

**EYEWITNESS TO ORDINARY EVIL:
ONE CODA'S WAY**

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FINAL

Ordinary Evil consists of the things that happen that we wish we could control and do something about but really cannot. Ordinary Evil is a topic that I have learned about from a psychologist friend whose name is Mike Harvey. (I apologize that he is a psychologist but I still consider him a friend.) Mike explains that as a child we had a blanket or a stuffed bear that our parents had given to us as a protector against the bad things. We keep the lights on to ward away the imaginary monsters. As we got older, the monsters began to take on names. There are rapists and murderers out there but they are not the real monsters we will deal with. The evil we will have contact with is much more subtle, much more ordinary. Ordinary evil is something that we all have faced and continue to face as adults. Some of us have faced ordinary evil more than others but we have all encountered it growing up and many of us face it every day as adults.

I think that the concept of ordinary evil aptly applies in a CODA's life. How many of us have encountered situations where our parents were thought of as less than able? How many of us have encountered situations where our parents had something happen to them that we know is illegal, immoral, or just plain wrong. *And we could do nothing about it.* We could not protect them. We could not change the situation or outcome. We didn't have the tools or the know how to handle these situations.

How many of us are interpreters who are in situations where you know there is a problem. Someone is doing something to someone and it is wrong. Usually that someone is the Deaf person. For us, it is difficult to displace what we feel. All of us repress the incident, try to control our feelings and move on.

I have learned that the more things change the more they stay the same. I believe that the reason that this is true is because of ordinary evil. I believe that all CODA's are constant witnesses to ordinary evil. When we witnessed ordinary evil, we didn't have the tools or the

guidance from the adults in our lives to deal with it. As everyone is, we are also subject to our own ordinary evil. I hope that I am able to tell you how ordinary evil has affected me.

Instead of telling you in years how old I am, I am going to tell you in world events because world events shape our lives more than you know.

How old am I?

- I was born at the end of WW2.
- During the Korean War - I was between 8 and 10 years old.
- This was the McCarthy anti communism period.
- During the Sputnik years, mid to late 50's - I was in Jr High.
- The rush was on to beat the Russians.
- In the late 50's during the Cuban Crisis-and the real potential threat of Nuclear War-
- I learned to go under the desk and cover my face. Then I learned to put my head between my legs and kiss my ass goodbye: This is how we learned to handle the nuclear threat.
- Then I barely graduated from High School.
- In 1963 Kennedy was assassinated - I was in the service stationed in Texas and on my way to Dallas that day.
- In 1966 when Viet Nam was in its beginnings - I saw my first dead body. We all learned about body counts then.
- I got married for the first time (these aren't connected):
- I learned about the Beatles when I returned.
- The Civil Rights Act 1964 had been passed and Black Power/Rage was the call
- 1967 my first child was born
- The year MLK and RFK were assassinated, I started college.
- Shortly before the Cambodian Crisis - 1969 my second child was born.
- In 1975 IDEA - Inclusion came to pass
- Rowley decision showed that Deaf kids didn't need interpreters.
- 1999 my 3rd and 4th child arrived:
- 2000 my fifth child (foster child) came to live with us.
- This year 9-11 has impacted our lives:
- The future is now uncertain similar to the early 1960's when the threat of nuclear war was real.
- We now know what an Islamic Jihad is and
- In Boston we have the Catholic Priest Pedophile cover up

These are just a few of things my generation has experienced.

What happened in my childhood and my life has shaped me to be what I am today, coupled with the world events above.

I am often asked: Who are the CODA's?

They say there are approximately 2,000,000 Deaf in the U.S. Many more if we include the hard of hearing who call themselves Deaf. If half of them are adults, this means that there could be approximately 250,000 marriages. If they have the average number of children in the U.S., two. Then there are at least 500,000 CODA's in the US. Where are they?

- We are the invisible children of an invisible population.
- We are invisible not because we can't be seen but because:
- We are powerless as children
- We are silenced as interpreters
- We are denied full membership in either culture
- We are oppressors at the same time we are oppressed
- What do we do?
- Many of us escape, probably, with great guilt (remember, there are 500,000 of us and only 300 in this room)
- Some of us return home and try to protect our families.
- Some of us never leave home - possibly the guilt is too much.

I have had the opportunity to meet CODA's from all over the world. I am amazed at the commonality of our experiences, no matter what country or background we come from. We all seem to share a bond, a common thread.

Thinking about the CODA's I have met, I think we can be divided up into those who are:

- Peacemakers
- Problem solvers
- Avoiders of conflict
and
- Aggressive CODA's

Any of us can be any combination of the above at a given time. As a result, all of us are super achievers! One of the things that we all want whether we admit it or not is to be respected for who WE are, and as a result many if not all of us are super achievers. We handle everything that comes our way, like it or not. We have to be careful because when we super achieve, we can fall from a high perch.

Are CODA's of today really different from yesterday?

As the chair of the CODA Scholarship committee, I have the opportunity to read essays by many of the younger generation. What I hear from every generation when asked to tell us their experiences as CODA's is in the:

- 1930's We were interpreting for our parents at work (Sidransky)
 - We were answering questions about our Deaf parents
 - We were interpreting for our parents at a family funeral (Greenberg)
- 1950's We were interpreting for our parents at the doctors, neighbors, at school (Preston)
 - We were interpreting for our parents on the phone
 - We were Answering questions about our Deaf parents
- 1960's We were interpreting for our parents at High School or college graduation (Walker)
 - We were interpreting for our parents at the doctors
 - We were still interpreting for our parents on the phone
 - We were Answering questions about our Deaf parents
- 1970;s We were interpreting for our parents at the doctors
 - We were interpreting for our parents on the phone
 - We were Answering questions about our Deaf parents
- 1980's We were interpreting for our parents Deaf friends as professional interpreters
 - We were still interpreting for our parents on the phone
 - We were Answering questions about our Deaf parents
- 1990 to now- We are Interpreting in court.
 - We are still interpreting for our parents at the doctors, for some TV shows, at school, it didn't matter that we had captions.
 - We were interpreting for our parents on the phone
 - We are still interpreting for our parents Deaf friends.
 - We are still answering the same questions about our Deaf parents

Do you really think it's any different Today, 2002?

Our experiences and our lives are shaped by the bonds with our Deaf parents. There are two things that I believe are incredibly important in our lives. The first is that Deaf is thicker than blood. How many of us feel closer to Deaf people than the people in our extended families. I sure do! The second thing is that we have all grown up with the central gut feeling that we are concerned for our parents. We may not have realized it but we have all internalized that having Deaf parents puts us at a disadvantage in the world and we don't know why.

We travel through this life not knowing who we are, but we are defined by two worlds: one world defines us as different, THE HEARING WORLD; the other defines us as Hearing, THE DEAF WORLD (Rodriguez, R. 2002 talks about this in his book Brown).

Our complex nature creates problems about who we are. If we 'pass' as hearing we deny our Deaf side. Hence, we deny our parents. If we 'pass' as Deaf we confuse the Hearing and create additional problems. Very few non-CODA's understand this.

In my case, I am leading two lives. I can give a talk from the Hearing point of view, or I can give the talk from a Deaf point of view. YET, The Hearing tell me I am not Deaf so I can't speak to that topic, the Deaf tell me I am not Deaf, I am Hearing, so I can't speak to that topic either. When I am in the Hearing world, I am thought strange and different; I am connected to Deaf (The PUBLIC ME). When I am in the Deaf world, I am thought strange and different; I am connected to the Hearing. (THE PRIVATE ME). Who knows the rules? Who can I speak for? Myself? How do I rectify this split in personality? I find that I don't really know the cultural ways of the hearing and I have made mistakes and don't understand when they happen or why they happen. In my life, there is no escape from this dichotomous lifestyle. You learn to adjust, listen, live, and strike out (in both meanings). When I tell it like it is in the Hearing world, it is not seen as a statement. It is seen as an attack on authority or the listener. I find myself having a great deal of difficulty with authority, the lines of authority.

What are the rules, really? Who will tell me? Certainly not the Hearing. But then who is left, my Deaf family. They don't know the rules themselves. Then how did we get to be who we are? Or more accurately, how did I get to be who I am?

As a CODA, WHO IS MY FAMILY? THIS IS AN INTERESTING QUESTION! Many of you know that I write a column called OGT. Over 90% of children born to Deaf parents are

hearing. Our children are mostly hearing. The concept of family for us I believe carries a different meaning. The traditional way to look at family is to examine both the immediate family and the extended family. Traditionally, the immediate family or the nuclear family is the parent and the children, CODA's are going to have trouble with this narrow definition. The extended family are the relatives on both parents sides. For me, there was a clear separation between my nuclear family and the extended family. My mother and father together had 16 brothers and sisters. None of my parent's brothers and sisters could sign. None of them bothered to learn to sign. One or two of them learned to fingerspell a little bit but when interacting with my parents it was just spelling a word or two here and there. If any real interaction was to occur it was up to my sister or I to interpret. As soon as my sister become old enough to do the interpreting in this situation I got out as fast and as far as I could. I am sure my sister hates me for this among other things.

My extended family would tell us how wonderful my sister and I were and refer to my parents as "poor Bet and Alfred." I hated the phrase and as a result, it drove a wedge between my extended family and me. They never really knew this and to this day still don't. There is much more to the extended family story but that will have to be for another time.

Family for me became the nuclear family and the family of Deaf people who were always at our house. It is here that Deaf is thicker than blood. Our house was rarely locked when we were home. People came and went constantly. These Deaf people were associated with the local Deaf club and the schools for the Deaf where my parents worked as teachers. These Deaf people became more family than my blood family.

Who am I? Who was my father? How far does the apple fall from the tree? My father, Alfred J., became Deaf overnight when he was 16. In the hearing world I have been told, he was

‘late deafened’ or had ‘lost his hearing.’ As you approach your 20’s life may be somewhat formed but the paths of living have not yet been chosen. Losing one’s hearing overnight means he spent years trying to figure out who he was: However, In the Deaf world *he became Deaf* when he learned to sign at Gallaudet. Something he told me often. This is also something that hearing people have a hard time understanding. There is IRONY in my fathers life: He was a great student (especially in math); He was a college graduate, in fact, he attended graduate school, he held two masters degrees, but he still couldn’t teach, he was only good enough to be a dorm counselor. In the end he became a printing teacher. He was a great athlete (football); He was a good signer; He was good in English and in German; He was a great toastmaster, good speech writer; He was a good father, a great storyteller; he was a good man. HOWEVER, what happened, he was Deaf, He no longer was considered a whole person, no longer could get respect, no longer could get equality. He was under appreciated and oppressed He died a bitter man in the end. His life, however, was full of humor, love, and he especially loved kids and they loved him. My Dad was the bridge person, always the explainer, always trying to see both sides of the story.

My mother, Mary Elizabeth, or Betty, a full-blooded Irish, she, as my grandfather would say. My mom was short, quiet, but carried a big stick. A yardstick, in fact. She wielded the yardstick until my early adolescence when one day I grabbed it and broke it over my knee. From then on she treated me like a man. My mom was a housewife and a teacher. I never saw her as tough. One day, I think it was in 1960, she came home early from teaching at school. I didn’t know what was going on. Then the next thing I knew she was working at an insurance company downtown. I found out later that she had quit work because she was told she had to use her voice with the Deaf children she taught. An ignorant hearing person who was the principal of

the lower school insisted on it. In fact, this ignorant hearing person, set it up so that it was either quit or do as I say. My mother, apparently, told her to take your oppressive attitude, your job and shove it. She walked off the job as a teacher in the middle of year. She worked a 9 to 5 job as a keypunch operator for the next 15 years. My mother was strong, strong willed, strong in belief, and had strength in herself. That year I learned who my mother was.

My parents were hard working and loving. My mom rejected hearing people, didn't need em, you could throw them out of the train, we got plenty of them. You know the joke, a Cuban, a Russian and a Deaf man on the train. The Cuban takes a cigar from the box and lights it, takes a puff, throws the rest out the window, There are plenty of cigars in Cuba, the Russian takes a swig out of a bottle of vodka, throws the bottle out the window, There are plenty of vodka in Russia, the Deaf man looks around, the conductor stops by to inquire about tickets, The Deaf man grabs the conductor and throws him out the window, and says, there are plenty of Hearing in my country.

My sister is five years younger and when I left home, she took over the roles I held, interpreter, troublemaker, etc. My sister is a bit younger than I. She is also in the business. She went through these things too.

These feelings and perspectives were passed on to me. I learned that Deaf people were hard working, laughing, fun, bitter, self abusive, abusive, looked down upon themselves, lacked futures, BUT were strong, resilient, taxpaying, family oriented, and supportive of each other.

They were schizophrenic; too, they ignored the hearing, developed negative attitudes toward them, but took care of themselves, organized and took care of each other. I learned that DEAF people were more Family to me than my blood relatives.

As a teenager, I eagerly wanted to know what the world was all about. I also wanted to shed the burdens and the demons that I carried because of how powerless I felt. I thought I did something unusual but it may not be true. I found a second family. A surrogate Hearing family. How many of us felt the need for a Hearing family? I found a set of hearing parents who were willing to listen to me, watch me do things, to help me understand that many of the things I was feeling were normal. I will never forget this family.

Jack and Nancy were always there for me. Jack was a master of all trades and I learned from him. He was a self-made man. Nancy was a sharp talking, tell it like is person, who showed me that life is not always going to be made for you. You have to go out and grab it. Unlike my father, these second parents were in favor of the Air Force. They supported me in this new adventure and helped me to understand that everyone goes through their rite of passage. Some get a lot of help, others do it on their own.

Allan Sussman a Deaf psychologist states: "It is a rare deaf person who has not as a child been ostracized, ridiculed, and denigrated by non-disabled children, I will add *and by adults*. Such memories are painfully poignant." How has this affected our lives? What legacy have our parent passed on to us?

From my family we move to me: WHO AM I?

There are two parts my own growing up. A pre military service part and a post military service part. In the preservice part I was very naive and I will expand on this later. In the post military service part I became an adult:

ME: EARLY YEARS

I do not remember anything prior to my 10th year. I only remember the stories I have been told. The adolescent years; Moving to Connecticut:

My recollections begin when we moved to West Hartford, CT. Our living situation really changed. We were no longer in an apartment; we were living in a house owned by the school for the Deaf. I don't really know why, but we got a house on the campus of a Deaf school. The house was located in an affluent neighborhood. It was on the edge of the school grounds facing a city street. Literally on the border of Deaf and Hearing. This is where I spent my formative years. Growing up as a kid on a Deaf school campus. Another metaphor for my life, one foot on the Hearing side of the street, and the other on the Deaf side, literally.

I had many friends as a kid but now that I look back not sure if they were my friends or because I had access to a great big Deaf school with a pool, tennis courts, football field, gym for basketball, etc. a private stream, with a waterfall, canoes, Then I began to grow up chronologically and physically. This is when all the repression, all the feelings that couldn't come out in a legitimate way broke through. This is when the trouble really started. I don't recall thinking that I was different until remembering one of my earliest recollections. This was the celebration and preparation for our first new TV. A TV that looked like a space ship with the picture tube on top, exposed, no cabinet around it and a small rectangular box supporting it. The box held the tuner to change channels. My friends came over, looked at it and laughed. I didn't know why. Then I went over to some friends houses and saw that their TV's were in big cabinets. I understood then, that not only were we different but we also appeared to think differently. After that, I told everyone that the reason we have a space ship for a TV is that it is

easier to lipread by my parents. Hell, the only person they could understand was Red Skelton and it wasn't because they could lipread him.

I remember my first real exposure as an eyewitness to ordinary evil was when we first moved to CT and showed up at the catholic school I was to attend. The nuns met my parents and learned they were Deaf. That thanksgiving, actually the day before, I was hanging out at the house and saw this big black station wagon drive up to the front door. Two large nuns, are there any other kind, got out in full dress uniform. Black flowing habits with white mouth wipes on their chest. Each of them selected a box and started putting in canned goods and a turkey in one of them. The other was filled with other kinds of food. They carried these boxes up to the front porch and rang the bell. This was 3 in the afternoon. Everyone could see this show. I remember thinking what the hell are they doing. I sat there debating whether to answer the doorbell. We didn't have signalers then. If Deaf people stopped by, they just walked in. My mother happened to see them and she went to the door. Both nuns began to speak to me as they explained that they were dropping off these thanksgiving items for the needy. Courtesy of the church. I was floored. I couldn't believe it. My mom told me to tell them it must be a mistake. No, they insisted that she take these things for our family. But they only talked and looked at me not to my mother. These so-called pious adults treated me, a child, with more respect than my mother, an adult. The boxes were left in the living room. I felt they were radioactive atom bombs. Later my father arrived home and was furious but did nothing about it as far as I knew. How could they make the assumption that since my parents were Deaf, they were needy and therefore needed help. Probably one of the cornerstone incidents that psychologically pushed me in understanding how Hearing ADULTS had preconceived notions of what it means to be Deaf.

Prior to this incident, I was a naive youngster who thought that the world was fun and things were going just fine. This was my first conscious awareness that to be Deaf was automatically thought to be needy and helpless. I was powerless to do anything about it.

Then, TROUBLE in School: I didn't recognize that ordinary evil stays with you and builds and builds. As I look back, I can see the unfocused revenge and self-destructive behavior pattern that developed. I probably never connected the hatred I felt towards those nuns that thanksgiving with the things that followed in my life: I went to this catholic school about three miles from my house. I was in the 6th grade, two things happened in succession. I had to go to the board to do a math problem. Well I couldn't figure it out. And as I turned around, the nun, Sr. Bloodsucker, grabbed my Elvis curl and slammed my head against the slate blackboard. Needless to say, my head being substantially softer than the board apparently cracked at the skin. I began to bleed profusely. She sent me to the office holding my scalp together and the mother-f. superior called my father. Who of course, showed up to pick me up. He looked at me, and told me I deserved it. After that it was open season on me. It was as if I had a target drawn on my chest.

A year later, a few friends of mine and I were caught reading playboy magazine. We got suspended for a couple of days. And my old man was in a rage. He grounded me for a month. By now I am really pissed. So one of my best friends and I went out and made some super slingshots. That night, we proceeded to break almost all the windows in the auditorium. They were the kind that had many many windows framed by wood. About 16 framed windows to a panel, and about 40 panels. Great for target practice. Then, a few days later, we did something really stupid. We got a CO2 cartridge and during recess, threw it in the incinerator. Well, it worked. The co2 cartridge went off, blew the big metal doors off and blew out a good solid 5

foot section of brick work and the chimney collapsed. We got caught. I was then sent to public school. It was like being sent to freedom, they had no idea who I was or how to handle me. It was great. They didn't know how to call my parents, and they didn't force me to study and do my work. I thought I had arrived at a country club. I turned the need for attention into an art form. I constantly cut up in class. Never did any homework. Then in the 9th grade, I ran into a 'Latin teacher who was a retired 'major' in the army. He was the first one to poke me in the chest. He told me I was smart asked why was I fucking up my life. He constantly picked on me. But for some reason, I didn't mind and actually passed Latin 1 that year. Lucky for me cuz it took me two more years to pass Latin 2. Maybe that is why they called Latin 2. Unfortunately, I was also in an English class taught by a young female teacher. She couldn't handle me so she put my desk in the doorway but in the hall not in the classroom. I loved to read. About half way through the school year, she gave an assignment. We were to produce a newspaper that would be connected to a book that we had enjoyed. My father being a printing teacher really helped. I soon produced a beautiful newspaper, with headlines, stories, bylines, front page vs. back page items, advertising, everything. For some reason that I can't recall now, she didn't like it. I felt I finally put out for a teacher and it still didn't satisfy her. So I threatened her. Well, life went downhill after that. Cops, courts, probation officers, etc. I never told them that my parents were Deaf, just never home. Why didn't I tell them? Must be part of my denial stage. As a result of meeting with the court system, I became labeled as someone to watch.

Teenage Years: Striking out by now I am well into my teenage years. Well, one day there was a dance held at school. Some cop parked his car out in front of the entrance to the auditorium where we were all out having a smoke. Some of the guys thought it would be great if we were to steal the cop car. I thought that might be pushing the envelope. So instead, one of

the guys copped the keys that the cop left in the car. Apparently, the cop was a Captain and the keys opened everything in town. Then my friend tossed them into the river near the school. Well, the cops rounded up a bunch of us and let everyone go except me and one other kid. They told me they were keeping me because they knew my parents wouldn't care. I was stunned. So I had to fast-talk my way out of that one. Basically because I didn't want my parents to know that's how the cops acted. In the end, the cops called the head of the Deaf school. He came to pick me up and told me I would never amount to anything. That stuck in my mind like a cancerous cell. Gnawing at me. Ordinary Evil can come in all forms, even those who think they are doing good. My senior year in High School really tested my fortitude. I got caught printing my own report cards in my junior year (remember, my old man was a printing teacher). I was only taking shop classes, but the report cards I made looked like I was taking Academic classes. So I was made to take all academic subjects that the college bound kids were taking. So in my junior and senior years, I was doing pretty well. I really liked chemistry. Well, one day in the 3rd quarter, I decided to have a smoke. I jumped out a classroom window and found an open car. This car happened to be the Principals car. Lo and behold, I got nailed by the Principal. So, he suspended me for two days, this being a Monday. I was to return on a Wednesday. But I couldn't come back to school until my parents signed a letter he would send home to them. I went home, told my mom and dad I was suspended until Wednesday, they weren't happy but what could they do. So we waited for the letter. No letter on Wednesday Thursday, or Friday. I called the school, the principal wouldn't even talk to me. His secretary said the letter was mailed.

The following Monday, the school nurse shows up at my door. She apologizes and tells me she was given the letter to mail last week but forgot and kept it in her purse. I get the letter,

run over and have my old man sign it. Go to school and find out that the 3rd quarter exams were held on Thursday and Friday. Since I was suspended, I would receive a 0 for all my classes for the 3rd quarter. I went to the Principal, he told me too bad, no apology, no excuses. Just too bad. I ended up with a “D” average, enough to graduate but no real grades. The real issue was that I was doing ok in school, nothing to shake the world with, but enough to possibly go to college.

During my senior year, since school sucked so much, I put all my energies into building cars. I have a hundred stories but will make my point with one. Getting a license meant real freedom. Freedom from home, freedom from the town I lived in, and freedom for me. To travel to places where no one knew about the Deaf school or me. I started building cars and had three or four cars in all conditions of shape and repair. Only one car was really together. I was working for months trying to get that car ready to race at the dragway. I built this incredible engine and worked day and night to get things ready. Well, I finally got the damn thing done but it had a special exhaust system call dumps. What that meant was if you unscrewed the end covers of the exhaust pipes that came out of the engine, the exhaust went directly out the side of the car, it not only bypassed the muffler, but had a direct exit for the fire from the engine. Imagine a 3 inch hole in the side of the car shooting about a two foot flame. This was on both sides of the car. Well, my old man came home and pulled his car in and I parked behind him. I was proud and excited, and told him I got my car running. He said great. My ma asked him to go to the store for some bread. I wasn't thinking. The next thing I hear is the VAAAROOOM, BOOM BOOM, ETC. My car starts up with the dumps open and my old man is backing out of the driveway. I tear out of the house and end up chasing my old man down the street. He doesn't see me. I know I am in deep shit now. Well, he meets friend of mine at a stoplight in town, and my car is reverberating off the buildings. Naturally a cop pulls him over. Gives him a

ticket for illegal equipment. He comes home and tells me he has never gotten a ticket in his 30 years of driving until I got my license. I ended up paying for the ticket because my old man was Deaf and didn't know that the exhaust wasn't connected.

About a year later when I was 17. I was driving around in this car with some friends out in the country. We were on a back road just cruising and were coming up to a stop sign that is partially hidden by trees. I asked if anyone saw any cops. Well, the guys had been drinking. They told me there were no cops. So I ran it. Just about one minute later, the cop comes screaming out of the bushes. He chases me and I decide to out run him. Well, after about a half hour, I end up coming down a main road into a road block with State Police cars. I try to get around them but don't make it and get arrested. I get pulled into jail and then have to wait for the arraignment. However, since I was only 17, a juvie by their rules, I was allowed to go home the next morning and get one of my parents. So I go home and get my mother. I bring her to court the next day. We sit in the waiting area waiting for my case to be called. Sitting with a bunch of drunks, and other rough looking people who had been arrested the night before. My mother wouldn't sit with me. She went into the courtroom. So when my case was called, the court clerk started to read the charges. I started to tell my mother what they were, with some major modifications of course, and the judge asks me what I am doing. I told him I am interpreting for my mother because she can't hear, she is Deaf. He paused, and then said, your mother cannot be your legal guardian. He assigned a probation officer to me and said I would be a ward of the court. I told that to my mother and she was furious and she told me to tell the judge that I had to get my father. Oh shit. Ok, the judge said fine, go get your father. We went home and I got my father. He came to court with me the next day and we went through the same discussion. However, my father's usual rule is not to talk to cops but apparently not judges. His

ability to talk confuses people in authority. They think if he can talk then he can hear. Well, he and the judge get into a shouting match and I get contempt of court, another night in jail. After getting everyone calmed down, the judge addresses me with the original charges and gives me a choice. Jail or the service? Huh, I wasn't prepared for that. If I pick jail, there will be a hefty fine and I had to pay for repairs to the cop cars. If I go into the service and leave town, that will be the end of it. So I end up on a plane to Texas as a new recruit in the USAF three days later. My old man was pissed. He didn't write to me or call me the first year I was in. I got one letter from him the whole four years. In truth, the service saved my life! It got me out of a negative situation that was getting worse. In the service, my achievements were not connected with Deaf. It didn't matter whether I had Deaf parents-They were no influence whatsoever. Hence, whatever I did, I did on my own. If I fucked up, I paid the price and I couldn't blame anyone else. The service was the turning point in my life. Now, I didn't like the service because it was extremely regimented. To make it, all you had to do was follow the rules. It was in the service that I learned the rules were made for those who *chose* to follow them. If you had status, like officers, then the rules could be bent, or said a different way, if you had status, you had a different set of rules. Look at the current crop of CEO's, Enron, MCI WorldCom, etc.

Eventually I learned that if you had bars on your shoulders or metal on your collar, you were the people that everyone looked up to. All you needed was to get a college education and you could have the bars. Without going into many stories about the service, I can tell you that I was lucky. I was not stupid and could pass all the tests they had. I was then assigned to an intelligence gathering squadron (oxymoron for the service) in Kansas. I got into more trouble but got to see the world. I went in as an E-1 (Lowest rank), made it all the way to sergeant (E-

4), and then got out as an E-2 (Airman 2nd class) with an honorable discharge. So, in the service, I put the Deaf world away in a box and left it there for ten years.

In the meantime, I got married and had two kids, all hearing. I was fully into the Hearing world. I was discharged in late 1966. I remember leaving McGuire AFB in NJ and stopping at the Port Authority in NYC. I had just been in the Azores for a year in an isolated tour. Meaning I couldn't bring my wife or kids with me. It was better than going to Viet Nam. I had to take a leak and went into the men's room and while I standing at the urinal, in walked a bunch of kids who all had long hair and looked like girls. I remember looking around quickly and wondering if I was in the right place, the men's room. The next ten years were indicative of that men's room visit.

I really developed into who I am during the years I refer to as the anti generation-

Anti war
Anti black
Anti white
Anti Hispanic
Anti different

These were the 60's, but as usual, I was always out of step. I wasn't really a 60's person. I was definitely not a child of the 60's. This is probably a metaphor for my life, always out of step. Yet, I am a product of the Vietnam generation. No one liked what I did, Socially, personality, philosophically, physically It didn't matter that I was a person. It was through all this that I learned to hone my mistrust of hearing people to a sharp edge. MISTRUST is a theme in my life and will never really be fully resolved. It resonates with me when I think of all the times I trusted and that trust was betrayed. The mistrust that had been building for a long time was now on the surface. As I reflect, the mistrust has always been there, just not on the table for me to deal with it.

This brings me full circle back to ordinary evil. Witnessing ordinary evil has shaped my view of the world. In my professional life, I have many experiences and stories that have shaped me to make me into who I am and helped me to solidify my views.

Many of the things that have happened in my professional life have pushed me to always be wary of Hearing people. I have lived my adult life under this framework: be wary of Hearing people, especially the 'do-gooder' kind. The last 30 years of my life have been in what I call the anti Deaf generation.

Early Adult Years: POLITICS: THE ANTI DEAF. Let me tell you about some of the things that happened between 1967 and 1975. When I got out of the service, I was a flaming right winger, God, country, apple pie. I went to work for a while and decided to go to college. I was lucky, the place I worked in, recognized my talents and offered to pay for my first semester at a local community college. After that, I was into college. I still am. It was during the late 60's that I became a social liberal and military hawk. The military hawk didn't last long, just until Nixon became President. It was then that the mistrust apparently turned me into a radical. I didn't realize at the time, I was being so radical. I will return to this point.

While I was in college, I originally majored in engineering avoiding anything to do with the Deaf business but ran out of money. Someone heard I had Deaf parents and offered me a job in the local institution for the mentally retarded, if I would switch to education. I did.

While I was in school, I ran into the professional ordinary evil. I learned that if you didn't have speech you couldn't think. I was flabbergasted. Unfortunately, I should have kept my mouth shut because I got into a hassle with a psych professor. This was the beginning of my understanding that intellectuals argued that Deaf people were considered dumb. Dumb not in the

mute sense but in the thinking sense. It pushed a button. I decided to go into the psychology of language and the education of the Deaf.

If I thought things were whacked at the undergraduate level, I really learned how really whacked they are at the graduate level. I attended the U of Arizona's graduate program in the education of the Deaf. It was the worst program I could have ever attended but probably typical. I was told that Deaf children were incapable of learning. Hence, everything had to be watered down. If they didn't learn it was the Deaf child's fault for refusing to learn the oral system, not the teacher who couldn't communicate, not the materials, not anything connected to the hearing adults who worked with the kids.

It was then, I learned I would never get a job as a teacher and if I did I wouldn't last in that job. So I decided to go for the PhD. Again, I was lucky, Don Moores at U of Minnesota took a chance on me. I was difficult to handle but we did fine. I learned a great deal in this graduate program. I also was given the opportunity to be one of the first people to study ASL acquisition in Deaf children. I also learned that I was to witness even more ordinary evil in graduate school and in the school systems I visited.

Mike Harvey says that "Ordinary evil can be classified under personal experiences of Disrespect, Abuse of Power, Deceit and Prejudice." (Harvey, 2001). These are terms we all know well. How often do we see it? It is not hidden. In my professional life for the next twenty years after the PhD, I have witnessed ordinary evil of all shapes and sizes.

Here are some selected examples:

In 2002, the Boston Globe recently published two articles. One article stated the 'pay' is good for 'translators' in the Latino/Hispanic community, since they are getting \$15 per hour. This translates into \$28,800 a year, no benefits, no health insurance, IF you could work for 40

hours a week. There are VERY few full time interpreter jobs. AND 40 hours a week is an incredibly difficult number of hours to fulfill. So if you subtracted health insurance, and the other fees, you might be left with \$14,000.00 in real pay. The attitude of the article suggested that is a 'translator' job is an easy job. Also, the son or daughter in a bilingual family is expected to do the job. The friend, neighbor who lives next door, who learned to sign, whatever that means. You don't need any training. And you are not supposed to have any emotion tied to the process. Anyone can do it. Just take some sign classes.

I was involved in a lawsuit where the next door neighbor "interpreted" for a Black Deaf woman at a clinic. She was pregnant. When she left the clinic that day with the neighbor interpreter the baby had been aborted. The Deaf mother thought she was going in for a prenatal checkup. The case was settled out of court. Why, because its easier to settle ordinary evil.

Another example of outright prejudice is given in an article by a woman named Cathy Young who was railing about the Deaf lesbian couple who wanted to have a second Deaf child. Young and a guy name Leo who write in respectable magazines basically question that any one who would want to have a Deaf child is insane, out of bounds, abnormal. As a result they question what right do these two Deaf people have to decide this for themselves. As if the Deaf couple had no right to think this through and decide for themselves. The article lambastes anyone who thinks it is all right to be Deaf.

We are eyewitnesses to these, We see, we hear, yet we do not speak. We hold it, we repress it, we carry it, and the results come out in a 100 different ways.

I witnessed a 12 year old CODA interpreting for her mother in court. The trial was the rape trial of her mother by another Deaf man. The guy had taken videos of the rape and the

ignorant prosecutor was using them as part of his case. The judge, supposedly an educated person, made the CODA interpret for her mother.

I am now witnessing the State of Massachusetts constructing and implementing literacy tests that keep Deaf people out of jobs. This is parallel to the tests that Black people had to take in order to vote in the first half of the 20th Century.

I am witnessing the police of a local town harass some Deaf parents who have three CODA's. The parents are scared and there is nothing they can do about it. The CODA's are unable to understand.

I have read about three Deaf people having been killed by the cops, all three Deaf were unarmed. The findings all say that it was the Deaf persons fault.

A 4th Deaf man, abused for years at the School for the Deaf, frustrated because he would not be heard by the court system, went home got a rifle and went back to the local mall. The cops shot him. But not before they refused to let someone who could communicate with him talk to him. The Governor of Main issued an apology. The Deaf man is still dead.

Recently, The ignorant Michigan courts took away a CODA from her Deaf parents because the Hearing stepmother complained that they were abusing the child. The child was then given to the stepmother. No abuse was supported. No one took the time to interview and communicate with the Deaf parents, because they thought an interpreter was unnecessary. All the hearing people took control of the Deaf parents' voice, their individual respect, their civil rights and their child- DATELINE, 1996 (Tom Bull)..

Now Hearing people, mostly doctors and audiologists are saying that technology will help Deaf people become more hearing. We all know this is not gonna change, no matter what the technology is that we have. Why? Because schools will continue to do a lousy job. The

cochlear implant in a majority of cases will not work. Teachers, who are supposed to be the professionally trained adults still cannot communicate with Deaf children. Then they blame the lack of achievement on the Deaf child. These Deaf children are Our future Deaf parents. They will produce the next generation of CODA's.

Ordinary evil can be seen in doctors who believe that it is more important to do surgery on the ear, to hear noise, than to live a normal life. Doctors continue to avoid meeting and discussing things with Deaf people. Cops continue to refuse to understand. Judges continue to apply different laws to Deaf people. All of them do not understand that the interpreter is for BOTH sides of the conversation.

I LEARNED AT A VERY YOUNG AGE THAT AUTHORITY IS IGNORANT, PREJUDICIAL, AND ANTI DEAF. And as an adult see it almost everyday now.

The ordinary evil appears to be that Hearing is good and Deaf is different. Different is bad. How can I live my life according to this standard: People often ask me: Why do I appear so angry, so mistrustful? It is not too far a stretch to look at differences that are publically/socially negative and unacceptable, such as the Deaf, and begin to force families to begin to 'cleanse' the neighborhood.

Movies like Sound and Fury and journalists like (Young, from Reason Magazine, Leo from US News and World Report, all written and produced by Hearing, very Hearing, people, promoting cures (medical technology), attempting to talk about ethics but only from their point of view (asking why would anyone want a Deaf baby?), promoting genetic counseling and in essence eugenics. The outside world apparently feels empowered to question Who would want to bring a Deaf child into the world, etc.

We are not far from the Hitler era. The Nazi principles of disability cleansing can be seen in the discussions of genetics for families with Deaf children, forced surgery on children under the guise of helping someone become 'hearing', as in cochlear implants, genetics counseling, etc.

The past 25 years have seen a resurgence of ANTI-DEAF, anti disabled moves even with the ADA.

A formidable example of this anti Deaf process that's as recent as this past spring (4/18/02). I was told that a school district was taking a Deaf mother to court to force her to implant her two Deaf children. The audiology clinic of the U of Michigan reported the mother to family services because of her refusal to implant. After some trumped up charges, the school district of Grand Rapids, MI joined the audiology clinic and filed against the mom. The two DEAF children have been removed from her and placed in a Hearing foster home. With Hearing people who cannot sign.

In my lifetime, it wasn't stated as law or restricting freedoms but today we are beginning to operationalize the belief that anyone who looks or acts different is a threat.

This was true in my early years and probably explains much more now that I am able to reflect on what happened. I realize now that as a kid and now as an adult: I was different, I felt different, I come from a family that was different, but not different like other different families, different in a generalized negative way. I couldn't put my finger on it but it was there. I wanted to be like everyone else but didn't know how. In my journey to know how, I needed to understand where hatred, fear, mistrust and anti Hearing, expressed by Deaf people comes from?

I learned that very few Deaf people are in control of their own lives. They are at the mercy of all the Hearing professionals, who never have to live with the decisions they make for

the Deaf. I believe that CODA's grow up in the presence of POWERLESSNESS as a model. As a CODA, I began to sense how the powerlessness develops.

Along the way, my personality got in the way of my success. Recently I was conversing with a friend I respect. We talked about how my message for years has been right on. But my style prevented people from hearing it. For years, people have considered me a 'radical'. I have heard this most of my life. I have been told that my direct, straight to the issue, confrontive style is bad. I have heard that I don't dress properly. All of this is taken as a sign that I am a challenge to authority. I find this incredibly interesting. It is the one area in the Hearing world that I have the most difficulty with. So when people want to dismiss what I say, they have a way to do it with out addressing the content of my statements. They attack how I said it, or they divert attention to how I look, sloppy, apparently another symbol of challenge to authority. , They dismiss me as angry because it directly addresses them. In fact I have been told that I am disrespectful of others because I won't dress up for them. I don't even have to say anything and I am automatically dismissed. I now wonder and reflect that it is what I say and that this is the real problem. People have great difficulty in discussing things with me because what I say gets to the core of the problem. I believe that my content strikes at their heart and rather than face the issue, it is easier to deflect the focus back to me. This is a common psychological ploy.

I have witnessed this process being done to Deaf people constantly. Ah, they're Deaf, what do they know. Look he is an angry Deaf man, or some such. It took 125 years for Gallaudet to choose a Deaf President. I constantly see the negative projection to Deaf kids in schools. I witnessed while growing up to this day that the Deaf have no voice, not as children, not as adults, and by no voice I mean no POWER.

I swore to myself that I would figure out how to develop a voice, I would find and obtain the tools that lead to the power. I got them, the PhD, the Professorship, the house in the burbs, two child family, two cars, etc. But the Hearing are slippery devils. I am still an outcast and powerless because I don't say it the right way or I don't dress the right way. For them the only way to 'say it the right way' is to eliminate my Deaf side, I can't.

The final irony: In my growing up Deaf people have always been suspicious of Hearing people. So CODA's are in a real double bind. CODA's are hearing people so they know all about Deaf people. CODA's have internalized this suspicion and are also suspicious of hearing people. Like it or not we are hearing people (& Deaf too) but we carry this legacy too far. We are suspicious of each other. In my experience I avoided other CODA's and other CODA's avoided me. It's like looking in the mirror. All my secrets are known. As I reached my teens, my interaction with other CODA's became severely curtailed. The irony was that there were a large number of CODA's in my High School and I didn't hang out with one my whole teenage years. I think I chalked it up to growing up and moving on.

Finally, WHO AM I? Really? I am a CODA!

I am in the family business. You could say I was born into it. I am a professor trying to be a scholar in the Hearing world, but maintain my allegiance to the Deaf World that I grew up in. It is a delicate balance. The balance tipped when my father died. I began to realize who I really was. The death of my father was very sudden and very hard on me. I suddenly realized that my parents were my direct connection to the Deaf-World. What would happen when my Mom died. Unconsciously, I forged stronger relationships with the Deaf people in my life. I bought a house with two close Deaf friends, a 30 year mortgage meant we would stay together for at least that long. I have connected with other Deaf people. I have connected with other CODA's. The

bonds of the Deaf community no matter how difficult are hard to break. All CODA's are not like this, I am only talking about me.

I have come full circle. First, I live with four females (5 if you count the dog). A fantasy that I have always had but the realization isn't exactly this one. I have two terrific older children. My wife Trudy and I have adopted two wonderful kids. One of whom is Deaf and the other is Hearing. In addition, we have an 18 year old foster daughter who is also Deaf. I live about a mile from the Deaf school. My friends say that this is my destiny. My older kids says I am outa my fucking mind. So I guess this is one CODA's way. I heard that the journey is more important than the destination. I have had one hell of a journey and I hope yours will be all that you want.