

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly...

Our Members Speak About Their Workplace Experiences

In fall 2013 we asked HLAA members and supporters to tell us about their workplace experiences with hearing loss. We want to use your responses as informal research to help us plan a workplace program. The [January/February 2014 Hearing Loss Magazine](#) focused solely on success in the workplace for people with hearing loss and for those who hire them. We hope you enjoy the issue.

We asked you to answer the following questions or simply give us your stories:

- Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss?
- Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART?
- What are your experiences interviewing for a job?
- Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act?
- Have you been successful at work?
- Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss?
- Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? What positives have come from having a hearing loss?
- Do you know of any employers who are especially accommodating to workers with hearing loss?

There is value in knowing you are not alone; therefore, we are sharing what you wrote. We removed names and any references to specific employers where requested. If you requested we not use your comments, we’ve excluded them. We have edited some of the comments for clarity. Mention of products or services does not imply HLAA endorsement; nor does exclusion suggest disapproval. Thank you for your valuable response.

If you aren’t an HLAA member and would like to receive the bimonthly *Hearing Loss Magazine*, [join now](#) to be part of the one organization that represents 48 million people in the United States with hearing loss.

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes. It is something I try to make everybody aware of. I point it out also to my students when I teach and audiences when I give a talk.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *For medium to large group meetings as well as listening to invited speakers I use a Phonak Zoomlink coupled with a Phonak My Link, which "talks" to my hearing aids on the telecoil setting.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *It was very stressful and many of the social situations that went with the interviews were less than ideal for somebody with hearing loss. However, since I had to give a talk every time I interviewed, I let people know then about my loss. I did not worry too much that possible employers would discriminate against me, as I work in academia, and find most academics pretty open minded.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Not formally. They did help me buy the Zoomlink/My link. My department chair also instituted a "round table" type of seating for faculty meetings to make it easier for me to read people's lips.*

Have you been successful at work? *I think so. I am a professor at a university; got tenure last year, and research seems to be going reasonably well. I do find the teaching stressful sometimes due to the hearing problem, but it has gotten better as I learn how to make things easier on myself. The semesters leading up to tenure were all pretty stressful, and the hearing loss made it even more so, but that's also the nature of this job.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *Not a job, per se, but there are activities I try to avoid due to the hearing problem. For example, teaching lab classes is something I feel I can't do well do to the constant background noise.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *No. I feel like I startle people though. And since not everybody notices or understands the depth of the problem, I'm sure there are people out there who think I am somewhat slow.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes, but they often forget, or don't realize just how many types of situations are impacted by the hearing loss.*

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Accommodations for hearing loss is something which I am truly passionate about. Basically, it doesn't happen if I didn't do it myself. I have had to purchase several products such as two Bluetooth microphone and receiver combinations. I have a Pocketalker and shotgun microphone to accommodate frequent, required meetings. I use an amplified POTS phone at home. I have purchased amplifiers for both my cellphone and Internet work phone. I have

refused to use a phone at work because no accommodations, though requested at least twice, were provided. Because of my hearing loss and age, 68, the SCSEP program is the only place I can find part-time work. I am a trained IT person, but I work on a reception desk – a huge step down for me. Thank you for allowing my vent.

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I am a retired lawyer (of counsel) who late in life took up teaching history and political science at our local two year college. After several successful and enjoyable years I had to quit. I simply couldn't hear the questions. Some of my students were from underprivileged homes where English was spoken in a mumble. My students did not show any improvement over their parents. Some of my students spoke clearly and after asking the mumblers to repeat several times, the clear speakers would restate the question. I am sure the questioners resented this. I tried wearing a really good hearing aid, but since I must also wear eyeglasses, this was unsatisfactory. The earpiece of the glasses bumped the behind the ear part of the aid and made it squeal. I had a choice – not to hear, not to see, not to teach. I chose the latter.

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I used CART while at the university and for seminars at work.

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For the past 25 years I have been an office manager/executive assistant. In the past 5 years I started to notice and monitor mild hearing loss and began wearing hearing aids in March 2012. My right ear has more loss than the left. During the last couple of years, the staff (and my family) in the office would tease me and say, "You can't hear." During meetings I would have a hard time hearing and/or understanding what was being said. At times, it still is very embarrassing even with the hearing devices. I have noticed however, that some people just don't speak clearly, they mumble and are very soft spoken. I have several people in the office who are this way and I pray whenever they approach me that I will be able to understand them. Even one of the mailroom workers, who is Filipino with a heavy accent and soft spoken, I just can't hear and understand most times. I tell him, 'Frank, you know I can't hear, speak up!!' in a joking way. Everyone in the office now knows I wear hearing aids because my hair is short [and] they can see them. But there are still times I can't hear. It's very frustrating and embarrassing, especially when they are right in my face. I did seek counseling last year from a corporate counselor because I was so distraught. The Human Resources Department offered to give me a different phone that would help, but so far, we haven't found one that is compatible with our system here. I turn the volume up as high as it will go when I use the phone and I also take off my left hearing aid off when I have long conversations. It seems to help. When there are a lot of people roaming around and the copiers are going and people talking, it is especially challenging.



Overall, everyone is very kind and sensitive to me. Most of us have been together a long time. When I can't hear, I simply say, speak up!!

I was also the worship leader at my church and sang in church my entire life. I had to give that up in April. It was just too stressful not knowing if I was on pitch or not. This has been most devastating.

Right now, I can't think of any positives from hearing loss. I'm going to the audiologist today to see if I can get another adjustment. I am on my third type of hearing device. Sometimes, I avoid social activities and interaction with people because I am so embarrassed. I pray that something positive will come out of it and I might be able to help others with the same problem.

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I am working 8 to 4, as before hearing loss. I am petroleum geologist, and my work is mainly to do study about different prospects, as concerns petroleum exploration. My hearing loss doesn't impact me on the job. I use hearing aid during communication with my colleagues, or chiefs. The only problem is that my hearing loss is caused from Meniere's disease and audiologists have difficulty to adjust hearing aid according to characteristics of my hearing loss. I would like to ask you if you can help me to recommend hearing aid type, which can be more adaptive for the Meniere's disease hearing loss type. I hear very loudly with a hearing aid. Thank you.

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I am an 80-year-old active Adjunct Instructor in computer subjects at Eastern Florida State College (formerly Brevard Community College). I have been so employed for approximately 25 years, during which my hearing deteriorated to the point that I have just undergone a cochlear implant to my left ear. Most classroom environments involve person-to-person contact, which makes the lipreading easier to work with. On the other hand, I inform the students on the first day that the problem exists, but that it is my problem, not theirs. They respond quite well when I tell them how long I have been teaching the subject and that I will do all in my power to assist them.

The hearing loss is a combination of heredity and flying as a pilot in the U.S. Navy for 20 years. During that time as a pilot, I was called upon to train other pilots to take my place, as the military tends to move people often. It did, however, make for an easy transition to teaching in that academic world, after studying for an MS in Education with a minor in Computer Science.

There are many funny episodes that have occurred and I have enjoyed an exceptionally fine relationship with my peers and supervisors, all of whom are well aware of my disability and assist in many ways. My department chair has often told me that he receives critiques much worse than anything I receive.



Obviously, it is a great pleasure to be involved with young people in such an environment and I appreciate the opportunity to teach four classes each semester.

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Every place where I have ever worked, my employers have taken it for granted that many of their employees have hearing loss serious enough to affect their ability to hear on the phone, for instance, or even to cause them to need to make adjustments to hear other people talking to them. It's a very common problem. It must affect 5 to 10 percent of the population from my observations! And even more when most of my co-workers at a call center were computer game whizzes. And my employers can never remember exactly WHO can't hear, any more than anyone else can, including myself.

In fact, I often wonder why it is that some people with hearing loss seem so arrogant and pushy and sorry for themselves. They're a very select subset of the hearing impaired! Most people with hearing problems, even very severe ones, just go through life and don't fuss about it.

I have more problems with hearing loss that mangles the sound, problems that get worse when you turn up the sound, and hearing loss that comes and goes, because these are hard for people to understand as well as remember (after all, usually I can hear them just fine), and I recently ran into trouble with not being allowed to wear noise protection.

No, don't write and argue with me. In fact, don't ever contact me again. I've got more to worry about than hearing from another arrogant whiny hearing impairment activist!

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Interviews go well. Usually one-on-one. Usually in a quiet setting.

On the job, hearing loss is a major challenge! People just don't understand no matter how many times hearing loss is explained. Usually assistive listening devices are not practical. Customer service is not a good match for people with hearing loss.

I am blessed with Phonak hearing aids with the iCom or ComPilot to use with my personal phone. The only thing better would be InnoCaption if the FCC ever approves them as a TRS provider. (HLAA could help with helping InnoCaption receive TRS provider instead of useless services such as CaptionCall and Hamilton, etc.) But for business purposes, having captions all around the office and warehouse are not practical.

Unless I can function one-on-one with customers and co-workers, the day is exhausting. People try to understand and want to help but it has been my experience that very few jobs depending on the occupation are easy to function on.

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I first realized I had a hearing loss in 1996. Since I was 66, worked in a children’s hospital, and not hearing or understanding was dangerous to the welfare of the children I cared for, I retired. I was told I only needed the small inner ear hearing aids. They helped, but at times I could not understand what was said. I continued to work but told all my employees I had hearing problem. I now work for the Department of Aging and Disability of Texas. My hearing continued to deteriorate. I obtained a CapTel phone at home, and requested one for work. The state agreed I had a disability and agreed to obtain a CapTel phone for me, which they did. But because most departments did not know how a CapTel phone worked, it took almost a year before they got it to working. My hearing finally deteriorated to where testing revealed I only understood 37 percent of the words I heard. Three weeks ago I got a cochlear implant. Our insurance company was great they sent me a nice letter saying they would cover 80 percent of the cost. Then they went on to inform me my maximum out-of-pocket cost could not exceed \$1,900, and they would pay anything over that. I'm hearing a little better, and they say my hearing will continue to improve over the next six months.

Because of my hearing problems we have quit going to church so people would not think I'm ignoring them. I do not try to join in on conversations when two or more co-workers are talking. I tell people I'm staring at their lips when they talk so I can understand them. I also have to do this with salespeople. I'm praying that this cochlear implant will solve these problems.

If you have any suggestions on how to improve what I'm hearing with the cochlear implant I would appreciate hearing them. Although I'm 82 I plan on continuing working to help my two invalid children. My wife is 81 and she would like to stop working this year.

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I wish I had time to respond to your request for work-life experience with hearing loss. After starting the Cross Country (enduring running) program at MC in 1964, I've spent a good bit of my life coaching high school XC. My hearing loss has never really been an issue and I've had great success. Closing the circle, just today I was interviewed at a local community college, to open their first-ever XC program. Good luck with your article!
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It wasn't until I started my previous job that I learned that it is better to tell people about my hearing loss than to try and hide it. When I was hiding it, I wasn't able to do my job optimally because I didn't always have the information that I needed, I would tune out at meetings, and I procrastinated when I had to make phone calls. A woman who worked in the human resources department was a friend of mine, and I told her about my hearing loss and how I was afraid to tell my boss, because I thought it would reflect poorly on me. That woman immediately told me to go tell my boss, because then he and I could make plans to address it. So, I did just that and my boss and I brainstormed about the best ways for me to receive communication. That woman in human resources outed me, in a way!
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When I got to my current job, I let my boss and co-workers know right away about my hearing loss, and they have helped me from the beginning by taking meeting minutes, filling me in on information that I missed on the phone, and reviewing work from meetings, to make sure that the information that I received was complete and accurate. When we got Office Communicator chat, my whole world changed, because I was able to conduct meetings using only the text function in chat, and if I were in a phone meeting, sometimes people would type into chat in real time so that I could follow along.

As a result of partnering with my current employer, I have been very successful with my job, receiving two promotions in the 13 years that I have been there.

But, every day is still a struggle for me. A few weeks ago I was in a brainstorming session, and was not always following along with the thread of the conversation. The other people in the meeting caught my bluff every now and then by asking me what I thought, and it was embarrassing to me to have to ask what I thought about what. Sometimes I go home from work feeling exhausted from all the hearing struggles that I have during the day and I just want to tune out the world.

On the whole, there are more positives than negatives regarding my hearing loss in the workplace. Co-workers are used to helping me now, and at the same time I am able to raise awareness to what people with hearing loss need to succeed in their jobs.

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As a retiree, I volunteer at an Air Force base with their Retiree Activity Office. We answer questions from retired military people, about their many military benefits available until they die.

I have had to give up answering the telephone, as I might be able to barely hear the questions, but a slight accent or rapid speaker, and I'm done. My new hearing aids are due next month, and that may help. The fellows at Luke have installed a gadget that makes each call louder, but again, if they are rapid speakers, forget it. My buddy partner answers and we talk about the questions and how to answer them. I would hate to leave, but am not contributing much to the service.

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I am retired since 2005 from my main social work job, but would like to share those experiences. Since my children were in school full-time, I would go on various job interviews. I know that I was turned down for several, due to my speech pattern (as a result of being hard of hearing). I was never asked about my speech pattern. However, I would hear that a certain person got the job and I know that it was due to my hearing loss, because I had more experience and education. However, I could not prove it.

With my oldest daughter nearing college age, I knew I really had to go back to work full-time and to be the "financial aid" to pay for college expenses. I was fortunate to start off at the College of Staten Island in the Special Student Services Department as a project coordinator. I learned of the job from a contact in the field and I had no issues performing the job. If I had difficulty with phone contacts, I used my assistant to help me. From there, I went into vocational rehabilitation, first as a job coach and later, as a supervisor. With both jobs, there were times I needed assistance with the phone, but the receptionist or secretary assisted me. Even though I had a phone amplifier, it did not always help my comprehension and that was before captioned phones. All of my employers knew of my hearing loss, because I was upfront with it.

At my last job as Director of Quality Assurance from 2000 to 2005, I had difficulty when my boss (CEO) decided to institute a beeper system. I had to always have the beeper on vibrate. I had difficulty when I was out in the field and could not access a phone. My boss then allowed me to be able to utilize the texting option on the beeper and told all staff to text me (and only me). There was another issue when one of my job duties was to take notes at staff meetings regarding medications changes for clients and abuse allegations. I could not catch every single thing as I could not lipread and write at the same time. Also the notes had to be 100 percent accurate because they were part of the agency's auditing practices. My boss then suggested using a tape recorder and having my secretary insert any information that I was missing into my notes.

I also had a second job (my initial part time job) as a tax preparer for a large company I did well in the class and was hired as a checker. This was the normal procedure. But after a second year as a checker, I had asked the district manager when I could be a full-fledged tax preparer. He said: Well, you know, you do have a "communication problem." I was very surprised at that. Ironically, however, a month later the same district manager was recruiting for new teachers to teach the basic class. He approached a friend of mine, who could not do it. However, my friend advised him to think of me and mentioned that I had a college degree. The district manager was so surprised that the worker "with the communication problem" had a college degree. When he called me, I said to him, you want me to teach when you stated that I had a communication problem? He apologized and asked if I would give it a try, and stated I would be a tax preparer the next tax season. I went on to work for the company for 26 tax seasons (full-time at first; part time in later years).

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Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I use CART for staff meetings. I used interpreters for intake.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I had difficulty with a panel of men who all spoke in low tones. I got the job but walked away from that interview crushed and self-defeated.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Yes, I’ve asked for CART and interpreters.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *I quit one job because they were making it difficult when I requested CART. I initiated a law suit but eventually dropped it because their attitude would never change.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes. I think in all of my jobs I’ve felt discriminated, including my current job. They don’t want to provide interpreters because of cost. This is a problem for me because I cannot understand some consumers.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Some of them are. Some are not.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I have a natural empathy for others, especially for people with hearing loss. I am also more kind-hearted and easy going because of my own loss.*

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Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *Sign Language Interpreter*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *Good experience with sign language interpreter*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Not really because they are willing to provide me an interpreter on their own*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *No*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *N/A*

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I gave a speech at the Corporate Headquarters of Baxter International about this specific issue on October 18. I presented info on Hearing Loss and Communication Strategies and Loops and ALDs. I have been an audiologist for 40 years and this was the first request from a corporation to make sure employees with hearing loss are accommodated in the workplace. I also invited a low vision specialist to present with me.

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I was treated badly at my final job due to my hearing loss but have been retired for a long time now. I am happily retired.

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Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *Cochlear Implants.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I lost my hearing very suddenly during my current employment.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Yes.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes. I received a substantial promotion one month after my second ear was activated.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *While on business trips, I can turn my ears off when the airplane is full of screaming babies.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *The state of Alaska has been an amazing employer since my sudden hearing loss 13 months ago.*

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At a job I left last spring, the supervisor and co-worker would deliberately turn away from me to speak to each other to exclude me. This gave them many things to laugh about.

I moved to a new job that I was qualified for and was in a training class. I asked if the equipment was hearing aid-compatible. I did not pass the first test I was given, and along with others was weeded out of the job. Later found out this is common practice with this company to remove anyone at will during training.

I am partially deaf due to two brain tumors. I will eventually lose all hearing. I am interviewing now and do not tell employers that I am hard of hearing.

The only positive I can see is "active listening" has to be done 24/7. I must always give my full attention to people speaking to me.

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I have moderate loss largely corrected with two digital hearing aids.

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes, and they're generally supportive.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I've asked and been assigned to only classrooms with relatively good acoustics. Many of our classrooms have hard floors or ceilings, which results in a lot of reflected noise. As long as I am in a classroom with carpet and acoustical tiles on the ceiling, I can cope.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *Not been a problem.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *See above. I never mentioned ADA in my request, but I don't think I needed to.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *No*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Generally so. In class, when students ask questions, I frequently have to remind them that I'm hard of hearing and ask them to speak up. That seems to be more of a problem with students who've been socialized to not speak loudly. When I tutor in the tutoring center, students nearby sometimes complain that I'm a little loud. I think it is normal for the hard of hearing to speak a little louder than those with normal hearing. This has actually been a positive when I lecture, as it makes my lectures easier to hear throughout the classroom. I just make a point to close the classroom door so as not to spill over into adjoining classrooms.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *See previous answer.*

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I can't answer your survey about hearing loss and the workplace because I'm disabled and don't work. My hearing loss has, however, presented a problem in my efforts at finding a part time

job to supplement my SSD income. I have a 70 percent hearing loss, which is partially corrected by dual hearing aids.

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Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Everyone at my work place knows that I have a hearing loss as well as a vision loss. I used to try to hide these things but I figured that if a potential employer would not hire me because of these disabilities than I would not want to work for that person anyway.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I wear my digital hearing aids full time and always carry my FM transmitter around with me for situations in which I would need to hear a speaker who is standing far away.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *Much of my past interviews have been pretty negative. I find that prospective employers focus more on my disabilities than me as a person. It is even more difficult when you have a vision loss so when you are a person who has both a vision and a hearing loss, you have to work extra hard at convincing people that you are as capable as a person with normal senses.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Never. Any accommodation I ever needed I usually handle myself because nobody knows me better than I do. I don't need much accommodation anyway so it is not a big deal. I have all kinds of devices that I carry with me to make myself more adaptable.*

Have you been successful at work? *I consider myself just as successful as my fellow colleagues because I always complete tasks that are given at hand. I work part time at a children's nursing home in recreation. I am a music editor and web administrator for a music publishing company and I am an independent pianist and composer.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *Never. One of my jobs is that I am a musician and so for many people being a musician with hearing loss sounds a bit paradoxical but these people are not educated enough to realize that hearing and listening are two completely different things. I began my music studies at the same time my hearing loss was diagnosed and have been going that route ever since. A hearing loss is not a loss of music. If anything a hearing loss can teach a person the true art of listening and communication.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Absolutely. Everyone will face discrimination sooner or later. But it is this type of adversity that pushes us to grow and work hard at achieving our goals. As a student entering into a music program, the department was a bit apprehensive about how they would accommodate a student who had both a hearing and vision loss. How would a hearing impaired musician be able to take the required ear training*

class if she did not hear as well as her peers. But once I was admitted into the program, I managed to prove them wrong and graduated from the music program with high honors. Having an ear for music has nothing to do with the sense itself, it has to do with memory. I was the strongest student in all my ear training classes because I have a very good memory and could remember what all the tones sounded like.

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Not always, but I rarely expect people to understand because as human beings, we can only experience our own reality. I do however, take the moment to educate and inform people about the nature and misconceptions of hearing loss.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *Having a hearing loss has allowed me to learn the true art of listening as both a human being and as a musician. As a musician, you learn to listen more with your body than you do with your ears. Sound has vibrations and as a pianist, I learned how to change my tone quality by memorizing how each type of tone quality felt in my hands and arms. Having a hearing loss has also taught me to become a more compassionate human being toward others. When someone only sees your disability instead of you as a whole person, it teaches you how you ought to see people. As a human being, I have learned that it is important to look at a whole person, not just their disability, religion, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation. When a sense is impaired, you learn how to perceive the world more as God does rather than how man perceives it. I am only 32 years old, but I am very fortunate to have had such profound revelations in my childhood.*

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I have a profound loss in both ears; hearing aids provide the means to interact with the hearing world.

I have told three people, out of fifty plus, that I have a hearing loss.

I have not asked for special accommodations, other than the removal of my desk phone. I find using a t-coil frustrating as the connection is broken and re established every time I make even the slightest movement. I can use a speaker phone but that is disruptive to those around me.

Interviews scare me but when they are one-on-one in a quiet room I do pretty well.

I have not had to ask for accommodations using legal reasons. I have brought microphones and remote listening devices into meetings with an explanation that was readily accepted. I have requested that in meetings I move around the room to stand next to each speaker. I was not allowed to do this as it made people uncomfortable.

My last title was executive vice president and chief financial officer, so I consider myself successful.

I am currently working as a consultant rather than as an employee for reasons related to my hearing loss. I don't have to have a phone on my desk, I go to very few meetings, and I can periodically work from my quiet home.

No discrimination that I know of.

Co-workers are wonderful! They are always sensitive and supportive.

No positives come to mind.

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My co-workers, manager, and staff all know I have a hearing loss.

I wear two hearing aids and also use a ComPilot mini microphone with Bluetooth for conference rooms.

Interviewing, I normally let people know I have a hearing loss and ask to have the questions in written form as well as verbal. I have found myself asking people to speak up in interviews so that I can better hear them.

I have asked for reasonable accommodations at work. My employer is willing to provide accommodations. The difficulty I have is research and finding the most appropriate accommodations that will work for me. I need to try out different phones, because until I actually try them, I can't judge how I will be able to hear with them. This creates some problems because it is hit-and-miss and I feel it is a complicated process to get approvals to purchase, than have to return then get another approval for purchase.

I feel I have been successful at work. But I work for the Department of Rehabilitation where there is great understanding of disability.

I have never had to give up a job because of my hearing loss, but I know before I received my first pair of hearing aids I was ineffective at my job and made many 'hearing' mistakes, and missed a lot of information.

I don't feel discriminated because of my hearing loss, yet I am also verbal. If I were unable to speak I would feel differently.

My co-workers are sensitive to my hearing loss, however, it is a constant struggle that I must remind people in meetings to speak up, speak one at a time, repeat themselves. This gets tiring in meetings after a while.

I myself have learned to have fun with my hearing loss. I often 'mishear' words and what I end up hearing can be quite hilarious, so I share that with friends and family. I'm not shy about my hearing aids, my hearing loss, and wherever I go, I try to use myself as an example to educate

groups about how to communicate so that other people with hearing loss can hear and to be sensitive to other people with hearing loss.

I have been very fortunate to work with the Department of Rehabilitation. I work with many people who have varying types of disabilities. It brings a great awareness and acceptance of others who have different needs.

My fortunate workplace experience:

I grew up with ear infections; tubes in ears multiple times until in my early 20s I had double mastoidectomies in both ears. I knew I had decreased hearing in both ears, but all I remember was an audiologist telling me, "You could probably benefit from hearing aids." Then I went to work with an agency that contracted with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). We helped DOR clients find jobs by helping them with interviewing skills, resumes, and finding employers in the community. My boss at the time, knew sign language, and had experience training/coaching deaf people with new cochlear implants how to use their new hearing skills. She recognized the significance of my hearing loss and coached me into trying out hearing aids. I cried when I got my hearing aids because I finally realized how much sound I had been missing! I could now hear birds singing, coins when they fell, and the crunch of a fortune cookie at lunch with my co-workers! Now I feel utterly naked without my hearing aids, and I show them off to everyone because I'm so proud of the difference they make in my life.

.....

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes, anyone who knows me at work knows about my hearing loss.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *Not at work, but at conferences I do.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I am always nervous when interviewing for a new job. When meeting new people, I have to adjust to the way they talk Sometimes facial hair gets in the way of speechreading. I am always upfront about my hearing loss, which is an advantage in my profession – Deaf education. I am concerned about misunderstanding information and responding off-topic.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *I have not, but probably should have. With the budget cuts and being the only staff in the system who needs a particular accommodation, I have saved accommodations for the students.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes. My room did not have a flashing light for fires and my student and I had "burned up" several times.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Not always, but I feel it is because of their ignorance and my ability to speak and hear (hard of hearing)*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I am a better advocate for my deaf/hard of hearing students. Having a hearing loss is just a part of me. I cannot imagine being any other way.*

I'm in the fifth school system in three states that I have been employed as a teacher for Deaf/hard of hearing students. I have been blessed that most of the people in all five systems were accepting. I have had some parents, not of my students, that were, in a sense, rude. For an example, I was asked one time which country I was born. This person responded that she had never heard anyone talk like I do (so much for being told that I had excellent speech, right?) I explained about my hearing loss and talking the way I hear. Then she topped off the conversation with "Oh, you have a hearing impaired accent!"

.....
Yes, my employers know that I have a hearing loss.

I use an amplified phone and a special amplified Bluetooth neckloop for my cell phone.

Most of the time I didn't have any trouble in the interviews that I've done in my lifetime. I only remember asking for accommodations twice and there was no problem in doing so.

I've been successful in work as far as my hearing is concerned.

I had to give up one job because of my hearing loss.

No, not really (there was a career that I wanted to pursue but couldn't because of my hearing loss.)

My co-workers are very understanding of my hearing loss and needs as most of them are hard of hearing or deaf as well.

Working as the HLRS at the Deaf Action Center I have found it to be a great asset as the clients that I see know that I understand what they are going through and it helps that I've also learned communication tips that I can pass along to them

The Deaf Action Center has been wonderful in accommodating my needs.

.....
I am no longer employed. I can share about disappointments, struggles and being ostracized in past work environments.
.....

.....

I truly believe, and have come to see, that attitudes about people with hearing loss all depend on the area, the local, the community. It can be viewed as a novelty, or a hardship. It can be viewed as being less than intelligent or belligerent. It can be poorly understood as far as the dynamites and "cures". Yes, cures. In the much advertised world of CIs, that is the impression forced upon the population. How often have I been told, "Well get a CI and you will be fine." Another struggle is not being part of the Deaf community. I am late-deafened. I have some residual hearing, speech comprehension is poor, about 25 percent in an ideal situation with my hearing aids. My loss is beyond hard of hearing. I could try to identify with the senior population, but I am not yet a senior citizen. I could identify with a disability population, yet I have most of my mobility and functions, and I have tried to fit into Deaf population but am not accepted as deaf.

In this area I found little as far as acceptance and accommodations. All too often I was treated as mentally inept (if I could hear what was going on I would not be slow!) All too often I would inquire about accommodations...oftentimes purchasing necessary items myself. Yes, myself...as I quickly learned I was "lucky" to have a job, counted as fulfillment for their disability quota, and a volume control on the phone handset was an accommodation, don't ask for anything more. Quite often jokes were made about my hearing loss...oftentimes during a staff meeting where I was publicly asked if my aids were working, told to deal with a frustrating client situation by "turn off your aids you'll be fine"

I left that job, due to health reasons but also continued with frustrations in situations such as staff meetings, school meetings, etc. Since I was already told not to ask for anything else as far as accommodations I knew better. Fact is, I never did ask; the secretary of the office had a volume control phone installed in an attempt to help.

In a previous work situation I was ridiculed. When the opportunity was clear I sponsored a staff training session. A presenter came in and spoke about the issues of hearing loss. Although staff seemed tolerant I was given a straight arm by many...being told "we're all not deaf you know."

I had pursued employment ads...but almost all available came with telephone work, which I cannot do accurately, or physical requirements that I can no longer do. I was told, by an assistance program that working in a sheltered workshop putting rings on pails would be suited for me. I have a bachelor's degree in social work and a minor in psych.

I have tried volunteer work. Often I am not accepted as it would not "fit in" with the atmosphere. Several volunteer situations I removed myself from, as I truly struggled with communication, acceptance, and lack of connections.

.....

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *No*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *Not applicable.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *No.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes .*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *None.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *No*

My hearing loss isn’t proven to be work relate, yet for me to be able to perform my job, which requires conference calls, they have offered me money towards hearing aids, which I will be purchasing soon.

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *CaptionCall*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *Intimidating!*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *No*

Have you been successful at work? *Lately – post-CI*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *Almost, but didn’t come to that.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Not intentionally, but yes.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Local coworkers are, but don’t need to be. Remote coworkers need to be (phone use), but don’t generally know me well enough and are clueless.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *Learning ASL and hosting meet-ups for practice. Meeting lots of great people.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *No, but I'd like to hear about it if you find any.*

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *Amplified Telephone.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I informed my employer 6-1/2 years ago that I was hard of hearing and as long I have an amplified phone at my desk to do my work, I would not have any problems communicating on the telephone. My employer was very accommodating.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *No*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *No.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *Awareness and education about hearing loss.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *State of New Mexico Government*

.....
I am a late deafened adult in both ears since 2005. I have cochlear implants, but I find socializing at the workplace very difficult. For example, most co workers were very accommodating if I asked what the discussion and conversation was about during lunch break, but it became embarrassing for me to continually and repeatedly having to do that with co-workers I was not well acquainted with. As a result I would often just sit back and try to understand what everyone was saying around the table. If there were others sitting around another table nearby, I could hear them better than the people at my own table!! Haha. I'll bet those of us with hearing loss can relate to that one. Not always so funny but true. It can be discouraging not being able to participate in group discussions like I used to.

One lady I worked with came up to me one time and covered my implant that was showing through and covered it up with my hair. I guess she was somehow embarrassed for me. Honestly, I'm never concerned, nor do I care if my implant or processor shows through for all to see. I'm not embarrassed to say: I have a hearing loss, can you please speak a little slower?

.....

I am a special education classroom assistant. I have hearing loss in both ears but it is more prevalent in the left ear. I have had hearing loss for many years now. Recently, I bought a sound amplification system to aid me in hearing the students that I work with. My co-workers do know that I have hearing loss and they will either speak louder, talk on my right side where my hearing is better, or be in front of me where I can read their lips. Any social event or interaction where there is a lot of speaking is very difficult for me and I have been avoiding social interaction for quite some time as I miss a great deal of what is being said. That would also include job interviews. I have not had to ask for accommodations as I work in a school with hearing impaired students so I do have signing abilities. I do not know that I would classify my job as successful at this point because the hearing loss does affect my ability to interact with the students most of the time. I have not had to give up any jobs yet due to the hearing loss. Some of the positives of hearing loss is that I have learned sign language and have become more sensitive to anyone with any kind of disabilities.

.....

I am not hearing-impaired, though my daughter is (she's a college student). I also am a reporter at Consumer Reports; I prepared a hearing aid article four years ago in the magazine that still gets a lot of hits on our website. We mentioned your organization in the article.

.....

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *Yes.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I do not let the interviewer know of my challenges. In my experience, it is not a positive. I once tried revealing my challenges during an interview and I was turned down for the job at the interview.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Yes.*

Have you been successful at work? *I think so, but I feel confident that it works against me.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I can enjoy peace and quiet whenever I want. Hearing loss has not been a positive in my life at all besides that.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *No.*

.....

My fellow employees are aware of my hearing loss because I choose to leave the room when there are a lot of conversations going on. I work in a forensic hospital which poses a significant safety risk, plus I am unable to do groups with patients any more. Our facility consists of large tiled rooms with no upholstery or sound absorbing furniture. Not only are mental health patients often loud when they first come in, but more than that the security staff socializes a lot in the open day rooms. I did request accommodations and sound absorbent panels were installed sporadically on the ceiling both in the treatment team room and the large sun room where groups are to be held. Patients in my groups also expressed concern about not being able to hear and I had to continually ask them to repeat themselves. The sound absorbing panes were the only accommodation. I had asked that our treatment team meetings be held in a smaller room without distraction of others speaking, faxes, and telephone conversation and this was done for a few weeks, but staff resisted and were successful in having that move reversed. The discrimination is subtle in that it's people quieting when I come into the room or leaving. Also, I no longer eat lunch with my peers in the lunchroom because it was too hard to follow conversations. I plan to file for disability once my doctor completes a report. What's the advantage of hearing loss. Not sure there is one that I've identified. Maybe spending more time alone. Perhaps focus and concentration, but then it's been harder to achieve that.

.....

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes. So do my students. It is common knowledge.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I have an amplified phone that flashes. I did not tell my employer that I was hard of hearing until after I was hired and then I requested a special phone. I was provided a less than adequate phone but better than the one in my office so I chose to buy myself the phone that I have now. I put in a work order to have my office furniture rearranged so that I face the door and the hallway fire alarm flash system and that the people, phone, etc. are on my left side for my "good" ear. I teach college and my classrooms are small. All the students sit in groups at tables and I group the students so I can hear and work my discussions so that I visit their tables when they work on*

something or discuss something and then I have one person from a table report out. The students all know to raise their hands so I can find them and lipread them when they speak. I have preferential seating for departmental meetings.

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? I have never had a problem interviewing for a job. I do not come across as hard of hearing even though I have a severe-to-profound hearing loss.

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? When I was asked to be the faculty senate president I knew that I could not run the monthly meetings without some kind of accommodation and had the Oversight Committee make a request that, since the meeting room was going to be remodeled anyway, that they put in a hearing loop system or some other type of mic system. Because we chose to make it a general request rather than a personal request, it would not technically be called a "reasonable accommodation" request under ADA. The administration did call the ADA office representative for the main campus and put in what they requested; however, they would not allow any of the hearing impaired faculty at our campus to be a part of the process or to check out the system before they bought it. Consequently, the mic system installed in the room actually distorts sound and the handheld mics require people to hold them in a way that blocks lipreading. When we did have an ADA representative visit the room, they agreed the system was mismatched and should be replaced, but nothing has ever happened. However, the current mic system is better than no mic system and we have required every senator (all 35+) to use the mics. Everyone knows it is to accommodate me and they will face me and talk directly to me or clarify things they have said.

Have you been successful at work? Very. I am highly respected at the university and at the state levels and have accomplishments similar to other professors at my rank.

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? No, but if I lose the rest of my hearing, I will probably be an online-only professor.

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? I do not think people have ever discriminated, but there are plenty of people who act on ignorance and do not handle situations well.

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? Yes. I think that part of it is my own personal attitude and comfort level with my hearing loss.

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? I am able to be a role model and inspiration for students and other faculty who have disabilities. I have told my story at state meetings and have been an encouragement to parents.

.....

I am retired after 55 years of teaching. My hearing loss started about half way through my teaching career. The diagnosis was otosclerosis and I had a stapedectomy operation before taking a sabbatical leave to get my doctorate. The surgery failed and had to be repeated, but I ended up completely losing my hearing in my right ear. I had a consultation with a doctor in Memphis. The conclusion was no surgery for the left ear. Since that time, I have worn a hearing aid in my left ear.

When interviewing for a job as a university faculty member, I was asked by the dean if I had any physical disabilities. I admitted to a hearing loss but explained that the result was that my problem would force students to learn to speak properly and project their voices so all could hear in the classroom—a vital skill for business students. I was hired so I guess the answer was accepted.

I found some of my hearing aids reacted to some classroom settings. In one, I had a loud ringing upon entering the room. In asking to change rooms, I had more difficulty in doing so than a professor who asked to be changed because he was allergic to chalk dust. In another, I found my hearing aid went dead after about an hour but revived itself after about two hours of being out of the classroom. Since the room was a computer lab I had established and my hearing aid was relatively new, I requested the university buy me a new hearing aid of another brand. They first said they would do so, but I could only use it in the classroom. I fought the issue, and they gave me a small amount of money to purchase a new one.

Meetings are hard. I have learned to position myself near people who do not speak up. Over the years, I have found that I am not always in the “in crowd” because I miss the low key jokes. People are not always considerate and tend to respond with a loud yelling voice when you ask for a repeat. I still serve on a board of directors for a large resort and conference center. After 13 years, I am finding the people a bit more receptive to my needs.

In addition to my teaching, I conducted workshops for teachers all over the country for a large publishing company. On the plane on the way home from Hawaii, I read the evaluations. One said that a woman was very snotty because whenever she approached me I ignored her. After crying, I figured out that she must have been approaching me on my deaf ear in a very light voice. From that point on, I and learned to tell my students and groups wherever I was speaking that I was completely deaf in one ear and wore a hearing aid in the other so to please speak up and to remember to approach me on the left side—or where my heart is.

All in all, I function with no hearing in the right ear and 30 percent hearing in my left ear without my hearing aid. However, I feel that I have had a successful career. Friends and

acquaintances do not realize I have hearing loss until I tell them. I get real bossy with people when I am out eating and tell them where to sit so I can hear better in a noisy restaurant.

.....

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *Yes.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *None.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Yes, purchase of assistive amplification devices.*

Have you been successful at work? *Reduced success.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *Yes.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *Better empathy toward persons with disabilities, development of assertiveness toward protecting my rights and addressing my loss.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *No.*

.....

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I use CaptionCall telephone and nTouch videophone in my office. My hallway at work can be so noisy so I'd shut my office door. I use any assistive listening devices including Loop as much as I can. Now I'm not afraid to ask!*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *In the past, I've told my prospective employer that I'm hard of hearing. I do well in lipreading, body language, and ASL. I will ask for accommodations at my desk area once I start working.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Yes, always.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes, I have.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *I used to work as a records clerk. I lost the rest of my hearing in January 2000 and was deaf for 18 months before I finally got my implant April 2001. It was a huge struggle for me while working because as a*

records clerk, I'd get phone calls from customers asking for copies of certain documents. I was not allowed to use my TTY or even use Relay operator. That's when I left for good in July 2002. I tried very hard to make the company understand, but nope!

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? Yes and no, depending on the situation. As I've learned more and more about the ADA laws and terminology, I will ask for my needs clearly and in writing. I make them write down their answers so I'd have proof.

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? My current co-workers are great. I've worked at a center of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for nine years. It is my second home.

What positives have come from having a hearing loss?

I don't hear a thing while sleeping. I can take off my implant when I get migraines. I'm an expert speechreading and use ASL. I've learned many tools on how to communicate effectively among my peers and clients. I'm so thankful for HLAA helping me in my life when I first lost the rest of my hearing. I feel that I'm born in the right time to take advantage of the technology such as CaptionCall phones, nTouch video phone that includes voice-carry over, and Loop Technology in America is getting better and better!

.....

My employer was unable to find a compatible business phone that can use both caption and transfer to other lines in the building. Texting works well on my cell phone for communication, if not too much background the telecoil in my implant helps some and co-workers are very accommodating with assisting with phone calls when I can't understand the person talking on the phone.

.....

I have had severe hearing loss in both ears since childhood. I learned about my loss in my 20s. I wore one BTE for about 35 years and two BTEs for the last 15.

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? Yes, I have always been upfront about my loss.

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? I depend on my cell phone loop (Nokia LPS-5 and three predecessor generations of LPS).

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? Never been a problem. If I misunderstand a question I acknowledge and move on. I have been an interviewer for scores of job candidates, and have given about 240 lectures in my career. I have often given same upfront declarations

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *No. I have asked for more powerful handheld receivers to couple my T coils with.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes. Unusually so given that my hearing loss had much to do with being kicked out of math at age 14.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes. See below.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes: if they know, they often forget. No big deal. Something to laugh about, unless they are ignorant and make jokes about my hearing at my expense.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I listen better, and have had to have good humor about my loss.*

I was once introduced to a prospective candidate by a senior vice president of my firm as: "Meet our candidate, he is 99 percent deaf." I was a senior member of staff at the time. I was shocked. I told him later that I would rather be introduced to people with an observation of something other than my invisible disability. How would he like it if I introduced him as, "Meet Dr. Smith, he is fat?" His reaction was to tell me that it was a joke and I should lighten up.

I complained about this incident to corporate management (firm was about 700 people) who appeared not to care. Indeed, corporate management a few weeks later told me to make sure "I had my hearing odds switched on" when I met a client. I complained about both of them to the firm's general counsel. No matter – nothing happened. Ironically a few months later the corporate fellow started to wear hearing aids.

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I have a Speech Adjust-A-Tone Phone amplifier by Hearsay Corp.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *In 2005, I went to corporate headquarters of a large retail business in our area to interview for a position. Although in an interview you are not required to disclose your disability, I was in a situation with the interviewer that required that I disclose my hearing disability. The interviewer I guess decided she was hungry for a snack and popped herself a bag of popcorn prior to her meeting with me, and then brought it to the interview. She put popcorn in her mouth, put her hand in front of her mouth and then proceeded to ask the question with her mouth full of popcorn. I've never seen anything quite that*

unprofessional, not to mention rude, in an interview ever. Naturally, I couldn't understand her and was being forced to ask for repetition of the question. After the third time, I finally had to explain that placing her hand in front of her face created a problem for me and that as a hearing aid wearer, sometimes I had to rely on lipreading to understand the spoken word. She looked at me as though I had done something wrong when in fact her actions caused the problem and situation. I should have reported her, but didn't want to be perceived as a problem risk by a company where I hoped to be employed.

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Not where I am currently, but at previous employers.*

Have you been successful at work? *I believe I have.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *I haven't had to give up a job, but there were jobs I didn't want to pursue because of my hearing loss, such as 911 Operator being the main one.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Not on an employment level, but there are situations that arise on a more personal, private environment with friends and family, that tend to be more exasperating than when on the job. The words I hate more than anything in an attempted conversation, "Oh never mind," when the other person becomes indignant because they may have to repeat more than once.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Very much so.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *You have a much higher advantage when playing the "selective hearing" game when those who say, "Oh, I'm sorry... I guess I didn't hear you," too are forced to accept that as a real deafness occurrence. That's how I usually "get even" with those who frequently say "Oh never mind."*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *I have been very fortunate that the employers I have worked with were accommodating even before the ADA was law. Phone amplification has always been a necessity in my career in the clerical field and I have always been afforded that. Of course, co-workers learned really quick to stay away from my phone. (Which I guess can be added to the "positives from hearing loss" category.)*

.....

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes - I never hid the fact I wore hearing aids, and needed special telephone devices. As a manager I also let the staff know (team now) I read lips.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I had a special telephone, but that was all.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *For my last job, an oral board was required. I let the human resources know that I was hearing impaired and was concerned I might 'misunderstand' some of the questions. They determined the questions ahead of time - asked the same of all interviewees, and gave me a copy of the questions - just in case. I got the job!*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *I did - once - when I was totally deaf due to loss in right ear and shingles in left which left me with no way to wear my aid. They were more than willing to work with me at meetings, and with staff.*

Have you been successful at work? *I retired as the chief financial officer immediately under the general manager for the department managing more than \$20 million in government grants that were given to the county government.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *Once a long time ago - I had a manager who was not accommodating and intimidated me to the point where I left. I later found out he was fired for discrimination against another person. It taught me that I had to stand up for myself.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Other than the one job - never in the workplace. But many times in personal settings; and when I was a child I had several teachers who thought because I was hearing impaired (deaf - with no aids at the time) that I was (in their words) stupid. They told me when I was a senior that I was not college material - and would never be able to cope with the demands of a college campus. (I graduated Magna Cum and have completed some courses for my Masters.)*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Always.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *It has made me more sensitive to the needs of others - not just with physical disabilities - but with other challenges as well - poverty, emotional problems, coping with life threatening illness or cancer. I have tried to educate people as I go throughout our state with the needs of others. I try to get them to be willing to go the extra mile to help those who are unable to help themselves.*

.....

In response to your inquiry I am sending my experiences of working with a hearing loss. I am self-employed as an attorney that only represents clients seeking Social Security Disability benefits. U.S. Government Agencies are not required to comply with ADA. They are required to comply with the Rehabilitation Act as amended. They refuse to provide me with CART at their

hearings when witnesses for them testify by video or phone. NAD is considering filing suit on my behalf for force compliance. I have been discriminated against by fee cut when a client's hearing was postponed three times for lack of CART. Positives are many; like not hearing the dogs bark when I sleep without hearing aids and cochlear.

.....

Although I am retired (I am 93) I intend to answer this from the viewpoint of a public education teacher.

Yes, my department knew I wore hearing aids, but of course, it wasn't as profound a loss as I have today. It was my students who first suggested that I might be hard of hearing, and therefore sent me to an audiologist.

I never found any discrimination! However, when I retired from public school teaching, and went to a junior college to teach GED, which I did for five years, I made myself resign because I had problems understanding and communicating with students who came from other countries and wanted to obtain their GED.

I had a difficult time understanding them and felt that I owed the students more than I was capable of giving them with my hearing loss. I'm not a candidate for a cochlear implant because I have about 5 percent good hearing in my ears.

It has been about 10-12 years since I taught, and I have regretted resigning, but "that's the way the cookie crumbled."

.....

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *I told my co-workers that they had to get my attention look at me and not talk to me from behind.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? No

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I do say sorry can you repeat that when needed but don't tell them about me being hard of hearing.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Not really, they wouldn't provide anything; it was a nonprofit school that I was working at.*

Have you been successful at work? *Not really because the teachers I worked with would get upset that they had to repeat themselves and they kept trying to get me fired and then they finally did by lying.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? Yes!

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes!*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Only a few were.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I can smell things better (well some stuff I don't really like smelling better... LOL)*

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *No.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *Not an issue.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Yes.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *No.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *No difference.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *All of them.*

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Anyone who knows or has met me in person knows I have a hearing loss.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *For classes, I have an FM transmitter/receiver.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *It is VERY difficult. I have had interviews that I could not understand the interviewer! He did not suggest we write back and forth and I did not think to suggest it.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Yes, to get an amplifier telephone, then later a captioning phone.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes. My boss does not want to let me transfer.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *When interviewing I found a job that I would have LOVED, but couldn't take it as the boss would be hard to understand and potential clients would be hard to understand. Plus using the phone would have been a requirement and I am not comfortable using the phone.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes. Some people avoid me to not have to put up with my hearing loss*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes, they use email and chat to talk to me.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I can take off my aids and I am able to concentrate better without background noise.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *My employer is New York State so they go out of their way to accommodate me, once I prove something will help me, at a reasonable cost.*

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *Captioning phone.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *Luckily I already had my job when I lost my hearing. I can't imagine trying to interview on the phone right now; I don't think I would be successful.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Captioning phone and hearing loop.*

Have you been successful at work? *I think so, my manager and co-workers have been very understanding.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *Not yet.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes, they try to accommodate by meeting in person instead of on the phone.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *Learning all the new technology, learning to be a better communicator.*



And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *Yes, the company I work for has been very accommodating.*



I am a safety professional in the oil and gas industry and am unaware of accommodations being made for anyone with hearing loss in my industry. Asking for those accommodations is believed by many to be instant cause for dismissal. A common myth, which I once believed, is that all field jobs in the oilfield are "safety sensitive" and therefore exempt from the need to provide accommodations. It was not until my husband, an employee of 32 years with an impeccable safety and job performance record, was on the verge of being fired due to his hearing impairment that I learned more.

The Hearing Loss Association of America was my first call, and I am incredibly grateful for the advice and direction I received. My initial focus was to help my husband provide his employer with information and education about accommodations that could easily be made in his workplace to preempt his supervisor from making an uninformed decision to fire or transfer him to an office based on the belief that his hearing loss was a safety risk. We composed a letter to his supervisor (copied to human resources and the safety professional) asking for three specific accommodations, and had the team at the disability law center review it before sending. His requests; to use text instead of cell phone calls; to use a captioned phone for weekly conference calls and to use text transmission capabilities on the satellite phone was an easy and inexpensive accommodation request. I wish I could tell you his letter led to a productive conversation about how each accommodation could alleviate the supervisor's vague concerns, and a grant of this request. The supervisor has chosen to ignore the request, however, and my husband continues to work safely but with the added stress of not knowing from day to day whether he will receive a pink slip. And although the company is clearly on shaky legal ground, my husband does not want a lawsuit – he wants to keep his job, alleviate any concerns others might have, and continue to be a valuable team member. We're in "limbo" while decisions are made behind closed doors.

As a safety professional, this painful process has taught me practical solutions and new approaches to help my clients, their team members, and my colleagues in the safety profession. Too often we are asked to provide expertise focused on the hazards specific disabilities might pose for an employee. Some of us have been led to believe that "safety sensitive" is a trump card allowing us to dodge the issue entirely. With a heavy workload and multiple demands upon our time, it can be easier to focus on the barriers rather than to partner with a team member and collaborate on identifying solutions. I am embarrassed to say how little I knew about the breadth of accommodations that can easily be made for hearing impairment.

As a wife, I am learning how deeply painful it can be for a talented professional to be on the "other end" of a disability hazard analysis, subjected to incorrect perceptions, irrational fears, patronizing attitudes, and stereotypes about "handicapped" people. (Sadly, this term was used). I had never imagined us in the position of living with the stress created by having our future placed in the hands of people who may or may not have the desire to be inclusive, the knowledge that the law requires it, or the willingness to do the right thing. Had I seen my husband's "case" on paper, I might have found it easier to recommend he simply be placed in an office than allowed to remain in the field in a job he loves. I don't know if I would have taken the time to address each specific instance of a potential safety issue and identified how it could be accommodated or why it was not a concern.

It's only mildly comforting to know case law is on our side. (Hearing loss was ruled NOT to pose a direct threat in the *Rizzo v. Children's World Learning Centers, Inc.*, (173 F.3d 254, 257-58, 5th Cir. 1999). The court ruled that Children's Work Day care center had violated the ADA rules when it terminated a bus driver with hearing loss based upon safety concerns without any empirical data in the record regarding her having any driving problems. Previous safe performance of the job was accepted as empirical data that the essential job functions could be, and had been, performed safely.) But very comforting to know the Hearing Loss Association of America is there for us. I joined HLAA to simply learn more about how to communicate with my husband when he eventually loses the rest of his hearing. I have gained so much more than that! We've learned about technology to use at home, legal help, accommodations, new hearing devices, and more. Thank you for the services you provide. I hope write to you again in a few months to tell you my husband's request for accommodation was met and that we are **both** happily employed in the professions we each chose.

.....

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *No, however they would accommodate me if necessary.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I've been fortunate to have positive interviewing experiences. Most interviews are done in an office with only one or two people asking questions. I've never had an issue. If I ever do need to ask them to repeat themselves, I never say "What?", instead I respond "Could you please repeat that question?"*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *In the past I did have to ask an employer to purchase a special headset that allowed me to hear optimally on my work phone.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes, I consider myself successful. I've continued to grow in my field since I graduated college and still have much more growing to do and success to achieve.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *The only time I felt that way was when I was a server at a restaurant. Through high school and college, I was able to do it, however once my hearing loss declined more, noisy environments became more of a challenge. Fortunately, at this point, I was ready for the corporate world, so leaving the restaurant business didn't feel like a loss to me.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Never at work.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes they are great. Sometimes they forget I have a hearing loss, but a friendly reminder always does the trick.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I've learned to overcome challenges, work hard for what I want, and develop my personal mantra of never ever giving up.*

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *No.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *Not an issue at the time.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *No.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes, they know they sometimes have to repeat something or listen to a voicemail message for me that is difficult to 'hear' (understand) due to either pitch or low volume.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *Positives? Sometimes I don't mind the quiet!*

About 10 years ago I told the owner of the company that I was going for a hearing test because I thought I was having trouble hearing and that my wife said that I couldn't hear. He responded, lightheartedly, "You're the only one who doesn't know that!" Two hearing aids later...Yes, I was 'missing out' of lots of sounds, which turns out did not bother me once I heard them again, i.e.,

the crickets, loud trucks, and other annoying background sounds, but missing out on the ‘conversations’ was what I needed to address. Hearing aids help but not 100 percent. Cochlear Implant might be in my future according to my audiologist. My father has one. My mother, deceased, had hearing aids in her 40s...so both parents being ‘hard of hearing’ sort of set the stage for me. And then a stint in the Field Artillery didn’t help matters either.

.....

I was a faculty member and administrator at a major university in New York. As my hearing impairment increased I had more difficulty in large classrooms. I could not tell when a student spoke where the sound was coming from or what they were saying. In my office, I requested and received an amplified phone. Some meetings were more difficult than others if the room acoustics were not good or if the group was large. I depended upon lipreading a great deal to assist me. When I got hearing aids the situation improved and I did not hesitate to tell people that I wore hearing aids.

When I did clinical practice as a nurse I had increased difficulty hearing blood pressures and distinguishing certain sounds in discussions. Visual readings or vital signs were lifesavers for me and for those I cared for.

.....

I just want to write about my experience as a person with hearing loss. I am from Ghana and suffered from hearing loss at the age of 12 years without using hearing aids but despite this problem am the most hardworking and successful among my peers in the community due to my creative talents. My journey is not an easy road because the job as a bartender is not suitable for people with hearing loss due to the high publicities but I managed to adopt some method that helps me going step after step even though it was very challenging and the pressure was too high and even some heartless people will start insulting you because they are not satisfied to repeat every speech they are talking to you because they forget that you are suffering from hearing loss. Today my life is like a fairytale because my hard work is paying off and my best secret is that I like to watch lipreading because it helps me to communicate with everyone I meet but sometimes it’s very difficult but am on top of my own class and a role model for children and even normal people always beg me to learn about my secrets. Finally, my advice to people with hearing loss is that they should not give up on their dreams and try to adopt positive methods even when they think it impossible.

.....

As a full-time special education teacher who requires the use of hearing aids working at the secondary level, my employer and co-workers know I have hearing loss. I sent medical

documentation from my otolaryngologist to the executive director of human resources last year when I was in the midst of collaborating with the school district regarding my request for an assistive listening device. After a year-long wait for a response from my school district, and what made me feel as though I was begging, my request for accommodations was finally approved. I benefit from having tennis balls placed on the bottoms of desks and chairs and an FM listening device that works in conjunction with my t-coil. Unfortunately, the FM device is not the “answer” to hearing my students in the classroom however, it has its advantages.

I have been much more successful at work since I finally accepted my hearing loss in 2006 and purchased my first set of hearing aids. Prior to that, my hearing loss had a negative impact on my job performance but I was able to somewhat “fake” my way. At times, I wonder if I can continue to be an effective teacher with hearing loss, especially if I continue to lose my hearing. I am considering my options however, I am hopeful I won’t need to leave my position as it is a scary prospect, especially because I have been a teacher since 1997.

At times, I have felt discriminated against because of my hearing loss, especially when my formal requests for accommodations was ignored by my employer and it took my seeking the counsel and advocacy from my employer to move things in the right direction. Sometimes, I feel as though my colleagues believe I am not as capable of fulfilling my job responsibilities due to my hearing loss and I believe this is due to lack of education and false beliefs about people with disabilities. I am fortunate to have a co-teacher who is sensitive to my hearing loss and will repeat back what students say in the classroom when I am struggling. I can’t say I believe this is something many of my colleagues would have the patience to do. On various occasions, I am forced to leave work early to attend to malfunctions that occur with my hearing aids which I feel has a negative impact on my ability to effectively fulfill my responsibilities.

The positives that have come from my hearing loss are learning that I can overcome personal and professional barriers and the opportunity to meet wonderful people through the HLAA chapter meetings and conventions. Unfortunately, financially, hearing loss specifically, the cost of hearing aids has had a negative impact on my ability to save in comparison to my hearing colleagues however, I am grateful for the technology that has enabled me to remain a full-time working member of the community.

.....

Although there are certainly times of frustration when I can’t hear very well in a large group, for the most part my hearing loss is just a matter of fact aspect of my life and not a major focus on my days.

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes, everyone with whom I work knows I have a hearing loss.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I have an FM transmitter that I use during meetings or when I am talking to someone with a very soft voice.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I have not had a job interview in years and when I did 40 years ago my hearing did not pose the serious challenge it does now.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *There has never been a need. I do have an amplified phone, but that was very matter of fact and I did not have to invoke ADA*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes, I have accomplished a great deal*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *I did have to modify the things I did. I am a clinical psychologist and I stopped doing therapy because I had trouble hearing what people were saying. I specialize in the treatment of autism and I realized I could no longer hear the tiny voices of young children. So I stopped working directly with them and instead supervised the staff members who treat them.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *No, not discriminated against. But I am lucky because I had already established a very good reputation in the university where I work.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Very. They all speak up when they talk to me. I am also skilled at reading lips and of course have two very top of the line hearing aids.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *Respect and understanding for people with the broad array of other functional challenges.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *The university where I work has certainly been supportive.*

.....

I am a retired elementary school teacher. Midway through my career I realized I had age-related hearing loss, even though I was only in my forties. My grandfather and aunt also had early hearing loss. I did get hearing aids, but they were uncomfortable, and were the kind that went completely in my ear, so I often forgot them accidentally on purpose. Eventually my hearing got worse and I got the behind-the-ear kind and I wear them much more often. Since children are so curious, they would ask me about them, and I would explain they were like glasses to help me see better. I also let the parents know because it was very difficult for me to hear on the school phone system. I would often have to ask for repeats, and voice-mails had to be listened to over and over, especially if they left phone numbers because people tended to say them very fast. So I asked parents to communicate a different way if possible. Eventually I

asked the principal for a telephone that was for those with hearing loss and could be made to go much louder.

Since the hearing difficulty became apparent when I already had a job, interviewing for another job hasn't been an issue. Co-workers were helpful, sometimes teasing, but accepting. Sometimes listening to children read could present problems when I was trying to distinguish small sounds from small voices, and I would ask the reading specialist to help out. Having hearing loss has helped me realize other people may have hidden disabilities. I often have to rely on others to restate things for me in restaurants and other public places. As a result of all this, I often analyze the sound-environments I find myself in, and let others know what could improve them possibly, as a casual remark.

.....

It is very interesting that I got this survey now. Briefly, I was most likely born deaf in my left ear, went to regular public schools, got my first hearing aid in the 9th grade, went to college and got my degree in radiology (x-ray), have been working at my present job for 29 plus years. Four years ago I lost all my hearing in my right ear and got a Cochlear Implant. Then over the last 12 months or so, my boss started to harass me (for lack of a better term) at work about my hearing or lack of it. Even though there were no complaints against me, my boss said that I was a hazard to my patients because of my hearing loss. They even tried to terminate me due to my hearing loss, (got a lawyer, still in litigation so cannot say much more on that) was reinstated, and I now have a "pocket talker" and use of a captioned phone to use at work. I now work on second shift and all is well, at least for now. I have never let my hearing stop me from doing anything with the exception of talking on the phone (I hate the phone!). So the bottom line here is that for me, I have had a good life with very few bad moments due to my hearing loss. The age of 60 is knocking at my door. Get me to retirement and I will be a happy camper (and I do like to go camping!!).

.....

I've been hearing impaired most of my life, with a profound loss in both ears. Using two BTE aids, I told myself I could hear "just fine." The reality was that was only true in very limited circumstances, and my job was limited to anything but. Basically, I couldn't hear on the phone, yet my job did require regular calls. Group meetings were also difficult, bordering on nearly impossible during cross-chatter or whenever laughter was present. I couldn't even hear my fingers tapping away on the keyboard.

When I began my current job two years ago I was still in the "I'm fine, this is no problem" mindset. I work as a web designer and developer, so most of my time is spent on the computer, which was great. It was quiet...visual...the work itself couldn't be compromised by my poor

hearing. However, one big part of my job involved meeting with clients to ascertain their needs. Face to face, it was difficult, though not impossible. Email, no problem. However, many preferred to use the phone. I dreaded those calls...long and unpredictable, full of crucial information I needed to do my job successfully. You can only ask someone to repeat themselves so many times before you feel like an idiot. I started making minor mistakes here and there that wouldn't have happened if I had been able to hear. One day, I decided to do something about it, and in doing so solved a lot of problems for myself. I mentioned casually that a CapTel or similar phone that converts speech to text would help me handle phone calls. The response was overwhelming! Co-workers from all over my department came together to support me and make it happen with alacrity, and when technical difficulties prevented the first phone from functioning, my managers, IT professionals, and representatives from CapTel were on site every day working to solve issues. It took a rewiring of the room I'm in and two phone upgrades to get it all in place, and never once did anyone question whether it was worth it. Today, I have somewhat improved hearing due to a CI in one ear, but I still use the CapTel phone to do my job.

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *Yes, ALDs for use in staff meetings that were being held in cavernous auditorium without use of PA system. I am also requesting use of recording device during 1:1 meetings with supervisor.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Yes. After 37 years of teaching, I needed to ask for ALDs during staff meetings held in cavernous auditorium (people spoke from everywhere). Before I requested ALDs (when I was repeatedly raising my hand to ask that something be repeated), I noticed snickering of others - not especially insightful, as these were all special education teachers. At the time, since this was the first time I was using the ADA Title I (in 2009) I had no clue how 'the system' worked. I asked three separate administrators - over nine months - for ALDs. I put one request in writing during a staff meeting, citing the ADA Title I, what a 'reasonable accommodation' is, etc. It was entirely ignored. Finally when I asked why my request was ignored, I was retaliated against. Months later (and wiser) I asked top administrators questions about ADA Title II ('who is the ADA Title II coordinator?') I was told they didn't have (or need) one, and I can't ask because I am an employee. I told them I can ask, they need one, and if they don't have one, they could lose all federal funds. A week later, they hired someone and emailed me her name.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes - in getting an accommodation but there is much prejudice. The 'system' has nothing in place re: disability awareness on a par with racial or ethnic diversity initiatives. NOTHING.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes, I would add "because of your disability" (for me - Moebius syndrome - congenital oculofacial paralysis) and because I identify strongly as a person with a disability. I became a teacher before the ADA - prior to entering teaching I was told NOT to become a teacher (because of disability). Then told to become a 'special ed' teacher. I did neither, and taught (successfully!) for 21 years in Lutheran schools. I decided to enter public 'special' education... In my FIRST textbook, I read that my disability ('rigid or frozen facial expression') was regarded as 'undesirable' (literally - in a chart!) by well known special education authors. I wrote them a rather terse letter - they published my letter in their next edition! Fast forward to 2013 - Educational historian Kate Rousmaniere researched "history of educators with disabilities"... and found essentially none (no political identity as teachers with disabilities, unlike other minority groups). The largest 'special' education professional organization - Council for Exceptional Children - has a caucus group (no journal, no research) of 'educators with disabilities'. TASH *has* self-advocacy ... this topic (need for first-person 'educators with disabilities' is PRECISELY what I will be discussing during a workshop at the conference in December.*

I filed a successful federal complaint and the special ed school got ALDs as well. I doubt the teachers ever used them for the kids. I wonder how many public schools even know what an ALD is (or can direct parents to the ADA Title II coordinator if they ask about it).

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *Greater awareness re diversity... positive traits - empathy, compassion, need for advocacy. But these are characteristics that come to others with their own diverse disabilities as well.*

PLEASE NETWORK --- develop cross-collaborative efforts with other disability rights organizations on this. CAFE TA center (in Florida) has developed an awesome workshop on cross-collaboration that was shared at last year's "Alternatives 2012" conference. I will be leading a caucus group on education/advocacy at this year's "Alternatives 2013" conference being held in Austin, Texas. There is a strong Deaf/deaf presence ... someone videotaped information re: conference in ASL. All large group gatherings will have CART. All attendees were asked about accommodations needed.

The ADA in schools???? HA!!! I have recently connected with MANY teachers who have asked for reasonable accommodations (such as being able to eat a snack at some time outside of lunch because of diabetes, or needing some alternative to physically signing in at a school building far removed from classroom because of MS (school's alternative was to drive over to other building); even requesting that a bathroom on the second floor remain open during

weeks prior to school starting so that teacher with diabetes could use that bathroom rather than walk a distance away while spending her own time to set up her room) NOBODY IS LOOKING AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS' RESPONSIBILITIES RE ADA. NO ONE.

In 2015, the ADA will turn 25. The *Disability Studies Quarterly* will be devoting an entire journal to the ADA. I proposed that the journal consider writing about the ADA within public education. The editor wrote back that this is a very relevant topic...

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I have a CapTel phone at work but my implant allows me to communicate effectively in most face-to-face situations at work.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *It was good. I explained I had a hearing loss and that I needed them to speak clearly and slowly. If I didn't fully understand a question, I asked that it be repeated.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *No. I have asked for accommodations but my supervisors have been very good about providing it without me citing any authority.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *Yes. Prior to getting a cochlear implant, it was extremely difficult. Honestly I'm not sure I can do my job now without my implant.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Not at my current job but I have interviewed for jobs where I just knew I wasn't going to get a fair shot because of my hearing loss. I could tell they had made their mind up within the first few minutes and the rest of the interview was just to humor me.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I can focus very easily as I have the ability to tune out background noises. I'm a better listener than most as I'm not relying solely on just hearing, but really listening to what is being said to me. And I think I'm better at reading non-verbal cues, as sign language emphasizes this and lipreading is mostly about non-verbal cues. So I'm able to see the underlying meaning behind the words being said, which can really be valuable at times.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *My current employer has been terrific so far. I don't know if they are especially accommodating (compared to who or what standard?) but they do want to increase diversity and understanding among its workforce and has made efforts toward this.*

.....
I have had a sensorineural hearing loss since the age of 6. I'm over 50 years old.

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I use ClearCaptions.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *Most of the time it is not fruitful.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *No.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Sometimes. They forget or don't understand.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I can tune out my wife when she gets mad!*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *I noticed that larger companies or corporations tend to do more to accommodate than smaller ones (like the one I'm in now.)*

I would like to add that every situation is different; every employer, manager or co-worker is.

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *My employer knows because I told them about my hearing loss and they also knew because I went through the process to get new hearing aids.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I have been designated "functionally deaf" and I use a loop with my cell phone and an amplified attachment on my work phone.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I find it very difficult to interview for a job with my hearing problem. I never know what to say or what I can say in regards to my hearing loss. Sometimes, I will mention it when asking for a question to be repeated but most of the time I do not say anything because I do not know what I can say or ask about.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *I have asked about this in the past. I am currently sharing an office with someone so I almost have to make sure that she is off the phone when I am on the phone. I am not sure that I would receive anything more than what I have right now for accommodations.*

Have you been successful at work? *I am not sure that I can classify myself as successful, but I have a job and I am trying to better myself.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *I am not sure about this question, but I can honestly think that there have been jobs that I have been more than qualified for that I did not get and I suspect that my hearing [loss] had a part in the matter. I also realize that is difficult to prove, but it is a feeling.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes and no. I believe that the person that I share an office with is sensitive as well as my bosses but as for the rest of the staff, no.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I am not sure that I have a positive from having a hearing loss. I am finding out information regarding my hearing loss now that I wish I knew 20-25 years ago and I am sure I would have a different answer.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *No*

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes and they have asked my employer to do a work assessment to assure I had all I needed to do my job.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *Yes - I have a streamer that is used with my digital hearing aids at meetings, conference calls as well as one-on-one that has accessories to assist in conversations. I also have a CapTel phone for all incoming/outgoing calls.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I have been with the same agency since 1990 so I have not interviewed in a while.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? See the above response. *They have paid for whatever was not covered by my employer.*

Have you been successful at work? *Very much so and they have accommodated me even with further losses of hearing over the years.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *I have questioned if I am up to par due to circumstances that I felt I have been involved in and my lack of hearing jeopardize different situations.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Not at work.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Definitely in most situations.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I always say I am fortunate as viewing differently and in the human service field that I work in my experiences have benefited those around me.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *Yes. They have been awesome!!! There are three of us who they have accommodated with hearing loss issues. They accommodate any concerns that any of their employees have! I am so fortunate and lucky!!!!*

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Presently I am not working. Earlier, I never allowed them to guess about my problem.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *No.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I avoid allowing my audience to know about my problem.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *No. I had never asked for any such accommodation. At the same time, I live overseas.*

Have you been successful at work? *Not much.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *No.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *Nothing positive. I somehow manage avoiding to be in an awkward situation.*

.....

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *No.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *No problems.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *No.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *Empathy.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *Not really.*

.....

I am an independent trustee for a municipal public pension. The pension belongs to an association of public pensions. The Association hosts several educational conferences and seminars throughout the year. I have asked, on numerous occasions to have the conferences captioned. For a time the association ignored my request but finally, I was advised it was too expensive and they were not going to caption the programs. My service on the governing board of the pension plan is totally voluntary, that is I am not compensated but at the same time I have a fiduciary responsibility. I probably will resign from the board because I am fearful I might miss an important point that might affect our plan.

.....

All of my work is over the phone. I use hearing aids but they don't always help. Some people at work are helpful but some can be abusive. It is not up to co-workers to aid me. If you have a disability you learn how to fit in. I have always enjoyed success because of my abilities but that can cause jealousies. You can't afford an ego attitude and become a team player. It works with most people.

.....

I have Ménière's disease. I had my first vertigo attack the summer before I started graduate school. I finished my Ph.D. and started working. About 10 years later my hearing suddenly worsened in both ears. I purchased hearing aids and ALDs so I could function. Fortunately the work of a clinical psychologist is typically done in an office with the door closed and the patient sits nearby.

I was very fortunate. Psychologists are ethically bound to consider each individual as a person and to not discriminate. My supervisors, and colleagues were both ethical and helpful. Never did any supervisor suggest I could not do my job. I suspect they trusted me to tell them if I was unable to function and needed a disability retirement. I requested hearing help with the telephone and that was provided by the medical center. Otherwise I worked hard to create the conditions so I could work. I told colleagues and clients when I had difficulty hearing so they could understand.

I retired after 38 years – 25 years of that was with hearing loss. I continue to work half time training clinical psychology graduate students learn to conduct therapy.

I recently had a cochlear implant – a benefit of my employer's health insurance.

.....

Deafness is, to me, the most debilitating handicap possible in regard to society's perception and response to the one so handicapped. I was born with a unilateral deaf right ear, diagnosed by in 1948. The condition has been problematical my entire life (I'm 72) both socially and occupationally. The sad thing is, even though one may tell others of their problem, that "deafness" is the invisible handicap. I managed to hide or accommodate to my disability but always appeared as the "strange" one; considered "quiet," "introverted," "retarded," "stuck-up," "shy." While my parents knew, they didn't comprehend how to deal with it so we just accepted it and moved on. Well, that worked well enough except my social interaction was terribly impacted, even more than I realized. My "good" (left) ear has deteriorated over the years to the extent I must utilize a hearing aid that, today, is only partially helpful. My first and second marriage, career occupations, social interactions have been negatively impacted. People consider themselves to be kind and accommodating but in reality they aren't, because they can't see my disability, even when I tell them. I tend to withdraw from social encounters, now, because it is easier. I really have had a good life but nonetheless would gladly have had a more visible handicap in place of "deafness," should He have given me a choice (knowing what I know now). You need to initiate and work hard to develop improvements in society's perception and acceptance of hearing impaired folks.

.....

My employer and co-workers do know I have a hearing loss. I did not put in for reasonable accommodations under ADA because I was told, actually warned, that they would have to contact my driver's license bureau and do assorted other tactics. But, I found out, not from management, that I could get a low-cost device on my phone to make the voices louder.

I believe I am successful at work, but I do miss out on conversations because my co-workers will talk, between cubicles or to each other, not concerned that though I hear them, I don't know quite what they are saying. I've made it clear to them that I need to be looking at them most of the time to know what they are saying, even with my hearing aids. I don't answer our door because my cubicle is far from the door, and I don't hear when people knock. I suggested a buzzer or even a door clacker, but it would take too much to get this. I work for a government bureaucracy. There is a deaf person who works in another area. He came already knowing the job. I doubt that he would have learned the job at our location. He came from another location where he learned the job. I would say that my co-workers in general are not sensitive to my needs. Some are more sensitive than others. But on the whole the culture is not of sensitive, caring type of employees. Management prefers verbal communication (I think so they don't have anything in writing for evidence of any miscommunications, lying, ineptitude, favoritism, etc.), but because of my hearing loss, I use that as my reason for writing. Conference calls are sometimes a problem, but I manage.

I enjoy belonging to HLAA and reading your magazine, because I realize I am not alone.

.....

I spent 21 years with a county library system in CA as a librarian. After 15 years the phones at the branch were not working well for me and some staff complained too. My branch manager and I came up with the idea to use my hearing loss as a way to get new phones for the branch.

Personnel from the county were called and they met with my boss and myself. I had to sign forms stating that I had trouble with the phones due to my hearing loss. In a month we received new phones, about eight in all. I could hear a lot better on them but they were not perfect. I still needed to have some staff interpret the caller for me at times, just like they had been doing with the old phones. The staff did not seem to mind helping me understand the caller. My position was that of assistant branch manager. I don't feel that my "interpreters" felt compelled to help me because I was in a higher position than they were. I see getting new phones for the whole branch as a positive coming from my hearing loss, we all benefited.

In later years I was made branch manager when a new director came. He implemented lots of new policies, so I decided to retire. My decision was influenced a little bit by my now being in

charge of the branch which meant increased phone calls and with a hearing loss it was not so easy for me to get someone to interpret for me, especially a possible irate patron!

After my retirement I volunteered at a local public library as a cataloguer for 14 months. A part time catalog job opened up and my supervisor asked me to apply. At that time I asked her if there would be phone work with the position and I said “because as you probably noticed I do have some hearing loss,” she did not say “yes, I noticed you have hearing loss,” she just said, “no, there is not telephone work required with the job.” So I applied and was given the job contingent on a background check and a physical exam. I went for the physical at a medical clinic that also handles back to work for worker’s compensation claims. I was given a hearing test without my hearing aids, of course I failed with my 90 percent hearing loss! They did a second test without my hearing aids, where I was told to face a wall and to let him know when I could hear him as he came up behind me. Well, I failed that also. I felt really degraded by his attitude and lack of knowledge, of hearing loss thinking I would pass the second test. I was told the physical should take about two days to process. Four days later my supervisor had not heard anything. She contacted human resources who said the doctor told them I should not be given the job because I could not hear. My supervisor reminded them that I had been doing the job successfully for 14 months. My supervisor notified the director of the library. He went to human resources and asked them if they had ever heard of the ADA? Two days later I was notified that I could start work. I truly feel that had I not been a volunteer but an outsider I would probably have been denied the job.



Hearing loss closed me out of a job that I wanted as my career many years ago. I was in a Nurse Practitioner Program where I got introduced to medical surgery. I fell in love with the experience and decided I wanted to be an OR nurse. I found a school that had a program just for that but only took 20 students and required testing of applicants. I applied, took the test, and was accepted into the program. That is until they realized I was hearing impaired. Their feelings were that I would be a liability and could possibly endanger a patient’s life with limited communication ability.

My previous nursing program with three and a half years already invested required that I wait a year to return which at the time was eternity. I ended up drifting into medical technology. I was employed in this field for a few years. A change in life's course brought me into the corporate world where I eventually strengthened my educational background with another degree in biochemistry.

I know undoubtedly that I have been bypassed for positions due to not my inability to hear but by others unwilling to do what it takes to compensate for the loss. The biggest hurdle of course communication by phone. This renders a lipreader at a disadvantage, couple that with foreign

accents and you may as well be the foreigner in their foreign country. Compensate with face to face communication, well that requires that they seek you, which is effort and time on their part. Texting, or email too much of their precious time and requires a degree of forethought. Better answer go hire another, preferably male, from their home country and then have them trained by me and impart more than 20 years of experience.

The next biggest hurdle - group meeting. The challenge find Waldo before he finishes his complete thought and fill in the blanks. Option of numerous compensation ALDS answer "What's a loop." I have been given an amplified receiver on one phone by my desk but the phone in the lab does not have one. They do contact me on that to tell me to pick up the other phone. Can't beat that level of consideration.

Having a speech impediment unfortunately to many equates to a lower IQ, yours, not theirs. If they can't understand you there must be something wrong with you.

Sorry to say I have not been ever made aware of a company that has gone to great lengths to accommodate needs of the handicapped, any handicap not just hearing loss.

I have never in my life considered myself handicapped. The best but not the only benefit of a hearing loss is you can make the world go away. I am an avid motorcyclist. I must say being deaf brings new meaning to "just you and the open road." Maybe I will meet you one day on the open road.

.....
So you can qualify my responses to the type of hearing loss you are really targeting, let me tell you that my hearing loss is relatively small. I have a 60 decibel loss on my right side and full hearing on my left.

Most of my co-workers are aware of my hearing loss, and I haven't had any pushback. I have not requested any special accommodation, or notified them at time of hire or interviewing. I have not left a job or felt discriminated against. For about the past six years, I have had a BAHA, but most of my working years before this (about another 16 years) I had the hearing loss.

I have been very successful at work, but have found myself doing certain things to cope. During meetings, when someone is trying to whisper to me, I do need to turn so they are whispering in my left ear (which is why most of them know about my hearing loss). In my cubicle configuration, I insist on a certain side/set-up so my phone is always to the left of my computer. (I guess you could call that an accommodation.) In meetings or group lunches (before my BAHA), I hurried to be one of the first to the table to grab a chair where everyone else would be in front of me or to my left. Still, I would find myself after a client meeting asking my co-workers what the side conversation was down at the other end of the table.

I have had a growing hearing loss all my life, and learned to cope with it as I grew up. When I was about 30 years old, a salesman pointed out to me how he could tell I had a hearing loss (generally, the way I held and turned my head), and I had never noticed it before. That's when I started paying attention to the coping mechanisms I had developed. Now that I am older, and those around me are older, I am seeing others with these coping mechanisms. I haven't told anyone yet, but there are certainly people around me with subtle unknown hearing losses. The only two positives I can think of are being able to alert others to hearing loss and being able to relate to the occasional client who has a hearing loss.

.....
People aren't very patient with hard of hearing people, that includes employers. I wear a hearing aid that has a microphone (receiver) with it.

Yes I've felt that I had to give up a job due to hearing loss.

There are no positives that have come from having a hearing loss.

There aren't too many places that want to hire hard of hearing people.

A couple of years ago I attempted starting a local chapter of HLAA with guidance and the help of my audiologist.

I had hoped to help others as well as myself. We've had four meetings so far but we are not considered a chapter until we have more people involved.

.....
I lost my hearing in my right ear 10 years ago. I also had a slight loss in my left ear. For three years I worked with single sided deafness. I am a corporate trainer. I train staff members on orientation and their specific job training. Losing my hearing proved challenging. Luckily my employer was very understanding and I was able to continue doing my job. After three years, I was fortunate enough to have insurance that would cover a cochlear implant and qualified medically. This has enabled me to continue working.

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes, my direct manager and the immediate team I work with know about my hearing loss and that I have a cochlear implant. Beyond that, employees in other teams do not.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I have a CaptionCall phone and a headset that is T-coil compatible. My employer paid for the headset. I obtained the CaptionCall phone on my own. I work from a home office, therefore a great deal of communications are conducted via phone and email.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *When interviewing I do not disclose my hearing loss to prospective employers.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Not until recently when I had to add a hearing aid and needed to request the T-coil headset.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes, for the most part I have had supportive managers and team mates to work with.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *Yes, I worked for a large credit card company that once I had to take some time off for my cochlear implant surgery I was treated differently. I was treated poorly by my manager and that trickled down to some of my team mates as well. I was separated from the rest of the group and treated like I had a contagious disease. It created a hostile work environment and I chose to leave because of it.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes, see the experience above.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *The co-workers that I had when I first lost my hearing 10 years ago and those that I work with now are wonderful. They do not make an issue of my hearing loss and at the same time have patience when I need something repeated or clarified.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I am more aware of how we communicate with others and the lack of eye contact at times. So for me, I make a point of making eye contact more with people. I find that this makes communicating much more positive.*

.....

My employer, a large city department, is aware of my hearing loss and has vigorously fought any of my requests for accommodation. I have been there many years and have yet to get a phone with captioning. They have given me a phone with an attached volume control which of course magnifies all the background noise. Theoretically after having a meeting with various people and my own lawyer, paid at my expense, I should be getting a captioned phone. I'll believe it when it is on my desk and useful. This round has been going on since 2010 when they pretty much wanted to discipline me for being uncooperative at working in an area which requires phone usage. That issue was dropped eventually but I still don't have the technology to manage work with phone calls. Theoretically two locations in the system have various technology for hearing impaired but one seemed to have been installed incorrectly when that location opened a couple of years ago and the other just seems hopelessly incorrect. I certainly can't prove it, and I don't think it was the only factor but I gave up trying to advance in my system at least somewhat because of my hearing. Most co-workers know and at least tolerate the fact I can't handle regular phone. Many are quite sympathetic. Several have said to me that

they can't believe the system is fighting me so much on my request for a captioned phone and a meeting area where I can hear what is being said by participants. No, I am not successful at work but for several reasons, not just the hearing [loss].

.....
I work for the state and they quickly responded when I requested a CapTel phone. My office has a switchboard and they did not want it to connect to it. It took almost a year to get it working. I'm under the impression the telephone company did not want to ask an outsider how to install it. They finally installed a separate phone line, which only provided captions if I made the call. After about a year they installed a second line and now it works great. I think CapTel may not have provided instructions for companies with switchboards and a government and company computer systems on how to ensure security.

.....
I retired after 41 years of teaching at a college almost three years ago. I have early onset hearing loss inherited from my mother, which began to be a problem in my 40s (I'm now 69). I got my first analog hearing aids in 1997 (digitals were not yet advanced enough); my first digital hearing aids in 2004, and then open fit hearing aids in 2008. My hearing loss has progressed from mild to moderately severe, and even with support from the college, including purchase of technology, it had become too exhausting. If I lectured, of course, it would be different. My teaching was all in small discussion classes at a small liberal arts college, and as you probably know, discussion situations are the most challenging to deal with, especially when teaching first year students. I struggled horribly until I finally found an audiologist who explained hearing loss to me in a way in which I could understand what was happening to me and why. This was a real turning point. I would have had to quit teaching several years earlier except for her help finding and learning to use appropriate technology. I wrote a letter to students at the beginning of each semester explaining my hearing loss and how we would work with a sound field system and three handheld mics which they passed around. This turned out so well that students discovered the benefits. (I've written an article about this.) I did very well because I told everybody about the problem, explained what I needed from them, educated them about my hearing loss, and required them to use technology that enabled me to hear.

Yes I asked for accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the college responded very well, and supported my exploration with my audiologist of what technology to try out first.

I felt discriminated against before I understood hearing loss better and became proactive in explaining what I need in order to participate fully. Inevitably there are situations in which it simply isn't possible for me to hear well-enough. People try to be sensitive but it takes them

away from the action too. I've learned to enjoy other aspects of being in such situations, and seek out one-on-one conversations.

Colleagues who know about my hearing loss have been very supportive. The director of the core program is the person who suggested I try the Indian "talking stick" approach with mics. I had gone in to tell him that I was resigning and he encouraged me to try this first.

Many positives, including some mentioned above. I'd add that I've learned to listen differently, and not just for speech. I'm currently working on an essay about this.

I hope these comments are useful and would like to hear more about your project.

.....

Yes, there are only two jobs that I have worked where my employer and/or co-workers knew that I have a hearing loss (my hearing aid is clearly visible to anyone). Given that all should see that I have a hearing loss, there was no assumption on their part that I may have needed accommodations for my hearing loss. In my past years, I assumed that this was my fault for not being more vocal on this issue.

I feel like that I was behind the "times." The only accommodations that I enjoyed were the use of ASL Interpreters. I was not aware of CART or other listening devices. It is not until I became a member of HLAA that I now have more familiarity of such devices. I have never had ASL Interpreters or any type of listening devices (other than my hearing aid) when interviewing for a job. I did this once and it was probably too late since I was terminated from my job, after requesting for reasonable accommodation under the ADA.

I feel I was successful at a work environment mainly at places where there were others with hearing loss, like myself.

There was one job, where I chose to give up this job due to my hearing loss. It involved working with the public in the private sector. The job I chose to give up was due to what I now know was my being discriminated for my hearing loss.

In hindsight, I now make sure that I have my hearing loss addressed. Any action of this sort does seem to encourage my co-workers to be sensitive to my hearing loss. I feel it is necessary to educate my co-workers of my hearing loss. So far I feel that my actions do generate more sensitivity with my co-workers of my communication needs.

The positives I have due to my hearing loss have been a boon for me - I feel that I am blessed to be born at a time where technological advances allowed me to benefit from hearing aids (which I still wear today).

Finally, as to the question to any of my employers who have been especially accommodating, and since my overall work experience has been in the field of social work, I have found that it seems that the government sector seems better in terms of accommodation for hearing loss,

than within the private sector jobs. It would be ideal, if one does not have to be tortured with explaining their own hearing loss and how to best explain what accommodations would be best to resolve this issue.

.....

I had enjoyed more than 20 years of teaching students with moderate mental disabilities in my former job. I began to feel pressure as my hearing declined. I taught in a co-op [12 school districts] and after teaching in one school district for 20 years, my program was moved to a district 25 miles further away. I later heard from a former principal that the director of the co-op and the psychologist for the corporation I had worked in made the comment that I would never drive that far. I did and I asked for and received accommodations for the classroom. Later, I learned there was a position open in the corporation I had left. A former paraprofessional told me and said that the psychologist had asked that I not be told of the position. She told me about it and I did get it, but it was downhill from there. Evaluations consistently stated, "Linda did not hear this or that." I was cited for things the teacher across the hall had in her classroom – a decoration hanging over the swing set was considered dangerous in my classroom that could only be touched when a student tried to reach for it. The teacher across the hall had a decoration in the hallway that hung low enough that people had to bend over to get under. No mention of her decoration being a hazard.

The worst thing that occurred my final year was during a conference with a parent and the psychologist. At one point during the conference, the psychologist asked the principal who had been taking notes to read over what had been said while asking me to complete a form. Once we were both done, the psychologist turned to me and asked in a loud voice, "Did you hear what she said?" I said I had not since I needed to look at the person talking. The psychologist then said, "I can do both! See?" I was so devastated I could not return to the classroom that day. I finished out the year, but at the end was told by the local teacher's association that the district wanted me to resign and apply for disability. I was 48 years old at the time. I contacted a lawyer and by mutual agreement I resigned. I did not apply for disability. My confidence in teaching though was at an all-time low. I started the next school year as a substitute in a local district. I requested classrooms where there were assistants as I didn't trust my ability to be successful without another person in the room. Whenever I subbed, I was told how well I did and my ideas and strategies were well received. I was hired for one year. The following year, I was hired in my current position.

I am currently a teacher for deaf and hard of hearing students and students with orthopedic disabilities. My employer knows I have a hearing loss. For the most part, my experience in this job has been positive. At times, there is a fear of losing my job due to my hearing loss. I

continue to have moments where I immediately feel sick to my stomach if I am criticized about something and I worry I am not good enough.

I wish I could say my students all respond positively and wear their hearing aids consistently, but that would not be true. The one thing that does happen though is that students don't say, "You don't understand." They see someone with a disability who is successful and being respected by staff. Parents seem to listen a little more because of my hearing loss and realize I can understand what their child is experiencing when trying to use hearing aids for the first time after going without [it] for years. I always encourage students and families to seek out organizations that work with hearing loss. I tell them that I have kept current with technologies and research and I am passing the torch to them to continue to learn and be knowledgeable in regard to their hearing loss.

I have requested CART for one meeting and it was provided. I feel I have been successful in this job. Surprisingly, some of my co-workers are not as sensitive to hearing loss as I would have expected. There have been derogatory comments made during staff meetings. Overall though, I am happy in my current position and am glad I have the opportunity to work with students.

.....

I have moderate hearing loss in the low ranges but actually good hearing in the high range. In my prior job I went to great lengths to conceal my hearing aids but decided not to do that in my present job. I am now very up-front and matter-of-fact about my aids and I wear my Streamer device around my neck and it is very visible. When asked what it is, I tell them it connects to my hearing aids. The streamer works with my office desk phone as well as my cell phone. I did not ask my employer to pay for either device.

My hearing loss has not presented major issues except that I used to (before aids) have to ask people to repeat things much more, and they may have thought I was not paying close attention. I did and still do have trouble hearing in noisy environments such as restaurants and people don't understand that. They also don't understand how I can have a hearing loss but hear certain things well.

A drawback to the assistive phone devices is that I don't have the phone to my ear when I am on the phone, and people don't always realize it when I'm on the phone.

To avoid potential discrimination I did not mention my hearing loss when I interviewed for my present job. When they found out later, they asked whether I was wearing my aids at the interview, and I said yes. I don't know just what they thought about that.

I don't believe my co-workers think much about it one way or the other. My hearing loss has been a "me" issue and not really any effect on my employer or co-workers, except that I still try

to avoid situations where I won't hear well. This has caused some people to see me as unfriendly or unsocial at times.

Having the hearing loss without the aids, it was much different, I had to sit in a certain place in groups so I could hear with my better ear, and I often pretended to hear things when I really didn't. The aids have made a big difference, even with just a moderate loss.

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Indeed. I go out of my way to tell people.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I have used CART in the past. Don't use it much anymore. I now work as a consultant in a variety of settings. It's the company that laid me off in 2009. They now have a beautiful new videoconferencing system that I prefer to use whenever possible for phone meetings so that I can get face-to-face.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *Haven't done an interview in a long time. Generally it's worked well, as interviews are usually scheduled one-on-one in a quiet setting.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Yes. That was how I got CART. I also asked for and received CART when I was pursuing my doctoral studies between 2001 and 2009.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes. Good performance evaluations. Several employee stock option awards. Layoff in 2009 (at age 62) was due to the huge economic downturn at that time.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Not really, although sometimes I feel left out of some social situations.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes. Everyone is comfortable about it and sensitive to my needs. I think my own openness about it puts people at ease. The fact that I use self-deprecating humor about my hearing loss as well as my obvious sense of self-esteem and confidence in my other abilities makes people feel OK.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I am leading a project to help make informed choice possible for parents affected by hearing loss in their children. I think my own hearing loss makes it possible for me to be a role model, and therefore a source of hope, to such parents. It also adds to my credibility when dealing with people in the executive and legislative branches of my state's government.*

.....

After teaching elementary PE for more than 23 years I started experiencing negative feedback from my administrators. I was traveling to a school where the acoustics were horrible. I asked for help. Administration responded by letting me spend a day traveling to all of the elementary gyms to listen and then review/rank the gyms according to my experiences hearing there. That was it. Over the course of the next several years I started to get warnings, negative evaluations and just harassment in general. At the advice from a couple of my colleagues I hired an expert lawyer. Her view was to educate the administrators on hearing loss and ask for accommodations hoping this would stop their actions against me. There were two main administrators involved...the district human resources director and my school principal.

The human resources director refused to do anything. He started saying that I was a good teacher and that I didn't need any help. However, the warnings, negative evaluations and harassment from him and my school principal continued over the next 2.5 years. My lawyer was stunned and said in all of her years she has never come across anybody who absolutely refused to accommodate an employee. She told me she has represented in thousands of cases over the years. Finally the administrator put it in writing when contacting my lawyer that he would not accommodate me. That pretty much was the start of the end to this saga.

My lawyer and I submitted four pages worth of accommodations and requests that we wanted to settle this case. Included were sound baffles on the ceiling, sound absorbing mats on the walls, special mirrors in the corners, a special button on the wall that the students would press whenever somebody got injured, amplified telephone, and even "sensitivity training" for the human resources director himself in regard to people with hearing loss and other disabilities. Many of our requests were suggested from a vocational disability specialist from a nearby university. Ironically this vocational specialist was hired by the school district, who originally tried to talk her into suggesting that I move into a different job. After observing me teach however, she saw and realized how much I enjoyed teaching and working with elementary aged students. Thus, she wrote to the school district that they keep me in my same position at my same school as well as suggestions and accommodations for me.

It all came down to one final meeting which was mediated by a judge. If this meeting failed the next step would have been to sue the school district in state/federal court. Upon arriving at the meeting the school district lawyer stated that they were willing to agree to every single request that we asked for. The sound baffles were installed immediately as well as many other things. I taught for another year or two and then happily retired.

If I were to make any suggestions to others who are in a similar position it would be to document everything with dates, times, who was involved, what happened and any witnesses. I was a packrat and kept papers and emails for years. I even found an old email from the physical education director where he mentioned that I was one of the best teachers on his staff. During

the course of all this I would sit at my computer when I got home from teaching and write down everything that might be pertinent to a possible lawsuit. This usually took me one to two hours every night. All told I had two file boxes of documents for my final meeting.

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *Amplified phone handset.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *None, been at same job for more than 20 years.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Yes. Amplified phone handset and a bookcase in front of my cube desk to block noise from a main aisle location.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes as a Geologist.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes. I recently filed discrimination at my job for gender and ADA issues because my fellow colleagues are generally making more than \$10,000 than I do.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Not applicable.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *None that I can think of.*

.....
Reality: Not everyone works in a dry, warm, safe, office or other inside facility.

Problem: No Safety stickers for outside surfaces such as hard hats.

The International Symbol for hard of hearing as a sticker (2 1/2" x 3") is *only* available with adhesive on its face for placing inside a window to indicate that the facility is compatible. They used to be printed on both sides for whatever surface. HLAA does not have them nor does Canada. I had to have my own printed with back-side adhesive. They are on all four sides of my hardhats (plural: three different types).

Safety: I do gardening and small farm work and volunteering. Many times when a crew is working in a dangerous and (to my hearing aids) noisy environment (Many voices, power tools, construction) where common communications is safety critical, I self-impose myself out of the danger zone.

.....

I am 71 years old and have had a moderate/severe hearing loss from birth. I did not have the opportunity to utilize the ADA while in school and college. Later it was never something on my 'radar screen' while I worked. I never had anyone talk to me about requesting "reasonable accommodations." I didn't even really know what that meant for me.

I have been a member of HLAA from probably the beginning and read the magazine cover-to-cover and read about HAT but really didn't associate it with something that could help me. Oh, I purchased an amplified telephone, smoke alarm, doorbell signalers, and alarm clock. But it never occurred to me that I could use some assistance at work.

At work and socially I always let people know I was hard of hearing. Until my most recent job, no one understood what it meant to be hard of hearing and the implications. I got myself into some pretty uncomfortable issues and environments. And I left one job due to stress and anxiety. I was a wreck.

However, at my last job (11 years at a large corporation) my supervisor had a hearing loss and a deaf sister. My life turned around because it was "okay" to be hard of hearing. During my annual ergonomic assessment I complained about my telephone headset – it was so uncomfortable when you wear BTE aids. He encouraged me to find a solution. That was when I discovered the telephone neckloop which the company bought for me. I had recently purchased new hearing aids and a personal FM. My supervisor asked me to talk to my co-workers about my "Assertive Listening Gizmos." It snowballed and I became a corporation-wide mentor and I spoke to 150 ergonomic assessors – training them to be watchful for persons with a hearing loss. I received a call from a sibling corporation asking for help with an employee. I was amazed at the number of people who spoke to me. Many had tried to get accommodations or even just understanding – 'please face me when you talk to me,' etc. to no avail. Mostly the culture was not Deaf/hard of hearing-friendly.

As a lifelong hard of hearing person I finally learned the benefits of being assertive about my hearing loss. I was empowered by the environment to talk about my gizmos – that helped me more than I could have imagined. No one was available for me when I needed it; I wanted to change that for others.

Enter John, an engineer and a new employee who is Deaf. We worked in an extremely secure environment. His hiring supervisor had the vision they would just get him some technology and Scott would be 'Good to Go.' It has been more than two years and they are still dealing with legal, human resources, and IT to provide accommodations. The secure electronic firewalls are difficult to penetrate. An ASL interpreter is the only option at this time. Even this is difficult due

to the engineering dialog and the technical nature of his work. He cannot take required training courses; understand group meetings unless there has been time to get an interpreter, etc. There are so many issues. This enormous corporation with its various sibling companies has no policy in place to deal with the Deaf/hard of hearing.

Due to the reduction of government military spending, I was part of an involuntary workforce reduction and I am no longer at the company. I am sorry I cannot be part of their solution to provide support for the Deaf/hard of hearing community and just hope they are still moving in the right direction.

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *(See dialog above)*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *Only a neckloop*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *Tricky but I usually can pull it off OK; I also have worked with the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Not until just a few years ago (see dialog)*

Have you been successful at work? *Not until my last job.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *Yes*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes!!!*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Not until my last job and they were wonderful*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *The chance to help others who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing.*

One of the key things I learned – we MUST ADVOCATE for ourselves

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *I own and operate a wine shop I purchased earlier this year – my staff know about my hearing loss.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I use only hearing aids.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I’ve had only occasional difficulties during job interviews and am not sure how much they’ve affected those interviews.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *No.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes, but it’s been a challenge at times in the recent past, as a consultant, trying to engage in networking at industry gatherings, and interacting with colleagues.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *No.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Yes.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *My staff are somewhat sensitive to them.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *I can help my young daughter to better understand how to protect her hearing and how important it is.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *No.*

.....

I have been singled-sided deaf on my left side for 10 years (due to the surgical removal of an acoustic neuroma), and I also have tinnitus on both sides.

Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I wear a BAHA BP100. It helps somewhat, but will of course never give me even close to normal hearing (since I no longer have a working cochlea or auditory nerve on my left side).*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I have been on interviews recently, and have experienced some difficulty with communication.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *No.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *Yes. I feel that I've been turned down for jobs due to my hearing loss, and I sensed that the interviewers just weren't being honest with me, as they gave other unsupported excuses for denying me the position to protect themselves.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Not so much openly discriminated against, but left out of communications and conversations. At times, people communicating with me are bothered and annoyed when I either can't hear/understand them,*

or respond inappropriately to what they're saying - yet they make no effort to remember that they need to speak to me where I can see their face, more clearly, or on my right side - which would make things better for all of us.

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? I'm sure that they would like to think so, but they often speak to me while walking away, talk very fast while slurring their words together, or think that I can hear them if they're talking to me on my left side etc. Hearing loss is an invisible disability. When people are asked to speak louder and more clearly, they sometimes do, but almost always only for the next two to three words.

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? It has helped me to see myself with more of a sense of humor. Some of the people I work with gossip and/or use foul language, so it's a good thing in those instances that I often don't hear what are obviously inappropriate or off-color conversations.

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? I sure wish I did.

.....

I work in a machine shop as a tool and die maker. Much of what I do there is to make or modify machines, machine parts, and tooling for the manufacturing department of the facility. Good communication skills are critical in this environment and, as someone with an "invisible" disability like SSD, it is often difficult to get much, if any, cooperation from co-workers. For example, when I don't understand a particular sentence, I'll repeat what I think I heard, even if it makes absolutely no sense, and I'll often get a response like, "Yeah, that's right." I can spend days, or even weeks working on a project based on someone's communication of a need for me to design and build something for them. It is imperative that I understand people's needs and desires before I undertake the project, and yet those same people seem unwilling to work with me to ensure that their directions are correctly understood.

I feel "stuck" at my current job even though I would like to relocate to the southeast (SC or TN). The development of the acoustic neuroma and its subsequent surgical removal and hearing loss in my left ear occurred since I've been employed at my present job, so at least I had good hearing when I was interviewed for this position. I don't think that there are many people who would feel comfortable with taking the risk of hiring someone with a hearing disability to do the kind of work that I do.

.....

Twelve years ago, upon learning that I had hearing loss, and then working through the related emotions, I thought I'd simply get the recommended solution, hearing aids, and quickly get up

and go again in my busy career. I was being promoted into a new role at a national level which would involve lots of travel, interacting with new people, conducting meetings, and lots of excitement! Well, it wasn't long before I started noticing communication issues – misunderstandings, bothersome acoustics, and embarrassment from having to ask people to repeat themselves, to name just a few.

I eventually left that job eight years ago to follow my dream of having my own coaching and training business. Looking back, I realize there was a lot of stress associated with that job, and much of it stemmed from my inability to hear well and not knowing how to get what I needed so that I could hear well.

Yes, I have been successful at work, once I came to terms with the fact that hearing aids are just the first step to better hearing. Relearning communication skills, overcoming embarrassment, becoming more assertive to ask for what I need, and being more aware of my surroundings – seating, proximity to the speaker, handouts for following along, and the use of assistive listening devices - have all helped me immensely along the way.

In hindsight, yes, leaving that last employer was partly related to my inability to hear and communicate well because I lacked the tools and awareness to change at that time.

I've not felt discriminated against, although it's noticeable that some people initially treat me differently when they learn of my hearing loss. However, once I begin speaking and saying outright what I need from them, if anything, I believe I portray the professional, capable person that I am, versus someone with a disability needing special attention.

My colleagues and co-workers are mostly sensitive to my needs, that is, if I choose to tell them or if it's necessary to let them know. Sometimes it takes a few reminders about speaking up or looking at me when talking, or waiting until background noise is less; overall, people in the variety of situations I work in are very kind and want to be helpful.

The positives from this "different-ability" are numerous. It's become a passion of mine over the past few years to create awareness about the growing issue of hearing loss in all age groups who are still in the workplace, and to encourage those with hearing loss to take control and move forward with their lives. I created a website and blog to address hearing loss and communication in the workplace, have spoken to many groups and even wrote a book.

I created a workshop which is approved to give nurses and other health care workers six continuing education hours and next year, will offer it to hearing aid company customers and their family and friends.

I received the Hearing Loss Support Specialist certificate from HLAA in 2011 in order to know even more about this subject!

I think the most important thing for me is that I took this physical loss and turned it around to be something to learn from, improved my own quality of life, and then found ways to encourage others to do the same. I learned the importance of resilience and the power of good communication skills. I know, without a doubt, that anyone with hearing loss has the ability within them to overcome it, follow their dreams, and thrive in life!

.....

I have been working at my job for just over six years. Some of my employers and co-workers know I have a hearing loss. They know I wear hearing aids in both ears. Not all the employers or co-workers know that I have a hearing loss, but they do see that I wear hearing aids. I haven't started to work with most of them, yet. When I work, I don't ask for special accommodations, but I really think, I need like a beeper or FM system, so I can hear when the managers are talking to me.

In interviews, I have to listen very closely when asked a question so I can answer them correctly. Some interviews are easier for me. They just hire me on the spot. My employer requires to complete a drug test before hiring people. A week later, I got hired as an overnight stocker.

I have been very successful at work. I pretty much do everything like stocking, zoning, and binning. I make sure all areas are stocked. I don't like to send things back unless it doesn't fit at all. I like to make sure everything is stocked well so the customers can find what they are looking for. Zoning is pretty much easy work. I bring all the merchandise to the front of the store and make it look like it's full, especially in the grocery department. The managers love how I zone the area and so they have been putting me there ever since. Binning is a lot of work. Managers are always counting on me to go help. Binning is when merchandise doesn't fit in the area. We put them in the back warehouse. The warehouse needs to be kept organized, nice, and clean. I don't have cashier experience at my job because it's a lot of responsibility.

I have never felt that I have to give up my job because of my hearing loss. I am used to it, since I was four years old. I work because I need money for payments, bills, rent, food, etc. I am in college because I want a successful job in my life, something I will enjoy for the rest of my life. I would like to work as a deafness resources specialist someday. I love supporting the hard of hearing and Deaf and their special needs.

Sometimes, I feel discriminated against because of my hearing loss. One time, my supervisor kept calling me and I never turned around. They gave me coaching for it. I told the supervisor that I didn't know he was calling me. He thought I was ignoring him, but I wasn't. I just didn't hear him calling me. Another manager knew I had a significant hearing loss. She asked my other

supervisor, “Did you know that she has a hearing problem?” and “Did you call her closer to you?” She cannot hear you well from a distance, only nearby.

.....

I received a bachelor’s degree in finance from RIT and right out of college went to work as a financial reviewer. I soon realized that I didn’t want to work primarily with numbers—I wanted to work with people. I started hanging out with the human resource people and asking them what they were doing. They told me they were looking at benefits and other related HR issues, and it looked like fun and seemed fascinating. My fellow employees encouraged me to go back and get a master’s degree necessary to work in human resources, so I went back to school and now have a job that allows me to help other Deaf and hard of hearing people be successful in their job searches, and to help employers realize the value of hiring Deaf and hard of hearing people.

During my work experiences, I have learned two important things that have helped me as an employee with hearing loss. First, I have become a strong believer in professional development. I always am looking for new ways to improve my skills, my knowledge and my experience, and I advise others to do the same. Not only does this have value to the individual, but also employers benefit from their employees’ professional development.

Second, I realize the value of having a mentor on the job. One of the best things I did was take advantage of the opportunity to have a mentor. Having a mentor gave me a better understanding of the investment world and its culture and environment. If I was unsure of how to handle a situation or who to ask, I always would see my mentor for advice that helped me make the best decisions and be successful.

At my job, my Deaf and hearing colleagues and I have used our collective HR experiences to develop a program for employers entitled “Working Together: Deaf and Hearing People.” My staff and I present this program on-site at different companies all over the country, and we talk about the need for Deaf employees to advocate for their needs, to have a mentor and to continue to develop their skills and experience. It’s important for employers to understand that

A Deaf or hard of hearing employee brings skills and training to the job; it’s the employers’ responsibility to make the workplace accessible, and to provide the opportunities for employee growth and success. A video we created shows employers the success of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the workplace.

.....

My first career was in management consulting and high-tech marketing, and for the past 20 years that I was in that line of work, I spent a lot of time and energy trying to hide my hearing loss. I faked my way through some meetings, pretending to hear people speaking at the other

end of the conference table, when in reality their words were unintelligible. I wore my hair long, over my ears, to hide my hearing aids. I cringed whenever my aids squeaked with feedback, fearing someone might guess my secret.

Sometimes my policy of hiding my loss required an actual sleight of hand. Once when I was interviewing for a new job, while I was waiting outside the hiring executive's office, the battery in my right hearing aid went dead. Without missing a beat, I deftly pulled a fresh battery out of the pack, inserted it into the aid, and fitted the aid back into my ear just before the executive walked out of his office to greet me.

For years I used to crow about that battery story to close friends and family, as though I were a female James Bond who had narrowly escaped detection. Looking back now, I see in that story something that was sad. Those years when I denied my loss, to others and even to myself, I was in a sense splitting off a part of myself.

Now I am in my second career, as a writer, a speaker, and a performing amateur pianist. My hearing loss does not define me but it is a fundamental part of my identity. When I'm in a situation where I can't hear, I generally tell people about my hearing loss. Often times the accommodations I need are easily achieved: a questioner removing his hand away from his lips, my moving up to the front of the room during a presentation or closer to the speakerphone during a conference call.

Still, it has only been about three years since I've gone public, if you will, and often admitting my hearing loss to people is difficult. Some react to my news with a barely concealed horror, as though I've just reported that my house was engulfed by a tsunami. Other times the difficulty comes from within: I worry people will question how I can perform the piano if I hear, not their rich analog world of sound, but rather digital sound piped through my aids. I worry they will question how I can interpret classical piano music if the top two octaves on the piano sound different to me than they do to people with normal hearing.

But the fact is that although I have a hearing loss, I have a "listening profit." Like many people with a hearing loss, I listen more keenly, more attentively, even passionately. My piano teachers report that my strength as a pianist is my musicality, my ability to hear the music within and to transmit that internal song into sound by way of piano keys. I like to think that every time someone is moved by my playing, I chip away a tiny part of society's stigma against hearing loss.

The stigma against hearing loss is real, but so too is our need to hear. We need to speak up, in one-on-one conversations with co-workers, explaining our situation and specifically what we need. Looking back on my 20-year business career, I wish that I had informed my boss and my

co-workers about that undeniable part of my identity. I might have found work less stressful and experienced more peace within.



Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes, my supervisor and co-workers all know that I have a hearing loss as do some related people who work with us.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *My special accommodations are a CapTel 800i phone, Web CapTel on the computer for conference call meetings, bilateral NoizFree earhooks and just very recently the CLA7v2 battery-powered amplified neckloop.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *I've had two interviews with recruiters in college. The first interview went very well and the interviewer didn't seem fazed upon finding out about my hearing loss. It really helped that a HOH friend coached me through interviews before with prepared questions and answers to anticipate and answer. The second interview was botched by answering one question wrong which I knew immediately. I received a job offer from the very first interview and have been working with that company for more than 24 years now.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Yes. I asked for a printing TTY in the 1990s which was paid for by the company. I also did the same when the older TTY was replaced with a new one. The CapTel 800i phone I insisted on purchasing so that I could take it with me. I want to upgrade to the CapTel 840i. My supervisor tells me yet again that I don't have to purchase this; the company can pay for it, which I may consider this time.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes and have had very good reviews.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *I've not had to give up a job because of my hearing loss. When the whole team was recently put on call for problems on weekends, I was exempted because of the problems trying to communicate with offshore people in a foreign country.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Not to my knowledge.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes, and they are very accommodating and very willing to come to the office to discuss work in person when it warrants it. Otherwise, email, IM and IM with on-screen mode works well as well as captioned phone calls.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *One co-worker said she appreciated her hearing better after meeting me.*

Hearing loss is a refining process for me. When my team changed in 2010 to a program where they could work from home rather than come into the office every day, it was brought to my attention that I needed to address anger/frustration issues related to this due to having to work harder in remote mode with most and often all co-workers working at home. I meet periodically with a counselor for this along with a technique to use to address the frustration. It wasn't an issue when everyone came into the office every day.

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *No answer provided.*

.....
My employer and my co-workers know I have a hearing loss.

I use a microphone which connects with my hearing aid at all times

Interviewing has been very difficult, despite my explaining that I am hearing impaired prior to the interview. The interviewer did not look at me, did not enunciate and actually moved her chair back from her desk during my interview, adding another three feet of distance between us.

I requested that a co-worker wear my microphone when we worked together distributing grades to parents during Parent/Teacher conferences; she refused; 10 minutes later I was relieved of my responsibilities at the conferences.

Yes – with a great deal of effort and patience in communicating with others.

Yes – I worked as a nonprofit agency director for 15 years; my hearing loss made it impossible to continue with this career; at school I am a technical assistant and earn less than half of my previous salary

Yes – often at work I have been discriminated against due to my hearing loss.

No, my co-workers are not sensitive to my hearing loss.

A positive from my hearing loss is that I have problems communicating constantly and I more fully understand the struggles of my English Language Learners.

No, I do not know of any employers who are especially accommodating

.....
I was working with a temp agency and specified that I could not take a job answering the phone. Despite this request, I was assigned to these jobs and got myself into a few pickles, one in a school running not only a phone, but intercom system! The temp agency and the

companies were nice and I did not have to stay the whole day in miserable situations, yet it was a nerve wracking experience for me!

Later I trained to be an aide in rehabilitation therapy and was told I could use an automatic blood pressure machine and not worry about the stethoscope, but I never saw this device during my short time of working there. Luckily, my career did not follow that path.

My job goal was to work in a hospital, yet this soon became a non-reality when I came to terms with my hearing loss and figured I could never work in such environment (i.e., background noise and conversations from a distance). When entering grad school for social work, I chose to focus on the elderly. While I enjoy the population and the challenges they face and what I do to help, the real reason for going that way is because I can usually hear them, and some of them are losing their hearing so we make a sympathetic pair. This route however is not infallible. As an intern I was working with a woman who finally said to me, “you can’t hear a damn thing I say, can you?” and I had to be honest and say I could not understand her and found her a replacement social work intern.

I am now a clinical social worker (LCSW) working at a non-profit agency as the social service coordinator for 38 elderly and/or disabled adult residents. I have a fabulous and understanding boss. While I shared my hearing loss with her, I did not have to explain ADA reasonable accommodations to her. I have an amplifying device connected to the office phone that works with a compatible T-Coil neckloop. All expenses, including replacement neckloops and batteries are paid for by the company. If and when I cannot understand messages on voicemail, any of my co-workers will help listen to the message to get names and numbers for me.

Before my boss would sign documents noting that I had training and would qualify to take my Independent licensure test in social work, she asked me to write a blurb about my hearing loss and how it might affect my work. I needed a plan to tell clients that I may ask them to repeat (and time is money in therapy), or that I may ask to record them so I could confirm what I heard. I also had to be open to the fact that clients could choose to not work with me. This was powerfully meaningful and useful.

More recently it was shared that I would be a good case manager but perhaps not so good at individual therapy. My limits in social work are frustrating and painful, yet I know I have a good job and in an understanding environment. My co-workers and residents are aware of my loss and my strategies to read lips. I have led a group about hearing loss and have so much to share in story and resources.

.....
Does your employer and/or co-workers know you have a hearing loss? *Yes, they do.*

Do you use any special accommodations like an assistive listening device or CART? *I have a CapTel phone, using interpreter but when I have someone here who is hard of hearing, I will use CART.*

What are your experiences interviewing for a job? *My experiences when interview for a job, when I tell them I am Deaf. And sometimes will need to have accommodation. This seems to be a problem. Because the employer is thinking money and they do not want to spend the extra money for my reasonable accommodation.*

Have you had to ask your employer for a “reasonable accommodation” under the Americans with Disabilities Act? *Yes.*

Have you been successful at work? *Yes, 22 years.*

Have you ever felt you had to give up a job because of your hearing loss? *Sometimes. Because I don't always understand what the staff are talking about and I feel I am behind on things that are important for me to know, so that I can do my work better.*

Have you felt discriminated against because of your hearing loss? *Sometimes.*

Are your co-workers sensitive to your communication needs? *Yes, very and I am lucky they feel this way.*

What positives have come from having a hearing loss? *Learning how to deal with my hearing loss and how to adjust due to the hearing world. Teaching the hearing community what those of us need to know and to be sensitive to those of us with hearing loss. Because it could happen to them later in life. Everyone wants to be independent and we have a right to be independent, just because we have a hearing loss. But to be able to keep our job and do our job well. The communication is so important. Without communication, we struggle.*

And finally, do you know of any employers who have been especially accommodating? *Yes I do.*

I work for the Center for Independent Living of South Central PA, which is in Altoona, PA. I started my job 22 years ago but the first few years were not as easy as I had hoped it would be. The Center here is a place for people with disability to come and to allow us to help them. When I started my job 22 years ago, I was hired as a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist. I had just lost all my hearing approximately two years before I was hired. I knew what to tell people about those of us with a hearing loss. But to learn about the Deaf community, was a different struggle. Even now, I did it and learned everything that I need to learn and still learning about what is out there to help those with hearing loss. Whether you are hard of hearing, deaf or a cochlear implant user and deaf and blind. Each hearing loss is so different and each person has a different need to have their accommodation met.

The Center has given me all the training and space that I needed to learn to help those that are in need of hearing how to live with their hearing loss. I have been so blessed because I love what I do, it is rewarding and by educating the public what is available to help someone with a hearing loss. Is usually a good outcome and something not. Whether it's for a job, housing, school or work. Even to learn how to live independent with their hearing loss. My job, allows me to help someone and make their life a little better and helping them to be more comfortable with who they are and to live with their hearing loss. Losing your hearing, doesn't mean a bad thing, it just means to learn how to adjust. Of course I would be the first person to tell you, how much I miss the music, how much I miss hearing a child laughing or even hearing those words saying "I love you."

My co-workers had to learn how to adjust with my working here instead of forgetting I have lost my hearing and I had to learn how to be more patience with them as well. It's no one fault when you lose your hearing, it's just learning how to live with it better so that you have a better outcome about life and what's going on around you.

.....

I am a 37 year old attorney with a moderate sensorineural hearing loss. It was not diagnosed until after I gave birth. It was after the birth of my first child I noticed a hearing loss. Then after my second child it was much more noticeable. Ironically my sister is an audiologist. She did a test a few years ago and told me I very much needed hearing aids. I am in court every day. Hearing the other attorneys, my clients and the judges became a real issue. I recall so clearly reading a transcript of a proceeding I was participating in. I must have said "What?" ten times during a brief 30-minute hearing. I went to a pretty popular ENT in the area who looked at my audiograms and was in awe that I was able to function without aids. Obviously I was not functioning well. Finally I caved in and got hearing aids. It was emotional and I cried. Looking back I don't know why exactly. Maybe I was embarrassed because I am only 37 years of age. However now that I have them they have changed my life. Especially at work. I can hear my clients. I can hear the judges. And very, very rarely do I say "What?" I recall once an attorney telling me she thought I was just not paying attention because of how often I said "What ?" It horrified me that she noticed. So thankful to have my hearing aids. I encourage everyone to have an annual test. No reason not to.

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I have had a hearing loss at least since age four, one hearing aid at age 13 and a second at age 18 or 19. I only purchased digital aids two years ago, at 57. Early employment as a nursing assistant wasn't affected by my loss, as clients cared for needed volume to hear as well. I didn't want to limit myself, received education I wanted to put to use, and when the ADA was fairly

new, it helped when I applied for work as a unit clerk on a busy nursing unit, allowing me to receive an amplified handset to the phone at my desk. I was aware of these because I used one at home. Moving to an administrative assistant role at another location, I had to explain the amplified handset, and without much difficulty was able to receive it, but the position was a 'float' where I had to disconnect the handset from one phone to take with me to another location whenever scheduled elsewhere, making that phone temporarily unusable, and sometimes people tried talking to me behind my back, not understanding when I didn't hear them. A change in phone systems complicated by a common printer nearby once again made hearing difficult. I began working with DVR to obtain an assistive device to aid with this problem and potential job searches; my hearing loss does not seem a factor in getting or interviewing for a job, and would be discriminatory if it were, but if anything, I have restricted myself with lack of confidence trying to get improved positions when available, staying where comfortable and where people know me until something pushes me to change. Since I was initially told I was not eligible for their services, I had already purchased the digital aids on a payment basis, insisting on a T-coil feature, so DVR sent me to a demonstration/store to see what other ALDs were available. I chose one that serves me in many ways. On phone calls, callers speak to my T-coil adapted hearing aids, eliminating the printer noise interference. I set up a transistor for 1:1 meetings with clients or for small group meetings that I take minutes for, using the personal loop receiver. I connect the transmitter to a tape player if I supplemented hearing at the meeting by taping it as an aid when transcribing the minutes. There have been downsides to use of this, some staff not understanding my need for it and others seeing it as an indication I may not be capable of some aspects of the job. I had difficulty explaining to a supervisor in the current job that my desire to assist with the 1:1 client contacts is part of my reason for getting this particular device; she now agrees to use me there, but it seemed to be only after her unit was cut so staffing needs sometimes make it necessary to use me at the front desk. A problem as substitute for someone calling off is that while I now hear callers on phone calls, I often can't hear the phone ring to accept those calls before they go to voice mail. Since I am filling in for absent staff, they hear and turn the ringer volume down, which it can only be turned up when a call is coming in – if I see the button lighting up indicating that, since I am not hearing it ring. I have run into a similar problem to the handset use, purchasing a second telephone set to make transfers between two locations easier, but initially received the wrong one, resulting in a complication to receipt of calls. Generally, I have felt successful in my positions, certainly helped by use of ALDs. Since I have dealt with my hearing loss for so many years, the positive I can speak of is that I have learned different ways, including through HLAA magazines, to accommodate for it, and to share this with others. Just this week, I had an acquaintance call for help with members of her small book club, to accommodate some not hearing others, and was able to give several suggestions. I have been blessed to be where I am because of the help I have received along the way, starting with someone telling me about what was then SHHH, but



including my employer abiding by ADA. I work for a government agency, in the business of helping people, and proud to be part of its support staff.