

Advocate in TRS and Motel TV Captions

Lawrence J. Brick

No Retirement from Advocacy

“Ask not what the deaf organizations can do for you, but ask what you can do for yourself and let the deaf organizations benefit.” It has always been Lawrence Brick’s belief that progress is made by the little guy who takes advantage of the system to get things done.

After a lifelong career in education, Larry Brick doesn’t know when to retire. After years of molding children of all ages into citizens of tomorrow, he turns to molding the telephone relay services (TRS) in Pennsylvania into an ideal relay service that provides universal service to everyone in the Keystone State.

Larry Brick fondly remembers “... back in the fall of the early 1990’s when many advocates, including Sandy Duncan, then Director of the PA Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and I attended a meeting between PSAD, PUC, and the PA telephone exchanges to discuss the establishment of the TRS in PA (and that was around the time when ADA was passed), I identified several states that had already established the TRS. The PUC Commissioner at that time reacted with disbelief with comments like: “You mean that even the little state of . . . in the boonies has

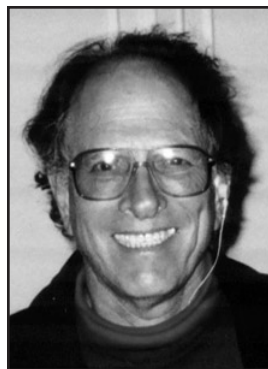
a relay service?” After my enthusiastic “YES”, he gave an order that he wanted proposals “on his desk” by December. Within 3 months, the PA TRS was born. I remember making my first relay call in tears to my Dad on my birthday, Decem-



Larry Brick with his wife, Carolyn

ber 24, 1993.

From this call, Larry Brick did not sit back on his laurels. The TRS service back then was just beginning. He strived to transform the calling experience for people who are deaf and hard of hearing from just text to voice to include other possible modes of communications. With his prodding, Pennsylvania became one of the first states to sign up for CapTel trials with Ultratec. In his quest for functional equivalency nationwide, he would like to see the CAs make “Text-ASL-to-Spoken-English” as



Lawrence J. Brick
Retired School Administrator
Philadelphia, PA

Pennsylvania Public
Utility Commission



Pennsylvania TRS Advisory Council

Top Row: Steve Samara, President of PA Telephone Assn.; Lois Steele, PA Grange representative; Lenora Best, PUC Consumer Advocate; ODHH representative – unidentified; Mitch Levy, AT&T Account Manager; Gary Bootay, PSAD representative. Bottom Row: Doug Hardy, deaf blind representative; Larry Brick, Chairperson & PSAD representative with guide dog, Takao; Don Lurwick, deaf representative at large; Diane Bender, SHHH representative.

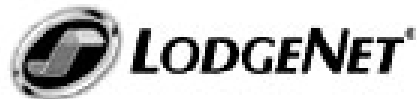
the default mode instead of word-for-word transmission.

Brick takes a variety of approaches whenever he sees an obstacle and speaks up for himself and others. One example took place at a Super 8 Motel near the Denver Airport. Brick could not see any way to turn on the captions in his room TV because the Lodgenet TV remote control was outdated. After sending a letter to the Super 8 Motel head offices, he was referred back to the manager at the Denver Airport Super 8 Motel.



Armed with information from TDI and NAD's Telecommunications Advocacy Network (NAD-TAN) he had several pleasant and supportive commu-

nica-tions with the manager who advised him that she was following up on this. Although he has not heard anything since then, he certainly plans to stop at that Super 8 Motel on one of his frequent Rocky Mountain ski trips and check them out.



Larry Brick's bottom line? File, file, file. Letters, letters, letters. Some lead to results and some do not. He says, "I can't help but wonder if more of us filed complaints and wrote nice letters every time we have been denied access, if we'd have better results. I write or file every time. ... It takes only a few minutes. ... Use the deaf organizations as a resource, but let your fingers do the scripting. All kinds of people across the USA with far more knowledge than I have helped me in much of my advocacy efforts."

Advocacy Toolbox - TRS & Motel TV Captions



1. Contact list for TRS Complaints:
www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/trs_contact_list.html
2. Closed Captioning Fact Sheet:
www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/closedcaption.html
3. TRS Fact Sheets: www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/trs.html
4. Accessible Transient lodging, ADA, US Access Board:
www.access-board.gov/adaag/html/adaag2.htm#tran