

Notes on the Conversation

Accessibility. The airport experiences Carlene describes happen all too often to many Deaf individuals. A Deaf person may miss a flight because s/he was not informed of an announcement. (Ticket agents often insist that the Deaf person sit and wait until the agent is free to assist him/her, and nearly as often the agent forgets. Usually if airline personnel inform the Deaf person of a change, that person can take care of the situation him/herself.) TTYs may not be readily accessible, either because airport personnel don't know where they are, or they are located in a distant area of the terminal, or they are stored at an information center that is closed at night. Sometimes the TTYs themselves are locked up, requiring the assistance of airport personnel to unlock them—an inconvenience when someone is in a hurry.

There are many tales about incidents like this, and not only at airports. More than once, well-meaning flight attendants have ordered wheelchairs to take Deaf passengers from one boarding gate to another during a flight change. Sometimes Deaf passengers are offered reading materials in Braille. Stories like these graphically illustrate the frustrations Deaf people encounter in the hearing world. The frustration is not because Deaf people can't hear, but because the hearing world is unaware of their needs. Ideally, ticket agents and airline attendants would be able to sign well. The next best thing would be if agents would *ask* Deaf people if they want assistance, rather than assume it's needed, and *inform* Deaf people, using paper and pencil, of what to expect.

The Story Corner

“Uncoding the Ethics”

Freda relates a joke about a hearing man who woke up one morning to find the bag of money he had hidden in his yard missing. When he saw footprints leading to the house of his Deaf neighbor, he knew who took his money. He brought a Sign Language interpreter with him, as well as his shotgun, to confront the neighbor. Watch what happens during the exchange between the neighbors with the interpreter as an intermediary.

Look in the Answer Key, p. 150, for a summary of the joke.