

# Meeting the challenge of deafness



Meeting the Challenge of Deafness In an article d " 2 Deaf Men Welcome Challenge of Taking Pilot's Seat" that appeared in the October 3, 2006 Star-Bulletin, author Helen Altonn tells of the challenges that 2 deaf pilots had in pursuing their dream of flying. Altonn tells us that the pilots, Ed Chevy and Marvin Cooper, shared similar passions as well similar obstacles. The author relates how family, friends, and technology can make the world more difficult for the hearing impaired. The author tells that when Cooper wanted to attend Indiana State to become a pilot, " His parents told him he couldn't be a pilot and encouraged him to go into computer technology". However, Cooper's will and passion for flying won out. For Chevy, his love of flying has been hitched to his need to be involved. After graduating from college in California, he sought out a new home. Chevy states, " Something about Hawaii attracted me. It wasn't the tradewinds or sun. It was something about the deaf community". The challenge of the deaf is to find support from the world around, through friends, family, and community.

Being hearing impaired is a challenge in today's world. Often, the deaf are limited not by what they can do but by the perceptions of what the world thinks they should do. Cooper's family initially discouraged him from trying to be a pilot, yet he was able to persist and learn to fly. However, he did not do it alone. As he said in the article, " At 14, every Saturday I snuck out and would go to flight school, learning how to fly. A very sweet man named Charley took me under his wing." In spite of the challenge, someone was there to help him face it and guide him through it.

For the hearing impaired, a little help sometimes goes a long way. Though Cooper and Chevy are unusual in their quest for flying, the common bond of deafness may entice others to join in their challenge. Both men have shown

an interest in starting a club for deaf pilots and the concept of support groups may be a great benefit. That these men can fly a plane without sound, without any radio communication, and using only visual instruments can be transferred and taught to other hearing impaired students and the concept can be used in other endeavors. The concept of "community" that Chevy cherishes can be invaluable.

For Chevy, it was the support of the deaf community that saw him through. Yet, support alone may not be enough. There are always technical challenges that stand in the way of accessing many careers and programs. Hearing-impaired individuals are often able to meet these obstacles with unique and clever solutions. When working as an auto mechanic, people would question Cooper's ability to hear the engine. According to Altonn, when Cooper was employed he used an oscilloscope to be able to see the sounds of the engine. He had put technology to use to overcome the technical obstacles that had been placed in his path.

Everyone faces challenges everyday. The deaf have an additional challenge in their life, yet their greatest obstacles may be the people that discourage them from pursuing an avenue seldom traveled. Technology, as well as being an obstacle, can also be used in novel ways to overcome a challenge and turn a problem into a solution. It is the perception of deafness that stands in the way of overcoming the challenge and family and friends can become a self-defeating image for the deaf. Learning what can be accomplished and bonding together to offer support can be the greatest tool that we can use to ease the challenges facing the deaf.

Works Cited

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Altonn, Helen. " 2 Deaf Men Welcome Challenge of Taking Pilot's Seat." Star-Bulletin 3 Oct. 2006 [Honolulu, HI] . 25 Oct. 2006 .