

DEDICATION

Gilbert L. Delgado Administration Building

New Mexico School for the Deaf

March 31, 1995

Doin Hicks

How wonderful it is to be back in Santa Fe, a city of grandeur and warm hospitality, and to this beautiful campus. I am delighted to be a part of this celebration, even more so because you honor a person so totally deserving, a distinguished son of Santa Fe and member of this school community. You not only honor him but, in so doing, you honor NMSD for his having been so much a part of its history and accomplishments.

Dr. Gilbert L. Delgado and I first met and worked together 30 years ago at a summer workshop which he was directing. A strong relationship both as friend and professional colleague developed and has never wavered since that time. My life has been made so much richer for having known him. He is a modern day pioneer and innovator from whom I, and many others, have learned much.

Before we can fully understand and appreciate much of what Dr. Delgado has done, especially in his role as educational leader, it is useful to look back at the beginnings of our profession and to the beginnings of NMSD. You have a fine school museum which houses many artifacts and much information about your illustrious history, so I will not try to

recount that. Perhaps it would be of interest, especially to you students, for me to tell you a bit about the overall history of our system of great schools and programs and the important place that NMSD has in that picture. My personal interest in NMSD, by the way, goes back to 1954 when I completed training to teach deaf students. NMSD Superintendent Marshall Hester came to Arkansas where I was in school and visited with the seven students in my training class. He offered jobs to three of us as teachers at NMSD. Two of my classmates accepted. I was very tempted but decided to go back to my native state of MO to teach and coach football. I have stayed in contact with friends at NMSD throughout the 41 years since that time and have visited from time to time, so I know a bit about you and am pleased to say that I have known and worked with the last five NMSD Superintendents.

Let us step back now a hundred years or so to the late 1800's and think about our schools in this country. Though New Mexico had a long and illustrious history it had not yet entered the union as a state. Happily, however, the territorial government was sensitive to the needs of deaf persons and followed what most of the states had done and passed a law to establish a school for deaf students. This law, like the laws in most states, did not ensure that necessary money to operate the school would always be provided, so at NMSD like many other schools there was a difficult time finding money to keep the school open. During the first few years of its operation it was necessary for your school's founder and first superintendent, Mr. Lars Larson, to use his own money and to seek help from the Santa Fe community to support the school because the

territorial government had very little money. In fact he provided much of the money for the first permanent building, although he was later repaid by the government. The problems faced by NMSD during its early years were not unusual. Many of the 60 or so schools for the deaf in our country at this time had faced similarly hard time. Some even had to close temporarily because of lack of money, epidemics of disease, or other hardships. Early educators often performed more than one job and, of course students often shared the work on school farms and gardens, laundries and workshops. A prized part of my personal library is a collection of histories of schools for the deaf. It has been inspirational to me over the years to read about the commitment which was required by so many people to maintain and develop our system of schools and programs for deaf students.

Your first superintendent, Mr. Larson, was indeed a pioneer. Fortunately there were many others like him. Also, as you know, he was a deaf man. Deaf persons had a major role in the establishment of at least 24 of our nation's schools for the deaf. Our country and our schools are deeply indebted to these deaf pioneers. Once again, after more than 100 years, our schools are recognizing the leadership abilities of deaf persons. NMSD is to be congratulated for its selection of Dr. Vasishta to follow Dr. Delgado.

Just a bit more about the past. Mr. Larson began developing your school in 1885 and in 1887 it was officially established by the territorial government of New Mexico. 1887 surely was a good year, especially here in Santa Fe. Other important things happened in 1887. Let me tell you about one of them.

You may know that Dr. Alexander Graham Bell had invented the telephone a few years earlier. The French Government awarded a prize each year to someone who discovered or invented something which was a major contribution to mankind. It was called the Volta prize in honor of the Frenchman named Volta who invented the electric battery. In 1870 the Volta prize, which was a sum of money, was given to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell.

Dr. Bell, whose wife was deaf, had a great interest in the education of deaf persons, although he was not in favor of the use of sign language. He decided to use the Volta prize money along with other funds which were contributed to build a library building and to collect all the information possible about deafness. The library, which was called the Volta Bureau, was established in 1887 The same year that NMSD was established. The building stands today and is the office of a national organization named for Dr. Bell. As the library collection grew in size to almost 50,00 volume, Bell realized that there was no history of the development of schools for the deaf in our country. He provided funds and commissioned Dr. Edward Allen Fay at Gallaudet College to coordinate and edit this history. It was to be completed by 1892 and would be a part of the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America and displayed at the World's Columbian Exposition. Each school for the deaf was invited to write its own history, along with pictures, building plans and other data and send these materials to Dr. Fay for editing. When finished these histories were bound into a three volume set and remain the only complete early record of our country's schools for the deaf. Only 2000 sets were printed and few copies remain in circulation. NMSD was a only a few years old, and had just 13 students, at this time

but , of course it had and was developing a historical record. Mr. Larson wrote the history of NMSD for this publication. It was short - only four pages and occupies position number 53 among the 61 school histories of public schools which comprise volumes one and two of the set. My copy of this history is cherished, and made even more meaningful when my family and I were privileged to live for nine years in Fay House a large Victorian residence on the Gallaudet Campus, the place where Dr. Fay accomplished this important work.

Why do I recount these stories? I do so in the hope that I can reinforce what I am sure you already know: NMSD and the great people who have nourished and nurtured her are an important part of a National Treasure. This treasure is our system of schools for the deaf which for almost 175 years has meant so much to our deaf citizens and their families and friends. By supporting and maintaining our special schools and by honoring persons like Dr. Delgado who has meant so much to NMSD and to all deaf and hard of hearing students we keep alive the important history of these treasured schools.

We are at a crossroads in our profession, and, in fact, in all of education. The schools systems around the country are not providing the level of quality which our nation demands and so we have set new goals. These goals, if achieved, will put our schools back in a position in international leadership by the year 2000. Of course we want the same high levels of achievement for deaf and hard of hearing students as the public schools seek for all students. Many of us fear, however, that our special schools are not seen as a partner in this effort to improve our schools. Some persons say that the

special school is no longer needed. As our federal government and the states struggle to balance budgets it is easy for them to listen to those who say that the special school is no longer an important part of the system.

Sadly, a few schools for the deaf have closed and others have found it necessary to eliminate parts of their program due to lack of support. Not so for New Mexico! NMSD continues to be a star in the New Mexico sky. Do you know why? Well, there are a number of reasons and each of you here who gives your best effort as a student, a staff member, a parent, a regent, or a community supporter is a reason for the school's excellence. But beyond that there is another reason. That reason is quality of leadership at the helm of the school. The last five years, under Dr. Delgado's leadership the school has made important strides. Let mention just a few. Existing programs have been improved and new ones created which keep the school vibrant and maintain its credibility. Quality of teaching and instructional supervision has received top priority. At the same time outreach programs gained strength, particularly the pre school programs. The new physical facility program at Albuquerque testifies to the commitment to this area. On the other end of the student age spectrum, transition and independent living programs are now operational. The weekend homegoing program gives students more quality time with family as well as permits them to participate both in home community and NMSD community activities on a regular basis. Success in the Very Special Arts Program has brought important recognition to students, faculty, and the NMSD community.

Attention to historical preservation and outdoor art (including signage, sculpture, walls and this immediate plaza area) have been a hallmark of his administration. All the while he worked diligently with community groups and with higher education in New Mexico for the benefit of deaf students. In no small part his efforts led to the establishment of educational interpreter training and the re-establishment of teacher training in New Mexico. These and related accomplishments during a short five-year administration are ample reason for the recognition you accord Dr. Delgado today. However, his work on behalf of NMSD which you have seen here in Santa Fe is only the tip of the iceberg. What of the other 37 years he has devoted to the field of education of deaf and hard of hearing students?

In a word, he has done it all.

As a teacher: Once a teacher, always a teacher. He began his career as a teacher and today, even in retirement, he continues to teach at the local community college.

As an Administrator: Early in his career, he was offered the opportunity to serve as principal at a large and prestigious high school for deaf students. He quickly gained the respect and loyalty of a faculty which was older and more experienced than he. It was during this time that we first met. I was a principal also with some of the same challenges.

As a bureaucrat: In 1964 he moved from CA to Wash. to administer a very important federal program related to education of deaf students- Media Services and Captioned Films. He was a "get it done" administrator and learned to

cut red tape with the best of them.

As a College Administrator: After five years with the government he moved across town to become Dean of the Graduate School at Gallaudet University. During his 14 years in this important position graduate programs at Gallaudet grew and prospered. New programs were developed and enrollment increased significantly. One of these new programs offered a doctoral degree in educational administration and provided a deafness-friendly environment. This was especially attractive to persons like Superintendent Vasishta who needed a place free from communication barriers in which to pursue an academically rigorous program of study.

As an International Program Officer: I believe it is safe to say that Dr. Delgado has done more than any person in our country to encourage, support and improve both education and welfare of deaf person in other countries. Throughout his years as Gallaudet he supervised and participated extensively in international activities. His multilingual skills, his knowledge of the field of deafness, along with his teaching and management skills made him much in demand for international outreach activities. International development is very rewarding but travel and work schedules can be extremely tiring.

Throughout his career Dr. Delgado has continued to improve his knowledge and professional skills. Through research and publications he has shared his knowledge with the larger professional community and the world. His books, monographs, articles and presentations are both numerous

and of high quality.

Greatness is not measured only in terms of deeds, but by what is inside the person. My admiration of Dr. Delgado comes more from knowing the man than from knowing what he has done. Knowing his unerring sense of values, beginning with his commitment to God and to family lets me know the fabric of which he is made. This same commitment, however, does not end at home but extends to friends, community, colleagues and beyond. This Son of Santa Fe is indeed a man of the world.

Gil, I congratulate you on this well deserved honor. And I congratulate NMSD and Santa Fe for their wisdom in providing this recognition. And finally, on behalf of your five children and 16 grandchildren who live in Maryland and on behalf of my family and me along with the host of friends you have there, we demand that, beginning immediately, you and your lovely wife Cecilia give us an equal share of your time.