

F O R E W O R D

It was mid-morning on Wednesday, March 9, 1988. There were about fourteen of us gathered in my office. Something big was happening.

The previous Monday, Gallaudet University students had staged a lock-out on the campus and were refusing to allow entry until there was a deaf president at Gallaudet. I had asked Jack Gannon to put together a group of people, most of whom were from the Gallaudet faculty, staff, student body, and administration, to talk with me about the Board of Trustees' Sunday decision to appoint a hearing person to be the university's next president.

The mood in my office was simultaneously electric and sober. This was not a group of immature, sensation-seeking teenagers. They were clear-eyed students and professionals. The professionals in the group included a former dean, PhDs, teachers, and alumni, all deaf, who had devoted many years to Gallaudet. They had been instrumental in creating the educational excellence we have all come to expect from the world's only accredited liberal arts university for the deaf.

As their story unfolded, I became overwhelmed by the passion with which they spoke, the depth of their feeling, and the strength of their resolve to see a deaf president at Gallaudet.

This was a symbolic "coming of age" for deaf and hearing-impaired people the world over. It was bigger than just Gallaudet, or the Board of Trustees, or those of us gathered in my office. It was bigger than just this moment in time.

Gallaudet has long been a Mecca for deaf and hearing-impaired people. The world deaf community looks to Gallaudet for leadership, for innovation, for hope, and inspiration. If there could not be a deaf president here, at Gallaudet, at this time, then where, and when? There was no turning back. As I listened and watched, I finally understood what the world would come to understand—the Gallaudet students could not lose.

What I could not have known on that Wednesday morning was that within sixty-two hours, Dr. Elisabeth Zinser would resign as president of Gallaudet University and that sixty-seven hours after that, Gallaudet would have its deaf president—the first in its 124-year history.

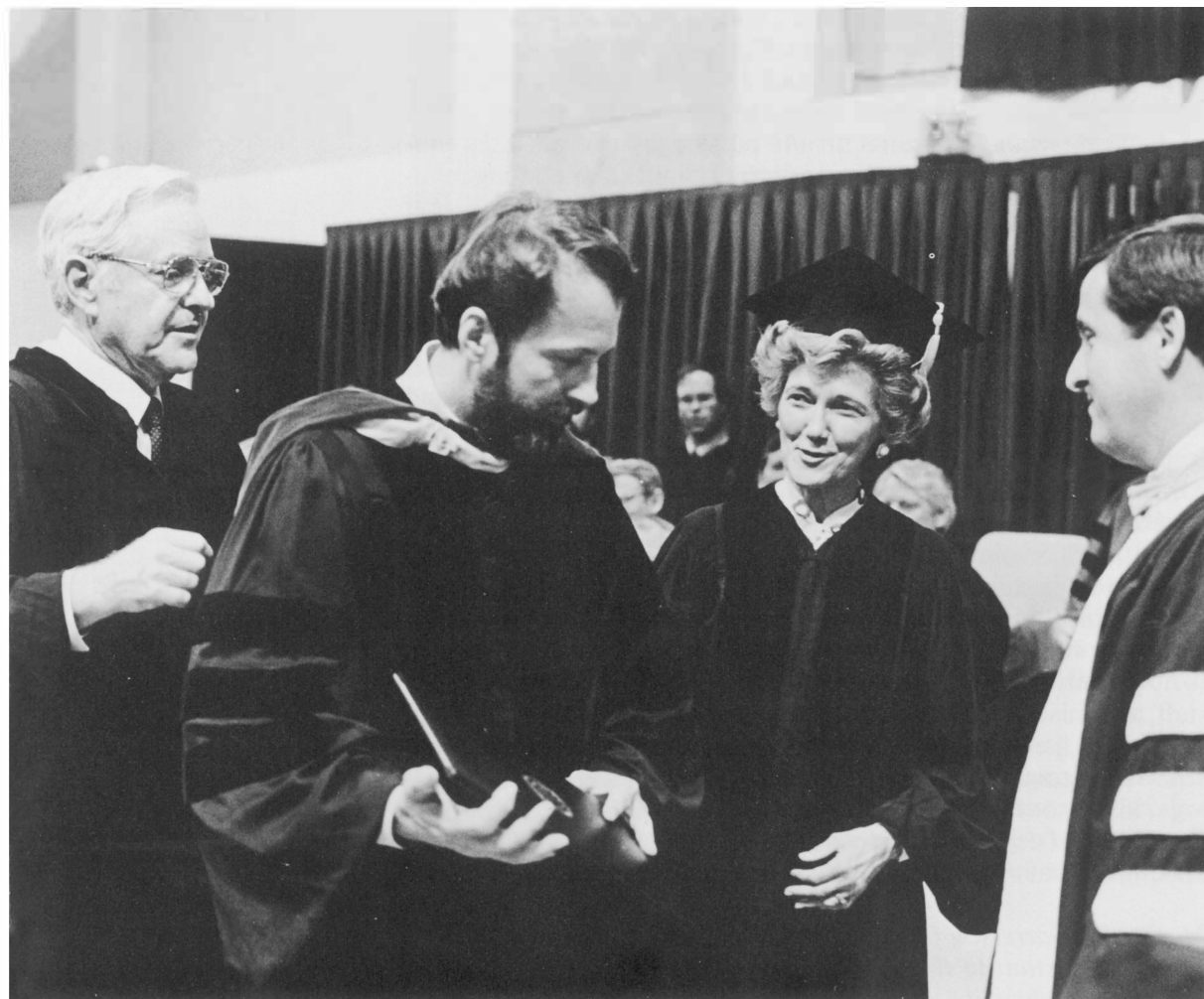
While we met in my office, the press was gathering outside in my reception room. Television cameras and reporters from the networks and reporters from the print press and radio (local and national) were all there, clamoring for information on what was happening inside. My mild-mannered secretary was forced to body-

block one particularly aggressive camera crew trying to force their way in to film our meeting.

It was just the beginning of the unprecedented attention the Deaf President Now movement at Gallaudet was to attract that week. Like many great movements in American history, the Gallaudet protest in March 1988 was a turning point. Just as the shot at Concord marked the start of the American struggle for independence from Great Britain, and Rosa Parks' refusal to sit in the back of the bus thrust the struggle for civil rights to the forefront, the events at Gallaudet marked a moment in time when things *would* change and a new order *would* begin.

This book is the amazing story of that week told by a man with a unique vantage point. I am certain this book will become a cherished diary of that historic week in March—the week the world heard Gallaudet.

*Congressman David E. Bonior
August 3, 1988
Washington, D.C.*



Congressman David E. Bonior was awarded an honorary degree by Gallaudet University in May 1984. Vice Chair of the Board James J. Hicks straightens the Congressman's hood while Jane Bassett Spilman, Chair of the Board, and President Jerry C. Lee offer their congratulations.

I N P E R S P E C T I V E

This is a unique book about a unique time and a unique group of people. It is about discrimination and about courage and determination. It is about a surprising victory, about the winning, not only of a series of battles, but of a war. This book tells a story that has local, national, and international implications for deaf people everywhere.

In retrospect, the Gallaudet student protest was more than a college campus uprising. It was a symbol, a primal scream, if you will. It will undoubtedly become a significant chapter in the chronicle of the struggle for equality of civil and human rights among minority and disabled persons. While the issue of discrimination against deaf applicants for the presidency of Gallaudet University was important, the week-long revolution provided an opportunity for deaf people to be heard and to achieve a level of self-actualization that had not, up to this point, been clearly and visibly articulated to the rest of the world.

The Week the World Heard Gallaudet captures an event that will long be remembered. The week was a national and international event, front-page news in every major newspaper of the nation and the world. Jack Gannon clearly demonstrates that the Gallaudet students and their advisors were well organized and completely convinced that their cause was just. Therefore they remained determined, almost serene, in their belief that they would win this fight. Their quiet revolution was dignified, nonviolent, and a shining example of positive advocacy. It captured everyone's imagination and continued to be aired on television and other media channels long after the protest was resolved.

In preparing this book, Gannon interviewed students, faculty, staff, administrators, board members, and deaf community leaders. In addition, he was able to tap into his background, experience, and knowledge acquired several years ago while working on *Deaf Heritage*, his history of the American deaf people. In a sense this book is a sequel to *Deaf Heritage*; it is the second chapter of Gannon's history of deaf America, and it certainly won't be the last.

*Mervin D. Garretson (Class of 1947)
Special Assistant to the President
Gallaudet University*