

Stories from Dot Shaw's children video - transcript

(Person 1 - SS) Hi, I am Sandra Sweeney, eldest of three children. I would like to tell you a little story about my mum Dorothy Shaw. In the Deaf community, we called her Dot.

(Person 2 – DS) Hi, I am Danielle Shaw, second daughter of three children.

(Person 3 – BS) Hi, my name is Bruce. I'm the only son, the third in the family – yes!

(SS) Dot - she was born in 1921 and died in 1990. She was born deaf and so were her parents. They were Jim and Eva Johnston. She also has a deaf brother named Eric. The family were fully proficient in Deaf Sign Language as it was called back then, but now it's known as Auslan – nice, eh?

(DS) My mum, she loved to read and write stories -reading newspapers, magazines and Reader's Digest. She also loved to hike and ride horses. When she was 9 years old, she lived on the grounds of the Deaf Society at Jolimont Square in East Melbourne with her family.

(SS) My mum went to the Victorian Deaf & Dumb Institution. It has changed its name, but the building remains the same. It is now known as Victorian College for the Deaf, which is better.

(BS) I would like to tell you about my mum's past achievements. She was the Dux of her school in Melbourne when she was 15. I myself was also Dux of my school in Sydney. It's nice that mum and son achieved the same. She always believed in Auslan language proficiency. It's important to be able to communicate with other deaf people, and it helps to improve skill in English. Having a hearing person's support can also help a Deaf person achieve more.

(SS) She shared some stories with me about her time at school, and about her favourite teacher named Mr Cook. Yes she said that – Mr Cook - who always used fingerspelling in the classroom. One day he had questions for students to try and answer. A question was asked, my mum raised her hand and answered enthusiastically. And then she raised her hand and answered again, and again. By then he had to ask her to hold and to allow other students their turn. So my mum, she was deflated after that – I thought that was hilarious.

(DS) After she met my father, Jack Shaw, they got married in 1943 and moved to Sydney. Then they had three children, and they are all deaf. I'm the second of out three. Then, out of 7 grandchildren, one is deaf. Out of 10 great grandchildren, only 2 are deaf.

(SS) Growing up, I did not really notice my mum being heavily involved with the Deaf community. I didn't notice, I was naïve. However, I remember as an older child, like a teenager, that she joined photography and art classes or something like that and that she would bring her photographic works home to show me. That was the only time I remembered her being involved in something for herself. Most of the time she was a housewife, or a mother, and she did work at Dairy Farmers for years as well. When I obtained my driver's licence I begged her to let me borrow her car. She agreed only if I'd

drop her and pick her up from work. So at that time she was still working, but I didn't realise that she was also involved in so many other things! I didn't notice her doing anything else apart from being a mother! Really, I am so proud of her as she has actually done so much for the community.

(BS) By 1947, she was a board member of many deaf organisations, like the Deaf Society of NSW, AAD, DRA, Deaf Women's Guild, Deaf Tennis Club and many other clubs as well. She was the first president of the 'Concerned Deaf for Total Communication in Education' group in the 1980s. She believed that it was critically important that teachers signed to deaf children. She also lobbied for captions on tv which led to the establishment of the Australian Captions Centre (ACC). She also lobbied for access to TTYs back then – those old ones where you inserted the phone handset in the machine and typed. They were nothing like what we have now with mobiles. Today's generation are lucky to have this modern technology.

(DS) A bit of a story about Reader's Digest. My mum told me me a funny story that I enjoyed. A mother was asking her little son if he would like some bread. The son replied yes, but he would like the clean bread, not the dirty ones. You know what that was about? Well he did not want the brown bread, only the white bread! That was a funny one, eh?

(BS) She worked on the Auslan dictionary with Trevor Johnston, who is my mum's brother Eric's son, and our cousin as well. I am thankful that Trevor worked with my mum. Mum also set up AAD in 1986, which is now known as DA – 'Deaf Australia'. She received Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee medal in 1977 and the OAM in 1987. She was acknowledged to be the first Deaf Australian to receive those medals. She also received the Australian Deaf of the Year award. Her dream was to be a teacher for deaf children, but back in her time, it was not possible for her to be one, as unfortunately there was no opportunity for Deaf people to get the required education. If she was to do this now, she would have a much better chance – different times. She was a wonderful mum, and she was gone too soon unfortunately. I miss her.

(SS) I would like to wish those students doing this writing competition good luck. I hope you each write a winning piece.