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BOOK REVIEWS

Editorial Comment

As the International Year of the Disabled (1981) slowly fades into history, one must revel in the milestones of individual and group accomplishments that occurred during that short but meaningful year. As Book Review Editor for a journal specializing in service to hearing-impaired individuals, I am singling out one book, *Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America* by Jack R. Gannon that personifies the intent and outcome of IYPD. I have taken the editorial liberty to highlight *Deaf Heritage* in this issue of *JRD* by presenting three reviews of this work from individuals representing different personal backgrounds and professional experiences.

Frank R. Zieziula, Ph.D.
Book Reviews Editor

Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America. by Jack R. Gannon. Edited by Jane Butler and Laura-Jean Gilbert. Layout by Rosalyn L. Gannon. Silver Spring, Maryland: National Association of the Deaf, 1981. 483 pp., \$18.00 (hardback), \$12.00 (paperback).

Deaf Heritage is a book which deaf people, and anyone identified with them, should have had long ago. Teachers, students in teacher-training programs, vocational rehabilitation counselors and social workers, among other professionals, will find it uniquely valuable. Mainstreamed education personnel unfamiliar with traditional programs and accomplishments of the deaf, can make up a deficit in their professional training by a careful reading of the book. A mainstreamed NTID student planned to buy a copy as a Christmas present for her parents! Through this book, parents, too, may become informed advocates for the advancement of deaf people.

This book tells it like it is (and was). Yet it is never offensive. The sprightly, refreshing style with an occasional flash of wit, we identify with the author, Jack Gannon, prize-winning editor of *Gallaudet Today*.

We can sympathize with the author's

family as he embarked on a two-year, part-time job of producing this monumental book in time for the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) Centennial in 1980. One might wish there had been time to include page numbers in the Table of Contents, subheadings, and a few other details which I caught myself penciling in, such as additions to the Index pages for quick reference. There are fewer minor slips in accuracy than one might expect; for example, the painting of Laurent Clerc on Page 106 by John Carlin belongs to the Kentucky School, though for a time on loan to the American School for restoration work. Nevertheless, *Deaf Heritage* is a masterpiece.

The author varies subject matter with many subheadings and boxed items not directly related to the immediate text. Rare photographs, long forgotten trivia, lists, and graphs are a gold mine of information. Included are stories and/or pictures of deaf airplane pilots, clergymen, school founders, artists, architects, sculptors, and outstanding sports teams and their coaches. A reflection of changes in The American deaf population is apparent in the list of NAD presidents — only the latest two were born deaf.

Examples of leadership by young deaf persons of the past are featured, among whom are founders of both the NAD and the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf (NFSD). NAD founders and officers included many Gallaudet College undergraduates who at the time were in their twenties. Robert McGregor, first elected NAD president, is described as "one of the oldest attending" at the age of 30! The NFSD began among older boys at the Michigan School for the Deaf and was taken over by adult deaf executives who have developed it into one of the world's leading fraternal insurance groups.

Interesting details are revealed leading to the revitalization of Gallaudet College, its expansion, and the establishment of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology. These colleges complement each other.

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The "sizzling, bountiful" decades are the 1960's and 1970's when life for most deaf people was revolutionized in some respects. The NAD and state organizations became federated. Under the guidance of NAD Executive Secretary, Fred Schreiber, a headquarters building was purchased in Silver Spring, Maryland, and a budget in the millions of dollars developed. The Junior NAD was organized to develop young leaders. The National Theatre of the Deaf brought sign language "out of the closet" to be acclaimed by critics as "a new art form" — and thousands of hearing people began learning it. More doctoral degrees were earned by deaf people during this time than in all previous history. Captioned television programs followed the captioned films program of the 1950's. Telecommunication devices opened up a long lost telephone mode of communication. A National Law Center for the Deaf helped enforce special, new employment provisions in federal laws for the handicapped.

All of this information is important in the heritage of every deaf American, and in some form or at some time he/she should know about it. Like Gannon, and like this reviewer, deaf people will emerge from the experience much prouder and with a new sense of identity.

I would like to add a footnote based on my experience with *Deaf Heritage* as the main text for a new fall course at NTID in deaf studies. All but one of my students were in the second year of their post-secondary studies. The students came from both traditional and mainstreamed backgrounds. Their enthusiasm about the course and the text was contagious and when the registration deadline passed I was besieged with inquiries about taking the course with me in winter or spring quarters.

There should be few if any problems using *Deaf Heritage* as a text in post-secondary programs. A good high school class might be able to use the book, provided there is an enthusiastic and resourceful teacher who can develop supplementary handouts to help focus on main points and to bring in the students' own experience background. As

a resource book for teachers working with less able students, I highly recommend *Deaf Heritage*.

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Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America.

Scattered through the libraries of schools and in the minds and memorabilia of hundreds of deaf people and their friends, lies the history of deaf people in America. Until the advent of *Deaf Heritage*, all of this wealth of information was inaccessible; much is still "out there" awaiting further research; and still more is on hand — so much so, indeed, that one does not envy the author the task he had of deciding what to include and what to put aside for another time. In the words of Ralph H. White, "Throughout the years in our country, there have been events of import, deeds of courage, decisions of lasting influence, strokes of brilliance, works of high quality, and moments of glory — all created by deaf people. The need was to capture between the covers of a book as many of them as possible." And that has been done.

Deaf Heritage begins, appropriately, with the chronology of early education of deaf children in America, nearly two hundred years after the Pilgrims arrived, for these efforts to open the minds of deaf children form a part of the written record. Then, too, whether by design or by happy happenstance, by implication it becomes clear that the accomplishments of these remarkable deaf people related directly to the education they received in the developing American school system. Further, deaf people were intimately involved in the establishment of 24 of the state schools for the deaf, a vigorous growth that was not matched by the roots in Europe — which may explain in part the difference between the accomplishments of deaf Americans and deaf Europeans.

The American part of the panorama paint-