

NTID

# F O C U S

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# NTID FOCUS

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**Director**  
Michael R. Franco

**Designer**  
Walter Kowalik

**Editor**  
Marcia B. Dugan

**Writers**  
Emily Leamon  
Lynne Williams

**Publications  
Coordinator**  
Kathleen Sullivan

**Photographers**  
Rod Reilly  
A. Sue Weisler

**Art Director**  
John Massey

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# From the Director's Desk

Alumni are one of the more valuable resources to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT); for that reason, we are devoting this issue of *NTID Focus* to them.

Since its establishment in 1968, NTID has been dedicated to preparing students for employment in the technological and professional job markets. The alumni body of NTID is now more than 1,700 strong and is increasing steadily. It is a richly diverse group which includes accountants, engineers, artists, social workers, architectural and engineering technicians, graphic artists, junior business programmers, research aides, medical laboratory technicians, and media copy technicians.

The deaf graduates came to NTID from a variety of backgrounds. In the past 15 years, NTID has welcomed students from every state in the union, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, making it truly a national technical institute for the deaf.

Many came from mainstreamed public high schools; others came from residential secondary school programs for the deaf. Their communication preferences varied from oral to manual to total communication. All have been supported by the Institute's "eclectic" approach to communication.

As students, they benefited from up-to-date curricula in business, science and engineering, and visual communication. Faculty members, many acquired from business and industry, have shared their practical knowledge through programs designed to keep students in pace with their hearing counterparts in our rapidly changing technological society.

Some of the graduates received certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees; others pursued bachelor's and master's degrees through the other eight colleges of RIT. Whatever academic options they chose, all benefited greatly from a wide variety of extra-curricular options, including athletics, community service, cooperative work experiences, and the performing arts. These opportunities helped them become well-rounded individuals, ready to join the competitive mainstream of society.

The goal of all Institute programs is to prepare students to succeed in that main-



Dr. William E. Castle

stream. To date, 97 percent of deaf RIT graduates in the labor force have found jobs in contrast to 89 percent of all deaf persons. Ninety-four percent of these graduates have found positions commensurate with their training. Of the graduates who are not in the labor force, four-fifths are pursuing further education, with the remainder choosing to stay at home.

Not only do a majority of deaf RIT graduates successfully mainstream into the nation's employment world, 80 percent of them are in white-collar positions, as compared to 26 percent of the nation's deaf population, and 54 percent of the general population. In addition, more than 83 percent of RIT's deaf graduates are employed in the private sector in business and industry, which is a phenomenon that did not exist for deaf people 10 years ago.

The average salary of our graduates during FY82 was \$16,900, with a lifetime earnings per graduate of more than \$800,000. When the average graduate retires from the labor force, that graduate will have repaid the federal government more than 400 percent of the cost of his/her education and will have saved the government an additional 300 per-

cent by not being dependent on welfare.

But our alumni do more than just work. They are lively and productive contributors to society, as each of the 14 featured in this issue shows.

Many also are reaching back to NTID through alumni service to the Institute, showing yet another dimension of their character. Members of several NTID alumni chapters have formally pledged their service to the Institute for the purposes of recruiting, welcoming, and placing students.

This willingness to give back to the Institute indicates our graduates' satisfaction with the education they received at RIT through NTID. In fact, nearly 80 percent indicated "very high job satisfaction" in a recent survey.

Today's graduates exhibit the same geographic mobility as their hearing peers. A majority are employed in the Middle Atlantic, New England, and East North Central regions of the United States. They are upwardly and occupationally mobile and are choosing employment opportunities away from their hometowns.

There is no better way to describe what NTID is about than to illustrate it through the lives of its graduates. Herein is a sampling.

# Deborah Verraros '72: Illinois's First Deaf Juror

Is your hearing good? Do you have any other handicaps which might impair your ability to serve on a jury?

Those are questions 13 and 15, respectively, on a questionnaire routinely sent to residents of the state of Illinois summoned for jury duty. Debbie Helwig Verraros of Mount Prospect answered "no" to the first question. She answered the second question in the negative as well, but before she went on to the next question, she crossed out the word "other."

Verraros is a member of NTID's class of '72. She has an A.A.S. degree in busi-



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*"Deaf people rely on their eyes far more than hearing people do. Perhaps they are better able to use them as a tool."*

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ness technology (a discipline now divided among the various business careers majors). Upon graduation, she became the first alumna to serve as a member of NTID's National Advisory Group. Now a senior analyst in the accounting department of Chicago's Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Company, she became Illinois's first deaf juror one year ago.

The case was a civil lawsuit; the plaintiff was asking for \$50,000 to compensate for personal injury sustained in an automobile accident. Defense attorney Ralph Lustgarten objected strenuously to Verraros' presence on the jury.

In an Associated Press story headlined "Deaf-Mute to Sit on Civil Trial Jury," Lustgarten was quoted as saying, "She has been deaf since 6 months old as the result of an illness. Even during questioning as a prospective juror, she was looking at the interpreter instead of me. A juror has to determine the credibility of witnesses and she would get this by looking at the witnesses' expressions. She loses this by watching the interpreter."

Lustgarten's argument held no sway over Circuit Court Judge Edward Hofert, who seated Verraros despite the defense attorney's objections. She seems to have been a model juror, agreeing with the consensus of her peers who found for the defendant. Ironically, the plaintiff's attorney had no reservations at all about seating her, but lost his first case in nearly three years of trial practice.

The headline on the AP story did not escape Verraros' notice. Deaf persons are seldom "mute," although they may choose not to use their voices. She called the error to the attention of the reporter covering the trial, who filed a correction with the local AP bureau. And she proved the doubters and naysayers wrong, demonstrating to those in attendance at the trial that she could watch the interpreter and the witness at once.

"Deaf people rely on their eyes far more than hearing people do. Perhaps," she suggests, "they are better able to use them as a tool."

The interpreter sat directly in front of the witness box; Verraros' eyes darted from one to the other and she says she didn't miss a twitch. She relates a key bit of testimony:

"The accident took place at an intersection. The plaintiff was driving and



was hit broadside by the defendant's car. The defendant claimed that the plaintiff had run a red light. Witnesses corroborated that the light did turn red when the plaintiff was in mid-intersection.

"The defendant claimed the plaintiff didn't see the light change because her head was turned. She was talking to her passenger, a close friend. The plaintiff denied this claim. In fact, she flatly denied to the prosecutor that she had talked with her friend at all during the ride."

The engaging 34-year-old's eyes twinkle as she recalls the amusement with which this statement was met. "Really, I wanted to laugh out loud, but it wouldn't have been proper."

So, her day in court turned out to be fairly routine and the verdict was decided after two hours of deliberation. But the story doesn't end there.

Illinois State Representative Woods Bowman learned of Verraros' case and attached a rider to a bill already before the state House of Representatives. Bill 1106, introduced by another representative, proposed that blind persons no longer automatically be excused from jury duty. Bowman's rider accorded the same right to deaf persons.



Courtesy of Chicago Photographers

However, the bill became bottled up in committee. Many of those committee members who were asked to vote on the bill are themselves lawyers and, says Bowman, "our bar associations are extremely conservative."

Nevertheless, he will re-introduce the bill in the next session of the legislature. He intends to lobby the various bar associations beforehand, to help smooth the bill's passage.

Whatever the outcome of that vote, Verraros scored a personal victory in court. After the trial recessed, she received a long letter of apology from her erstwhile opponent, the defense attorney. His experience with Verraros in the courtroom had convinced him that deaf persons can serve as functioning members of the American judicial process. Debbie Verraros is pleased to be the deaf person who convinced him.

—Emily Leamon



## His (Defense Attorney Ralph Lustgarten) experience with Verraros... convinced him that deaf persons can serve as functioning members of the American judicial process.

### A Legal Question



#### Deaf-mute to sit on civil trial jury

CHICAGO — Despite the objections of defense attorneys, a deaf mute has been seated as a juror in a civil lawsuit in Cook County. Debbie Verraros of Mount Prospect, an accountant for the Continental Illinois National Bank & Trust Co. of Chicago, was sequestered Wednesday as part of a jury in a \$50,000 personal injury suit stemming from an automobile accident. She is believed to be the first person with such a handicap to serve on a Chicago jury. She was accepted by Judge Edward Hoffman over the objection of defense attorney Ralph Lustgarten. "She has been deaf since 6 months

The roadblocks Debbie Verraros faced when trying to serve on a jury are set up all over the country. Deaf persons are unable to claim jury duty as their Constitutional right, as the U.S. Constitution only mentions that the defendant in the court proceeding has a constitutional right to a fair and impartial jury.

A California Supreme Court opinion noted that:

"While trial by jury is constitutionally implanted in our system of justice, an individual's interest in serving on a jury cannot be held a fundamental right. The guarantee of the 6th Amendment is primarily for the benefit of the litigant—not persons seeking service on the jury; and even though lawfully qualified, a citizen may not demand to serve on a jury. At most, the citizen is entitled to be considered for jury service." Adams v. Superior Ct. of San Diego County, (1974).

Most states have laws that prevent deaf people from serving on juries. These laws usually disqualify persons who are unable to speak or understand the English language or those individuals whose senses of hearing or seeing are substantially impaired. A deaf person in Arkansas, who had been disqualified for jury service due to impaired hearing based on applicable state law, attempted to have the state law declared unconstitutional as a denial of due process and equal protection guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. The Arkansas court held that the state law was not unconstitutional and discussed at length the issue of having a deaf or blind juror:

"Impairment of the senses, particularly the senses of sight and hearing, vitiates a person's ability to serve effectively as a juror. Evidentiary analysis, a juror's primary function, requires an unimpeded perception, for without the ability to perceive there is no ability to evaluate, reconcile, or judge. The sense of hearing is, indeed, perhaps even more important to effective service as a juror than the sense of sight. This conclusion is buttressed by the realization that most evidence consists

of oral testimony and that the function of a juror will largely be that of assessing the credibility of witnesses and analyzing testimony." Eckstein v. Kirby, (1978).

Some states recently have enacted laws that would allow hearing-impaired individuals to be considered for jury service and not automatically disqualified. However, even though such laws have been enacted, they are not a guarantee of actual service.

In states that permit hearing-impaired people to sit on the jury, there is still a question of who pays for the interpreter. Some states feel that if a hearing-impaired person is allowed to sit as a juror, that this person should pay for the interpreter's services.

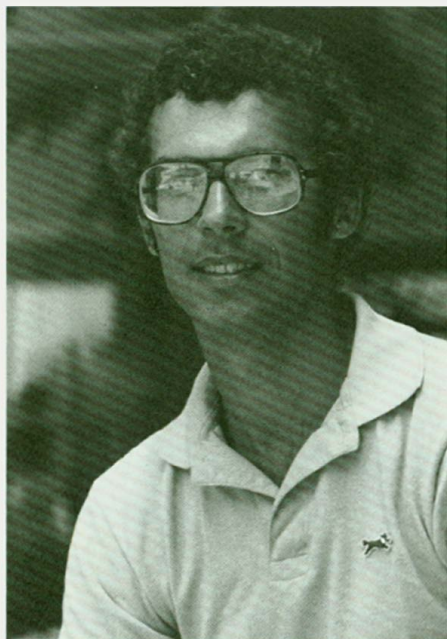
Some states have laws requiring the court system to pay for the interpreter while others do not have a specific state law covering this issue.

According to Sarah Geer, staff attorney for the National Association of the Deaf Legal Defense Fund, the only states in the union which have clear laws supporting the right of hearing-impaired persons to serve on a jury are California and Colorado. While other states have some form of law on the books, they are for the most part, she remarks ruefully, "ambiguous or grossly inadequate."

—E. L.

# Gary Etkie '77:

## Out There on His Own



They are a typical young family, like thousands across the United States. He is tall and handsome, with curly brown hair and dark-rimmed glasses. She is a pretty, slender, blonde with a sunny smile. Accompanying them is their lively, towheaded toddler. Gary, Susan, and Shawn Etkie are back at NTID, visiting old friends and talking to incoming students.

Gary and Susan met in 1972 through deaf community activities in their home state of Michigan, and both later attended NTID. He earned an associate degree in data processing in February 1977; she studied optical finishing technology for two years before leaving to marry Etkie in 1978.

As the young couple talks about their lives during the six years since they left the Institute, Shawn sits at their feet, playing with a balloon distributed at one of the career booths set up to show incoming students programs available at NTID. The balloon, almost as big as the little boy, proclaims in green letters, "Printing or Bust."

In spite of the message, Etkie is at the Institute to encourage students to consider careers in data processing.

"Nowadays, the computer field is popular and needs a lot of people compared to other fields," Etkie stresses. "And NTID has up-to-date equipment. I'm also here to encourage students to get a computer science degree instead of stopping with a certificate or diploma. With the bachelor's degree, they have a chance for better jobs."

Etkie speaks from experience. He spent three years at a government center, where he started as a junior programmer. He then accepted a job as a programmer for Bell Telephone Laboratories (BTL) in Naperville, Illinois. Since then, he has advanced to technical asso-

ciate programmer, and BTL is urging him, at its expense, to pursue a baccalaureate degree.

"I have thought about going back to school, but right now my job is demanding, and I want to spend time with my family," Etkie says. However, he admits that he probably will enroll soon at DuPage College, near their home in St. Charles, Illinois.

Etkie thinks NTID students should consider Bell Telephone Laboratories as an employer when they graduate. He, like many NTID graduates, is the lone deaf employee at his plant, and he would enjoy working with other deaf people. "There is one person who is hard of hearing, but he knows very little sign language," says Etkie, who communicates at work mainly by note writing.

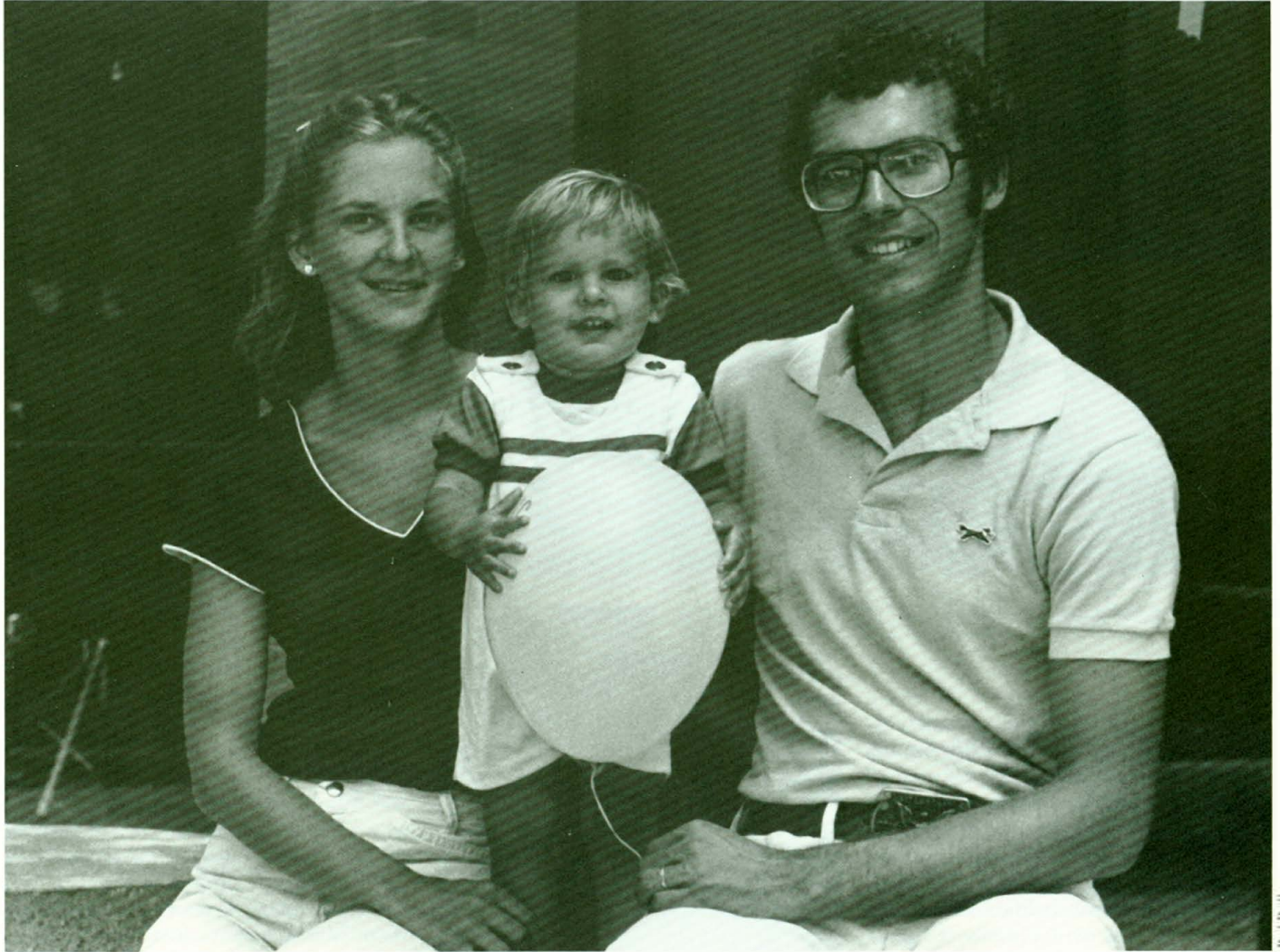
For the past three months, Etkie has been working on a newly formed affirmative action committee whose primary goal is to encourage more deaf people to apply for work at Bell Labs, and then to provide better support for them.

"The company did give me a portaprinter, but I can't call anyone else at the plant," Etkie says. "I can call the Bell Lab in New Jersey, and I can call home, but when I have to talk with people in other offices at the plant, I walk." He grins. "Oh well, I need the exercise." His next goal is to have an interpreter present at group meetings.

If Etkie has reservations about being the only deaf person at the plant, he has none about his job. In his position as a programmer, Etkie writes programs in a Structured English Definition Language which allows telephone branches to make information changes for customers' phones. "I like my work," he insists. "I enjoy the variety—I learn something new every day."

He also appreciates the opportunity to take part in company-sponsored athletic events. "I have been on the softball

*For the past three months, Etkie has been working on a newly formed affirmative action committee whose primary goal is to encourage more deaf people to apply for work at Bell Labs...*



Real Reality

and bocce ball teams for the past two years," he explains. "I also play racquetball once a week."

Susan, with Shawn settled on her lap, explains her job experiences since leaving the Institute. Although there were opportunities in optical finishing in downtown Chicago, she preferred something closer to home. "So I took an office job—first for an insurance company and then for a tractor company. When the baby came, I decided to stay at home with him." A bright smile lights her face. "That's a full-time job."

Etkie says he hopes to visit NTID again soon, and plans to continue his work with the placement office to find qualified deaf people for his company. He concludes wistfully, "NTID has many students who have the technical skills Bell Labs needs. I really would like to have more deaf persons working here."

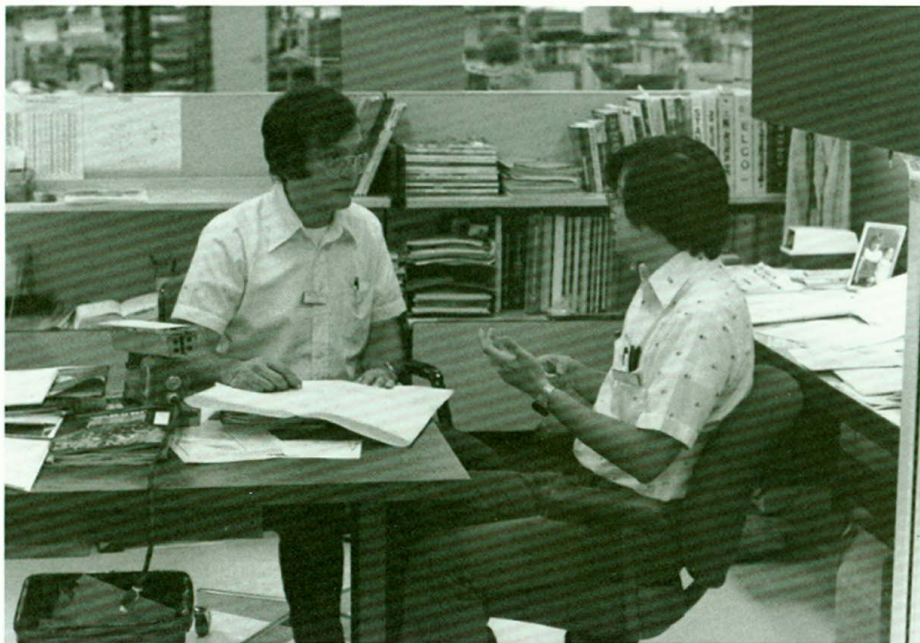
—Lynne Williams

*Susan, Shawn, and Gary Etkie relax in the NTID courtyard during a recent visit.*



# George Kononenko '75:

## Rising Through the Ranks at Hewlett-Packard



(Above) George Kononenko chats with Bill Gmg, his supervisor, and (right) instructs Bob Mitchell, an assembler/inspector.

When it comes to communicating with his co-workers, George Kononenko doesn't let his hearing impairment get in the way. Kononenko, who has been deaf since birth, applied for a job as a co-op student at the New Jersey Division of the Hewlett-Packard Company in 1974. He was concerned, as were his interviewers, that his deafness would hinder the give-and-take communication necessary between project engineers. Those fears were allayed when Kononenko decided to teach sign language to his fellow workers, turning the problem inside out.

Kononenko originally is from Morristown, New Jersey. While a student at RIT, he read about Hewlett-Packard in the library, liked what he read, and decided to apply for a co-op job. It was a happy choice; he spent two summers there and, upon graduation from RIT, was offered a permanent position.

NTID also was the perfect choice of college for him. As a child, he was always tinkering. His scientifically inclined parents, both educated in Europe, encouraged his natural curiosity.



"I would sit for hours watching my father, who is a chemist, work in the laboratory," Kononenko recalls. "He let me play with his lab equipment, and exposed me to all sorts of electrical instrumentation. When I read about NTID in *The New York Times* in 1968, my parents were all for it."

He enrolled in NTID's summer orientation program in 1969, and transferred into the mechanical technology program in RIT's College of Engineering, where

he received an associate degree in 1972. He continued for his bachelor of engineering technology degree in mechanical engineering technology through RIT's College of Applied Science and Technology, formerly called Institute College. At Hewlett-Packard, his first job title was mechanical designer. He was so successful at that, he was promoted to the position of project leader.

"My responsibility was to develop and design electrical packaging of power supplies for the computer systems. I directed five hearing workers responsible for the mechanical design of the new electrical equipment," he explains.

Last year, in a bid to narrow the lead currently held by the Japanese in the field of robotics, Hewlett-Packard instituted a new department, automation assembly engineering. Kononenko, who had displayed an avid interest in the growing field, was asked to be technical leader.

Not only was he assigned the complex tasks of running this new department and a new robotic project, but Kononenko also is an active participant in Hewlett-Packard's affirmative action program, SEED (Student Employment and Educational Development). He acts as a mentor to minority or otherwise disadvantaged students hired by Hewlett-Packard for summer work.

Last summer, he supervised a woman from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and acted as career advisor for Nathan Crowe, an NTID student from Eau Claire, Wisconsin. He also has been involved in recruiting NTID students for Hewlett-Packard, and plans to continue doing so.

But his most active "extracurricular" role in the company has been as a teacher of sign language. He must be good at it, because he estimates that after 10 weeks of instruction, approximately 35 of his co-workers are able to converse with him in American Sign Language.

Kononenko does not confine his life to his work, although he does bring many of his outside interests to bear on the environment in his office. The same hands that fly through the air as he talks —New Jerseyites are fast talkers—are



Courtesy of Hewlett-Packard

***His career at Hewlett-Packard has been so successful that he was asked to appear in a videotape made by the company.***

put to use in woodworking, building a rock garden, watercolor painting, and working on his mountaintop home on Lake Hopatcong. Two of his watercolors, an Atlantic seascape and a Delaware River scene, were winners in an art/photography contest held at Hewlett-Packard, and were framed and hung in the company's Atlantic and Delaware Rooms.

His career at Hewlett-Packard has been so successful that he was asked to appear in a videotape made by the company. "Just Three People" is the story of Kononenko and two other disabled employees.



Two of Kononenko's watercolors were prizewinners in a contest sponsored by Hewlett-Packard. The top painting now graces the company's Atlantic Room and the other is in the Delaware Room.

It details their lives at work and at home, so co-starring with him are his wife, Linda, who also is deaf, and 5-year-old Jennifer, who has impaired hearing. In one scene during the film, Kononenko is portrayed holding a book open and signing a bedtime story to her. The Kononenkos have another daughter, Melissa, who is 2.

But the film deals mainly with Kononenko's performance on the job. His manager says, "It was obvious right away that George had the specific skills that would make him a good supervisor—if he weren't deaf. So I decided if we were really serious about affirmative action, then he should be appointed to that position. It's a decision I've never regretted."

George Kononenko's talents as an engineer are no doubt the reason his career has spiraled upward at an almost dizzying pace. But it is his aggressive approach to tackling the communication problem that gets him through the day.

—Emily Leamon

# Linda Nelson '73:

## A New NAG Member Speaks Out



Linda Nelson is the epitome of the 1980s woman—doing a careful balancing act as professional woman, wife, and mother of two. She also is a new member of NTID's National Advisory Group (NAG). Her four-year term began last October and ends in May 1986.

Nelson is not the first member of her immediate family to serve on the NAG. Her husband, Gerald ('74), served from 1976-79. The couple has been married for 10 years.

This energetic young woman, who graduated from RIT's College of Business in 1973 with a bachelor of science degree, is a counselor for the Mental Health and Hearing-Impaired Program (MHHL) at the St. Paul-Ramsey Medical Center in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Nelson's job—one she describes as "jill of all trades"—includes community organization and planning, group work, independent living skills education, and legislative work for the MHHL.

Staff members in her program also are responsible for developing in-service training programs for people who work with deaf battered women, as well as counseling the battered women themselves.

"This is a new thing for deaf people," Nelson explains. "It is a sensitive topic, and there is a stigma about it in the deaf community."

In spite of this, she stresses that the outlook is brighter each year. "We recently had a deaf women's conference which included three mini-workshops. One was titled, 'How to Handle a Crisis.' A deaf woman explained that she had been battered by her deaf husband. She encouraged us to help other deaf battered women, tell them where they can go for help, and how to deal with the problem. It was a moving experience for all deaf women."

This was not the first conference that Nelson has helped to organize with other deaf women in her community. The first, in 1976, was set up to help deaf women learn how to become more independent through training, and to gain more knowledge about themselves.

Eventually, Nelson and the group of deaf women established a formal organization called the Minnesota Conference of Deaf Women.

"In between conferences, we also have mini-workshops on such things as self-defense and nutrition," Nelson explains.

Nelson is especially pleased with a conference she helped arrange last fall.

"The theme was 'Deaf Heritage,' and I was told that it was the first of its kind in the country," she says. "Our keynote speaker was Jack Gannon, author of the book, *Deaf Heritage*. Four hundred and fifty people came. It was a smash. What's more," she adds with obvious relish, "more than half of the participants were deaf."

Nelson attributes the large turnout of deaf people to the fact that the conference was planned by a committee, most of whom were deaf. "I believe that every committee that is related to deafness must have at least one deaf person on it," she asserts.

***"I am very excited to be part of the group [NAG].... It gives me a chance to visit my school and my old friends and to help NTID improve its services to deaf students and alumni."***

Her ties with the deaf community extend well beyond her professional life. She and her husband also belong to a deaf couples bowling league, and are active in the Minnesota Deaf Campers Club. Sixty families belong to the Campers Club, which has weekend outings once a month during the summer.

Nelson also likes to golf, but admits that she hasn't played much lately. "My kids steal my time," she explains. The time "thieves" are Max, 9, and Chris, 8. "They play baseball, flag football, and hockey. Hockey is very popular in Minnesota—if kids don't play, they're outcasts of their peer group."

The entire family also is deeply involved in Little League baseball. "The League is run by the parents," she says. "More than 2,000 children participate each summer. The parents have a lot of enthusiasm and are a big help to the kids."

In addition to performing a demanding job, maintaining an active recreational schedule, and supporting busy children, Nelson also volunteers in the community and still manages to run a household. She admits that this takes skill in time management and a husband who is willing to share the duties.

"I'm very lucky," Nelson confides. "My husband and I share the responsibilities for the children and the home. Gerry helps with everything—he washes dishes, takes care of the house, and does the laundry." She adds emphatically, "We never iron. Everything is permanent press! We just take it out of the drier and hang it up."

From time to time, one or the other will shoulder the whole load because of special circumstances. When Linda Nelson travels to meetings, Gerry Nelson stays at home with the children.

During the past year, their roles were reversed. "Gerry spent eight months pursuing a master's degree in supervision and administration with leadership training at California State University at Northridge (CSUN)," she explains. "I stayed in Minnesota, and he came home once a month."



Last summer, the Nelson family went to California for the final two months of Gerry's study. "During that time, we did a lot of sightseeing and camping," she says. "Los Angeles is a great place to visit, but live there?" She shakes her head. "No way. The smog was bad, and I had a headache every day."

Once Gerry finished his degree work at CSUN, the family extended their sightseeing in the West. "We traveled to San Francisco, Oregon, Washington, Vancouver, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota—and then home. We covered 4,000 miles in three weeks. At the end of the trip we were exhausted. However, we realized it was the best family vacation yet because the boys were old enough to understand places, histories, and environments. That made me feel good."

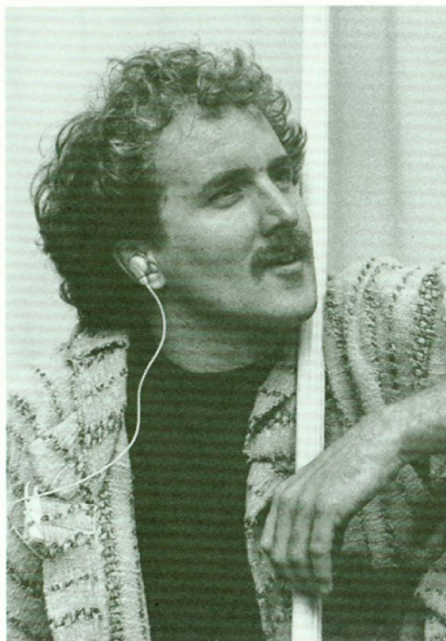
Nelson looks forward to her term with NAG. "I am very excited to be part of the group, because NTID is my alma mater. It gives me a chance to visit my school and my old friends and to help NTID improve its services to deaf students and alumni. Not that they are doing things wrong, but programs always can be improved."

—Lynne Williams

# Willy Conley '81:

## Actor, Photographer, Renaissance Man

*The name of his game ... is charm. There's not much in this world that blue eyes and a persuasive manner can't accomplish.*



It's hard to say no to Willy Conley. He's the kind of person who orders one drink and gets two, with a wink from the waitress. Or intercepts a soccer ball from a practicing team and dribbles away, unchallenged.

The name of his game, you see, is charm. There's not much in this world that blue eyes and a persuasive manner can't accomplish.

Willy Conley also is an actor. He is spending one year with Sunshine TOO, NTID's traveling theatre troupe. As one of six cast members (three deaf and three hearing), Conley portrays everything from a video "Pac-Man" to an awe-struck Noah who chats with God via an interpreting angel.

Such roles are quite a change for the 24-year-old graduate of RIT's Biomedical Photographic Communications program, although Conley was recruited for Sunshine TOO long before he graduated in 1981.

"We urge people with theatrical skills to audition for us," says Dr. Bruce Halverson, director of Performing Arts at NTID. "But at the same time, we look for people with good interpersonal skills. Willy is a genuinely nice person, and this translates into his performances and workshops. He's a good role model for deaf students and a good ambassador for the Institute."

Conley agreed to consider Halverson's offer, then went off to Galveston, Texas, to complete a one-year residency in biological photography at the University of Texas Medical Branch.

The program (which recently was suspended due to budget cutbacks) attracted RIT students for several years, and was "highly competitive," according to Nile Root, an associate professor in RIT's School of Photographic Arts and Sciences (SPAS).

"Each year, six or eight students applied for the program," Root says. "The year that Willy went, another RIT student also was chosen. That was quite an honor for RIT."

Conley and Dave Zagorski (the other photography student) didn't know each other before they went to Texas, but they eventually became roommates and good friends. When they weren't "soaking up rays" or playing frisbee at their rented beach house, however, they studied. Hard.



A. Sue Weniger



(Top) Rehearsing a scene from "Arlecchino's Dream." Willy Conley as "Capitano" wields his sword while Isabella (Sue Bride) and Columbina (Kathy Holzwarth) look on. (Directly above) In another scene from the same story, Conley, as the Biblical character Noah, gives names to the animals around him—in this case, a frog, portrayed by Doug Berky.

The intensive program, considered the equivalent of a master's degree, prepares students in one short year for the prestigious Registered Biological Photographer (RBP) certification examination. There are fewer than 300 people worldwide with this certification, which requires a written exam, a practical (an extensive portfolio of photographs), and an oral presentation.

At the University of Texas, this process takes at least five months, but students are supposed to spend only *half* of their time preparing for it. The other half, theoretically, is devoted to doing medical photography work in the University of Texas Department of Pathology Photography Labs.

In most cases, however, it ends up being more like full time for both pursuits.

"I spent about a month sleeping in the photo lab so that I could use the equipment," Conley concurs. "It's kind of a trade-off: you do your medical photography work and then use the lab equip-

ment to develop photographs for your portfolio."

After passing the written and practical exams, Conley took and passed his final examination in San Diego in July 1982. After showing his paper, portfolio, and written exam scores to a five-member board of examiners, he delivered a 10-minute oral presentation. The board members then sent him out of the room, telling him they would have a decision for him within 15 minutes.

"In about two minutes, they opened the door and called me in," Conley recalls. "One man shook my hand and said, 'Congratulations,' and that was it."

According to the Biological Photographic Association, he is the only deaf person in the world with RBP certification.

Conley's success in the program was due, in part, to his undergraduate training. Admission requirements for RIT's Biomedical Photographic Communications program are considered the strictest of any SPAS program. Potential stu-

dents must visit two hospitals with biomedical photography departments and then write a report about their experiences.

"We put a lot of weight on that report," Root says. A strong written report and a good interview both helped Conley to get into the program, but he soon realized that the work load would be difficult.

"I was an average student until I entered the program," he says. "But knowing that my NTID counselors had worked hard to get me admitted really motivated me. I felt that I was an exception of sorts, and I wanted to excel."

According to Root, he did.

"Willy was one of my top students, and we're a competitive group," he says. "He did some of the finest work I have ever seen in our program. His advanced work, particularly in photomacrography (high magnification photography) and close-ups, was beautiful. In addition, Willy was a hard-working student and one of the most personable people I've ever met."

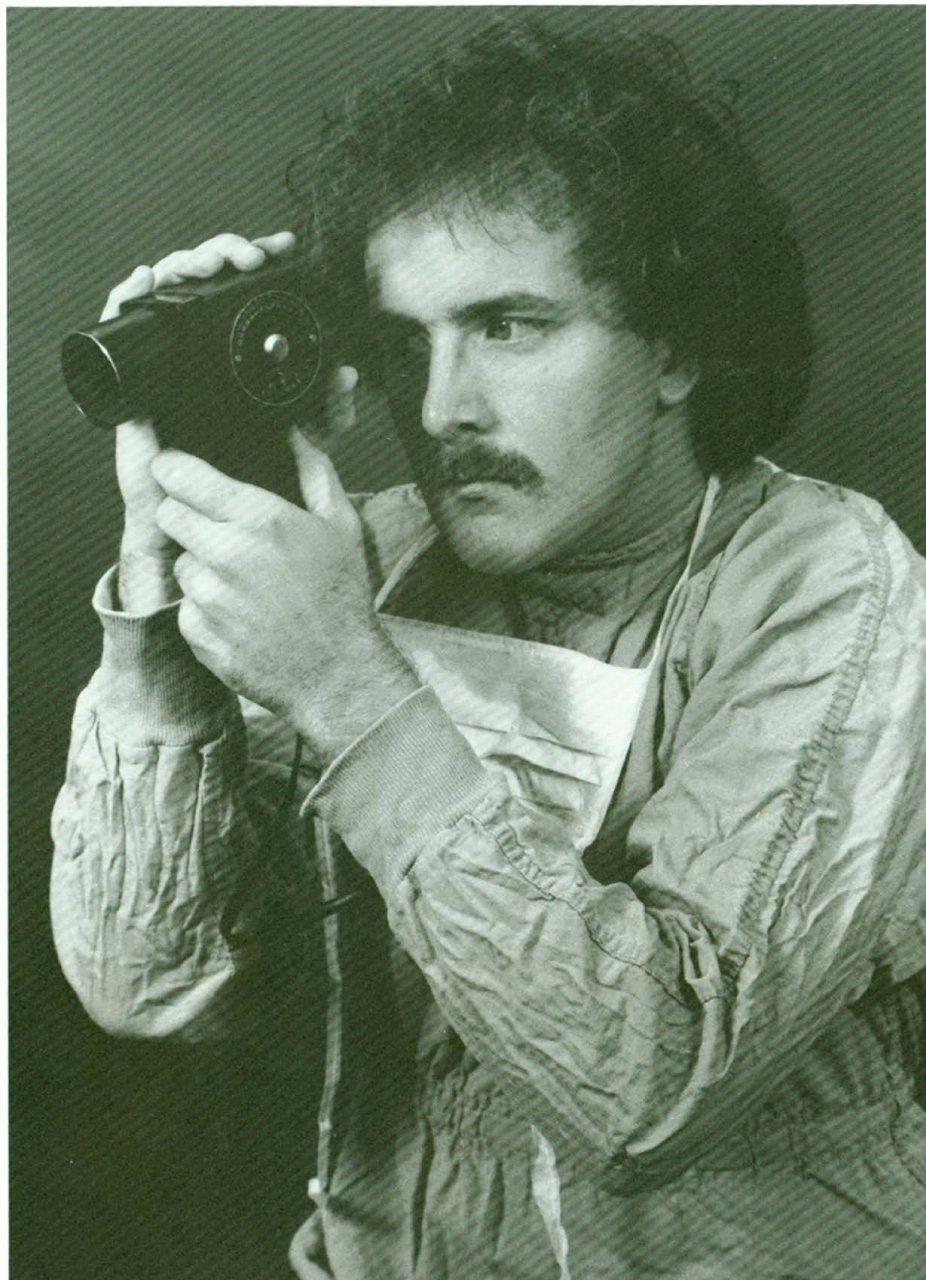
Although only one internship was required for his undergraduate program, Conley did two. He spent the summer of 1979 at the Department of Medical Illustration and Medical Photography at Yale University, as the first intern ever hosted by the department.

Two summers earlier, Conley served as a photography intern at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, where he had, in a sense, begun his photographic career years earlier.

As a high school senior in Lutherville, Maryland, Conley was asked to volunteer for a career development class. He spent more than five months doing pathology photography at Johns Hopkins, where an audiologist first suggested NTID to him.

"I was interested," Conley recalls, "but the summer orientation program is what hooked me. I had never seen so many hearing-impaired people together before. The tutors and notetakers looked interesting, but I didn't really know anything about interpreting." He also didn't know sign language.

Two years later, Conley not only was adept at sign, but had pursued his interest in acting through NTID's Signing/Singing Chorus and Sunshine and Company, NTID's resident theatre troupe. The offer to join Sunshine TOO followed.



Courtesy of the Biological Photographic Association

Using a spot meter, which measures light reflecting off a subject, is important in an operating or autopsy room.

"The entire troupe is composed of talented people," Halverson says. "Each lends a unique skill to the group. In Willy's case, he's very good at performing physical comedy. And he has an appealing onstage charm."

Conley intends to resume his photography career when the Sunshine tour ends in June.

His other ambitions include running and reading, and he says that he'd like to someday teach photography to hearing-impaired high school or college students.

For the moment, however, he's busy learning the ropes with Sunshine TOO. He jokingly says that deaf theatre is different from hearing theatre in at least one respect.

"We don't say, 'Break a leg' before a performance," he grins. "We say, 'Break a finger.'"

—Kathleen Sullivan

# Wendy Maruyama '80: Critically Acclaimed Artist

The term "woodworker" conjures up visions of bearded young men in tattered jeans or grizzled old men with rough, stained hands. Wendy Maruyama fits neither image. She is a diminutive young woman with a purposeful stride, intelligent dark eyes, and long black hair worked casually into a single braid which falls to the middle of her back.

She also is a creative woodworker who, as an NTID-sponsored student, earned a master's degree in 1980 from RIT's School for American Craftsmen.

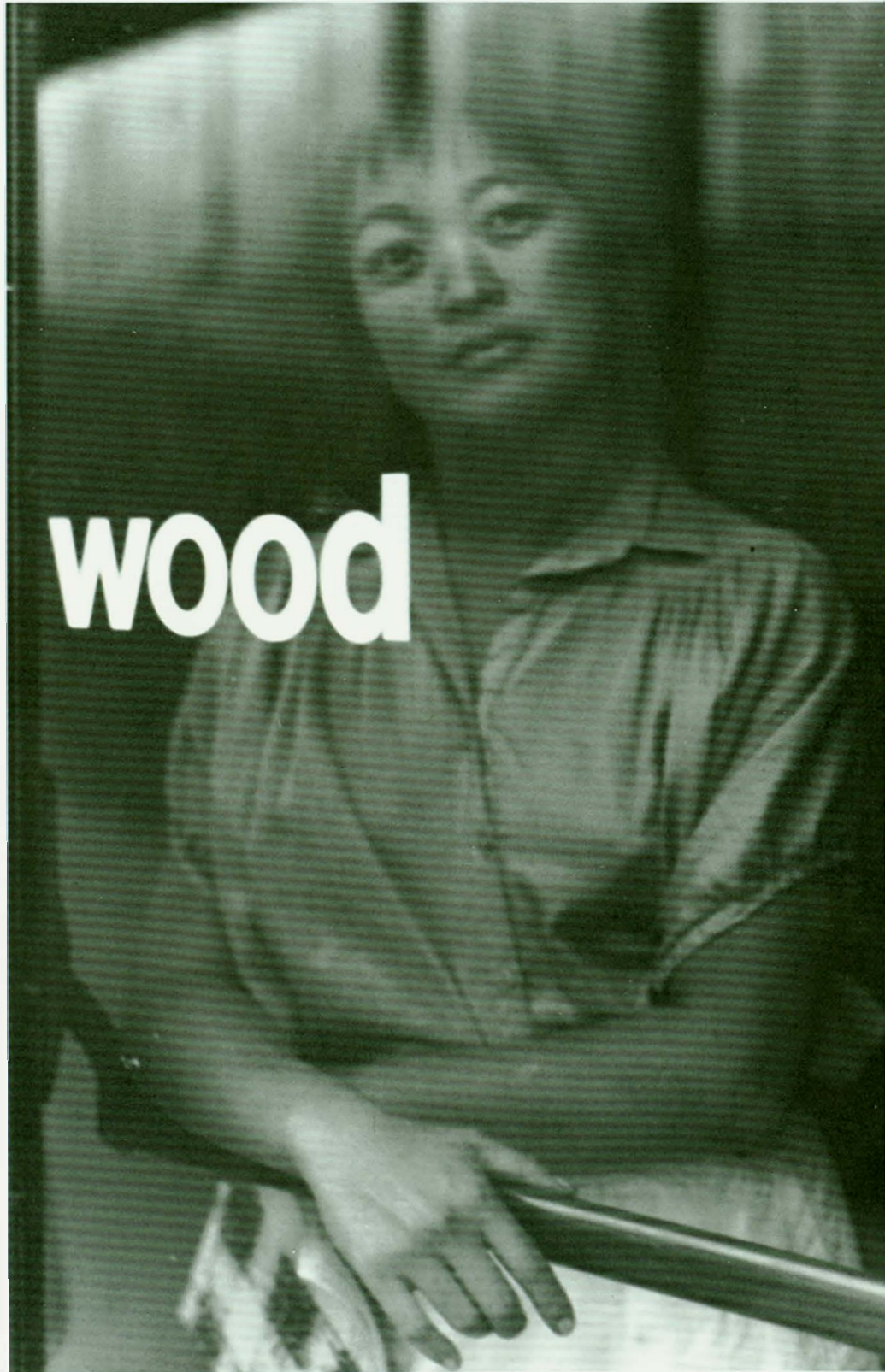
Born in La Junta, Colorado, and raised in Chula Vista, California, Maruyama also has an undergraduate degree from San Diego State University, and spent two years in Boston University's Program in Artisanry, where she learned traditional woodworking skills.

Although the traditional is part of her basic educational background, her current works are decidedly contemporary and, in her words, "flashy ... and pretty crazy." A recent creation, called "Mickey Mouse Chair," features a tall, narrow back topped with wide "mouse ears."

Crazy or not, Maruyama's furniture is causing a stir in the field of woodworking. Pieces have been featured in *The New York Times*, *Gentlemen's Quarterly*, *The Arts Journal*, *American Craft*, *Fine Woodworking*, *Fine Woodworking-Design Book Two*, and *Fine Woodworking-Biennial Design Book*. She exhibits frequently in New York and California as well as in the Southeast, and recently was awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to support her work.

The current setting for her creative activities is the fledgling Appalachian Center for Crafts in Tennessee, where she has taught since its establishment in 1980. The modern educational complex is constructed of rough-hewn wood and natural brick, with wide expanses of windows which flood work areas with sunshine. This small community of artists is tucked into a large wooded hill overlooking Center Hill Lake, about midway between Nashville and Knoxville.

Maruyama's hectic and demanding schedule often translates into very late







hours. She confides that she worked on a project until 3 the previous morning and then was up again at 8.

In addition to designing and building furniture, she runs the woodworking studio and instructs 13 students enrolled in the woodworking program. "I make sure everything in the studio runs smoothly," she says, moving through the rows of work benches covered with projects in various stages of development.

"There's a lot of paperwork and administrative work," she says with a rueful smile, "plus my own work, which right now is at the bottom of the list. But I'm hoping to catch up."

Maruyama's hearing impairment apparently has created few problems in dealing with her students, and she is greeted warmly by those remaining in the workshop as the dinner hour nears. "Woodworking and teaching woodworking are such visual things," she

**“Woodworking and teaching woodworking are such visual things... that you really don't need to hear. It's something you learn by watching.”**

explains, "that you really don't need to hear. It's something you learn by watching."

A unique advantage of working at the Center is that each instructor is given a studio on the premises. This allows instructors to supervise their students closely and gives students the opportunity to watch the instructors at work.

Maruyama always has been interested in art, but initially had nothing to do with crafts or woodworking.

"I enjoyed working three-dimensionally with clay, metal, or wood," she explains. "Then I became interested in crafts in general. By the time I finished high school, I was working with a little bit of everything. It was interesting getting into wood because I thought it was a man's field." Her eyes take on a gleam of mischief. "In those days, they wouldn't let women take shop. Most men still don't think women can do woodwork."



(Opposite page) Wendy Maruyama and Hank Merta Adams inspect their jointly designed and produced table. (Top) Maruyama checks on work done by student Bob Robinson. (Bottom) Maruyama and Adams assemble the table for exhibit.

She becomes more serious and admits that her interest quickly grew beyond the initial challenge of doing "a man's job" and even beyond woodworking itself. "Now I'm more interested in making furniture. I just happen to use wood." Wood is not the only material she uses, however. She also works with Plexiglass, plastic, epoxies, crayons, and paints.

"I like to paint the wood so you don't really see that it's wood," she explains. When asked why she doesn't varnish her wood to show the grain, Maruyama laughs and rolls her eyes in mock horror. "Oh, traditional woodworking is so romantic—so sticky sweet. I got bored with it."

She ponders her statement and then, with a shy smile, gently amends it. "Who knows? Maybe years from now I'll be doing traditional wood with

## Michael Pierschalla: Apprentice



Since ancient times, young apprentices have learned skills and crafts from experienced masters. Although would-be artists now learn through established programs at colleges and universities, apprenticeships still exist. Michael Pierschalla is one modern participant in this time-honored practice. He served an apprenticeship at the Appalachian Center for Crafts last year, and now works with Wendy Maruyama as a studio assistant.

Pierschalla, a soft-spoken young man, had been a hearing-impaired student at RIT's School for American Craftsmen for three years when Maruyama told him about the apprenticeship available at the Center.

"It was a nice time to interrupt my education, do something else, and then return to finish my degree," Pierschalla explains. "I thought an opportunity like this might not come again for a long time."

It has worked well for both teacher and student for more than a year. For Maruyama, it means much needed help with her work load. For Pierschalla, it's a chance to have the structural freedom to work on his own projects, instead of preparing formal assignments as part of his program at RIT. It also means day-to-day work. "I organize people and help run the studio—sweep up, encourage, and exhort," he grins. "Things like that."

Maruyama concurs, "It's been good having him here because he is more like a technical assistant. He helps me make sure all the machines are in working order." Although the position is not salaried, there are fringe benefits.

"I get paid in privileges," Pierschalla says. "I have private studio space and the freedom to come and go and set my own directions. I also get a lot of good feelings about it."

"I've always leaned toward teaching my craft for a few years after I finish

school. I enjoy seeing the light go on in someone's head when I explain something."

His face beams as he explains what it means to teach a difficult skill or procedure, realize the class does not understand, go over it again, and suddenly see the "light" go on. "That's what it's all about," he stresses.

Pierschalla was able to test his teaching skills last summer, helping Maruyama with a night class. He was so successful that he was given his own class for the fall term.

"There is something very special about this school," Pierschalla continues. "It is a little community—a tight potpourri, sort of family."

In spite of this assessment, he is looking forward to returning to Rochester and RIT—for several reasons. The first is simple: "I get anxious for the North because I am a life-long Yankee," he laughs. "I grew up in Wisconsin, spent a lot of time in New York, and, because my father was in the service, we traveled around a lot—always in the North."

His second reason is more compelling. He is anxious to return to NTID and take more courses in sign language and strategies for dealing with deafness. Although he had taken some during his three years at RIT, the need has intensified during the past year.

Pierschalla was not born deaf. For most of his 27 years, he was hearing. "I lost 90 percent of my hearing when I was 20, so I grew up oriented to the spoken word." With the remaining 10 percent, and a good hearing aid, he managed to get by orally and didn't use much sign language. Then, last February, he woke up one morning to find the last of his hearing had disappeared overnight. "I put in a new battery, and that didn't fix it. I tried this and that, and finally went to a specialist," he explains. Exploratory surgery furnished no clues to the sudden loss, and the doctor speculated that it must have been the result of a virus.

This sudden turn of events has convinced Pierschalla that he has much to gain by returning to RIT for another year or two.

"When I was there before, I didn't think of myself as deaf, although technically and legally I was because my loss was so severe." He shrugs slightly. "That's changed now, and I think that there is a need for me to know sign language." He smiles broadly, "And sort of spread it around to others."

—L. W.



Don Rice

Maruyama inspects furniture sections before assembly.

Chippendale and Queen Anne legs. You never know. Things change all the time."

Maruyama may mellow into traditional at some future date, but for the present, she is happy with contemporary styling—clean lines with bright colors. One recently completed table was a collaborative effort with Hank Murta Adams, a young glassworker at the Center.

The base of their table is painted vivid turquoise with a crimson front panel and a top of poured glass. Adams explains that he poured molten glass into a sand form. Because the mold was so large, seven days were required to "bring it down"—a process of slow, regulated cooling.

The table is but one of the pieces that Maruyama and Adams plan to exhibit at an upcoming show in Washington, D.C.

They also hope to have 12 pieces ready for a show by next fall. "Hank wants to have 25 to 30 pieces for that show," Maruyama teases.

Placing pieces in shows and exhibits is very much a part of an artist's life. Artists submit color slides of their furniture to show organizers for consideration. Organizers then select an artist, or group of artists, to include in the show.

Although Maruyama is relatively new in the field, she exhibits often, and was surprised and pleased by her \$5,000 NEA grant. "It's an individual fellowship grant for the visual arts," she explains. "They chose me as part of the 'emerging artists' grant." The committee indicated that the money could be used in any way to help support the design, construction, and showing of the artist's work. Maruyama admits she was

tempted to use the money to replace her aging gold Toyota but just "couldn't blow it that way." She sighs, "I guess I will use it as I need it to send my work around the country. Shipping expenses for furniture are phenomenal."

She confides that winning the grant has boosted her confidence. "I thought, 'Gee, somebody thinks this stuff is half-way decent.' That is especially nice when you have begun to wonder what you are doing and if it's going to get you anyplace. It also encourages me to apply for other grants.

"I've become much more aggressive," she says. "You have to be when you are in a field like woodworking."

Maruyama feels that her grant is due, in part, to increased contemporary representation on the jury that judges the works. "I think, in the past, woodworkers on these juries were very conservative. This particular group, for the most part, was avant-garde."

The Appalachian Center for Crafts, like many other federally and state-supported facilities, is feeling the effects of the country's economic problems, but Maruyama stresses that she feels lucky to be there. "I consider this a training period for teaching," she says. "I'm willing to stick my neck out for the school and work as hard as I can for it."

In spite of her love for the Center and for Tennessee's natural splendor, she admits that she is a city girl at heart.

Her favorite city is Los Angeles, where she would eventually like to work. "There are a number of state colleges with good art programs," she says. "On the other hand, I love New York City. If I could afford it, I wouldn't mind working there. I guess I like that fast, hectic life."

She laughs again and her eyes sparkle. "I was moaning and groaning earlier about how tired I was and how much work I had to do, but at the same time, I love it. I hate when it slows down."

—Lynne Williams

# Michael Ritter '80 & Mark Scarpelli '79:

## Working on Golden Pond...

Michael Ritter decided a long time ago that his deafness wasn't going to stop him from following in the footsteps of a man he greatly admires—his father. The senior Ritter, the object of his son's admiration, has taught physics for 21 years at the University of Virginia.

Ritter, a 1980 graduate of NTID with an associate degree in architectural technology, is an architectural designer with the WM Design Group (WMDG) of Center Harbor, New Hampshire.

Although he is profoundly deaf, most of Ritter's education was in mainstreamed situations, with the exception of seven years spent at the Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, Massachusetts. Like many NTID students, he learned sign language while in college, and now teaches this newly acquired skill at his local public library.

Ritter chose architectural technology as a major because there is a certain closure to the work which appeals to him.

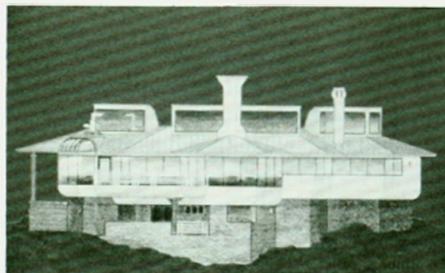
"I like being responsible for a project from the drawing board stage right up until I see the building erected," he says, slashing the air with his hands to outline the dwellings he sees with his mind's eye.

Ritter started as a draftsman with WMDG right out of NTID. He chose New Hampshire because it is his wife's home state, and because of his own fondness for New England. He is married to the former Vicky Dole, another NTID student who went on to graduate from Plymouth State College in New Hampshire.

His working environment is undeniably appealing. His firm designs primarily solar powered structures for some of



Courtesy of the WM Design Group, A.I.A.



(Above) The "Tootsie Roll House," a passive solar house in Center Harbor, New Hampshire, was designed by WMDG for the owner of the company which produces the well-known confection. (Left) Michael Ritter's rendering of a passive solar home in northeastern Massachusetts. The solar panels reflect a spectacular ocean view.

the most prominent people and businesses in the area.

Yet his office is situated in a scene of bucolic splendor. Nestled in a town whose winter population barely reaches 600, on the shores of Squam Lake, the denizens of WMDG often are found spending their lunch hours tossing a volleyball over a net, or taking a swim in the lake. During the summer of 1980, Ritter

and his co-workers worked with the production staff of the award-winning movie "On Golden Pond," which was filmed in its entirety near the office.

The projects he has worked on run the gamut from the prosaic to the arcane. Many of them are the typical solar design: complex, streamlined edifices with a wall of glass. One notable example is a secluded retreat built for a local confectionery czar which is shaped, at the owner's behest, like a giant Tootsie Roll.

Ritter is from a family of achievers. In addition to his father, he has a brother

who is a district attorney in Denver, Colorado, and another who is an Air Force officer going for a master's degree in aeronautical engineering.

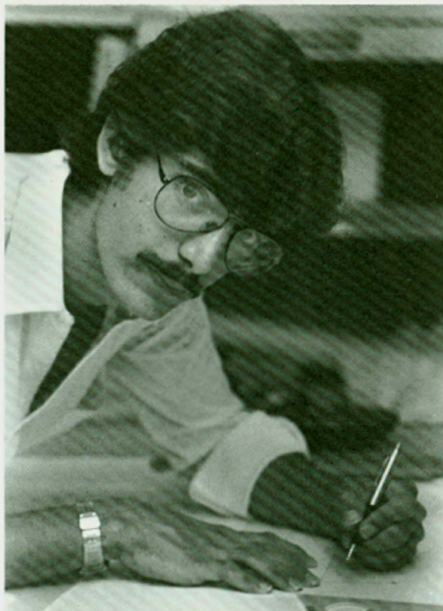
This, in combination with a strong Mormon background, is what he feels has invested him with the perseverance necessary to succeed. At the moment, he is talking of returning to school for a bachelor's degree with the hope of eventually becoming self-employed. For that, he realizes he will have to devise some sort of communication system, as much of the business of architects is conducted over the telephone.

Characteristically, he already has an answer to doubtful inquiries. "I will simply," he shrugs, "have to find a secretary who knows sign language."

(Right) Michael Ritter



## and the Highway to Heaven



Mark Scarpelli

Picture an engineer. Perhaps he sports a crew cut, squared-off black eyeglasses, and never leaves home without his plastic pocket protector filled with mechanical pencils, tucked securely into the breast pocket of his short-sleeved white shirt. The only deity he thinks or cares about is modern technology.

But religion does play a central role in Mark Scarpelli's life, as it does in Michael Ritter's. And his appearance, in combination with the smile that constantly plays about his lips, gives the lie to the commonly accepted stereotype described above.

He was born in Alabama, and raised in the Bronx and Queens. His family now lives in Orangeburg, New York. Scarpelli's education—again, like Ritter's—was a mélange of schools for the deaf and public schools.

One year of it took place in Rome, Italy, where his father, a pediatrician, was a faculty member at the University of Rome. It was a year of great growth for Scarpelli, both physically and intellectually. In fact, in the 10 months he was there he went from 4'11" to 5'6," from 65 to 115 pounds, and his voice changed. He also, he adds somewhat cryptically, stopped being such a "good

boy." Unfortunately, while living in Rome, his mother died of a brain tumor. He has a stepmother now, who also is a pediatrician.

Scarpelli is one of eight children, six boys and two girls. His younger sister is the only other hearing-impaired sibling. However, her education took place in mainstreamed schools. She now teaches blind students in Manhattan.

"We grew up to lead totally different lives," muses the 28-year-old, "yet we're very close."

Scarpelli graduated from NTID in 1979 with an A.A.S. degree in civil technology. Initially, he had intended to study business, and instead chose architectural drafting, finally settling on civil technology through a rather circuitous route.

After one week of sampling careers at NTID, he decided that the advice he had been given to major in business because of his mathematical prowess was well meant but impractical, for he had little interest in the subject. In time, he also lost interest in architectural technology, finally leaving school.

He then briefly attended California State University at Northridge. A year later he returned to NTID, still unde-



(Below) Scarpelli prepares a blueprint at his drafting table and (left) makes a copy of it on a vacuum frame device.

***“Let’s face it. I’ve had four different types of jobs in the past two years. By this time I’ve had to use 100 percent of what I’ve learned.”***

ecided as to a major. Then, in an experience he defines as “intensely private,” he saw evangelist Billy Graham deliver a sermon on television called “Highway to Heaven.” Among the duties of a civil technologist are assisting in highway construction. The chips fell into place for Scarpelli and he knew he had found a career.

Following graduation, he quickly found a temporary job as a bridge inspector in Rochester and then a permanent job in San Diego, but it lasted only six months because, he cracks, “You can’t analyze mud!,” alluding to southern California’s frequent mudslides. In actuality, he was laid off, a victim of the faltering economy.

At this juncture, he returned to Rochester—“I felt like a baseball player being traded back and forth”—and set about systematically searching for a job. Every morning, he says, he would scan the paper looking for openings, and each afternoon he would don a suit for a round of pavement pounding.

It was in this manner of knocking on doors that he found his current position at Sear-Brown Associates, P.C., where

his experience has included everything from surveying to drafting, computer programming, and site inspection. He has worked in the surveying, land planning, architectural, and landscaping departments. This, he says, is where the training he received at NTID comes in handy.

“Let’s face it,” he says with a shrug, “I’ve had four different types of jobs in the past two years. By this time I’ve had to use 100 percent of what I’ve learned.”

He is the first deaf person to have been hired as a permanent worker by Sear-Brown; as such, he has felt forced to prove that he is equal to the tasks assigned him. His constant drive to communicate with his co-workers extends to a tour of duty on the company softball team.

Socially, he is still more at ease with hearing-impaired persons, although he is pushing himself to expand his horizons to include more hearing people. He also attempts to improve his ability to distinguish different sounds, and toward that end has taught himself to play piano



and bass guitar. Playing an instrument is not unheard of among deaf persons (NTID has its own combo), although a self-taught deaf musician is a rarity. But Scarpelli comes by his talent naturally: most of his brothers play instruments; in fact, they have their own “private studio.”

“They all want me to feel a part of this family activity,” he explains, “so they encouraged me to learn to play. I think that someday they’d like to be professional musicians—we’re all dreamers in my family.”

Like many NTID alumni, Scarpelli subscribes to the maxim that the road to a better life is paved with education. He is considering pursuing another college degree, so that he might eventually become a senior designer. He also is resolved “to get out more on my own and get a good look at the world outside of deafness.”

—Emily Leamon

# Louise Timm '78:

## Panamanian Adventurer



She never really expected to win. Louise "Weez" Timm saw the notice on a bulletin board announcing the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship Program competition and, after discussing it with one of her professors, decided to enter.

The Fellowship offered "college graduates of unusual promise" a chance to engage in a year of independent study and travel abroad following their graduation. The grant, for an unmarried recipient, was \$10,000.

The postsecondary path leading to this exciting opportunity began at RIT,

newspaper ad about a job opening for a microbiologist to work in Pittsburgh area mines, *growing mushrooms*."

With these job possibilities in mind, and nearly two years of experience at the hospital, Timm decided to move into applied microbiology.

"I'd always wanted to work on a more public rather than an individual basis," she says. "I preferred to do it on a wider scale—learning about the cultural, nutritional, and environmental aspects—to see how everything in the environment contributes to the spread of dis-

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***"Everyone was speaking Spanish. I felt like E.T.—like I was from another planet."***

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where Timm earned her associate degree through NTID in medical laboratory technology in 1978.

"When I was studying at NTID, I thought everyone who graduated from the program had to work in a hospital." She admitted that the prospect didn't thrill her, but she was willing to try.

Following graduation, "Weez" landed a job in the microbiology section of a Pittsburgh hospital's clinical lab. She soon realized, however, that she was looking for more of a challenge. She didn't enjoy spending all her time in the lab, and the unusual hospital shifts sometimes made her job difficult. "At night I was the only person in the department and had to run up to the floors to get blood samples or go back and forth to the Emergency Room."

While working at the hospital, she learned of other areas where microbiology training could be applied. "I realized you could work in water treatment centers, canning plants, and in the pasteurization section of dairies," she explained. "One girl works for a chocolate company in Chicago"—her eyes danced with amusement—"testing candy to make sure it is all right to send out. I even saw a

ease. That's not possible when dealing with one person," she continues. "I always have been visually oriented. I want to see *everything*."

Her next step was to resume her studies, this time at Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C. At the beginning of her senior year, while pursuing a baccalaureate degree in biology, she entered the Fellowship competition.

"I dreamed of studying tropical diseases, and this seemed like a wonderful chance to study them where they occurred."

Timm designed a research project on the subject, submitted it, and thus began three months of letters, interviews, and suspense. The flier publicizing the Fellowship described the caliber of student being sought: "The Foundation seeks individuals who have such qualities as intelligence, integrity, maturity, leadership ability, and potential for creative achievement and excellence within a chosen field."

In April, Timm received the entirely unexpected news that she was one of 70

"It will give me an opportunity to be involved in laboratory bench work and field epidemiology," she says.

Timm is lavish in her praise of Price, whom she describes as "an outstanding teacher who has great concern for her former students. Without her assistance, my research in Panama would not have been possible."

After the appointment was finalized, Timm had just a few weeks to take care of all the travel arrangements. "You just don't know what I have been through," she groans. "I even had to get police clearance. What it amounts to is a certificate for good conduct."

Timm also needed a health certificate, indicating that she was free from contagious diseases. However, the most interesting experience was her visit to the Consulate of Panama.

"A medical laboratory technologist from the Gorgas Memorial Institute made sure I had all the necessary papers and went with me to process my visa." Timm laughs as she recalls the visit. "Everyone was speaking Spanish. I felt like E.T.—like I was from another planet. Luckily, the technologist was from Panama and spoke Spanish."

Timm admits that she is concerned about the language barrier. "English is spoken in many places, but there will be accents I'm not used to hearing." To minimize the difficulties, she is taking an extra pair of hearing aids along, and will make certain that she has plenty of replacement batteries.

"This is a big step for me," Timm says. "It will be a testing ground. I know I want to get my master's degree in public health—but, what part? I don't know. I might try parasitology or epidemiology."

As a Watson Fellow, Timm will be required to submit progress reports during the year, and when she returns, must write a final evaluation and accounting of the Fellowship funds.

She plans to work for awhile in the United States, but doesn't rule out the possibility of someday returning abroad. "They are giving me a great experience, and I may want to go back and help out.



A. Sue Weisler

students chosen to receive the grant. From then on, it was a whirlwind of preparations for the slender blonde.

Initially, Timm had hoped to do her studies in either Africa or India, but political unrest and difficulty in obtaining visas eliminated both countries from consideration. At this point, she contacted Beverly Price, associate professor in NTID's Applied Science/Allied Health program, who taught Timm during her years at NTID. Price contacted the American Society for Microbiology, and the Society put her in touch with Dr. Harold Trapido of the Louisiana State Medical Center. Dr. Trapido heads the Center's Department of Tropical Medicine and Medical Parasitology. He, in turn, contacted the Gorgas Memorial Laboratory in Panama City, Panama.

The final result, according to Timm, is that she will be accommodated into one of the ongoing programs at the Center.

"I see it as a wonderful opportunity to get ahead in my profession," she continues. "I have seen many students graduate, find a job, and then stay in that job for a long time. I don't feel they are growing. You've got to get out and grab everything that is around you. It's up to you."

During her last-minute preparations, Timm was deluged by well meaning advice. "Don't drink the water. Don't do this. Don't do that." Such advice is unnecessary, she says, because a background in microbiology makes you more aware of what you should and should not do.

On Nov. 14, Timm traveled to New Orleans for a one-week crash course in parasitology taught by Dr. Trapido. "It was an intensive review to prepare me for the work I will be doing in Panama." A week later, it was on to Panama City!

—Lynne Williams



# Andrew Baker '79:

## The Nation's First Deaf Optometrist?

*A little-explored facet of deafness, that Focus examined in several recent issues, is that hearing loss often is accompanied by visual deficiencies. Here is one alumnus ready to tackle the problem head on.*

Andrew Baker '79, may become the country's first deaf optometrist. At least he thinks he may; he hasn't heard of any others.

A biology major who cross registered into RIT from NTID, Baker entered the New England College of Optometry in Boston, Massachusetts, after receiving his B.S. degree at RIT. He now is in his fourth and final year of optometry school.

The son of hearing parents and brother of two hearing siblings, Baker was born deaf, as the result of an Rh incompatibility, in Livingston, New Jersey. His family then moved to Pittsford, New York, a suburb of Rochester, where they spent one year and first became familiar with NTID. They finally settled in Westborough, Massachusetts.

In that small town, Baker grew up without ever meeting another deaf person. He attended hearing schools that provided special help in speechreading, voice articulation, and speech therapy. "It was a lot of hard work," he recalls ruefully, "but looking back, it was well worth it."

Baker, 26, first became interested in visual perception because of his mother, a school psychologist. He, like many in his line of work, has 20/20 vision, but she was the first to inform him that others with hearing impairments are not always so lucky—there is a higher incidence of visual anomalies among hearing-impaired people than there is in the general population.

His interest in the deaf population was nurtured at NTID. He likens the experience of setting foot on a campus where many of the students are hearing impaired to a trip to Europe. For the thoroughly mainstreamed Baker, NTID might have been a foreign country. But as his understanding grew, so did his empathy, and he devoted himself while at the Institute to discovering some of



the special problems that deaf people face when dealing with a hearing world.

He has refined that knowledge in graduate school. There he has sought to discover, mainly by interviewing other eye and health care practitioners, how to accurately determine the visual acuity and health problems of deaf persons. Since most eye examinations take place in darkened rooms, a deaf person has little chance of being able to communicate with a doctor. Another problem is that most optometrists feel that their methods are at best scattershot, and that better ways for testing the vision of the hearing impaired must be devised.

"I ask them, 'If a deaf patient comes to your office, what do you do?'" Baker says. "'The best I can,' they answer. Only a small part of the eye examination does not require communication. If patients' symptomatology suggests that more needs to be done, they often cannot be treated properly. Instead, the optometrist prescribes eye care and hopes for the best."

Baker already is working on audiovisual and communication techniques for vision testing of deaf people. Astoundingly, he has convinced the New England College of Optometry to help him set

up, upon his graduation and subsequent licensure, a clinic designed specifically to accommodate the hearing impaired. He is quick to point out that he has accomplished this with the help of his advisor, Dr. Frank Thorn, whose wife and two daughters are deaf and thus took a very personal interest in helping Baker realize his ambition.

Armed with the arguments that it is more important for deaf than for hearing people to see normally, and that there are approximately 40,000 deaf persons in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Baker has traveled from pillar to post, attempting to drum up both corporate and non-profit interest in his venture. He has been aided by Sally McClellan, director of fund raising for the New England College of Optometry.

His efforts have not gone unrewarded. Thus far, he has elicited support from groups as diverse as the Multi-Optics Corporation and the Lions Clubs of America. The non-profit clinic, when it is established, will be affiliated with the New England College of Optometry, although Baker would prefer that it not be physically attached. He thinks Boston's horrendous parking problem would discourage potential patients, and would like to see the clinic in a suburban setting.

"Imagine," he chortles, "trying to find a space on Beacon Hill [a twisting maze of impossibly narrow streets in downtown Boston, where it had been suggested that the clinic be located]."

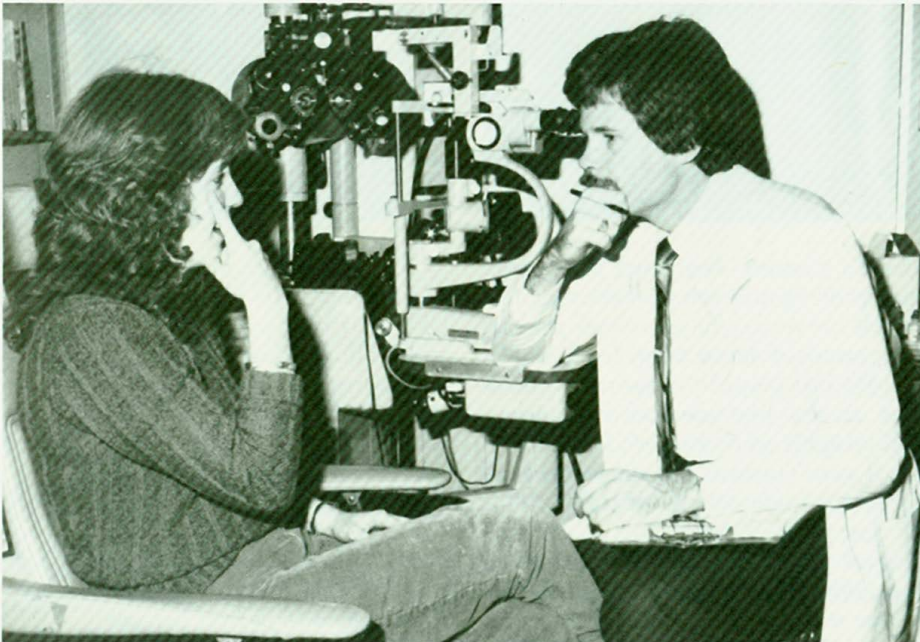
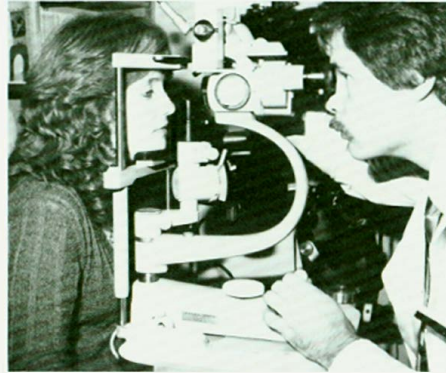
He hopes his clinic, slated to open in August, will take the guesswork out of eye exams for the deaf. He also is hoping it will be only the first of many such clinics to open around the country. Eventually, he would like to travel all over the United States, setting up similar clinics and training the eye and health care personnel.

While it may not yet be established, Baker already can imagine the clinic in his mind's eye.

"It will have two or three examining rooms, a reception area, and rooms for dispensing (where patients are fitted for glasses), technique testing, optical fin-



***"I ask them, 'If a deaf patient comes to your office, what do you do?' ... 'The best I can,' they answer."***



*(Top left) Andrew Baker evaluates a patient's visual acuity at close range with a tentative prescription. (Top right) Slit lamp biomicroscopic technique is performed to assess the ocular health of the outer parts of the eye. (Above) Baker listens as deaf patient Anne Maria Folkard presents her concern.*

ishing technology, and ophthalmological consulting/in-office surgery. There also will be a low-vision room for those approximately 16,000 deaf-blind individuals in New England who need special attention to make use of whatever vision they have."

He is animated when he speaks of the "dream clinic," and perhaps even more so when he identifies his primary motivational force. Like many NTID students and alumni, Baker feels those most responsible for his success are his family and friends.

"Everyone," he remarks softly, "did all they could to make sure I had every benefit—piano lessons, tutoring, that sort of thing."

With his parents' encouragement, he applied to and was accepted by NTID, which was for him "a rewarding, soul-searching experience."

At NTID, Baker says he learned to assert himself as a deaf person, a skill he hopes to pass on to others. He credits

the Institute with teaching him to learn more about people, as well as equipping him with a variety of coping mechanisms.

"I now have a TTY and a light for my doorbell, for example. And I'm not afraid to ask people to repeat themselves if I can't understand them," he says.

He lives in a suburb of Boston with two hearing classmates. They've all worked hard to conquer the rigorous academic schedule, although Baker admits that it has been a struggle. He relies on notes taken by others and constantly reminds teachers to speak clearly in class and to use audiovisual aids, a technique he tells them will help hearing students as well. Although some are harder to convince than others, he has managed to rank in the top half of his class.

To help defray the \$7,000 in tuition costs, Baker has a business partnership in medical illustration and photography with Tom Coughlan, another deaf RIT graduate. He also teaches sign language in the Cambridge (Mass.) public schools and acts as a consultant to the City of Cambridge in matters pertaining to the deaf. In his free time, which must be rare, he dives for lobsters in Rockport, a coastal town north of Boston, and skis in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Somehow, he has managed to turn almost every roadblock into an asset.

"There are more obstacles to confront when you're deaf," he says. "In order to survive all the red tape, you have to know how to use your common sense to get around it. That knowledge can help in all kinds of ways. I like meeting challenges. If a barrier exists, it's there for somebody to overcome. It is my responsibility as a deaf person to tap all of my available resources to do this, a skill NTID taught me well."

— Emily Leamon

# Edward Lord '73:

## Mixing Business with Pleasure



From referee stripes to pinstripes... Ted Lord officiates at a local high school lacrosse game (above) and (opposite page) teaches a Business Procedures I class at NTID.

There's nothing Ted Lord likes more than proving to hearing people that deaf people can do anything to which they set their minds. Take lacrosse, for example.

Lord had played the sport as a teenager at the Marvelwood Preparatory School in his home state of Connecticut, but it wasn't until he saw a newspaper ad a few years ago seeking officials that his interest was re-kindled.

Lord called for more information through Hi-Line, a Rochester-based phone service for the hearing impaired. After conversing through the Hi-Line interpreter for several minutes, the lacrosse official on the other end finally asked why Lord would not communicate directly with him.

"When he found out I was deaf, he was amazed," Lord recalls gleefully. At Lord's insistence, however, the man agreed to meet with him before the larger officials' meeting. He immediately let Lord become a high school official, and Lord was more than glad to comply.

"I wanted to get back to lacrosse," he says, "and officiating was a great way to do that. I like the challenge of proving that deaf people can communicate and get along with hearing people."



Such challenges are exactly on what Lord thrives. His competitive spirit can be traced to a comfortable upbringing which allowed him to pursue his affinity for sports year round. Swimming and sailing in the summer and skiing in the winter made Lord an accomplished sportsman at an early age.

He skippered his first race at the tender age of 12. "We had a 14-foot boat," he explains. "My sister Margie was my first crew, and later my two other sisters took over her job."

"I think I like water so much because I'm a Pisces," he grins, "although I don't really believe in that sort of thing."

Although he has a case full of trophies, Lord says that his most memorable race was not a first place finish, but a second.

"When I was 17, I participated in the well known Sears Cup race. I came in second for the state, but I missed first by—(he grimaces)—one quarter of a point."

His boat, the Pequod, was named for Captain Ahab's boat in *Moby Dick*. The Pequod now is docked in Rochester, and Lord says he wouldn't part with it for the world.

"I could never get rid of that boat," he says. "It's part of my life."

And what an interesting life he's had. He has lived away from home for most of his 33 years, beginning with his enrollment at the Mystic (Connecticut) Oral School at age 2. From there, it was on to the Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, Massachusetts, and then to the all-hearing Marvelwood Preparatory School in Cornwall. Lord was the first deaf student admitted there.

Add to that largely oral environment two hearing parents and three hearing sisters and you'll get an idea why Lord's parents weren't thrilled at the prospect of his going to NTID in 1970.

"They thought I would learn sign language and forget about my lipreading abilities," he says. "But I looked at it as the best of both worlds. I was excited to go to a school with both deaf and hearing students."

Lord received an associate degree in data processing in 1973, and then went on for a bachelor's and master's in education at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Lord says that he enjoyed both the academic and social atmosphere of U Mass, and didn't have any complaints about the skiing, either.

He recalls fondly how, years earlier, his father would pick him up at the Clarke School on weekends and take him skiing for the day in Massachusetts or Vermont.

"That was a long drive for my father," he says, "but it meant a lot to me."

Lord returned to Rochester in 1976. He began working at NTID as an audio-visual specialist, and has been a business instructor for the past three years.

When he's not teaching typing, orientation to business, economics, or business procedures classes, Lord is involved in a number of professional and civic organizations.

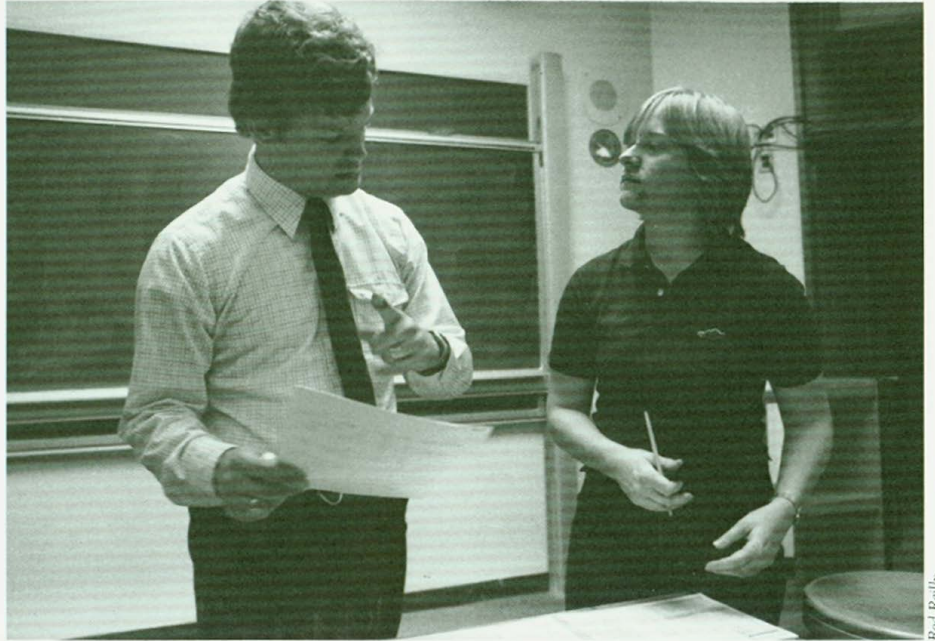
He is vice chairman and an active member of the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf's Oral Deaf Adults Section.

As such, he is committed to the philosophy of giving deaf youngsters the opportunity to speak and/or speechread instead of relying only on sign language. "It's so easy for a child to simply learn sign language and give up trying to learn to speak," Lord says.

"I'm not saying such children should have to learn to talk, but they should be given the opportunity."

Lord also is a former president and vice president of the NTID Alumni

**"I like the challenge of proving that deaf people can communicate and get along with hearing people."**



Rod Reilly

Chapter of Greater Rochester (NACR), and now is social chairperson of that group.

He is an auditor for the Rochester Civic Association of the Deaf, and past technical editor for the *Empire State News*, a publication of the Empire State Association of the Deaf.

In addition, he is involved in an informal cross-country ski group of both deaf and hearing ski enthusiasts and is a member of the Pultneyville Mariners.

He seems to have achieved a happy balance between sailing on Lake Ontario in the summer and frequenting upstate New York's ski resorts in the winter.

With his interest in sports, it seems appropriate that Lord's wife be an accomplished athlete as well. Patty, a 1975 graduate of RIT's College of Business, is "an excellent horsewoman," according to her husband, and skis as well. And where did the two meet?

In a very non-athletic setting—dinner at NTID. It seems that Patty was seated next to Lord's mother at a welcoming dinner for new students and parents, and Mrs. Lord introduced the two. They were married in 1975.

Of his experience as an NTID student, Lord says, "I think going to NTID helped build my confidence. I enjoy mingling with hearing people more now, both professionally and socially."

—Kathleen Sullivan

# David Skoczylas '81:

## Co-op Experience Pays Off

He is the picture of a young man on the way up. His dark three-piece suit is well cut. His sandy colored hair and mustache are neatly trimmed.

The image is accurate. David Skoczylas (pronounced "scotch-a-lis") is the only deaf employee at the Cummins Diesel Engine Company in Jamestown, New York, and he is on his way up.

Skoczylas always has functioned ably in the hearing world. In fact, his first contact with deaf people came in 1977, when he enrolled in NTID's Industrial Drafting Technology program at RIT.

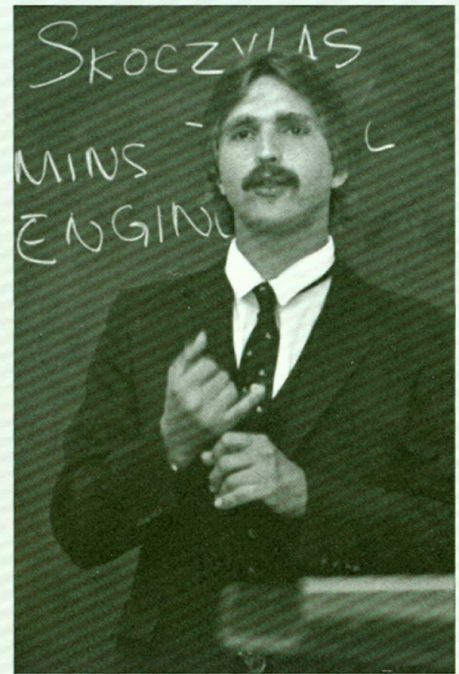
"I always liked industrial drafting—even in high school," he says. "It was my high school teacher who encouraged me to come to NTID."

As Skoczylas talks easily and confidently, it is difficult to believe that he has ever needed much encouragement in any area of his life. He is self-assured, with a lean, athletic body.

Because of his success, both as a student and an employee, faculty members from NTID's Industrial Drafting Technology program invited him to return to the Institute last summer to share his experiences with incoming students. It was an inspired choice, because his enthusiasm is contagious.

"I went to NTID for four years and feel I learned a lot," Skoczylas asserts. "One thing was sign language. At first it was hard, but I did learn it and used it often while I was a student. Now I've been gone for a year, and I don't use it as much." He flashes a pleased grin. "However, I am teaching it to people in my company who are interested and want to learn it."

It was Skoczylas' cooperative work experience at the Cummins Diesel Engine Company that led to his current full-time position as a tool designer there. "I worked for them during the summer of 1980," he explains. "I did my job and they said they were happy with me. Cummins told me that when I graduated, they wanted me to come back."



In May 1981, Skoczylas earned an associate degree, and after looking at several companies, decided that Cummins was best for him. It's a decision he has never regretted.

"It's a fantastic company," he says. "They have offices all over the world—Japan, China, Mexico, Germany, and England. I enjoy working and have made a lot of friends. I don't have any trouble working for hearing people," he says, "and many people are willing to help me."

The Cummins Company pursues five activities, each involved in the design and construction of engine parts for large trucks. "There are many parts of an engine," Skoczylas explains, "such as the fly wheel and the cam shaft. Each of the divisions within the company takes one part of the engine. Then the assembly line puts it together."

An engineer is the closest thing to a boss that Skoczylas has in his work environment. "The engineers tell me what they need, and I come up with the



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***“I always liked industrial drafting—even in high school. It was my high school teacher who encouraged me to come to NTID.”***

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A Sue Winters

*(Left) David Skoczylas fields career questions from incoming NTID students.*

tool they need to do the job. Sometimes they give me an idea.” He can’t stop a pleased grin. “And sometimes I come up with a better idea. But we really are a team, with everybody working together. I like that.”

Skoczylas’ favorite job is designing gauges and tools. “They must be perfect,” he explains. “I like that because there is a lot of detail to it.” On the other hand, as with all jobs, there are aspects of his work that he is less enthusiastic about. “The part I like the least is re-drawing,” he says. “Sometimes old plans need to be re-drawn.” He chuckles. “Everybody hates that boring job, but it has to be done.”

His apparently boundless energy extends well beyond the work setting, and into a frenetic athletic schedule. He is a member of three softball teams in three different leagues. Although this keeps him running from game to game, he is nonchalant about it. “Last week I had games on Thursday and Friday, two on Saturday, and another two on Sunday.” As if this weren’t enough, he also is a

member of the YMCA and belongs to a bowling league.

While at NTID, Skoczylas met with a group of students interested in the industrial drafting major. For an hour he told the group what to expect in college, how to get through, and what courses are required, and then answered questions about his job.

“When I first came to NTID, I didn’t know anything, and the work was hard,” he admitted candidly. “As I learned more, it became easier. Now, on the job, I’m still learning.” He was reassuring as he talked about the experience of being the only deaf person in his company. “During my first days on the job, I was very nervous,” he admitted, “but the people were nice, and interested in deafness.”

Throughout the session, Skoczylas fielded questions with ease and good humor, and it was obvious why he is so successful, both personally and professionally. He concluded with some good advice as a former student.

“The courses required at NTID are very important,” he told the students. “I didn’t realize that when I was here. But when I got on the job—wow, I found out how important they were.”

—Lynne Williams

# Daniel Woolmaker '80:

## Peace Corps Veteran

The journey began with a 20-hour flight to Manila, and ended one year later with a cross-country train ride from San Francisco, California, to Canal Fulton, Ohio. In between, Danny Woolmaker's life was changed.

After one year as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Philippines, Woolmaker returned to the United States with a Filipino bride and a dream to someday return to Mindanao and continue his work with the deaf residents of a small "barrio" in Cayagan de Oro City.

Woolmaker, 26, joined the Peace Corps in 1980, after graduating from RIT with a bachelor's degree in environmental design.

He didn't know when he volunteered that his Peace Corps service would begin with four years of college rolled into one intensive eight-week training program. Nor did he realize that he would be sent to a land where, instead of the four seasons he was used to in his native Ohio, he would be faced with only two: wet and dry. And that he'd often find snake or dog meat sharing the plate with his rice at dinner.

He wasn't prepared to find deaf youngsters hidden in closets by ashamed parents, or elderly deaf people who didn't know even the basics of spelling and grammar.

He adjusted, though. And he taught. Five days a week, for 5-7 hours at a time, often waiting for his students to straggle in because time wasn't particularly important to them.

When he wasn't teaching, Woolmaker learned. About Jeepneys and *balut* and the magnificent rice terraces of the mountain provinces; about the "magic spell" that hit him soon after meeting his bride-to-be; and about the bureaucratic red tape that eventually led to his decision to leave the Peace Corps after one year and return home.

Here is a glimpse of his life in the Philippines:



Danny Woolmaker poses in front of a Jeepney at the Philippines exhibition at the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Dear Ms. Sullivan:

*It's hard to begin describing my year in the Philippines, but I'll try to keep it short and simple.*

*Just before I graduated from NTID at RIT, I began looking for a job. I saw a poster for the Peace Corps on a bulletin board at NTID and decided to apply. After some red tape and lots of tests, I was accepted into the Peace Corps in the middle of June. I went to Gallaudet College for eight weeks of training; to Seattle, Washington, for five days of training; and then on to the Philippines. There I had five more weeks of training, concentrating on learning their language and culture.*

*There are very few schools for the deaf in the Philippines. Most are in Manila, but there are no support services like at NTID, few teachers, and no interpreters.*

*There are many deaf people in the country, but they are worse off than Americans in terms of education, support, and understanding of deafness. They think they are the*

*only deaf people in the world, and many did not even know that there were more deaf people on the other islands of their own country.*

*As a rehabilitation counselor, I worked with both hearing and deaf people. I taught hearing people about deafness and ways to interact better with the deaf community.*

*I also taught basic fingerspelling, sign language, and "the three Rs" to deaf students who ranged in age from 7-55 years old. Many were not sure how old they were, because they didn't know their birthdays or what year they had been born.*

*We established a canteen with the students which sold hot dogs, cookies, etc. to the community. This gave the students a chance to handle money and face hearing people.*

*About the Philippines: there are 7,107 islands which make up the country. There are three large islands: Luzon, where Manila and the capital of Quezon City are located; Visayas, which has much sugar cane; and Mindanao, where I was. This island is like "the last of the West or the great frontier." Several years ago, a lost tribe was found in the mountains of Tasa-*



day. This island is the home of the Muslims. There are 87 dialects and three major languages: Pilipino, English, and Spanish. Ninety-five percent of the people are Catholic; the rest are Muslim and Protestant.

With these figures, you can understand how the cultures would vary on the different islands. Due to a strong Spanish influence, however, much of the culture is like Mexico—an afternoon nap, work only in the morning or at night.

My students were never on time for class. If I started class at 8 a.m., they would show up at 8:30 or 9.

The food is very different, too—their main food is rice, which is eaten three times a day. They also eat dog, snake, balut (a little chicken still in the egg), lots of fruit, and seafood.

There are only two seasons in the Philippines—dry and wet. The sun rises at 5:30 a.m. and sets at 6 p.m., all year round. It is so hot during the summer that it is required to stay in the shade as much as possible.

Family life also is much different. Because of the cost of living, many families live very close to each other or even together in the same house or “bahay.” Not many families can afford cars, so there is much more public transportation than in the U.S. “Jeepneys” are very popular; they are made from jeep leftovers from World War II. Buses are all very colorful and very fast. The major problem now is carbon monoxide pollution, similar to Los Angeles.

I met my wife, Lyn, during my training in Manila. She taught us Pilipino Sign Language. She was a teacher aide for the Philippine Association of the Deaf Demonstration School in Makati, Metro Manila.

Her real name is Maria Lina C. Pilapil. She invited me to visit her in Manila during Christmas vacation. Somehow, after knowing her for several months, something hit me like a “magic spell.” Some sort of love developed, and we were married in Manila five months later. My parents couldn’t come because of time and health reasons, but her family and friends were there, as well as my Peace Corps friends.

We went to the mountain provinces north of Manila for our honeymoon, then to the city of Baguio, and on to shoot the rapids of the Pagsanjan Falls.

At the beginning of my experience, I really had culture shock. I found it hard to believe I was really in the Philippines. But looking back, I learned so much that I want to go back again. There is so much to see and do. The lifestyle is much slower than in the U.S.; there’s a slow or lazy atmosphere that I got used to.

I am very happy that I went. I learned so much, combined with what I learned in college and from newspapers and books. There is a lot of work to be done for the deaf, particularly in education, support services, and jobs. We’d like to go back to visit family and friends and maybe give some help or advice to schools or deaf people.

We’re most interested in establishing better support services for deaf people in the provinces outside of Manila. We’d like to someday establish a college or vocational school for hearing-impaired people.

All of this, however, will take time. What we need the most is money. There are so many things we want to do, but we can only do one at a time.

I hope I’ve answered all of your questions. Thank you for writing!

Sincerely,

*Danny L. Woolmaker*

Danny L. Woolmaker

Today, Danny and Lyn are house-parents for 10 hearing-impaired youngsters at the Alabama School for the Deaf in Talladega. Woolmaker affectionately refers to his group of 5-9 year olds as “the wild bunch.”

He says he feels lucky to have a job after nine months of searching. He tried to find a position in environmental design, but was discouraged by the competition. After two years in the Philippines, he says his skills in that area “sort of rusted out.”

Danny and Lyn are doing some part-time teaching and are involved in numerous sports and club activities at the school. Lyn sometimes is homesick for her family, however, and has found it hard to adjust to the climate and some food.

Woolmaker says, “We both want to go back to the Philippines someday. The same sort of magic spell that hit me when I met Lyn makes me want to return. I really miss it.”

—Kathleen Sullivan





# Patricia Swart '79:

## California Engineer



There is a program at NTID that allows new students to "try out" various majors, so they can start thinking about what they might like to do for a living. For Patricia Swart, it wasn't necessary. Long before she came to NTID, she knew she wanted to be an engineer.

Swart, 24, graduated from NTID in 1979 with an A.A.S. in civil technology. She has worked since that time as a structural engineering technician for Blaylock Willis Associates, a small (20 employees) firm located in her hometown of San Diego.

Her interest in engineering was cultivated by her father, who guided her in choosing which courses to take at NTID. Although Mr. Swart is an accountant, his brother is an engineer.

Before coming to college, she attended a public high school with special classes for hearing-impaired students. She first learned of NTID via a recruiter who visited her school.

The oldest in a family of four children, Swart would be going a long way from her native California. Her parents supported the move, because even though she would be taken so far from them, they felt the technically oriented environment would suit her well.

Their intuitions proved correct, for Swart found that the civil technology major neatly combined her interests in math and art. She now is a structural draftsperson, drawing buildings that require the execution of minutely calculated details.

Swart says that she never has thought of herself as a pioneering woman in a "man's field," although of the five people in her firm who do her job there is

only one other woman. She was the only woman in most of her classes at NTID, a situation she expects will improve in future years.

While she remembers engineering teacher Bob Keiffer and career counselor Carl Spoto with special fondness, she feels the indebtedness that many successful NTID alumni do to the communication development program. She was helped in an interesting way: in line with NTID's efforts to help students make the best use of their residual hearing, Swart was fitted with two new hearing aids to replace the one upon which she had relied previously. Her new aids greatly improved her communication skills.

Despite this "leg up" on the communication process, Swart approached the job market with some amount of trepidation. She combated her fears by interviewing companies rather than vice versa: trying to get a feel for what it would be like working with particular people and in different places. She felt that Blaylock Willis had the most to offer her and that she would enjoy working for her boss, Mr. Willis—a hunch that paid off.

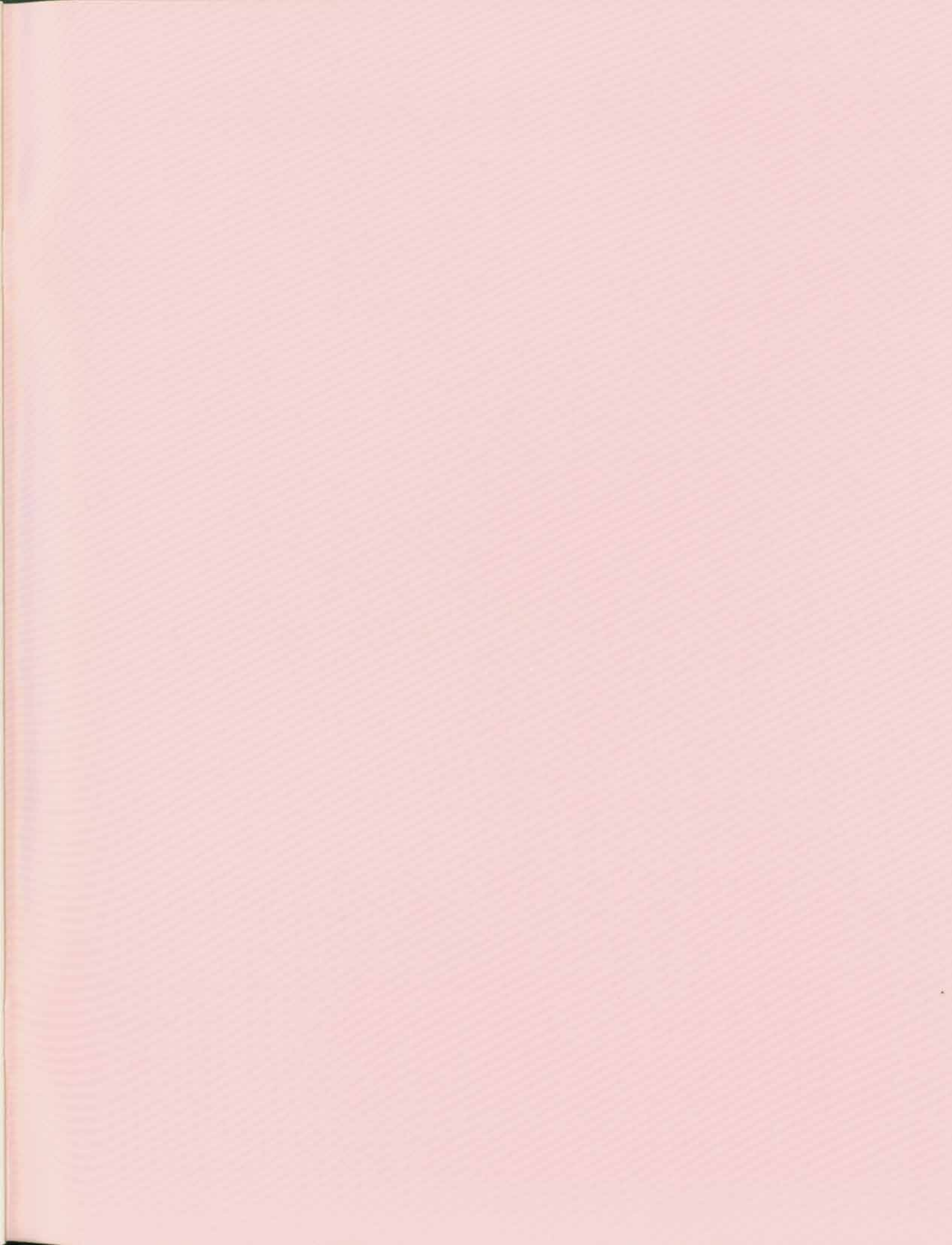
She is the first deaf person to have been hired by the firm, and says that her future employer expressed reservations about hiring her.

"But somehow I must have impressed Mr. Willis," she recalls, "because he said I made him want to bring some meaning to the phrase 'equal opportunity employer.'"

When not on the job, Swart spends her time jogging, camping, hiking in the mountains, or exploring nearby Mexico. The thousands of miles that she has put between the Institute and herself have not diminished her enthusiasm for it. There is another hearing-impaired member in her family, a 17-year-old sister, but Swart doubts she will attend NTID.

"I don't think they have a program for her," she says with a short laugh. "She wants to be a horse trainer."

—Emily Leamon





**Rochester Institute of Technology**

National Technical Institute for the Deaf  
One Lomb Memorial Drive  
Post Office Box 9887  
Rochester, NY 14623

**A Final Word...**

Deaf RIT graduates are a vital element of the Institute's alumni. These stories illustrate their various contributions to the work force and to society at large.

Dr. M. Richard Rose  
President  
Rochester Institute of Technology