



Adventist Deaf Ministries Report

Volume 10 Issue

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Booklet Makes Big Difference in the Life of Deaf Man

Mike B. hit the bottom. He had just divorced and his life hit an all-time low. Mike felt a desperate need for God in his life.

Mike was the only Deaf person at the church he attended. The church members never reached out to this man, who was screaming inside for help. Mike never felt more alone than when sitting in one of the pews of the church.

Finding another job, he ended up moving to another community in Washington state. An Adventist church was not too far away. Mike was at the end of his rope and frustrated with trying to find spiritual strength among hearing people.

He decided to give this church a chance. Only one last chance. Mike determined that he would go to this church to see what the people were like. If he was not truly welcomed, then he'd leave, never to come back. He would leave God and His church.

This decision brought grief to Mike. He knew the pattern of a hearing congregation. They might wave a hand to him, but they would let him alone to himself without extending a hand of true friendship, never treating him as a brother in the family of God.

That Sabbath he sat in the pew, grieving. He felt that this

would be the very last Sabbath he would spend with God. Mike's heart was breaking.

After church, he was invited to stay for fellowship meal. He sat down at a table with his plate of steamy food. Still feeling lonely as he picked up his fork, Mike began to eat what he thought would be his last fellowship meal.

Then, a child walked up, waved, and fingerspelled a few words. Mike thought, "Cute kid."

Then one by one, people came up to him. Each one tried to communicate the best that they could. They showed interest in this man's life and a gladness that he was there. Before long several people were sitting with Mike.

Mike was stunned at this unusual behavior. He thought he knew all about hearing churches and that they showed little or no interest in Deaf people. He wondered if maybe he was just a novelty. So, he decided to test them one more Sabbath.

The next Sabbath, the people were even more friendly to Mike. He was amazed and asked one individual what made them so friendly. They showed him a copy of "Can You Hear Us?", a booklet explaining how individuals and churches can be-



come Deaf-friendly. The church had one copy and church members had passed it around to read.

To this day, the church has truly made Mike a part of the church family. Mike's brother and sister-in-law have visited this church a number of times. They too are Deaf and they have enjoyed the warmth and open arms of this church. They have felt at home during church social activities.

Mike gives praise to God. He is now a strong Christian with a strong relationship with God. Tears came to his eyes when recalling how close he had come to throwing away His relationship with God. He is grateful for the simple booklet that may have saved his soul.

Would you like your church to be Deaf-friendly? Contact us for more information on these booklets! Email us at: adm@deafadventist.org

Making a difference in the lives of Deaf people...for eternity!

Western Deaf Camp Meeting 30th Anniversary

I just had the wonderful privilege of attending the Western Deaf Camp meeting held at Milo Adventist Academy. This year was the 12th time I have attended this camp meeting and it has always been the highlight of the year.

This year, we saw many old faces and some new faces with over 120 people from 17 states and Canada. Attendees this year enjoyed looking at photographs from years past, laughing at how people look so different now, hearts touched when we see someone we cherish now gone, and amazed to see how the Lord has led us.

The first camp meeting was held in 1977. Only six this year were at the very first one: George and Arlene Belser (AZ), Don Sutton (CO), Ken Abernathy (CO), and David and Francisca Trexler (MD).

Our schedule was really busy this year. This year's theme was *Behold Jesus and Follow Him*. The main speakers were Pastors Paul Kelly and David Trexler. Pastor Kelly led us to a deeper understanding of what perfection means. He also gave us words of hope about a day soon to come when Jesus will come. He asked, "What will it be like after Jesus comes?" Hands flew threw the air as people signed, "No more wheelchairs! No

more glasses! No more hearing aids or cochlear implants! No more canes! No more bandaids! No more communication barriers!" and many more.

Pastor Trexler encouraged us to become true disciples of God. We felt truly humbled when he asked us the question, "30 years and still here, why?" He said that while we enjoy the celebration, we need to think about why we are still here on earth, instead of with Jesus in Heaven. We all agreed that we do not want to celebrate a 40th or 50th anniversary of this camp meeting.

There were lots of things to do and we were always busy! Group counseling sessions and Bible studies were in the afternoon, followed by crafts and cooking classes. We even went rafting and had a quilting class! Plus, George Belser and Jeff Jones both had presentations.

Adventist Deaf Ministries also had a report to the constituents and opened the floor to anyone who would like to express suggestions, concerns, questions, or ideas. There were several very good ideas presented, which the board will address in a future board meeting.

As always, we had communion service. This has always been a very sacred time. Much preparation goes into each of these



Pastor Paul Kelly leads out in the Communion Service on Friday evening. *Photo by Judy Johnson*



Michael Carrier shares his testimony just prior to being baptized. We shared his story in the previous newsletter. Praise the Lord! *Photo by Judy Johnson*



A special wedding ceremony for Jason and Sheelah Kimbrough on Sabbath afternoon thrilled our hearts! *Photo by Judy Johnson*

communion services and many Deaf people are able to serve in such a special way. Afterwards, we had time for testimonies. One that I remember most is the first one. A man stood up and said that there was a man that he felt at odds, perhaps even enemies, with for a long time. At the foot washing service, he and this other man served one another. Their hearts were touched by the Holy Spirit. A few moments later, the other man stood up to say that he, also, felt God's leading and was thankful for this opportunity to put things behind them.

We made our annual

walk to the baptismal pool. Many in the crowd had been baptized in this same place over the years. This year, we witnessed seven people be baptized. Each one shared their story, and they clearly desire to follow Jesus all the way. Our new brothers and sisters are: Michael Carrier (CT), Millie Harreden (CA), Boyd Garner (OR), Jason and Sheelah Kimbrough (NY), and Kevin and Amanda Colgan (formerly NY, now OR). Welcome!!

After the baptism, we ventured to the gazebo for the wedding of Jason and Sheelah Kimbrough. This was not the first wedding

here at camp meeting. Back in the 80's Pablo and Sandra Aljeo were married here. The Kimbrough's were married by the Justice of the Peace nine years ago. They felt that God was not included in this union and decided they wanted a special ceremony before God as they commit their lives to him. What a beautiful service!

There just isn't room enough to tell you all about it. **A big thank you to Chuck McGehee, Sandra Aljeo and the others involved!** You have made a large impact on many lives through your selfless service. Thank you!!

If you missed this camp meeting, you really missed out on incredible blessings from God. If you know a Deaf Adventist, encourage them to attend a camp meeting. It is not too late. Why not make the decision to attend one either this year or next year?

If you would like to see a few more photos, you can go to our website: www.deafadventist.org and click on **Family News**. You will also see other pictures from different places.

*Submitted by:
Esther M. Doss*



Getting to know George Belser

QUESTION: You have been the Interim Director for ADM on a part-time basis since March 1 since Jim Hovey retired. What have you learned about your job as Director that made a lasting impression on you?

ANSWER: I learned that being the Interim Director is not an easy job, and have come to a greater appreciation of Jim Hovey's pioneering work and leadership in getting ADM firmly established as a viable organization for, of, and by the Deaf.

QUESTION: What is the most rewarding part of your job as Interim Director?

ANSWER: I believe that my current role as Interim Director is that of a pilot trying to keep his jet airliner in a holding pattern while circling the airport until he is ordered to land. Accordingly, the most rewarding part of my job would be to continue extending services to the Deaf by way of Gospel work during the transitional period, caring for the Deaf Bible School, and to turn ADM over to the new Director in good shape when he is ready to begin his duties.

QUESTION: Not only are you the Interim Director, you also have another job as editor of the Easy Reading version of the Sabbath School Quarterly lessons.

How did you end up being the editor?

ANSWER: I was not really the editor but just a translator simplifying the English language for the benefit of Deaf readers. Back in the 80's Deaf leaders took turns in translating the Easy Reading Edition, but eventually it became a regular job for me. My work is also the basis for translation into foreign language as regular English is very difficult to translate into foreign language, I was told.

QUESTION: How did you become deaf? Did you have deaf parents?

ANSWER: I was born deaf to deaf parents.

QUESTION: How was communication used in your early home life?

ANSWER: ASL was the medium of communication within my family, but as my father was a firm advocate of the Rochester (Fingerspelling) Method, I was exposed to the English background at an early age.

QUESTION: How did you grow in Christ? How did you learn about the SDA message and when were you baptized?

ANSWER: As I grew up, my parents were not religious due to the fact that Father

“blamed” God for his being a cripple. He was a victim of osteomyelitis when he was a boy and eventually lost his arm through amputation because of infection in the marrow of the bone. This caused him to be confined to the wheelchair for the next 25 years of his life. The advent of antibiotics later kept the infection in check and prolonged his life until his death in 1967 at the age of 75 years. Even though Father was not a Christian, I always believe that he was more of a Christian than I ever hope to be as he always fostered a very optimistic outlook on life. My wife Arlene and I were introduced into SDA truth by Elder Arthur Griffith, then a pastor of the Deaf Group in Portland, Oregon, and were baptized into the Remnant Church in 1971. My mother was baptized several years later.

QUESTION: Where did you go to college and what did you major in?

ANSWER: Well, I matriculated at Gallaudet where in 1955 I received a Bachelor of Science degree because Education was then recognized as a “science.” I was conferred a Master's degree at the University of Portland in 1961. In those days deaf students in hearing universities did not have interpreters. We had only note-takers as volunteers, and they were rough



times, indeed!

QUESTION: Where did you teach? Was Jim Hovey a former student?

ANSWER: Upon graduation from Gallaudet I taught at the Idaho State School for the Deaf for one year and then was hired to teach at the Washington State School for the Deaf, where I served until my “early” retirement from the teaching profession in 1982 to spend more time in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yes, Jim was a student of mine, and in spite of his much-publicized complaint of having received a “C+” at one time from me, he was among my outstanding students.

QUESTION: Tell me a little bit about your wife Arlene, How did you meet and how long have you been married?

ANSWER: My wife Arlene was a student and eventually a teacher at Washington, where we became enamored of each other and got married in 1967. Incidentally, this month (July) we are celebrating our for-

tieth wedding anniversary, and we often wonder where the forty-year period has gone.

QUESTION: What did Arlene do for work? Does she have hobbies?

ANSWER: Arlene was, at first, a Physical Education teacher, but upon her return to the profession after a six-year hiatus as a housewife, she taught many different courses such as vocabulary development, keyboarding, physics, hygiene, et cetera. Her hobbies include reading, bowling, photography, and RV-ing. She is admired for her calm deportment and was, and still is, sought

after as a counselor.

QUESTION: How did you get involved in the SDA Deaf Ministry as a Pastor? How did you get involved with ADM?

ANSWER: No sooner than I was baptized I got involved in doing lay work, giving Bible studies, and presenting sermons. In 1984 I received a call to take Elder Rex Rolls' place as a pastor of the deaf in the Portland/Vancouver area and was ordained to the gospel ministry in 1990 by the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Upon closure of Deaf Services at Christian Record Services in Lincoln, Ne-

braska, of which I was a Board member, I was active with Jim Hovey and Thompson Kay in getting Adventist Deaf Ministries established and incorporated into a non-profit organization and have been involved in its politics, development and growth since then as a Board member.

QUESTION: If you had to start over again at the beginning of your Deaf ministry, what would you have done differently that would have a more positive impact on the Deaf world?

ANSWER: In retrospect I don't think I ever want my life changed in any way except that I would want to

exert a more positive influence on the Deaf work. Yes, I have made mistakes, some of which I am not proud, but I have learned from them and moved on. Without God my life would be similar to a rudderless ship helplessly adrift on the wide ocean, so I am very thankful for the Holy Spirit's guidance in my humble service to the Deaf under Christ's banner. I realize I have been adding on years, and I would very much like to dedicate what several years I have left to serving Him.

*Interview by:
Bruce Buzzell*

Deaf Bible School--The Cornerstone of ADM's Ministry

One of ADM's strongest and fast-growing services is its Deaf Bible School with approximately 300 students enrolled in the God's Way program and 100 students registered with the Amazing Facts program. And several new students are being enrolled daily. A good example is that upon my return from the Western Deaf Campmeeting held in Milo, Oregon, I had to enroll over ten new students into the school program.

In the past we received many new students from our Deaf Expo booth promotions from time to time across the country, but lately

we have been receiving enrollees through referrals from their friends who have taken courses in our Bible School and recommended them to participate in the program, too. As an example, one student is reportedly taking a course upon the suggestion of a non-Adventist Deaf pastor!

Admittedly, it is difficult to follow through with the students upon completion of their courses in the school. Very few students live close to a Deaf group. We have to rely on hearing people, hoping that they will provide the appropriate follow-up. However, we have recently tried to remedy this situation

by encouraging these students to participate in the Prophecy Seminar course by using the Videophone, and presently three have taken us up on this offer. I spend time studying face to face with these students by

Videophone. Yes, this may be a time-consuming project, but it is proving to be profitable with positive results. Please continue to pray for us as we persevere in this worthy endeavor.

By George Belser

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See order form for details.



First Deaf Seminar at Southern New England Conference

On the morning of June 23rd, I walked among brown canvass tents on a campground near an old barn. I walked into the barn and found rows of wooden benches sitting on a dirt floor. I saw an interpreter signing for a few Deaf people so I slid onto a pew. I was at the Southern New England Conference Camp Meeting.

I had never been to Massachusetts for camp meeting. I must say, **the Southern New England Conference has set a precedent for other conferences.**

The conference has few Deaf members. The exact number unknown, I am aware of only 8 Deaf members. Though the numbers are small, the conference decided to invite Pastor Jeff Jordan to speak to the Deaf and myself to give a seminar to the hearing about Deaf ministry.

The first mention of Deaf work in SDA history was recorded by Ellen White in Testimonies vol-

ume 4 p. 300. In the 1870's, a group of Deaf people were at a camp meeting in Ballardvale, MA, about 35 miles away.

The attendance for my seminar on Deaf ministry was small. However, everyone returned each day. One pastor said, "I have learned more in the past hour than I have over the last several years. If I saw a Deaf person, I used to think, 'Oh, poor Deaf person' and walk away. I will never do that again. I will now think, 'Wow, a Deaf person!' and go and make friends with that person."

One of the men attending the seminar has a Deaf brother. Although he knew a lot about Deaf culture, he still learned much about his brother. He also has been given some tools so that he can share Jesus with him.

The seminar attendees were invited to join us in the evenings to "hear" Pastor Jordan preach. Most of them did!

The Deaf were richly blessed in different ways by having Pastor Jordan with them. Altogether, we had six Deaf people.

One couple really touched my heart. The lady was born into an Adventist home and faithfully attended church. She is now 45 years old and had never "listened" to a sermon in her own language until now. Her life will never be the same. A young Deaf couple soaked up the mes-

sages like sponges. While the wife is Adventist, the husband is not. He shared, "I wish there was a Deaf pastor here so I can listen to his sermons each week!"

Interpreters were also given encouragement.

After the final program, we all, Deaf and hearing, stood in a circle to pray. Each one took a turn. One hearing man choked up when he confessed to God that for the last 80+ years, he had been blind. But he

expressed thankfulness that he now knows more about the Deaf-World. Each prayer brought tears to my eyes.

Again, I must commend this conference for stepping up to the plate. These lives may never be the same. Also, thank you, Dayna Beal (Michael Carrier's interpreter) for bringing Deaf ministry to the conference's attention.

By Esther M. Doss



Esther Doss & Pastor Jordan with Deaf members/interpreters.



Pastor Jordan at the Southern New England Camp Meeting.

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Adventist Deaf Ministries (ADM) was originally incorporated in the State of Nebraska and was recognized by the federal government as a nonprofit religious organization on April 6, 1998. After moving to a new headquarters, ADM was subsequently recognized as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization by the State of Arizona on May 9, 2001. ADM has been granted the right to issue tax-deductible receipts for donations made to Adventist Deaf Ministries.

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