

Manual Communication Skills I  
360-541 Section 001  
Interview

by

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The purpose of this interview was for me to reach out and associate with a person who is deaf. I did not have to reach too far. I think the point of an interview is to get to know someone. I have known Helen Dalton for two years, however my interview enabled me to get to know her better. In interviewing Helen many of my previous thoughts and impressions were confirmed. I also chose to interview Helen because there are many things I have wondered about concerning her, her family, and what it was like for her growing up. It was nice to learn this information. I find that by learning about the people with whom you associate communication is a lot easier and more comfortable. *good attitude*

When someone is informed that a person is deaf a common response seems to be "He/She cannot hear." and "My message will not be understood." Another response is the sender tries talking louder. These are only two examples of what some people who are deaf face when meeting people who are unfamiliar with deafness. It should be noted that these responses may apply to some people who are deaf and not to others. For Helen, talking louder is not worthwhile because as her mother says, "She cannot hear.", but she reads lips very well. Chances are that the message will be understood. Helen also speaks very well, therefore if a message is unclear she could ask for clarification.

Helen is the youngest of five children. She is the only deaf family member. Therefore, being the baby of the group, her parents had four other models to compare Helen's behavior to. She was a quiet baby, and her parents knew that usually babies were not as quiet as she was. As a result, she was diagnosed to be profoundly deaf at the age of three months. - *wow - that's really early!*



The issue of deafness as a handicap was seen as anything but that in the Dalton family. The family accepted Helen, and communication was regular. In fact, Helen did not realize that she was different than everyone else in her family until the age of nine. <sup>wow!</sup> She recalls being with her family one day and out of the blue she realized that she could not hear. This upset Helen; she felt as though God did not love her. Through the loving words of her mother, stressing her wonderful features in comparison to her brothers and sisters, she realized that God had given her a different gift. Helen recalls that day as the day she accepted her deafness. Helen spoke highly about her family. She says that she was kept abreast on information while she was growing up and not abandoned because she was deaf.

Helen was diagnosed as being deaf very early in life. As a result, she began school at the age of three. She attended a private school in Minnesota while leaving her family in Milwaukee. <sup>wow -  
good for mom  
explaining it  
in that way</sup> Her parents enrolled her in the school because they felt it would provide the best education for her. The school was based on oral instruction. Helen feels it is possible she was sent to an oral school to avoid the use of sign language. That was a common attitude years ago. It should be noted though that the use of sign language based instruction did not come into effect until later and oral was the primary mode used to teach deaf children. <sup>wow -  
right!</sup>

Attending the oral school allowed Helen to communicate with her family without the use of sign. It also prepared her to be mainstreamed in high school and attend a four year college without an interpreter. What an accomplishment for a person with a profound hearing loss. *you said it! It is hard to imagine.*

Friendships are things Helen had little problem gaining. She was mainstreamed and the only deaf person in her high school.

This did not stop her from attending extracurricular activities with her friends. As a matter of fact, she may have been the only deaf person in the school but she was anything but unpopular; she was elected to be the Homecoming queen. This was one of her most honorable moments; along with being elected Treasurer of six local colleges during her last two years of college. Although Helen was deaf, her communication and ability to acquire friends was hardly lacking. Helen remembers that she was going to miss her friends made in high school and college when she graduated from Cardinal Stritch college and planned to move back to Milwaukee.

Upon graduation from college Helen took a job at Allis Chambers. She worked there for eight years and changed jobs to work for Milwaukee Public Schools so she could raise her son. She continues to work there today.

Helen was married to a man who was hard-of-hearing. Together they had a son, Gary. Gary is hearing; and Helen is thankful that he is hearing and she did not have to choose a mode of communication for him. When Helen was young, oralism seemed to be the predominant mode. Now, there are many choices.

Helen is a calm and patient person. <sup>yes!</sup> As a result, there were not any language barriers she could speak of between her and Gary. Very few signs were used at home, and if something needed to be repeated or said slower, it was. When it came time for school conferences or scheduling appointments or anything that required a parent or adult Helen did it. Being deaf did not stop Helen from involving herself, nor was it an excuse for Gary to do things for her. Independence is important to Helen. Through the aid of technology, she has achieved it on her own.

Technology such as caption television and the TTY telephone are two devices that are available to people who are deaf/hard-of-hearing. For Helen, they have allowed her to learn about the world

Interesting  
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and make contact with whomever she chooses. Choices are hers to make and she is not dependent upon anyone else.

Helen was very patient and willing to divulge information during the interview. As a result, I was able to learn more about her and what has helped her become the person she is today. I acquired a lot of information that I have not written about; to learn about it you will have to talk with Helen. I encourage it, however I must add that although American Sign Language is the preferred language of the deaf culture, Helen does not prefer to use it. Remember she is very oral, and very willing to communicate.

If there is one thing I have learned from Helen it is this, every person is different and a product of their surroundings. To understand maybe you need to meet Helen.

*valuable  
perspective  
to have.*

*I enjoyed reading your interview very much. I know Helen too - so it was interesting to learn more things about her background.*

*Good work!*

*A*



9/25/94

I have spent many days helping in room 103 at Washington Irving. That school was originally my classroom observation site in exceptional education. I have found that in spending time with Debbie Polenska, the teacher, and the children, my goals of becoming a teacher for the deaf are more clear. I really enjoy the time I spend.

On September 25, 1994, I spent the day with the class. I have become comfortable in the room and with Debbie because of my previous time spent there. However, this was my first meeting with this group of children. I worked with four of the five children on spelling words and their meaning. I found this interesting because it made me remember some of the tasks needed when working with deaf children, especially when you are meeting for the first time, even several times thereafter. Eye contact was a tough task for some of the children. I feel it is important to establish eye contact when working with the children simply because it's necessary for communication.

I do a lot of one on one work when I am there. It seems to me to be catch-up work. I enjoy the time spent with the children because the experiences are real. I am seeing what it may be like for me as a teacher, and the children are not holding back. Children are honest people. I learn from them as they learn from me.

I have really enjoyed my experiences gained from Washington Irving. I like working with the children. They are a breath of fresh air for me whenever I feel as though I am drowning in school or just feeling down. My spirits are often raised when I leave the classroom.

*great - Any comments about your communication mode?  
Do you have any problems communicating with the kids.*

10/15/94

I was nervous about going to the event. Honestly, I do not believe my nerves were put to rest until I left. I also was afraid for a couple of reasons. One, I thought I looked like an amateur and people would know I was scared. Two, I was afraid that someone may talk to me and I would not understand. The pressure seems to be so great when you have little self-confidence. I must work on that if I want to better my skills and associate freely with people. *yes*

I think something that may be typical among people who are learning sign language is the thought of "using" the deaf community to better our skills. I am not sure how I feel about it. I know socialization is a necessity if I want to better myself but do I have to swallow my uncertainties and do it? *yes*

I was surprised by a couple of things I saw. I thought there would be many more people there. Maybe I was hoping I could just blend in with the crowd, but there was no crowd. I also was amazed by the speed of signing. WOW. That was very impressive. Other things I noticed were the lights to the music. In the bar, the lights were low and the music was loud. I was a bit confused because I would have thought the lighting should have been better. I do not know if I expected to see people dancing or not. Should I have? *Rarely - here.*

Generally, I am glad I went. I know I need to associate within the community more to satisfy my desire in learning the language to my fullest potential. I like signing, and I hope to allow myself to use my skills more. My confidence is increasing and more events are in the future.

*Be willing to jump in with both feet but also  
try to develop a thick skin!*

11/12/94

I was fairly disappointed from this experience because I was not able to work with any children. I did associate with the man who did the storytelling. He is deaf. None of the seven children present were deaf. Mostly I sat back and watched the activities. The parents worked with their children and I did not want to intrude. Maybe next time there will be more opportunities for association.

I did enjoy watching the stories because the storyteller was very gestured. That helped with comprehension for me. I felt I was able to understand almost all the book. - What a feat hey, a children's book. I think vocabulary was my problem. I'm not sure if I missed signs or what, but piecing it together was not too bad. I noticed that if you are involved, or concentrating, on the topic you have a better chance of understanding. Content, I suppose, is the key.

I learned two new games I could play with young deaf children. "Hot Potato" and "Follow the Leader" or "Copy Cat" was played. Minor revisions were made to substitute for music. Simply turning the lights on/off can allow deaf children to adapt to a game hearing children play. This would work for musical chairs too. Learn something new all the time.

*Good things to tuck in your memory for the future.*

I can see that this event would be fun for children and help them become more aware and comfortable around people using sign language. It is a good tool for parents, hearing or deaf, who wish to involve their hearing or deaf child with peers. I hope to go again and hopefully there will be more opportunities to socialize.

*I wish more hearing parents with deaf children would attend. People's lives are just too busy.*

*Keep pushing yourself to more adult deaf events.  
That's the place you develop the naturalness of the language.  
Deaf people are our best teachers.*

(A)

*we'll take  
what we  
can get ☺*

*Interpretation  
take advantage  
of this all the  
time.*

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Upon graduation from college Helen took a job at Allis Chambers. She worked there for eight years and changed jobs to work for Milwaukee Public Schools so she could raise her son. She continues to work there today.

*Interesting reaction. Most deaf would prefer sign language* { Helen was married to a man who was hard-of-hearing. Together they had a son, Gary. Gary is hearing; and Helen is thankful that he is hearing and she did not have to choose a mode of communication for him. When Helen was young, oralism seemed to be the predominant mode. Now, there are many choices.

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