

Interviewee: Wendie Haglund
Interviewer: Laura Brum
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Abstract: Born in 1954, Wendie Haglund lived in Worcester her whole life. Growing up she had chronic ear infections and cholesteatomas. However, her life changed forever when she was 32 and she became deaf. She was diagnosed with tumors behind her brain and she lost her hearing overnight. Wendie faces many difficulties because people often mistake her for being hearing because of how well she speaks. She fits into neither the hearing nor the deaf world, and it's something that she will deal with for the rest of her life. However, Wendie is an amazing woman who remains positive and continues to give back to her community through volunteer work.

Laura Brum: Okay, what's your name?

Wendy Hag: My name is Wendie Haglund.

LB: Okay, where were you born?

WH: I was born in Worcester Mass.

LB: Worcester Mass? Okay. When were you born?

WH: 1954.

LB: What do you do for work?

WH: I'm presently not working. I volunteer at a church, we're a food program.

LB: Oh that's nice.

WH: Yeah.

LB: How old were you when you became deaf?

WH: I was 32.

LB: 32. What happened?

WH: I had tumors, well initially as a child I had a lot of like swimmer ear infections, I kept getting what is called cholesteatomas, small little tumors in the ear canal that I had

operated on. That was before, and then was diagnosed with tumors behind my brain and that was when I initially lost my hearing, overnight.

LB: Wow. How did that make you feel?

WH: Sad.

LB: Yeah...

WH: Real sad, it still makes me sad.

LB: Yeah...

WH: Scared, real scared.

LB: I can imagine.

WH: Yeah.

LB: How did your family and your friends, how do they react?

WH: They still don't [laughing] it's taken, I'm 53 years old and I think maybe now they're finally starting to realize that I'm deaf. [Laughing] It was a big adjustment for them.

LB: Is it because you speak?

WH: Yes exactly. I go through this all the time because I speak. I do have a problem with my speech but it's more my vocabulary; we're finding out that it's because I don't hear all the words so I have forgotten a lot of my vocabulary. I was getting very nervous a couple years ago because I was noticing my speech was getting, was getting smaller and smaller and it wasn't, it was not my speech itself, it was my vocabulary, but I was thinking it was the opposite. I was thinking that I was losing my speech, but it was actually my vocabulary, so I went to a speech therapist and I work on it a lot now.

LB: That's great. When you became deaf did you have to change your job? Were you working?

WH: I was working at the time, yeah. Um...

LB: Did you have to change your job?

WH: Yes I did.

LB: Yes?

WH: Yeah, I did go back to work for a while but I had some, a lot more surgeries after that.

LB: Alright. Speaking of surgeries, you had a cochlear implant right?

WH: Yes I did.

LB: Did you like the cochlear implant?

WH: I had to have a cochlear because I'm allergic to antibiotics so I can't wear hearing aids, and of course being that I am deaf they really don't work efficiently on me, but I kept getting ear infections and I'm allergic to antibiotics so that was the main reason behind, so I could have some communication and I got the cochlear. But from the time I had the cochlear put in it did not feel right to me, I knew that something wasn't right. Yes I did like it, it was a big decision to make, it did help me a lot but I had it in for about a year, maybe two year- a little bit over a year and my body rejected it, and I had to have it taken out.

LB: When you had the cochlear implant you liked it a lot but did it help you?

WH: It helped me yes, it did help me, yup.

LB: And this is the last question. Do you have any hopes for the future?

WH: Um...

LB: For people who lost their...

WH: I try to look bright toward the future. I'm a pretty uplifting person and I, I hope that at some point in my life I'll be able to get it together more and do something more with my life than what I'm doing right now. I was going to school here for a while, I was taking some classes, but I had gotten ill again and I had stopped. Like I said, I do volunteer work and that's very rewarding to me. I do a lot of other research work and what not, and I'm writing a paper to help the deaf community.

LB: Wow, that's nice.

WH: And I've done a lot of things with the deaf associations, CLW.

LB: That's really nice.

WH: Thank you.

LB: It was nice to meet you.

WH: Very nice to meet you too.

LB: Thank you.