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INTERPRETING IN THE 70's

JAMES E. STANGARONE

It is a pleasure to be able to be here today to discuss with you what I feel will be the interpreting needs of the 70's. When Mr. Woodrick asked me to present a lead paper and chair the section on interpreting, I was quite hesitant because I did not know if the PRWAD would be receptive to my ideas and feelings. After giving it considerable thought, I decided that little had been written about interpreting and the experience that I've had at NTID should be of help in discussing the future needs of the deaf.

What exactly will the deaf need in the way of interpreting during the 70's? It is my feeling that, as places like NTID, Seattle Community College, Delgado College and St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute train more and more deaf students in a variety of jobs, many of these students will need help from interpreters while on these jobs. If any industry hires a large number of deaf people, there is justification for that industry to hire either an interpreter or a person who could work at the industry in a particular job and provide interpreting when necessary. If a particular place of employment had a person on their staff who could do interpreting, this would relieve a lot of the frustrations of communication between the deaf and the hearing. It is not always possible for an employer to take the time to write down what he wants the deaf employee to know. An interpreter can provide communication more quickly and with less confusion. I don't think that the deaf person has to depend heavily on an interpreter. However, if an interpreter is available, it can certainly make the situation more meaningful.

The legal setting is also beginning to demand a great deal of attention from interpreters. During my two years at NTID, I have

found it necessary to provide interpreters in many situations for judges and lawyers in the city of Rochester. It has been most difficult to provide this service when our own interpreters have their regular schedules to follow. However, we also feel that it is important to provide this service to the community when needed. We have also provided interpreters who will be in the areas of employment, medical situations, legal situations and classroom situations. This has been my experience here in Rochester.

What can be done to provide enough interpreting for the deaf during the 70's? I think that training programs need to be established in various areas of the country to train interpreters in the areas of greatest need. I think we have to begin looking at places where interpreters are now hired as full-time employees. These jobs will continue to increase as more and more deaf people obtain training in various occupations that have never been open to the deaf before. One area where I see a definite need to train interpreters is in the classroom situation. If people know that jobs are available for classroom interpreters there should be no difficulty in finding people to train in this area. While at the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Convention recently, I learned from Mr. Al Pimentel that Gallaudet College would probably provide programs to train personnel to train interpreters in various settings. Since Gallaudet will take responsibility for training personnel to train interpreters, I think it is time for us to begin giving serious consideration to where we will set up training centers throughout the country.

The training of interpreters in legal settings would require close contact with law schools, lawyers, judges, policemen, etc. Training interpreters in the educational situation would require close contact with deaf students in an integrated environment with hearing students. I don't think that we can justify opening too many centers to train interpreters. I would suggest that three areas of the country should take responsibility for preparing interpreters. Locations in the East, Midwest and Western parts of the United States should be kept in mind when selecting centers.

What would be involved in training interpreters? I feel that training programs should be flexible enough to permit interpreters to receive short-term training and long-term training. Certificates,

diplomas or degrees could be awarded in interpreting. At this point in time, I am not thoroughly convinced that a four-year bachelors degree program would be necessary to train interpreters. I might suggest that an AAS degree in Interpreting might be good to keep in mind when setting up programs.

People who are training to become interpreters in the medical setting should have practicum in areas where there are large concentrations of deaf people who would use hospitals, clinics, offices, etc. This then means that training centers should be located in large cities.

Training interpreters in the classroom setting would mean that interpreters should be able to practice interpreting in classrooms where you have the deaf and hearing integrated. These people that receive training in the classroom setting should also receive practice by interpreting in adult education programs for the deaf. Requiring training for interpreters will help to make the area of interpreting a more professional one.

I must go back briefly to why I decided to discuss interpreting in the 70's. At first it was difficult for me to see what the deaf would need in the way of interpreting during the 70's. I must admit that one of our NTID students gave me the fuel that I needed to discuss with you the future interpreting needs of the deaf. This particular student came into my office one morning to ask me if it would be possible for an interpreter from NTID to be with him when he first went out on his job. He felt that an interpreter would be most helpful during the orientation to this new job. This young man had received most of his educational training in an oral environment. He is an average speechreader, and has poor speech. I can see that he will have difficulty in communicating with those people around him until they become accustomed to his speech. The fact remains that it is essential for this student to receive all of the necessary instruction in the beginning days of a new job. He will be one of our first students to complete a program at NTID. I am sure that the only possible way an interpreter can be provided for him would be through his Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. This same student told me that he would be interested in taking college courses during the evening while he is on his new job. He wanted to know if interpreters would be available to him. All I could answer was that

it depended on the particular area of the country in which he worked and lived. Here is an example of a young man who feels that he will need an interpreter during the beginning days of his new job, as well as a need while pursuing further education in his community. You must remember that this is not adult education, but continuing education that could possibly lead to another degree.

Because of the lack of interpreters in the classroom setting, we at NTID have found it necessary to begin training our own interpreters. During the summer of 1969, we began our first program to train student interpreters in the classroom setting. We had six hearing RIT students with us for an entire summer. Some of these students knew some fingerspelling and some language of signs. However, for the most part, we had to give them training from the very beginning. These students lived in the dormitories with the deaf students and were able to communicate with them at all times, using fingerspelling and the language of signs. Within their training, they not only learned how to communicate with the deaf, but learned the problems of the deaf. After an entire summer of training, we were able to utilize the services of these students as interpreters in the classroom situation as well as any activities that might occur outside of their classroom time. I have observed most of these student interpreters in various classrooms throughout RIT and feel that they do a good job in interpreting classroom lectures. With our first group of student interpreters, I have felt that our weakest area in training has been in reverse interpreting. I am sure that many people will feel that this is their area of greatest weakness, too. The greatest advantage of training these RIT hearing students is that they have the subject background that most interpreters do not have. These young people have the vocabulary that enable them to interpret more efficiently and effectively. When I schedule these interpreters to interpret in the various classrooms at RIT, I try to keep them in their major areas.

During the past summer, we had 17 RIT hearing students in our second Student Interpreter Program. These students majored in areas such as Printing, Photography, Chemistry, Business, Art, etc. Many of these students did not know how to sign and fingerspell before they began the summer Workshop. We began teaching the signs and fingerspelling from the very basic course. It is interesting to note how quickly these students learned to communicate with the

deaf. After a period of time, we then began to train them in interpreting situations. We used the video-tape system with these students a great deal. This enabled the student to better evaluate his interpreting skills. We also used this video-tape system with our regular interpreters for self evaluation purposes.

What are the job possibilities for full-time interpreters? I can only speak for interpreters in the classroom setting. At the present time, at NTID we have five full-time interpreters, sixteen staff members who help us do interpreting and twenty-two student interpreters. At the end of this past summer, our interpreters completed 12,000 hours of interpreting over a two year period. As I look to the future here at NTID, the interpreting needs will increase rapidly. For the present quarter, we are doing approximately 400 hours of interpreting a week. The full-time interpreters will be doing a maximum of 25 hours of interpreting a week and the student interpreters will be doing a maximum of 15 hours of interpreting which includes both academic and cocurricular activities.

What about research in the area of interpreting? There is a definite need to do a great deal of investigation with the whole area of interpreting. One of our interpreters will work with the Division of Research and Training to do only research in interpreting. We need to look at such things as the fatigue factor of interpreters -- how many hours a day can an interpreter interpret? What about content of the subject? Is there really a need to expand the language of signs to accommodate various technical areas? What about the clothing that is worn? Where is the best place for the interpreter to sit? How much information is the student able to retain while concentrating on an interpreter? What other ways, if any, would be better than interpreting in some classroom situations? As you can see, many questions need to be answered before we can provide both students and interpreters with the best learning situation.