

“Signs of Minnesota” Oral-Visual Interviews

Background Information

Interview Information

These “Signs of Minnesota” interviews consist of short stories giving glimpses into the experiences of 29 deaf Minnesotans. They were incorporated into the Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans’ (MNCDHH) Oral-Visual History Project. These interviews were originally recorded by Doug Bowen-Bailey of Digiterp Communications and produced on DVD as a benefit for the Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens (MADC) and the Minnesota Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (MRID). The interviews took place in 2004. There was no formal interviewer.

MADC and MRID generously contributed the “Signs of Minnesota” interview materials to MNCDHH so that they could be incorporated into this important oral-visual history video collection for archiving at the Minnesota Historical Society.

Translation Notes

A note about translation of these interviews: The interviews were recorded in American Sign Language (ASL). The interviewees used ASL as a first language, and the signed information was translated into vernacular or spoken English by interpreters.

This transcript and the open captions in the video are based on the spoken English information.

Actions are in brackets. Translation notes are in parentheses and italics (using the emphasis font), and they represent additional information and corrections about what was said.

Transcript of “Signs of Minnesota” Interviews

Doug Bahl

[Visual of title graphic “A Brief History of Olof Hanson – Doug Bahl”]

I'm here at Gallaudet University standing in front of Dawes House. The building was designed by the famous architect, Olof Hanson, who used to live in Minnesota. He was born in Sweden in approximately 1860. His native language was Swedish, and he became Deaf at the age of 12. His family ended up settling in Minnesota, and they sent him to the Minnesota School for the Deaf in Faribault. He learned English and ASL at the same time. Of course, back then they didn't call it ASL. It was referred to as "sign language" or "manual communication." Anyway, he graduated from high school and went on to attend Gallaudet where he graduated in 1886. After graduation, he decided he wanted to go into architecture and went to study in Paris for a year, also taking time to visit a number of Deaf schools in Europe studying their architectural designs. After coming back to the U.S., he worked for a while as a draftsman. In the 1890s, the economy wasn't good, so he took a position teaching physical education at the Minnesota School for the Deaf in Faribault. After he saved some money, he decided to start his own architectural firm there in Faribault. He worked and built his business. After a while, Gallaudet College

offered him the opportunity to design Dawes House. Originally, the building was used as the boys' dorm for Kendall School. Today it is used for offices and classrooms. It recently housed the Interpreter Training Program, but the program has since moved to another building. Olof Hanson went on to design many buildings. Dawes House happens to be the oldest one still standing. Many of the ones he designed around the U.S. are no longer in existence. The last building he designed before he died was Thompson Hall, in St. Paul, Minnesota. It is a Deaf club still in use as a center for the Deaf community today. Now, I stand in front of the oldest one of his buildings still standing. I feel honored to be here talking about this history here and the connection to Minnesota. After graduating from Gallaudet, Olof Hanson worked for a while and then married and had three hearing daughters. When his business wasn't doing as well as he liked, he decided to move to Washington state to start a business with a hearing partner who was also an architect. He designed several buildings, but because of the stiff competition in the field, he decided to become an Episcopal clergyman. He also became involved with the National Association of the Deaf, serving as the NAD president from 1910 to 1913. One of the biggest successes of his tenure was addressing the concerns of Deaf people who wanted to work at the federal level in the civil service. The policy at the time was one of total discrimination; deaf people were not even considered as potential employees. Olof wrote a letter to President Roosevelt, which persuaded him to change this policy. So, the many Deaf people who work for the Federal government today have Olof Hanson to thank for influencing the president to give Deaf people the chance to work in the federal civil service. Olof continued his involvement in the Deaf community, but did not do the same with designing buildings. Instead, he worked at the University of Washington in Seattle as a landscape architect. He died in 1933. Deaf people in Minnesota remember his name because the school in Faribault is on Olof Hanson Drive. Whenever we write that address, we remember Olof Hanson and his contributions as an architect, a community leader, and a clergyman.

Leo Bond

[Visual of title graphic "An Olympic Challenge – Leo Bond"]

My name is Leo Bond. I grew up in Minnesota and went to the Minnesota School for the Deaf in Faribault. I ran track, competing against other high school teams with both deaf and hearing runners. I was a 3-time champion in the 440 yard dash. My coach, Ron Mitchell, invited me to join the U.S. team for the Deaf Olympics in Sweden. I was a little overwhelmed, but excited by the prospect. I trained for the next couple of months and then flew to Sweden. It took me some time to get used to the surroundings, seeing Deaf people from around the globe with their different sign languages, but it was quite a spectacle to behold. I was there for two weeks. I met my main competition from Germany who was also in the 440. I was new to this level of competition, and he had so much experience. Compared to him, I felt like a kid. Anyway, we both made it through the preliminary races and finally faced each other in the finals. When I saw him at the starting line, I was pretty nervous but worked on keeping my cool. We both took our positions for the start. When the gun went off, he shot out of the blocks. I wasn't expecting him to take off so fast. I must have trailed him by 25 feet around the first curve. I tried my best to close the gap. I knew his pattern was to let up at the end, so I gauged when it would be the best time to make my move. Coming down the final straightaway, I finally caught up to him and we crossed the finish line in a dead heat. Crossing the line, the German runner looked stunned. Neither of us knew

what to think. All of the people in the stands were in shock at how close the finish was. The question on everybody's mind was who had won. We all waited as the judges deliberated. My heart was racing in anticipation. All of my family and fans were also on pins and needles. When the judges finally announced that I had won, I was overcome with emotion. The German runner accepted the decision with dignity, though it was the first time he had been beaten. He really was an amazing runner. We both had the same time of 47.5. But I was awarded first place, and he got second. The next race was the 800 meters. In that race, I led the pack and broke the world record with a time of 1:53.7. After those Olympics, I took some time traveling on vacation. Four years later, I was ready for the Olympics again. The year was 1977 and this time it was in Rome. I felt much more relaxed the second time around. I had done my training and felt confident. Socially, it was really fun to get to meet Deaf people from all around the world. Then came the time for competition. In the 440 yards, I won in a world record time of 47 seconds flat. Again, I doubled up with a win in the 800 with a world record time of 1:49.7. I was also on the victorious mile relay team. Altogether, I won four golds in 1973, and three in 1977, for a grand total of seven gold medals. I felt I had achieved all that I wanted to and realized that I had enough of that level of competition. I was so grateful for my fans, and everyone who supported me, as well as the Deaf people who I met from around the world. At that point, I decided to retire and leave the sport, though it is something I still miss.

Roger Brown

[Visual of title graphic "Working Between Worlds – Roger Brown"]

For the past 31 years, I've worked at Honeywell, and that has meant years of challenges in trying to communicate with hearing people. I have watched people talk without knowing what they were saying. I used writing to communicate as best I could. I also have tried to teach co-workers how to sign, but they often don't have enough patience. It's frustrating to have all the conversations going on around me without being included. Then, about three years ago, I started working here at Metro Deaf School as a janitor. I've seen some really big differences between the two places. I work all day at Honeywell, and then come here to work at nights. I'm not accustomed to working with deaf people. For 31 years, I wasn't included at Honeywell, and then here at MDS, I can talk with anyone easily. It's great to be in the loop on everything. The education children receive here is really impressive. Kids are not afraid to engage adults in conversation, which is inspiring to see. Then when I go back to working in the hearing world, it's cumbersome and frustrating. It's nice to have the balance of working at MDS. The students here are very fortunate to feel so free with communication. I wish I had an education like them. I remember feeling scared to talk with adults when I was young. So, I really support the involvement of the Deaf community in teaching Deaf children like this. It is good for me to have the chance to work in both the hearing and Deaf worlds. Each culture has things that have to be accepted. You simply need to pay respect where it is due. Overall, I am so grateful to work at Metro Deaf School and be able to catch up on all that I have missed.

Mike Cashman

[Visual of title graphic "A Few Good Men... – Mike Cashman"]

Hi. My name is Mike Cashman and I am Deaf. I have a story that I would like to share with you. While I was a Gallaudet student, it was Gallaudet College at that time, though now it is Gallaudet University, a couple of my friends and I went to downtown Washington, D.C. We were out walking, in search of a good restaurant. There were many good dining opportunities around Georgetown University. Some places with Greek food and lots of other international cuisine. After all, Washington D.C. is very much an international city hosting many embassies from nations around the world. So, of course the food in the city reflects the diverse people who come to Washington. Anyway, as the three of us were walking, we spied a Marines recruiting station. I asked my friends if they wanted to go in and see if we could enlist. My friends thought I was being ridiculous because Deaf people couldn't enlist, but I convinced them to go with me and see what kind of response we would get. As we entered, a Marine with a crew cut and a highly decorated uniform stood and immediately began talking to us. In response, we gestured to that we were Deaf. He was thrown by this because he didn't seem to understand what Deaf people would be doing there. Despite this, he invited us to sit down. I wrote a note to him, "We want to enlist," to express that we wanted to join the military. He was obviously flustered at this request, at least in part due to a lack of effective communication between us. He eventually articulated that Deaf people could not join the military, I, however, wasn't satisfied with such a simple answer. I asked him to show me the regulations that said that deaf people could not enlist in the military. He got on the phone and called his supervisor out to the front. The supervisor tried to wave us away, but I wrote that I wanted to see the regulations preventing Deaf people from enlisting. His response was that there were no such regulations but that Deaf people simply couldn't join. He told us flat out that we wouldn't want to join the military. To me, that last statement was so ironic because their mission is encouraging people to enlist, yet there, in black and white, he had written, "You don't want to join the military." In the end, my friends and I agreed it was an odd experience.

Toni Dalbec

[Visual of title graphic "Introducing... – Toni Dalbec"]

My name is Toni Dalbec. I'm deaf and I have cerebral palsy, or CP. I've had CP my whole life and I live here in Duluth. I grew up and went to the school in Faribault. I finished in 1979, I was really glad about that. I am deaf, so I want and am happy to see friends, but I don't have any friends. I'm really lonely. I enjoy visitors. And I'm happy I have support from computers. They have helped me a lot, especially with the video relay. Thank you very much!

Lynn Eccles

[Visual of title graphic "School and Family Struggles – Lynn Eccles"]

Hi, I'm Lynn Eccles, and I'd like to tell you a story about my life. I was born deaf. And I was mainstreamed into the public school. They had an oral program there included lipreading, speech, and frustration. I did not connect. And in my family, all conversation was hard. I missed most of what they were talking about. One night, we were watching the TV, the show "Little House on the Prairie." I remember being enthralled with it. My brother and sister were next to me, just as enthralled. And whenever they laughed at something, I asked them what was so funny. And they would say; "It's nothing, it's not important." Which left me feeling really deflated. They didn't think I was worth the time for an

explanation. I would go to my room and read books. There was really no communication in my family. When I started middle school, I was still in a mainstream program. And my parents said that I had to go speech therapy, even though I didn't want it. I had to follow the rules and I tried hard to talk. I had to endure all the frustration that comes with speech therapy. I only knew a little sign language. I learned when I was around nine, I picked it up gradually. In middle school, my signing wasn't fluent; it was more signing English ... PSE than anything else, and communication at home was the same as ever; I was always frustrated, I started to rebel. We quarreled, I was unhappy, my self-esteem was very low. But at school I worked hard to make a connection and it became my escape. Being at home was the last place I wanted to be. When I started high school, my mother and I started an endless debate. My mother wanted me to go to St. Louis Park High School. There was a deaf and hard of hearing program there. And I didn't want to go there, but she insisted, which led to even more arguments. And finally one day, I just decided to be assertive. I walked over to the Osseo High School, which was the high school in my hometown. And I met with the principal and I asked if it would be possible for me to register for classes. He told me I could. And I said the only accommodation I needed was an interpreter. He said that was fine. The principal could fingerspell, which was great, cuz that really helped our communication. I registered for the classes I was interested in and asked for a copy of my registration. I asked if I could have some kind of proof for my parents that I had the right to choose whatever school I wanted. And the principal informed me there was a law that would prove it. It was 507 or something, but it would be in the law books, and that I needed to check at the library. So I went to the library downtown. And I asked the librarian there if she could find the law book that would prove law 507 and she verified that she had the book. And while she led me to it, I remembered a former interpreter talking to me about that law. I finally found the law book and she read the section I was looking for. It said that a child old enough to make a decision could choose his or her school. Parents didn't have control over that. That was exactly what I was looking for. I asked for a copy of that section of the law. So, I had that and my registration papers. Then I walked the 11 blocks home and waited for my parents to get home from work. When they came in, my mother said she had registered me for St. Louis Park High School. I thought: "You did?" She gave me the form and I looked it over. The courses she picked for me were mostly requirements, nothing I was interested in. I looked my mother straight in the eye and I tore the papers in half. My mother looked at me in shock. I told her that I didn't want to go there. She told me it didn't matter what I did, the original papers were on file. Fuming, I proceeded to show her both the papers I had. She saw the Osseo H.S. registration first. She couldn't believe I had done that without her agreeing to it. I told her to read the other paper about the law. She said I was forbidden from doing that, but I told her I had rights. She thought I couldn't make decisions because I was deaf. I told her I was determined to go to Osseo High School regardless of her decision. The argument raged on for almost three weeks. And the day before school started - both schools started the same day - Mom came to me to strike a deal. She asked if I was still determined to go to Osseo. I said "yes". I still had an attitude because my mother and I never got along. Ever! So she proposed the deal. I said; "Fine, what's the deal?" She said; "if you go to Osseo for the first quarter, or semester..." I can't remember which they had... If I passed all my courses with a "C" or better, then I could go another quarter. But if I got a D+ or worse in any of the courses, any one course, I'd have to go to St. Louis Park. Well, I thought that this was doable so I agreed to her terms. I worked hard in all of the classes. The interpreters they provided were good. Home was a mess, but at school I plugged away, I was very involved. I could walk there, I enjoyed it. One drawback was the lack of

a social life. That's probably my one regret. I did have some hearing friends who tried to learn to sign, that was nice. Home life was a disaster as always. Well I passed the first quarter, the second quarter, and the next quarter and every quarter, I never had a D+ or lower. My mother, not wanting to admit I was right, assumed I was the teachers' pet, which only led to more arguments. One day my mother asked me if I was determined to continue. I said, "Yes, until graduation." She asked if I was sure I would succeed. I said I could. I believed in the power of positive thinking, but my mother was a naysayer. I just said to her, "Watch me." Four years later I graduated. I had succeeded. After that I left for Gallaudet to start a new life. I cut all ties to my mother and I never saw her again.

Denise Egbert

[Visual of title graphic "The Family Bed – Denise Egbert"]

My name is Denise Egbert. My husband, Clyde, and I have a 15 month old daughter named Isadora. When she was first born, she slept in a bassinet and night. And I was breastfeeding her. As she grew bigger, we found that a bassinet became too small, so we transferred her to a crib. But the three of us did not sleep well at night. I was having to wake up constantly several times a night to go and feed her. My husband and I talked it over. We did some research and found out about something called "family sleep". So, what we did was have Isadora sleep next to me overnight. So, when she was hungry, she would wake up, I would feed her and she would fall sleep again. We were much happier. We slept better and we weren't sleep deprived anymore. Really, we sleep so peacefully. I think it should happen in every family, if possible. Isadora is 15 months old now. Her vocabulary is really good. She signs really well. She's so cute. Some of the signs, she picked up on her own. For example, we have a rug on our living room floor and sometimes she will pick up something like trash, and hand it to me. Every time she does, I sign "Thank you" to her. So, she sees it over and over again. Or if she puts something in her mouth, I say, "No, give it to me." When she hands that to me, I sign, "Thank you." One day I leaned over to pick something up, and she signed to me, "Thank you." She learned that all on her own. There was another one. I came home from work one night. And whenever I came home, my husband would always sign, "Momma's home!" And then I would come in and sign, "Hi!" I came home from work one day, and she signed, "Momma!" So she picked it up on her own, which she's done with a lot of different signs. Last week, I saw her using four different signs to make a sentence. It wasn't really clear to others, but I knew she was trying to tell me was she wanted a drink of water. She signed a four-word sentence already at 15 months. It's so impressive and it shows that signing is good for any kid at any age.

Connie Erickson

[Visual of title graphic "Rock Climbing at UMD – Connie Erickson"]

Hello, my name is Connie Erickson. I would like to tell you a story about rock climbing at the University of Minnesota, in Duluth. It was maybe six or seven years ago, that I went for the first time. You go into this building that has a rink in it. And on the far side of the rink, in another room, is where the rock climbing wall is located. Well, I went in, looked around and it was very interesting. They had two different rock walls. The one on the right was called the tower. And then the other was called a chimney. It was all very cool. I was there to learn the basics from a teaching assistant, or a TA, working with an interpreter. She explained I needed a belt, harness, and special climbing shoes. Then, once I was

all geared up, I learned about hooking up the rope and how to belay. And then, when I was ready to go, I had to inform my belayer that I was ready. And once I communicated to the belayer, then I could start climbing. Well, the challenge was to look for the easiest hand placements as I made my way up the wall. I had to take a few breaks to catch my breath and sometimes looked back to see how high I was. I got to a ledge, rested a little bit...and then I continued on and finally, finally made it all the way to the top. Such a relief. I looked down, it was about 70 feet from the top to the bottom. Phew. And, then I had to go back down. So, holding on to the rope, I was able to rappel all the way down to the floor. It was such a great experience. I've been going rock climbing now for three, four years. Completely fallen in love with it. I became so interested I asked the TA for more information about where I could get my own gear. And so I went...I bought it. And I have my own gear and just bring it with me every time I go rock climbing. Really, it is just a favorite activity of mine. I absolutely love it. Now, I haven't been on an outdoor climbing adventure. I'd like to do that sometime, but I just have to find the time for it. But, I prefer the indoor wall. It's easier. And it's still really cool. Now that wall has all these different routes. Some are easier than others. The one in the middle is really tough, but trying it, that was a good experience for me. I think if any deaf people are interested, they should come on over. There's no charge to climb at the place. And, there are people to help you get started. The gear is already there. So, I think you should come on in. It's a good idea, it's a good experience and... That's all I have to say. The end.

Toni Fairbanks

[Visual of title graphic "A Challenging Pregnancy – Toni Fairbanks"]

Hello, I'm Toni Fairbanks. I'd like to share a story about my pregnancy. I went to a doctor's appointment on a Friday at 1:30. The doctor did a check-up and found that I had miscarried. I was devastated over the news, but I tried to accept it. I went home and over the weekend I was still not feeling well. I was throwing up, nauseous, had severe cramping, which was puzzling. Monday morning, I decided to call the doctor and he told me to come back in. Well, I went in and I took a urine test. The doctor found that I was still pregnant. I couldn't believe it. I was sent to the hospital for an ultrasound thinking I might have had twins and lost one. I wondered if I was still carrying the other baby. I had so many thoughts in my head. But, I tried to stay positive on the short drive to the hospital. And the ultrasound showed I was pregnant with twins. It was mind-blowing. I had had with triplets but I had lost one and the remaining two were okay. But they warned me I was carrying them very low and I had to go back to the doctor for instructions. The position of the babies put them at risk for another miscarriage, and the doctor ordered me on bed rest for six weeks. I couldn't do any work around the house, no vacuuming, or anything because the babies were just too low. I had to elevate my leg on four pillows, which was not comfortable. And to keep myself occupied, I read books, I rented a lot of videos. Back then, we didn't have a satellite dish, so I watched a lot of TV and videos. Oh those six weeks of bed rest seemed like an eternity, but I made it through, went in for another ultrasound and found the babies were higher and safer, which meant I could return to work doing light duty. I worked pushing coins in a cart, which was very heavy. So, I told my employer and was transferred to light duty. And for the rest of my pregnancy, I was constantly sick. I had no appetite, I lost 50 pounds. I was hospitalized twice just to get some nourishment through an IV. The whole pregnancy was really an ordeal of suffering, disappointment.

Finally, after eight months, labor started. But both babies were breech, so I had to have a C-section. I had a boy and a girl, but the boy had underdeveloped lungs and sleep apnea, so he was sent to another hospital immediately, which was so frustrating for me. I felt so disconnected from my son because he was so far away, and I couldn't bond with my daughter. I didn't feel any connection for her because I was so concerned with my son. It was just like I was dealing with the loss all over again. I didn't feel like I was a mother to either of these two babies. I was constantly calling to check on my son. He was improving everyday, and I finally looked at my daughter and I started to feel guilty. I picked her up and felt that immediate connection and we really bonded. My daughter had to stay in the hospital a little longer because she had jaundice. I mean really, it was just one thing after another. The minute I was discharged I went to see my son. I did not even go home first. I just had my husband drop me off and then go park so I could go straight in to see my son. And when I finally got to hold him, I felt an immediate connection. He stayed in the hospital six weeks before coming home. And now, they are both healthy eight year-olds.

Jerry Geist

[Visual of title graphic "A Trip to Nepal – Gerald Geist"]

My name is Jerry Geist. I'd like to talk about my travels to Nepal. In 2002, while I traveled around Nepal, I went to Chitwan National Park. I had the opportunity of seeing wild animals there, including rhinos, elephants, and Bengal tigers. To begin, I went to a travel agency to negotiate the cost of a tour. I finally settled on one and scheduled a time that worked for me. The day to leave came and I was picked up by the tour guide in a van. We traveled about three hours south of town to the national park, which was right on the border with India. Upon arrival, we had to leave the van at a river and then canoed over to an island. This was where the wild animals lived. Once on the island, we hiked to cabins where we stayed the night. The next morning, the guide outlined our different options for the day. I decided to go on the elephant ride. We went down a trail to a tree with a platform connected to it. It seemed to be about 15 feet high. We went up onto the platform and waited. We saw the elephants coming toward the platform. The trainer, on top of an elephant, maneuvered it to under where we were waiting. On the elephant's back was another platform for four people to sit on. The trainer sat on the elephant's neck. I sat on the back left side of the elephant. When we were all loaded and ready, we started on our journey through the jungle looking for rhinos. We enjoyed the ride and our search. We finally spotted a rhino lying next to a waterhole. He seemed to be resting because he was warm and the temperature was hot. Everyone was snapping away on their cameras. As we were leaving, our elephant decided to chase another rhino. The trees toppled over from the elephant crashing through the jungle. The branches were brushing the tops of our heads and I had to duck a few times. Even as all of this was happening, I managed to take some pictures. I did lose my hat and I thought it was a goner until a woman sitting in front of me informed the trainer. The trainer then stopped the elephant and steered the elephant backwards. The elephant pivoted and grabbed my hat with his trunk and handed it to the trainer, who then passed it back to me. I thought it was neat that the elephant picked up my hat. At the end of the hour-and-a half tour, we stopped to have some lunch. At about three in the afternoon, they announced that it was elephant bathing time. The guide asked if anyone was interested in doing this and a group of us headed down to the river. We climbed on their backs and they lumbered into the river. The elephants

played with us by getting a trunk full of water and spraying it straight up into the air, thus soaking us. That was fun! Then the elephants lay on their sides and we washed their bellies. Their skin was unbelievably rough! This was how elephants kept cool on hot days. We got back onto the elephants and returned to dry land. Overall, I had an amazing time in Nepal.

Betty Hastings

[Visual of title graphic "Stories of a Duluthian – Betty Hastings"]

Hello, my name is Betty Hastings. Now, when I was young, my parents thought I was mentally retarded. This was a long time ago, they didn't know about deafness then. And a friend, who lived in Duluth, saw the way I acted. I often hid behind my mother. She had a daughter who was deaf. And let's see, I think her name was Sally, and the daughter's name was Marg. Sally said to Marg that she thought that maybe I was deaf and that they should come and visit my mother. So they stopped by. I hid under the table. Sally told my mother, I think your daughter's deaf. My mother was sure no, I was just mentally retarded. But Sally said, no, she was sure I was deaf, she gave my mother the address of the school for the deaf in Faribault. So they sent me there, but oh - I didn't want to go. I cried and cried. But when I got there and saw everybody signing. I couldn't believe it! I'd never seen sign before. The first signs I learned were about food. At the dining room I would reach for something or point to something and they would gently slap my hand and say; "This is the sign for "potato, please"". If I'd point to something else, they'd teach me the sign for that, plus the sign for "please'. The next group of signs I learned, I learned from playing outside. We were playing "house" and the other kids taught me the sign for "mother', "father', "brother', sister', so that we could play house. I caught on pretty quickly, and they taught me everything I needed, out there on the playground. "Boy", "girl", all of that kind of thing. In the classroom we didn't sign. It was an oral program, so we had to speak and lip-read and they used the blackboard. But outside, we could sign. Oh, I loved it there. I roller-skated, did tumbling, played baseball. Oh, let's see... I stayed there for... let's see, from the time I was eight until I was sixteen. And then I had to leave home - oh, I mean, had to leave the school for personal reasons. I was home for two years and I decided to get my GED. I finished that in four years. Then I went to college. I was only able to stay two and a half years, we didn't have the money for it. Later I became a teacher of sign language. I did that for 28 years. I so enjoyed it. I loved teaching signs. But some of the new signs kept coming up and of course, I had all of my old signs, my old sign for "car' or for "hospital'. But all these new signs kept appearing and it was so hard for me. I, I liked my old signs, the ones I had first learned. It's hard to break those kinds of habits, but what can you do? You can't criticize people for the way that language changes. I was married for almost 50 years. My husband passed away. I think he'd be happy with the way it worked out for him, because he was very afraid of becoming blind and he died before that could happen. But for me, I feel lost without him. He was a wonderful cook. Oh, just wonderful. I miss that. I was good at the household things, carpentry, painting... and he didn't like that. While he was good at cooking...and I didn't like that! We had 2 children, 2 girls. When they were young... Oh, you remember the story about George Washington and the cherry tree? He chopped it down and couldn't tell a lie about having done so. Well, I had my own version. I came home one day with a jar of cherries, because I was going to bake cherry bread. And I told the girls not to touch the cherries. And they said they wouldn't. Well, about 2 weeks later, I was ready to bake the bread. I baked on Mondays. But the cherries were gone! All that was left in

the jar was the juice. So I had to change my plan. Instead, I made some banana nut bread that day. And then, I baked my pies. I always made 5 pies, one for every person, their favorite. My husband liked apple, one daughter liked lemon and the other liked...umm... cream pie I think. My favorite was coconut cream pie. So I used to bake a pie for each of us on Mondays. Well, not every Monday, but every two weeks or so. Anyway, when the girls came home from school, I said to them; "Now be honest with me. Which one of you ate the cherries?" And they both denied it. Well, what was I going to do? I couldn't punish both of them because I didn't really know who'd done it. So I told them to forget it. And I waited a month, when I knew they probably had forgotten it. And I came home from work and told the girls that I had brought a box of candy. They wanted it right away but I said no, they had to eat their supper first. And then when they were finished, I said they had to wash and dry the dishes and put them all away, which they did. And then I sat down on the couch with my husband and got out the box. So I opened it up and handed the candy to the girls. My oldest daughter was wonderful, put in her mouth right away. The youngest daughter took one look at it and said; "I can't eat that." I said; "Why?" And she said; "I think cherries make me sick." Oh- that was it. I knew she was the one that had eaten all the cherries. I mean, I wasn't going to punish her, because, the poor thing, at least I knew who had done it. She cried, and she apologized. And I said; "It's ok, I'm not going to punish you now, I think not having candy is probably enough punishment." Let's see. The next time was on a Sunday, I think. My husband and I were getting ready for church. And I bathed and dressed the girls first, and told them to sit and wait for me. They were wearing these bright yellow dresses, I remember. So, we went upstairs to change, and by the time I got back down, one of them was missing Julie. And when I asked her sister, she said Julie had gone outside. I thought; "Oh, not again!" I went out, I called for her, and she didn't come. I asked the neighbors, and she didn't come. I could not find her. Then the neighbor across the street said they heard something strange in their cellar. And they went down and found my daughter - in the cellar. It turns out, that she had slid down there, down the old coal shoot they had, and gotten stuck and was banging on the door trying to get out. Well, of course she was black from head to foot! Just filthy. So; "I just can't believe what a waste of my time this is!" I told her. I had to take her in bathe her, change her. Oh (sigh). And then the next time I knew better. My husband and I got dressed first, and we dressed the girls later. Oh - what a waste of my time! Oh my. Let's see. Oh, here's another story. It's with Julie again. Julie really wanted a bicycle and I told her she was too young to have a bicycle. She insisted she knew how to ride a bike. And I told her no. Well, she decided on her own to borrow a bike from a girlfriend of hers and of course couldn't stop it. She was racing down the hill and she ran smack into a garage! Oh, she was all banged up. She came limping back home and I said to her; "Look at that! You destroyed your friend's bike for nothing!" She said she thought it was going to be fun, and I said; "Well, look what happened! I hope you learned your lesson. Seems like you should have listened to me in the first place!" Later, let's see...there's another time where Julie, again, Julie. Somehow this never happened with my oldest. Anyway, my youngest girl Julie came and said her arm really hurt - she could barely move it. So, we wrapped it up and I said, well, maybe we should go to the hospital, because it might be broken. So I brought her down to the hospital to see the doctor. And when the doctor said; "Ok, we need to unwrap that arm." Julie immediately did so by swinging her arm around and around until the wrapper came undone. She wasn't hurt at all! She had completely fooled me. Oh, that girl. I think that's all I have to say.

Daniel Hepokoski

[Visual of title graphic “Introducing... – Dan Hepokoski”]

I'd like to talk about sports, like football, soccer, baseball, and basketball. And my girlfriend, who lives somewhere else. But we're still together. And going to school in Faribault a long time ago when I was a kid. I was there 12 years. And 6 years at Petco. And then I got a break. For 4 years, I got 8 - 10 dollars. My parents live in a different place. I was with them when I was a kid at school. I have a brother, Tim. That's my family. I was in Faribault from 8th grade to my senior year. I graduated in 1993. Now, I moved to a new house. It's my home. It's a group home. Three of us live there. We clean it. I have a bike in the garage. Now I'm done with my story.

Jonie Langdon

[Visual of title graphic “Coming to Minnesota – Jonie Langdon-Larson”]

Hello. Today, I'd like to share a story about moving to the United States. I was born in Germany, and the story of why I moved to the U.S. is a very interesting one. I didn't grow up being around many deaf people. I think I met only three deaf people growing up, it was an interesting way to learn about being deaf. When I was 11 or 12, I was walking through the airport with my family, and we noticed an old man sitting in the corner. He was dressed in dirty clothes, he held out his cap and he was begging. I was pretty turned off by the looks of him, but my dad encouraged me to go over to help him. I didn't want to have anything to do with him, but I went over and I said hello, nice to meet you. And he handed us a card, which I looked at and then gave it to my dad to read. The next thing you know, my dad got all excited and told me that this man was deaf, just like me. And as a 12-year-old, I looked at this man dressed in rags begging and I wondered how my dad could think he was just like me. Or that I was just like him! But I knew I wasn't going to grow up and be like that beggar. I just filed away the experience in my memory for later reflection. Another person I met was a deaf woman who was in her, maybe 50s or 60s. This was when I was 12 or 13, so I thought she was ancient, but she maybe she was 50 or 60. I met her in, a small town in Germany, called Horbach. The woman lived with her sister and the sister's husband, I think. They were friends of my mom's so we went to visit. My mom told me she was so excited for me to meet this lady, who was deaf. I understood this by reading her lips, and I was fine about meeting the woman. We greeted everyone and it turned out all the woman did was point. She was deaf, but she couldn't sign, or speak, or communicate in any way other than pointing. And here's my mom saying that this woman was deaf, just like me. And I looked at the woman, who was nice but couldn't communicate at all. My mom even tried writing to her, but she couldn't read. She had to rely on her sister to try to explain what my mother had written, through gesture and home signing. I looked at this deaf lady who couldn't read, sign, or communicate very well, and I thought about the beggar in the airport who handed out the cards asking for money and pity. I also thought about people thinking they were just like me. Well, I didn't want to be just like them. My parents seemed to think it was okay for me to be like them, but I wanted to have a different future. I decided that I wanted a career, as a youth pastor. And I started to looking at colleges to see how I could do that. I contacted one university to register for classes to become a pastor. The advisor was very supportive of my taking classes, but wanted me to know that I wouldn't be licensed as a minister. I was confused, and he explained that I could take the classes and would pass, but deaf people were not eligible to be licensed. In Germany,

deaf people were forbidden from becoming a pastor or working in any profession that required a license. Well, I figured maybe I could be a teacher instead. So I started taking classes, making it through without an interpreter. I passed my classes and received A's, and I was pleased. But a woman explained to me that being a teacher also required a license, which meant I couldn't do it because deaf people couldn't be licensed. I decided that if I couldn't be a teacher or a pastor, school wasn't worth it. I withdrew from school. And a little while later I was reading a magazine and I saw an article about a Deaf man who was both a pastor and a teacher. I was so excited to see someone Deaf who was in both of these professions. I was curious to know where he lived. As I read on, I discovered it was here in Minnesota. So, I wanted to move to Minnesota. Remember, I was in Germany I was fluent in reading and speaking German, but my English was somewhat limited. But I decided to move to Minnesota to be able to follow in this man's footsteps. In preparing, I looked at a map to decide which city I should fly into. I had worked to save \$5,000, which I thought was so much money. In looking at where to fly, the ticket to Minnesota was expensive, something like \$800. I wanted to save my money, so I decided to fly instead into Dover, Delaware. Well, It looked pretty close to Minnesota on the map. I figured the map was the same scale as Germany's that I would easily take a train over to Minnesota once I landed in Dover. As my plane landed, I was so excited to be in the U.S. at last. When I got off the plane, I asked an airport employee where the train station was. The man was confused because there wasn't a train station at the airport. I couldn't believe it because in Germany train stations were everywhere. But there was no train station at this airport. The man asked me if I wanted to ship a box. I replied that, no, I wanted to travel to Minnesota, not ship a package. The man chuckled a little at my enthusiasm, and through our awkward communication, he finally told me that I needed to take a bus. Well, no - actually, what he said was that I needed to ride the "greyhound." So I knew I needed to ride a greyhound. I had a dictionary with me and I looked up the word. It said that a greyhound was some kind of dog. I really didn't understand what he meant. Was I supposed to ride on a dog all the way to Minnesota? I decided to drop the idea for the time being. I took a taxi to a hotel for the night so I could figure out what to do. When I got to the hotel, and relaxed a little bit, I asked the man, in writing, for more information about the greyhound. He wrote back that I should look in the Yellow Pages. I nodded, then asked him where I could find it. I also asked what it was. He said, "Oh, you'll find it, it's a thick book in your room." When I got in my room, I searched all over for some yellow paper. I looked on the wall for yellow paper, in drawers, everywhere I could think of. I finally went out into the hall to see if I could find someone to explain about the yellow pages. A woman finally passed by and explained that the "yellow pages" were the phone book. I finally understood, although I was curious about why it was called that. But I went back into my room to find it. The woman showed me that the book itself was half white and half yellow. I looked in the yellow half for "greyhound." But I couldn't find it. I remembered "greyhound" meant dog, so I looked under "dog," which didn't help either. I went back to the desk and explained I wanted to get to Minnesota, and the man explained that to get there, I needed to take a bus. I finally understand ... the Greyhound was a bus, and the Yellow Pages meant a phone book. I thought I was fluent in English from my studies in Germany, but apparently not. Well, I finally did get on the Greyhound bus, and after a three- or four-day journey, I made it to Minnesota and I was thrilled to see this place at last. And that's my story.

Marian Lucas

[Visual of title graphic “Going to Newfoundland – Marian Lucas”]

Hello. My name is Marian Lucas. I want to share a story about a wonderful friend of mine. She teaches at the North Dakota School for the Deaf. One night after teaching a sign language class for parents, she got her paycheck and thought of me. She wanted me to go to the Newfoundland Deaf School, which had a drama education program. I had heard that it was the best program from another friend of mine, Pat Graybill, a well-known storyteller, well-known for his work. He told me about the program and then I told my friend in North Dakota. When she got her paycheck, she thought of me right away and wanted me to use her money to reserve a flight. I went to a travel agency and I explained that I wanted a round trip flight to St. John's, Newfoundland. I purchased a ticket for \$300. I had heard that the roundtrip flight would cost around \$600 because it was so far, maybe a four- or five-hour trip. I thought \$300 was fair. I went to my first destination, Boston, and transferred to a very small plane. I found that interesting. On the map, St. John's, an island, seemed to be a three- or four-hour flight from Boston, so I wondered about flying in such a small plane. We boarded, and when we neared our destination, I saw only forest out the window and a tiny airport. When we landed, I looked around and saw a sign that said "New Brunswick." I was sure we would board another plane but it turned out my ticket was incorrect. I approached someone and said I was trying to get to St. John's, Newfoundland. The person replied that I was in the right place, I'm not sure of the name of the town I was in but I had to take a bus to town. Some of the details are blurry for me since this happened back in the 90s. I felt like something was wrong, like maybe my ticket was wrong, and it turned out I had the wrong itinerary. I did not think that it was my responsibility, since it was the travel agency that had booked the wrong ticket. I explained this and the person there called my travel agency in Minneapolis. During the discussion, the travel agent said it was not responsible and that I had made the mistake. Obviously, there was a miscommunication. I thought I had made my destination clear. The discussion went back and forth between the travel agency and me. And in the midst of it all, I suddenly remembered something in my bag. It was a guide to events in St. John's, with information on different places like museums. That proved the travel agent knew my plans because she gave me the book with the agency's address stamped on the back. That was the proof of my agent knowing where I wanted to go. I handed the book over to the person helping me, and that person agreed with my point. It turned out the travel agency was indeed at fault and had to pay the extra \$400. The person helping me said I had to leave immediately. There was this huge plane waiting for me, an Air Canada plane, and was already 15 minutes late. I raced to the plane and found I was seated in first class. I had all the perks of first class, like free wine, for the four-hour flight. I finally got to my destination late that night. So that's my story.

Krista McKenzie

[Visual of title graphic “Medical Encouragement – Krista McKenzie”]

Hello, my name is Krista and I want to encourage deaf people to work in the medical field. It's important that deaf people go to college and get a degree in the medical field for jobs like doctors, nurses, pediatricians, ob-gyns, midwives, and so on. The reason is, deaf people need these kinds of services. Also, it would be wonderful for parents and deaf children to have the experience of seeing deaf professionals working with adults and children to meet their needs. And to inform parents of appropriate places to go for medical needs. Ob-gyns would be good, because they can help deaf people

have a wonderful birthing experience, especially since many times, deaf people have difficulty finding a doctor who can understand their communication needs and so forth. That would be nice. A midwife would be great for home births. Many deaf people would like to give birth at home. And they may not know what to do. A deaf midwife would understand the equipment, like a TTY and how to get in touch, and how to communicate easily with a deaf person. Deaf pediatricians would be great because deaf children would be comfortable signing one-on-one without having to hire an interpreter. That way, children won't feel uncomfortable such as when the parents are talking with the doctor and their parents. The children feel cheated and left out. Oftentimes children want to know what's being discussed. And sometimes parents aren't willing to share information with their children. If there were a deaf doctor, that would be perfect. The kid could know what is being discussed without feeling frustrated or left out. That would be really cool. I think it's important to go to college and get a degree in the medical field. Oh, and, another one we really need is an ENT, or an ear, nose and throat specialist. That's important because it's often the first place doctors send deaf children to get testing, services, referrals, and ideas. That would be perfect if it could be done. It'd be a wonderful experience and something we really need.

David Moberg

[Visual of title graphic "School Experiences – David Moberg"]

Hello. I'm David. Growing up, I had a variety of experiences at different schools, some of which were really frustrating. When I was young, I attended Lincoln School in Duluth for about eight years. All the teachers signed there and there was a group of deaf students. After my father passed away, my mom took me back to be closer to her family. I ended up in a mainstream setting for two years, and I had no interpreter. It was really frustrating to try to read the teacher's lips, and not understand what was going on. When a teacher lectured, I'd end up asking the teacher to point out the information in the book later. That went on for two years, which was frustrating for both me and the teacher. In some subjects, I could understand but in classes that relied on lectures, like history and social studies, I was lost. The school eventually called my mom in for a meeting because the school wasn't a good fit. They then sent me to a school with a special education classroom. It was okay there, but the teacher didn't sign and they hired only one interpreter, who wasn't always in the room. There were lots of times when I was simply lost. The interpreter called my mom and suggested I go to school in Faribault. We went down to look at the Minnesota School for the Deaf. My mom asked my opinion, and I decided to give it a try. I ended up staying there until I graduated and I loved my experiences there. So my life has had some ups and downs, but I'm doing just fine now.

Bud Norton

[Visual of title graphic "A Gardener's Tale – Walter "Bud" Norton"]

Hello, my name is Bud Norton. I am very avid vegetable gardener. I started about four or five years ago and learned a lot from a deaf friend who was very knowledgeable about organic gardening. I learned from him that you first have to address the soil. It might have too much clay. You have to add sand, humus, black soil, and compost. Also, green sand with added minerals and phosphates helps improve the soil. The best time to plant garlic and shallots is in the fall, not spring. Before you plant, you should

make a raised bed. Then plant the garlic cloves. Put insulation on top of the bed to keep the garlic from freezing. Then use straw for mulch. This process allows the roots grow through the wintertime and develops a healthy plant. In the spring, reduce the mulch and the insulation until you see the green shoots showing. Cover them again with mulch. This process has been very successful for me for four or five years. I also grew catnip for my cat. That plant was enormous. I have also grown potatoes. I planted two different kinds: Reds and Yukon golds. I plant these in the spring and harvest in the fall. Some of the potatoes were huge, especially the red ones. I have learned a lot of this from my deaf friend. All of my gardening is chemical-free. There are other natural repellents like garlic spray or hot pepper spray, which the bugs detest. My dream some day is to find one or two acres of land to plant a large garden. I will sell some produce and give some away. I hope this might be possible. Being a gardener is what I love. I think it is in my blood. My parents were gardeners as were my grandparents. My father grew mostly potatoes and some carrots too. Oh, I forgot to tell you about carrots. There are many different kinds of carrots. A particular one that I look for is the sweet kind. I forget the name but I bought that seed. I plant them in the spring and harvest them in the fall. They shouldn't be eaten right away. Store them until they become sweet. It's really something.

Andrew Oehrlein

[Visual of title graphic "A History of Courage North – Andrew Oehrlein"]

Hello, my name is Andrew Oehrlein. I would like to share some of history of this camp. It all started in 1971. Walter and Lydia Duebner were well known for their shopping bags. Back in the 1920s and 1930s, during the Great Depression, they invented the modern shopping bag. Back then, filled shopping bags were not very easy to carry. Walter and Lydia came up with the idea of adding handles to the bags to make them easier to carry. People were able to buy more food and make fewer trips to the store. People could buy enough food to last for up to two or three weeks. After that, their business soared in St. Paul and then expanded to Indianapolis. As he got older, Walter joined Courage Center where he enjoyed meeting with friends and playing tennis. At that time, he decided to purchase the land here, about 90 acres. Now you have to understand that Walter loved to build log cabins with his own hands and his axe. Four cabins were built at camp: two are gone now, but two are still here to this day. Many years passed and Walter's wife, Lydia became very sick. They agreed it was time to give up the property. They called a lawyer and discussed donating the land. Walter then called Courage Center. Courage Center was amazed at the offer, but had no idea where the land was. Walter explained it was on Lake George near Itasca State Park. Two people from Courage Center came to look at the property and were overcome by its beauty. The lawyer soon arrived and handed the visitors a huge key ring full of keys. The lawyer made it very clear that the donation of the land was contingent upon one thing. The camp motto had to remain "Deep in the Pines." The board decided that the camp would be called Courage North with that motto. That was in 1971. In 1972, the first Deaf/Hard of Hearing and physically disabled/wheelchair sessions took place. Over the years, the sessions began to grow. At first, there were only four cabins. Each cabin was able to hold eight campers and two staff, totaling about 50 people per session. After getting by with limited resources, numerous private companies were asked for donations for the camp. As a result of the tremendously positive response, the camp built a dining hall and six cabins. Each cabin was able to house eight campers and four staff. That meant the capacity of the camp

grew by almost a hundred. Some sessions added included Deaf/Hard of Hearing Teens, Deaf/Hard of Hearing Youth, two sessions for physically disabled people and wheelchair users, a new program for persons with hemophilia, and a program for people with autism called Camp Discovery. The camp has continued to grow every year, with its history passed down over the last 32 years. I hope you have enjoyed getting a glimpse into the history of the treasure that is Courage North.

Debbie Peterson

[Visual of title graphic “Ely’s Wildlife – Debbie Peterson”]

I'm Debbie Peterson from Seattle, Washington. I used to live in Minnesota. There are two stories of living there that I want to share. Back when I was living in Minneapolis - right, Minneapolis. My roommate had a sister who lived in Ely. I had heard so much about the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, the BWCA, and was curious to find out more. When my roommate invited me to head north for the weekend, I jumped at the chance, especially after hearing how beautiful the area was. We left after work and drove north to Ely. The hills and forests were just beautiful. We had to drive on this bumpy road out to the sister's cabin. She worked as something like a forest ranger or for a national park. I just remember her wearing something like a park ranger's uniform. Well, once we had bounced our way to the cabin, I met her sister, who signed very well. The cabin itself was very quaint. A living room, a bed, a wood stove and sink. I loved taking it all in. We then went outside to talk, and the mosquitoes were absolutely eating me alive, even though they didn't seem to be bothering the other two. I don't know if it was my white skin or if I'd just eaten too much candy. Whatever it was, they were coming after me. It was excruciating. The sister gave me a head net that I could use to fend them off. Finally, we went inside for the night. The next morning, we planned to go canoeing and I was excited for that. I had on long pants, long sleeves, and a head net to protect myself from the mosquitoes. Only my hands were vulnerable, but that was no big deal. As I was sleeping that night, I felt something on my chest. I looked and saw a tick crawling up towards my face. I flicked it off of me, but I just couldn't shake the feeling of it. Creepy crawly things like that just really get to me. I also had to go to the bathroom and the cabin had an outhouse, so I got out of bed and made my way outside. When I pulled down my pants to sit down, I was attacked by the mosquitoes. In my mind's eye, I envisioned a squadron of mosquitoes, called into formation with the blaring of the horn, with helmets, goggles firmly in place, flying off on their mission. As I pulled down my pants, I could imagine my white butt, with a huge bull's eye on it that they attacked with perfect accuracy. I went the bathroom as fast as I could, and pulled my pants up-swatting mosquitoes all the while, and I rushed back to the cabin, with my backside oh so itchy. The sister couldn't believe how affected I was by the mosquitoes, but that was how it was. Finally, it was time to go canoeing. I helped carry the canoe down to the lake. Mosquitoes were trying to get through my head net, but they couldn't. I got all these bites on my hands, as I was trying to swat them away. We finally got out on the water and away from all of them. It was a beautiful day for canoeing. When we came back, the mosquitoes were after me again. In heading back to Minneapolis, I thought of the beauty of Ely and the BWCA, but it's the mosquitoes I'll never forget.

Sherri Rademacher

[Visual of title graphic “A Challenge at the Doctor’s – Sherri Rademacher”]

Hi, I'm Sherri Rademacher. I want to share about my own experience with discrimination. I hadn't seen a doctor in about three years, and I'd had a cold for about two months. I wanted to be healthy before I flew on a vacation to Mexico. I made a call to my insurance company to ask if I had the same doctor; I did not. I proceeded to tell them I wanted a doctor whose office was close to the college where I worked. That worked out so I called to make an appointment that same day. The receptionist said that since I was deaf, I had to wait three days. I asked them why and they said they had to contact an interpreter three days in advance. I explained that I could go without an interpreter so I could see the doctor right away. I made it clear that I was fine with having no interpreter and I went in for my appointment. I spoke for myself and I told the receptionist my name and who I was there to see. The woman looked at me, dumbfounded, and asked me if I was deaf and I came alone. I affirmed the obvious. She again asked if I was deaf and if I came without an interpreter. A bit taken aback, I repeated that I had come alone. Stunned, the woman asked the same questions again. I gave the same answers, and she seemed as if she couldn't believe it.. The woman then told me to follow her and I sat in the lobby, waiting to be called. As I sat, the woman stood directly behind me, keeping a close eye on me. And when my name was called, I went into a small room just to fill out forms required of new patients. The woman who processed my information communicated with me just fine. The receptionist felt compelled to pointedly inform the woman that I was deaf. The woman taking my information ignored her and we got along fine. We didn't need to resort to using paper and pen, and an interpreter wasn't needed. The receptionist couldn't believe her eyes and went back to the front desk. Once the paperwork was finished, I went back out to wait to be called by the nurse. When I was called, we went to the exam room and the nurse asked about my symptoms. We were able to talk without the use of an interpreter or even writing, except for when I had to write out the name of a prescription for a skin problem. The doctor turned out to be very good-looking. It was too bad we were both married. The exam went well without any problems with communication. When I went out in the hallway, I reflected on how well the appointment went and found it annoying that the front desk receptionist was stunned that I was deaf and didn't need an interpreter. Three days later I got a call from the nurse saying that they gave me the wrong prescription. I said I was fine and had no side effects, but would change medications. I then told her about the receptionist and I asked her advice. She suggested contacting hospital administration, who was responsible for complaints. So I did, and they apologized for the receptionist's behavior. They explained that because I was a new patient, she might have been felt that an interpreter would have provided the best access. I haven't gone to that doctor because I don't want to see that woman again. It's odd because she had a prosthetic hand, and yet she looked down on me as if I weren't bright because I was deaf. I've never forgotten that experience of discrimination.

Kim Sackett

[Visual of title graphic "A Night Out at the Deaf Club – Kim Sackett"]

Hello! My name is Kim Sackett. I'd like to tell you about my best friend and I. One night we went to a Deaf club. We drove a classic 1971 Volkswagen convertible - a Galamati - I'm not sure what it was called exactly, but it was a classic owned by my parents. It was summertime, so on the way to the dance, we drove with the top down. The Deaf Club was having a 1950s dance, so we dressed for the theme. We made it to the Deaf club and we enjoyed the festivities. When the dance ended, we headed home. It

was about 11:30 that evening. As we drove home, the car started acting funny. We smelled a strange electrical odor. I talked it over with my friend about what was wrong and what we should do. We pulled over. My friend said that electric sparks were flying. We decided it wasn't a major problem and we should continue driving. The engine died twice, so I had to pull over and I was finally forced to call my parents at that late hour and wake them up to come get us. It was bad timing. They had to drive from southern Dallas all the way to the north side of Dallas to get us. It was maybe a half hour or 45-minute drive. When they arrived, my dad saw that it was because of car problems and blew up. He commanded me to ride back with my mom. I wouldn't have gone with Dad, anyway, because he would have yelled at me all the way home. So my friend had to endure a quiet ride with my father; poor her. In trying to talk to my mom, she didn't want to discuss anything. When we got home, I asked my best friend how it went and she said my dad was quiet. I tried to talk about it with him, but he didn't want to discuss anything either. So my best friend and I went to my room and talked about what had happened and how my dad lost his temper. Despite all that, it was an enjoyable and memorable evening. Eventually we went to bed. The next morning we got up and my friend went home.

Susan Siemsen

[Visual of title graphic "A Brief Autobiography – Susan Siemsen"]

Hello. I'm Susan Siemsen. I'm from Ohio. I grew up there. I was born Deaf. I was mainstreamed, and then went to college in Rochester, NY at NTID for four years to study computer graphics. When I finished school, I moved back home to Ohio. Then my best friend moved to Minnesota. I was curious what Minnesota was like, so I moved there, too. I met my husband there and we got married. We met at a Deaf church in the Twin Cities. We then moved here to Duluth. I'm happy my husband found a job here. I have lived in Duluth for two years now. I have a baby girl, a daughter who is two. I now attend a church with a Deaf ministry that's been underway for almost two years now. I learned a lot through Deaf ministries in New York and the Twin Cities, meeting Deaf people, seeing what they do. That's how I learned about this work. I attend Hermantown Community Church, which is really supportive of Deaf people. I've been very impressed because the pastor is also very supportive, which I appreciate. I have learned a lot through my church, teaching classes with my team. We teach sign language classes as well as classes about Deaf culture. The students learn really a lot; it is moving for me to see this Deaf ministry in action. It's impressive to see the growth from hearing people who are so motivated to learn.

Randy Shank

[Visual of title graphic "My Minnesotan Pet Peeve – Randy Shank"]

Since I moved to Minnesota six years ago, there's one thing that really gets to me about living here. Every time I go to a store or fast food restaurants like McDonald's or Burger King, it aggravates me how he lines at the counter move slower than other places like in Wisconsin or Washington D.C. Lines move much slower here because of checkbooks. I see them tucked into shirt pockets or sticking out of back pockets. It is just maddening. I've had the experience of waiting in line at Wal-Mart when the items are maybe two dollars, yet the people have to write a check for that amount. It makes me impatient, and then the next person writes a check for maybe five or six dollars. I just pay in cash and get out of there. Once at Burger King, I noticed someone's meal cost like \$4.99, and that person still wrote a check.

Another time, I happened to glance at the number of someone's check; and it was astronomical, somewhere around 15,000! My check number is in the 400s or 500s; I only use checks to pay bills through the mail. Yet Minnesotans here use checks to pay for everything from a dollar to thousands of dollars. I think this is a waste of money. It's better to pay in cash or use a credit or debit card, which costs nothing. I've seen people use checks from Wells Fargo. Why don't they simply get debit cards, which free and can replace checks? It's because people here are stuck in the habit of writing checks. Back when I was in school, I had a houseparent from Minnesota, and he always had a checkbook in his front shirt pocket. We always made fun of that. Now I realize that he was just like all these Minnesotans who still live by their checkbooks. The thought of it drives me mad.

Trudy Suggs

[Visual of title graphic "A Minnesota Heart – Trudy Suggs"]

I've lived in many different states, including Illinois, Washington D.C., Colorado, Wisconsin briefly. Yet my heart belongs in Minnesota. People say Minnesota is too cold but I just tell them Minnesotans, of course, know how to dress appropriately. I love Minnesota for many reasons. First is the outdoors. For me, camping and hiking are essential. Everything is so close by. There's the northern forests and hills, and the lakes. There's so much to do, like fishing. There's so much beauty. The second reason is the Deaf community. I've always referred to Minnesotan Deaf community as the dark horse of America. Many people ask if there is a Deaf community here, and once they think about it, they realize many renowned Deaf people graduated, or are, from here, or live here now. Minnesota has everything - the Deaf school and a Deaf community. I also live 10 miles from the Deaf school, so I often go to events there. And the diversity that exists is tremendous, from grassroots people to professionals. Everyone's on an equal footing. There is a plethora of cultural events in the Twin Cities as well as here in Faribault. The Twin Cities is a mere 50 minutes away, so that's convenient. The third reason is that my family is from the Midwest - in Illinois which is a short distance away. I have the best of everything right here. Camping, the outdoors, the city, culture, community, and privacy... I have it all in Minnesota. So, that's why my heart belongs to Minnesota.

Diane Suhr

[Visual of title graphic "Travels in Thailand – Diane Suhr"]

I want to talk about my experiences traveling. The richest experience of my life was going to Thailand in 1989. I was there for three weeks. I went with my husband, my husband's brother, who is Deaf, and his hearing wife, who is from Thailand. The two of them had been trying to convince us to go with them on a vacation, and after much deliberation, my husband and I finally decided to go for it. When we told my husband's brother and his wife, it put a smile on both of their faces. We then started doing all the necessary planning. We got our passports, and filled out paperwork with the documentation that we needed, like our birth certificates. The night before our trip, my husband was too nervous to sleep. That wasn't the case for me. I slept like I was knocked out cold. We did all our packing and our friends took us to the airport where we flew to Chicago. Then we waited some more until we met my husband's brother, his wife, and their two daughters. We finally got on the plane, which was a 747, a jumbo jet. That was my first time flying, so it was quite an experience for me. We finally took off out of Chicago,

and it was a long flight. I'm trying to remember how long it was... like 12, no, 16 hours. We spent most of our time in our seats, and ate on the flight. We arrived in Japan and had a five-hour layover without much to do. We spent our time looking in the duty-free shops and ended up buying some fragrant perfume. It was also interesting to watch people having conversations in Japanese. Japanese people would talk rapidly, punctuating their conversation with small bows of their heads. It was fascinating to see that bowing all over the airport. I also saw a Japanese woman who was a monk with a shaved head, wearing unique clothing. It was all very interesting. Finally, it was time for us to get back on the plane to Bangkok, Thailand. When we got there, the first thing I noticed was that the air smelled different. We got in line to go through customs and get our passports stamped. Then we got our luggage. Once we did that, we met up with my sister-in-law's family from Thailand. This was how our encounter went. We looked at them and said hello. They put their hands together like they were praying and bowed to us. When they got through all the bowing, at the end, we copied them and returned a bow. They laughed to see us copy their bowing. That can mean three things: "Hello," "Good-bye," and "Thank you." The meaning depends on how it is used in conversation. That was interesting. We went to our hotel. One thing I noticed was that Bangkok had an incredible number of motorcycles on the streets going this way and that way, making all sorts of noise. When we got to the hotel room, we found that it was pretty small and very simple. Just two beds, with a shower and a toilet in the bathroom. That was all there was. But we only had to pay \$17 for the night, so that wasn't bad. It was cheap, but a nice room. We spent some time shopping and relaxing in Bangkok and then took a bus to the sister-in-law's hometown up in the north, near Laos. That was like being in a new world to me. So many Thai people, and we were the only white people. Everyone was looking at us. I wasn't used to being in the minority like that. The food there was absolutely delicious. Different types of rice; it was all just so good. One interesting thing was our sister-in-law's parents' house. It was like two stories. The first story was on stilts; there were no walls, but there was a stone floor. As I was walking up to it, my sister-in-law told me to take my shoes off before going in, which I did. There was a bowl of water at the entrance for washing feet. In the house, our bedroom was upstairs. There was mosquito netting over the beds, and the windows had no glass. And the beds were really firm. The next morning, when we woke up, there was a lizard crawling across one of the beams on the ceiling. It was really an interesting experience. One story I should share is about the bathroom. It had cement walls and was in between the first and second floors. Immediately upon entry, there was a counter with only cold water, and a pail. To my right was a toilet on the floor. The water was to be used in place of toilet paper, but we had brought tissues with us. I had to squat to go to the bathroom, and then pour water from the counter to flush it out. Bathing went like this. You would take off your clothing and bring your soap and supplies. You had to fill the pail with water and pour it over your head, then wash yourself. It was just like a shower. Just that you had to pour the water over yourself to rinse yourself clean. We stayed for five days and it was quite an experience to live like that. People kept looking at me, because of my white skin being so different. The food was wonderful, and there were so many things to say about that trip. When we were in town, we did run into two white American women. I felt a connection to them right away, since they spoke English. It was almost a relief, as if I were homesick. We were in Thailand for three weeks. We got to Bangkok and went to see the Royal Palace. It was absolutely gorgeous there with all the gold and elaborate decorations. There was a temple that we went into to see that had many Buddha statues; one of them was a beautiful jade one. We

said our goodbyes and flew back home. When people asked me how I felt, I said I I was happy to be back home in America.

Gary Suhr

[Visual of title graphic “Communication over Time – Gary Suhr”]

My name is Gary Suhr. I was born in Rockford, Illinois. My parents are both Deaf, as am I. I have an older brother who is Deaf. Including myself, there are five children and all of us are Deaf. Because we all are Deaf, we use sign language. It was an easy life. Never boring. I attended the Wisconsin School for the Deaf just across the Illinois border about 40 miles away. At Christmas time I came home because we lived so close. My grandparents are also Deaf, as are my aunts and uncles. I have six cousins who are Deaf, I mean hearing, but they are fluent in sign language. It was an easy life and I always knew what was going on because we could all sign. When my family moved to a farm, my grandparents, who were also deaf, lived a mile away. This was in Hilton. We lived there for three or four years. When my father couldn't make a living, he sold the farm. We moved back to my hometown where I was born, and I continued going to school in Wisconsin. But when I got a little older, like ten or eleven, I started coming home less. I liked staying at school because of things like sports and just talking with my friends. Going home meant being alone because my dad would be gone to work. I would have nothing to do. Staying at school was fun and more enjoyable. The communication was there. I also learned about leadership skills through the Boy Scouts and athletics. It was an easy life. When my siblings and I got together for things like Christmas, I noticed it wasn't the same since my mother passed away. It was like the mast was gone from our ship. We continued to have family gatherings for seven more years, until my father passed away, too. At that point, we all started to head in separate directions. When I married, I started to attend my wife's family gatherings. My aunt and uncle still lived near the school so I got to chat with them. Once I graduated from school, things were much different for me. After my parents passed away, I was around hearing people much more, like my wife's family. My English just wasn't that good. I was so used to communicating freely in sign. Having to communicate in writing was quite a frustration. School had been fun, but after that, it was really frustrating, which disappointed me. My wife became my secretary and saved my life. She helped me pick up on things. She helped me so much and I realized how much my life had changed for the better. We raised three children who I signed to, and they are fluent in sign language. They have been good to me. If I ever needed help, I could depend on them to help out things like with phone calls. The day I got my first TDD, that was great but I still had to communicate in English. This caused problems because I wasn't sure I would be understood. Now that we have videophones, it's so liberating to communicate in sign again, and to pass this tradition of communication on to the next Deaf generation and beyond.

Elee Vang

[Visual of title graphic “Being a Responsible Citizen – Elee Vang”]

Hello. I'm Miss Deaf Minnesota. My name is Elee Vang and this is my presentation. I am Hmong, and my Hmong community has very strong ties. I believe community is where we preserve our values. In becoming responsible citizens in our communities, we need to focus on three things: first, know your neighbor; second, pick your representative; and third, support diversity. A neighbor can be defined as

someone who lives near you. Knowing your neighbor means being involved with them at events and activities. Deaf people typically have no problem being involved in the Deaf community. But they also need to recognize that hearing people live in communities, too. That will encourage diversity. Diversity is recognizing and supporting people with a variety of skin colors, nationalities, religions, and much more. Our neighbors might be different from us, but supporting diversity will lead to stronger ties among neighbors. People want their families and children to feel comfortable and live in good communities. This requires being involved in choosing your representatives, whether the governor, senators, or the president. Those representatives can help your community. Become a responsible citizen for your community and vote to elect a president this fall. Remember these three important items: first, know your neighbor; second, picking your representatives; and third, supporting diversity. Combining these three things can make a positive impact on your community.

Kim Wassenaar

[Visual of title graphic “A Project to Combat Sexual Violence – Kim Wassenaar”]

Hi. I'm Kim Wassenaar and I'm here again. I'm a project coordinator for the Council on Crime and Justice. The project I work on is seeking to recruit 50 individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind, to talk about sexual violence within the Deaf community. We'll ask questions trying to elicit people's opinions and perspectives about how to more effectively serve the Deaf community in this area. One example is talking about how to improve communications with the police department. We will pay \$50 for people's time, which is about one or two hours for our survey process. First, people will watch a videotape, and then we'll ask them a series of questions. So, that's what I am working on today. It will be finished by the end of August or the middle of September.

Alex Zeibot

[Visual of title graphic “Video Relay – Alex Zeibot”]

My name is Alex Zeibot. I'm going to explain about video relay services, or VRS for short. For many years, if Deaf people wanted to make a phone call to hearing people, they had to use telecommunications relay service (TRS) where a TTY user was connected to a hearing phone user via an operator who spoke what a Deaf person typed and typed what the hearing person said. This service has been around for many years. Now, VRS offers a new technology. With a videophone and a TV, Deaf people can place a call to hearing people by contacting VRS. Video interpreters (VI) interpret the phone conversation between a deaf person using American Sign Language and a hearing person using spoken English. So, Deaf people can see the conversation in ASL. It's really great. It's almost like real-time communication. Using a TTY with the old relay service led to significant delays in the conversation, which was frustrating for both parties. VRS represents a revolution in what is possible in the Deaf world, both in the speed of communication and that Deaf people can communicate in American Sign Language. Plus, all video interpreters hold certifications, such as from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. The quality of interpreting allows for better English messages being delivered, compared to when TTY relay operators had to voice the typed message word for word, which often led to confusion on the part of hearing people on the phone. Qualified video interpreters are better able to truly connect deaf and hearing users of the service. It truly is fantastic. Another thing is that with TRS, Deaf people placed 90% of the

calls while hearing people almost never initiated TRS calls. The reason being that the process was too slow for hearing people. Now with the speed of VRS, hearing people are starting to make more of the calls, bringing the percentages more into balance. I really think VRS is great, and offers the potential for Deaf people to have equal access as hearing people. With VRS, we can do it.