in Canada. "When I was sixteen, there was a deaf girl living in our neighborhood. Beth was her name. On warm summer nights my friends would come to our house, and Beth too. We talked by the hour. We went for walks. And Beth would join in the fun. She couldn't speak a word, but she watched us with an intensity that made us all feel she understood what was going on. She would watch our lips and follow along whatever we did. She would make gestures or act things out and we understood her most of the time.

"But I can remember times when we would all be talking and laughing and I would turn and look at Beth. Maybe I would catch a glimpse of her out of the corner of my eye. Her face had the saddest look I think I've ever seen in my life. Her deep brown eyes would fill with a forlorn, lonely expression. She wanted so much to join in with us, to understand our laughter and talk, to tell us about her own feelings. But there was no way she could follow our train of thought, no way she could tell us what thoughts lay behind those lonely eyes.

"Beth felt the isolation terribly. She was smart and could have learned, too, if only people had known then. But it will be so different with Lynn. She'll be able to communicate; her deafness won't be such a barrier. I think about Beth every time I see Lynn. I wonder whatever happened to her."

There was a long silence after she spoke. Louise shifted in her chair next to me and pulled her sweater over her shoulders. I watched Lynn run across the yard. I thought about Beth. A sense of sadness filled the cool evening air around us. It was mixed with hope. Someday she would speak. She would not be alone.

Louise stood in the middle of our front lawn and motioned me back with her hands. Cautiously I backed the orange-and-black U-Haul truck over the curb, across our front lawn, and stopped a few feet from the front porch. Bruce and Lynn watched from the safety of the porch railing, then Bruce climbed into the truck when I opened the back. He shouted to catch the immediate echo of his voice; Lynn, hands outstretched, begged in her silent way for me to lift her into the back of the truck. I slid out the loading ramp until it met the porch and together we started loading the truck.

For days Lynn had been excited about finding boxes, emptying shelves, unloading cupboards and labeling packing containers; it all seemed like a great new matching game designed especially for her. And each box or cupboard became the source of things for Louise to name and talk about as the casual lessons in lip reading went on and on.

"We're going to Oklahoma. We're moving," Louise repeated endlessly to Lynn. "We have to pack all these things so we can move to Oklahoma where Daddy's going to school." Without words, without tenses to indicate time, communication about the future was hazy at best. So many times we wished that, like Bruce at her age, she could understand "tomorrow," "in a few days" or "next week." But Lynn didn't seem perturbed by her own ignorance.

At sunup the next morning we left Wheaton. Bruce, in the truck with me, talked of his friends and commented about familiar landmarks. I could see Lynn in the car seat beside Louise as they led our little caravan. Lynn, uninterested in the passing scenery,
kept peering out the back window to make sure the black-and-orange truck with her father, brother and toys stayed close behind.

“What’s Lynn pointing at?” Bruce asked in the middle of the morning. Louise was nodding her head to Lynn.

“It’s another U-Haul truck!” Bruce shouted. Then I saw the orange-and-black vehicle, going in the opposite direction. As it passed Lynn waved and pointed, looking back to make sure we saw it too. A truck! Boxes and furniture and toys! Another family moving! An idea that Lynn had experienced in that fleeting moment, like matching objects for which she had no word.

About noon the next day we drove into Norman. We located our apartment in the housing for graduate-student families several blocks from the university. Driving up, we could see the row of apartments stretched out for a mile along a forested preserve. The wide strip of grass that separated the buildings from the woods gave a country-club appearance to the otherwise drab stucco buildings that had served as U.S. Army officers’ quarters during World War II. Each two-story building had eight living units.

“Hi! Can we give you a hand?” Before I had even opened the back of the truck, Bill Connelly, an English student, and Craig Atherton, who I discovered was working on a Ph.D. in mathematics, came out to help. Within minutes we felt at home. Louise talked to their wives about markets, schools and places to visit on a graduate-student budget. Swarms of children came from every direction and soon Bruce was talking with several boys his age; he learned their names. They told him about the creek and most of the animals that lived there; they explained that the creek led into a pond several blocks away. They gave him directions to the local store that sold candy. Just around the corner from our building sat a large sandbox partly overgrown with weeds, and nearby stood a permanent swing set. It looked as if we had moved into the middle of a park filled with children. All sense of isolation in a new city at a big university disappeared.

Then I noticed Lynn. She stood around with Bruce, his new friends and other children her own age. Smiling, pointing, trying to be friendly, she drew confused looks from the others when she did not respond to their questions. She did not learn about the creek or the turtles that lived there. She heard no names to associate with the faces of these new playmates. In spite of her isolation she showed no hint of loneliness.

A day or two later we went to the Brandts’ for a picnic supper on the grass behind their apartment, several buildings away from ours. Afterward, in the cool of early evening, we explored the woods. We crossed the parking lot in back, and beyond it the wide grassy area which the university kept mowed.

“Hurry up!” Davy called to Bruce, eager to show him the stream, and they raced toward the woods on the other side of the field. I could see large spreading elms crowded among ash, oak, Southern pine and others I didn’t recognize. Tangled undergrowth and smaller trees gave the entire area a semi-wilderness atmosphere. Twenty feet into the woods the ground dropped away to a small meandering stream six feet below us. Fallen logs were scattered here and there; mushrooms poked their way through the damp cover of dead leaves from the previous fall. The woods were alive with birds—English sparrows, robins, mockingbirds and bright-red cardinals with a pointed crest and a bib of black beneath their beaks.

We followed Bruce and Davy upstream to a large oak; it stood on the high bank of the stream, its root system partially exposed by erosion. Someone had fastened a two-inch-thick rope with a large knot at the end to a branch that jutted out over the water. Bruce, his legs firmly wrapped around the rope, was already swinging back and forth in a wide arc over the narrow stream.

“Rope swing,” I said, looking at Lynn; she pointed and begged for a turn, then closed her eyes tightly as I pushed her into the air above the water.

Bruce wanted to visit the duck pond, so we went back to the house for bread and started down the street. We went parallel to the woods and stream for about three blocks, crossed a busy street and then walked toward the woods again. The stream ran under the street and into the duck pond before winding its way on through that part of the city. A small park area surrounded the
pond, and more than a dozen white ducks paddled among the reeds close to shore. Bruce and Lynn began throwing pieces of bread crust to them and before long the ducks were eating out of their hands.

"Ducks. Ducks," Louise was saying each time Lynn looked in her direction. Lynn danced up and down and squealed with excitement; then she struggled and cried when we finally had to pick her up to start back.

During most of the two years of her life in Wheaton, Lynn had been a cooperative, eager-to-please child. Seldom did we have to do more than shake our heads "No! No!" or remove her from a forbidden area. Perhaps we had trained ourselves as much as Lynn; since we could never shout "Come back!" or "Don't touch that!," we often intervened. But the stirrings of independence and eagerness to explore the wider world grew noticeable almost at once after we arrived in Oklahoma.

I came home one afternoon during the first week of school. It was warm and humid. Even the short ride home on my bicycle had left me drenched with perspiration.

"Hi! I'm home!" I called as I came in and set my books on a kitchen chair.

"How was school?" Louise asked routinely.

"Good. How was your day?"

"Busy. I went shopping and then worked with Lynn. She matched all her colors today except one." Louise turned around and headed for the bedroom. "I wonder where Lynn is?" Her voice carried a tone of worry.

She came back into the kitchen. No Lynn. Now an anxious expression had appeared on her face. We headed out the back door together. The water in Lynn's blue wading pool shimmered in the sun; two children played at the edge of the grass near the parking area. Lynn was nowhere in sight. We walked quickly around the corner to check the sandbox and swings. No Lynn.

"Where could she have gone?" Louise asked anxiously. "She was here only five minutes ago!"

"Bruce!" I called. The sound of urgency in my voice brought him running. "Have you seen Lynn? He shook his head. "Come on! We've got to find her!" I looked at Louise and we both thought of the same thing at the same instant. The woods! We all began running. I crossed the parking area and picked up speed on the seventy-five yards of grass.

"Lynn! Lynn!" I called at the top of my lungs. If only she could hear us! Perhaps she was with someone who would call back. I dashed to the stream and looked up and down. No Lynn! I ran through the trees, the thick underbrush tearing at my pants. The rope swing swayed gently in the warm breeze. I was scanning up and down the streambed when Louise and Bruce came up.

No Lynn!

"Tom!" Louise was out of breath and her voice sounded on the edge of panic. "The duck pond!"

I could feel the blood drain from my face. "Let's go!" I started running at top speed, Bruce and Louise followed. I came out of the woods, cut diagonally across the field and dashed between two apartment buildings. The busy street. The pond. I fought back the vision of Lynn floating face down in the muddy water. I reached the boulevard, quickly appraised the traffic and flew across against the light, down the long slope toward the water.

There was Lynn, alone, squatting at the very edge of the pond.

"Lynn! Lynn!" I screamed. Oblivious to my voice, she didn't move. Then I saw she was not alone; four ducks were approaching her outstretched hand. My heart was pounding. A great sense of relief swept over me. Then Lynn looked up and saw me. She pointed happily at the ducks. I came up and knelt down beside her, shaking my head "No! No!"

In a few seconds Louise and Bruce arrived all out of breath. Louise, her eyes moist, picked Lynn up and held her close for a long minute. Then we tried to explain.

"No! No! The duck pond is no, no!" Louise shook her head vigorously and tried to look angry.

"You cannot come to the duck pond without Mommy or Daddy," I added, shaking my head sternly.

We started back together, holding Lynn's hands tightly; my
legs suddenly felt weak and shaky. For days after that we constantly kept watch whenever Lynn went out in the yard. For Louise it meant an unrelenting vigilance.

Since the day Lynn had learned to walk, watching over her had grown into a full-time job. We hesitated to discipline her when we weren't sure she understood our commands. When she was less than a year, even before the audiologists had confirmed her deafness, the loud "No! No!" had not worked. In our immediate presence her actions presented little difficulty; outside our presence, even if she was only in the next room, it was another matter. Once, when she was about eleven months, Lynn had crawled into Bruce's room to explore. The books on a lower shelf caught her eye and she scattered them all over the floor. Amid head shakings and "no no's" Louise took Lynn back into the living room. Later that same day, down came all Bruce's books again and he exploded angrily. "I wish someone would put her in the garbage can!" He slammed his door shut and began to replace his books again.

"I think she needs a good spanking," Louise said.

"I don't think she understands, and what good will it do to spank her?" I asked, then reluctantly slapped her hands, hoping she knew what we wanted.

Then a few days later Bruce struck on an idea. He recalled Lynn's fear of dogs. Louise had taken her out for a walk in the stroller when a little black dog came dashing up, put two feet on the stroller tray, wagged his tail and licked Lynn's face. Terrified, she burst into tears. After that, even an approaching dog sent her into near-panic. Bruce replaced all his books for the sixth or seventh time, then placed a floppy-eared stuffed dog on guard in the doorway to his room.

He called us to watch. In a few minutes Lynn crawled down the hallway while we followed at an inconspicuous distance. She could see that the door stood open and headed straight for another game with the books. Then she saw the toy dog! In a flash she whirled around and almost ran on hands and knees back down the hallway. After that whenever that silent sentry stood guard to Bruce's room, Lynn withdrew to a safe distance.

One afternoon in early July a few days after Lynn's excursion to the duck pond, Bruce came running in. "Mom! Quick! Lynn hurt herself! Come quick!"

She had fallen out of the swing and cut a gash in the back of her head. Lying on the ground, blood all over her head, Lynn was screaming at the top of her lungs. Louise got a diaper and held it to the wide gash on Lynn's head. I carried her to the car and we drove to a nearby hospital.

"It's all right. It's all right," Louise kept saying between Lynn's cries. "You'll be all right. We'll have the doctor fix it." We wanted to tell her where we were going, to prepare her for the stitches, but all we could do was hope our moving lips gave some comfort.

In the emergency room we told the doctor Lynn couldn't hear. He looked at the matted and bloody hair, inspected the gash, gave her a shot and then began sewing up her head. It required twelve stitches.

The next day Lynn was sitting in her highchair and pushed against the table. Her chair rocked back and over it went, hitting her head again. The stitches held, but after that Lynn began waking up in the middle of the night screaming and crying. We would pick her up in the darkness, hold her for a few minutes, then put her back into the crib. An hour later she would be crying again.

We began to realize how frequently we had used our voices to keep in touch with Bruce through the blackness of night. She missed the calming influence of our voices and although we left a small light on, she couldn't read our lips. If only we could reach out across the darkness and reassure her. In time the wound healed and Lynn slept peacefully once again.

Lynn's new independence extended to her hearing aid as well. She started asking for us to put in the earmolds and fasten the harness. She would walk into the kitchen, tug at Louise's dress,
then point to her ear with repeated jabbing motions: "I want my hearing aid." She would only tolerate it for twenty or thirty minutes, but with her aid she still made more noises—babbling, humming and vowel sounds.

One morning Lynn came in and pointed to her ears. Louise fastened the harness and inserted the earmolds; Lynn waved goodbye and headed out the back door and around the corner of the building. Louise walked her to the sandbox, then went back inside, returning every few minutes. On this particular day it seemed the other children were more intrigued by the strange things in Lynn's ears than building sand castles or fighting over the tricycles. The third time Louise came out to check, Lynn was sitting in the sand, still in her small harness with the aid in its pouch, but the Y-cord with both earmolds had disappeared! On several previous occasions we had seen children come up to Lynn and pull them out of her ears, but we had quickly retrieved them. Now Louise began the search.

"Have you seen Lynn's earmolds?" she asked a small boy nearby, pointing to Lynn's ears.

"No," he said, shaking his head. Neither had any of the other children until she came to one three-year-old who wouldn't speak but shook his head "No." He then reached in his mouth and produced one soft plastic earmold.

Louise sifted through the sand and five minutes later discovered the other earmold. But the Y-cord had vanished. That afternoon when I came home we sifted all the sand again and searched the entire area around the sandbox before giving up. The next day it turned up, hidden in the grass, nearly a hundred feet from the sandbox.

One thing made it easier to keep tabs on Lynn—the closeness of our neighbors in the graduate-student housing complex. Within days after our arrival everyone knew Lynn was deaf. I can still remember Bruce introducing Lynn to some of the other children at the sandbox one afternoon during our first week in Norman.

"This is my sister, Lynn," Bruce said. "She's deaf. She can't hear."

Wide-eyed with amazement at this childhood anomaly, a six-year-old boy with red hair and freckles moved a bit closer. "Hi, Lynn. Can you hear me?" Lynn gave him a big smile but answered nothing.

"Can she really not hear?" he asked Bruce, who nodded proudly.

"Lynn! Are you deaf?" another boy shouted as loud as he could. Everyone looked at him—everyone except Lynn. Unaware of the tests presented by these backyard audiologists, Lynn had failed with flying colors.

Word passed quickly from one child to the next and back to their parents. We talked easily with all our neighbors about Louise's bout with rubella. Lynn's deafness and the problems we faced in teaching her to lip-read and speak. They listened and offered the best resource we could have asked for—understanding. As the summer wore on, we began to feel safe when Lynn went outside—just knowing that other mothers and fathers and older children knew she couldn't hear.

In her world of silence Lynn craved color and movement and reactions from others that spoke louder than the minuscule mouth movements which she did not understand. She teased us all to evoke the responses she could read. I recall one morning when I sat at my desk typing a letter to my parents in Los Angeles. Our bedroom door opened and there stood Lynn in her pink pajamas. A wide grape-juice mustache highlighted the grin that said, "I want to play!"

She came over to the desk and I picked her up, held her and talked to her for a moment, then put her back down. "I'm writing a letter to Grandma and Grandpa. You run along and play." I went back to my typing, trying to ignore her silent insistence.

Then came a tug at my sleeve. "Up," she mouthed and pointed to the corner of my desk where she often sat to watch me work.

"No!" I shook my head and continued typing. Another tug and more pointing. I took her by the hand, led her out of the bedroom and closed the door. In less than thirty seconds the door opened and there she stood, mouthing "Up, up."

I finally gave in. She sat on the narrow perch and I returned
I found the children, arms outspread toward the darkened sky, faces upturned, dancing in the rain as if the shower had been provided especially for them. Bruce heard me instantly, turned to tap Lynn on the shoulder and point in my direction. They both came in, streams of water running down their faces, hair matted wet, but cool and refreshed.

“Rain. Do you like the rain? Thunder. Lightning. The thunder will come again.” Lynn watched my lips as I spoke. At the next sharp explosion Lynn looked up at me, then pointed to her ears and to the kitchen ceiling. It was hard to know whether she had heard the sound or merely felt the vibration.

“Dad! Watch what Lynn has learned to do!” Bruce took Lynn by the hand as soon as Louise had finished drying her off, led her into the living room and got her bag of matching objects. He sat her on the floor and took his place opposite her. She knew exactly what he had in mind and waited for his instructions. I stood in the doorway and watched in silence. Bruce reached into the bag and pulled out only one of each object—the ball, a toy car, an old shoe, Lynn’s hat, a plastic bird and a cow. He set them in front of Lynn in a row. Lynn watched patiently.

“Where’s the ball?” Bruce looked directly at Lynn as he spoke; her hand shot out and picked up the ball. Back it went into the row.

“Cow.” Again she picked up the correct object.

“That’s really good,” I said to Bruce. Lynn had learned “ball” and “cow,” but I didn’t think she had learned to recognize the others consistently.

“Car!” Bruce said. I half expected Lynn to reach out for the cow again, since it looked so similar on the lips. But now, with a steady hand, she reached out, picked up the car and showed it to Bruce. The bird, hat and shoe followed. Then Bruce went through all of them again in random order. Lynn read his lips perfectly without one mistake!

I went over and knelt down on the floor, praising them both for their success. “You’re a better teacher than Mom or I,” I said to Bruce. “You’ve taught Lynn to lip-read four more words!”
By the end of July we could count eight words that Lynn lip-read in test situations. In addition to the six objects she also knew "up" and "hot." Informally she responded consistently to "eat your food," "wipe your face," "take a bath," "put your hat on," "fall down" and "go bye bye."

An event that gave Lynn dozens of new words to lip-read was our Saturday-morning jaunts into the beautiful Oklahoma countryside. I remember one Saturday we left right after an early breakfast.

"Barn. See the barn with the silo." Louise pointed off in the distance and at the same time looked around at Lynn.

"Look, Dad! A turtle!" Bruce shouted and pointed. We stopped to look. Its bright-painted shell must have been ten inches across.

"Turtle. See the turtle." Lynn squatted down and reached out gingerly to touch its hard back. In the car a few miles later we came upon her favorite animal — Jersey cows. Lynn pointed and tugged at Louise's shoulder. We pulled over and talked about cows for five minutes. As we started away, Louise looked directly at Lynn and said, "Cow. Cow." Unexpectedly, without hesitating, Lynn mouthed a silent "cow." Louise and I looked at each other, surprised and excited. That tiny lip gesture had made our morning! If she could mouth new words, we felt sure she would soon learn to speak them.

By early August, when summer school drew to a close, Lynn lip-read so many objects from the bag that we had moved on to pictures. The John Tracy correspondence course suggested a file with matching pictures. Louise spent hours going through discarded magazines and newspapers collecting matching elephants, airplanes, houses, dogs, trucks and dozens of other pictures. She also found people doing things which allowed us to teach Lynn verbs. On almost any day, late in the summer, I might come home from school and find Louise and Lynn sitting in front of pictures spread out on the floor.

"Running. Where's the boy running? Running." Lynn would look over pictures of a boy running, a girl jumping, a baby sleeping, an old man laughing, a woman cooking, then pick up the one that matched the picture of a running boy in Louise's hand.

"That's right! You found the boy who is running!" Louise handed Lynn the matching picture and she put them together back on the floor. Then it was on to the girl jumping and the woman cooking until all had been matched. Every magazine and newspaper became a source for that picture file. And slowly Lynn moved on from merely matching the pictures to selecting the right picture by matching it with the word on our lips.

It would not be accurate to say that we spent most of our time giving Lynn formal lessons in lip reading. They did involve considerable amounts of time but increasingly we emphasized casual instruction in everyday situations. Now that she could lip-read a handful of words, we felt sure she had finally acquired the idea of a word. And so we kept trying to capitalize on every situation by speaking new words that referred to things she could see.

At times we wondered how important it was to stick to our schedule of planned lessons. Near the end of that summer Louise sent in the third lesson from the John Tracy course and asked for advice.

"Most of our activities with Lynn have been very informal and unstructured," she wrote, "We have tended to shy away from some of the more organized activities suggested in the course. Do you feel it's advisable to do some of the more formal color matching games, etc., as long as we are doing them informally? Will lip reading in informal situations throughout the day meet the same objectives?"

The reply from the clinic encouraged us to use our own judgment, keeping up the informal but also the formal lessons as Lynn's attention span increased.

One thing could not come from the casual talking with Lynn and that was the certain knowledge that she was reading our lips and not some situational clue. When we tested Lynn with objects we could be sure she read our lips. At first we had used two bags. We would reach into one bag and pull out a block or fork
or shoe, show it to Lynn, then wait while she reached into her bag, felt around the various objects, then proudly presented the matching one.

Over the summer Lynn had moved slowly from matching what she saw to retrieving what she read on our lips. One evening as I studied for my final exams, I listened to Louise say the names and wait for Lynn to find the right object.

"Shoe." Lynn’s hand went in, searched for a few seconds, out came an object.

"Good girl. You found the shoe."

"Spoon." Again a pause while Lynn retrieved the spoon. I was conscious that Louise must have gone through nearly twenty objects without a single mistake on Lynn’s part. I looked up from the problem I had been working on and watched as they proceeded.

"Cup," Louise said and waited. Lynn searched with her sensitive fingers, trying first one shape, then another inside the bag. I thought back to that day in the spring when I had tried so hard to see if she could match "ball" on my lips with the ball in front of her.

"Ball," Louise said and I could tell she had saved the easiest word until the last.

"Tom! She did all twenty-five of them without a mistake!" I felt a shiver go up my spine. To think she had progressed so quickly! She could learn. I felt proud of Lynn, proud of Louise, proud of Bruce, and proud of what we had all accomplished together. And I felt sure Lynn would start talking soon; perhaps by the time she was three or going on four at the latest.

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**Eleven**

Janet lived in one of the upstairs apartments. Her father was writing his Ph.D. dissertation in English. Janet was nearly six months younger than Lynn. At the swings, Louise and I must have pushed Lynn and Janet together a hundred times that summer; we alternated between them to keep their swings going at the same tempo. They loved to look at each other at the highest moment, Janet squealing with excitement, Lynn beaming with a wide grin.

Janet loved to swing, and flying back and forth, she hummed and sang and laughed and screamed and talked. The sounds came so effortlessly. Moving her lips. Playing with sounds. Pushing air out past her vocal cords. She could say several hundred words and it was as if the excitement, the feeling of movement, the experience of falling were somehow incomplete without this verbal accompaniment. I didn’t understand everything she said; the baby talk and word play were mixed freely with intelligible speech. But even when she was not clear, I grasped the meaning in her rhythm, her tone and her very expressiveness itself. How we wished Lynn could express herself as easily!

We didn’t know it then, but we had come to the edge of another invisible barrier—the great chasm that existed for Lynn between the expressive and receptive sides of language.

For Janet, or any hearing child, for that matter, understanding words and saying those words were like two sides of the same coin. Both involved sound. For the vast majority of the human race, reception and expression are synchronized, part of the same process. I remember how quickly Bruce repeated the words he heard us say. "No! No!" we would admonish him. Soon he was
Johnny, a lively two-year-old, lived in the next apartment. His black skin and frizzy hair fascinated Lynn. She soon made five other children about the same age for his party. After games and presents, the noisy children sat around a small picnic table behind the apartment playing with balloons and waiting for the birthday cake. In addition to a large cake with two candles, each child received a cupcake and a single flaming candle in the middle of the dark chocolate frosting. Without hesitation, each one blew out his candle at the same time Johnny extinguished the two in front of him.

Everyone but Lynn.

Like the others, she had leaned forward to the burning candle and her mouth had formed a tiny circle, but the puff of air never passed her lips. A single bright flame flickered at the picnic table as the other children looked at Lynn. She tried again, leaning closer, straining to make her lips into a tighter circle. The air refused to come. A few seconds passed, then Janet leaned over and blew out the candle for her. An instant later everyone began to devour the cake and ice cream.

We couldn't remember teaching Bruce how to blow out a candle. But now we set about in earnest to help Lynn learn this simple act that most children acquire incidentally as they learn to talk. Louise began by lighting two candles at the kitchen table. Bruce blew out one of them; Lynn watched, then tried and tired to blow out the other without success.

"Maybe if she could feel the air rather than just see the candle go out," Louise said to me one afternoon a few days later. And so we started taking every opportunity to blow on Lynn's hand, on her arm, her tummy and her face. She loved this new game and would hold her own hand up to her mouth, purse her lips and try to blow, but still the air refused to come. She tried our hands without success.

Next Louise combined the sense of touch and sight by placing a feather in Lynn's hand. When we blew, Lynn felt the air and saw the feather fly off her hand. Week after week we blew out
candles, blew on Lynn's hands and sent feathers fluttering to the floor. We wondered if something was wrong with her muscles or lungs that she couldn't grasp the simple idea of blowing, but what we read in the John Tracy course suggested this was a common problem for deaf children. We also discovered Lynn didn't know how to drink through a straw like other children.

Weeks turned into months and we continued to work with Lynn on blowing. I thought of all the sounds that required some expression of air from the lungs—words like "hi," "cat," "that," "pat," "party," "tiger," "trip," "try," "bed," "ball," "ship," "shore" and hundreds of others. I said the alphabet out loud to myself with my hand held close to my lips to discover all the sounds that involved even the slightest puff of air. I began to realize Lynn had to gain the idea of blowing, then learn to control the amount of air required by these different sounds.

Months later, not long before Lynn's third birthday, the solution came unexpectedly. Louise bought some party whistles, the kind with a coiled tube of paper that unrolls when you blow the whistle. Bruce and Lynn were both in the kitchen helping her unload the groceries and fold the paper bags when she had emptied them out.

"Look what I bought for you," Louise said to both of them after the groceries had all been put away. She opened the cellophane bag that held the whistles and gave a silvery blue one to Bruce, a red one to Lynn. Bruce immediately blew on his, the paper tube rushed out to stop a few inches from Lynn's face. She was fascinated. Into her mouth went the whistle. She tried to blow, but the red paper tubing didn't budge. She took it out of her mouth to examine it more closely. She tried again but to no avail.

So Bruce took her red whistle and demonstrated that it also held the same kind of magic. For ten minutes Bruce demonstrated and Lynn valiantly struggled with the whistles. Then she tried blowing the four others that were left. All worked instantly for Bruce; none responded to Lynn. Mystified, she finally gave up.

Later in the day Bruce took the whistles into his bedroom and demonstrated each one again to Lynn. He must have worked with her for half an hour when he came charging out of the bedroom shouting, "Mom! She's got it! Lynn can blow the whistle!"

Sure enough, there came Lynn behind him, the red paper magically shooting out at least an inch and then retreating. When the tube had completely unrolled it emitted a shrill noise, but Lynn could not blow that hard yet. By the end of the day she filled the house with the screeching sounds and proudly watched the bright red paper unroll to its full length.

"Let's try the candle," I said to Louise that night after dinner. "If she's learned to blow the whistle, she can probably do the candle now too!" So out came the candles and Lynn looked on with interest as I lit two of them, one for Bruce, one for her. Bruce quickly extinguished the flame on his, then Lynn leaned forward and tried to blow. But nothing happened. After a few minutes Bruce brought in her whistle. She blew it hard and the paper tube flashed out and the shrill whistle filled the kitchen. Louise took the whistle from her and pointed to the candle. Lynn rounded her mouth and strained forward, trying to blow. Nothing happened. Not even a flicker!

Why could she blow the whistle but not the candle? Perhaps having the whistle in her mouth made the difference, stimulating her to tighten the muscles of her diaphragm and expel the rush of air. But Lynn had learned to blow! We celebrated with a trip to Baskin-Robbins for ice cream cones.

In the weeks that followed, Louise practiced with the whistle and the candle together. First Louise blew the whistle, then quickly blew out the candle. She lit the candle again and then Lynn blew the whistle, rounded her mouth and made every movement as if she were going to blow out the candle. But the air did not come until one day, after a couple weeks, the flame flickered.

"Good girl! You almost blew it out!" Louise said as Lynn watched her lips. She tried again. It flickered again. And then, before the session ended, Lynn had blown out her first candle!
And none too soon, for the following week she proudly blew out three candles on her cake while the other children at her party watched.

The previous summer the John Tracy correspondence course had been suggesting other ways to prepare Lynn to use her voice. We learned that language was not simply words, but words spoken in the rhythm of sentences. Words spoken with punctuation and stress. And so we began to teach Lynn the rhythm of speech even without the sound of speech.

Nursery rhymes fascinated Lynn. She watched our lips and looked at the pictures of mice running up grandfather clocks, bakers and butchers floating in tubs, and children dancing in circles. After reading her a nursery rhyme, we now added rhythm with our hands and bodies. “Ring-around-the-rosy” was one of Lynn’s favorites, and we were careful to move and fall in rhythm with our voices. “Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, Baker’s man” gave us a chance to clap our hands in time with the silent words. And slowly, through movements she could see and experience, she began to acquire a sense of rhythm that would be important for fluent speech.

If Lynn was to use her voice, she had to know it existed. But how could we make her aware when she couldn’t hear? Even when she cried, she could only feel her moving lips, the vibrations in her throat, and the tense muscles pushing air from her lungs. That first summer in Oklahoma we became aware that she didn’t understand when other children cried. Because she couldn’t hear or see herself when she cried, she had not connected the grimaces, the tears, the strange faces other children made when they cried with her own crying.

One afternoon early in the summer Bruce had come running down the hallway and burst into our apartment. Through his tears and screams we learned he had fallen off his bicycle and scraped his knee. The blood had already begun to ooze through his torn pants leg. Lynn seemed delighted at Bruce’s antics and started

“Bruce is hurt!” I said to her, looking concerned and shaking my head in sympathy. I pointed to his knee. “That hurts. You shouldn’t laugh.” Louise carefully slid his jeans down and Bruce cried out in even greater pain. Lynn looked at me with a smile and pointed at Bruce; she began laughing again.

All our explanations failed, and for weeks Lynn laughed whenever she saw Bruce or some other child crying. Then one morning Lynn fell against her tricycle; she burst into tears and screams of pain. Louise had been weeding her flower garden next to the porch and ran to see how badly Lynn was hurt.

An idea struck her. She picked Lynn up from the walk and rushed inside to our apartment, Lynn still crying loudly. She took her directly to the large mirror in our bedroom. Ignoring Lynn’s injured arm for the moment, she held her up to the mirror.

“Look at yourself! You’re crying!” Louise moved her a few inches closer. “You’re crying just like the other kids when they’re hurt!” Tears streamed down both cheeks. Her lips quivered, the corners of her mouth turned down between each gasp of air. The painful grimaces came and went, creating a sequence of distorted expressions.

For the first time Lynn saw herself crying. For an instant she stopped, surprised by her own performance reflected in the mirror. She looked at Louise, then began crying again. She had made the connection, at least once. Though the crying of other children always caught her attention, she slowly came to understand that this accompaniment of pain and anger and disappointment was not intended to entertain her.

Lynn could easily see the facial expressions that went with crying. To feel the tiny vibrations in her throat was another matter altogether. Somehow she had to become aware of her own ability to produce vocal sounds. The John Tracy course told us to capitalize on informal situations where Lynn was “giving voice” without realizing it. And so we tried to watch for situations like the following, which, with minor variations, repeated itself many
wading pool. It was time for her nap, so Louise went to the porch and waited until she caught Lynn's attention.

"Come in now. It's time to come in," she called loudly, motioning for Lynn to come in. Lynn looked blankly at Louise, then went back to washing her rubber doll and pretended not to understand. Finally Louise went out to the wading pool, picked up the towel from the ground nearby and pointed toward the house. "Time for your nap. You have to get out of the pool now!"

But Lynn wasn't ready to come in. She pointed to the water, kicked her legs defiantly and shook her head. Louise lifted Lynn from the pool and began wrapping her in the towel. Lynn kicked harder than ever and then in a burst of anger she tried to struggle free. "Aaahhh! Eeeaaaah!" she screamed.

Instantly Louise stood her up, let the towel fall to the ground and stooped to gain eye-level contact with Lynn. "You're talking! You're using your voice!" Louise quickly pointed to Lynn's throat and tried to get her to make the angry noise again. "Good girl! You used your voice."

But by now Lynn was struggling to go back to the wading pool. In a few seconds the lesson was over, but not lost. Patiently, in dozens of similar situations when she gave voice spontaneously, we turned her attention to the existence of her own voice. We knew this wasn't the whole answer, but it was one way among many to begin preparation for the day she would begin to talk.

By late summer Lynn graduated to a new kind of matching game. She had mastered the task of putting two identical objects together. She could find the corresponding picture for anything we presented. She also matched objects and pictures with the movements on our lips. Now we had to teach her the most difficult thing of all: that the objects and our lip movements went together with the sound of our voices.

"Yellow. Which one is yellow?" Now Louise grasped Lynn's left hand and held it firmly to the side of her own throat so that Lynn could feel the vibrations of her mother's vocal cords as the words were spoken.

"Yellow. Pick up the yellow one." With her free hand Lynn picked up the yellow paper, looking back and forth from Louise's face to the floor.

"Blue. Where's the blue one?" While Lynn's hand went out to pick up the blue paper I could hear her making a sort of humming sound as she felt the vibrations on Louise's throat. One time through all the colors and Lynn had come to the end of her patience. She tugged at her hearing-aid cords and the earmolds fell from her ears. She began to pull on the harness.

Auditory training had become a continuous thing whenever Lynn wore her hearing aid. For some time we had been working on gross sounds. The John Tracy course suggested ways to help her pay attention to gross sounds like an automobile horn, a drum or a police whistle.

We devoted many hours to one particular auditory-training game recommended by the clinic. Together we discussed it and figured out how we could teach it to Lynn. We reread the instructions several times. It would take a week or two for Lynn to grasp the nature of this game completely; each day on the kitchen floor was a step toward understanding it. We could not explain the game but we knew she would discover the rules, and playing the game enabled her to use her residual hearing.

The objective was simple. Louise was to sit behind Lynn on the floor with a metal wastebasket kept out of Lynn's sight. Five blocks would be stacked in front of Lynn. Louise would bang on the wastebasket bottom with a wooden spoon to create a gross sound that would echo throughout the kitchen. Each time Lynn heard it, she was to knock one block from the top of the stack. This way we could be sure she heard the sound.

But the game did not start that way. Lynn and Louise sat facing each other, the wastebasket and large wooden spoon to one side. Louise stacked the blocks into a tiny tower while Lynn watched. As soon as the blocks were in place, Lynn reached over and knocked them down, something she had done dozens of times before.

"No. Not all at once," Louise said as she restacked the blocks.
This time she restrained Lynn’s hand. “Now, you take this wooden spoon and hit the wastebasket,” she said to Lynn, reaching over the pile of blocks to grip Lynn’s hand in her own and hit the wastebasket with a resounding bang. Lynn looked up at me as if she had heard the sound.

“Hit the wastebasket again and then I’ll knock down one block,” Louise said as she helped Lynn hit the wastebasket and at the same time reached over and knocked the top block off the stack. Together they hit the wastebasket again and Louise pushed over another block. The fourth time Lynn was ready to hit the pan by herself and watch Louise knock the block from the pile. Round one was finished!

“Bang!” Lynn struck the wastebasket.

“You can push the block over, too,” Louise said to her and moved Lynn’s other hand to knock one block from the top of the pile. Then she pointed to the wastebasket.

“Bang!” Again she helped Lynn displace another block. Slowly they worked down the stack of blocks until all five lay scattered on the floor. It had taken nearly ten minutes and now Lynn grew restless. The game ended for the day.

The next time they played, Lynn quickly began to beat the wastebasket, holding it tightly between her outstretched legs. Now Louise had to restrain her from hitting it more than once before she had removed the next block. After two loud bangs on the waste basket, Lynn reached over and pushed two blocks from the stack.

“No, only one block at a time!” Louise replaced one block and waited for Lynn to hit the wastebasket again. By the end of the lesson Lynn had gained a clear idea that it was her job to hit the wastebasket, and it was her job to knock the next block from the pile. She also was beginning to grasp the notion that displacing the block always followed hitting the wastebasket.

The next phase went more quickly. “I’m going to hit the wastebasket, and whenever I do, you push the next block from the stack,” Louise explained, hoping Lynn would understand her actions. For the rest of that week they worked on this pattern—Louise hitting the wastebasket, Lynn knocking over the blocks.

Several days later, after numerous reviews, Louise was ready for the next step. She moved the wastebasket around behind Lynn, who couldn’t see it unless she turned around.

“Now, we’ll pile the blocks in front here and every time I hit the pan, you push one block off the stack.” We both spoke to Lynn as if she could hear; she couldn’t, of course, so we depended on some example, a demonstration or a clue to get across our message. When Lynn was not looking, Louise struck the wastebasket. Lynn waited for about ten seconds and then looked around with a puzzled look on her face. The five blocks stood in a neat stack as if waiting for Lynn to hear.

“Okay, we’ll have to let you see me for a while until you get the idea,” Louise said. While Lynn watched she hit the wastebasket. Lynn smiled, looked back at the blocks and removed the top one from the stack. Back and forth they went, Louise watched Louise hit the wastebasket, then turned around to displace the next block.

Sometimes I played this game with Lynn when I came home from school, at other times Bruce played and always Louise repeated it. Often we hit the basket when Lynn wasn’t looking to test her; sometimes she seemed to hear and knocked a block from the stack, but we couldn’t be sure because she was inconsistent.

Almost always Lynn played this game while wearing her hearing aid. One morning Louise sat down to play without taking the time to put on Lynn’s hearing aid. Lynn was watching the blocks intently.

“Bang!” Louise whacked the bottom of the wastebasket as she had done hundreds of times before. Lynn dutifully pushed the top block off the pile. Louise was surprised and puzzled. She banged the wastebasket again. Without hesitating, Lynn removed the next block.

“Good girl! You heard it!” Louise was cautious but filled with excitement.
“Bang!” Off went another block. “Bang!” Another block. It seemed too good to be true, so she ran through another round of the game. When I came home, Lynn successfully responded to two rounds with me, this time with her hearing aid on. We didn’t understand how she had heard without the aid, but it didn’t seem important. Now she began to respond consistently whenever we hit the wastebasket—with or without her hearing aid.

One morning not long after this, Louise had set out the wastebasket and blocks. Before they could sit down, Lynn grabbed the wooden spoon and with an impish grin pointed for Louise to sit down. She placed the blocks in front of Louise and moved the wastebasket around behind her.

“Bang!” Lynn struck the wastebasket as hard as she could and then pointed over Louise’s shoulder to the blocks, nodding her head. Louise smiled and dutifully knocked over the first block. Lynn laughed proudly. She struck the wastebasket again and waited expectantly for the second block to fall. Mommy obeyed. The game went on for three rounds of blocks. From that time on it grew increasingly difficult to play this game with Lynn. After two or three minutes she demanded to become the teacher, or she grew impatient and ran off to play.

When my mother and father arrived for a short visit, Lynn was especially excited because Grandma became such a responsive student. She lip-read Grandma as easily as she read the familiar words off our lips. But within hours after they arrived, Lynn pulled Grandma over to a place on the couch and dumped out the blocks and cars and hats and other objects from her matching-bags.

“Find the matching block, Grandma!” her nodding head and pointing finger seemed to say as she held up a block. Grandma caught on quickly. In her own silent way Lynn praised her for each success. Slowly they worked through the entire set of objects and colors. Then she moved on to the auditory-training game. They both sat down on the floor. Lynn set the wastebasket behind Grandma, the blocks in front of her. It took Lynn several attempts to demonstrate the rules, but soon Grandma was knocking over one block at a time as Lynn gleefully banged the wastebasket for all she was worth. If Grandma looked around, Lynn shook her head “No! No!”

With increasing frequency now, Lynn became angry and frustrated at our inability to understand her. She pulled on my arm, pointing to the back door; I followed her outside, thinking she wanted to be pushed on the swing. At the swing she shook her head, stamped her feet and pointed toward the woods. More than once I made a trip across the field and into the cool woods, only to find her as upset and unsatisfied there as at the swing. Back to the apartment we went, with me still unable to interpret her gestures and facial expressions. In the end she often gave up, having forgotten her original interest.

Sometimes Lynn’s inability to communicate brought added strain to family relationships. When we struggled unsuccessfully to grasp the meaning behind her insistent gestures, we were all left feeling helpless and angry. When Bruce played with friends, he did not want to be bothered by Lynn’s fruitless attempts to make herself understood. “Can’t you make her stay away from us?” Bruce would complain. Sometimes Louise and I would blame each other for the frustration we saw building in Lynn, feeling that this recurring problem was due to one of us not working hard enough with her.

The John Tracy Clinic suggested a way that would allow Lynn to communicate with us without speech: an experience book. We still have those two loose-leaf notebooks, each crammed with hundreds of pictures pasted on 5” by 8” cards. The blue books are worn on the edges, fingermarked from Lynn’s dirty hands. She would come running in from playing outside, grab one of the books, dash over to us while turning the pages in search of the picture that would say she had seen a blue jay or wanted to swing.

Lynn missed her grandparents when they left for home but with this new way to “talk” to Lynn about them, it seemed to ease the hurt that came with their sudden disappearance. I don’t know what we would have done without those experience books.
Lip reading allowed us to talk to Lynn in only the most limited ways. She couldn’t communicate with us at all. She couldn’t ask questions. She couldn’t tell us how she felt. She couldn’t tell us what had happened outside when she came in crying. She couldn’t tell us where she wanted to go, what she wanted to do.

We went through all our photographs and picked the ones we thought had meaning to Lynn. Daddy riding a bicycle along the sidewalk in front of our apartment. Lynn swinging on the rope across the creek in the woods. Bruce climbing a tree. Opening presents at a birthday party. Lynn sitting in the sandbox, heaping sand over her legs. Lynn sitting in her wading pool. Mommy driving the car. Lynn riding on Daddy’s shoulders. Mommy putting on Lynn’s hearing-aid harness. A cow standing beside the road. An armadillo in the middle of the road. Grandma and Grandpa standing beside their car. Grandma and Grandpa waving good-bye.

The list went on and on. We added to it with pictures from magazines. We started taking new snapshots of ordinary things—Lynn going to bed, Lynn asleep, Lynn taking a bath. Slowly the books began to fill up. Each evening we looked through them together and “talked” about experiences and people and things she knew. Wherever we went, the experience books went along, and they reduced communication problems dramatically. We would start for a drive in the country and Lynn would begin looking out the window. She couldn’t say, “I’m looking for cows,” but now she reached over, opened her experience book, pointed to the picture of a cow, then went back to looking out the window.

Before she pulled Louise or me to follow her outside, she searched through the experience book. If she didn’t come to us with a picture, we handed her the book with a questioning look on our faces. She often turned to a favorite picture of herself, standing in tennis shoes and a red gingham dress at the edge of the duck pond. The white ducks bobbed up and down in the water at her feet; she held a small bag of breadcrusts. Instead of making futile trips to the swing or the woods, we immediately set off for the duck pond.

Lynn caught on quickly and in many situations communication by pictures was unnecessary. She simply understood. When we started loading sleeping bags and the tent into our car at the end of August for a two-week vacation in New Mexico, she seemed to know what lay ahead. On the second afternoon of our trip we pulled into a National Forest Service camp a few miles northeast of Santa Fe. We started unpacking and as I laid out the tent, Lynn began handing me stakes to pound into the ground. She had watched me do this before and needed no coaxing to lend her assistance.

Once the tent stood in the shade of a large pine tree, Lynn ran off to rummage through the two boxes of our camping gear, obviously searching for something. She pulled out a gallon plastic water jug she remembered seeing us use the previous summer. Without any instructions—no one pointed, no one said anything—she dashed off to a nearby faucet, filled the bucket, and within minutes struggled back into camp with water for cooking and drinking. After dinner Louise collected the trash and paper plates in a bag, without a word handed it to Lynn, who knowingly walked off to deposit it in the nearest trash can.

Our vacation ended all too quickly. We drove back through Santa Fe in the early afternoon. A late August sun reflected off the white hood of the car as we made our way slowly through the downtown business district.

On the outskirts of town Louise pointed to a sign as we neared an intersection. “That’s the school for the deaf,” she said. A cluster of stucco buildings stood back on a sloping incline to the right. A driveway ran up to the school, which was surrounded by lawns and trees.

“It’s the New Mexico Residential School,” Louise added. We came to the sign and I pulled to the side of the street, the engine idling.

“Shall we go up and visit?” I asked, almost thinking out loud. I wanted to go in, to see what the school looked like, to ask about their educational program. At the same time I felt a sense of uneasiness, foreboding. The Residential School. For months
we had heard those words. In California, in Illinois, in Oklahoma. Almost every state had a residential school for the deaf, a place where young children were separated from their mothers and fathers.

From what we had read, from all we had learned at the John Tracy Clinic, from what audiologists and speech teachers had told us, we were confident it would never be necessary to send Lynn to a residential school. Only the few deaf children who did not develop speech attended residential schools to learn a manual trade and to learn to communicate with one another by means of gestures. What could we find out here that would benefit Lynn?

I looked at Lynn, then back at the school. She had no way of knowing what it meant, no way of knowing that other children like herself lived there. But in a sense, the children there were not like Lynn. Out of such schools, we had heard, came the manual deaf adults, the ones who couldn’t communicate with the rest of society.

I looked at Louise. “What do you think?”

“Should we take the time?” she asked, and the tone of her voice reflected my feelings.

I pulled away from the curb and headed out of town. Soon the residential school was far behind us. But each of us thought about it for hundreds of miles. At the same time we hoped and prayed that a good oral school would accept Lynn soon.

Twelve

A hint of fall filled the air one day in late September when Louise and I set out for Chickasha, Oklahoma, to register Lynn in the Jane Brooks School for the Deaf. It was about forty miles west of Norman.

For more than a year we had felt that if Lynn was to learn to talk, it would require professionally trained teachers. The few lessons Jill Corey had given Lynn underscored everything we had read. Start your child in school as early as possible. The earlier, the better. Most hearing-impaired children, we learned, didn’t begin school before the age of three or even four. Some waited until six or seven, with disastrous results.

During our first week back I had gone to a professor associated with the speech and hearing program at the University of Oklahoma, which had a special school for deaf children. To my surprise, I discovered that Lynn was too young to attend. We would have to wait until she reached three or three and a half before they would accept her.

“But we wanted to start her right away,” I said to him, trying to hide my disappointment.

“There’s an excellent private school in Chickasha,” he suggested. “It’s an oral school. It’s on the campus of the Oklahoma College of Liberal Arts. They might take your daughter even though she’s only two and a half.”

A nationally recognized institution, the Jane Brooks School for the Deaf had been founded by Mrs. Margaret Brooks as an outgrowth of teaching her own daughter, Jane, who became deaf at an early age when stricken by meningitis. Our first letter from the school emphasized that it offered an oral education for deaf