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## The Enchanted Hills Deaf-Blind Camp Convention Report

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## THE ENCHANTED HILLS DEAF-BLIND CAMP CONVENTION REPORT

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**Robert L. Miller  
and  
Rich Goldstein**

The opportunity to serve and contribute to the progressive and continued recognition of deaf-blind persons through A National Convention was indeed a privilege. We saw what, to date, has been the largest gathering of deaf-blind adults ever to assemble together. It is the purpose of this report to try to summarize some of the process and events which were planned and carried through the week of June 12-19. Where it seemed necessary, the report calls attention to areas which should be kept in mind when one works and strives for understanding, communications, and companionship with deaf-blind persons.

This document is a compilation of the thoughts, opinions, and desires of many persons who helped in playing vital roles both before and during the "Camp-Convention" experience. Special note should be taken of the words "Camp-Convention" which symbolize the two major thrusts of the week's programming; business and convention meetings combined with camping and leisure activities.

### **Volunteers**

Sixty volunteers and support staff were

recruited, interviewed, and required to show fluency in at least the use of the American One Hand Manual Alphabet before being accepted into the program. The base camp fee of \$50.00 which went to pay the week's room and board at camp was waived for those accepted.

It was estimated before the convention that 60 staff members would be sufficient to assist with the needs of the 84 deaf-blind persons registered. Staff would be available either to assist in areas of recreation or to interpret during business meetings. Remaining staff were to help out in the dining area before, during, and after meals. It was anticipated that convention meetings would not be as heavily attended by the conventioners compared to recreational activities. Since a smaller ratio of interpreters would be needed during these "play" activities, the ratio of 60 volunteers for the 84 deaf-blind persons was considered adequate.

Meetings, as it turned out, were attended by the majority of conventioners. This was true for regularly scheduled meetings and for meetings which were called at a "moment's notice". This, then, required

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Mr. Miller was Camp Director at the Convention and Mr. Goldstein was Associate Camp Director.

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the services of more interpreters than had originally been anticipated. In some cases, volunteers familiar with only the manual alphabet were sufficient for those deaf-blind persons whose vision was not good enough to enable them to see an interpreter at the front of the meeting room. In other cases, there were some deaf-blind members who neither understood much of the American Sign Language nor could they comprehend a substantial amount of the manual alphabet. Methods of communication used, thus, were quite diverse, e.g., the Teletouch.

Those deaf-blind campers who wished to participate in recreation had enough volunteers available to assist. The shortage, therefore, was primarily at meetings, though it should be pointed out that all deaf-blind persons attending meetings were eventually accommodated with interpreters.

### Meetings - National Association of The Deaf-Blind of America (NADBA)

The San Francisco Lighthouse and the NADBA agreed that the convention would hold its business meetings in the morning and would reserve the afternoons for recreation and relaxation (similar to the format used in Ohio in 1975). It was also agreed that those persons wishing to resume business meetings during the afternoon could do so, so long as all campers were made aware of such plans well in advance, e.g., announcements during lunch to this effect. The rationale for this format was as follows: Because of the lack of independent funding, most deaf-blind persons must finance their own way to the NADBA meetings. These meetings take place once a year at specified locations within the Continental U.S. and may begin occurring biennially. As a result, in order to attract and increase the numbers of deaf-blind participants, it seemed only reasonable that both social and recreational activities be provided. A week of nothing but business meetings

would be unusually taxing and serve as little incentive for the majority of deaf-blind persons and volunteers to return for future conventions. Organized meetings of deaf-blind persons are still a relatively new undertaking requiring a great deal of organization and coordination. Concentration in meetings is taxing and reduces a meeting's effectiveness after a relatively brief time.

Convention meetings that were scheduled took place but usually began about one-half hour late because of any number of problems i.e., lack of communication and/or understanding as to time and place of meetings along with mobility difficulties. Time was also consumed in coordinating and pairing up volunteer-interpreters.

The meetings were coordinated primarily through the San Francisco Lighthouse and The Cleveland Society for the Blind. Mr. Lou Bettica and Mrs. Vera Schiller, both from the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults, agreed to help steer the meetings.

As expected, these gatherings ran roughly at the outset but showed gradual improvement as attendees became accustomed to the various communication styles, pace, and developed a clearer understanding as to the reason for holding the meetings.

A few items which characterized the meetings should be mentioned.

1. The accomplishment of even the smallest and simplest order of business required a great deal of time, e.g., a discussion of a small item in the NADBA publication THE VOICE.
2. Interpreting any item required repetition, rephrasing, and clarification to assure that all members understood.
3. A high degree of frustration and fatigue characterized both the deaf-blind members and the interpreters in general.

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4. Concentration and attention spans appeared to be good, considering the hours required to accomplish a few tasks.

The most important factor that developed as a result of the meetings did not involve any particular order of business. There was a definite indication (in spite of the assistance rendered by hearing-sighted and/or sighted persons) that deaf-blind persons are capable and have the potential to organize meetings and plan for themselves. The stereotype which indicated that deaf-blind persons could not handle their own affairs--even if given the opportunity--is not, nor has ever been, accurate. With the proper exposure, assistance, and support from appropriately trained personnel, agency facilities, and community resources, the deaf-blind person's full potential will be realized.

Non-business meetings were also devoted to demonstrations of low vision aids, communications devices, and presentations on independent living, employment opportunities, and other subjects.

### Medical

Medical forms were enclosed with all application forms sent to prospective deaf-blind campers. The necessity for comprehensive medical histories cannot be overstressed. Many deaf-blind campers were in the "elderly" category and many persons suffering deafness and blindness also have additional disabilities requiring attention. Campers were informed that their applications would not be considered without accompanying medical information.

A fulltime registered nurse and infirmary facility were available. It was the nurse's responsibility to review all medical data and make special note as to kinds of medication, the times, and to whom they were to be distributed. All medication was turned over to the nurse at the beginning of camp in order to avoid confusion and cut down on possible health hazards.

The nurse and infirmary were highly visible and located near the dining hall. This

made delivery of medication and first-aid services fairly simple. The few crises that cropped up, primarily during the first two days of camp, were handled efficiently.

### Recreation

For almost as long as there has been deaf-blindness, the correlation has been made between it and the feeling of loneliness. The world of a deaf-blind person with neither residual sight nor hearing extends only as far as his limbs can touch. One of the primary reasons for holding camp-conventions is to encourage the use of leisure time in an attempt not only to reduce the loneliness, but to produce new areas of activity and enjoyment.

Two Assistant Camp Directors who had some experience in organizing recreational programs in camps similar to this one were hired. It was hoped that through their previous experience and that of the Camp Director, a variety of enjoyable activities could be made available to all campers throughout the days and early evenings. Because of the diversity and number of deaf-blind campers and the need for flexibility with both meetings and recreation, no formal program of recreation was drawn up. The Assistant Directors arrived on the first day of camp and held periodic meetings with other staff and volunteers to plan daily activities.

Enchanted Hills' location and facilities made it an ideal spot for deaf-blind campers. Some activity offerings were:

1. Walks through camp via the assistance of thousands of feet of guide rope which made trails, cabins, and other sites easily accessible.
2. "Sensory Playground"-- a takeoff on the obstacle course idea which uses waterbeds, nets, slides, and other various stimuli allowing for climbing, jumping, rolling, and other physical activity. This playground is a project of a local university.

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3. Roller skating in a rink with guard rails and baseboard protectors.
4. Swimming.
5. Bowling.
6. Rowboating.
7. Horseback Riding.
8. Dancing.

Activities offered or available for those who preferred a less physically active schedule included checkers, chess, bingo, Monopoly, Scrabble, and cards.

One activity, formally planned and investigated before camp was in session, included a winery tour which would require a whole day to complete. Since Enchanted Hills Camp is located in the heart of California wine country, and there had been some requests for such a tour, this was seen as an ideal planned activity. Wine-tasting would also be a part of the tour and the option to purchase wine was made available.

A great deal of conversation and socialization was anticipated. The convention staff wished to encourage active involvement with the camp facilities but also felt that social interaction would be just as important.

Conflicts between recreation and convention meetings played a large part in the week's program. Daily recreational activities were made available with volunteer staff ready to assist interested deaf-blind campers. It turned out that most campers spent the mornings attending meetings while a small number engaged in leisure conversation or active recreation.

The activity which took precedent above most others during the afternoon hours was the swimming pool. Campers who needed assistance to and from the pool were either driven or accompanied by a volunteer. A "water carnival" planned for the end of the week was attended by a modest number.

### The Living Situation

Accommodations at Enchanted Hills vary widely. Married couples, elderly campers,

and some guests were housed in more modern facilities within the main part of the camp grounds, close to the dining hall and meeting areas. Single (and generally younger and more mobile) campers stayed in rustic cabins about one-quarter mile below the main campground area. Rope guided trails meander from their cabins to the top of the hill; morning and nighttime transportation was provided. Each cabin was the responsibility of a sighted volunteer in order to make sure that morning, evening, and general living routines were followed without incident. They were also available for general assistance and to obtain supplies e.g., bathroom articles.

A shortage of volunteers and the lack of an orientation program created some difficulty in maintaining order and coordination within the cabins. After a few days, however, a general routine was established and the camp settled down to a more predictable pattern.

### Meal-Time Procedures

The main dining hall was a perfect set-up for the 144 persons who would be using it. Campers and volunteers were evenly distributed. Two tables were left for administrative staff, visitors, and special guests. There were no elaborate preparations made for the distribution of food from the main kitchen to the tables. Volunteers were selected to distribute some of the food.

One professional cook took on the task of preparation for the whole camp for the week. One of the kitchen staff actually used his vacation time to help with the maintenance and food preparation and without compensation.

As might be expected, all meals were well attended. The table roster made seating an easy process and volunteers kept tabs on persons at their table.

The banquet was the highlight of the camp-convention. The event was relaxed and nicely rounded out the week. Speechmaking

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was kept to a minimum and the strains of protocol were refreshingly absent.

### Transportation

Enchanted Hills Camp is located approximately 80 miles north of San Francisco, a one and one-half hour drive on freeway and then winding country roads. Campers and staff came by car, bus, or plane.

Out-of-state campers and volunteers were met at the San Francisco International Airport (a 20-minute drive from the city of San Francisco) on the first day of camp. Three vans (one 10-passenger, two 12-passenger) picked up groups of people in the morning. Because arrival times and terminal locations varied, several staff people were needed to meet various groups, help carry luggage, and direct campers to the vans. Most groups were traveling with a volunteer-interpreter. If an individual was traveling alone, extra effort was needed to be sure that person was not kept waiting. When a van was filled, the group was driven to the Lighthouse Center in San Francisco. The Center was used as a meeting place for the people coming from the airport, as well as for those living in or near San Francisco. A 40-passenger bus transported people from the Center to camp.

The shuttle system from the airport to the Center was implemented so that people did not have to wait several hours at the airport. At the Center, coffee and donuts were provided and people were able to wait in a more comfortable setting. The return trip was planned similarly, with three vans, a rented bus, and private cars transporting people from camp to the airport.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Volunteers

The ideal situation would call for one interpreter for every camper with each interpreter being paid to stay with one camper for the whole week. The lack of realism here brings up the need for alternatives.

Without dealing with the philosophy of business meetings and recreational activities taking place at the same time, a closer ratio of interpreters to campers would make for a more comfortable situation. A volunteer should know categorically what his responsibilities will be on the job, i.e., interpreting, transportation, recreation, etc., before he undertakes the job. He should be made aware of his primary function and recognize that only in unusual circumstances, will he be called upon to serve in a different capacity. This will make for a better and more relaxed working relationship between administrator and volunteer. It will also enable the volunteer to evaluate his role in advance so that adjustments may be made if needed.

Choosing the level of skill of the volunteer should weigh more heavily on his ability to interpret than in any other area — if there are enough prospective volunteers to choose from.

Prospective staff could be made aware that such an experience with a group of deaf-blind persons is invaluable if they wish to pursue deaf-blindness or related fields of service in the future. A one or two day orientation session on deaf-blindness immediately preceding camp might be turned into an independent study project on the college level or as a form of workshop experience for people involved in rehabilitation.

An item which should always be part of a program of this nature is **Orientation for Volunteers**. At least one full day devoted to planning, coordination, discussion, questions-answers, and interaction will enhance the camp session. Emphasis during such an orientation may be directed to becoming familiar with the physical surroundings, being alerted to emergency procedures, information dealing with deaf-blindness and some of its special considerations, the general philosophy of the camp, and just getting to know key people.

The whole area of volunteerism is a vital part of many agencies and organizations. It should be emphasized that being accepted as

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a volunteer holds no less importance or responsibility than if it were a paid position. In actuality, being a volunteer requires that a person be enthusiastic enough to discipline himself in terms of increased attentiveness and in the following of directions and cues perhaps even more so than if he were paid.

### **MEETINGS—NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF-BLIND OF AMERICA (NADBA)**

As stated previously, interpretation must be adequate and diverse enough to accommodate all communication styles used by deaf-blind persons. This can't be emphasized enough when discussing meetings because information must be accurately relayed to all who attend. A suggestion which might improve this situation would include a space on the application blank to prospective campers inquiring what type of communication they prefer.

Active participation on the part of deaf-blind members, while evident at this convention, must be continually promoted. Joining committees, organizing policies, and legislation can be handled by many NADBA members who are eager to make inroads and contributions to the field, and who, in the near future, may seek leadership roles.

What is necessary is a more formalized structure—specific topics within a simplified and clearly defined agenda. Such a schedule should be available and distributed well in advance of the formal meeting so that members have the opportunity to review and prepare. As a beginning, the Enchanted Hills conventioners decided to have the NADBA Constitution and by-laws sent to all members both in braille and large print so that the Association's meaning and reason for being would be more clearly understood. A listing of the officers' and board member's names and addresses could also be added.

Flexibility must be maintained in the times meetings begin and end with an aim towards emphasizing more responsibility such as being on time.

Future meetings should have an adequately skilled secretary who can record the minutes of the meetings and have those minutes duplicated and distributed both in braille and large print.

The controversy concerning meetings and recreation needs to be resolved to the satisfaction of all involved. The elimination of recreation or, for that matter, the total domination of business meetings and formal presentations does not have to be the answer. Perhaps blocks of time might be devoted exclusively to one activity or other. The mixing of the two activities (meetings and recreation) on a formal basis may be a bit impractical. Perhaps meetings could last until 2:00 or 3:00 p.m. with the latter part of the afternoon devoted to swimming or perhaps a long break in between morning and afternoon meeting sessions. The combinations are numerous but simplification and ease of operation appear essential. It has been suggested that the Helen Keller National Center provide leadership and direction in any or all matters discussed here with regard to future conventions. Centralizing authority within such a major agency would help to eliminate unnecessary overlap and conflict of interest.

### **Medical**

Greater stress should be placed on the need for accurate and complete medical records on all campers, staff, and support personnel.

Though posing no particular problem during this camp session, it might be of greater benefit to have medical personnel become more fluent with the One-Hand Manual Alphabet, and aware of other styles of communication. Support staff was fortunately on hand whenever communications between nurse and deaf-blind patients became necessary but emergency circumstances might require greater facility in this area.

It would be ideal to have nurses available 24 hours a day. Even one additional nurse would help enormously to relieve the work

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load and responsibility which was carried by the one available nurse.

### Recreation

Since recreation appears to be at least as important and necessary as other activities at camp, it bears closer examination. Recreational activities could be repeated for those campers who could not participate the first time around. Recreation and meetings scheduled on alternate days might also be a possibility.

The larger the number of deaf-blind campers and staff, the more the need there is for planning. The camp itself is new and foreign enough to make a day's activities similarly vague. Staff as well as campers can more quickly and clearly understand, adapt, and even work around an established routine or program. A routine could be drawn up and distributed to prospective campers far in advance of arrival so that the week's activities will be clear to them. Included in the application might be a section on recreational preferences and suggestions. This would give feedback to those involved with program planning and would include not only day but also evening events which are expected by the campers. Along with this planning, awards, prizes and the like could be added and used as incentives for more active participation.

It is important to recognize the fact that many deaf-blind persons live day to day without being very actively involved in physical and/or group activities. It is therefore necessary to be aware of physical limitations and to watch that campers do not overtax or injure themselves. On the other hand, it is important to realize that sitting passively by and seeming to be content is not necessarily an indication that a deaf-blind camper is content. This pattern is not uncharacteristic for many deaf-blind persons and it is up to the volunteer staff to encourage as much participation and mingling as is reasonable. Deaf-blind people are not unlike other

people in their desire for recognition and encouragement. It is an unfair assumption to conclude that the campers are perfectly satisfied and fulfilled. We might not be far wrong in assuming that the majority of deaf-blind campers don't travel hundreds or even thousands of miles and invest large sums of money in order to do the same things they were doing at home. It is necessary to constantly check and to at least try to weaken the barrier which causes some deaf-blind persons to hesitate in their interaction with other persons. Camper and staff personnel alike should be aware of this and make the additional effort.

### Meal-time Procedures

Problems with food are not unusual. Future conventions must just be aware that this is a major headache requiring constant attention. Times that meals were held, as with meetings, were subject to change. While this never presented a real problem, adherence to a schedule would be preferred.

The dining hall was also the scene for on-the-spot "reporting", announcing, and impromptu organizing, scheduling, bingo and other evening activities. Except for these areas, mealtimes were ideal times for further socialization, comparing notes, and general relaxation. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner did and should continue to offer these opportunities.



## BOOK REVIEWS

Frank R. Zieziula, Reviews Editor

*Habilitation of the Handicapped: New Dimensions in Programs for the Developmentally Disabled.* Marven Rosen, Gerald R. Clark and Marvin S. Kivitz. Baltimore, Maryland: University Park Press, 1977. 371 pp. \$18.50 (hardbound).

Rosen, Clark and Kivitz, of the prestigious Elwyn Institute, have compiled a valuable contribution to professional rehabilitation literature in mental retardation. Their text brings the concept of habilitation into focus as an effort to "maximize the individual's potential for learning, development and happiness," instead of the more traditional rehabilitation treatment of handicapping conditions. Arguing that these philosophical differences begin with rather narrow psychological evaluation and adaptive behavior classification systems, the authors offer valuable information about innovative criterion referenced and behavioral evaluation alternatives. A discussion of the "habilitation process" includes vocational and social training, a new look at institutional philosophies and services, and the community adjustment of mentally retarded citizens. The authors conclude the text with analyses of relevant supportive topics such as psychosexual adjustment, psychotherapy, group counseling, behavioral interventions and "learned helplessness." Finally, citing recent judicial, legislative and service consumer mandates, Rosen, Clark and Kivitz challenge rehabilitation specialists to mobilize resources for habilitative initiatives with retarded people.

While there is plenty of valuable information in *Habilitation of the Handicapped: New Dimensions in Programs for the Developmentally Disabled*, some criticisms are offered. First, the book title is misleading. The P.L. 94-103 definition of developmental disability is considerably broader than the scope of this text. Second, while academic rehabilitation specialists may treasure the many research studies and literature reviews

in the book, there is little here to help client service rehabilitation counselors with the practical "What do I do now?" questions. Third, like many rehabilitation documents these days, the authors of this book deal primarily with one major handicapping condition---mental retardation. Counselors I know need information about the multiplicative effects of and services for multiple handicaps.

Though rehabilitation or "habilitation" counselors working with deaf people can benefit from reading this text, applications of theory, research, and practice from this book will have to be extrapolated because deafness is not discussed.

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