that point, water, milk, you know her bear. **Smiling, Jennifer holds up Juliet’s cloth bear-puppet.** And now with the implant the signing I feel has been kind of a bridge between the words she’s hearing and the words we’re signing. And she knows the sound milk means milk and she’s been picking up, her first words that she’s said have been her signing words.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

Now, Summer Crider signs as an interpreter voices.

SUMMER CRIDER:

I remember when I was growing up because I was so disconnected from my parents, and the fact that they enjoyed music and hearing everything and it was very tough for me. I can remember my mom trying to introduce me to other deaf people and I did meet one girl who had the same background as I. She though had a cochlear implant and it was very successful for her and I thought well whatever it is I want what she has. I was just looking for a way that I could get hooked back into their world and feel a part of it like I belonged there somehow.

A video shows Summer as a little girl.

ARCHIVAL CRIDER FOOTAGE:

MOTHER: What is today? What's today?

SUMMER: Thursday, Thanksgiving

MOTHER: Thanksgiving, right. Thursday, Thanksgiving, right.

Wearing a native-american costume, Summer SIGNS as she talks.

Are you an Indian, dressed up like an Indian?

SUMMER: Yes.

MOTHER: What are those?

SUMMER: Feathers.

MOTHER: Feathers, right. And what's the blue thing on your pack?

She wears a controller on her fanny-pack.

SUMMER: (not audible)

MOTHER: That helps you hear better, it sure does. A lot of money! Yes, it was a lot of money!

SUMMER CRIDER:

I used it a lot. I would use it when I was in bed. I was asleep and I would have it on. I didn't feel that I could connect totally 100 percent with the hearing world but at least I felt a little closer that way.

In another video, Summer is about eight years old.

Through Deaf Eyes

Film Transcript

SUMMER CRIDER:

In those early years I was placed in a deaf program and that was within a hearing elementary school. So it was a mainstream setting. **As a teenager, she reads aloud in class.** And then I started to recognize I was different from everyone else. I started to begin to think what makes me different from them and it was this box and this wire that was attached to my head. So I quit wearing it, I just took it off. And about tenth grade I decided that I needed a better social life, so I started checking things out, I was very assertive in my research. And I came across the Florida School for the Deaf. **In a school play, costumed students SIGN in unison.** And made the switch to that school. I went back to wearing the implant again. And I began wearing it all the time. **Summer signs as an interpreter voices.** So it's kind of unusual, just the opposite of what you would think because my parents were very concerned that once I went to the school for the deaf that I would stop wearing it entirely. I wouldn't speak any longer. I wouldn't wear the implant. But the opposite is what happened and it's because I had confidence in myself. Everybody there was just like I was, everybody else had a problem with their hearing so it was Okay. It gave me the opportunity to wear my implant and to feel like I fit in and really take advantage of everything that it had to offer.

Now, a goateed man in a t-shirt yawns and looks in a bathroom mirror.

NARRATION:

An implant often means a kind of balancing act – balancing a deaf life with the arrival of sound, and even balancing the sound itself. **He picks up a cochlear earpiece.** BEGIN OPEN CAPTION ###And now, adjusting to life with two cochlear implants, *Equilibrium*, by deaf filmmaker Adrean Mangiardi.###END OPEN CAPTION

Now, in the film, the goateed young man swims underwater in a pool. His eyes closed, he waves his arms slowly. His eyes open wide.

Now, the word “Equilibrium” appears, over a smear of gushing red dots.

Later, the man lies in bed, his eyes closed. His alarm clock turns to 8:00, then FLASHES bright light, waking him. He switches off the alarm.

In the bathroom, water drips from a faucet. The man enters, and looks in the mirror, yawning. He folds his right ear back and rubs his hair.

He looks at two cochlear earpieces sitting by the sink.

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He picks up one of the earpieces and slowly brings it to his ear. He slides it into place.

He grimaces! Underwater in the pool, the man thrashes wildly.

Now, in front of the mirror, he tenderly rubs his face. Water drips from the faucet.

The man picks up an iPod and turns up the volume.

Nodding to the beat, he imagines a rock band playing. As the band's singer moves his mouth, the group becomes a blur. Back in the focus, the singer's mouth is covered with TAPE!

Frowning and shaking his head, the man picks up the other earpiece and puts it into place.

Scowling, he imagines WATER shooting over his head! In front of the mirror, he taps his temple, then his earpiece.

The rock band blurs out of focus again, and the goateed young man is surrounded by a wall of video STATIC. He gapes, then turns away.

In front of the mirror, he smacks his left ear, then scowls. He goes to a closet and takes out a box labeled Auria. He opens the box, revealing an audio control board. Later, wearing safety goggles, he turns a screwdriver, working on an earpiece.

He carefully examines part of the earpiece, then BLOWS on it. He lifts-up his goggles and takes a closer look.

Later, the man twists dials on the audio board, and searches in a toolbox. He finds a replacement part, and plugs it into the earpiece, turning it to secure it. He places it over his ear.

Images flash: he scowls, and water shoots over him.

How, he swims underwater in the pool. Kicking his legs, he rises toward the surface.

Now he lies on a pillow, with the earpiece in place.

Through Deaf Eyes

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A WOMAN lying beside him leans close to his ear.

GIRL:

Good morning, sweetheart.

They share a smile. Holding hands, they lie on a bedsheet in a grassy FIELD. Red rose petals drift down onto them.

In the pool, the man floats upward, smiling.

Fade to black.

Now, in a school gym, a teacher works with young children. A sign reads “The Maryland School for the Deaf Provides Excellence in Education.”

NARRATION:

Parents of deaf children face another daunting choice: what kind of school is right for my child? It's a crucial question. Most deaf children today are mainstreamed, but there are still schools exclusively for deaf students. These deaf schools vary widely in their approach – so the environments at two schools can seem like two different planets.

At a table, a teacher signs to two young girls. In a classroom, 12-year-old students sit at desks, facing a teacher who signs to them.

NARRATION:

At the Maryland School for the Deaf, every class is taught in sign language.

Maryland School for the Deaf Superintendent James E. Tucker.

JAMES TUCKER:

We teach kids how to read and write, count, learn about science, history, government, computers, career and technology and so forth. **He signs as an interpreter voices.** We want our students to receive information directly from their teachers, meaning no interpreters are involved. All of our teachers sign.

Through Deaf Eyes

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In math class, then in a science lab.

MATH TEACHER:

Which is the angle of X?

CHEMISTRY TEACHER:

When you're done with that you clean up the equipment.

English class.

ENGLISH TEACHER:

Did you all read it already? Ok, let's have your paper.

A student signs to the teacher.

DANIEL:

I want to change my paper.

A classmate looks at him.

GIRL STUDENT:

That last paragraph of yours, do you mind expanding on it?

Later.

DANIEL FAVA:

I was born hearing and at 14 months I got a severe illness and I lost my hearing then. **Student Daniel Fava.** But my parents didn't know quite what to do with me as a deaf child. So they looked for information about schools.

NANCY FAVA:

Daniel was the first deaf person that either one of us had ever met. The first thing I thought was I wanted him to talk. **Nancy Fava.** But as we became more and more educated in deafness I'm trying to figure how can somebody who can't hear learn without having some type of visual language. The first thing we did was call the deaf school.

Through Deaf Eyes

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At lunch, Daniel laughs with friends.

SAM FAVA:

Language is developed from the ages of zero to five regardless of whether its sign language or Italian or English. We realized that sign language was something that could be adopted by a very young person very quickly as a first language. That was my most important thing is to have him have a language. **Sam Fava.** If you walk through this campus, the only thing that you'll see that's different is that this is quiet and the public school is loud. The same conversations go on, the same things happen in every aspect of this school as any other school.

NANCY FAVA:

Daniel's first language is ASL, and our second language is signing. The issues are the same. I've talked about sex with him. We talked about you know all, all kinds of different things. And I feel like we're not missing anything. We both immersed ourselves into the Deaf culture. We both have deaf friends that we see and we communicate with.

DANIEL FAVA:

I'm in both worlds. I'm in the hearing world, I'm in the deaf world. **Daniel signs.** I mean I'm lucky because my parents can sign. Some of these other kids have no opportunity to communicate with their parents. They can only write back and forth and the parents only have minimal signs like "I love you" and that's it. So definitely I want to thank my parents for everything they've done for me.

SAM FAVA:

If Daniel wants to get a cochlear implant when he's twenty-five years old he's free to do that.

NANCY FAVA: If he wanted to put a hearing aid on and we tried hearing aids when he was younger that's a different story. You can always take that out. A cochlear implant is such a permanent thing. Would I like him to hear music? Would I like him to hear the rain? Would I like him to hear the leaves rustling on the ground? He has no idea what that sounds like so he's not missing any of it. But yes, I would like that to happen. I mean that, that would be something that would be wonderful I think for any deaf person to hear. But, but a miracle to one day Daniel, I'll turn around and Daniel is hearing? That, that would not be who he is as a person.

In a classroom, a boy reads.

CLARKE SCHOOL

MALE STUDENT:

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I played air hockey. **A teacher points out words.** My was...

TEACHER:

Who's that?

MALE STUDENT:

My *mom* was jogging...

TEACHER:

The other day (Sound fades out.)

NARRATION:

The Clarke School in Northampton, Massachusetts, has always been a strictly oral school.

FEMALE STUDENT:

BEGIN OPEN CAPTIONS####

My fifty-first state is Fighting Irish. **A girl makes a speech in class.** It's this island, it's very small. And it sits about 285 miles off the Northwest Hawaii coast...(fades out)

END OPEN CAPTIONS###

NARRATION:

Sign is never used in the classroom.

OPEN CAPTIONS BEGIN ###

TEACHER: Daffodils

STUDENT: Daffodils. Flowers.

END OPEN CAPTIONS###

Professor of Education Alan Marvelli.

ALAN MARVELLI:

It used to be that you were dealing strictly with vision and very limited auditory input. Today, what you're dealing with is almost exclusively auditory input either through high quality hearing aids or through cochlear implantation which takes a child or has the potential to take a child who is profoundly, even totally deaf by any acoustic standard, and to give that child the opportunity to become hard of hearing.

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PATRICK DEHAHN:

I'm deaf and my sister is deaf and I have two hearing parents that are very helpful **Patrick deHahn sits with his parents.** and they take care of me and they repeat when I don't understand things and my sister too. And I'll help my sister and we both understand how it is to be deaf.

Patrick and other students put on costumes in a bathroom.

PATRICK DEHAHN:

It needs to be tighter because it's too loose.

Martha and Christopher deHahn.

MARTHA DEHAHN:

We were overwhelmed when we found out first of all about Patrick's hearing loss. It's something that we suspected and it wasn't confirmed until he was nine months old.

CHRISTOFER DEHAHN:

We took a leap. We trusted the people here at Clarke and we put him into the preschool and within a year he had pretty much stopped signing except at home, cause they don't sign here, and he was speaking.

PATRICK DEHAHN:

The implant has helped me a lot. I can keep up with people when they talk and I can talk on the phone and I can understand music like to the lyrics more often.

CHRISTOFER DEHAHN:

Don't assume the technology will fix your child because it won't. My children are both very high-functioning oral deaf children, young adults. But they are deaf. They are still deaf. They will always be deaf.

Students in formal clothes line up.

NARRATION:

Today, enrollment at many deaf schools is on the decline. Eighty-five percent of deaf children spend their entire education in regular public schools, in mainstream programs. Deaf children in those classrooms use hearing aids, cochlear implants or sign language interpreters to follow lectures and discussions.

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The students march into a chapel for a graduation ceremony.

RORY OSBRINK:

I was in a mainstream program. I was surrounded by hearing people. I never was segregated into a deaf classroom. **Teacher Rory Osbrink.** My friends, in general, I would say treated me pretty good. With the exception of the cochlear implant which was really obvious. Then the remarks started to come. They called me a freak. They said I was strange. They'd say, what's that? Is it really part of your body? It's like a foreign object.

K. TODD HOUSTON:

Often because deafness is a low incidence disability they may be the only child in the classroom or maybe in their grade or in their school and so they can stand out in that way. **K. Todd Houston** And, and so if we don't do some things to help them be successful in the mainstream they may struggle and, and have other affects down the road.

GINA OLIVA:

When we're raised orally as solitaires and then at some point in our lives, **Physical Education Professor Gina Oliva.** when we're twelve, when we're eighteen, when we're twenty-five, when we're forty, we realize that there's a whole group of people like us who use sign language It's just like wow. And so I call that met deaf wow. It's like a common experience. You grow up. You think you're the only one. And then you find out you're not. You're not alone. And you're like thrilled to meet other people who have your common experience. And you just want to be with them. Become friends. Learn the language. Hang out. You're home.

Now, Summer Crider signs.

SUMMER CRIDER:

I'm not normal, and I want to remain that way. I like being different. But, of course, as I was growing up I always wanted to be normal. So I think I learned how to sort of make my way through that fine line of being normal and being who I am. In terms of a disability, I don't view myself as having a disability whatsoever. I function like any hearing person can. My deafness does not deprive me of anything. I can do anything I want. Except maybe sing.

Bob Hiltermann.

BOB HILTERMANN:

Back in my Gallaudet days I was a student at the University and I was walking down the hallway in the dorms one day.

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And I felt the vibration. There was something going on. **A guitarist plays. As Bob signs, an interpreter voices.** And there was a guy playing a guitar. Earphones connected right to the guitar. And I was just like "Wow." You know, I'm a drummer!

The guitarist Steve Longo signs as an interpreter voices.

STEVE LONGO: And I said, well where are your drums? And he said, "Well, I don't have them with me." So I told him to use the chair and use a ruler for his sticks and I said, show me what you have.

At a concert, Bob plays a drum solo.

The other musicians join in.

ED CHEVY:

Beethoven's Nightmare is a really unique band. Consisting of three deaf musicians. **Ed Chevy.** Each of us have our own instruments. We have a drummer, we have a bass guitar and we have a rhythm guitar. And one person tries to sing.

Bob Hiltermann.

BOB HILTERMANN:

The way I play I depend on a lot of vibrations so we play really, really loud, enough for us to hear and feel it. You know you go to regular rock concerts and they are loud. And it made me wonder, how do they stand it? Because it's really too loud for the regular hearing person. They're going to become deaf themselves but for us we already are, so it's perfect.

Grinning, Bob pretends to put on a helmet with a chinstrap and goggles.

Bassist Ed Chevy signs as an interpreter voices.

ED CHEVY:

As deaf people we have a rhythm inside our bodies and we're famous for being story tellers it's a huge important part of Deaf culture. Onstage, the band plays as people sign and dance to the music. **A dark haired woman makes circles with her fists and shakes her hops. A young woman grins as she signs.** If you can see a beautiful

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storyteller telling a story in ASL it's just fantastic. And to pair it with that beat, the creativity that it elicits is wonderful. It can really be paired with any story you want. ASL is a beautiful language and we don't want to lose the language.

Author Tom Humphries signs as an interpreter voices.

TOM HUMPHRIES:

We're always going to have some fear in my opinion. I think that's part of being a cultural group, being embedded within a larger society, people who are different from us. We're constantly living in some fear in the back of our minds that we will lose what we have.

I King JORDAN:

I know there are people who think with genetics, with technology, with changes that are happening **I. King Jordan signs.** in the future that deafness will disappear. I don't believe it. I think there will always be deafness and there always will be a need for people who are not deaf to understand deaf people.

Actor and Director CJ Jones.

CJ JONES:

What's wrong with being deaf. I'm deaf, I'm fine. I function fine. I drive, I have a family, I've made a baby, I make people laugh, I travel. What the hell is going on? I have to hear? That has nothing to do what it. It's all about knowledge. It's about the heart. It's about abilities, about doing something you want and getting what you want out of life and not because you get a cochlear implant and everything is going to be great. No, excuse me ladies and gentlemen, no. Knowledge is the most powerful vehicle to success, not hearing, not speaking, reading, yes. Reading and taking in all that book knowledge and being able to use it. That's the power of the universe; the force, knowledge, not hearing. So thank you very much. The End. Roll credits.

He nods.

Words appear: "Production on this film was completed before the 2006 protests at Gallaudet University concerning the selection of Jane Fernandes by the Board of Trustees to replace outgoing President I. King Jordan. The Board has since withdrawn its appointment and installed an interim president."

Credits: A film by Lawnrnce Hott and Diane Garey. Narrated by Stockard Channing.

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