

# Foreword

Every book has a reason for coming into being. Basically, it is a response to a long-felt and oft-expressed need for a volume which deals with the contributions of deaf Americans to society.

The heritage was waiting to be recorded. For all its richness, the material on deaf people and deafness had not been tapped. The world of deafness has had its trail-blazers, innovators, statesmen, philosophers, writers, artists, politicians, and reformers. Throughout the years in our country, there have been events of import, deeds of courage, decisions of lasting influence, strokes of brilliance, works of high quality, and moments of glory—all created by deaf people. The need was to capture between the covers of a book as many of them as possible.

Many goals were envisioned for the book. Perhaps the most important one was to present in a cogent form the legacy left to us by the deaf people of generations gone by. It would remind our young deaf people that deafness need not be a barrier to what they can do to enrich the quality of life for deaf citizens everywhere. More importantly, it would make them aware of the rich heritage that has cumulatively been bestowed on them.

The book was sure to come sooner or later. The Centennial Convention is often cited as the reason that the book-writing project got moving. It wasn't. It did, however, provide a powerful impetus toward its development. Yet, the timing of the project couldn't be more favorable. It coincides with the National Association of the Deaf's Centennial Celebration in Cincinnati, Ohio, June 30-July 5, 1980.

It remained only for someone to undertake the monumental task of researching the innumerable gems of information and weaving them into the stir-

ring and inspiring volume it finally became. The National Association of the Deaf selected Jack R. Gannon, Director of Alumni and Public Relations at Gallaudet College and Executive Secretary of the Gallaudet College Alumni Association for this job. For him, it was a labor of love. The document clearly reveals it. The National Association of the Deaf owes him a debt it cannot ever repay.

Mention must be made of Gallaudet College's contribution to the project. Although Gallaudet College and the National Association of the Deaf perform different roles in serving deaf Americans, they share some common goals. One of these is not only to promote respect for deaf individuals, but also to recognize the contributions of deaf Americans to society. The book is a tangible example of cooperation between the college and the Association. The National Association of the Deaf wishes to express its deep appreciation to Gallaudet College and Dr. Edward C. Merrill, Jr., its president, for providing the time and support for Mr. Gannon to write the book.

The National Association of the Deaf also wishes to express its gratitude to all who in any way, large or small, contributed to the development of the book.

The book is finally here. It has been worth waiting for!

Ralph H. White  
President  
National Association of the Deaf