Outgoing PRESIDENT’S FAREWELL Message

Outgoing President
Odd-Inge Schröder (Norway)
with wife, Bogumila,
at the
2006 DHI Conference in Berlin, Germany

For six years (2000–2006), I have been President of DHI and enjoyed attending the DHI conferences held in Washington, Paris and Berlin. These six years have given me a deeper insight and inspiration for my historical studies of the deaf population in Norway during the 1870–1900 era.

The history of the deaf people is very complex. The first step is to limit the field by asking a question: Who is deaf?

Is it a person who is born deaf, early deafened, profoundly deaf, severely deaf, or hard of hearing, hearing impaired, signing deaf, orally deaf or culturally Deaf? It is my opinion that all these different groups should be researched and studied. The study is marked by different aspects on deaf people from scientific fields such pathology, audiology, medicine, education, linguistics, sociology and comparative religions. Because of all these different perspectives, there are political and technical consequences: opinions about various communication methods such as writing, hand–alphabet or cued speech, and different philosophies such as oralism, manualism, total communication or bilingualism. Whether deaf pupils are “segregated” (placed in a deaf-only classes) or mainstreamed in a “normal” society (with or without interpreters), the consequences affect the deaf pupils the rest of their lives – for good or for bad. Deaf people as a minority have always lived in a majority of hearing people. It seems the majority has always had the power to define what the minority is.

The next step is to ask another question: who are the non–deaf individuals we should include in our history? The history of deaf people is intertwined with the history of hearing people. There are hearing persons involved with the deaf who have the power to define how the deaf should be educated, how they should behave and how they should live for the rest of their lives. Noted members of this select group are Thomas Gallaudet and Alexander G. Bell — both of which had deaf mothers.

There are also numerous other deaf individuals who, in reality, were not Deaf. These include people such as Thomas A. Edison and Helen Keller. They did not identify themselves with the common deaf man and woman. Still they are part of deaf history.

Yes, the history of deaf people is more complex and comprehensive than I ever imagined.

My previous goals for DHI were many. Not all could be realized because DHI is still a small organization and funds are not available to fulfill the dreams. One of our ideas was to publish a quarterly magazine. This would be possible only if there are at least 1000 subscribers. It is also no easy task to manage an organization with members around the world only through the internet with delays and reminders. It would be much better to communicate with each other face to face.

Let me here send my heartiest thanks to Secretary / Treasurer Breda Carty (Australia), Ulf Hedberg (USA), Elena Silianova (Russia), John A. Hay (United Kingdom), Yukata Osugi (Japan), Victor Palenny (Russia) for their cooperation during the years. The other members–at– large from my presidency such as Vice-President Jochen Muhs (Germany) and Abbas Ali Behmanesh (Canada) are now serving for a new term together with the new President Douglas Bahl (USA) and with other members such as Annemieke Van Kampen (Netherlands), Gordon Hay (United Kingdom) and Helmut Vogel (Germany). Lois Bragg (USA), our former editor of The DHI Newsletter, is now Secretary / Treasurer of DHI.

Good luck to the new Bureau. And thanks to all I have met during my six DHI years.
Notes from the Editor

Please extend a warm welcome to our new Bureau members, elected at the recent DHI Conference in Berlin, Germany. I look forward to working closely with them in the coming months. I was both pleased and delighted to learn that Canada won its bid to host the 2012 DHI Conference in the city of Toronto, Ontario.

Special thanks to Lois Bragg for a well-written article with some photographs about the Berlin Conference for this newsletter. I personally was unable to travel abroad due to prior commitments. However, I hope to attend the next DHI Conference in Stockholm, Sweden, in 2009.

Announcements, stories, articles, book reviews, news, photographs, and the like are urgently needed for future issues of The DHI Newsletter. Every reader is encouraged to submit something of special interest.

For several decades now, people have seriously been collecting Deaf-related paraphernalia. Such items include old photographs and postcards of Deaf schools, Deaf club and school publications, older model TTYs, mementos, newspaper clippings, engravings, artifacts, postage stamps, and so on. They may be worth saving because of their historic and/or reference value to future members of the Deaf Community. You will find that many of these items are being bought, sold, and traded daily on internet-auctioned sites such as eBay.

Every morning or evening, I surf the internet in search for Deaf-related postcards (worldwide). I now have about 350 postcards in my possession. One of them is a 1902 postcard scanned and printed on the first page of this newsletter. I also look for any unusual 19th / 20th Century items related to a Canadian residential school for Deaf children in Belleville, Ontario, which I attended in the 1950s and 1960s. A few months ago, I bid and won a late 19th Century gold-plated souvenir cup, containing the words “Ontario Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb” printed below the colourful painting of the campus buildings.

If you have a collection of Deaf-related items in your possession, please do not hesitate to let me know so they can be shared with our newsletter readers. All submitters will be properly credited.
First of all, I want to express my deepest gratitude to you for your vote of confidence in me as your Deaf History International president for the 2006-2012 term. We have several new folks on the DHI Bureau: Lois Bragg (USA), Annemiek Van Kampen (Netherlands), Gordon Hay (United Kingdom), and Helmut Vogel (Germany). The remaining familiar faces on this Bureau are Jochen Muhs (Germany) and Abbas Ali Behmanesh (Canada). The incredible expertise, knowledge and support of the new DHI Bureau have been absolutely priceless to me during the smooth transition. I would like to thank Odd-Inge Schröder, (Norway), Ulf Hedberg (USA) and Breda McCarty (Australia) for their commitment to DHI as officers over the last six years and their passion for DHI is contagious.

A big thank you goes to Conference Coordinator Mark Zaurov (Germany) and the entire Conference Planning Committee including the outgoing DHI Bureau members and to you, the participants. This year’s DHI Conference was fabulous with inspirational presenters and panelists. Participants were also touched by the experiences of those deaf individuals who left Nazi Germany with their families before the sterilization and killing began or who were sent away while their families remained; those who experienced these years as members of the German deaf community or who survived the concentration camps.

As for many of the participants staying at the Radisson SAS Hotel, we enjoyed viewing approximately 2,500 fish in the huge cylindrical aquarium in the center of the lobby. Fish seem well cared for as we saw scuba divers feeding and cleaning up inside the tank every morning throughout the DHI Conference.

Berlin is a beautiful city with its rich history. I am sure the DHI attendees had great time viewing the different architectural styles in different portions of the city which has had quite a lot of rebuilding done in recent years.

As I write my first DHI Newsletter column, the thought comes to mind, similar to all other organizations, is that there is always room for improvement. So, I am asking myself these questions: Will DHI continue to grow? Will we see a more active DHI Bureau? Will we bring more diversity in terms of presenters and Bureau members at the future DHI conferences? That means your involvement in making good things happen to our DHI is more important now than before. My presidency depends on you in order to make DHI prosperous. I am looking forward to our new term with great enthusiasm.

I would like to outline the three goals that we would like to accomplish this coming year.

1 — PEOPLE: First, our DHI is people. I want to see more people get and stay involved and connected to the DHI. At the Berlin conference, the audience looked to me to be almost 90% white so it seemed to be very few Asians or Africans. Diversity is valuable so the DHI Bureau needs to review and achieve improved diversity at the future conferences as well as representation of women, Asians, Africans and others on the DHI Bureau. We want to launch an effort to keep in better touch with our membership in different countries all over the world and to promote the DHI.

2 — PROCEEDINGS: Several DHI members raised the possibility of publishing the last three DHI proceedings from 1997 (Trondheim, Norway), 2000 (Washington, D.C. USA), and 2003 (Paris, France). These proceedings haven’t been published and are very long overdue! Our new DHI Bureau will pursue the matter with these DHI conference hosts and may consider options to publish these proceedings before the next 2009 DHI Conference in Stockholm, Sweden.

3 — DHI WEBSITE: As you know, our DHI website is currently outdated. I am pleased to say that Gordon Hay (United Kingdom) has accepted to be in charge of the DHI website and will be unveiling an updated website in the near future.

Again, thank you for allowing me to experience and develop better networking among the Deaf leadership of DHI at international level as well as national level, too. Please contact your DHI Bureau members or me with your ideas. Your input is valuable!
DHI members arriving in Berlin might have wondered if they came to the right place, as the logo of the IGJAD (Association of Deaf Jews in Germany) was more prominently placed on banners, book bags, and conference programs than was the logo of DHI. It was no surprise, then, that the conference program heavily favored the topic of Deaf Jews during the Nazi period.

That topic is, of course, crucial to Deaf history, but its outlines are very well known. Adult Deaf Germans who believed that their deafness was hereditary volunteered, or were persuaded, to accept surgical sterilization while Deaf children were simply marched into the operating room; German Jews who were Deaf were rounded up with their families and murdered because they were Jews.

Some questions that might occur to DHI members on this topic might include the following: What was the philosophy within various European Deaf communities about genetic deafness and members who came from Deaf families? What were the attitudes of German, Dutch, French, or Polish Jews toward Deaf members of their families? What role did schools for the deaf play in this horror? What sorts of people controlled local Deaf associations, which frequently cooperated with the Nazis? Unfortunately, these questions were not taken up. Instead, presentations concerning the fate of Deaf German Jews consisted primarily of anecdotes, as presenter after presenter described the grief of survivors.

One of the many such numbing presentations, however, was exceptionally successful in conveying well-known facts grounded in specific events, and this was the presentation by Jan Backer (Netherlands). Backer, who attended a school for the deaf in the Netherlands during the Nazi occupation, produced photos of deaf-school classes, which he had altered by marking, with a red X, Jewish children who would soon be murdered. Backer’s audience could see immediately the decimating impact on Deaf communities when so many deaf children disappeared with their families in the night.

Backer also had video clips of interviews with other former deaf-school students, and these were particularly chilling, although perhaps not for the reason Backer intended: witness after witness told essentially the same story. “I went to my friend’s house after school and the neighbors told me he was gone with all his family. No one knew where they went.”

There were several well-researched presentations. Ely Newby (USA) presented his research on deaf Japanese-Americans who were interred, with their families, in camps in the American west. Newby described how these children were pulled out of deaf residential schools, which stopped enrolling any deaf children of Japanese descent, and how, later, some of them went on to graduate from Gallaudet and lead ordinary lives. What was new in this presentation was the complicity of Deaf schools, particularly the California School for the Deaf in Berkeley, in this horrific American violation of civil rights.

Douglas Bahl (USA) provided similar new information about the so-called Kindertransport, in which German Jewish families sent their children to England for safety during World War II. Bahl reported that out of ten thousand children, eleven were deaf. These children were cared for, but their teacher, Dr. Felix Reich, was imprisoned on suspicion of spying, and what happened after the war is a scandal: the British government actually deported some of the children back to Germany, while others were allowed to remain in England where they were unable to locate any surviving family members.

Teresa Blankmeyer Burke (USA) chose a difficult but thought-provoking topic: the use of genetic testing to intentionally conceive a deaf child. Burke usefully

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summarized the traditional arguments for preventing the birth of deaf children, such as the desirability of saving the public expense of deaf education, and then turned to the present argument made by eugenicists, that choosing to have a deaf child harms that child by restricting his/her future. Burke effectively demolished that argument by showing that choosing a deaf child is not choosing the deaf trait that would harm an existing child but rather choosing the whole child, who will be deaf but would not otherwise have existed. Burke also quarreled with the common argument that deaf children’s lives were restricted by pointing out that the restrictions on deaf children were more like giving them a menu with 8 choices instead of 10 and not at all like sending a vegetarian child into a steak house were every menu item was precluded! Burke’s thoughtful paper, by the way, stood in contrast to one of the keynote addresses that treated the same topic in a much more superficial manner.

Paddy Ladd (United Kingdom) presented the most theoretical paper of the conference. Taking as his topic the future of Deaf history, Ladd referred to the past 25 years as the “first wave,” during which histories of people, institutions, and specific events were compiled. [This first wave, in my opinion, was well represented by this very conference.] Ladd argued that it is now time for the “second wave,” during which we must address the cultures of deaf groups and what he called “the colonization of the mind,” that is, the effects on the Deaf psyche of living in “internal colonies” of second-class citizens. The only work that has been done along these lines so far has been concerned with France from 1779 to the 1840s, a period about which relatively much is known of the deaf mind. Ladd found it interesting that Deaf French at that time were eager to class themselves with “savages” (First Nation Peoples) in their closeness to the natural world. I found it interesting to wonder about the effects of colonization: without colonization, deaf schools would never have existed and the deaf population would still be dispersed and without a culture. Ladd has recently had a book published that might give us some further answers.

While this report focuses on the successful presentations, it must be stated that the keynote addresses, those whose speakers were invited guests with 60 minutes rather than 30, to present, were among the weakest of the conference. Two of the three keynote speakers, in fact, did little more than talk about themselves and their families, topics that were not of great interest to the audience. Keynote addresses should serve as the touchstones of the conference: they should present the most up-to-date research available on a topic of general interest and, ideally, should look to the future of the discipline while instilling fresh enthusiasm among conference for further research. The Stockholm organizers for the 2009 DHI Conference should think very carefully about whom they will invite for keynote addresses.

The Berlin Conference was the first DHI conference not to have American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters on hand, and the American participants would have suffered greatly if not for a most generous volunteer, David Bar-Tzur (USA). He is a professional interpreter who attended the conference hoping to learn more about Deaf Jews and to improve his spoken German, but he gave up his time to interpret the proceedings into ASL.

The ASL interpreting situation at DHI conferences was explained in an article by Brian Greenwald (USA) published in this newsletter after the 2003 Conference [see “On Providing National Sign Language Interpreters,” DHI Newsletter, No. 17 (Winter 2003)]. As Greenwald explained, DHI by-laws specify only International Sign Language (ISL) and the sign language of the host country. Americans must bring their own interpreters, but America, unlike other developed countries, does not provide monetary support. In the past, Gallaudet University has provided highly qualified ASL interpreters, but that did not happen this year. Because Americans are the largest single national bloc in DHI (more than 50%), because many Deaf people from other countries learned ASL while attending Gallaudet, and became Americans, living in such a large country, have almost no opportunity to practice ISL, we must come up with a way to provide quality ASL interpreting at future conferences. ASL also is the largest vocabulary of any national sign language and is most suited to academic conferences.

Presenters who used International Sign Language (ISL) did so with uneven abilities. The Americans

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purportedly using ISL relied heavily on ASL signs and I would guess that the same was true of ISL signers from other countries incorporating their own national signs.

The International Sign Language (ISL) interpreters worked diligently, but had to read signs from a screen at their feet, which kept them from making eye contact or any reasonable facial grammar. The result was very difficult to comprehend, even for those whose ISL is fairly good. More serious harmful was that they appeared to miss about 50% of what was presented.

A group of hearing Finns told me that the spoken English interpreting was excellent. They wondered, however, as did many other participants, why a 130 Euro deposit should be required for the use of headphones! Headphones cannot possibly cost that much to replace if lost or broken, and the high cost was seen as intentionally prohibitive or punitive to the hearing.

To sum up the interpreting situation, it was simply not adequate and certainly not conducive to scholarly discourse. Many speakers were quite clearly simplifying complex material so that ISL could handle the basics of their research, leaving the audience with very little meat. My research partner, Diane Gates (USA), and I scrambled to simplify and cut details at the last minute when we saw what was happening to other papers. Perhaps the worse case of this was an intriguing paper by Rabbi Douglas Goldhamer (USA) and Ellen Roth (USA), in which Goldhamer struggled with little success to explain the views of an 11th Century Arab philosopher in terms simple enough for ISL to handle.

The Stockholm conference organizers need to address this problem by encouraging people to sign or speak in their home language and leave the interpreting to the professionals. ISL must increase Deaf historians, for whom it is a third or fourth language, attempt to use it to convey their research and theories.

Personal Opinion Disclaimer: The comments in this article are the opinions of the author, and do not necessarily represent the views of other conference participants or of the DHI Newsletter.
The 2006 Deaf History International meeting of the General Assembly was held at Humboldt University on 3 August at 5:30 p.m. during its 6th DHI Conference in Berlin, Germany. It was chaired by outgoing President Odd-Inge Schröder (Norway).

Membership stands at 103 individual members and 14 institutional members. The treasury stands at $13,966.22/USD.

Clifton F. Carbin (Canada) was thanked for taking over the editorship of The DHI Newsletter in late 2005, and Gordon Hay (United Kingdom) for recently taking over the DHI website.

Members had a lengthy discussion about the publication of conference proceedings, and what might be done to publish the proceedings from 1997 (Trondheim, Norway), 2000 (Washington, D.C. USA), and 2003 (Paris, France). Mark Zaurov (Germany) announced his intention to publish the 2006 proceedings in January 2007 and offer them for sale.

DHI is in need of a revision of its bylaws. The outgoing Bureau was not able to effect a revision, so this becomes the responsibility of the new Bureau. A proposed bylaws change was therefore referred to the incoming Bureau.

The following offices were open for election: President (6-year term), Secretary / Treasurer (6-year term), and four positions on the Bureau (3-year terms). [Note: The vice-president’s 6-year term, currently held by Jochen Muhs (Germany) continues until 2009.]

President Schröder (Norway) and Secretary / Treasurer Breda Carty (Australia) had decided to step down.

Three candidates stood for the position of President, which was won by Douglas Bahl (USA). There was only one candidate for Secretary/Treasurer, Lois Bragg (USA), who was elected by acclamation.

Eleven members competed for the four seats on the Bureau, but the two Americans were excluded because of the DHI rule limiting service on the Bureau to no more than two people from the same country. Winners of the four seats were Helmut Vogel (Germany), Gordon Hay (United Kingdom) Annemieke Van Kampen (Netherlands), and Abbas Ali Behmanesh (Canada), who was elected to his second term.

Many members informally expressed concerns about the small number of women who are willing to stand for election for positions other than Secretary / Treasurer. All of the candidates for President were men, as were nine of the eleven candidates for Bureau seats. It is generally agreed that DHI needs to do more to encourage women members to serve. It is also a concern that DHI continues to have very low membership from developing countries.

The next DHI Conference is set for Stockholm, Sweden in 2009. President Schröder announced that the bid for the 2012 Conference was won by Toronto, Canada.
DHI CONFERENCES: Past and Future

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

Sixth DHI Conference
Berlin, Germany / July 31–August 5, 2006

Seventh DHI Conference
Stockholm, Sweden / Summer 2009

Eighth DHI Conference
Toronto, Canada / TBA 2012

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!!
Deaf People and World War II
By Patricia Durr, Associate Professor, Department of Culture and Creative Studies, NTID at RIT (USA)

For the past four years, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology has been amassing materials on Deaf People during World War II. We have created a prototype/draft website, which will be modified and enhanced in the coming months before it is made public. Using a high speed Internet connection, you can accessed it at http://idea3.rit.edu/paddhd/publicww2

Interactive slideshows and video components will be added. Furthermore, newly found or created information will be installed as well.

The site is broken down into three main spheres - Deaf Americans, Deaf Europeans, and Deaf Asians. The site currently features streaming videotaped testimonies of Deaf survivors of the Holocaust, which have been captioned by NTID. The Shoah Foundation has allowed us to post in their entirety 5 Deaf related testimonies as streaming media. These testimonies are invaluable to researchers to gain a more complete and thorough understanding of the Shoah. Several other important video clips are housed in the site as well and many more will be added.

NTID is in the process of translating several other testimonies and videotapes (Israeli, Japanese, French, etc) to be able to caption these works into English as well for viewers who do not know the sign and printed languages used in the programs.

The site has bibliography listings for books, articles, scripts, and videotapes. The Links section has imbedded links to other important websites on the subject as well as a works cited listing with links to all the materials within the site.

Joan Naturale of the RIT Wallace Memorial Library has secured copyright permission for original works, articles, and primary documents to be reproduced within this site. Simon Ting and Cathy Clarke have been instrumental in the development of this prototype website. Patti Durr has served as the content expert in seeking out the various materials and determining how the content would be organized.

We are indebted to all of the authors, copyright holders, publishers, filmmakers, etc who have allowed us to share their work. It is our great hope that by gathering this material together under one site, future researchers will be able to access them and undertake further scholarship in this area in order to advance our understanding of the Deaf experience during World War II.

The site will continue to be added to and redesigned as more permission and materials come in so please bookmark the site. When the site is open to the public a new address will be given and an announcement will follow.

Please contact us at PADDHD@RIT.EDU if you know of additional work that could be added to this site or if you wish to offer any input on its design, layout, content, etc.
**JOIN DHI TODAY!**

Membership in the Deaf History International (DHI) is open to anyone interested in the study, preservation and dissemination of Deaf people's history.

Membership includes subscription to The DHI Newsletter.

--- Membership Form---

Dues for DHI membership through 31 October 2007 are payable in US funds only.

- [ ] Individual – US $20.00
- [ ] Institution / Organization – US $50.00

- [ ] To Join / New Member
  
  *For those who have never been a member before.*

- [ ] To Renew
  
  *For those who either wish to renew their current membership or whose membership expired less than 12 months ago.*

- [ ] To Rejoin
  
  *For those whose membership expired more than a year ago.*

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