



# DEAF HISTORY International

An Association for All Interested in the Study, Preservation, and Dissemination of Deaf People's History

NO. 26

The DHI Newsletter

SPRING 2006

## Insight into the Work of the Association: "Kultur und Geschichte Gehörloser e.V."

by Helmut Vogel (Hamburg, Germany), KuGG President

The 6th Deaf History International (DHI) Conference in Berlin this summer is approaching quickly. As most people already know, the event is organized by the Interessengemeinschaft Gehörloser Jüdischer Abstammung in Deutschland (IGJAD) / Interest Group in Deaf Jewish Descent to Germany. I would like to introduce our association, "Kultur und Geschichte Gehörloser e.V." (KuGG) / Culture and History of the Deaf. The 2nd DHI Conference (1994), held in Hamburg, gave us the initiative to form, two years later, a Deaf History Interest Group (DHIG) to focus on and analyze the history of the Deaf in Germany. Through the union of the DHIG and an already existing association for Deaf culture, our KuGG was established in 2001.

Here I would like to concentrate on the research regarding the Nazi period in Germany because there is still a lot of work in that area to do. During the Nazi period, numerous Deaf people were victims of Nazi tyranny. They were sterilized against their will and euthanized. Jewish Deaf were killed in the concentration camps. Awareness of this was discovered for the first time in the 1980s. Horst Biesold investigated the topic of forced sterilization, breaking the taboo after many decades. He has since passed away, but will not be forgotten. Jochen Muhs researched the Deaf in the Third Reich and has reported on it since the 1990s. Many people found his research on Paul Kroner, a Deaf Jew, to be very interesting. Kroner supported the Deaf communities in Berlin and Germany and was murdered later in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. Mark Zaurov concentrated on the living situations for Deaf Jews and highlighted the negative consequences of the Holocaust for the Deaf Jews in the Deaf community. Lothar Sharp recently researched the Deaf in the Hitler Youth and wrote two books about it. The topic about the Nazi period has interested me for a long time.



2005 Bonn Symposium  
Back (left to right): Jochen Muhs (Berlin), Hans-Uwe Feige (Leipzig), Gerlinde Gerkens (Kiel), Mark Zaurov (Hamburg) and Martin Domke (Dresden)

Front (left to right): Helmut Vogel (Hamburg), Friedrich Waldow (Essen) and Marie-France Percevault (Orleans, Frankreich)

Last year on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the end of World War II, we remembered the Deaf victims of the Nazi Regime. We organized a Symposium in Bonn with the theme "60 Years After 1945—With Deaf History into the Future." We invited various speakers to give talks, among them were some eyewitnesses. There were many interesting presentations and some talked about their personal experiences. The Bonn Symposium was very successful with more than 150 visitors, 20 of those from other countries, to which we were very happy.

In addition, I would like to share a

Continued on page 3 ►

### Inside this issue:

President's Message	2
Notes from the Editor	2
<b>Article Review:</b>	3
<i>"Making Sense of It All: The Battle of Britain Through a Jewish Deaf Girl's Eyes"</i>	
<b>Call for Papers:</b>	4
<i>150 Years on Kendall Green: Celebrating Deaf History and Gallaudet</i>	
<i>"Stumble-Stone" for Paul Kroner (1880–1943)</i>	5
<i>VI.DHI Conference—Berlin (Summer 2006)</i>	6–8
<i>Open Bids for DHI Conference in 2012</i>	9
<b>Book Review:</b>	10
<i>Far from Home: Memories of World War II and Afterward</i>	
<b>Book Review:</b>	11
<i>Breaking the Silence: The Education of the Deaf in Ireland, 1816–1996</i>	
<i>DHI Membership Form</i>	12



19th Century  
"Deaf & Dumb" Mug  
( United Kingdom )



# The DHI Newsletter

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## President's Message



As you know, the 6th Deaf History International (DHI) Conference is in Berlin from July 31 to August 4, 2006. You can read more about the exciting plans and programmes in [www.igjad.de/dhi2006](http://www.igjad.de/dhi2006). I hope that many of you readers will be able to attend the conference this year. If unable to do so, please plan for the next one, the 7th DHI Conference in Stockholm, Sweden, in 2009.

From time to time, I have gotten questions as to what Deaf History really is. Is it only about Deaf people and not about hearing people working among the Deaf as well? Personally, I feel that an audiogram is not what decides who is Deaf. A person can be born deaf, have residual hearing, be deafened later in life, or be socially/culturally Deaf. We cannot exclude hearing people from the history of the Deaf—an example is Abbé Charles Michel de l'Épée, an important name in the history of Deaf people who is hearing. Using an analogy of what Deaf History is—a stone thrown in water makes rings after rings which spread outward. The inner ring represents the Deaf person and the outer rings are the Deaf and hearing environments. The different rings make up the study of Deaf History.

## Notes from the Editor



First of all, I would like to thank the readers who took the time to let us know how pleased they were with the new format, content, and look of the previous *DHI Newsletter* (Winter 2006, No. 25). Most were surprised to receive it electronically via their e-mail addresses. About 10 people asked to have their subscription remain in the traditional way via postal service because they neither own a computer nor are computer savvy.

This is a call for more international articles, comments, events, article/book reviews, photographs and any other information for the next two issues. In the left column, I have added my fax number for those wishing to use it instead of send e-mail attachments.

Enjoy this newsletter. Share it with your colleagues and friends. And don't forget to encourage them to become paid subscribers!



### FOR FUTURE ISSUES

**The Deaf History International Newsletter welcomes Deaf History-related submissions of news, articles and essays, book and film reviews, images and photographs, newspaper clippings, conference and workshop announcements, websites, and other readings of interest for possible inclusion.**

**Please submit them to the editor by the following deadlines:**

DHI ISSUES	SUBMISSION DEADLINE	DISTRIBUTION DATE
SPRING	March 15	April 15– 30
SUMMER	June 15	July 15 – August 15
FALL	September 15	October 15 – 31
WINTER	December 15	January 15 – 31

## Insight into the Work of the Association: “Kultur und Geschichte Gehörloser e.V.”

( Continued from on page 1 )

short story about an older participant from Holland. He saw his Jewish friends being deported by the Nazis during that time. He never told any Deaf non-Jewish Germans about this. The presentations and personal experiences of the speakers touched and encouraged him to share his own story. For the first time, he described his experiences to Jochen Muhs and me.

We hope for further meetings and a fruitful exchange, not only among us Germans, but rather across borders so that we can process our common history and further develop the future, especially with regards to an ever increasing Europe.

It was a new opportunity for the German Deaf community to commemorate the Deaf victims of the Nazi Regime in a joint conference. A report written by Mark Zaurov about the Bonn Symposium appeared in *The DHI Newsletter* (Fall 2005, No. 24, p. 2). If interested, you can read the abstracts from the speakers at the Symposium in English at our homepage [www.kugg.de](http://www.kugg.de) and you can familiarize yourself with our association as well.

A documentary on the Symposium is being written, so that we can pass the information on further. We at the Kugg e.V. want to make sure that the Nazi crimes against mankind are not forgotten and we want to always remember the Deaf victims of those crimes. If we understand the past, we can look towards the future and together mold it. Likewise, we must remain aware of racism and Anti-Semitism and do everything we can to prevent them.

The upcoming 6th DHI Conference in Berlin this summer will contribute to that since many people from around the world will participate and learn more about these issues.

We are pleased about previous contacts with other national Deaf History associations/organizations. We also hope to establish many new contacts at the conference

Best of luck to IGJAD in preparing an interesting and informative conference. And to all the participants a wonderful time in Berlin.

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## ARTICLE REVIEW

## “Making Sense of It All: The Battle of Britain Through a Jewish Deaf Girl’s Eyes”

Eileen Katz and Celeste Cheyney, “Making Sense of It All: The Battle of Britain Through a Jewish Deaf Girl’s Eyes,” in *Deaf Women’s Lives: Tree Self-Portraits*, ed. Brenda Jo Brueggemann (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2005), 99-188. ISBN 1-56368-321-0

Reviewed by

William Sayers, a translator among whose works are Horst Biesold’s *Crying Hands: Eugenics and Deaf People in Nazi Germany* (Gallaudet University Press, 2002), Adam Rayski’s *The Choice of the Jews under Vichy: Between Submission and Resistance* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), and *Gaillard in Deaf America: A Portrait of the Deaf Community, 1917* (Gallaudet University Press, 2002).

Eileen Katz, the deaf daughter of a Jewish tailor in London, was six years old when the clouds of World War II first became apparent to the British public in 1938. In this memoir, readers follow her schooling at the Residential School for Deaf Jewish Children, the various evacuations of the schoolchildren and staff as London came under threat, and their survival of the air war over Greater London and the Battle of Britain. Among the refuges at the impromptu schools to which Katz and her classmates were moved during the war were pupils of Dr. Flex Reich, the founder of the Israelite School for the Deaf in pre-war Berlin, whom he had saved from deportation to Nazi death camps.

All autobiography is written with the advantage or burden of hindsight. It is the writer’s choice how much of such subsequent knowledge to weave into the narrative. Eileen Katz chooses to concentrate on how her gradual realization of what war entailed, and what was actually happening to herself and her family went in step with acquisition of the basic English interrogatives *who*, *what*, *where* and *why*. Thus, entry into the world of the hearing comes at the cost of learning how grim a world this is.

The RSDJC was an oral school although signing was tacitly allowed in the dormitories and playground. Thus, readers will find it difficult to accept that notions of identity, location, and causation reached these deaf children only with their formal schooling and with a content

strongly marked by wartime conditions. Equally implausible is the author’s purported unease on first sights of Hitler’s photograph and her later spontaneous creation of the sign that would become standard for the German leader. The cloyingly saccharine account of school life, where descriptions of sweets eaten clandestinely under the bedclothes bulk large, might just be accepted but the level of remembered detail in this retelling of the childhood years between six and nine is scarcely plausible.

Nor is the role of co-author Celeste Cheyney ever identified. Many readers will conclude that we have not an autobiography, but a ghosted pseudo-biography, less a literary crime perhaps than faked testimony of the Holocaust, but unsettling in its own way. More charitably, “Making Sense of It All” might be accepted not as a descriptively padded memoir but as a fairy story—a dark one.

The issue of the verisimilitude of this personal history, seen through alternatively rose-colored and darkened glasses, is not raised by the editor, who is condescending to her three writers when her introduction opens with a passage from Hélène Cixous and then goes on to say that they are unlikely to have read this critical theorist’s work, but have heeded her absent counsel in their writing. One can almost hear, in Brueggemann’s editing, the archetypical English schoolmistress crying “Jolly good writing, team!”



## 150 Years on Kendall Green: Celebrating Deaf History and Gallaudet

On April 11, 12, and 13 of 2007, Gallaudet University will hold a conference titled “150 Years on Kendall Green: Celebrating Deaf History and Gallaudet” in Washington, D.C., to mark the sesquicentennial of the founding of the Columbia Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, the parent of today’s Gallaudet University and the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, which includes the Model Secondary School for the Deaf and the Kendall Demonstration Elementary School. The conference planning committee is interested in receiving proposals for papers or presentations that examine Deaf history and Deaf culture, particularly as these topics relate to Gallaudet University, its alumni, programs, history, and influence. Other topics in United States Deaf history also will be considered.

The University will pay an honorarium, arrange and pay for travel, waive registration fees, and provide accommodations in the Gallaudet University Kellogg Conference Hotel (or similar facility) for all individuals accepted as presenters for this conference. Interpretation into spoken English and American Sign Language will be provided. All sessions also will be open captioned in English.

Interested individuals should write a short proposal, no more than 250 words, describing the content and method of their presentation. It is anticipated that most papers will not exceed 30 minutes, but longer presentations may be considered if they are appropriate.

### **Proposal Deadline: June 1, 2006**

Submit to:

Dr. Brian Greenwald  
Department of Government and History  
Gallaudet University  
800 Florida Avenue NE  
Washington, D.C. 20002 USA.

Questions may be addressed to: [brian.greenwald@gallaudet.edu](mailto:brian.greenwald@gallaudet.edu)

Note: This conference is sponsored by Gallaudet University Press Institute, with additional support provided by the Gallaudet Research Institute, the Clerc Center, and the Gallaudet University Department of Government and History.

DEAF CANADA CONFERENCE

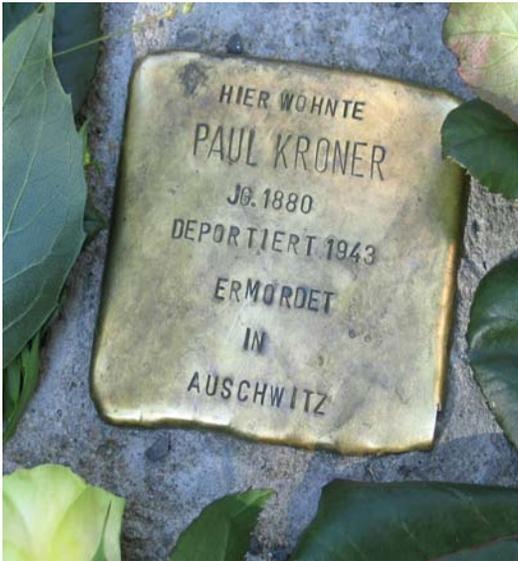


Painted by Canadian Deaf Artist Pamela Witcher

# “Stumble-Stone” for Paul Kroner (1880–1943)

by Jochen Muhs (Berlin, Germany), DHI Vice-President

*Humans are only forgotten if their name is forgotten.* — Gunter Demnig



On July 29, 2005, a brass paving stone was placed in the Lützowstr, Berlin, Germany to commemorate and honour Paul Kroner, a respected Deaf Jewish leader. This “stumbling stone” (known as “Stolperstein” in German) was sculptured by the famous artist Gunter Demnig of Cologne who has created over 6000 special memorials for the victims of the Nazi regime. Donations were made possible from Deaf Berliners (GVB). Because of the holidays, the formal inauguration and celebration did not take place until September 23rd.

## A Model Deaf Berliner

Deaf Jews were persecuted around 1933 after Hitler's takeover of Deaf Clubs. Approximately 400–600 of them in Berlin were murdered from 1938 to 1945 by the Nazis. The present association for the deaf (GVB) selected Paul Kroner to represent all Deaf Jews by having a “Stumble-Stone” cut and engraved in his memory.

Paul Kroner was well-known all over Germany. He was a respected comrade in the Deaf movement. In 1900, he founded a Deaf Sports Club known as Berliner Gehörlosen-Sportvereins (BGSV), and was its long-time treasurer. He was also very active with the central club for the welfare of the Deaf in Berlin.

## Inaugural Dedication

On September 23, 2005, many Deaf and hearing people, including three different school groups and representatives from the city of Berlin, were present for the inaugural event honouring Paul Kroner. The GVB chairman (Jochen Muhs) told the audience that Kroner had a well-respected Jewish personality during his time when he united both the Christian and Jewish Deaf people of Berlin. The students also spoke and signed about Kroner's life, work, and contributions. It was a ceremony that many will remember for a very long time.

This “Stumble-Stone” is the second memorial honouring a Deaf person. The first one commemorated Edward Furstemberg, who established the first Deaf Club in Germany in 1848.

## Television

A broadcasting company from Bavaria was present at the inaugural event to televise a 30-minute segment about Paul Kroner, the artist Gunter Demnig, the Pogrom (persecution of the Jews), and the celebration itself. Demnig had the honour to place the stone on the sidewalk near Kroner's former residence, which was destroyed during the war.

## Lecture and Exhibition

Jochen Muhs also gave a lecture at the Berlin Deaf Centre about the life, work, and death of Paul Kroner. He then opened the exhibition for the crowd. A similar lecture and exhibition will again be presented at this summer's 6th DHI Conference in Berlin (July 31–August 4, 2006).

Paul Kroner





VI. DHI CONFERENCE  
**BERLIN**  
JULY 31 - AUGUST 04  
2006



DEAF HISTORY  
INTERNATIONAL

The 6th DHI Conference will be held in Berlin, the capital city of Germany, this summer from 31st July to 4th August. It is supported by Aktion Mensch and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Humboldt University Berlin. Languages used at the conference will be German Sign Language, International Sign, German and English.

Full details about the conference, call for papers, registration, accommodation at Hotel Radisson, travel, and information about the city of Berlin can be found at this website:

<http://www.igjad.de/dhi2006/en>

## Call for Papers

You are invited to submit a proposal for presentation at the conference. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Deaf Holocaust
- Deaf Nazis
- Deaf Theatres
- Deaf Biographies
- Deaf Refugees History
- Responding to Genocide in the 21st Century
- Deaf History of DDR from Its Start to Its End
- Deaf Associations
- History of Abuse and Discrimination in Deaf Education / Schools
- Role of Modern Deaf History Studies for Deaf Community Recovery and Deaf Studies
- The Status, Definition and Contribution of Deaf History Studies
- Sterilization
- Deaf Art History
- Deaf Movies History
- Deaf Women's History
- The Period from 1933 to 1945 and the Deaf Community
- Social, Cultural and Political Situation of the Deaf since 1900, 1918, 1933, and 1945
- German Reunification and Deaf Community
- Future and Goals of Deaf History Research
- Deaf History in Curriculum / Education
- Deaf History and Sign Linguistics
- Role of DHI for Deaf History
- Other topics are also welcome!

### Extended & Final

## SUBMISSION DEADLINES

*(see website for additional details)*

Abstract / Presentation / Lecture Topics:

**\*\* February 28, 2006 \*\***

PowerPoint:

**June 30, 2006**

Full Article:

**October 15, 2006**

## Registration

All participants, including presenters, must register. Information about registration deadlines and fees is available from the above DHI Conference—Berlin website. You can also register online OR fax a copy of the Registration Form (*see next page*). The sooner you register, the more you save!

**For more information, contact:**

[info@igjad.de](mailto:info@igjad.de)

Mark Zaurov  
Coordinator, 6th DHI Conference  
IGJAD e.V.  
Postfach 60 53 18  
22248 Hamburg  
Germany



VI. DHI CONFERENCE  
**BERLIN**  
 JULY 31 - AUGUST 04  
 2006



DEAF HISTORY  
 INTERNATIONAL

## REGISTRATION FORM

FAX THIS FORM TODAY to  
 DHI Conference-Berlin Coordinator  
 +49 40 8812161

SURNAME:	FIRST NAME:	ARE YOU? [ ] Deaf [ ] Hard-of-Hearing [ ] Late Deafened [ ] Hearing
ADDRESS:		OCCUPATION:
TOWN / CITY:	PROVINCE / STATE:	POSTAL / ZIP CODE:
COUNTRY:	E-MAIL:	FAX:

REGISTRATION FEES	Before March 31	Between April 1 and May 31	Between May 31 and July 15
Regular	260 €	350 €	400 €
DHI Member	250 €	330 €	400 €
Lecturer Regular	260 €	310 €	350 €
Lecturer DHI-Member	250 €	300 €	350 €
Developed Countries	200 €	250 €	300 €
IGJAD-Member	220 €	270 €	300 €
Student	250 €	250 €	300 €
Interpreter*	60 €	60 €	60 €

€= Euro currency

\*Registration Fee for Interpreters only and is subject to restrictions.

**NOTE TO DEVELOPED COUNTRIES:**  
 We are not responsible for VISA issues.

**IMPORTANT:**  
 The order for registration is only valid when the payment is made within the time period. If not, the next higher fee will be considered.

Account name: IGJAD e.V  
 Bank Name: Bank für Sozialwirtschaft Hannover  
 Account number: 8472100  
 Bank code: 251 205 10

For EU—Bank transfer in EURO  
 IBAN DE50 2512 0510 0008 4721 00  
 BIC: BFSWDE33HAN

International order can do by Credit Card (MasterCard / VISA).  
 Checks, cheques or money orders (like from USA and Canada) are not accepted.

### Cancellation of reservation from the DHI-2006 Conference

- Complete cancelling the reservation from the Reservation Registrar should be performed in writing to the following e-mail address: [registration@igjad.de](mailto:registration@igjad.de)
- The fee for the cancellation amounts to 50% of the Registration Fee. It is impossible to reimburse a person with the cost of registration Fee after June 15, 2006. If the resigned participant is able to find another participant, then it reduces the cancellation fee for 50.00 Euro less.
- We, therefore, strongly urge you to include a special Cancellation Insurance for the case of cancellation.



VI. DHI CONFERENCE  
**BERLIN**  
JULY 31 - AUGUST 04  
2006



DEAF HISTORY  
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## GALA INFORMATION

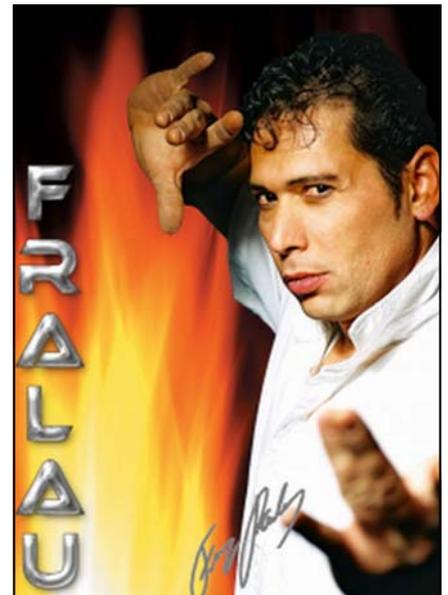
**The Gala at the 6th DHI Conference will be held at Berlin's historic DAS ROTE RATHAUS ("Red Town Hall").**



According to Wikipedia (*The Free Encyclopedia* from the Internet), the Red Town Hall (German: Das Rote Rathaus) on Rathausstraße in Mitte, is the town hall of Berlin. It is the home to the governing mayor and the provincial government of the town and state Berlin. The name of the landmark building dates from the facade design with red clinker bricks .

The town hall was built between 1861 and 1869 in the style of the north Italian High Renaissance by Hermann Friedrich Wäsemann. The architecture of the tower is reminiscent of the cathedral's tower of Leon in France. It replaced more, partial buildings dating from the Middle Ages by a whole street block. Since its completion, it serves as a city hall. During the Cold War and after its reconstruction during the 1950s to the original plans, it served only as the town hall of East Berlin, while the Rathaus Schöneberg was domicile of the West Berlin senate. After the German reunification, the unified administration of Berlin officially moved back in 1991.

The Gala will cost 100 € per individual before May 31st, 2006. After that date, it will be 130 €. The price includes a magnificent buffet (like a 5-Gang-Menu), drinks and a show by FRALAU, a Deaf world champion magician. The buffet is styled after the Soccer World Cup.



€= Euro currency



**Wappensaal (Crest Hall)**

## DHI Bureau Seeks Bids for **DHI Conference in 2012**

DHI President Odd-Inge Schröder wishes to announce that the Deaf History International Bureau is now accepting bids to host the 2012 DHI Conference. If your organization is interested in having this conference in your home country, please contact Breda Carty, our DHI Secretary / Treasurer, for information regarding bidding guidelines and procedures.

Breda can be contacted at this e-mail address:  
breda.carty@bigpond.com

For the record, below is a list of our past, present, and future conferences:



### **First-Ever International Conference on Deaf History**

Washington, D.C., USA / June 20–23, 1991



### **Second DHI Conference**

Hamburg, Germany / October 8–11, 1994



### **Third DHI Conference**

Trondheim, Norway / September 10–14, 1997



### **Fourth DHI Conference**

Washington, D.C., USA / June 27–30, 2000



### **Fifth DHI Conference**

Paris, France / June 30–July 4, 2003



### **Sixth DHI Conference**

Berlin, Germany / July 31–August 5, 2006



### **Seventh DHI Conference**

Stockholm, Sweden / Summer 2009



**Eighth DHI Conference — 2012**  
▶▶ BID FOR YOUR COUNTRY NOW! ◀◀

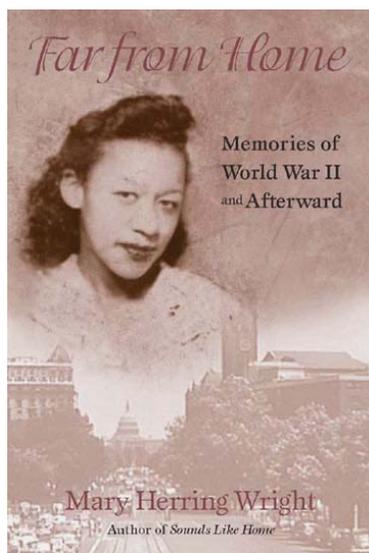
# BOOK REVIEW

## Far from Home: Memories of World War II and Afterward

Mary Herring Wright (2005), *Far from Home: Memories of World War II and Afterward*.  
Gallaudet University Press, 232 pages, ISBN 1-56368-319-9

Reviewed by

Tonya Stremmlau, Professor, English Department, Gallaudet University (USA). Her scholarly interest is currently in the works of fellow deaf writers.



Mary Herring Wright's *Far from Home: Memories of World War II and Afterward* is a sequel to her earlier memoir of her childhood and high school years, *Sounds like Home*. Both books are worthy of note not only as deaf autobiographical writing, but also as windows into history and culture.

*Far from Home* covers Wright's life from 1942–2004, although the years are not covered equally. Over half of the book deals with the World War II years, when Wright went to Washington, D.C. and worked for the Navy; the rest of the book covers Wright's return to live in her family's community of Iron Mine, N.C. where she married and raised her own family of four daughters. It ends with Wright receiving an honorary Bachelor of Arts degree from Gallaudet University in 2004.

Wright's portrayal of the influence of being deaf on her life accurately reflects her views on being deaf—that it is part of who she is, but not necessarily the most important or most interesting part. Although she had gone to the North Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind after becoming deaf as a child, Wright had little contact with the Deaf Community once she left the school and worked and lived in the hearing community. This was not a rejection of Deaf Culture or people, but rather a reflection of her deep commitment to her family and home community in which she was the only deaf person.

Valuing family was responsible for Wright's initial trip to Washington, D.C. in 1942, because a cousin there thought a doctor in the city could help Wright become hearing again. Wright accepted being deaf, but wanted to please her family, especially her mother, who continued to have hope that Wright would be able to hear again. The doctor could not help, but while Wright was in town, the cousin arranged for her to take the civil service exam. After the test, she went home for a while, but when the test results came, she was asked to return to Washington to work in the war effort. She ended up working second shift in the Navy Annex in Virginia, across the Potomac River from Washington.

Initially, Wright stayed with her cousin, but later took a room in a house close to her job. Because she worked the second shift, she was able to visit people and explore the city during the day. She visited her cousin, and also occasionally got together with deaf friends. None of her deaf friends were willing to travel across the river to Virginia to visit her, though, they thought it was too far away. Wright enjoyed seeing them, but felt comfortable in her life among hearing people.

Like so many other young women, Wright had a special guy, Maleon Stanford, in the armed services. He was killed on August 3, 1944 when the transport truck he was riding in crashed. This led to Wright deciding she wanted to return home to her family so that she could be with her loved ones. Not long after, she met James Wright, the man she would marry in 1955. In the years between moving back home and marrying, Wright lived with her parents and helped out around the house and on the farm.

Even after getting married, Wright continued to live with her parents; James was often gone for work. This arrangement continued while Wright had her first two daughters. The Wrights finally moved into their own home after Wright's mother's death—but within walking distance, to the home where Wright's mother had grown up. Thus, Wright's life continued to be full of family, not only her own growing family, but also her extended family and neighbors, many of whom were at least distantly related.

Because her husband had to work to provide for the family, Wright ran the house and family. When lots became available near the highway, she worked to buy a lot on her

own, against her husband's wishes. When he saw how hard she worked to get the necessary money—sewing, doing taxes, and farm work—he helped get a loan to build a house with the luxury of an indoor bathroom.

Over the years, Wright communicated primarily through speech. She wanted her daughters to learn American Sign Language (ASL), but they were resistant, although they did fingerspell. Wright found her own way to access in the community; for example, in church the pastor provided her with copies of his sermon.

A big change for Wright's community in the years her daughters grew up was the arrival of desegregation. For Wright, the biggest impact was on the education of her daughters. The local Black schools were closed, and her daughters were bussed to desegregated schools farther away. This meant more educational opportunity, but also an end to the schools that had been at the heart of the community. Wright had volunteered at her daughters' school before desegregation, but not after. She was grateful for the increased opportunities for her daughters, but was still sad to see the local schools close.

One of Wright's daughters went on to business school and landed a job at Gallaudet. This led Wright to new deaf friends. When Wright had finished school, Gallaudet had not been an option because of segregation. She was pleased to see expanded opportunities for deaf people and to be able to feel a part of the Gallaudet community.

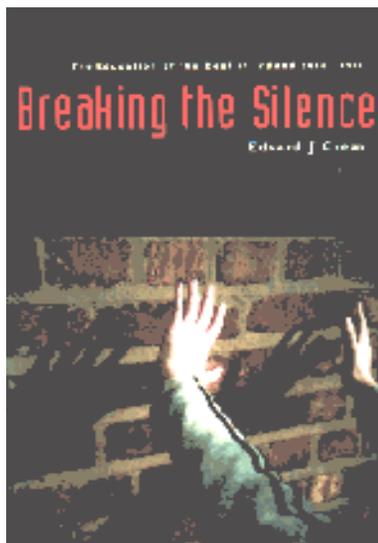
One of the greatest strengths of this book is Wright's conversational writing style. This creates a feeling of intimacy that leads the reader to feel connected to what happens to Wright and the people she cares about. She brings the reader into that circle of family and friends. In this context, it does seem strange that Wright has comparatively little to say about her husband. She says much less about him than about her parents, siblings, and daughters. Even Wright's landlady in Virginia during the war years gets more mention than James. Apart from this puzzling gap, though, Wright does a thorough and entertaining job of sharing her life with the reader. It is a life well worth reading about.

# BOOK REVIEW

## Breaking the Silence: The Education of the Deaf in Ireland, 1816–1996

Edward J. Crean (1997). Dublin: Irish Deaf Society Publications, Hard Cover, 235 pages. ISBN 0-9529206-0-3

Reviewed by  
David W. Pancost, Chair of the English Department, Gallaudet University (USA)



In the preface to *Breaking the Silence: The Education of the Deaf in Ireland, 1816–1996*, Edward J. Crean says that he intends “to open up free discussion” by “informing those especially concerned and primarily responsible for the education of deaf children” (xv). But he does much more than that. The silence he breaks is that imposed on Deaf people in Ireland by oral schools dominated by well-meaning albeit ignorant and finally oppressive hearing professionals. The foreword, written by Kevin Stanley and John Bosco Conama, Chairperson and Hon. Secretary of the Irish Deaf Society respectively, make it plain that *Breaking the Silence* “is a brave and much awaited venture recording the general perspective Deaf community on the Irish provision of education for the benefit of the Deaf community,” and Crean “regularly submitted proofcopies [sic] to us for approval to ensure he was expressing what he felt was in the hearts and minds of the Deaf” (xi).

The result is of necessity a small baggy monster, part potted history from Harlan Lane’s *When the Mind Hears* and Michael O’Dowd’s 1955 MA thesis “A History of Irish Catholic Schools of the Deaf, Cabra,” part review of some 25 years of reports, forums, and organizing, part analysis of oralism, and part compilation of documents, reports, presentations, and the

like. This is all to the good, because it makes *Breaking the Silence* an excellent resource for the Irish to use in reforming their system of educating Deaf children

The history is curious. Educating Deaf children has been controlled by the Church since 1846 (Crean has little to say about a non-denominational school that existed from 1816 to 1871 and became oral in the 1880s) at two schools in Cabra, Dublin, one for girls and one for boys. Both were sign language schools on the French model and both remained so, isolated from the changes that swept Deaf education in the wake of the Milan Conference in the 1880s. The sign languages used, however, were “methodological” signs, evidently a sort of signed English, developed by hearing teachers for classroom use, not Irish Sign Language (ISL); moreover, a different language was used in each school, so that boys and girls used different languages. Add the fact that Protestants and Catholics spoke different ISLs, and there existed what Crean calls a “Bable of ‘Sign Languages’ in Ireland” (37).

After WWII, the two Cabra schools became oral schools. Crean thinks the primary motive for change was to keep in Catholic Ireland children being sent to oral English schools by hearing parents who wanted oral education. Presentations by Sister Nicholas Griffey, Ireland’s leading oralist, suggest that integrating Deaf people into the hearing world was more important. In any event, the change came about even though Griffey and the rest knew that it would be resisted by their pupils and lower Deaf pupils’ educational attainments. A bit later the Ministry of Education began to support these schools and expanded their services, so that in 1972 the report of the Committee on the Education of Children who are Hearing-Impaired “became in effect the official Government endorsement of the policy of oralism” (69). Deaf people, of course, had no say in any of this, and according to Crean have been continually ignored since.

The analysis of oralism, entitled “A Philosophical Approach to the Education of the Deaf,” is an attempt “to see the education services for the deaf through eyes of the deaf community” (94). In it, Crean demonstrates the futility of lip

reading, protests that oralism makes Deaf people dependent and saps their self-esteem, argues that the curriculum at Cabra is deficient, points out that the Deaf have a right to determine their own destiny by controlling their own education, and attacks mainstreaming. The book ends with fifteen appendixes, including five presentations by Sister Nicholas Griffey, exchanges between the hearing-dominated National Association for the Deaf and its critics, survey data on Irish Deaf people, and even an exchange between President Jordan of Gallaudet University and a critic of Gallaudet’s language policy.

Crean wisely avoids making any elaborate proposals for reforming the education of Deaf children. He instead plumbs for bilingual education on the Scandinavian and Gallaudet models, hiring Deaf teachers, and rooting the education of Deaf children in the aspirations and needs of the Deaf community. He does not seem to be optimistic that anything will change soon, and in that he is doubtlessly correct. As some of the documents he publishes make clear, Irish oralists are more than a bit defensive, and we may imagine that the Ministry of Education is unwilling to risk any expensive, radical change. But change is in the air. There are now Irish Deaf studies, even the NAD is pushing its version of sign language, and bilingual programs in Scandinavia and the United States offer alternatives undreamed of in the early 1990s, when the Ministry of Education blew off a proposal from the Irish Deaf Society.

The stakes are high. In Crean’s own words: “The deaf, too, will be numbered among the ‘also-rans’ unless they are allowed to work out their destiny. The Cabra establishment have made mighty efforts for the education of the deaf since the 1940s, but as we have no before and after reading assessment tests to compare the pre-oral past-pupils with the oral ones, we cannot make an indisputable evaluation of their work. Certainly the recent reading tests show appalling results. In my opinion, the record of oralism with control of the Cabra establishment or non-deaf people or Department of Education officials provides little hope for the future of deaf people in Ireland” (76–77).

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