

Interviewee: Sara Patterson
Interviewer: Pamela Doig
Date of Interview: February 20, 2008
Location: College of the Holy Cross
Interpreters: Tricia Montesork
Sabrina Gillan
Jenna Hernandez
Transcriber: Kim da Silva, Salter College



Overseen by: Prof. Judy Freedman Fask, College of the Holy Cross

Abstract: Sara Patterson was born in January 2, 1961 in Brooklyn, NY to deaf parents. Sara was also born deaf and is fourth generation deaf on her mother's side. Being part of a deaf family, Sara developed a strong sense of identity. She was able to engage in natural communication with her family through sign language. Sara attended and graduated from Lexington School for the Deaf and graduated from Gallaudet University. In this interview Sara describes her struggles with oralism and also the impact of the rapid changes in technology on deaf individuals. Sara and her husband, Don, have two hearing children and Sara spends her time working part-time for Sprint Relay and volunteering at her children's school and at College of the Holy Cross.

Pamela Doig: Hi. My name is Pamela Doig and I am a student here at Holy Cross. Today I am going to be interviewing Sara. Hello. What's your name?

Sara Patterson: My name is Sara Patterson.

PD: And what is your maiden name?

SP: Rothenberg.

PD: And, what is your name sign?

SP: It's this.

PD: And, how did you receive it?

SP: Well, really growing up I didn't have a sign name. My first, my name begins with the letter "S," and it's only four letters. When I was living in Maryland, before I moved here to Massachusetts around 1998, I really did want a name sign, and one of my girlfriends asked me, "Do you have a name sign?" And, I told her, "No, not yet." And, she said, and she knows my family really well, and she asked me what my mom's name sign was and I showed her. And she said, "Oh, that's really beautiful. Why not take on that with your letter initial because you guys have similar facial features." So, I did and I when I came here to Massachusetts I kind of spread that around. But in Washington and

Maryland I did not use a name sign. Even here in Massachusetts though people still finger spelled my name Sara.

PD: So wait, your mother has the same sign name?

SP: Yep, just with an “H” and mine is an “S.” We kind of have the same facial features, so it works out.

PD: And, were you born deaf?

SP: Yes, I was born deaf.

PD: Where were you born?

SP: Brooklyn, New York.

PD: And, when were you born?

SP: January 2, 1961.

PD: Are your parents deaf?

SP: Yes.

PD: And how many generations deaf are they?

SP: I’m fourth generation deaf on my mother’s side and on my father’s side second generation deaf.

PD: And, how do you communicate with your parents?

SP: Well, when I was born, you know, I would gesture and make up my own home-made signs. And really, kids when they’re one or two, they start signing. But, it took me until about four years old to start learning American Sign Language. And, I had a deaf family, my uncles, my relatives, I guess you could say I was a late bloomer.

PD: Where does your mother live?

SP: My mother lives in Las Vegas, Nevada.

PD: And do you have brothers and sisters? How many?

SP: Yes, I have one brother and one sister and I’m the baby. My brother’s the oldest, then my sister, then myself.

PD: And how do you communicate with them? Are they deaf? Are they both deaf?

SP: Yep, we're all deaf, so American Sign Language we use.

PD: Are your brother...Is your brother and sister involved in the deaf community?

SP: Oh yeah, definitely, always. They grew up, they had deaf friends. They went to the deaf school. Even when they transferred to the public school, they still played with their deaf friends, especially on the weekends. They were involved in the deaf club, the deaf events, and the same when they went into college.

PD: And they're still involved in the deaf community?

SP: Yep, they're still involved when they got out in the real world. They're still involved with the deaf community. And, even outside of the working world, my brother is, of course, socializes with the deaf community. And, my sister, she actually works at a school in California, Riverside, and she teaches there.

PD: She teaches deaf children?

SP: Yep, she's a physical education teacher. So, she works with deaf kids.

PD: And you have a nephew, right?

SP: Yes. My sister, her son, so my nephew, he's hearing.

PD: And how do you communicate with him? Does he know sign?

SP: Yep, he knows sign. We sign because my sister's deaf and she uses sign. And sometimes she'll use her voice. So, she goes back and forth between the languages. So, his mother is deaf and his grandmother is deaf, so they communicate through sign language, and his aunt, myself, I'm deaf. And, I don't really use my voice unless it's to call for him. Communication really is the key, and it's successful through sign language with us.

PD: How many languages does your mother know?

SP: Well, she knows German Sign Language and when she moved to Sweden she went to the deaf school there. So, she knew written Swedish and Swedish Sign Language. And, when she moved to America, she learned American Sign Language and written English. So altogether five.

PD: What do you think is her favorite language?

SP: Well, she's been in America for over 50 years, so I think she prefers American Sign Language and written English.

PD: How do you communicate with your brothers and sisters and with your mother?

SP: You mean my brothers and my sisters?

PD: Yeah.

SP: And, my mother? We sign American Sign Language.

PD: I mean do you use like a video phone, or like if you wanted to contact them, your brothers and, your brother and sister? How would you do that?

SP: Well, a long time ago with the TTY, we would write in English sentences back and forth. And, we wrote each other letters. This was before the TTY was made. When my brother and sister were small, if they went to summer camp, the best way was to write letters. And then the TTY came, so we wrote in English. And, the VP we use American Sign Language.

PD: And how did you learn sign language?

SP: My mother and father and my family and my relatives were all deaf, so it's just instilled in me.

PD: Do you use a hearing aid?

SP: Now, no. Not anymore. Before when I was at my school, Lexington School for the Deaf in New York City, they required that you used a hearing aid in school. When I went home, I definitely took it off. Sometimes in school though, I'd still have it on, but I'd turn it off because I couldn't stand the constant noise. So, I'd say, "Yep, I have it on." But, it was really off. If someone wanted me, I'd turn it back on. I guess you can say I was kind of sneaky of avoiding trying to use it.

PD: Didn't it break, right?

SP: Sometimes it broke. Sometimes the ear mold, it wouldn't work and I had to go see the audiologist. And, he would try to fix it, and I thought, "For what?" It was fine, it works. And, do the test and go back and forth. Really, I just felt that the hearing aid was worthless. I definitely took off the hearing aid when I played sports. I didn't want the ball to hit it. It would hurt. Or, hit any of my bones in the back of my ears. I wasn't worried about the ear mold so much when I was sweating, but it did hang off sometimes when I was playing. And, the sweat will ruin it. Back when I had a hearing aid, it was actually a hearing box, a body system, I think in the 1970s. And, it would be connected to headphones, but there is no speaker. It was separate from the teacher. And, technology's

changed so much now, it's less bulky. It's real lightweight. You know, easy on, easy off. But, after I graduated that was it for me—no more. The constant noise, what a headache! It's not like I could understand words, so what did I need it for? I like it nice and quiet.

PD: Do you use oralism?

SP: When I went to school at Lexington, they required the use of the oral method, so I had to deal with that for a while. The teachers would tend to speak a lot. They didn't really sign. When they would look away, me and my friends would sign with each other. But then when they would turn back we would speak. And then again when they would look away we'd sign to each other again. We would speak with the teachers a lot and sometimes we would try to gesture. It was easier because I feel like the words should be connected with my body. It was for me to express myself. I felt disconnected if I didn't use any gestures or any hand movements from my spoken English. But, at school I did have to deal with it a lot.

PD: What's been your experience with the deaf community? Deaf clubs? Deaf events? What's been your experience?

SP: I feel like I have people that are the same as me. I can socialize with them and it's a lot of fun to go to events. My parents went to deaf schools and my father was really involved in sports. He used to take care of a lot of the basketball tournaments. We would go to different towns or different states. And, it was a lot of fun to see a lot of my friends and we would get to hang out. We'd go under the bleachers and cause trouble. We'd run around and play. It was a lot of fun hanging with my friends. It was good to see some of my parents' friends too. But, it would be annoying because they'd call me and they'd want to introduce me to people. And I'd say "Hi" and try to be respectful, but then I'd go back and play with my friends. Some of them hadn't seen me since I was really young, so they would try to take away my, they would try to take me away. And, they'd want me to talk to them, but then I'd really want to go back and play with my friends. And then when I went to college, I would see these people again. And, I would remember them from the deaf clubs or from different basketball tournaments and deaf school. It's tournament. That's the sign for tournament. So, I went to college and recognized a lot of people from tournaments, from camp, deaf club, lots of different places. I knew a lot of people already.

PD: When your parents found out that you were deaf how did they react?

SP: It's interesting, actually. I just asked my mom how she felt when my brother was first born. She said before my brother was born my mom was kind of hoping that he would be hearing. You know, jobs, she wanted him to be a lawyer or a doctor. She had really high expectations like most people do for their first-born son. So, she wanted him to be successful in the workplace. But, because my mother's family is all deaf and only some of my father's family is deaf, they weren't really sure if he going to be deaf or hearing. A lot of my family, a lot of my dad's family is hearing, so we weren't really sure what was

going to happen. My mom's family has a lot of deafness in it, so the outcome was kind of unknown at that point. So then when he was born he was deaf. And, they were all fine with it. And then when me and my sister were born they had absolutely no expectations. They just wanted us to be healthy.

PD: Where have been the different places that you've lived?

SP: First, I lived in Brooklyn, New York. Then, I went to college at Gallaudet. That was when it was called a college. Right now, they've changed it to Gallaudet University. And, that's in Washington, D.C. And then I worked in Maryland for a while. I was the head swim coach for the girls' team part-time for about three years. Then, I moved to Massachusetts for eight years. After that, I moved to Las Vegas, Nevada for another eight years. And then, I moved to Pennsylvania for two years. And I've been back here for a year and a half.

PD: Wow, many, many places.

SP: Yeah, not too many places. They've all been pretty close to each other.

PD: Massachusetts, Las Vegas.

SP: Well, yeah.

PD: And, where do you live now?

SP: Northborough, Massachusetts.

PD: And, what do you like about Northborough?

SP: Well, it's quiet. There's lots of trees around. It's pretty secluded. It kind of feels like the country, but there are cities really close by. And, I'm a city girl. I grew up in the city. Not really used to the suburbs, but it's nice. It's quiet. My kids have a great school. The principal is wonderful. The people there seem really friendly. They're really great. They understand that I'm deaf. There's lots of places for the kids to go. There's lots of events. We're pretty close to Worcester. We're also pretty close to Boston. And then, we can go to New Hampshire or Vermont. Everything's about an hour drive, so it's pretty convenient. So, I enjoy it.

PD: You went to school at Lexington School, right?

SP: Yep, Lexington.

PD: Is that a residential school or a day school?

SP: Well, when I first started there in 1963 it was a residential school. And, I guess about 1980 or so, around when I graduated, the amount of people in the residential program had gone down so much that they decided to stop the residential program and it became a full-day school. So, now it's just a day program.

PD: Were students required to live at Lexington School?

SP: Required to stay there? I don't think they were required to, no.

PD: Didn't you live at school?

SP: I lived in the dorms for one year. For the most part, I was a commuter student. I really, I had to stay at home. And, I did that until I was about seven and my sister was about nine, and we both really wanted to stay in the dorms. And, we begged and begged, all of our friends were there. But, my mom was really stubborn and didn't want us to go there. We kept bothering her and bothering her, and finally she decided to give in and the school accepted us. We stayed in the dorms for about a year and ended up hating it. My mom was right. You know, at home we have our library; we have our bedrooms, and a kitchen. We can eat anytime we want. If you're hungry at night, you can get a snack. In the residential program, there was a very strict schedule and you can only eat at certain times. You can only have very limited snacks. At home, we can do whatever we want. And then, at home there's also... communication's very easy. We all sign. In the dorms, people weren't very good at signing sometimes and there was still some spoken English used. So, it was difficult.

PD: Did your sister live at Lexington School?

SP: Yep, she lived there for a year.

PD: And, did she graduate from there?

SP: No. My brother and sister did not graduate from Lexington School. They actually graduated from a public school. I was the only one who graduated from there.

PD: You used oralism in your class, right?

SP: Um, huh.

PD: Did the teachers know you used sign at home?

SP: Yeah.

PD: Did they mind?

SP: Did they mind? Not really. They can't control what I do at home. That's my own business. They can't see what's going on at home despite how strict they may be. My whole family's deaf. They know that. So, we need to sign.

PD: It's interesting that you went to a residential school that uses oralism. Why did you parents pick that?

SP: Well, back in the 1950s when my brother and sister went to school, I don't know, maybe the early sixties there weren't many schools that used sign language or even total communication. Most of the schools around that time used the oral method. There were some religious schools, but none of them matched with my affiliation, so I didn't want to go any..., my parents didn't want me to go to any of those schools. Lexington was the best school in New York City for me at the time. Also, my dad went to New York School for the Deaf in Fenwood. It was called Fenwood before it was named New York School for the Deaf. That's in White Plains, New York. It was outside of the city and it was a long drive. It was about two hours. So, it was too far to go there. Lexington School was perfect because it was a really short commute.

PD: Is Lexington School still a...oh, no wait, it's a day school, right?

SP: Right.

PD: Do you know if they still use oralism or...?

SP: Well, when I started at Lexington School it was in Manhattan until I think about 1968 or so, around there, it moved to Queens, New York. Since then, it's been in Queens that whole time. I know that they used the oral method until about my junior or my senior year of high school. But then, they started becoming a little more flexible. Some of the teachers would sign in class a little bit. Most of the students really struggled with spoken English, so since there was such a wide variety of communication in the classroom, sometimes signing was just the easiest way to keep class moving. If more than five of the students, if there were more than 15 students in class then they would usually sign because it's really hard to lip read when you're that far back sitting in a lecture-type classroom. It's easier to get the big picture if they're using sign language. But, I remember in middle school and elementary school signing was completely against the rules. Sometimes they would use the overhead projector and use written English. It was easier than giving, handing out papers to everyone. So, during elementary school and middle school we just had to tough it out and learn as much as we could. But, then they started signing a little later. I hear that they were using total communication for a while. I don't know if I necessarily support total communication. But, it's good because there's some signing so you're able to get that opportunity, but at the same time they're speaking in class and doing that all day, it's really difficult. ASL and English don't match up together, so that makes it a little more confusing. They thought it was a good idea at that time, but I'm not really sure. It didn't happen when I was there.

PD: What were some of your favorite classes?

SP: I loved physical ed. Of course, you know, you get to play all day. I really liked art and science and math.

PD: And, what was your least favorite class?

SP: English.

PD: Were you involved in clubs or sports?

SP: I did play sports. I started when I was about 12. I was on junior varsity volleyball and then softball. And then, when I graduated I was on the deaf club softball team, and basketball team, volleyball also. I tried out for the Deaf Olympics swim team, but I didn't make it. And, I also tried out for their ski team, but I didn't make that either. I guess I didn't have enough practice. I didn't really train a lot. It was nice because I could train on my own and not with a team. So, it was a good experience, but looking back I think that if my father was still alive and he was there to support me and give me...and donate some money to it then I would be able to do it. But, now...I don't really know if I have the right answer, if I could turn back time then maybe that would be nice.

PD: And where did you go to college?

SP: I went to Gallaudet in Washington D.C.

PD: Did your education have challenges like what?

SP: At Gallaudet?

PD: Yeah, sure.

SP: Well, I know at Lexington it was difficult for me because of the oralism, but we were all in the same boat. We were all equals. At home growing up my whole life I felt like I was the same as everyone else and there were no problems. But then, I went to Gallaudet and it just hit me there are so many people that are so smart. And, the people that were there were from all over America, some were from other countries. They all went to Gallaudet. The teachers all signed. And, it was amazing. Finally, I had sign language in class. The textbooks were really big, so it was hard for me to study at first, but then I was able to pick it up.

PD: Was your experience going to Gallaudet good or...?

SP: It was challenging. The discussions were really challenging. It was good because we could discuss politics and I can get involved in the conversation 100%. At Lexington, the

discussion was limited because of the spoken English and the speech reading. It was so much easier with sign.

PD: And you're married, right?

SP: Yep.

PD: And what's your husband's name?

SP: His name's Don Patterson.

PD: And is he deaf?

SP: Yes. No, he's deaf. Yes. When he was born he was deaf in one ear and hearing in the other. He then got sick and it destroyed all the hearing he had left in his one ear. He ended up having the mumps. He was about ten months old when he got it. He wasn't even a year old yet. He lost all of his hearing in his good ear and became completely deaf.

PD: And, how do you communicate with your husband?

SP: We sign. We use ASL.

PD: Of course. And, how did the two of you meet?

SP: We met through one of his friends in Wayland, Massachusetts. We met his friend...I met his friend. I went to sell him a refrigerator and he just kept delaying the payments. So, we met up to talk about money. But Don would always come with him. So, we met and finally the two of us... and the two of us could not get the payments down. So me and Don met privately and decided to change the way things were going and then we kept meeting. Then we got married.

PD: Are Don's parents deaf?

SP: No, they're hearing.

PD: Does he have brothers or sisters?

SP: Well, Don's the middle child. His two older siblings are both hearing. And, like I said, Don was born with hearing in one ear and he was deaf in the other. And, his two younger siblings also were deaf in one ear and had full hearing in the other ear.

PD: Growing up did he use sign? Or how did he communicate with his parents, his brother and sister?

SP: Well, his younger siblings are still hearing in one ear and they have...even though they're deaf in the other ear, they can still live in the hearing world. They're mainstreamed in a deaf program in a hearing school. At home, they usually communicated using either home sign or gesturing a lot. They would kind of sign, but speak at the same time. They would always figure out a way to communicate with each other though. For example, window, the word window, they would say "window" and then draw a triangle in the air, a rectangle in the air, and that would mean window. His brother, who is my brother-in-law, has pretty good speech. So, what he would do to communicate is sign the first letter of the words he would say. For example, he would sign "I" and say "important." So, that would help us with the process of communication. Every word that they would speak, he would initialize. That would help my husband understand what he was saying and Don is used to his family speaking. He grew up with them. I still struggle. I don't see them everyday, so I'm not really used to it at all. I have to ask Don a lot what they said. Or, sometimes I just smile and nod.

PD: Where did Don go to school?

SP: He went to school at a few different places. He was born on Long Island, New York. So he went to Mill Neck School for the Deaf. He went there for a year, and then his parents pulled him out of the deaf program and put him in a deaf program in a public school in Minnesota.

PD: Did he like it?

SP: Well, he wasn't really mainstreamed in the fact of being the only deaf person in class, but what they would do is for certain subjects they would have all the deaf students together and the teacher would sign. But then in high school for math or for gym, a few other subjects he would go into a class with other hearing students, and then he would be the only deaf person. But for classes like English they would have all deaf classes and the teacher was either hearing and could sign or was deaf. But they used sign language to communicate in those classes. If he was in a class with all hearing students, they would use an interpreter.

PD: Okay, so they had interpreters. That's good. And, do you have children?

SP: Yes, I have two kids.

PD: Are they deaf?

SP: The oldest is my son, Evan, who is ten. Well, he's almost ten and a half. And, my youngest is my daughter, Samara, who is seven and a half.

PD: And, how do you communicate with them?

SP: Sign language.

PD: And is that their first language?

SP: Yes, they're first language was American Sign Language because that's how I communicate, and their father communicates the same way, and my mom, their grandmother, who we actually lived with for one and a half years in Las Vegas, and my mother signs.

PD: Wait, so their grandmother is hearing?

SP: Well, my mom's deaf, so their grandmother.

PD: Oh, right, right.

SP: And they use spoken English or sign. They can go in between each. Now, I wouldn't do that so much, usually just to sing them a nursery song because my kids really wanted to hear my voice. So, most of the time, when it was bedtime I would sing them to sleep. So, I put them to bed with my voice and I like that. But, our everyday communication was through sign language.

PD: Your two children, do they go to a residential school or a hearing school?

SP: They go to a public school, yes.

PD: For work, what are your plans? What do you plan to do?

SP: My work? Well, up until now I was a homemaker, housewife. And now for ten years. But, during the ten years I worked a little here and there. And, I volunteered at different places. Like when, Evan was born I actually worked at a program called *Shared Reading Project* that Gallaudet helped fund. Las Vegas is actually one of five cities that Gallaudet helped fund. And, I just happened to live there. What I would do is every week, I would bring a book to a family, all of hearing parents, and they had maybe one or two deaf children. And I would help them read a book in sign language. And I help them. This was really just so they can communicate with their child everyday. You know how today many school encourage children to read about 20 minutes a day, right? Well, I did the same. I helped them sign and made sure they understood. And, even if they didn't understand, they actually came with a videotape so if they forgot what I taught them or they were having a problem signing something, they could reference back to that videotape. And really they got creative in their own way in teaching their child how to read a book. When the one week was over, I'd go back and give a review. I did this weekly and provided them with a different book. So, it was like a tutor. I also worked on a bill in Nevada for licensing interpreters and that actually passed. Then I moved here and now I volunteer at Holy Cross with the sign language classes and swim lessons. And, I also volunteer at my kids' school. And, now I work as a subcontractor with Sprint Relay. I work there part-time. So, I'm also in the process for looking for a job. It's back to the

working world for me. I've had enough of staying home. I want to get out and meet people. Just ready for work.

PD: How do you feel about mainstream programs?

SP: I worked in the mainstream schools once, this was awhile back. And, when I first entered it was really a shock. It was such a different world. I felt they were lacking the awareness of deaf people, of deaf culture, of how to approach someone who is deaf to socialize. That was all missing. There were deaf children that went and some hard-of-hearing children, but at home their parents were hearing so this is why they chose to mainstream them. But the school itself, it didn't really understand what it meant to be deaf and there wasn't really a lot of accommodations for these children and there were a few deaf teachers there. But still it was a disconnect between them and the school. At a residential school it didn't matter if they used the oral method because everyone was deaf because they signed. They had a strong deaf community and the school really helped support the children who had hearing parents. But, in the mainstream they're was only that group of kids and in the other classes the hearing kids were there. So they didn't really have, they didn't have deaf role models. For example, when I would take them to the cafeteria and we would line up in single file and I'd be in front, if I stopped, well actually I forget who was where, but if I stopped and I'd see the kids keep going I was confused like who decided to tell them to keep going. And, what do I do? I can't hear anything. So, what do I keep checking behind me every few seconds to make sure that I'm being followed? I can't hear, so if I'm not following them I'd get lost. A hearing person can hear the footsteps, but I have to keep turning around. So, just the fact that they weren't aware of deafness was the hardest challenge for me. Do I support mainstream? No. I mean if a deaf child grows up and is in a deaf school and they feel that they want to go in the mainstream I think that fine because they already established who they are with their deaf identity. I think if the sports program from the mainstream was placed in the residential schools, I'd prefer that the most.

PD: What do you think about cochlear implants?

SP: Do I want one? No, I don't want one.

PD: For example, for children who are three years old, parents they decide to implant their child, what do you think about that?

SP: Oh, I don't support it. If it's a question of the children's want, I'm not sure. Many parents want their children to behave in the same way that they do. But, I don't understand why they don't consider their child's want. They're young, but they can't just give up on them. If the child grows up and decides they want one, I think that's fine. But, is the cochlear implant necessary if something's wrong and maybe a hearing aid would work? Why go through the surgery and all the intense training? That just steals away from their childhood and they should be enjoying and having fun and not have the pressure and really being brainwashed. They should just be left alone and enjoy their

childhood. And if they grow up and decide that they want one, I think that's fine as long as they made their own decision. And personally, I believe it's easier for the parents to learn sign language than for the deaf children to learn how to speak. It takes a lot of time and practice. It takes away from the communication and their education. Development is just really slowed down. So, I don't know if it's a good idea.

PD: Some schools now accept children with cochlear implants, do you think that's a good idea, or schools like the Learning Center, or...? Like schools like the Learning Center now accepts children with cochlear implants. Do you think that's a good idea, mixing the kids? Like ASD, American School for the Deaf.

SP: Yep.

PD: I think they now accept kids with cochlear implants, right?

SP: I believe many deaf schools are encouraging.

PD: I guess they need to.

SP: I think it's a good way for the children with cochlear implants to be exposed to two worlds, so they can learn sign language and be interactive with deaf kids. And at the same time they are able to hear. So they can really go back and forth between the two worlds. They can speak and they're deaf so they still have that connection. So why not let them enter the deaf school? It's a learning opportunity for them.

PD: Some people in the deaf community are not accepting of this. They really think it's a bad idea. If there's children with cochlear implants they shouldn't be going to the same school with other children. Do you think it's bad for other children to have other children with cochlear implants in the same class?

SP: Well, in the beginning when the cochlear implants were so new, yes absolutely. There was a lot of complaint. In the 1990s, there was a lot of defense, resistance towards the cochlear implant. But the more the deaf community starting understanding, they started accepting it, that they had options. And, slowly their resistance went away and they realized that it's not so bad. So, to say, "No, they can't enter a deaf school," I don't think that would be right. I think they encourage them. I think they're a nice addition and it's a great opportunity for them to be involved with deaf students. I mean many of these kids their parents decide for them. I'm sure the parents have their own reason for the cochlear implants, so a lot of the children don't make their own decision. So I don't see anything wrong with them going to a deaf school. I mean we're all the same. They're still deaf. If they didn't have the cochlear implant, they're still deaf. It's instilled in them. So yeah, why not let them go to the deaf school? There's nothing wrong with that.

PD: And, last question. What do you think about the new technology? Like growing up, did you have a TTY? Now, they have videophones. What do you think about all this?

SP: Really before the 1970s there was no way of contacting your deaf friend. You'd have to approach them personally. If arrived off the train or the bus, it would get really frustrating. You'd have to plan beforehand. And even at that you would still be waiting up to two hours just to meet a friend. So that was really hard. Unless there was an emergency then you would have to ask your neighbor for help, so they could make the phone call. But, I never bothered my neighbor. And then when my stepfather brought the TTY, it was a huge model. It was so loud when you pressed the buttons, but what a way to contact your deaf friends. It was so easy. And, when I used it I was ten years old and I would just be on it for hours. And then, so-called relay service, they didn't call it that but, the New York Deaf Contact in the 19...around 1975, the New York Contact finally was established and that just made everything easier. I could call the school. If I had problems with my bill, I could call the people to talk to them. It was really nice. I didn't have to depend on my neighbors anymore. In 1990s, 80s, the pager came out, and then the relay service. But, the VP, that was just amazing, so much less frustrating. Remember I told you I did not like English, so to try and write English sentences I had to think, "Okay, this is in ASL, how do I say it in English?" And, I couldn't express myself if I was angry or if I was laughing, for example, I had to say, "Laughing" or "Smiling." And, that just didn't feel right. I mean another person's on the phone laughing for me. And, I had to give a lot of personal information over the TTY like my credit card number. It just took so long to explain things. It was really a waste of time. In sign language, you just get the big picture and it's faster. For example, I can call five people in 15 minutes, whereas on the TTY it would take up to two hours for one person. But the VP is wonderful. It's face-to-face communication. If someone needs something to be explained I can actually show it. It's visual. Like, do you understand this? Is this clear? I can contact work or family. It's just really different and it's nice. Bu, the VP it really just changed my life, so to say.

PD: Technology has really changed.