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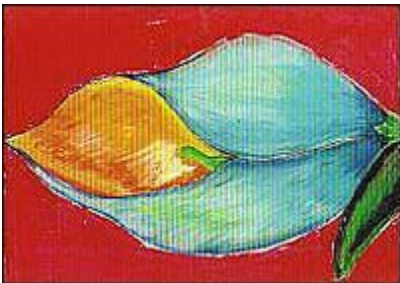
## Kat

*Kat Aiple works for the U.S. government. She tells us how her hearing family helped her feel comfortable in both the Deaf and hearing worlds. And she reminds us that parents should never stop communicating with their children. [Contact us](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/contact.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/contact.jsp>) if you want us to respond to Kat or ask her a question.*

**July 31, 2003**

### **Being an "Army Brat" - and Moving Around a Lot**

I am profoundly deaf, raised by my hearing parents and two hearing brothers who learned sign language right away at Gallaudet College (today called University) when they learned I was deaf at 9 months old.



My dad was and mom is in federal government for years (dad retired after 36 years in U.S. Army) and dad just retired from state government after 15 years. Mom is a registered nurse in federal government's VA hospital. Now you can see where the influence came from inspiring me to work in federal government with job security and great benefits.

I grew up going to deaf state schools in numerous states as you see dad was in U.S. Army so we moved a lot. The rich experience is big. I had to change sign language to blend in other state school's kids in each state I moved to. It was interesting, but frustrating same time.

### **Going to the Model Secondary School for the Deaf - and Facing Culture Shock**

Finally, I graduated at Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD) in Washington, DC after only being there for two years. And I felt I was a foreigner there! Because I knew all different sign language from other states in one combined sign language I use and even invented some of my own, because I got all confused up. Many found some signs funny! But they did not criticize me.

Only out of school, I was criticized a lot on the sign language and I told them that I will NOT change my own sign language, because that is the way I am in ASL/English. I had enough. I could not remember specific sign that state's adults want me to say in their own state. So they will have to learn to let me do my own way.

I encourage your deaf children to go to MSSD as it has rich experience of mixing with other states' kids and international kids. Also learn to prepare for college life with living in the dorm and do your own laundry, activities and cooking skills! I was the Class President during senior year, Peer Advisor, assistant secretary in Student Body Government and other some activities that are worthwhile to learn experience from.

### **Having a Loving Family**

I want to tell you reason the subject I choose is "communication is the key in the family." It is because at beginning you saw that my parents and my two brothers learned sign language before I even started to learn! They were very eager to talk to me and feel equal in the family.

My parents and my brothers even interpreted what special shows on TV was all about. Sometimes, one of members in the family would sit in front of TV to interpret all the way with Christmas shows. There was no close caption that time! Nor decoder ever invented yet!

### **Finding Deaf Friends**

My family have even made efforts to find church with good deaf service and Sunday school with deaf children going to and make out of the way trips to go to that church and be member of the church for me so I could socialize with other deaf kids in Sunday school! They even participated in National Association of the Deaf events and family weeks at conferences in most eastern states. For years, my brothers continued to be friends with deaf classmates and schoolmates to continue the communication in sign language for years. So I was raised with wonderful communication in family and support causing me to accomplish to communicate good with hearing people and get caught up with the hearing world's communication level.

### **Being Part of the Hearing World**

Also I have been a champion swimmer for near 15 years of my childhood and socialized often with hearing swimmers who were eager to learn sign language while I learned to lip read with the swimmers WITHOUT taking lip-read lessons. My parents did not teach me that. I was self-taught.

That was also an advantage in hearing world when I catch lip-reading and many would get surprised that I knew lip-reading. Include the sign language interpreters who changed sentences in communication with the hearing people what I said and I would catch them on the spot and correct them that it is not what I said.

### **Communication is Key**

So communication in the family is the key. You all include parents cannot expect kids to learn communication system or English skills in school! Home is important too! Ignore or give limited communication with gestures in family is, in my own opinion, very wrong!

We do not want deaf children to use layman's language forever! They need to get jobs in hearing world as hearing group is the majority on the Earth. Remind yourself, parents, to take sign language classes and communicate with your children include siblings to talk to their own siblings. That is important.

### **Where I Am Today**

I am currently working in the federal government as a secretary to all of the Auditors at Defense Contract Audit Agency for 2 years. I have been with other agencies all together 6 years in federal government. I was very fortunate to work in federal government as it is important to start your work resume at an early age! I have been getting temporary jobs in any government during summers off from high school years. That is important to get start-off with good resume before graduate from high school.

Also, I am with University of Phoenix On-line majoring in BS degree with Business/Management. I love every minute of it! It is very tough, but at your own pace.

*This page was last edited on October 31, 2003.*

*You can find this page online at:*

<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/meet/deaf/kat.jsp>