

AN INTERVIEW WITH LORIE NOEL

My name is Lorie Noel. And just to clarify, I don't live in Seattle at all. I live about 30 miles south of Seattle. I moved there because well, it wasn't my choice; it was my parents' choice to move there. I was born almost deaf, what you would call "severely hard of hearing." But my parents decided they wanted me to talk. I didn't see any sign language growing up. It wasn't until later, when I was an adult that I began to learn sign language.

But my parents thought that I could understand everything around me because they were just judging based on my responses in one-on-one conversations, and I was a very skilled lip reader, so they had no idea what I was missing. For example, growing up in group situations, or in classrooms, I was missing everything. But then I started meeting Deaf people and hanging out with them when I was about 37. Yeah. I am so glad I met them, too! Because, now I feel normal. Before, I never felt normal. I felt I couldn't quite fit in with anyone. And I was missing out on so much. It was very isolating. I felt like I couldn't do anything. But when I started seeing sign language, I was like "Wow!" I just love it. I felt like I understood more of what was going on around me. Before I knew Sign, if there was a family gathering or any situation where people were talking around the table, I just sat and I didn't do anything. I had no idea what I was missing. I just sat there quietly. But after I had interpreters, I knew what I was missing, and I won't tolerate that anymore!

SSPs also may do light interpreting for me. Like if I am going food shopping, and I need to write or pay for my food. Suppose a clerk talks to me and I don't understand, my SSP informs me and interprets for me. It really helps. Well, I contact my SSP ... through email and I ask that person which day she is available, and she gives me all the dates for the month, and I look at my schedule and her schedule, and I pick. I say "This. OK." We agree on a time, and she shows up. Sometimes I am ready, sometimes I am not (laughs) you can call me 'punctually challenged.'

Anyway... I tend to... the stores or places I want to go to... I imagine the location of all the stores. I write them in order. Like, if the post office is closest, I will go write that, and if there is an optical place next door, I will go there. I try to follow where it is the closest, you know, instead of back-tracking. I do not know if that makes sense, but ... You know, make the stops close, in order, so I can take advantage of the short time that I have. I show them things to look for, like I will save a book to show them, I will say "This is what I want." Or I will show them a brand of clothing, and I will say "This is the brand I am looking for." I do not hear them knocking, so I tell them to go ahead and come in. If the door is unlocked, I tell them to just come in and make themselves comfortable. I have lots and lots of magazines, you know... The other [thing] is if I want more time, I will pay them out of my pocket, if they agree with it.

I prefer to have the same person for the long term because they know me, and I know them. They know what I like to buy, whatever. Plus, I prefer to [alternate between] two different SSPs at the same time because of the variety, and because each SSP has

strong and weak points. Sometimes some SSPs are really skilled at finding clothes for me, and others – not so good, but they have other skills that I like. So I prefer to have two different SSPs at the same time. I use an interpreter for serious things, like doctor visits, that require certified interpreting, or serious bank business, like loans. But SSPs are for simple things, like food shopping and a little bit of interpreting.

End of the Interview.