

10-1968

New Telephone Arrangement for the Deaf

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.wcsu.edu/jadara>



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(1968). New Telephone Arrangement for the Deaf. *JADARA*, 2(3). Retrieved from <https://repository.wcsu.edu/jadara/vol2/iss3/5>

8 NEW TELEPHONE ARRANGEMENT FOR THE DEAF

NEW TELEPHONE ARRANGEMENT FOR THE DEAF

"For the first time in my life," said a 50-year-old deaf engineer, "I was able to call my wife from my office and tell her what time I would be home for supper." The thrill of the experience was still showing in his eyes as he went on to say that he and his wife, who is also totally deaf, had never before, in 30 years of marriage, been able to have a telephone conversation without the help of a hearing person to get the incoming message.

Like a growing number of deaf people, this deaf engineer and his wife were utilizing teletypewriters attached to ordinary telephones through a specially constructed coupler unit. These teletypewriters, when connected to a telephone, enable even a profoundly deaf person to communicate over telephone lines with another person, whether deaf or hearing. Both parties to the conversation must have the same equipment. There are no special rates to pay beyond the cost of normal telephone service, once installation has been made.

Operation of this equipment requires no special technical skill. The caller simply dials the number in the ordinary manner, lays the telephone in a special cradle, and begins conversation. This cradle—which is not electronically connected to the telephone—leads to the terminal unit box, which is connected to the teletype page-printer. A flashing light or other signaling device indicates that a call is coming in. The deaf person then flips an "on-off" switch on his teletypewriter, picks up his regular telephone and lays it in the cradle. By watching a small neon light on his set, the party on the other end of the line sees that the deaf person has answered and is "connected". The person making the call then begins to type his message on his own teletypewriter. The teletypewriter units are useful for deaf people because it is not necessary to use any auxiliary hearing aid in making calls. Both parties simply type their messages back and forth to each other.

Thus, even if both parties are totally deaf, they can communicate by telephone without the help of anyone else—a major development for thousands of deaf people who have heretofore been denied the use of Alexander Graham Bell's most famous invention. With direct long-distance dialing, even trans-continental calls will soon be a reality for many deaf people.

This arrangement for using teletypewriters with the telephone was developed by Robert Weitbrecht, a research physicist and long-time radio "ham" who is himself totally deaf. Mr. Weitbrecht became interested in the problem of telephone communication for the deaf after being appointed chairman of the Communications Committee of the Oral Deaf

Adults Section of the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf. In order to carry out their mission of encouraging the teaching of speech and lipreading to deaf children, the members of ODAS found themselves hampered by their inability to telephone each other to arrange conferences and publications and to make plans for future activities. Mr. Weitbrecht, whose daily job is designing radio telescopic electronic equipment in Palo Alto, California, met this challenge by designing the special coupler which permitted him and his deaf friends to carry on written telephone conversations, thus opening up a whole new area of communications for them, using standard telephones.

The distribution of teletypewriters for the deaf in the United States is being coordinated by the Teletypewriters for the Deaf Distribution Committee (TDDC), headed by two deaf businessmen: H. Latham Breunig and Jess Smith. Dr. Breunig, who is a statistician and chemist, is also national chairman of the A. G. Bell Association's Oral Deaf Adults Section. Mr. Smith is Editor of *The Deaf American*, a magazine published by the National Association of the Deaf. The TDDC address for information is: 5125 Radnor Road, Indianapolis, Indiana 46226.

"This system," said Mr. Smith in a recent editorial in *The Deaf American*, "is far superior to other means of telephonic communication (for the deaf) developed so far."

Edna Levine Honored

Dr. Edna Simon Levine, Director of the New York University Center for Research and Advanced Training in Deafness Rehabilitation, has been chosen 1968 Woman of the Year by the Phi Kappa Zeta Sorority of Gallaudet College, Washington, D.C. The award was conferred during special ceremonies held at Gallaudet College on May 15.

Dr. Levine, an authority on the psychology of hearing impairment, is author of *Youth in a Soundless World* (1956), *The Psychology of Deafness* (1960), and co-author with James F. Garrett of *Psychological Practices with the Physically Disabled*. She played a major role in the formation of the Mental Health Center for the Deaf of the Psychiatric Institute and the National Repertory Theatre of the Deaf, a company whose appearances in major cities and on television have met with critical acclaim. In her present post at New York University, Dr. Levine is directing programs to further the understanding of deafness. According to Dr. Levine, "Significant rehabilitation of the deaf person cannot be accomplished without