

emerald

Blind, deaf woman earns two PhDs

She is totally blind and profoundly deaf. But when she marches up to claim her two doctorate degrees from the University June 13, Addie Becht will think of herself as a professional, not a handicapped person.

"When I get my degrees, I will not feel they are giving them as a favor," she says. "I feel that I earned them. It never entered my mind that I was to compete because I was deaf and blind. I wanted to compete as a professional."

Becht, who will receive doctorates in counseling psychology and clinical psychology, has mixed feelings about whether her accomplishment is remarkable.

"First I'd have to say that no, it's not remarkable, because I think of myself as a professional — not as a handicapped person," she says. "I think that too often handicapped people make too much out of their handicaps so they make themselves handicapped."

"Secondly, yes it is remarkable, because when I was involved with drugs there came a point when my mind and body were literally destroyed and they thought I had less than three months to live," she says. "I had to learn to read and write all over again. There was a time when I could not add one plus one."

"When I see what it was then and what it is now... Then yes, it is a miracle."

Becht, 48, speaks in a calm, well-modulated voice. Her interpreter, Beth Schmidt, a doctor of naturopathy and a chiropractic doctor, touches her lightly to give her indications of when to speed up and slow down as she relates her story.

Becht became addicted to narcotic drugs because of a painful bone disease which was diagnosed as osteomyelitis. She was given drugs to combat the intense pain.

Her hearing began deteriorating when she was 11 and by age 33 she was profoundly deaf. Her sight started deteriorating in 1959 and 10 years later she was legally blind. The nerve deterioration occurred because of her abuse of narcotic drugs and alcohol.

"By the age of 10, I was a (drug) addict," she says. "But I did not know it until I was 14. Drug addiction was not accepted then. My family tried to hide my drug problem."

At 14, she separated from her family, turned "very bitter — very much against the rest of the world," and turned to heroin.



Addie Becht's interpreter, "Dr. Beth," uses sign language so that Becht, who is deaf and blind, can respond to questions.

Until Sept. 3, 1962. "I decided to get the monkey off of my back. I kicked drugs cold turkey," she says.

Her friends locked her in a room with no clothes for 14 days and 14 nights — "until I had kicked it. Much of the time I did not know what was going on."

Afterward, her life took a "complete reverse." She changed her language, dress, and friends.

To help the nervousness she felt when off of the drugs, she turned to alcohol.

Then on June 9, 1969, Becht decided that "I'd be better off dead than on alcohol or drugs," and after eliminating suicide as an option, she stopped drinking.

Becht earned a B.A. in psychology from Cascade College in Portland in 1964, and a masters degree in counseling and guidance from Lewis and Clark College in 1976, with the help of Schmidt as her interpreter. She decided to go to the University because she wanted enough of an educational background to operate a state-approved clinic.

She decided to get two doctorates because it would take her less hours to get two doctorates than the state board required. Besides her two doctorates, she also earned an MA in clinical psychology at the University.

People at the University, — professors

as well as staff — had to be educated about her abilities and potential, Becht says.

"People have stereotyped ideas of deaf/blind people. I went to a lot of (trouble) to prove to the University what I could do."

Professors were skeptical — she was told she could not take required classes.

"My trial came when I had to do a 1,000 hour internship which is required of all clinical students. When I went to apply, I was refused and rejected again and again," she says.

Becht finally got a job at Riverside Psychiatric Hospital with Paul Rethinger. "The rest of the staff was skeptical, but Dr. Rethinger (spoke) on my behalf and made it possible."

Her internship was successful. "It was the turning point for the University and the turning point for me," she says.

She worked with violent patients, often without the help of an interpreter. She found she could easily put very disturbed patients at ease.

"As a result the University's thinking changed," Becht says. "They looked at me more as a professional and colleague. Of course that was very rewarding to me."

But it is "Dr. Beth," as Becht calls her interpreter, that deserves credit.

"She deserves the degree more than

I," Becht says. "She doesn't like me to say this (Schmidt nods her agreement) but she went to great lengths to make this possible."

Schmidt modestly refuses to say why she puts out such effort to help Becht. "I just do," she says.

"For three to four days, (Schmidt) never went to bed so she could translate lectures and draw anatomical charts so I could keep up," Becht says. "I met the same deadlines as the rest of the class. I was never behind."

When there were films or drawings on the blackboard, Schmidt would draw them on her back "so I could see them at the same time the other students saw them."

When exam time rolled around, Schmidt received the tests early so she could translate them into braille and draw any anatomical charts.

"Then I would go with the rest of the students to take the test," Becht says. "There were absolutely no exceptions made for me."

Becht says the only time she really thought about her handicaps was when she was "extremely frustrated. Then I told myself to stop feeling sorry for myself. If I started thinking of my handicap I'd be a loser."

Her frustration becomes evident when

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IFC, athletic department agree on funding

By Rich Burr
Of the Emerald

The Incidental Fee Committee approved a plan to reduce the incidental fee subsidy of the University Athletic Department for next year Wednesday.

The IFC, in a 6-1 vote, approved a plan calling for a fee of \$14 per student per term — with an additional \$1 guaranteed in the event of underrealized student ticket sales.

This year, a base subsidy of \$12 plus a guaranteed additional \$5 — coming from student ticket sales and student funds — ensured \$17 per student per term in support, said David Gibson, ASUO vice president for administration and finance and a member of the ASUO's negotiating team. With ticket sales amounting to an average of only \$3 per student per term, the ASUO paid the athletic department

\$120,000 from overrealized incidental fee funds.

With the \$3 incidental fee decrease, the Athletic Department has a \$120,000 deficit that will be made up through ticket sales, Gibson said. If the Athletic Department is unable to erase the deficit, the IFC will be liable to pay only up to \$40,000 of lost sales revenue — or \$15 per student per term, he added.

Under the approved plan the IFC will establish a \$40,000 athletic ticket guarantee reserve by raising incidental fees \$1 per student per term.

"We're putting the burden on the AD (Athletic Department) instead of on the students," Gibson said.

Gibson said if the Athletic Department does make up the \$120,000 deficit through ticket sales, the IFC might use the reserve money for ASUO program allocations.

"By the end of December the AD would have a realistic projection of their annual revenues," he said.

The IFC approval came just hours after student representatives finished negotiating the plan with Athletic Department and University administration officials.

"For the first time ever we've reached an agreement with the administration (on the AD subsidy)," Gibson said.

"We're the only school in the Pac-10 that sits down and negotiates with the administration," he added.

IFC member Dianne Ritterband-Mason, who cast the lone dissenting vote, said the committee should not have voted on the plan.

"I can't see how we can make a decision if we don't have the budget in front of us," she said. "I don't think we should be pressured into making a decision."

Even if the IFC did not consider the

plan, the State Board of Higher Education would make the decision, he said.

In related business, Gibson introduced for future consideration other sections of the final agreement between the ASUO and athletic department.

The agreement specifies that if students do not buy all football game tickets available for Sections 5-9 in Autzen Stadium by 5 p.m. of the Monday before the game, the AD could sell up to 400 reserved seats to the general public, Gibson said. The reserved seats would come from the top 20 rows of the mentioned sections.

"I think it will help us, and it will help them," Gibson said. The only people who will be adversely affected will be students who buy their tickets the day of the game, he added.

"We're not giving up good seats," said IFC member Betzy Fry.