**Bring colors to the soundless world**

“There may be little sound in the world of people who are deaf. But I want it to be a world full of colors,” said Professor James DeCaro. There are 13 colleges and universities admitting students who are deaf in China. In this land of silence, the faculty and students share a common friend—Mr. and Mrs. James DeCaro. In a period of nine years this American couple provided funding (through PEN-International at NTID) for over 30 Chinese faculty members to receive training in America. They also helped establish China’s distance learning system which cost about $40,000.

**“Lao D” to Faculty and Students’**

“Lao D” is the nickname given to James DeCaro by the Faculty and students of Tianjin Technical Institute for the Deaf at Tianjin University of Technology (TUT). “Lao D” does not mean he is old, but rather wise. It implies that the relationship he has with TUT is longstanding. In 1998, “Lao D” read news from the internet that Tianjin Technical Institute for the Deaf was established on the campus of TUT in 1997. “Upon reading the news, I was surprised and excited.” ”Lao D” has been involved in higher education for the deaf for almost 30 years. He knows clearly that it is not easy for China as a developing country to support higher education for deaf
students. “Lao D” wrote to TUT proposing the establishment of an academic exchange program.

Accompanied by the president of the National Technical Institute of the Deaf “Lao D” toured Tianjin in 1998. He said, “At that time, the quality of higher education for the deaf in Tianjin was very poor. The conditions for teaching, and the limited choice of courses, were very disappointing. However, the spirit and enthusiasm of both the faculty and students was very impressive.” As soon as he returned home, “Lao D” invited faculty members from TUT to visit the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology. The most skilled chef would not cook with rice. TUT faculty had the opportunity to personally experience the advanced education for the deaf in American. Unfortunately, TUT lacked the resources needed to develop deaf education.

“Lao D” tried various channels to help China develop its higher education for the deaf. “I called almost all the people who might provide support in my phone book.” By 2001, “Lao D” had contacted three world-class educational institutes for the deaf. In partnership with TUT, the Postsecondary Education Network International (PEN-International) was established at NTID. TUT gets support from PEN-International. Because of his contributions in higher education for the deaf in China, “Lao D” was
presented the “Hai River Award”…a prize given to foreign experts by the Tianjin Municipal Government.

A Dumpling Expert

As the director of the international deaf education organization, China’s deaf education was on “Lao D’s mind. “There are 20 million deaf people in China. Developing deaf education in China, and improving its influence, is so huge that no other country in the world has attempted to achieve such a large undertaking.” “Lao D” comes to China on an annual base, training faculty, talking to students, and observing teaching; he emails his Chinese partners two to three times daily, keeping in touch. “I frequently call them to seek information…requesting arrangement for educational observation at different sites. I think they might be annoyed by me, “Lao D” said jokingly.

“Lao D” has visited cities such as Beijing, Changchun, Zhengzhou, and Xi’an. Currently there are five colleges and universities that serve deaf students that have joined PEN-International in China and are receiving support from PEN. “Lao D” knows higher education for the deaf like he knows the back of his hand. “Changchun is the largest scale program in terms of higher education for the deaf, while Tianjin has the closest contact
with us….keeping close contact with higher education institutes for the deaf at various locations in China is his business. He jokingly points out however that there is also a personal reason: he wants to learn cooking skills from the chefs of China.

“I’m of Italian descent. Enjoying good food is in my nature. I’m also very interested in Chinese cuisine.” In 2002, “Lao D” started his dumpling making lessons at a Chinese colleague’s home. After a few trials, “Lao D” who has innate cooking talents, soon was able to make dumplings that looked quite authentic. The only difference was their large size. “My teacher told me that I am the fastest learner among his foreign dumpling making students. The dumplings were huge but did not break when boiled. Incredible!” “Lao D” laughed with satisfaction.

**Signs that laugh**

“I’ve never heard the sound of laughter. But I imagine it must sound beautiful, just like teacher Patricia’s sign language,” said students from TUT commenting on Patricia DeCaro’s sign language laughter. Patricia is “Lao D's” wife and a colleague. She has also been involved in higher education for the deaf for over 30 years. In students’ eyes, Patricia is smiling and magical, and easy to get to know. Students enjoy sharing their
feeling with her. Her email box is filled with emails from these students.

Both Patricia’s parents were deaf. Because of this, she has a special bond with deaf people and can better understand deaf people’s feelings. “Deaf people are sensitive to their environment since they do not hear the way we do. When communicating with them, honesty and respect are the two most important factors.” As a consultant, she pays special attention to the communication needs of deaf students, encouraging them to keep contact with the society. “As a child, I served as a bridge for my parents to the hearing world. I wish to be of service to deaf people by helping them to learn to reach to the hearing world.”

In order to have a comprehensive understanding of higher education of the deaf in China, Patricia conducted a series of interviews with more than 100 Chinese deaf students and faculty of deaf students trying to document their educational needs. “Some students expressed no confidence in their future. I have many deaf members in my family. Through education they were able to overcome their ‘disability’. I know for sure that education can bring new hope to deaf students.” This is what she preaches and this is also what she has been engaged in doing. The 2006 report she wrote on her study covers issues such as college majors for deaf students, communication and employment. The report is a “treasured classic” in
China’s higher education for the deaf.

At present, the DeCaro’s hope to help their son adopt a Chinese deaf child.

“To adopt a deaf child from China, a country we are very fond of, will accomplish multiple positive outcomes: it will not only help us maintain a close bond with China, it will also be a lovely product of our involvement in China’s higher education for the deaf.”
给无声世界带来色彩
——记国际高等聋教育联盟詹姆斯·迪卡罗夫妇

郑兴 黄敏

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“聋人的世界没有声音，但我希望是多姿多彩的。”詹姆斯·迪卡罗教授说。中国有13所高校招收聋学生，在这片无声的静土，师生们有共同的朋友——国际高等聋教育联盟的詹姆斯·迪卡罗夫妇。这对美国夫妇9年间资助30多位中国教师赴美培训，帮助建立总价值近40万美元的远程教育系统。

师生的“老迪”

天津理工大学聋人工学院的师生都昵称詹姆斯·迪卡罗为“老迪”，并不是他年龄有多大，而是他同该学院的关系很“老”。1998年，“老迪”在互联网上看到一条来自中国的信息：天津理工大学1997年设立了聋人工学院。“我当时十分惊讶，也很激动。”已从事聋人高教近30年的“老迪”知道，中国作为发展中国家扶持残疾人高教实属不易。“老迪”当即给天津聋人工学院写信，提议进行教学交流。

1998年，“老迪”陪同美国国家聋人工学院院长赴天津考察。“当年天津的聋人高教水平很低，简陋的教学条件和单调的课程设置让人失望，但师生的认真精神令人印象深刻。”回国后，“老迪”邀请天津教师赴美考察。巧妇难为无米之炊，虽见识了美国先进的聋人高等教育，天津聋人工学院也无所需师资力量。

为帮助中国聋人高等教育，“老迪”运用自己的力量四处奔波。“我几乎打遍了联系簿上的电话，与可能提供帮助的人联系。”2001年“老迪”联系到3家世界一流聋人高教机构，联合天津聋人工学院，成立了国际高等聋教育联盟，以联盟的名义资助中国聋人高教。因对中国残疾人教育所做的贡献，“老迪”获得了天津市府授予外国专家的“海河奖”。

包饺子能手

作为国际级聋教育机构负责人，中国聋教育最牵挂“老迪”的神经。“中国有2000多万聋人，在中国开展聋教育的意义和影响，其他任何国家都达不到。”“老迪”每来中国培训教师、和学生交流、考察教学；每天给中方负责人发两三封电子邮件，保持联系。“我经常打电话了解情况，要求他们帮我安排各地的教学考察，他们可能很‘烦’我。”“老迪”开玩笑地说。

北京、长春、郑州、西安……这里都留下过“老迪”的足迹。目前已有5所中国聋人高教院校加入联盟，受到资助。对各地聋人高教情况，“老迪”了如指掌。“目前长春的聋人高教规模最大，天津与我们联系最紧密……”同各地聋人高教机构保持密切联系的“老迪”，不仅是因为公事，“私事”也很重要：他要向中国教师学习厨艺。
“我是意大利裔，天生喜爱美食，对中国的饮食文化十分感兴趣！”2002年，“老迪”“拜师学艺”，到中国
教师家中学习包饺子。具有厨艺天赋的“老迪”经过一番学习，包出的饺子也像模像样，不过饺如其人——一个头特别大。“我的‘老师’说我是他教过的外国人里学得最快的，包得很大也没煮破，很厉害的！”“老迪”笑逐颜开。

会“笑”的手语

“我没听过笑声，我想它是一种很美妙的东西，像帕翠莎老师的手语一样。”天津聋人学院的学生都说帕翠
莎·迪卡罗的手语会“笑”。帕翠莎是“老迪”的夫人，也是同事，从事聋人高等教育30多年。在同学眼中，笑容
亲切的帕翠莎拥有“魔力”，总能很快打开学生心扉。学生遇到困难，都愿意向她倾诉，帕翠莎的电子邮箱里大
部分都是学生的邮件。

因父母都是聋人，帕翠莎同聋人有特殊感情，更能体会聋人的感受。“聋人因有生理缺陷比较敏感，同他们
交流，真诚和尊重最重要。”作为一名咨询师，她特别注重同学生交流，鼓励聋学生同社会保持联系。“从小我就是
父母同外界联系的桥梁，我希望自己成为更多聋人同外界联系的纽带。”

为全面评估中国聋人高教情况，2003年至2006年间，帕翠莎先后同100多位中国聋学生、聋校教师等进行座谈，
了解他们的学习和生活情况。“有些学生对未来、对生活感到沮丧，我的家族中也有很多聋人，他们通过教育弥补
生理缺陷。我相信教育能为中国聋学生带来希望。”帕翠莎这样说，也这样做着。其2006年提交的报告，涉及中国
聋人高教的专业设置、学生交流和就业等各方面，成为中国聋人高教的“宝典”。

目前，迪卡罗夫妇最大的心愿是帮儿子领养一名中国聋儿童。“在我们喜欢的中国领养一位聋儿童，既能同中国
保持更密切的联系，也可谓我们在中国从事高等聋教育的另一个收获。”

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