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A study of the minority status of independent films in the deaf community: Implications for deaf studies curriculum development

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The University of Arizona, 1994

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A STUDY OF THE MINORITY STATUS OF INDEPENDENT FILMS IN THE DEAF COMMUNITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR DEAF STUDIES CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

by

Melinda Marcia Weinrib

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In the Graduate College

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1994
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ABSTRACT

A potentially rich source of curricular material for the development of a Deaf Studies curriculum lies in the category of feature films. The case of minority status of films produced in the American Deaf community is presented based on a comparison with the African-American independent film industry. An ethnographic study formulates an understanding of the contributions made by deaf independent filmmaker, Ernest Marshall. Marshall's personal background, his film business and perspectives on the value of film and signed language are discussed. A description of Marshall's film collection also provides an excellent historical resource for signed language use and for cross-cultural comparison purposes. Film studies are stressed as a viable teaching approach with the film medium providing cultural insights into the lives of deaf people and serving as a primary source for the documentation and preservation of American Sign Language.
INTRODUCTION

Due to the increasing recognition of American Sign Language (ASL) as a viable language in the education of deaf children, a bilingual/bicultural approach along with English is now being seriously considered as a pedagogy (e.g., Quigley & Paul, 1984; Johnson, Liddell, & Erting, 1989). Equally important is the development of a Deaf Studies curriculum especially designed for deaf children of various age groups as well. Jacobowitz (1991) argued that the three major components that all Deaf Studies educators should cover are language, culture, and oral-based literature. Although long overlooked, a possibly rich source for Deaf Studies curriculum development lies in the wide array of films produced within the Deaf community throughout the twentieth century. This is especially true because of a lack of research on the value of films in documenting and portraying the lives of deaf people and their use of ASL.

Although beyond the scope of the present research project, the visual nature of ASL as a language along with the use of film medium may be critical for deaf children's needed literacy development. Literacy can lead to successful learning of English as a second language. For the purpose of further development of Deaf Studies curriculum, the present study is rectifies the oversight of the film medium and its role in the Deaf community in the United States. An ethnographic study was designed to investigate feature films as a genre as well as to develop an understanding of the deaf independent film industry and the use of signed language. In order to collect information regarding feature films, a notable deaf filmmaker was interviewed and his films reviewed. The significant findings of the study are related

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1 refers to non-written literary traditions of the Deaf community or literary works originated in American Sign Language and transmitted orally among signers and through generations.
to the background of the deaf filmmaker, his film business, and signed
language use in his films. Special emphasis is on the filmmaker's perpectives of
other deaf independent filmmakers and on the value of the film medium for the Deaf
community. Also, this study compares the historical development of Deaf and
African-American independent films or those films produced outside of Hollywood.
This area of investigation is critical for understanding the shared minority group
status of both Deaf and African-American communities and how the historical
oppression of these groups is reflected in the films that they produced. Finally, the
films produced in Hollywood depicting Deaf and African-American members of the
society will be discussed as well to determine for their impact on the minority
independent film industry.

In the following sections of this study, an integrated literature review and
data are presented. The research sequence for the study is as follows: 1) review the
educational movement in Deaf Studies and the role film plays in the development of
Deaf Studies curriculum as well as determine the minority status of deaf independent
films; 2) conduct an ethnographic interview with Ernest W. Marshall concerning his
background and filmmaking experiences; 3) analyze the interview with Marshall and
his film collection related to the portrayal of the Deaf community and historical
changes and variation in ASL. Outcomes of this study are expected to provide
recognition to the independent feature films produced in the Deaf community and to
determine their value and roles as a major resource within a Deaf Studies curriculum.
More specifically, the films produced by Marshall provide an excellent historical
source as well as a cross-cultural comparison with the feature films produced in the
African-American community.

In order to gain a fuller appreciation of the data as provided through
Marshall and his films, it is necessary to review recent developments in creating
Deaf Studies curriculum and how these developments reflect the nationwide movement in promoting multicultural approaches to curriculum and teaching in the classroom. Special attention is given to the extent to which Deaf Studies curriculum includes films produced in the Deaf community and to the role of feature films in the area of performance art. Although film studies are generally not stressed in regular multicultural curricula, the basic argument made here is that the film medium is visual and that it serves as a primary source for the documentation and preservation of signed language.

FILMMAKING AND DEAF STUDIES

The notion of Deaf Studies was first raised back in the early 1970's by Frederick J. Schreiber, then executive director of the National Association of the Deaf. Schreiber emphasized the value of Deaf Studies in this way:

*If deaf people are to get ahead in our time, they must have a better image of themselves and their capabilities. They need concrete examples of what deaf people have already done so they can project for themselves a brighter future. If we can have Black studies, Jewish studies, why not Deaf studies?* (Gannon, 1981, p. 416).

In more recent years, M.J. Bienvenu (1991) points out that deaf children need to relate to other minority groups. Deaf children within the educational setting need to learn of the oppression with which members of certain cultures have learned to live, and how our roles in society maintains or resists that oppression. Furthermore, the study of Deaf culture provides an important function by helping deaf children to learn facts about different cultural groups as well. The content of a Deaf Studies curriculum is expected to share a common thread as each minority
culture has survived and sometimes flourished despite the lack of understanding and support of the majority who hold power within society.

Kannapell (1991) states that educators need to be more sensitive and supportive of deaf children's need to develop a Deaf identity, especially those born to hearing parents. Too frequently, deaf children are assumed to function as hearing children even though they lack the needed hearing for acquiring the English language naturally and effectively socializing with non-signing hearing peers. As a result, the role of Deaf Studies is vital for strengthening the identity of deaf children; fostering a positive self-image or self-worth; creating a sense of pride; celebrating the abilities of deaf children, showing that deaf children have role models and a heritage worthy of recording, and, developing respect for and recognition of ASL as a language while departing from the pathological perspective of deafness. Deaf Studies is also expected to prepare hearing parents of deaf children to accept the realities of deafness, including the use of ASL and Deaf culture as another human variation within society (Andersson, 1991).

With the increasing interest in Deaf Studies in 1991, the first Deaf Studies conference was held in Dallas, Texas. Nationally acclaimed speakers presented convincing arguments and proposals for developing Deaf Studies curriculum within the field of deaf education. Educators attending the conference were encouraged to collect or expand a body of literature reflecting the rich linguistic, social, and cultural aspects of the Deaf community in the United States. At this conference, Melvia Miller-Nomeland presented model curriculum developed by Sara Gillespie and herself titled the Kendall Demonstration Elementary School Deaf Studies Curriculum Guideline (1993). This model curriculum is well-organized including specific objectives and activities for deaf students at both the primary and secondary levels. A total of six major areas are included which are: 1) Identity; 2) American Deaf
Culture; 3) American Sign Language; 4) Communication; 5) History; and 6) Social Change.

The positive effects of the new Deaf Studies curriculum are reported in Abrams (1993), and the unit on American Deaf Culture helps deaf students to recognize their distinct cultural and minority status. Another unit, American Sign Language, familiarizes deaf students with the rich oral traditions of the Deaf community through the medium of storytelling. The film category is under the unit of Deaf History, but the films are not organized according to the genre. The unit includes a set of historical films produced through the National Association of the Deaf (NAD, 1910-1920) and did not include any other films, feature or not, produced after the 1920's. Although, relevant information in regard to NAD's role in film production was included, the focus was still limited to one set of films within a short period in the history of the Deaf community.

The Deaf Studies movement is not necessarily unique. The Multicultural curriculum at Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD, 1992) and the Multicultural Social Studies curriculum at Tucson Unified School District (TUSD, 1993), for example, do parallel the content and processes of the model Deaf Studies curriculum. These curriculums contain units on self-identity and personal development, appreciation of diversity as a valued characteristic of the national identity, cultural awareness and understanding, history, achievements, values and ethnical behavior. Each discipline provides natural opportunities for students to develop self-awareness and self-esteem, in addition to learning about the culture and how it is transmitted through folklore, music, art, and social activities. However, for films as a category, no coverage is made in either curriculum. One possible explanation lies in the availability of extensive written literature for understanding multicultural issues. Spanish, for example, is a written language and Spanish
literature is richly documented in the form of books.

The critical question raised here is the value of the film medium within a Deaf Studies curriculum. An examination of the special relationship between the film medium and ASL as a language is needed. Equally important to understanding the history and culture, is the significance of films produced within the Deaf community as well as those produced in Hollywood. This area of investigation is expected to contribute to determining the value and role films have within the Deaf Studies curriculum.

4.1 American Sign Language and the Film Medium

According to Fleischer (1991), the visual medium of film is critical for documenting and preserving signed language use in the past as well as the present. This is especially understandable given the fact that ASL is an unwritten language, and its literature, though rich, is strictly oral-based. Also, the cultural significance of films produced in the Deaf community suggests an excellent source for educational purposes. For example, Charles Krauel was a notable deaf filmmaker who specialized in making films of various social events within the Deaf community in Chicago from 1925 to the 1950's. Although not feature film in genre, the vast Krauel film collection is now of significant historical value and has been placed into the archives at Gallaudet University. Krauel, prior to his death, had been interviewed for a documentary of his life and films in 1982 (Supalla, 1991). The documentary film, "Charles Krauel: Portrait of a Deaf Filmmaker", chronicled Krauel's filmmaking ventures, his personal perspective on signed language use and his life philosophy. Padden and Humphries (1988) translated Krauel's reflections upon ASL, in particular on what it was and the recent introduction of artificial English-based sign systems:
Nowadays, signs are different. Back then, signs were better, you know, natural, but now with all these IS kind of signs, and all that—well, it may be good for children who need to learn language. Those kinds of signs are good language. My signs are not, they're like "short-cuts", more abbreviated. But it sure saves time though. This faster way of talking is much clearer. Nowadays, with IS and all those things, you get these long drawn-out sentences that take forever to sign. It is a waste of time, I tell you.

The case of Krauel, provides evidence as to the value of the film medium in recording a visual language. Only film was able to document his remarks, in their original form and they can be subject to discussion in a classroom of deaf students. The history of ASL as a language needs to be included in the Deaf Studies curriculum as well as how deaf people erroneously perceive their own language. Also of importance is developing an understanding of the recent development of a signed version of the English language. In conjunction with the Krauel interview, Krauel’s own films are expected to present a vivid portrayal of deaf people lives in the past.

Within the Deaf community, the bulk of beliefs, values, and traditions are largely transmitted orally. However, a significant literary work in ASL can also be effectively presented through the film medium. In the oral-based literature of ASL, the three major genres are oratory, folklore, and performance art. In the signed oratory genre, the characteristics distinguishing are the rate of delivery, the size of individual signs and signing space, and the incorporation of formal forms and style of the signer (Frishberg, 1988). Folklore, on the other hand, involves a variety of signed materials reflecting deaf people's culture and world view, as well as images of group and individual definitions of identity (Rutherford, 1987). The traditional language arts in ASL may include storytelling with traditional themes, motifs, creating names in signs, visual and verbal jokes and games. A number of films, and
more recently videotapes, have been produced over the years, and recent examples are "My Third Eye" from the National Theatre of the Deaf (1973) and "The World According to Pat: Reflections of Residential School Days" as performed "live" by nationally acclaimed deaf actor and storyteller, Pat Graybill and produced by Sign Media, Inc. (1986).

Performance art is particularly relevant as it includes feature films produced in the Deaf community, and it can serve as a source for developing the needed interest and pride among students in the Deaf Studies classroom. With the showing of such films, deaf children are expected to develop a healthy self-image and greater confidence as well as a more positive attitude and outlook toward life and society. Role models are readily provided in the films. The use of ASL in films is also expected to help deaf students to build and expand their views of what constitutes literacy achievement in a language without a written literary form. This is especially true concerning their own language, ASL. The use of film material can expose these students to a variety of forms of literacy ranging from a story as told by one of the actors to dialogues between actors, the details of sign production related to historical changes and regional use, and the potential for repetition of events by replaying film segments.

The contribution of feature films as produced in the Deaf community may be significant for the needed development of metalinguistic skills among deaf children in the school setting as well as for the development of English as a second language. For example, according to the model program developed by Neuroth-Gimbrone and Logiodice (1992), the feature films could be introduced to the class, and deaf students participate in class discussion to facilitate their metalinguistic awareness of their own language, ASL. Also, in the later steps to follow up, deaf students could focus on translating the signed dialogues and stories as told by performers in the
film into written English, and the teacher could provide these students with written literature in English, if applicable. In the case of Marshall's films, this is especially true as some stories in Marshall's films were based on texts written originally in English. As will be discussed later, Marshall was able to create his feature films by both translating (from English to ASL) and adapting the stories for film production. Deaf students should be aware of the process that Marshall undertook, and they should attempt to translate and reconstruct the story from film in ASL as well as reading the original story. Although more research is needed, ASL metalinguistic skills in conjunction with translation and reading-writing skills in English is expected to develop based upon the use of feature films with deaf children.

4.2 Status of ASL as a Language

As stated earlier, the use of the film medium has been with us for over a century, but ASL as a language has been in use for much longer which can be traced back to France. The European origins of ASL have resulted in a long evolutionary process leading to its present status as an autonomous signed language used throughout the United States and parts of Canada (Frishberg, 1975; Lane, 1984). More specifically, the creolization of French Sign Language and indigenous signed languages used in this country including that of Martha's Vineyard led to the development of ASL (Groce, 1985; Woodward, 1980). The founding of the first American public school for deaf children in 1817, presently named the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut, has played a critical role in the further development of ASL as a conventionalized language in this country. Two key figures, both teachers of the deaf and founders of the school, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc were credited for advocating the use of signed language in the education of deaf children (Lane, 1980; 1984).
According to historical accounts, signed language use with deaf children was later discouraged or restricted with the rise of pure oralism. The year of 1880 is marked as the beginning of oppression that continued until the early 1970s. In 1880, the International Congress of Milan in Italy voted against the use of signed language in the education of deaf children, and the ban against signed language was carried out throughout the world including the United States (Lane, 1980; Stedt & Moores, 1990; Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989). It is interesting to note that the National Association of the Deaf formed in the same year as the Milan Conference and the banning of signed language use with deaf children put film production high on their agenda (Schuchman, 1988). In this case, the film medium was quickly exploited by the Deaf community as effective propaganda in their campaign in supporting the preservation and use of ASL.

A significant contributor to the NAD film production was George W. Veditz, the third president of the organization (1904-1910), as well as a participant in one of the films produced and is a much quoted orator. The NAD film entitled, "Preservation of Sign Language" (1913) in which Veditz performed his signed oratory serves as the only documented source for his now famous quote:

As long as we have Deaf people on earth, we will have signs...
It is my hope that we all will love and guard our beautiful sign language as the noblest gift God has given to Deaf people
(Padden & Humphries, 1988, p. 36).

He fought personally for the use of ASL in the education of deaf children, and the post-Milan climate during this period was much against his beliefs and his organization. Apparently, deaf leaders and members of the Deaf community were fearful that ASL might disappear as a language, and Veditz succeeded in raising funds to produce films that included sign masters of the time. In addition to Veditz,
another sign master was Winfield Marshall who in 1920 performed a translation of "Yankee Doodle" in ASL. NAD produced the series of films from 1910 to 1920, and Winfield Marshall's film was possibly the last one. By sheer coincidence, Ernest Marshall who participated in this ethnographic study is the nephew of one of the men who pioneered the use of signed language in the film medium.

In Veditz's famous oratory quoted above, he later shares some significant thoughts on signed language:

Friends and fellow deaf mutes...The French deaf people loved Epée. Every year on the occasion of his birthday they gather together at banquets and festivities to show their appreciation that his man was born on this earth. They travel to his gravesite in Versailles and place flowers and green wreaths on his grave to show their respect in his remembrance. They loved him because he was the first teacher, but they loved him more for being the father and inventor of their beautiful sign language (Padden & Humphries, 1988, p. 33-34).

This segment of Veditz's filmed oratory provides special insights into understanding the origins of signed language. The name of the Abbé de l' Epée refers to an extremely important figure in Deaf history, a priest in Paris, France during the eighteen century, he encountered two young deaf sisters. The sisters signed to one another, and de l' Epée resolved to learn their sign language. This meeting led de l' Epée to the founding of formal education for deaf children (Lane, 1976; 1984). Through incorrectly credited for being the inventor of signed language, Padden and Humphries (1988) explained that it was de l' Épée who led the movement in promoting the use of signed language in the education of deaf children.

Also, another folktale about de l' Épée is reported in France, and it has been successfully transmitted orally in the Deaf community there for the years. Both American and French versions of de l' Épée are part of folk mythology common in
the two countries (Padden & Humphries, 1988). As a result, the film segment of Veditz serves as an excellent example of how a film can be used for educational purposes as far as Deaf Studies is concerned (Jacobowitz, 1991). More specifically, deaf students should be able to sense the special role de l’Epée played in shaping their history and how this figure was and continues to be highly revered in France as well as in the United States. More importantly, the students learn that the signed language Veditz referred to is, in fact, French Sign Language, and its important historical relationship with ASL. Finally, the teaching of folklore is achieved through the discussion of the legend on the origins of signed language as covered in the film segment.

The NAD films are now part of the George W. Veditz collection in the archives at Gallaudet University which are named in his honor. Fortunately, the old films which are now approximately eighty years old are accessible through videotape copies distributed by Gallaudet Media Distribution for the Kendall Demonstration Elementary School Deaf Studies Curriculum Guide. Also, these films should be considered the first successful attempt in the history (at least in the United States) at preserving the orality of ASL through the film medium. The NAD film collection comprises the first independent films ever produced in the Deaf community as well. The NAD films include oratory, storytelling, personal anecdotes as told by sign masters, but no feature films. The genre of feature films was not produced in the Deaf community until the 1930’s. Interestingly, Ernest Marshall may be the first to produce a feature film. His first feature film was titled "It is Too Late" which was produced in 1937. At this point, both Marshalls, the

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2 According to Schuchman (1988), a deaf independent film entitled, "The Selfish Mr. Tiggity" was also made by M.C. Movie Production Company, Arkron, Ohio in the 1930’s. The author is unable to provide an exact year of production.
uncle and nephew, Winfield and Ernest shared a common interest in filmmaking. They made a historical contribution in the creation of independent deaf film industry.

Besides independent film production, the Deaf community also participated as actors in films produced in Hollywood, especially during the "silent film" days. Unfortunately, with the advent of "talkies", deaf actors were then excluded (Schuchman, 1988). Audiences were able to hear actors' dialogues, and speaking was widely encouraged along with acting. Subtitles were no longer used. Most of the deaf actors leaving the film industry of Hollywood did not continue filmmaking within the Deaf community. One notable exception was Emerson Romero who brought his experiences to assist with filmmaking in the Deaf community. Romero teamed with Ernest Marshall and they combined their expertise and resources in the production of several films.

4.3 Early Silent Films and Deaf Filmmakers

In Hollywood, one of the first deaf actors to be involved in silent motion pictures was Emerson Romero who starred in Spanish-captioned silent movies produced by his brother (Schuchman, 1987). Romero's stage name was Tommy Albert. Romero starred in several short silent movies from Hollywood. Schuchman (1988) states that none of Romero's films are known to be in existence today, although subsequent interviews and photographs reveal that he played four comedic roles from 1925 to 1927. Romero was eventually unemployed because of the "talkies". During the second World War, he worked in a war plant on Long Island, New York until the war was over. He had a small shop which sold homemade vibratory alarm clocks specifically designed for deaf consumers. He became very active in deaf theater groups and was a performer for deaf audiences in
New York City. He advocated the making of movies with all-deaf casts for the Deaf community and produced captions for the then inaccessible talking movies.

Although Romero had no contact with the Captioned Films for the Deaf eventually established in 1958 by Congressional law, he is considered to be a pioneer in the development of a captioned film library for the deaf (Gannon, 1981). Romero had to withdraw from his work on captioned films because inserting captions between scenes often broke up dialogue in the middle of a sentence, making the films too long for the average audience and the cost was prohibitive for one individual. Unfortunately, Romero did not receive any recognition for his accomplishments from the Deaf community until after his death. Books such as Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America (1981), Gallaudet Encyclopedia of Deaf People and Deafness (1987), and Hollywood Speaks: Deafness & the Film Entertainment Industry (1988), have mentioned Romero and his achievements.

Regardless of whether Romero was involved in acting or not, deaf people enjoyed the silent films produced in Hollywood. The films shown in public theaters came with subtitles which enabled deaf people to follow the story in the films. However, when silent films converted to "talkies" in 1929, deaf people lost the same equality of access to this form of entertainment (Schuchman, 1987). Deaf independent films, on the other hand, provided a fully accessible form of entertainment, and a number of feature films have since been produced for specifically deaf audiences. With the decline of silent films after 1929, the production of feature films in the Deaf community was born. This is evident in the case of Marshall who began feature film production in 1937 and with others in following years. The feature films produced in signed language were shown in deaf social organizations (e.g., clubs), and they attracted a large deaf audience. Marshall's feature films were among these shown and Marshall was at once a well-
known filmmaker in the Deaf community throughout the country. Unfortunately Marshall is now no longer a familiar figure to the younger deaf generations nor is his work widely recognized in the field of Deaf Studies.

Among other deaf filmmakers, Peter Wolf is a more recent figure. Wolf is a filmmaker with numerous capabilities ranging from being a producer, director to cinematographer. He has also acted in a couple of his own feature films. In fact, Wolf wrote, directed, and performed in "Deafula" (1975) and "Think Me Nothing" (1979). While a student at Gallaudet University, he majored in drama. Then he joined the National Theater of the Deaf (NTD). While touring with the NTD, he studied books on filmmaking and collected money from each NTD company member to direct and produce a film about NTD's travels (Bangs, 1987). Wolfe, inspired by deaf filmmaking, formed his own company called Signscope in Portland, Oregon, and his goal was to produce films about deaf people. His first film, "Deafula" was a deaf version of Dracula. It was shown in theaters and was well received by the Deaf community. He then made his second film, "Think Me Nothing" in California which did not do as well financially as Deafula. It required a great deal of editing due to several soft porn scenes (Bangs, 1987). Wolf recently completed production of his third film, "I Love You But..." (1994), a romantic comedy written by a deaf writer who is also an executive producer, Dr. Lawrence Fleischer.

According to Schuchman (1988), there is a total of 33 deaf independent films identified during the period from 1910 to 1979, including nine produced by Marshall. The number of films produced peaked at 11 in 1910 when filmmaking was first introduced in the Deaf community, and it declined to an average of two films produced each decade during the period from 1920 to 1940. The filmmaking activity in the Deaf community increased during the following decades of 1950,
1960, and 1970. A total of seven films were produced in the 1970's, including two by Wolf. The graphic illustration of the filmmaking activity in the Deaf community in the United States from 1910's to 1970's is as follows:

![Graph showing the change in frequency of films produced by decade from 1910's to 1970's.]

Table 1: Filmmaking activity in the Deaf community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decades</th>
<th>Frequency of Films Produced</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910's</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920's</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>1930's</td>
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<td>1960's</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970's</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Modern Deaf Independent Filmmaking

The increased deaf filmmaking activity in recent years coincides with a dramatic increase in the public awareness in regard to language and arts of the Deaf community (Frishberg, 1988). The National Association of the Deaf (NTD), for example, was established in 1967 as one of the primary organizations responsible for changing the attitudes of society towards deaf people through their performances in use of signed language. The NTD included both deaf and hearing performers working together in order to make their performances accessible to both deaf and hearing audiences. The NTD received the Tony Award for theatrical excellence in 1977 (Mow, 1987). The prestige of this theatrical company created the needed respect for ASL as a language, and it resulted in the development of a large
audience. The signing community now included hearing people who became interested in learning ASL as a language, and the number of people becoming fluent in ASL exploded with the availability of classes in higher education institutions and in local communities (Wilcox & Wilcox, 1991). Finally, the NTD has made a direct contribution to filmmaking in the Deaf community as well. It is of note that as a result of the NTD's efforts, Wolf was able to experiment with filmmaking during one of the NTD's tours and later made a commitment to the establishment of his own movie production company.

The impact of the NTD on society at large is especially relevant concerning its various programs such as the Little Theatre of the Deaf which performs for children in schools, libraries, museums, and parks in the United States. The NTD Professional school is offered each summer for those in the Deaf community who are interested in taking classes in acting, dancing, theater, literature, and arts (Mow, 1987). Eventually, national television and movies saw the success of deaf actors and actresses performing together at NTD and started to include them in their shows.

A good example of this success is Phyllis Frelich who was one of the founding members of the NTD. Frelich and her husband, Robert Steinberg met the famous playwright, Mark Medoff who wrote a play about the experiences of deaf people in a hearing world as well as other issues. Medoff used Frelich and Steinberg as the models for his characters and created the play, "Children of a Lesser God". It focused mostly on the cross-cultural experiences of a married couple who were deaf and hearing (Panara, 1987). The play had a successful run at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, and then it opened on Broadway. Frelich won the Tony Award for the Best Actress in the play and was the first deaf person to receive such an award in history. Eventually, the play was made into a movie with Marlee Maltin who then won an Oscar Award for Best Actress. This became one of the
biggest breakthroughs for deaf people in the film media and led to even more increased awareness of signed language and Deaf culture by hearing people.

The most significant and hopeful sign has been the increased appearance of deaf actors and actresses in the roles of deaf characters. Since 1966 they have appeared with increasing frequency, capped by the December 1985 Hallmark Hall of Fame presentation of "Love Is Never Silent", starring deaf actors Phyllis Frelich and Edmund Waterstreet and produced by Jullianna Fjeld who is also deaf (Schuchman, 1988). Julianna Fjeld won an Emmy Award for Best Picture for her work on this film. At this point, the use of ASL in filmmaking is no longer limited to those produced within the Deaf community, but that it is now true in a number of recent film productions throughout Hollywood. However, the achievement made with the hiring of deaf actors and actresses and Hollywood's improved sensitivity and interest in the language and culture of the Deaf community was actually a result of a long struggle over the years.

As mentioned earlier, historically, deaf actors and actresses have been excluded from Hollywood films that involve characters who are deaf. Instead, Hollywood has traditionally hired hearing actors who acted like deaf people. There were negative stereotypes such as the dummy, the perfect speaker, the expert lipreader, and the fake deaf person and the unhappy deaf person (Schuchman, 1988). Some movies included unrealistic scenes of deaf people cured by a blow to the head or by falling down the stairs. Deaf community members objected to such stereotypes and myths and were determined to halt these kinds of films.

One of the first protests came from the Deaf community in 1979, when there was a boycott by deaf activists because the producers of "Voices", a movie about a deaf young woman who fell in love with a hearing man, hired a hearing actress to play the deaf female role. This might have caused Hollywood producers to
consider hiring "real" deaf actors and actresses like Marlee Matlin. More recently, however, in August 1993, there was another boycott by the Deaf community of the Columbia picture, "Calendar Girl". Their casting advertisement stated that actors applying for the role must be fluent in sign language, with a preference for deaf people. According to the National Association of the Deaf Broadcaster (September, 1993), the producers eventually released a revised role description which stated actors did not need to be deaf as the role was not a "speaking role". There was only one deaf actor and sixteen hearing actors called back for the second audition. Eventually, despite the outcry from the Deaf community, a hearing actor was hired to play the role of the deaf character.

Hopefully, the past experience of deaf protests will provide Hollywood with new directions in handling with deaf-related issues and end this long-standing pattern of discrimination so that deaf actors can be given the opportunity to play the role of deaf characters in films that are produced in the future. More importantly, the enduring misconceptions of the Deaf community as perceived by society would diminish once more accurate portrayals of deaf people are made, especially through Hollywood films. Unfortunately, in a number of recent Hollywood movies, the story often lies in the cross-cultural experiences of deaf people and how they endure in the hearing world. Rather, the real story of deaf people lies in those experiences of being in the Deaf community. For example, the cross-cultural marriages of deaf and hearing people are a rarity, and it is far more commonplace for a deaf person to marry a deaf spouse as far as statistics are concerned (e.g., Schein, 1989). "Children of a Lesser God" may provide an example of a gain greater sensitivity of hiring deaf actors and actresses, but the balance is still in favor of hearing and non-signing audiences. If this is the case, the deaf independent films may still be the only accurate portrayal of the deaf experience and are possibly more entertaining for
Regardless of whether deaf-related films are produced in Hollywood, the increase in deaf independent films is a significant and recent phenomenon, and it cannot be ignored any longer. Moreover, the total number of 33 deaf independent films identified are probably only those known at the time of publication of "Hollywood Speaks: Deafness and the Film Entertainment Industry" (1988). Other independent films have been made over the years. One full length feature film produced in Oregon and released in 1978, was entitled "Beyond the End of the Rainbow." This particular film was not reported by Schuchman. Clarence Supalla was the producer as well as the leading actor in the dramatic film, and the name of the movie company he founded was OK Theatricals. In addition, a local deaf independent filmmaker of the Los Angeles area, Lynton Rider, has reportedly produced four or five full length feature films during the 1950's and 1960's. According to David Supalla who was acquainted with Mr. Rider, the films are now thirty or forty years old and are not accessible to the public. The title of these films is not known. Mr. Rider is now deceased and his film collection is supposed to be in the hands of his daughter who lives in the same area (Sam Supalla, personal communication). With the Rider films as an example, more work is evidently needed in tracing, collecting, and preserving deaf independent films produced across the country.

Finally, for the purpose of Deaf Studies curriculum, the deaf independent film category requires more attention based on its accurate representation of the Deaf community in the United States. For example, preservation and dissemination of older deaf independent films for educational purposes remains a critical issue. However, before any further discussion, it is necessary to first examine yet another set of minority films produced within the African-American community in this
country and how it compares with the industry as developed by deaf people and the struggle involved with Hollywood.

4.5 A Cross-Cultural Comparison

Throughout the 1900's, 20's, 30's, and 40's, African-Americans protested the negative screen images in the films produced by the major studios. For example, African-Americans were shown in stereotypic roles of stupidity, submissiveness, irresponsibility, laziness, and cowardice. Another insult to African-Americans was when whites appeared in blackface. A strikingly similar comparison can be made with the protests made by deaf people as discussed earlier and where only difference may lie in the time period between the two minority groups. That is, the Deaf community became most active in protesting later, their portrayal in films in the 1970's and continued into the 1990's. Sampson (1977) explains that these protests were led by civil rights organizations, black performers, and most of all, by the black-oriented newspaper. Some of the protesters urged African-Americans to boycott the movies altogether, thereby imposing economic pressure on Hollywood producers. Others urged African-American actors and actresses not to accept the stereotypic roles that were offered them. Some even suggested that African-Americans organize their own independent film companies and produce their own films. A number of individuals, both African-American and white, accepted this latter challenge.

The first challenge undertaken was in 1910; William Foster with African-American participation and advice produced the first of a series of African-American cast comedies. This was the first time African-Americans had a voice in the production and distribution of movies for African-American audiences (Sampson, 1977). Interestingly, 1910 is also the year when deaf people produced their first
film. The National Association of the Deaf was involved in film production, but the total of thirteen films produced were not comedies nor do they belong to the feature genre. Also, William Foster may be an African-American filmmaking pioneer as was George Veditz.

In the African-American community, the first comedies produced led to the establishment of the Lincoln Motion Picture Company in 1916. On January 20, 1917, the State of California awarded $75,000.00 and issued a certificate of incorporation to the Lincoln Motion Picture Company. Lincoln’s first production was a feature film, "Realization of a Negro’s Ambition", whose theme centered around the African-American middle class. It was the first feature picture in the United States starring African-Americans in dramatic nonstereotyped roles (Sampson, 1977). On the other hand, for the Deaf community, the first feature film was produced in the 1930s, but unlike the literature on African-American films, the needed detailed description of Marshall’s, "It is Too Late" and other deaf independent films were lacking.

The financial success of Lincoln's first film convinced others that this could be a profitable business. After Lincoln's first picture was shown in African-American theaters in the East, there were a few more African-American independent film companies established by African-Americans in Chicago. The Lincoln Motion Picture Company demonstrated the ability of African-American men to write, direct, produce and distribute motion pictures worthy of national attention. However, the African-American film companies had to hire white union cameramen and editors, who were paid the same union wages they would have received if they had been working in a Hollywood studio as there were no African-American camera operators or editors in those years. The reason for this shortage was that unions would not accept African-American applicants for membership. The question of whether the
difficulties that pioneer African-American filmmakers encountered were also true for those in the Deaf community is still unknown. The same is true for the extent of business success among the early deaf filmmakers.

The rapid growth of the African-American film industry in the early 1920's was probably a result of the general acceptance by the African-American audience and the rapid construction of theaters in those cities of the south and north which had large African-American populations. More interestingly, most African-American films were rated average in quality mainly due to low budgets and the limited experience of producers during that period. There was also a lack of quality film actors and technicians (Sampson, 1977). Although some remarkable films were made during the silent era, the technical quality of these films only started to show improvement in the 1930's and 1940's and the African-American audience started to become acquainted with the various African-American screen personalities. The quality of early deaf independent films is not expected to be exceptionally high, and it is still unclear as far as the literature is concerned on whether certain deaf screen personalities had developed for the deaf audience.

Between 1910 and the 1950's, 163 independent film companies were organized for the specific purposes of producing African-American cast films for showing in the segregated theaters which were owned and operated by both African-Americans and whites. However, there had been only 65 African-American independent film companies which were owned and operated by African-Americans (Sampson, 1977). During the same period, Marshall, for example, had formed his own company, but not much is known on the total number of film companies formed in the Deaf community. Moreover, with a much smaller population in the Deaf community, the number of film companies formed should be proportionally smaller as compared with that of the African-American community.
Jones (1991) states that a great loss occurred when the African-American audience films died out in the early 1950's. These films were a much needed portal through which African-American artists could pass into worldwide fame. Unfortunately, those groups who established the African-American independent films were not recognized by the general public. Almost all of the silent films and sound films have either been lost or destroyed, held by private collectors, or are unavailable for viewing by the general public. As mentioned earlier, the lack of recognition for Marshall as a filmmaker serves as an excellent example. Fortunately, unlike most of the African-American films, Marshall's own eleven films are still preserved, and they are now available through Gallaudet University's archives. Marshall, who is still living, has made every effort to preserve his films throughout the years. He has also personally donated the films to the Gallaudet University archives over the past few years. Films other than those produced by Marshall have also been preserved, but it is uncertain as to how many more deaf independent films have been overlooked, lost or destroyed over the years.

In the 1950's, a few African-Americans began making movies in Hollywood. Since the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's, increasing numbers of African-American students began entering university film programs and film schools. In contrast to many early African-American independents, these students became politically involved in the production and technology of films. Thus, these African-American filmmakers focused on the real experience of the African-American community to the "film's full aesthetic and political potential" (Cham & Andrade-Watkins, 1988, p. 22). It is interesting to note that the Department of Television, Film, and Photography was formed at Gallaudet University in 1984 and the courses developed are especially designed for deaf students. The popular weekly television program entitled, "Deaf Mosaic" released through the public
television stations nationwide is a product of the Department. It should be noted that present active deaf independent filmmaker, Peter Wolf did not benefit from the courses offered in television production as he completed his study at Gallaudet prior to the establishment of the Department. Moreover, Wolf is inclined to filmmaking over television production, and he reportedly has had formal training in a film school located in California.

As far as deaf independent films are concerned, they are not necessarily in decline as occurred with the African-American independent film industry, but rather deaf film production began to rise during the 1950's as discussed earlier. However, the aesthetic and political value of deaf independent films is still not fully exploited nor are they produced in sufficient number. In the case of African-American independent films, a different course has taken place, that is, a variety of local filmmaking activities occurred more frequently in the 1970's and into the 1980's. These films were more fictional and narrative than those from the earlier periods. More attention is needed on the nature of recent deaf independent films. Furthermore, as in the case of modern African-American independent filmmaking, the remaining question is how minority filmmakers handle the competitive challenge from an increasing monopolistic and compelling industry of Hollywood (Cham & Andrade-Watkins, 1988).

In sum, there are a number of parallels when comparing Deaf and African-American independent films. There are, however, some significant gaps in the specific information related to the deaf independent film industry and the number of deaf filmmakers involved. Although the field of Deaf Studies is relatively new, more research is needed to fill in the gaps. As more films and information about these films are gathered, Deaf Studies instruction will, in turn, become more comprehensive. As discussed earlier, the notion of Deaf Studies has become popular
in the school curriculum serving deaf children nationwide. A serious stumbling block remains to the further development of Deaf studies which is the lack of research in this area. This is especially true in terms of the extent and nature of deaf independent films. One significant gap lies in the detailed description of deaf independent films as well as the personalities involved in their development. Equally important is the financial status of the deaf independent film industry and further understanding of individual film companies involved.

Ernest Marshall, an accomplished deaf filmmaker, was involved as the principal consultant in order to help answer some of the questions raised by this study. Not only were the ethnographic interviews with him an excellent means for comparing deaf independent filmmaking with the African-American independent film industry, but also a rich source of data related to his personal background as well as to his contributions to the language and culture of the Deaf community. In the following section, the research method for this thesis is explained and the results of the ethnographic interviews and analysis of the ethnographic data are presented.

RESEARCH METHOD: ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Informal interviews are a central data collection technique for ethnographic studies (Johnson, 1992; Spradley, 1979). Some of the most effective ethnographic approaches involve the use of key informant interview, life history interviews, and expressive autobiographic interviews. According to Johnson (1992, p. 88):

*Successful interviewing in both a skill and an art. It take time, experience, effort to learn to interview both efficiently and well. It is important to establish and maintain good*
rapport, to be able to control the pace and direction of the conversation as needed, and to know how to follow up on important issues.

The present study uses the ethnographic interview approach to focus on the life history of the deaf independent filmmaker Ernest Marshall. The interview is then analyzed to determine linguistic and cultural themes relevant to Deaf Studies.

For the purpose of this ethnographic research project conducted on Deaf independent films, Ernest Marshall was first contacted through a letter, and he granted permission to participate in the study. The two and a half hour ethnographic interview session followed up at a community center for the deaf located on Long Island outside New York City on August 20, 1993. Marshall was fully aware of the thesis research work involved and what the focus was. Furthermore, the Marshall film collection was subject to a detailed description modeled after the Deaf-Folklore Film Collection Project (Supalla, 1991). Nine out of eleven known Marshall films were made available in the videotape format along with their titles, and they were subject to coding related to the following five attributes:

1) Filmmaker name, 2) Film date, 3) Videotape time, 4) Film location, and 5) Subject Name. Not included in the indexing system model, a synopsis was also written to describe the story content in each of the nine films. See Appendix A for detailed description of the nine Marshall films. The remaining two Marshall films not included in the study are not accessible as they are only available in the original film preserved at Gallaudet University's archives.

Prior to the interview session, Marshall provided a videotaped copy of himself doing a two-hour long presentation on his filmmaking experiences. A complete transcription and analysis of this two-hour presentation was done. See Appendix B for a copy of the transcription data. As a result of the analysis, there
were certain themes evident in Marshall's presentation in need of expansion, and a set of follow-up questions were then developed for the actual in-person interview session conducted. See Appendix C for a copy of the 40 questions developed. Again, the videotaped interview was transcribed and analyzed. See Appendix D for a copy of the transcribed data according to each question asked, this appendix also contains additional questions asked during the interview. Several important themes emerged from the interviews including: Marshall's personal history, film business experience, the value of sign language use in his films, and the reaction of deaf audiences to his films. The results of the interview and analysis of relevant themes are presented in the following section. First, Ernest Marshall's description of his growing up in a deaf family, are presented including his experiences at the school for the deaf; followed by his film business venture; and his perspectives on historical changes/variation in ASL.

RESULT OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW: ERNEST MARSHALL AS A DEAF FILMMAKER

6.1 Growing Up Deaf

On August 20, 1993, at the time of the interview with Ernest Marshall, he was 83 years of age. He was born on January 2, 1910 in New York, and he is an only child. He is also the third generation of a predominantly deaf family: his parents and paternal grandparents were deaf. The same is true for some of his extended family members including uncles, aunts, and cousins. As mentioned earlier, his uncle, Winfield Marshall was one of the individuals involved in producing the early NAD films. All of Ernest Marshall's early deaf family members were enrolled at the American School for the Deaf (ASD, formerly called American
Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb) in Hartford as early as the 1850’s. On a historical note, Marshall's grandparents may have associated personally with the school's deaf founder, Laurent Clerc, as Clerc worked at ASD until he retired in 1858. Unfortunately, Ernest Marshall reported that he did not recollect any remarks made by his grandparents about Clerc. Marshall's father initially enrolled at ASD then transferred to the New York School for the Deaf (formerly called New York Institution for the Deaf and Dumb) located in its original site in New York City.

Three generations of deaf people in the Marshall family are, in fact, a rarity among the American Deaf community. Less than 10 percent of deaf children are born to deaf parents and much fewer experience the extent of three or more deaf generations as reported for the Marshall family (e.g., Schein, 1989). Rather, most deaf children are acculturated into the Deaf community by attending a residential school for the deaf where they are engaged in rich peer interaction, and are thus exposed to ASL from those of deaf families. As a result, ASL as a language is, in most cases, transmitted from deaf child to deaf child. In addition, deaf children of deaf parents during their adulthood enjoy a respected status within the Deaf community due to their native competence in ASL (Stokoe, Bernard, and Padden, 1980).

Throughout his childhood, Ernest Marshall recollected that both of his parents signed a variety of stories and fairytales, and he was able to bring what he learned to the New York School for the Deaf and share them with the rest of his deaf peers. With this storytelling experience, he remained an outstanding storyteller which he demonstrated during the ethnographic interviews. Furthermore, he explained that after his graduation from the New York school (or affectionately called Fanwood throughout the Deaf community over the years) in 1931, he became involved in local deaf theater groups in the New York City area. He combined his
talent for drama with an interest in photography and motion pictures.

Ernest Marshall explained that he had never attempted continuing his education by enrolling in Gallaudet University, but he pointed out that two of his deaf family members did. One being his Uncle Winfield who enrolled at Gallaudet in 1904. However, his filmmaking venture which Marshall was more than eager to undertake during most of his adulthood years, coincided with developments at the Eastman-Kodak Company that designed the Cine-Kodak 16-mm system in 1923, the Standard-8mm system in 1932 and Kodachrome in 1935, all intended for amateur filmmakers (Schuchman, 1987). Moreover, Marshall was able to learn how to make films largely through actual experiences without any formal schooling.

6.2 Marshall’s Film Business Venture

Marshall first produced films in 1937 and continued until 1963. His company was called the Independent Theatrical and Cinema Club for the Deaf, and a total of seven feature films and four short films were produced resulting in a total of eleven films. Marshall was able to purchase his own equipment and film and relied on deaf actors who volunteered their time (Schuchman, 1987). To support his filmmaking, Marshall had to work full-time outside of filmmaking. Therefore, he was not able to devote all of his time to making films due to limited financial resources. The revenue generated through his feature films was never sufficient and it was the basic explanation he gave for the eventual termination of his filmmaking activities. Nonetheless, throughout the years, Marshall and his deaf colleagues managed to make movies during evenings and weekends.

To finance the first moviemaking project, Marshall reported that he had to initially rely on his own money without any outside investment or help. He had relied heavily on deaf clubs as the sites for the showing of his films nationwide.
The deaf clubs were supportive and agreed to split the proceeds from admission with Marshall 50% - 50%. For the first few Marshall films shown, one dollar was charged for admission and went towards the generation of a "film fund".

The titles of Marshall's seven feature films are "It is Too Late" (1937), "The Confession" (1956), "The Debt" (1959), "A Cake of Soap" (1960), "The Dream" (1961), "The Neighbor" (1962), and "Sorrowful Approach" (1962). All of these films were produced in ASL except for one (i.e., "The Dream") which included oral deaf actors and actresses. Some of the feature films were made with subtitles even though signed language was used. Marshall reasoned that some hard of hearing people who did not know ASL attended the viewing of his films, and they had trouble following the story. The same is true for hearing people who lacked the needed signed language competence, and the subtitles were found to be an effective device for them. In a way, the subtitled Marshall films were like a foreign film shown to an audience who lacked the language used in the films.

Outside of the Marshall film collection reported in this thesis, Marshall also made films of interest to the Deaf community similar to the newsreels enjoyed by the general public during his time. For example, a number of schools for the deaf routinely included military drills as part of the educational regimen of male students, who were addressed and organized as military cadets. As result of Marshall's efforts, the drills of the student military corps of the New York School for the Deaf have been preserved on film (Schuchman, 1987).

For the first feature film, "It is Too Late", Marshall explained that he wrote the original script himself, and the same is true for "Sorrowful Approach". For all other films, Marshall relied on the work of various playwrights, and most of his films were based on the works of Guy DeMaupassant, a Frenchman and Anton Chekhov, a Russian. One of the reasons stated for choosing plays written by
DeMaupassant and Chekhov was that these plays included a small number of characters (i.e., 3 or 4). A smaller production was more feasible and convenient for Marshall as well as for the volunteer time required from actors and actresses in and around the New York City area. As a result, all of the Marshall films were produced based on a small number of actors and actresses, and the individual film length ranges from 14 to 55 minutes.

In "It is Too Late", the actors and actresses were all fluent signers, and most of them were from Marshall's alma mater. In the film, the performers signed exclusively without the slightest movement with their lips. However, fingerspelling as a system did play a significant role in acting. Both actors and actresses in the film fingerspelled certain words as a substitution for signs, but this particular language use was not consistent nor did it replace signing in dialogues. In addition, a cultural note lies in how a piece of paper was flashed under the door to attract someone's attention inside the house. This, of course, was done to let the occupant know that somebody was at the door. In the scene where this particular behavior was used instead of a doorbell clearly indicates that the modern flashing doorbell was non-existent back in the 1930's. Apparently, the lack of modern technology did not mean that deaf people could not cope with getting in a house for a visit. Also, deaf people during that era as evidenced in the film, relied on writing letters to their deaf friends telling them that they would meet them at their houses at a certain time and to await their arrival by looking for the piece of paper placed under the door.

The use of deaf actors and actresses in the film, Marshall reported, stirred exciting and positive reactions from the deaf audience. The deaf audience explained that they felt that they could relate far better to the film scenes involving deaf actors than what they saw in regular movies or plays.

Another film, titled "The Confession" was the first film to use subtitles.
Marshall described this effort as experimental and it did not come out perfectly. He said he learned how to use the subtitles more effectively by expanding their size in the next film titled "The Debt". This film was the longest film Marshall ever made (i.e., 55 minutes), and using almost two thousand feet of film produced in Technicolor.

When Marshall showed his films at deaf clubs, he was able to make a small profit after paying for the expenses of film production and travelling. He explained he had personally brought his films to different states for showing by way of train, bus, and car. Marshall remarked on his good memories in St. Paul, Minnesota:

> I made the flyers of my films for St. Paul. When I arrived in St. Paul, I was thrilled to meet a woman who happened to be a good friend of Emerson Romero. Romero suggested to her to show the films to deaf people in St. Paul. Deaf people were very excited to see the films. When I arrived at the deaf club, I was surprised to see a full house of deaf people. They showed me a list of people who lived far from St. Paul who were willing to drive all that way just to come and see the films.

From this testimony, deaf people formed a large audience for Marshall and his films, and it is consistent with the Deaf community's heavy participation in a wide variety of social events (e.g., sports-related or for social purposes). It should be stressed that at the time when assistive telephone devices for the deaf such as teletypewriter were not available; deaf people regularly met in a deaf clubs to maintain constant contact with each other. This is where Marshall's films were shown.

Other than deaf clubs, Marshall also recollected that sometime in the 1950's, the American Athletic Association of the Deaf (AAAD) sponsored a nationwide basketball tournament. The AAAD requested a special show related to his films. Marshall explained how elated the audience was with the film he had created for
them. This film combined live performance with film performance. An actress also participated in the special performance. At first, Marshall appeared on the stage and was about to perform in front of the audience, but he realized that his bow-tie was missing. He had to excuse himself, and this particular event was actually part of his antics. The film was then immediately shown on the screen, and the audience could see Marshall coming back, but this time, in the film. Also, when Marshall came back on the stage in person, he stopped and looked up at himself in the film. Next, Marshall in the film walked away, out of the frame, and the real person Marshall also walked out off the stage. After this special effect, Marshall came back to the stage to continue performing; he waved a magic wand at the screen. There appeared a woman on the film, and she then walked out. Again, similar to Marshall's earlier stunt, the same woman, this time, in real person walked onto the left of the stage. The innovative performance involved an unique interaction of both the film and live performance, and Marshall received raving remarks from the deaf audience. Unfortunately, this particular performance was the first and last due to a great amount of work involved.

In 1959, Marshall went on to do an experiment with filmmaking using the songs found written in an old magazine from 1877. He explained that he first learned of a special effect in movies with a bouncing ball above the words to the song. Captioning was one of the ventures that Marshall experimented with and he had used captions on some of his films. As a result, he took a chance in adding the bouncing ball concept to a film and asked a deaf woman to sign a song, "I Shall Know Therefore". This effort, though hard, came out successfully. The deaf audience was able to watch the song being signed as well as read the captions with the bouncing ball. Marshall recollected that the audience enjoyed the effect as if it was a "silent musical" for them. As occurred with the earlier experiment, the silent
musical film was done only once.

In the last noted experiment, Marshall recollected that he wanted to do something radical and decided to make a film in which deaf people acted as if they were hearing. The film was called "The Dream". Marshall explained his reasons behind deaf people playing hearing people:

*I believed that deaf people could act like hearing people. An actor is able to act as a beggar, thief, and other different characters. This film showed that deaf people could act like hearing people.*

It is ironic that back then, deaf performers were able to play hearing and hearing performers played deaf people. However, due to a variety of reasons as discussed earlier, both Deaf and African-American communities no longer allowed Hollywood to give Deaf or African-American roles to actors or actresses who were not part of either minority groups. Moreover, there is no other known deaf independent film (since or before Marshall's 1961 film) that included deaf performers playing the roles of hearing people. Interestingly, the actors and actresses who played hearing people had extensive oral training, especially those enrolled at traditionally oral Public School 47 for the Deaf in New York City. With Marshall's direction, they volunteered and succeeded in the roles of hearing people in this film. If a hearing person were to view "The Dream", this person would most likely agree that the deaf performers were convincingly real. As done in all of the films, Marshall explained that all of the performers had to rehearse on the spot, scene by scene, and "The Dream" took six months to complete. Filmmaking was conducted only during the evenings and weekends.

For the experiment of having deaf playing hearing people, Marshall was asked the question, "Was it easy for the performers to speak without using signed
language during the shooting?”. Marshall replied, "It was easy for them to do it. They just memorized their lines".

The experimental film production was not without problems. Marshall explained that after the film was developed for "The Dream", some of it came out blurry, and he did not want to waste the effort involved (e.g., volunteer acting). It would require money for reshooting of certain scenes, but Marshall resolved the dilemma by changing this idea to change both the story plot and the original title, "Ten Barrooms in One Night" to "The Dream". In this new version, Marshall had to put himself in the film as an actor. His part consisted of dreaming in the film, and the blurred scenes were included as part of his dream. When he woke up in the film, he was determined to go back to sleep and enjoy his dream more by putting on his glasses. Once he fell asleep, he was then able to dream with clear scenes that followed. With these "last minute" changes, Marshall was able to rescue the film and showed it to his audiences. However, as he reported, the response to the film was mixed. It was not necessarily due to the unexpected changes that Marshall had to make with the film, but rather due to the idea of deaf performers playing hearing people. For "The Dream", Marshall was able to recollect the some of the audience's responses as follows:

They said, it was an odd film. They asked me why I made that film. It was a special film. They wanted to watch the performers signing in the films.

Apparently, signed language use in films remained the choice for the deaf audience, and Marshall continued making more films using ASL. It should be stressed that Marshall did add captions to "The Dream", but it was clearly not helpful in making the film popular among the deaf viewers.
Marshall as a filmmaker did all of the directing until his sixth film. This film was directed by a deaf woman, Kathleen Fettin. She initially played in two of Marshall's films, "The Confession" (1956) and "The Debt" (1959). Marshall let Fettin direct the sixth film entitled "Sorrowful Approach" (1962). In this film, Fettin worked with three actors and took on a role herself as well. Marshall was pleased with Fettin's work as a director.

Also, recall that Emerson Romero was involved in silent movies produced in Hollywood, but that he later moved to the New York City area after the introduction of talking movies. As a result of similar filmmaking interests, Romero and Marshall became close friends. Romero was able to give Marshall some tips on filmmaking. In addition, Romero was also able to direct one of Marshall's productions, "A Cake of Soap" (1960). The outcome of Romero's directing was that the film was a hit with deaf audiences because of its plot and humorous ending. Marshall recollected that Romero had ventured into film captioning earlier as well, especially those talking movies now produced in Hollywood. Romero had written letters to ask the federal government for funding to caption the talkies, but he was ahead of his time. The commitment from the government or rather the United States Office of Education, only came later in 1958.

Deaf actors and actresses participating in Marshall's films, all volunteered their time and Marshall only made sufficient profit to finance the next film production. A total of 14 deaf actors and 12 deaf actresses were given credit by having their names included in film credits. In recollecting how these performers were recruited in the first place, Marshall explained,

*I knew these deaf people who were very good at acting.*
I saw them on stage. I picked them: depending on their talents.

Since Marshall himself was involved in theatrical groups within the Deaf community in the New York City area before he became involved in filmmaking, the deaf theatre continued to play an important role for him by providing prospective performers as needed in his films. Also, Marshall explained that he did not give prospective deaf performers tryouts as follows:

No tryouts, they proceeded to act following with my directions during the shoot. The woman, Kathleen Fettin was a good actress. I showed the script to her and then she went ahead with her role. She acted perfectly without a rehearsal. She was a natural actress.

In addition to Fettin, who also directed, there were four additional deaf performers who had acted in two of Marshall's films: Morris Davis, Philip Goldberg, Frank Heintz and Dorothy Pakula. None of these performers including Fettin had acted in more than two feature films, and it is not clear whether they had developed screen personalities themselves. With low film exposure, it is unlikely that any of the performers in Marshall's films had achieved the status of a "star."

Although Marshall had made a number of films in signed language, he believes that the captioned films now widely available through the Captioned Films for the Deaf are very beneficial. He recollected how the access to Hollywood movies was lost after the silent film period. The silent films may show a set dialogue between the actors, but there were breaks where the scene was covered by black background with captions. In this way, the deaf audience was able to follow the plot in the film as the hearing audience would do. Also, Marshall states that
modern captioning is a significant improvement over the old version as it is now being shown over the action in the film without any breaks.

With film distribution provided through the Captioned Films for the Deaf, Marshall extended his filmmaking interests and became a film programmer. In this case, he took the responsibility for the New York City area and showed the captioned films on loan throughout the Deaf community. Among the regular sites were the Union League Club for the Deaf (UL), Bronx Movie Club of the Deaf, Over 55 Club, Long Island Club of the Deaf, and even a deaf church, St. Ann's Church of the Deaf. Marshall was proud to state that he had shown over 2,000 captioned films. He recollected that he had also met a few deaf projectionists who showed the captioned films as well, but none of them endured the long tenure that Marshall did.

Returning to the films produced in signed language, Marshall had to stop making films after 1963 or due to increased costs of filmmaking. Marshall was not able to pursue his filmmaking venture when he could not afford it any longer. For his last effort in nationwide distribution in 1964, Marshall and his wife celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary by travelling all over America by train. Marshall was able to show his films personally, and prior to the trip, he was successful in making contact with eight different deaf clubs which agreed to let him show his films. Marshall explained that he was able to show a few films only in person as he was worried that the films might be ruined. All of the films that Marshall showed to deaf audiences were originals. Again, in this case, Marshall may not have been able to finance the needed reduplications of his films.

Outside the filmmaking venture, Marshall recollected that David Hays of the then newly founded National Theater of the Deaf (NTD) had seen him acting on stage under the Fanwood Alumni Association's auspices in White Plains, New
York. Bernard Bragg, one of the founding members of the theatre group introduced Hays to Marshall and to his films. Hays' reaction to the films was very positive, and he even suggested that Marshall should seek financial support in future filmmaking ventures (e.g., investments). However, Marshall explained that the Deaf community did not have the needed capital or financial capacity to invest in such a risky venture as filmmaking. He recollected that he received a questionnaire from Hays as a possible founding members of the NTD along with Bragg, Frelich, and others. There were a number of questions related to age. Marshall was sixty-six years old at the time and he felt he might be too old. Nevertheless, he did list the titles of the films he made and returned the questionnaire to NTD, but he was not chosen to become one of the first performers.

In response to other films produced in signed language, Marshall stated that he was impressed with Peter Wolf's work as a deaf filmmaker. Marshall added that there were some deaf filmmakers like Andrew Kruger who made good films of mountains and archaeology and who used signed language in his films. The Kruger films were only shown in the western region of the United States. Marshall also noted another deaf filmmaker, Chester Beers who made a film titled "Dog Trouble" which was similar to Marshall's film, "It is Too Late". It is not clear what Marshall meant by the similarity between the two films, but "Dog Trouble" was very successful and was shown in every state in the country. Alexander McDale and Clyde Cherrington were also deaf filmmakers located in the West. In Marshall's own hometown, New York City, Max Lubin was another deaf filmmaker who specialized in filming various social events during the 1930's and was also a cameraman for Marshall's short subject film, "The Magic of Magicians". Marshall recollected that the Union League of the Deaf paid Lubin to make seven full reels of the deaf club's wide variety of social events. It was Marshall who succeeded in
convinced his club, the Union League of the Deaf recently to donate the historical films to the Gallaudet archives.

Marshall concluded his remarks with advice for the younger deaf generations who may be interested in making films. He advised them to be aware of the high costs involved in filmmaking and that they should seek outside funding such as investments. More importantly, a good story is instrumental for the success of any film produced in signed language. Although 1963 was the last year for Marshall in producing a film, he was able to preserve all of his films leading to their rightful place in the George W. Veditz Film Collection along with the historic National Association of the Deaf films. Also, Marshall was clearly aware of the special value of the film medium in documenting and preserving the lives of deaf people and their language. Other than his own films, Marshall was active in preserving other films produced by deaf filmmakers (e.g., those of the Union League of the Deaf now in the Gallaudet archives).

The Marshall film collection is now preserved and is of significant historical value. What is significant about the Marshall films is that they were produced in ASL as early as 1937, and that are features films. The question then lies in how the signed language is presented in such films. Signs used may represent historical change and in particular to the New York region. Recall that the filmmaker himself is a native New Yorker and almost all of his cast were from the same area. A total of almost sixty years have passed since the completion of Marshall's first film. Although Marshall was eighty-three years old at the time of the ethnographic interview, he has vivid memories and told stories related to his filmmaking ventures. Furthermore, Marshall was able to answer questions in regard to signed language use in his films and provided valuable insights into his world, first with his language passed on through his own family since the Clerc days in the American School for
the Deaf and then his present outlook at the language use in the modern Deaf community in the United States.

6.3 Signed Language Use in Marshall's Films

As evident in Ernest Marshall's films, the film medium is potentially a rich source for ASL use, especially concerning the historical changes and regional variations involved. Younger deaf generations will be able to appreciate the stylistic forms of ASL as presented in films along with understanding how signs may vary from one region to another based on where the films were made and when. The study's findings along with the new information discussed earlier on the films produced in signed language and a comparison of the deaf independent film industry and that of the African-American community in the United States are critical for the further development of Deaf Studies curriculum.

Historical change in language often takes place in the vocabulary or rather phonology of how words and signs are formed. On historical note, a number of ASL signs do resemble in form those of French Sign Language (FSL, Woodward, 1980). The relationship of ASL and FSL is not surprising given the fact that the education for deaf children in the United States originated in France and with the importation of Laurent Clerc, a deaf teacher from Paris. Regardless of the origins for ASL, the signed language once established and distributed throughout the United States, is expected to change as well. Lucas & Valli (1992) pointed out that a change in an existing form should occur in any language over time as well; the old form and new form may coexist for a while, and the old form may later disappear altogether. There is a set of signs which provide evidence of historical change in ASL. For example, signs such as CAT, COW, HORSE, and DEVIL that were originally produced with two hands in Old ASL are now produced with one hand in
Modern ASL (Frishberg, 1975).

Recall how Krauel, a deaf filmmaker had commented on ASL as a language, Marshall also made comments on signed language. He was somewhat irritated with the way ASL is used among younger deaf generations. In some cases, Marshall explained that he could not understand new forms of ASL and he had to ask some signers to fingerspell for him. Marshall also observed that younger deaf people signed too fast and used a lot of mouthing. The use of fingerspelling also decreased drastically. The perception of ASL for Marshall lies in use of older signs moving slower and gracefully, and fingerspelling would be included to a great extent. Most importantly, no mouthing would occur along with signing. Marshall described his encounter with "new" ASL signs as follows:

*I talked with a deaf Chinese person about President Clinton who has lost his popularity. He noticed that new sign for "popular" (five handshape palm out downwards on one handshape). I told him it was the wrong sign and gave him my sign for "popular" (one handshape on the temple then five handshape palm out downwards circular). The same thing happened with the new sign for "kid" (one handshape palm out on between the nose and mouth). I did not like that sign. It should be the five handshape palm out downwards bouncing).

The first sign example above clearly demonstrates that the old forms of ASL can disappear altogether. The old sign for "popular" did not evolve into a modern form, but rather that it was replaced completely with a new sign as described. The second sign example was also foreign to Marshall as he could not see any relationship between the new and old forms. The sign for "kid" is a recent addition to ASL vocabulary. Marshall, though erroneously, believed that this new sign had replaced the sign for "children", however the latter sign still remains intact in ASL vocabulary without any significant change over time. In both cases, Marshall could
not comprehend the signs recently added to the ASL vocabulary. The historical change for ASL vocabulary as described earlier does not apply here. Rather, new signs can emerge and become part of the ASL vocabulary without any history, and as a result, the signed language continues to evolve.

However, if one views Marshall's own films, a particular sign may be shown in its old form, which has since changed into its present form. The film, "It is Too Late" included an older form of HOME (see Figure 1a). This particular sign has undergone historical change to its present form (see Figure 1b). Originally, the sign HOME constituted a compound of EAT (O-hand at the mouth) + BED (flat hand on the cheek). Since then, the sign has changed where the second hand "assimilated to the formation of the first, and the location of the first touch has partly assimilated toward the second, so that the citation form today is an O-hand touching two distinct places on the cheek" (Frishberg, 1975, p. 710).

![Figure 1a: 1930's sign, HOME](image1)

![Figure 1b: Modern sign, HOME](image2)

Confirming Marshall's remarks, deaf actors and actresses in the 1937 film have relied heavily on fingerspelling to the extent that some of signs, though available, would be replaced with a fingerspelled counterpart. For example, the two words that were only fingerspelled in the film are: N-I-C-E and
Marshall commented on the special role that fingerspelling once played in ASL as follows:

A long time ago, most of us fingerspelled, and then signed. After people enrolled at Gallaudet College, they modified the system of sign language. For example, a word that we usually fingerspelled at Gallaudet, would have invented a new sign. Thus, they used signs a lot and less fingerspelling. In my time, when I was young, I used a lot of fingerspelling and signing.

More research is evidently needed, especially on the role of Gallaudet University as an institution in terms of how ASL is affected as a language. The use of fingerspelling also requires more attention. According to Marshall's comments, it is possible that fingerspelling as a system was more predominate in the earlier days of the Deaf community in the United States than it is now. It is not clear why the popularity of the fingerspelling system eroded over the time, and for ASL as a language, it has evidently changed during the lifetime of Marshall. Throughout the interview, Marshall continued to rely primarily on ASL, and the historical value of his signing is enhanced by the fact that he is directly linked to the early deaf students in the American School for the Deaf through his own grandparents (i.e., during 1850's). Marshall used fingerspelling during the interview to a great extent as well. More specifically, he would fingerspell redundantly after a sign. For example, the sign for "cousin" was first produced, and it was followed immediately with C-O-U-S-I-N.

In regard to historical change in ASL, Marshall argued that it was not necessary at all, and that ASL should retain its old forms, especially in signs. Marshall rationalized by stating that deaf people would converse more easily. However, he may not realize that deaf people, especially the younger generation of signers do not necessarily communicate with more difficulty if new and changed
forms are used. It is rather that Marshall belongs to the older generation of signers, and that ASL has changed drastically over the time. Nevertheless, the value of old ASL signs does prevail for historical purposes, and Marshall, like with his own films, has preserved ASL in its old form. During one special occasion at the New York University, Marshall was able to demonstrate his own signs as opposed to those now widely used in the Deaf community:

The new form of ASL for "program" (P handshape moving on B handshape) while there is an old ASL form (B handshape bent on B handshape palm out upwards). I recently was at New York University to be one of the panelists. I showed the audience my old ASL while other two panelists showed the new forms of ASL. The audience realized that the new forms of ASL are completely different. It indicated that the old ASL is phased out.

Regardless of Marshall's own remarks and pleas, ASL continues to evolve whether it includes new signs or existing signs change in form. The same is expected to be true for the rest of the languages in the world. Marshall admitted that he could not change the way his own language works:

I went to the forums on the first Fridays of the month from September to June. I was surprised that when I watched the deaf presenters, I did not understand them even though I am deaf. I am afraid that more and more deaf people sign too fast. I ask myself, "why the rush?." In the past, deaf people signed slowly and clearly. I am very sad about it, but I can not do anything about it.

In addition to the historical change and evolution of ASL as a language, the regional variation is also evident in Marshall's own signing during the interview as well as in some of his films. According to the literature, people in one geographic area are expected to use a language differently from people in another geographic
area. More specifically, regional dialects are prevalent in many languages and
societies worldwide, and speakers of a particular spoken language differ noticeably
in their pronunciation from another group (Crabtree & Powers, 1991). ASL and the
Deaf community in the United States are no exception, signers are well aware of the
regional variation across the country. Some well-known examples of regional
variation in ASL signs are: BIRTHDAY, GREY, CHRISTMAS, SOON and
PICNIC (Shroyer & Shroyer, 1984).

Another source of regional variation in ASL occurs across racial lines within
the Deaf community. For example, Anthony Aramburo (1989) reported that Deaf
African-Americans and whites use formationally different signs for SCHOOL,
BOSS, and FLIRT. The present synchronic lexical variation in Black Southern
signing is largely attributed to the historical segregation of African-American and
white students through physical separation of schools in the South (Woodward,
1976). In the case of Marshall, he is of European origins and none of his films
included an African-American performer. However, since Marshall has spent his
entire life in the New York City area, and his signing as well as performers in his
films have showed a strong regional variation in ASL. For example, a strictly New
York City sign still in use among older generation of signers occurred in "It is Too
Late" and it is the sign for "date" or for the special social engagement involving a
couple (see Figure 2a). The younger generation of signers throughout the United
States, including the New York City area are now using a completely different sign
for the same concept, and it is also initialized (i.e., both handshapes as alphabetical
for "d"; see Figure 2b). The regional sign example for the New York City area has
apparently fallen out of use among the younger generation of signers and that a non-
regional sign has taken its place.
Although more research is needed, Marshall’s signing during the interview as well as performers in the films represented primarily the "Fanwood" dialect (in reference to the nickname of the New York School for the Deaf, formerly located in New York City). Marshall’s signs not only represent the New York City dialect, he represented his alma mater as well. One needs to realize that the New York City area during Marshall’s childhood had a total of four large schools for the deaf. In addition to Marshall’s alma mater, the other schools were Lexington School for the Deaf, Public School 47 for the Deaf, and St. Joseph’s School for the Deaf. A strong lexical variation is reported between graduates depending on which school they enrolled. Also, for those who enrolled at schools other than Marshall’s, they were strictly oral, and as a result, graduates from these schools mouthed along with signing. Marshall, being from the New York School for the Deaf where oralism was not stressed, did not rely on mouthing.

One of the performers in "The Dream" and "Sorrowful Approach" was Dorothy Pakula. In a personal communication, Dorothy stated that among the Deaf community in New York City, she could tell which school for the deaf particular individuals were from based on how that person signed. "Regional" differences did exist between the four schools in the New York City area, but the distinction is now
reportedly less apparent. This is especially true concerning the fact that all four schools adopted a form of signing since the 1970's, and that pure oralism ceased to exist in these schools as well. It is possible that if more older deaf independent films are located and produced by graduates of other New York City schools, they may reveal the variation in ASL among the schools as reported.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Clearly, more research is needed beyond the present study which focuses on the independent filmmaking activities of one filmmaker: Ernest W. Marshall. Further study of the work of other deaf filmmakers and their film collections may reveal more about ASL as a language, especially in terms of historical change and regional variation. However, for the purpose of this study of Marshall and his films were included. The outcomes can be discussed in terms of how deaf independent films, especially the feature film genre should be formally recognized. In addition, it is important to discuss specifically how these films become a major resource for the further development of Deaf Studies curriculum. The data related to Marshall provide an excellent historical resource and are an effective means for cross-cultural comparison as needed in the curriculum.

For the deaf independent film industry, Ernest Marshall was an excellent example of what a deaf filmmaker can become. He belongs to the group of deaf filmmakers who produced films that are considered, "by the Deaf and for the Deaf." Marshall produced a total of eleven films, including seven feature length and the rest as short subjects. None of these films included voice even if the technology allowed it. A few of them included captioning for those who were not proficient in signed language (e.g., hard of hearing). The audience was predominantly deaf and
proficient in ASL. As a result, in all of Marshall's films, ASL was the language used in dialogues. One exception was the experimental film produced without any use of signed language and how deaf people, especially those from oral education backgrounds attempted to act like hearing persons. Moreover, Marshall was an innovative filmmaker experimenting with the film medium in a variety of ways which included captioning and the use of bouncing ball along with a song in ASL.

At the time of Marshall's various film productions (1937 to 1963), the Deaf community had no access to Hollywood, especially after the decline of silent films or rather the introduction of "talkies". It is interesting to note that 1929 marked the year when voice became part of the movies and it took only eight years before Marshall responded with producing films in signed language. Marshall was clearly a pioneer in the development of an independent film industry in the Deaf community. The lack of access to Hollywood films led Marshall to produce the films described in this thesis. The deaf actors and actresses, for example, were no longer able to find employment in Hollywood, and among them was Emerson Romero who brought the expertise of Hollywood to New York and assisted Marshall in producing films. The deaf audience compensated for their loss of access to Hollywood films by attending Marshall's films.

A similar parallel can be found in the development of an independent film industry by Deaf and African-American communities. The first parallel is found in the fact that Marshall had faced difficulties found with other minority filmmakers in establishing a viable entertainment film industry in the Deaf community. His accomplishment with a total of seven feature films, excluding "short subjects" is remarkable given the lacking financial resources involved. Although no deaf screen personalities evolved from the Marshall films, a large number of deaf performers made a contribution to the overall film quality. Marshall's own film production
company, Independent Theatrical and Cinema Club for the Deaf along with other deaf-run companies reported in this thesis are a testimony to the existence of an independent film industry comparable to that in the African-American community. Each of Marshall's feature and short subject films have been fully described and this background should contribute to the better understanding of deaf independent films in general. A total of 33 deaf independent films have been reported, but clearly from this thesis, many more are yet to be found.

With the availability of known deaf independent films, especially those of Marshall's, they should form a major resource for the Deaf studies curriculum for various reasons. Since ASL has no written literature, it might appear as though there is no literature to include in the development of a Deaf Studies curriculum. Films can serve as an excellent medium for the documentation, preservation and dissemination of relevant information related to Deaf Studies. Deaf students also need to learn that there are films beyond the well-known collection of NAD films, and that some belong to the feature film genre. The value of film medium in general is best illustrated with the addition of Marshall's work as well as from his interviews. Marshall was fully aware of other filmmaking activities conducted in the Deaf community nationwide, including more recent figures such as Peter Wolf. Marshall was able to tap into the advantage of films to include the use of signed language, and his value in regard to films is highlighted with his action of preserving the old Union League of the Deaf films. A parallel could be made with the recent documentary film production, "The Los Angeles Club of the Deaf" (1985) which included some old film clips of various social activities and memorable events throughout the club's long history. With Marshall's accomplishments, the Union League of the Deaf films could be the subject of another documentary film. One needs to realize that the Union League of the Deaf is, in fact, the first club ever
established for the deaf in the country in 1886 (Van Cleve & Crouch, 1989).

Furthermore, this study with Marshall has demonstrated the role that film plays in the preservation of ASL and the maintenance of some of the rich traditions found in the Deaf community. More attention is still needed on how Marshall films could be tapped for the literacy development of deaf children as well as for their learning of English as a second language. However, for the focus of this thesis, the Marshall films will provide additional support to the six areas as outlined in the Kendall Demonstration Elementary School's model Deaf Studies Curriculum Guideline (i.e., Identity, Deaf Culture, ASL, Communication, History, and Social Changes). Related to the first area, deaf students, especially those born to hearing parents are expected to identify with deaf adults acting in feature films. Also, these children need to understand that the Deaf community exists through various stories as told in films. They can gain further understanding of Deaf culture and how it changes based on technology. For example, deaf students can learn about different forms of behavior involving the use of paper under the door instead of using a more modern flashing light. The value and function of ASL has remained intact with deaf people signing back in Marshall's 1937 film. This is also applicable to the next area, American Sign Language, and deaf students need to appreciate the special relationship of the two visual mediums: ASL and the film medium. The evidence of both historical change and regional variation in ASL can be found in Marshall films.

For other areas, films serve as an excellent communication medium as far as signed language is concerned. Deaf students need to appreciate how the film medium compensated for the lack of a writing system for ASL and that signed language is effectively documented in film. Understanding history and social changes in the Deaf community are also readily available in Marshall's films. Deaf students can gain greater understanding of the historical significance involving the
accessibility to Hollywood films and how the deaf independent film industry was
developed in response to the changes made in Hollywood. In this case, the
introduction of "talkies" resulted in a profound change within the Deaf community.
Specifically, deaf audiences were no longer able to enjoy the Hollywood films that
they used to (e.g., with silent films). Deaf students should be able to appreciate the
more recent changes occurring, especially with the hiring of more deaf actors and
actresses in Hollywood as well as the promotion of captioning that Marshall first
experimented with 37 years earlier.

The historical significance of the Marshall film collection is paramount,
especially in the case of Ernest Marshall as a deaf person as well as a deaf filmmaker
and pioneer. It should be noted that Marshall, or at least his family, can be linked to
the early days of deaf education. Marshall is a descendent of three generations of a
deaf family. His paternal grandparents enrolled at the American School for the Deaf
during the time when Laurent Clerc, the nation's first deaf teacher and founder was
still teaching. In addition, Marshall's own uncle had an important role in the
production of NAD films and how the Marshall family engaged in the promotion and
preservation of ASL over the years. Ernest Marshall continued the family tradition
by making a significant contribution to the signed language by producing feature
films and that these films are now part of the Veditiz film collection at Gallaudet
University's archives.

Excellent material on Ernest Marshall for the Deaf Studies curriculum can be
found in the videotape entitled "Moving Pictures, Moving Hands: The Story of
Ernest Marshall" produced by Beyond Sound in 1987 now distributed through
Harris Communications, Inc. This 30 minute documentary was hosted and written
by Don Bangs and it includes an interview with Marshall as well as clips of
Marshall's films and still pictures of Marshall's personal history. Another
outstanding documentary, "Charles Krauel: Portrait of a Deaf Filmmaker" is now being produced by DawnSign Press, and it will be released shortly. Krauel's films are best described as newsreels produced specifically for the Deaf community in Chicago from the 1920's to 1960's. With both types of films, students will gain further understanding of the individual deaf filmmakers in the United States, including the extent of filmmaking activity in the Deaf community.

Finally, the possible cross-cultural comparison in the Deaf Studies curriculum can be achieved through Marshall's films. As mentioned earlier, films in both the Deaf and African-American communities were first produced in 1910. In the case of the Deaf community, film production was funded through a political organization (i.e., National Association of the Deaf) and it was part of the fight against the rise of pure oralism. The African-American community, on the other hand, had formed an independent film industry producing feature films from the start. The lack of access to Hollywood for African-Americans was based on racial discrimination and it triggered the development of the minority independent film industry. For deaf people, it was rather late when "talkies" were introduced that they experienced a form of discrimination as well. As a result, the first African-American feature films were produced earlier in 1916, whereas the first deaf feature films were later produced by Marshall in 1937. Regardless of the differences involved, the feature films produced by both Deaf and African-American communities share a minority status in the entertainment industry.

In terms of future of the deaf independent film industry, the number of feature films produced continues to rise over the recent years. It is possible that the films produced in the Deaf community attract a larger audience than reported by Marshall. As a possible explanation, there are an ever increasing number of hearing people becoming proficient in ASL who are anxious to participate in the Deaf
community in one way or another. Also, one needs to realize that deaf people continue to be discriminated against from participating fully in Hollywood. Hearing people have continued to take the roles written for deaf characters. With more protests coming, it is not clear what would happen to the independent film industry in the Deaf community had Hollywood become more accessible.

Regardless of what the future holds for the independent film industry in the Deaf community, the value of the Marshall films and others produced throughout the twentieth century cannot be ignored any longer as a category for the Deaf Studies curriculum. First of all, with the availability of the Marshall films for study, students are expected to develop needed appreciation of the film medium and what role it plays in the Deaf community. The Deaf experience is effectively portrayed in the Marshall film collection as well as how ASL was used earlier in the twentieth century. A parallel can be made with the independent film industry of both Deaf and African-American communities, and that students need to expose themselves to a particular person who was a pioneer in deaf filmmaking, namely Ernest Marshall as well as the extent of participation of his family in the history of the Deaf community. Each feature film that Marshall produced can be subject to further analysis as one would expect in a film studies course and this particular activity should be a component of the Deaf Studies curriculum as well.

In sum, the integrated literature review and data as presented in this study provide an evidence of the existence of an independent film industry in the Deaf community of the United States. The film medium has played a special role for ASL as a language and for the Deaf community as a whole and it should receive more attention in the field of Deaf Studies. The ethnographic interview conducted with Ernest Marshall has provided the needed background related to his personal history, business venture in filmmaking, and signed language use. The basic finding is that
Marshall's films compliment all six critical areas in the model Deaf Studies curriculum ranging from the development of identity for deaf students to how the Deaf community has changed throughout the course of history. The study conducted on Marshall as a deaf filmmaker and his films is a significant step towards the needed development of the film category in Deaf Studies, and hopefully, it will be followed with more studies on films as produced in the Deaf community.
Title: "It is Too Late"

Subject Name: Herbert Fletcher....Ernest Marshall
Sally Seltzer....Katherine O'Brien
Flora Fletcher, his mother....Anna Klaus
Barbara Murray....Dorothy Havens
Matthew Bender....Ben Ash

Produced by the Cinema Production of the Deaf
Photographed by Charles B. Terry

Filmmaker: Ernest W. Marshall
Film date: 1937
Videotape time: 14 minutes
Film location: Brooklyn Park
16 mm Black and White
Feature Film

Synopsis: Herbert has a girlfriend, Barbara but he also has a girlfriend on the side whose name is Sally. Herbert believes that Barbara is unaware of his affair but he finds that he is mistaken when he visits Barbara one afternoon. Herbert's girlfriend troubles are worsened when his other girlfriend introduces him to her other boyfriend Matthew. Matthew and Herbert argue over Sally resulting in Herbert leaving. When he arrives home, he discovers a "Dear John" letter from Barbara which breaks his heart. He goes out on a drinking binge that results in his becoming blind. Meanwhile, Sally breaks off her relationship with Matthew and runs to Herbert to try to win him back. As she converses with Herbert, she realizes that he is blind. Upset, she leaves but decides to return only to find that Herbert has died of a broken heart.
Title: "The Magician of Magicians"

Produced by The Cinema Production of the Deaf
Photographed by Max Lubin

Subject Name: The Magician....Ernest W. Marshall
The Accompanist....Laurette Gourdeau

Filmmaker: Ernest Marshall
Film Date: 1938
Videotape time: 5 minutes
Film location: ?
16mm Black and White
Short Subject

Synopsis: The magician does his various magic tricks.

Title: "I Shall Know Thereafter"

by Eleanor Littlefield

Recited by Dorothy Myers

Filmmaker: Ernest Marshall
Film date: 1955
Videotape time: 3 minutes
Film location: ?
16mm Techicolor
Short Subject

Synopsis: Dorothy Myers signs song while a bouncing ball on the screen followed the words and music.
Title: "The Confession"

Based on a story written by Guy DeMaupassant

Produced by Independent Theatrical and Cinema Club for the Deaf

Photographed by Israel Pincus
Play narrated in English subtitles by Ernest W. Marshall

Subject Name:  Margueritte de Therelles....Kathleen Fettin
Suzanne de Therelles....Regina Levy
Abbe Simon, the priest....Michael C.
Choirboy....Sigmund Esptein

Filmmaker: Ernest W. Marshall
Film date: 1956
Videotape time: 15 minutes
Film location: ?
16mm Black and White
Feature Film

Synopsis: A dying woman confesses terrible secrets to her older sister, secrets that hurt her sister. The dying woman confesses in hopes that her sister will forgive her before she dies.
Title: "The Debt"

Produced by Independent Theatrical and Cinema Club for the Deaf

Adapted from a play of Anton Chekhov by Ernest W. Marshall and Leroy R. Subit

Play narrated in English subtitles by Ernest W. Marshall

Subject Name: Natayla Gayef...Katherine Fettin

Ivan Borisovitch, a middle-aged landowner...Leroy R. Subit

Yasha, Gayef's Aged Footman...Frank Heintz

Filmmaker: Ernest W. Marshall

Film date: 1959

Videotape time: 55 minutes

Film location: ?

16mm Technicolor

Feature Film

Synopsis: The movie opens on grieving widow whose name is Natayla Gayef. She is being comforted by her dead husband's footman, Yasha when the doorbell rings. Yasha goes to the door and returns with the landowner, Ivan Borisovitch. Ivan demands money from Natayla, stating that he is there to collect on a debt owed by her dead husband. Natayla states that she does not have the money, will gladly pay Ivan the next day after she collects money from her farm manager. Ivan becomes angry and demands the money immediately. Natayla states that this is impossible and begins to argue with Ivan. During their argument, Ivan reveals that he has fallen in love with Natayla. Natayla is enraged and orders him to leave at once. Ivan hugs and gives her a kiss which causes Natayla to fall in love with Ivan.
Title: "A Cake of Soap"

Adapted from the story "Dusk" by Saki (H.H. Munroe)

Produced by Independent Theatrical and Cinema Club of the Deaf

Photographed by Ernest W. Marshall
Assisted by Israel Pincus

Subject Name: The Businessman....Steve Zdanko
His Companion....James Stern
The Old Man....Frank Heintz
The Young Man....Philip Goldberg

Filmmaker: Emerson Romero
Film date: 1960
Videotape time: 9 minutes
Film location: Central Park, New York City
16mm Black and White
Feature Film

Synopsis: One day, the businessman and his associate take a break by walking in the park. They see an old man who is acting strangely, he wanders around then sits on a bench then wanders some more. The businessman and associate feel pity for the old man. As they are sitting on the bench, a young man comes and sits next to them. The young man starts to tell a woeful story of coming to a new city, registering in a strange hotel and writing a letter home to his parents. He has come out to the park as he is lost. He left his hotel soap to buy a cake of soap because he did not like the hotel's soap, but unfortunately, he could not remember the name of his hotel or where it was. He was now lost and with no place to sleep for the night. The businessman and his companion looked at the young man with suspicion. His is a far-fetched story. The businessman asks him where the cake of soap is. The young man has lost that too and walks away. After he has walked away, the businessman finds a soap. He realizes that he has judged the young man wrongly and goes to find him. While conversing with the young man, the businessman decides to give him some money to help him. They end their conversation and the businessman goes to find his associate who has already left. The strange-acting old man comes back to the bench and the businessman asks him what he is looking for. The old man says he is looking for a small box that contains a cake of soap. The businessman realizes he has been conned by the young man.
Title: "The Dream"

Based on the old melodrama, "Ten Barrooms in One Night"

Produced by Independent Theatrical and Cinema Club for the Deaf

Photographed by Israel Pincus
Title by Ernest W. Marshall
Script by Cholly Tewelles

Subject Name: The Man....Ernest W. Marshall
His wife....Irene Kahn
Simon Slade....Morris Davis
Mrs. Slade....Dorothy Pakula
Frank Slade....Philip Goldberg
Harvey Green....Richard Myers
Mary Morgan....Arlene Weiner
Joe Morgan....George Weiner

Filmmaker: Ernest W. Marshall
Film date: 1961
Videotape time: 33 minutes
Film location: DeSales Youth Club for the Deaf, New York City
16mm Black and White
Feature Film

Synopsis: A writer is having writer's block. While trying to write a story, he falls asleep and dreams. His dream is about a couple, Mr. and Mrs. Simon Slade who own a bar and have a son, Frankie who is an alcoholic. Frankie is a bartender who is frequently tempted to overindulge by the bar's patrons. One day, Mr. Green comes to the bar and asks Frankie for a drink. Mr. Green does not like to drink alone and encourages Frankie to indulge with him. Frankie declines but Mr. Green will not accept no for an answer and keeps at Frankie until he gives in. As Frankie and Mr. Green talk and drink, they are joined by Mr. Morgan who is bar-hopping. This particular bar is number ten on his night's travels. Mr. Morgan begins to sing boisterously to which Mr. Slade tells him to stop the noise and leave the bar. Mr. Slade then passes out. Mr. Morgan's daughter happens along and takes her father out of the bar before anyone else arrives. After she leaves, Mrs. Slade arrives to find her husband and her son passed out. She assumes they have passed out because they are drunk so she sits down to have a drink. She pours milk. The writer then awakes from his dream and retells the dream to his wife.
Title: "The Neighbor"

Based on a stage play of "The Proposal" written by Anton Chekhov

Produced by Independent Theatrical and Cinema Club of the Deaf

Adapted by Emerson Romero
Title lettering by Barney Kindel
Photographed by Ernest W. Marshall

Subject Name: The Father....Morris Davis
The Daughter....Anna Maldonado
The Neighbor....Raul Maldonado

Filmmaker: Ernest W. Marshall
Film date: 1962
Videotape time: 18 minutes
Film location: at the park
16mm Black and White
Feature Film

Synopsis: A father and a daughter live next door to a single man. The single man has admired the daughter and wishes to marry her. One day, he musters up the courage to ask her father for his daughter's hand in marriage. The father consents and now the single man has to ask the daughter to marry him. He is nervous as they walk together. Instead of coming right out and asking her, he starts to talk about the trees. The daughter mentions that those particular trees belong to her. The single man disagrees and claim they belong to him. They argue over the trees. The daughter becomes angry and starts to walk away. The father who is looking on, wants the couple to get together. The single man goes after the daughter to try to reconcile with her and try to ask her to marry him. However, he is still nervous and brings up the subject of his dog, who, he believes, is better than the daughter's. This causes another argument which leads to them ending their relationship and any hope of the two of them getting married.
Title: "Sorrowful Approach"

Produced by Independent Theatrical and Cinema Club for the Deaf

Photographed by Ernest W. Marshall
Lettering by Barney Kindel

Subject Name: Mrs. Hanman....Kathleen Fettin
Her Husband....Joseph Hines, Jr.
The Girlfriend....Judy Fleischer
The Neighbor....Dorothy Pakula

Filmmaker: Kathleen Fettin
Film date: 1962
Videotape time: 15 minutes
Film location: ?
16 mm Black and White
Feature Film

Synopsis: A couple, Mr. and Mrs. Hanman have been married for a long time and have fallen into a rut. One evening, a girlfriend of Mrs. Hanman, who has blurry vision, stops by. The friend strikes up a conversation with Mr. Hanman because he looks so sad. Mr. Hanman tells her he feels that his marriage is lifeless. The girlfriend is sympathetic to his situation but explains that it is unavoidable due to Mrs. Hanman's vision. To lift his spirits, the girlfriend suggests the couple go out for a walk. Instead, Mr. Hanman suggests the girlfriend and he go to see a movie. Mrs. Hanman encourages them to go, she trusts them. The next day, the friend drops by and Mrs. Hanman tells her that she is going to the hospital for eye surgery to correct her vision and will be gone for a week. She worries to her husband that he won't be able to take care of himself. He tells her not to worry. A week passes and Mrs. Hanman arrives home from the hospital. She realizes that her girlfriend and her husband are having an affair. She becomes upset and depressed. Her husband arrives and goes to the bedroom to get some money to go out. Then, he goes into the bathroom. While in the bathroom, Mrs. Hanman goes to the bedroom and gets money out of her husband's wallet. Mr. Hanman comes into the bedroom to tell her he is going out with a friend. This lie does not fool Mrs. Hanman, she knows where he is going. Her husband will soon find out his wife knows of the affair.
Hello, my name is Ernest Marshall. I have been deaf filmmaker for 55 years. I am happy to tell you about all the films I made throughout the years. Almost all of these videotapes consist of filmplays. I will explain what each film is about. Today, it so happens that I am taping myself on my birthday. I will be 83 years old on January 2. I have felt inspired over the years since 1931, when I started joining Deaf communities, various social events, and other activities such as shows. I do not need to elaborate on that, I am only focusing on the films today. I started watching films because I began to feel involved with the films and I mingled with a few people during the silent film days. The silent films were shown at St. Ann's Church of the Deaf. Around that time, the silent films converted to talkies. The silent films were no longer made. Deaf people were left behind. We borrowed old silent films from the library and showed the films. Many deaf people came to see and enjoy the films until the library did not receive any more silent films, at which point they sold them. Eventually, the Captioned Films for the Deaf program was established. We borrowed the captioned films from time to time. We continued showing the captioned films which at different Deaf organizations and clubs. Under the Long Island Club of the Deaf (LICD), I ended up showing over 500 captioned films. There were over five hundred film showing at LICD. I became a film programmer and took the responsibility to send for a list of films and to borrow them for twelve years. I did the same thing at the Union League of the Deaf. I also showed the films at St. Ann's Church of the Deaf. There was a total of over one thousand films. I made a book of all the captioned films. At Over 55 clubs, I showed films until recently, and I estimate the total to be 674 films shown plus those shown at my home, when I invited my friends to watch the films. It was nearly two hundred films. From the beginning until recently of my showings of the
captioned films, I added up to over one thousand eight hundred films. I am still showing the films.

Now let's talk about the films. I have learned how to make, edit, etc film, although I never went to school for training as a filmmaker. I learned how to make films by myself over the years. The first thing I did was taking family pictures. This led me to make filmplays. Home movie cameras came out and were sold in 1928. I watched how home movie cameras worked and at the same time I wanted to buy one. I had a good idea to take a day to make a film then show it to Deaf audiences. During the Depression, I tried to manage a small budget for myself. I got some players to make a film which I directed called "It is Too Late". It was an original play. I will explain more details about that film later. When I made the films, I observed and learned how to do different tricks and special effects such as putting titles in the films, motion stopping, wide off, fade out, and close up. You would see these films with these special effects. At that time, these were new film techniques but today, it has become very common, and there are a lot of new techniques in films since these films are made with automatic machinery while in the past cameras were operated by hand. I was a titlemaker. I made a third film called "The Confession" which was the first film with subtitles. The subtitles did not come out perfectly so I learned how to make the subtitles better by being careful to measure the size of the subtitles for the next film called "The Debt". I was able to make my own subtitles instead of ordering subtitles from stores which would be very expensive. I did not get any help from organizations. I used my own money.

Film editing was the most hardest part, as I had to follow set up the numbers for each roll of film, according to its place on the script. I organized film rolls by number then put them together and edited them. "The Debt" was the longest film I ever made. It was almost 2 thousand feet, done in technicolor. This film was one full reel and played for fifty five minutes.
I acted in and directed the films at the same time. "The Confession" was from a story by Guy De Maupassant, a famous storyteller. This story was converted to a movie. During shooting, I was careful to watch the face and body expressions by the actors so they would match with the subtitles. "The Debt" took the longest time to be made. We practiced acting for six months at my home. The players had to learn how to use the play scripts and display the right facial/body expressions. When we finished practicing, we went to a place in Brooklyn for our shooting site. We used a living room. "The Debt" was a stage play written by Anton Chekhov, a Russian writer. This stageplay was also converted for a movie. You can see for yourself that the show and the play looks the same. I saw the play, "Children of Lesser God" twice and the play used simple props just like "The Debt". This play converted easily to a movie. I brought my equipment to the house. Eventually, my friends had the heart to give me a ride and help me bring the equipment to the house. The actors joined me there. I chose a small cast of three characters so it would be easy to practice. If we had 15 or 20 more actors, we would have had difficulty because each of us lived a distance from each other, and it would be hard to get together for rehearsals. The three actors tended to show up faithfully on time. Every week we shot and stopped until the next week for six weeks. We went back and forth since we lived far away, going from the Bronx to Brooklyn. The shooting finally got done. I was happy to see that the movie came out good. It was really hard work. I was a director for a while. I also was a cameraman. In the movie called "A Cake of Soap", I picked a deaf man who was supposed to be a good cameraman and who also had camera equipment. So I borrowed the equipment from him and in return for the favor, let him do the camera work. I was working under the director, Emerson Romero, a cousin of actor Cesar Romero in Hollywood. Later, he acted in the movie with me. Another person was supposed to join us, but he never showed up. So another person, Eugene Bergman, an English professor at Gallaudet University, joined us in this movie. The film was completed but it did not satisfy
us. So we did reshoot it a second time. The original actors were not in it. I wanted to be the cameraman for this film. Emerson Romero was the director for this film. After completing the film, the camera were came out very good. This film, "A Cake of Soap" was one of the best filmplays I ever made for deaf audiences. This film was shown in every states. Deaf people gave me good compliments on this film, saying it had a good plot and a humorous. Deaf audiences laughed so hard after the film was over. I did another film called "Marriage Proposal" by the same author, Anton Chekhov. I showed the script to Emerson Romero, who revised the script to make it easy for deaf audiences to understand. I thought he would be the director for this film, but he could not make it. He encouraged me to direct it. I went to the Gallaudet Home which is 75 miles away from New York City. I got the same three people I had used before, as I knew it would be easy to work with and travel together with. If there were ten or fifteen characters like a list of Hollywood actors, we would end up watching a long list of credits on the screen. I did not want to do that. On a beautiful day, we went to the Gallaudet Home. I looked at the script and tried to finish the film in one day. We made it before dark. The film came out pretty good because I was a cameraman. Other people were also cameramen, but they were not as good as me. You will watch the films and understand the cameramen's qualifications. Some of these films were not my responsibility as a cameraman. Anyway, We went through successful showings of the films.

I had many creative ideas; I wanted to do something different in relation to filmmaking. I wanted to make "live films". The American Athletic Association of the Deaf (AAAD) Basketball Tournament asked me to give a show at the Pena Hotel. I accepted the job. I decided to do "live films" for the audience. I brought a lot of equipment such as a projector, screen etc. It was hard work. Deaf people came and sat in front of the screen. They wondered what kind of film would be shown. During the afternoon, I put things in order but for some reasons a hotel worker came and asked me what the projector was for. I
explained that the special film was to be shown for the deaf audience. The hotel worker demanded to know if I was a member of the union, but I was not a member of any union. I explained again that this film was just showing a special play, it was not from Hollywood. The worker gave me approval to go ahead. I was relieved. That night, I got a signalling button to control the projector, and then I went on the stage and gave a little show. A woman came up to the stage and worked with me. I realized my bow-tie was gone because I had left it in another room. I walked away. All of a sudden, I was in the "live film" right after I had left the stage. I picked up my bow-tie while the live film was playing, I was behind the stage watching the movie then I followed the person walking out. Deaf people were elated over it. I picked up a wizard's magic wand. The woman showed up in the screen and walked away. She was waiting backstage until her cue came. Then she walked "in and out" of the screen. People came up to me and told me they had really enjoyed the live film. I liked that idea. I wanted to do it again, but it took a lot of work. I kept putting off making "live film", and I never did do another one. I did a good job. On another film, a woman signed a song while a "bouncing the ball" on the screen followed the words and the music. During the silent films, they showed "bouncing the ball" with the words on the screen. I had a good idea to make a film like that. Even though I had no training in how to make a film with a bouncing ball on the screen. I made up a song. I picked a woman who I had dated before who had experience in signing songs. I gave her a song sheet which she had to memorize. She was not sure if she would make it look good. I was behind the camera and helped her out while at the same time I had to keep an eye on the camera, especially the footage meter. When the film was completed, it came out successfully showing the ball bouncing on the words in the screen while the woman signed her song. People liked it very much especially since it did not come with music like a violin etc. It was a silent musical for deaf audiences. I made another film like this. I copied some songs from Hollywood movies. Some of you older people may remember these films.
I like to do different things relating to making a film. I had another good idea, to have deaf people act like hearing people. No Sign Language! Just talking! I picked deaf people who could speak well. During the film shooting, Emerson Romero came with me. We reserved a room at the DeSales Youth Club in Brooklyn. There was a large bar with rows of whiskey bottles. I directed this film. I told the actors to speak and use their facial expressions at exactly the same time. It was a long film shooting. After the film was developed, I was disappointed because it did not come out clearly. I called it a waste of money. Then I had a good idea. Why not change the title "Ten Barrooms in One Night" to "The Dream"? In this film, I was dreaming and there was a blurred scene so I woke up and put on my glasses, hoping it might help me to see the dream better. It was a kind of trick in this film. Some scenes were pretty good. Many deaf people came up to me and asked me why the deaf actors talked instead of using sign language. I said No, that was special thing about the play - Deaf people acting like hearing people. As long as this film came with subtitles it would be enough to be understood. I enjoyed watching this film and like to watch it again and again. Now this film is in the Gallaudet Archives.

I had another good idea. You know there has never been a woman directing a movie. Kathleen Fettin, a deaf woman who played in two of my films, a good actress. Her first film was "The Confession" and the second film was "The Debt". She was an easy person to work with. I asked her to direct the film. She agreed to direct. I told her to do everything. I was willing to be a cameraman for her. She got two actors and and took a role of herself. There was a small casts of three in "Sorrowful Approach". She was a good director. I am sad because she passed away fifteen years ago. I feel bad, every time I watch the films on Sunday and see Kathleen Fettin acting.

David Hays, a National Theater for the Deaf (NTD) director, had seen me acting on stage under the Fanwood Alumni Association's auspices before. He had met me a few times before Fanwood. He gave me a list of his acting experiences. I received a
questionnaire from him before the NTD was established. There were many questions. It
mentioned AGE. I was uncomfortable with that, as I was 66 years old at the time. I have
since then decided to forget that. David Hays wanted to see my films. I went to his office
near Columbus Circle in New York City. I brought my film portfolio. Bernard Bragg met
me there. Hays came and asked me who that girl was (Kathleen Fettin) in the film. I told
him that she was gone. Hays said "shucks, I liked her acting". He wished he could have
her join the NTD.

I am a film collector. I have collected many different old films. One of my favorite
films is that of my deaf uncle Winfield Marshall, one of my father's brothers who was a
graduate of Gallaudet College in 1904. The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) asked
him to sign a song in the film. It was a hand-powered camera, not like automatically
controlled. I have prints of his film, since I got help from Dr. Marcus Kenner in getting
permission to make a copy of Winfield Marshall's film. He contacted the library at
Gallaudet. Since I am a relative of Winfield's, I got permission to get a copy of Max
Lubin's Union League newsreel and the NAD convention in Buffalo, New York in the
1930's. I still have films of social events such as St. Ann's Church for the Deaf events and
other events. I was in a film made by Max Lubin, where I was playing Santa Claus and
giving gifts to people.

That is all that I have to explain and tell you all my ideas about how the films
worked. Now I will show you my feature films. Each film has titles and credits showing
where the story is from, etc.. My friends, I want to thank you, my people. I have loved
acting for deaf people for so many years.
40 FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

1) Your background

2) Exactly how many films did you make? you claimed nine feature films, but one is missing - "The Face on the Barroom Floor" (1959)

3) What do you think of the silent films?

4) What were your own reactions and the deaf audience's reactions when the silent films converted to talkies?

5) What do you think of captioned films?

6) What was your purpose in counting the captioned films you have shown?

7) Are you still showing captioned films now? Where?

8) Where did you get playscripts for your own films?

9) Why didn't you use playscripts written by other authors besides Anton Chekhov and Guy DeMaupassant? Were they your favorites? Why?

10) You mentioned in your presentation videotape that you spent your own money to make films. What about admission? What about profits?

11) The film "A Cake of Soup" was successful. Did you make a big profit?

12) During the shooting of "A Cake of Soup", did you contact Central Park for permission to let you make a film there? Were there some deaf people as extras?

13) How did you pick the players for the films?

14) Tell me about Emerson Romero's background and your personal experience with him.

15) Tell me what is "live films"? Why did you do them?

16) In the film "I Shall Know Thereafter", how did you get songs from Hollywood? What year did you make this film?

"It is Too Late"

17) Who wrote the playscript for this film?

18) Which school(s) did the actors graduate from?

19) Why did the players use fingerspelling instead of signing for words like kitchen, home, drunk, nice, how are you? These words have signs.
20) In this film, an actor put a piece of paper under the door to make people notice that somebody was at the door. Did all deaf people usually do that at the time because there were no door lights?

21) What was the deaf audience's reactions to your first film?

"The Dream"

22) What made you decide to make a film by deaf people who acted like hearing people?

23) How long did the actors have rehearsals before shooting?

24) Which school(s) did these actors graduate from?

25) What was the deaf audience's reactions to this film?

26) What is the reason behind deaf people playing hearing people?

27) Was it easy for the actors to speak without using sign language during the shooting?

28) You enjoyed watching this film and would like to watch it again and again. Can you tell me what is the special thing about it?

29) How often did you watch all of the films that you made?

30) What was the purpose of showing your films to David Hays? What was his purpose for watching these films?

31) Did Hays ask you to participate NTD in any way?

32) Tell me who was Dr. Marcus Kenner as he helped you to get a copy of your Uncle Winfield Marshall's films.

33) Where were Winfield Marshall's and Max Lubin's films were located?

34) Why did you stop making films after 1963?

35) What do you think of other deaf independent films such as Deafula, and Think Me Nothing?

36) How come didn't you make films which focused on deaf social events like Union League? I wonder if other people besides Max Lubin made films about deaf social events in New York City?

37) What was the purpose of making films with subtitles even though the deaf players used sign language?

38) What kind of audience did you show your films to? How big was the average audience?
39) What is your suggestion/advice for the next generation who may be interested in making films?

40) What do you think of older and present forms of American Sign Language? Example, date, home, kisses, - why are these signs different now?
Interview Date: August 20, 1993

(Melinda) Your background (including your family, experiences, etc.)

(Ernest) Let me introduce myself, my name is Ernest Marshall from New York City. I am the third generation of a deaf family: my father, mother, and paternal grandparents are also deaf. My grandfather was also deaf and had a deaf brother. They went to the American School for the Deaf; and I had a few cousins also went there. My grandfather was born in 1840's and went to the Hartford School around 1850's. His brother went there the following year. My father also went to Hartford School and then transferred to the New York School for the Deaf (Fanwood) in New York City. I grew up watching my parents conversing through American Sign Language (ASL). They were not oralists. When I enrolled at Fanwood, I signed with the students. The students were surprised that I was expert in ASL. They asked me how I learned ASL. I explained to them that I came from a deaf family. This school, the New York Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, was the first military school for the deaf in the world. I was a band lieutenant. I stayed there for a few years until I graduated. I felt ready to face the world but the times were very bad because of the Great Depression. But I managed to make a living.

(M) Did your parents and grandparents meet Laurent Clerc when they enrolled ASD?

(E) I believe my grandparents had seen Laurent Clerc at the time around 1840's to 1850's. But they never told me about him.

(M) Did your family enroll Gallaudet College?

(E) My father's brother Winfield enrolled at Gallaudet College. My cousin Deborah Marshall also went there.

(M) What did your uncle and cousin do after graduating from Gallaudet College?

(E) After my uncle Winfield graduated from Gallaudet, he got involved with Republican party to support and vote for a new President of the U.S. It helped him to get a job in Washington, D.C. as an accountant for the Southern Railway trains. He worked there until he retired. As for Deborah, she graduated and became a teacher in the West. Then she came home to the East to support her family.

(M) Which school did your cousin teach in the West?

(E) I do not remember which school she taught at.
(M) How did you learn storytelling?

(E) When I was a little boy, I told the other boys different stories in school. When I was seven years old in 1917, I came home from school. My parents tended to sign to me the fairy tales then I brought these stories to school and shared with other boys. When I was transferred to the military school, I continued signing stories to other students. When I was out in the world, I continued signing stories. I was called many times to sign stories in different places. Two months ago, I went to New Jersey. I signed stories to a hearing audience. I used pure ASL.

(M) Was it the first time for you to sign stories to a hearing audience?

(E) Yes, it was my first experience signing stories in front of a hearing audience. I have been used to signing stories in front of deaf audiences until my recent experience in New Jersey.

(M) What was the hearing audience's reactions to your storytelling?

(E) They understood my signs clearly. Most of them want to become interpreters later.

(M) What about voice-interpreting for the hearing audience?

(E) No voice-interpreting!

(M) Wow!

(E) My nationality is French, British, German, Dutch, and Scottish. My one ancestor came here to America from Scotland in 1750 before the United States was established. My mother's side was French and German while my father's side was a mix of different nationalities.

(M) Do you have any sisters or brothers?

(E) I have no sisters or brothers. I am an only child.

(M) Exactly how many films did you make? you claimed nine feature films.

(E) I made seven feature films and the others were short films. The total is eleven films.

(M) You made seven feature films.

(E) Yes, I made films with no help. I got the money from my own pocket.

(M) The film, "The Face on the Barroom Floor" is missing.

(E) I was not satisfied with this film because the captions did not match with the signs of the actors. Even though the actor were very good. So I decided to remove the film from circulation since I did not want to show this film to audiences.
(M) Do you still count on that film which is a part of your feature films?

(E) Yes, I still count on that film as part of my feature films. I did show this film to an audience but the audience noticed the captions did not match with the signs. The filmmaker did not follow my instructions. He should have looked at the film footage. I was not happy with this film and put it away.

(M) Didn't you show this film to any audience ever again?

(E) I did show this film a few times, and then I stopped showing it.

(M) Now, what do you think of the silent films?

(E) I loved the old silent films. These were really nice plays and good entertainment. I compare them with the talkies now with their horror, violence, advanced filmmaking etc... it is much different from the silent films. The old cameras stayed in place and did not move around. Now the cameras are able to move and follow you somewhere like on an airplane, train, car etc..

(M) What is the special thing in the silent films that you always interested you?

(E) It was a nice play. I enjoyed drama. I like the silent films.

(M) What is your favorite silent film?

(E) Ben Hur was a very good movie but I like other old silent films too. I do not remember the names of the other silent films.

(M) What were your own reactions and the deaf audience's reactions when the silent films converted to talkies?

(E) Most deaf people were very disappointed because they were not able to watch the films without dialogue and subtitles. They could not understand and follow what the films were about. The film library happened to have silent films so we borrowed and then showed them at deaf clubs. We felt secure that we had something to watch that had captions. In a short time, the library sold the silent films. Deaf people were left behind out.

(M) What about your reactions to the silent films?

(E) I felt the same way. I agreed with deaf people. I enjoyed movies less when I watched the films without captions. I could not follow the story.

(M) Could you guess what the film is about?

(E) Yes, I could guess through the actions. I also could imagine what the film was about but sometimes I could be right or wrong.
(M) What do you think of captioned films?

(E) They are wonderful. The captions help us to understand what the film is about. The silent films showed the action and dialogue between the actors which were then covered by a black screen, which meant that we could not see the actors conversing or acting. In comparison, the talkies with captions let us read the captions while watching the action and background at the same time. Captions are a big improvement in films.

(M) I watched your presentation on videotape, you counted the captioned films you have shown. What was your purpose in counting the captioned films you have shown?

(E) I received the captioned films from the library. I wanted to know how many films I had showed. Last May 13th this year, I was surprised to learn that I have shown 2,000 captioned films for the deaf people. I showed over 500 films at the Union League Club of the Deaf. At the Long Island Club of the Deaf, I showed another over 500 films. I also showed the films at my home, where I set up the Independent Film Club of the Deaf (35 times) and other places. I count the total to be 2,000 films.

(M) 2,000 films, what was your purpose of counting films?

(E) I just wanted to find out how many films I have showed. I met a few projectionists who showed the captioned films and quit in a short time while I continued showing the films.

(M) Are you still showing captioned films now? Where?

(E) Yesterday I showed a film at the Over 55 Club.

(M) Where?

(E) At St. Ann's Church for the Deaf, they have an Over 55 Club for Senior Citizens. I showed a film with captions which was called "Herbie", a comedy. Everyone enjoyed watching this film.

(M) What about today's videotapes?

(E) People like to rent and watch the videotapes at home depending on their preferences. I like watching the captioned films at the clubs.

(M) Today people prefer to stay home and watch the rental tapes instead of going to the club.

(E) Yes, right! True! To prove it that we are seeing less attendance at the clubs. Most people prefer to stay home and watch rental tapes. At the time when there was no television, many deaf people went to the club regularly to meet and mingle with people in the clubroom.
(M) Where did you get playscripts for your own films?

(E) The film, "The Confession" was from a script which was written by Guy DeMaupassant. This story was revised for the movie. "The Debt" was also from a script which written by Anton Chekhov. The title, "The Bor" was changed to "The Debt" because the story was focused on the money or debt. Dr. Leroy Submit edited the words for the movie so deaf audiences could follow the story. The rest of my own films were not from the book or playscript. But "The Neighbor" was also from a script.

(M) Besides Guy DeMaupassant and Anton Chekhov, what about the rest of the films which was written by who?

(E) The film, "It is Too Late" was an original play.

(M) Who wrote the script for "It is Too Late"?

(E) I wrote the story. This film ran 40 minutes.

(M) Why didn't you use playscripts written by other authors besides Anton Chekhov and Guy DeMaupassant? Were they your favorites? Why?

(E) Because "The Debt" was one of 32 best stageplays. I looked at the script and liked it so I decided to use it for my film. Another reason was that I looked for a script which had a small number of characters like 3 or 4 actors in the show or movie. It was much easier to direct fewer characters. If I had many characters, like 15 or 20, it would be hard for me to direct. Not only that, each of us lived away. I preferred to have 3 or 4 characters so it would be easier for us to cooperate and work together smoothly.

(M) You wrote the story for the films. What about other deaf playwrights?

(E) There were no others! I was the only one who wrote the scripts.

(M) You mentioned in your presentation videotape that you spent your own money to make films. What about admission? What about profits?

(E) First, I picked a place to show the films. I mostly showed the films at deaf clubs. The Deaf clubs and I agreed to split the proceedings 50-50%. I got 50% to cover expenses. I did the same thing with other deaf clubs. Sometimes we got small and large amounts of money.

(M) How much for admission?

(E) At the time, the audience paid one dollar as a donation, not for admission. I made the flyers and it mentioned donation for the "film fund". Deaf clubs and I shared half the money.
(M) At the first time, you made your own film, "It is Too Late" - you spent your own money to cover the expenses and showed the films at deaf clubs. You got 50% money. Was it still a big profit?

(E) No, I made a small profit to cover expenses such as rolls of film, and travelling. I brought my films with me while travelling through different states. I did not ship my films. I went to different states with my films. I went to Boston twice, Hartford, Conn once, Lewiston, Maine, Reading, Penna., Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. twice, Richmond, Virginia, St. Paul, Minnesota, New Jersey and New York. I traveled by train, car, and bus. I was thrilled because a woman in St. Paul, Minnesota happened to be a good friend of Emerson Romero, who suggested she show the films to deaf people. At the time, deaf people were thrilled to see the deaf films, but today people do not bother to watch deaf films. So I made the flyers for St. Paul. Deaf people in St. Paul got the flyers and were very excited to see the films. The films were shown on Halloween Day. When I arrived at the deaf club, I was surprised to see a full house of deaf people. They showed me a list of people who lived far from St. Paul who were willing to drive all that way just to come and see the films. I won't forget that.

(M) What about travelling to the West?

(E) No! not to California, Just between the midwest and the East coast. (in Marshall's letter of September 11, 1993 - he stated he had made a mistake that he went to California)

(M) In St. Paul, Minnesota, what were the deaf audience's reactions to your films?

(E) They were thrilled and suggested that I make more films. Now you see the new deaf films such as Think Me Nothing, Deafula, etc. At the time, I got a lot of attention from them but today I get less attention from young deaf people because they feel today's deaf films have become common.

(M) The film, "A Cake of Soap" was successful. Did you make a big profit?

(E) I showed "A Cake of Soap" with other films because it was a short film so I added other films in the showings. There was a lot of talk around town about "A Cake of Soap" since the audience liked the plot twist at the ending of the film. They laughed hysterically. I gave a lot of credits to Emerson Romero. It was his idea to make a comedy film. Deaf people had many problems on their minds and the film helped them to forget their problems.

(M) During the shooting of "A Cake of Soap", did you contact Central Park for permission to let you make a film there? Were there some deaf people as extras?

(E) Firstly, we had people like Eugene Bergman and Emerson Romero. During the shooting, the police showed up and asked us what we were doing. We told them we were making a film. Then he asked for a permission form. Romero said we did not have a permission form. The police told us not to make a film in the park even though we were using a hand-held camera. But the film did not come out well. So we had to do it over again. We were required to get a permission to use the park. We went to the Admissions building to get one. They asked us many questions about vans, lights, etc.. We did not
have those things except for small things. We still got permission anyway. We paid for one
day of shooting. If there was something that came up that we forgot or went wrong at the
park, we could not use this permission form for the next time. We went ahead with the
shoot there. The policeman did not show up to check if we had a permission form. Maybe
the police already had a list of people who planned to make a film in the park so they did
not bother us.

(M) What about the deaf people as extras?

(E) We had no extras except for three deaf actors. The people in the park walked and
passed by as normal. We had no problems.

(M) How did you pick the players for your films?

(E) I knew these deaf people who were very good at acting. I saw them on stage. I picked
them: depending on their talents.

(M) Did you give them tryouts?

(E) No tryouts, they proceeded to act following with my directions during the shoot. The
woman, Katherine Fettin was a good actress. I showed the script to her and then she went
ahead with her role. She acted perfectly without a rehearsal. She was a natural actress.

(M) Tell me about Emerson Romero's background and your personal
experience with him.

(E) Emerson Romero and I were close friends. He went to see my films at deaf clubs. He
was motivated to work with me in making films. He used to be an actor in Hollywood. He
was in the comedy films. His stage name was Tommy Albert. When the silent films
converted to talkies, he lost his job as an actor. He went to New York and settled there.

(M) What did Emerson Romero do when he settled in New York?

(E) He worked for the bank. During the Second World War, he worked in the war plant in
Farmingdale, Long Island until the war was over. He had a small shop which sold alarm
clocks.

(M) Did he get involved with deaf communities?

(E) He got involved with many shows. He was really a good actor and comedian. He was
in the theater at college.

(M) Which college did he go?

(E) I do not know which college he went. He knew how to pick good plays for deaf
people.
(M) Was it true that Emerson invented the captioned films?

(E) He bought the films. He asked someone to listen to the dialogue and write the words for him. He added subtitles to the films. He spliced in captions between the scenes similar to the method used with the old silent films.

(M) Who invented the captioned films before the Captioned Films for the Deaf was established?

(E) "The Confession" was the first film with English subtitles. It was my idea to put the subtitles in the films. The first thing I did was to shoot the action and then rewind the film and shoot a title card with subtitles on a black background with white lettering, since we would not see the black background on the film except for the subtitles. I did the same thing for "The Debt". In Europe, the people there use subtitles in their films. It is not new to them. The people in Europe invented the English subtitles before we did.

(M) Tell me what is "live films"? Why did you do them?

(E) I do not want to explain that. It is hard to explain how I got in and out of films.

(M) You mentioned in your presentation videotape, can you please make it clear how it works?

(E) I do not want to talk about it because I want to keep it secret how it works. Once I did explain how it works and someone stole my idea. I talked to Helen Menken, a daughter of deaf parents who played in the Broadway shows and played the character of Queen Elizabeth. We rented the playhouse and showed my films to hearing people. They were very impressed. I explained to the people how "live films" worked. Then at the 1933 New York World Fair, DuPort showed "live films" and explained how it worked. I was surprised because they stole my idea. I did not get anything from it.

(M) Were they hearing people? How did they steal your idea?

(E) There was a film preview. There were a lot of filmmakers. Menken helped me to show my films to them. I happened to explain to people about my new idea of "live films". I thought they would plan to take me to CBS television studios but it never happened because Menken died of a heart attack. I lost my chance. At AAAD sponsored by the Union League, I directed the floor show. I showed the "live films". It was a trick.

(M) Was it your first time to do "live films"? Did you do it again?

(E) Yes, It was my first time and I dropped it.

(M) Didn't you have motivation to do "live films"?

(E) I had no motivation to make another one. It required cameras, space, a place, etc.

(M) What year did you do "live films" for AAAD?

(E) In the 1950's
(M) In the film, "I Shall Know Therefore", how did you get songs from Hollywood? What year did you make this film?

(E) I found the song from an old magazine from 1877. I watched a movie with a bouncing ball above the words to the song. So I took a chance in doing it. I asked a deaf woman to sign a song. It was hard work but it was very successful.

(M) Was this movie with bouncing the ball above song words your first and last time making?

(E) Yes

(M) Did you ever make another movie like that?

(E) No

(M) What year did you make the film with bouncing the ball above song words?

(E) 1959

"It is Too Late"

(M) Who wrote the playscript for this film?

(E) I wrote the playscript. I told the players what to do during the shooting. Before the shooting, I told them to show me how they would act. I was satisfied with their acting, and then we went ahead with the shoot.

(M) How long did the players have rehearsals before the shooting?

(E) For about three or four months, we did not even work for one day. we agreed to find time to work together because we lived far from each other.

(M) Where was the shooting?

(E) Brooklyn Park

(M) Which school(s) did the actors graduate from?

(E) Most of these actors graduated from the New York School for the Deaf (Fanwood)

(M) Why did the players use fingerspelling instead of signing for words like kitchen, home, drunk, nice, how are you? These words have signs.

(E) A long time ago, most of us fingerspelled, and then signed. After the people enrolled at Gallaudet College, they modified the system of sign language. For example, a word that we usually fingerspelled, in Gallaudet they would invent a new sign for the word. Thus, they used signs a lot and less fingerspelling. In my time, when I was young, I used a lot of fingerspelling and signing.
(M) In this film, an actor put a piece of paper under the door to make people notice that somebody was at the door. Did all deaf people usually do that at the time because there were no doorbell lights?

(E) In the old times, there were no doorbell lights. We wrote letters to our deaf friends telling them that we would meet them at their houses at certain time and to look for a piece of paper under the door. Now there are doorbell lights, and telephone lights.

(M) What was the deaf audience's reactions to your first film?

(E) They were thrilled to see movies with deaf actors. They felt it was something different because they were tired of watching the deaf actors on the stage.

(M) Where did you show this film in the first time?

(E) At St. Ann's Church for the Deaf in New York City.

(M) How much for admission?

(E) 40 cents. I did not care about the money. I just wanted to entertain deaf people.

"The Dream"

(M) What made you decide to make a film by deaf people who acted like hearing people?

(E) I wanted to do something different in making a film. I had a good idea to make a film by deaf people acting like hearing people. So I went ahead with the shoot. I picked deaf actors who happened to speak very well and were experts in lipreading. For example, Philip Goldberg used sign language in the movie "A Cake of Soap" while he talked in the movie, "The Dream". Emerson Romero came and asked me why didn't the actors use sign language. I said it was a special film and something different from other films. This film was with subtitles which would be helpful enough to be understood.

(M) You picked these actors who happened to speak very well. Were they willing to get involved with the movie?

(E) They really enjoyed playing in the film. They did not think of the money. They enjoyed watching themselves in the film.

(M) Which school(s) did these actors graduate from?

(E) Most of them graduated from Public School 47 in New York City. We used the bar room at the DeSales Youth Club of the Deaf.
(M) How long did the actors have rehearsals before shooting?

(E) We went and rehearsal during the shooting. I watched the actors rehearsing before shooting until I was satisfied with their acting, and then we went ahead with the shoot. It took us six months to finish this film.

(M) What was the deaf audience's reactions to this film?

(E) They said it was an odd film. They asked me why I made that film. It was a special film. They wanted to watch the actors signing in the films.

(M) Did they like this film?

(E) Some of them liked it.

(M) What is the reason behind deaf people playing hearing people?

(E) I believed that deaf people could act like hearing people. An actor is able to act as a beggar, thief, and other different characters. So it showed that deaf people could act like hearing people. That was my reason.

(M) Was it easy for the actors to speak without using sign language during the shooting?

(E) It was easy for them to do it. They just memorized their lines.

(M) Did they feel awkward without using sign language during the shooting?

(E) No, it was smooth.

(M) You enjoyed watching this film and would like to watch it again and again. Can you tell me what is the special thing about it?

(E) Yes, all the time. I like watching the way these actors act like hearing people. Deaf people can act as different characters.

(M) Do you still watch this film again?

(E) No, this film is at the Gallaudet Archives. I have other films which will be sent to Gallaudet's Archives before I am gone.

(M) How often did you watch all of the films that you made?

(E) All the time, when I am in the mood to watch the films.
I am telling you the truth when I say I am getting tired of setting up the projector, putting up the screen and changing the reels. It is much easier for me to use the tapes which show all of my films at once.
(M) What was the purpose of showing films to David Hays? What was his purpose for watching these films?

(E) Bernard Bragg told David Hays about me and my deaf films. David wanted to see them. I picked the film, "The Debt" with English subtitles to show David. I brought it with me to David's office. He used to work in Manhattan on 59th Street and Columbus Circle. Bernard came with me. David was impressed with my films. He said he thought there were people who would help me by investing money to make more deaf films, but my company was very small. I got to know David better ever since. Someone gave David my name before the establishment of the National Theater for the Deaf. I got a questionnaire from David. I wrote a list of the films I made. But it mentioned AGE. They preferred to pick young deaf people.

(M) David sent you a questionnaire. Did he let you know that you would not be accepted into NTD because of your age or did you guess that you would not accepted?

(E) I got the letter from David which stated that I was born with good talents. He mentioned that he was sorry for not hiring me as he had already picked other people. I knew it was a cover up due to my age.

(M) You showed your films to David Hays. What was his reactions to your films? (I mean Hays looked for the actors in your films or watched these films for pleasure)

(E) He was curious about my films. He specialized in the theater. He used to work as a prop man for Broadway shows. He went to the theater for the deaf in Connecticut. He became interested in working with them. So he received a lot of money from the government to establish the National Theater for the Deaf. Now NTD still stands successfully because they receive money through grants. If not for the grants, NTD would not exist now. You see other deaf people get grants for some purposes, and then they become successful.

(M) What do you think of NTD shows?

(E) Good, it is a big success. It becomes more recognized by people all over the world. It is helped by from the government through grants. In the old times, there were few local deaf shows. There was little publicity. Today there are some new deaf theater companies all over the country. Deaf people watch plays on television everyday, and then become interested in acting. There are more opportunities for deaf people to get involved with shows and movies. In my time, there were few shows. I was in shows a lot. Many people asked me to be in their show. Today there are too many deaf people who are in shows.

(M) Do you go to New York Theatre of the Deaf shows?

(E) Yes, once in a while. I saw "A Christmas Carol" which was very good. I enjoyed it a lot. They made perfect props for this show. I get less attention from other people now because there are too many deaf actors. In my time, there were few people like me.
(M) Do you predict that there are more and more deaf theaters in the future?

(E) Yes, more and more deaf theaters like Westside Theater and road company by former NTD actor Edward Waterstreet in California, and in Chicago.

(M) Tell me who was Dr. Marcus Kenner as he helped you to get a copy of your Uncle Winfield Marshall's films.

(E) He was the former president of the National Association of the Deaf. I wanted to get a copy of "Yankee Doodle" since my Uncle Winfield was in this film. I could not get it so I talked to Dr. Kenner because he had a contact with NAD, and then I got a copy of it through help from Dr. Kenner. He was also a leader for the Hebrew Association for the Deaf in New York City.

(M) Did your uncle get involved with NAD and other deaf organizations?

(E) He got involved with local deaf organizations in Washington, D.C. I am not sure if he participated in shows outside of Washington, D.C. but he was in shows at Gallaudet College.

(M) Where were Winfield Marshall's and Max Lubin's films located?

(E) Max Lubin was a cameraman for the Union League Club of the Deaf (UL). He made films of outings, the NAD convention in Buffalo, New York, and the FRAT's social parties. The UL paid him to make films. Recently, the members of the UL did not know what to do with these seven full reels of UL films. I suggested they give them to Gallaudet's Archives. The vote passed. These films are now in the Gallaudet Archives.

(M) Why did you stop making films after 1963?

(E) The reason I stopped making films was due to increased costs of film rolls and other things. In 1964, my wife and I celebrated our 25th anniversary wedding. We travelled all over America by train. Before our trip, I contacted 8 different deaf clubs to see if they would be interested in watching my films. We agreed to set up dates to show the films. We went to Akron, Cleveland, Dayton Ohio, Dallas Texas, Los Angeles, Oakland California, Chicago, and then went home. We really enjoyed ourselves.

(M) Did you bring all of your films with you?

(E) I chose a few films to bring with me. I could not bring all of them because they were too heavy to carry. I did not want to ship them to the deaf clubs because I was afraid they would ruin the films especially since they were original. I wanted to take care of my films while I showed them. For example, "It is Too Late" made in 1937, is still in a good condition.

(M) You chose a few films to bring with you. Which film did you show?

(E) Two films, "The Debt" and "The Neighbor"
(M) What about "A Cake of Soap"?

(E) I think I showed that film too. It was a hit.

(M) What do you think of other deaf independent films such as "Deafula", and "Think Me Think"?

(E) I praise Peter Wechsberg (Wolf) for being a good filmmaker. He is an expert in camerawork. These films were fantasy. In Deafula, the priest craved blood. As for Think Me Nothing, it was a comedy film. The pictures were perfectly exposed. Andrew Kruger was a good friend of mine. He was a good filmmaker and had a good camera called a Bolex with a reflex lens. His brother was a president of the Kodak Corp. I suspect that his brother gave him a lot of rolls of film with Technicolor. He took good films of mountains and archaeology. They came with signs, not captions. These films were shown in the West. He gave me two reels of his film. Chester Beers made a film called "Dog Trouble" which was similar to my film "It is Too Late". It was an original play. He showed it all over the country in each state. He was from the West. I don't know Alexander McFale personally but he was one of the deaf filmmakers. During the war, Clyde Cherrington had money to make a film in his office. I am sure there are some other deaf filmmakers somewhere but I do not know this for a fact.

(M) Speaking of Max Lubin, did he specialize the conventions in the films?

(E) Yes, he specialized in filming various social events. He also was a cameraman for "The Magician of Magicians".

(M) How come didn't you make films which focused on deaf social events like Union League? I wonder if other people besides Max Lubin made films about deaf social events in New York City?

(E) I admit I do not know if other people made films about Deaf social events. At that time, around 1928 to 1930, 8mm home movie cameras came out. A lot of people bought them. I am sure they shot the events. I do not really know who these other people were. All I know is that Max Lubin was one who specialized in filming the events. I did shoot the outings at Fanwood twice, boat rides on the Hudson River, and other small events. But I did not specialize in event films. I mostly specialized in movies.

(M) What was the purpose of making films with subtitles even though the deaf players used sign language?

(E) Because a few hard of hearing people were not expert in reading signs. They missed a lot of what the stories were about. So I agreed to put the subtitles in which helped them enough to understand.

(M) What kind of audience did you show your films to? How big was the average audience?

(E) Mostly deaf audiences, I mostly used the local deaf clubs. I did use a YMCA in Washington, D.C., and Boston and some other clubs.
M) How big was the average audience?

(E) There was always a full house of deaf viewers through advertising by flyers. One time I did try to show the films to a hearing audience. I gave the flyers to deaf and hearing people in order to bring them in to see the films. The films were shown at different times, in the afternoon for hearing audience and in the evening for deaf audiences. The captions would help hearing audiences to understand better. After showing the film, the hearing audience's reactions to the films were good but they could not get used to seeing signs. It was distracting to them. But they enjoyed them anyway. It was my first and last time in showing the films to hearing people.

(M) You showed the films to deaf audience in local areas in New York City. Did you show the films often to them or once in a while?

(E) I showed the films to deaf audiences once because it was not worth it for them to see them again.

(M) Suppose a few years later, would you show the films again?

(E) Well, but I have become crazy about the videotape camera. I have one. It has more advantages over the old movie camera as the movie camera required a lot of time to adjust the focus, change the rolls, send for the developing, etc. while videotape cameras are easy to operate, since they include an automatic focus adjustment.

(M) What is your suggestion/advice for the next generation may be interested in making films?

(E) I warn people who are interested in filmmaking that it costs a lot of money. If they can, they should get help from the people who are willing to invest the money. The first thing is to pick a good story which helps lead to success. The people should think twice before they decide to go ahead with filmmaking. Really, I can not give the right advice because money talks. In Hollywood, they spend thousands and millions of dollars on filmmaking. We do not have enough money. If the people could get the grants, it would be fine. Dr. Don Bangs of Washington, D.C. got some grants worth about twelve thousand dollars to start making films. If not for the grants, he could not have gone ahead with filmmaking. The hearing communities helped people out with the money to make films, and then they became successful. In my time, I did not get any help with money. Emerson Romero tried to contact the government asking them to give him grants to make films. They were not interested in filmmaking, as they preferred plays. For example, David Hays contacted and convinced the government to give him money to set up the Theater for the Deaf. It worked. If Emerson would have gotten the grants, we would have done more filmmaking. If the young people want to make films, they must think twice, especially as money talks.

(M) If you were born all over again, what would you do? (I mean you did filmmaking for many years so now you look back, what would you do better?)

(E) I loved being in many plays. I had been in a play called "Cyrano Debergerac" which was a heavy drama. I liked it but we could not use this play because it would take so much of our time and we would have to get together for rehearsals. I like to convert stageplays
into films. I could pick a playscript to make a film. If the young people wants to be in filmmaking, they should look at books for a good playscript with few characters. It would be easier to get together on time.

(M) If you got the grants before, what would you improve?

(E) In many ways, I do not know in what ways I would have improved my work. I would have many creative ideas.

(M) What do you think of older and present forms of American Sign Language? Example, date, home, kisses, - why these signs are different now?

(E) I am sad because people have changed our old ASL. Last Sunday, I sat with a deaf Chinese person. We talked about President Clinton who has lost his popularity. I noticed the new sign for popular (five handshape palm out downwards on one handshape). I told him it was the wrong sign and gave him my sign for "popular" (one handshape on the temple then five handshape palm out downwards). The same thing with the new sign "kid" (one handshape palm out on between nose and mouth). I did not like that sign. It should be (five handshape palm out downwards). Many new ASL signs have ruined our old ASL. I like fingerspelling and sign. I love watching deaf people use signs with their mouth closed. It was easy to follow. But now people must watch people talking while signing. There are too many new ASL forms. I am very sad. I won't follow the new ASL ways. I will keep my old ASL. Sometimes I do not understand new forms of ASL, so I ask people to fingerspell for me. I ask why they changed the form of ASL. But I can't stop them from using new forms of ASL.

(M) Why are these signs are changed now?

(E) It is not necesary to change the forms of ASL. We should keep the old forms of ASL so we can converse easily. The new form of ASL for "program" (P handshape moving on B handshape) while there is an old ASL form (B handshape bented on B handshape palm out upwards). I recently was at New York University and Alan Champion was responsible for the forum. He picked three panelists on which I was included. I showed the audience my old ASL while the other two panelists showed the new forms of ASL. The audience realized that the old and new forms of ASL are completely different. It showed that the old ASL is phased out now.

(M) Do you follow today's ASL?

(E) I have to admit I went to the AT&T building for the forums on the first Fridays of the month from September to June. I was surprised that when I watched the deaf presenters, I did not understand them even though I am deaf. I am afraid that more and more deaf people sign too fast. I ask "why the rush?". In the past, deaf people signed slowly and clearly. I am very sad about it, but I can't do anything about it.

(M) I have one last question. Would you like to add something?

(E) I still love filmmaking. I do want to continue doing it but the cost prevents me. I love to go to the movie theaters to watch the action. I have caught many bloopers in the movies. I still go to the movie theaters to watch foreign films.
(M) Do you see the movies without subtitles in the movie theaters?

(E) No, I always ask if the movie comes with subtitles. If it does, I would go to the movie. If it does not, I would go to another movie theater.

(M) Suppose if there are a lot of actions in the movie without subtitles, would you watch it?

(E) Sure, I do. Now there are more movies with horror and violence which lead to more crimes and influence people's attitudes. They are bad. During the silent film days, the film started with the title and the credits, which mentioned the film had passed the Board of Viewers with the seal which meant the board gave permission for the film to be shown to the public. Without the Board's permission, awful pictures would be edited. Today the filmmakers are free to do whatever kind of movie they want to make. They make a lot of money quickly. Here is my process for producing a film. The first thing is to select the play, a place for rehearsals, performers, and cameramen. When to direct the play; to purchase film; to pick a place for shooting; lettering dialogue lines on title cards; shipping films to the laboratory for processing after shooting the title cards; to follow the editing work; to purchase reels; order program circulars; arrange with the clubs for filmplay showings through correspondence; and to make programs and flyers for showing the films. The producer and director are the ones who take responsibility to invest the money for filmmaking. I did all of that by myself. No one helped me.

When I travelled all over the country, the deaf people and I corresponded by mail to agree to meet at a certain place at certain time. We met punctually on time. No one was ever late. I did the same thing with you this morning when we met at the bus stop on time.

(M) Did you have back up to help you out with the filmmaking?

(E) No, those people who worked with me, they were really well-coordinated. That was how we succeed with our films.

(M) Many, many, thanks for your time. Wow! I have learned a lot from you today. I am sure your interview will help me to expand knowledge about your experiences and filmmaking work. Thanks again.

(E) You are welcome. I am happy to hear that. Thank you.
REFERENCES


