



# DEAF HISTORY INTERNATIONAL

An Association for all interested in the study, preservation, and dissemination of Deaf people's history

No 57

The DHI Newsletter

September 2016

## From the Editor

Welcome to the latest issue of *The DHI Newsletter* - the first one we are sending out in our new email format. We hope this new format will make the newsletter accessible to a wider range of people and easier to send out regularly. We'd love your feedback on this change to our newsletter format.

Many of us were saddened by the passing of Dr Mary Malzkuhn (USA) on April 23rd this year. Dr Malzkuhn was one of the founding members of Deaf History International, and an early newsletter editor. She began her studies as a mature-age student after she had raised her family, and went on to become a professor in Gallaudet University's Department of Government. She was a well-known and much-loved teacher and advocate for human rights, who inspired many of her students to engage with real world political issues and become advocates for Deaf people's rights. For example, the four student leaders of Gallaudet's Deaf President Now movement in 1988 had all been taught by Dr Malzkuhn and credited her with inspiring and encouraging much of their subsequent leadership and advocacy work.

(Thanks to DHI Bureau member Brian Greenwald for providing some of the background information on Dr Malzkuhn's career.

Photo: Gallaudet University Archives.)

Deaf History really began to emerge as an area of study during the 1980s, and the Deaf Way Conference in 1989 was one of the first to have a History strand. Dr Malzkuhn was Program Chair of the History strand - and it was at the Deaf Way that the first informal meetings were held to discuss the formation of what would later become Deaf History International. Dr Mary Malzkuhn was truly one of our founding mothers, and we honor her contributions.



In other news, our Secretary/Treasurer Joan Naturale has now organized 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status for DHI in the USA. This has a number of benefits for DHI - for example, all donations will now be tax-deductible, DHI will be able to apply for some government and private grants in the US which are only available to tax-exempt organisations, and DHI's existence has more ongoing stability. Thanks Joan!

Happy reading,

Breda Carty  
*DHI Newsletter Editor*



## President's Column

Peter W. Jackson  
United Kingdom

It is true to say that history is a day-to-day creative process and that what anyone does this minute is history tomorrow. Sometimes these moments of history are positive, at other times these moments are sad. This is also true for Deaf people and the world's deaf communities. Many people (Deaf or not) throughout the world have been following with deep fascination the exploits of the US dancer Nyle DiMarco who has become an international star, icon and role model to a whole generation of Deaf people by winning not one but two top-rated US shows *America's Next Model* and the ABC television dance competition *Dancing with the Stars*. In a different way, the new Smirnoff vodka advertising promotion also breaks new ground by featuring the new British Deaf dance sensation Chris Fonseca. Both men have been inspirational and give weight to the saying *Deaf Can!*



Nyle DiMarco with his professional dance partner Peta Murgatroyd winning *Dancing with the Stars*.



Chris Fonseca

One of the saddest historical moments recently was the sudden closure of the world's

second oldest deaf school after France's *Institution Nationale des Sourds-Muets à Paris*. The Royal School for Deaf Children in Margate was founded in 1792 as the London Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb Poor and has had an illustrious and distinguished history until its sudden closure in December 2015. The shock and dismay felt by the British Deaf Community of the closure was quite considerable and was not helped by the knowledge that the closure was forced by the British government's Care Quality Commission which

revealed students received instances of institutionalised failings and abuse. It was a sad end to a school well-loved in the British Deaf Community. Many of the school's treasures were rescued by the British Deaf History Society's Deaf Museum & Archive.



While on the subject of the Deaf Museum & Archive, the first part of 2016 has been kind to the volunteer team that manages the museum. In February, the team won a prestigious award for the Best Preservation of Deaf History, and a separate award was won by the parent organisation, the British Deaf History Society, in recognition for its work in preserving and promoting Deaf history.

Maureen Jackson and Janet Huntington showing their delight at the award.

Finally, the British Deaf Association recently celebrated its 125<sup>th</sup> birthday with a Congress at Torquay where I was honoured with a surprise award at the Banquet for my work developing sign language qualifications.

The clock is now counting down towards the next DHI Conference to be held in Sydney, Australia in July 2018. Please keep an eye on the DHI website and this newsletter for registration and programme details.

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## Member Profile

### DHI Bureau - Member at Large

Brian H. Greenwald, PhD.  
United States

Professor of History and  
Director of the Center for Deaf  
Documentary Studies at  
Gallaudet University



#### ***What sparked your interest in Deaf history?***

It started when I was looking to register for history classes in my junior year in college. A course called “History of the American Deaf Community” was listed as one of the classes offered. I was shocked – It had never occurred to me that deaf people had a history. It was such a good class that I started reading everything I could find in Deaf history. I’ve worked in this area since then.

#### ***What Deaf History projects are you working on?***

I recently coedited a book *In Our Own Hands: Essays in Deaf History, 1780-1970* with my colleague, Dr. Joseph J. Murray. Right now, I am working on a book about Alexander Graham Bell’s role in the American eugenics movement, and also researching sterilization efforts on Deaf people in this country. We also have a number of other projects in the pipeline at the Center for Deaf Documentary Studies which I direct. The staff and students there are truly amazing. A student is developing an exhibit about the “Gallaudet 11” who worked with the US Navy and NASA before the first man went into space. There is a team working on a documentary about Deaf people in urban settings – in this case, Deaf people from New York City from the 1930s to 1970s. The team hosted a panel at City Lore in New York City in March and had a terrific turnout. We are collecting stories and information about Deaf people in New York City in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### ***Why are you a member of DHI?***

I enjoy the camaraderie, and I’ve found that DHI conference organizers and hosts try very hard to assemble interesting conferences. Typically there are side excursions to sites and venues important to the deaf community that are fascinating. Its also a great opportunity for me to meet with a wide range of people from different countries interested in deaf history, and I’ve been able to exchange a lot of information over the years.

#### ***Do you have any advice for other Deaf history researchers?***

Meet with others. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Join DHI and other local history organizations.

**Contact Brian at:** [brian.greenwald@gallaudet.edu](mailto:brian.greenwald@gallaudet.edu)

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## Member Profile

### DHI Member

David Nathanson  
United States

ASL teacher, White Bear Lake  
High School, Minnesota

#### ***What sparked your interest in Deaf history?***

I grew up going to the Deaf Clubhouse. I listened to the stories told by the elders at the clubhouse and loved them. Our clubhouse is one of the oldest Deaf Clubhouse in USA that was built of, by, and for Deaf people and things like that makes me take pride in our history.

#### ***What Deaf History projects are you working on?***

The current project is hosting the 2016 US Deaf History Conference in Minnesota. Then will work on 2021 Deaf History International conference.

#### ***Why are you a member of DHI?***

My major was Deaf Studies from Gallaudet University and that is how I learned about Deaf History International. I attended the first one in Sweden and was immediately hooked. I enjoyed the collaborative efforts and new stories shared from across the globe. I grew to appreciate the interconnectedness of us all. Also, I studied Linguistics and Anthropology so it was a wonderful way to see how language has evolved over time and is shared. Anthropology involves looking at social make-up of groups and this conference really allows us to paint a bigger picture of the relationship of them together.

#### ***Do you have any advice for other Deaf history researchers?***

I advise history researchers to teach/mentor others how to research, preserve artifacts, and how to make them more readily accessible to the public, especially for the younger generation. I believe that history is what keeps our future grounded so this knowledge and skills need to be generously shared with as many people as possible.

**Contact David at:** [davidenathanson@gmail.com](mailto:davidenathanson@gmail.com)

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Member profiles are a regular feature of the DHI Newsletter. In each issue, we include profiles of a DHI Bureau member and an ordinary member. If you would like to share your background and your research interests in a newsletter profile, please contact the editor.

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## Vale Dr Yerker Andersson

DHI acknowledges the passing of Dr Yerker Andersson, who served as President of the World Federation of the Deaf from 1983 to 1995. He made history for the international Deaf community in many ways - for example, he was the first deaf person to address the United Nations General Assembly, in 1992. A tribute to Dr Andersson in International Sign can be seen on the [WFD website](#).

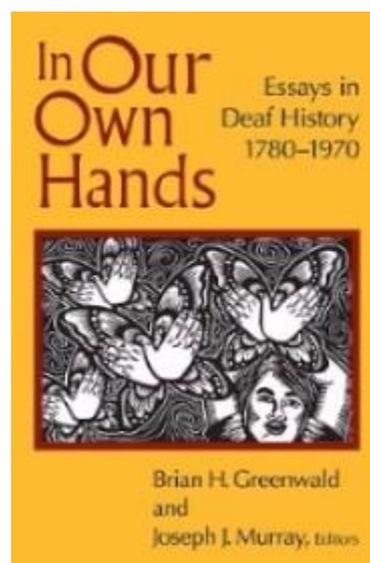


## Book Review

*In Our Own Hands: Essays in Deaf History, 1780-1970*

Brian H. Greenwald and  
Joseph J. Murray, Eds.  
Gallaudet University Press.

Reviewed by:  
Harry G. Lang, Ed.D.  
Professor Emeritus  
National Technical Institute for  
the Deaf



Feminist theorists have defined the constructs of “autonomy” as both a characteristic of human subjectivity and a quality that emerges in actions and decisions; where “agency” involves both collective action and individual self-reflection often directed toward culture and politics (Kathryn Abrams, 1999). In examining these notions in Deaf history, Brian H. Greenwald and Joseph J. Murray have compiled an excellent resource that provides numerous examples illustrating how deaf people have attempted to maintain self-direction in a world entangled by diverse commitments and influenced by social norms and multiple overpowering factors.

*In Our Own Hands: Essays in Deaf History, 1780-1970* includes twelve meticulously-researched essays on such topics as public perspectives about deafness that have changed (or not) over time, the struggles of Black Deaf Americans for citizenship and quality education, conflicting views on appropriate schooling and religious services, and barriers to self-direction emerging as part of a larger system of social and political

inequality. Several authors deal with the formidable challenges presented by the American eugenics movement, the development of autonomy and agency while confronted by the influence of Alexander Graham Bell, and the medicalization of deafness, in particular through research on hereditary deafness. One chapter delves into how the authoritarian control of hearing people in New South Wales and Queensland in Australia deflated efforts of deaf people to attain equality through breakaway social organizations; and several essays focus on individual advocates for Deaf citizenship such as Alice Taylor Terry in California and Rev. Robert Capers Fletcher in the Southern Deaf community.

These writings on autonomy and agency are rich in detail and provide new information not found in previously published resources, and, as a collection, they present a solid foundation on which scholars and advocates can build to further our understanding of such issues as authorization and constraint and how we are socially embedded in a process of transformation.

Due to the heterogeneity within the Deaf community, defining the “self” in Deaf history is a complicated challenge. This we see, for example, in the discussions of perceptions held about deaf people shared by speakers at Presentation Day at Gallaudet College (now Gallaudet University) and the impact of Darwinist thought, anti-immigrant movements, and oralism. There was political strife in Chicago during the educational reforms that were attempted in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as conflicts arose about the establishment of day schools. In New York City, deaf members of St. Ann’s church struggled against the reorganization imposed on them by those with paternalistic attitudes. Both the National Association of the Deaf and the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf led the campaign against peddling. These are just a few of the many episodes described in this volume.

Recognizing and reflecting on the internal and external influences on the development of autonomy and agency are critical to effecting positive change. The authors’ local and regional accounts clearly demonstrate how the Deaf community has struggled to conceive its goals and values, and distinguishing them from those that were externally imposed. *In Our Own Hands* may help lead to steps that will embrace engagements with others and further reflect on the notions of agency.



## 10th DHI Conference: Sydney, Australia, 17-21 July 2018

The next DHI Conference will be held in the southern hemisphere for the first time - and in keeping with the location, the theme of the conference will be "Colonialism in Deaf History".

The Organising Committee is busy finalising the venue and preparing a stimulating program. The conference website is up and running, and will be adding information and video clips about the program, keynote presenters, call for papers, registration, and suggestions for making the most of your trip to Sydney and the rest of Australia in 2018. Check it out at [www.dhi2018.com](http://www.dhi2018.com)

See you all in Sydney in 2018!

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You can now join DHI online and pay via Paypal. Go to:

<http://www.deafhistoryinternational.com/membership/>

**Individual members: US\$20 a year      Organization members: US\$50 a year**

You can receive a discount by paying for two or three years' membership at once. Your membership begins the day you join, and you'll receive an automatic reminder when it's time to renew. As part of your membership, you will receive:

- Three DHI Newsletters a year
- Discounts to DHI conferences and other events
- Access to the Members' Area of the website, where you can download previous issues of

- the newsletter and participate in forums
- AND you support the only international organization focusing on Deaf History.

Questions? Contact the DHI Secretary/Treasurer on [jxnwml@rit.edu](mailto:jxnwml@rit.edu)

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*The Deaf History International Newsletter* welcomes Deaf history-related submissions of news, articles, book and film reviews, visual material, conference and workshop announcements, and other items of interest. Submissions should be emailed to the editor. The deadline for the next newsletter is **30 November 2016**.

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