

Foreword

*How transient is joy and grief
A moment stamped in bold relief
Then lost on memory's yellowed page
We trace them dim with dust and age*

—author unknown

MEMORIES of my yesteryears are not dusty, and don't seem at all aged. I don't dwell in the past, but memories of my childhood are like beautiful jewels to be taken out every so often, played with, enjoyed, and packed away again. Those were years when sound had meaning, when I could hear. Now it's just vibrations, loud noises, constantly watching lips and every gesture, trying to get some meaning out of what is being said.

I began losing my hearing when I was about eight years old. By the age of ten, I was completely deaf. Although I have been examined by several specialists, none of them were ever able to determine exactly what caused my hearing loss. They are certain, however, that it is nerve deafness.

I decided to write my story because I wanted my children to have a lasting document that chronicled my experiences growing up as a deaf person. I also decided to write my story for my many

deaf friends because my story, in many ways, is also their story. Many stereotypes about deaf people persist. Even today, some people continue to use the phrase “deaf and dumb” when referring to persons who are deaf. The use of the words *dumb* and *mute* are very inaccurate because many deaf people can speak. Therefore, none of them are really dumb or mute, even if they choose not to speak. The general public should understand that deaf persons are first and foremost human beings with the same fears, desires, anxieties, hopes and most importantly, intellectual abilities, that hearing persons have.

In the book, which roughly covers from the mid-1920s to the early 1940s, I talk about my experience of the transition from a hearing world to one of total silence. The book chronicles my ongoing adjustment as I travel back and forth each year between my deaf world at the North Carolina School for the Blind and Deaf and my hearing world at home. My adjustment to hearing loss occurred at a time when I was also experiencing the physical and emotional growing pains that come with adolescence. In addition, the story occurs over a period that covers two major events in American history—the Great Depression and World War II.

Finally, my story adds an important dimension to the growing body of literature on deaf people as I am an African American woman who is deaf. My book is unique and historically significant in that it provides valuable descriptive information about the faculty and staff of the North Carolina school for Black deaf and blind students from the perspective of a student as well as a student teacher. It also describes the physical facilities as well as the changes in those facilities over the years.

My story is one of enduring faith, perseverance, and optimism. I share it in the hopes that it will serve as a source of inspiration for others who are challenged in their own ways by life’s obstacles.