



2009-2010 Report

The Community Foundation

Serving Riverside and San Bernardino Counties

Donor Advised Funds

Gerald "Bummy" Burstein can point to scores of credits and honors bestowed upon him, but this winter The Community Foundation was the one honored when Burstein endowed a donor-advised fund with the Foundation. The new fund will permanently provide annual funds for scholarships and overall support for students at the California School for the Deaf, Riverside (CDR).

Fittingly, a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the new fund was held at the Gerald "Bummy" Burstein Student Center at the CDR.

For all he's done, and for all he's given, Burstein remains unassuming despite impacting the lives of generations of deaf and hard of hearing citizens.

"For me, leadership is not just an activity but a way to give back to students and future leaders to open new avenues for our deaf community" he said. "For all the achievements that I've had, I could not have accomplished them the support of many others. For that it is always important to give back. As the famous quote goes: 'It is better to give than to receive.'"

Born in 1926 without the ability to hear but with an innate sense of leadership and innovation, Burstein wasn't long in making his mark. Bolstered by a strong family support system and the ability to easily read lips, young Gerald enrolled in P.S. 47 for the Deaf in Manhattan. After graduation, he entered Charles Evans Hughes High School, where he enthusiastically participated in his studies and excelled athletically (swimming) and academically (honor society).

He also diligently contributed to his community, as attested by his achieving the rank of Eagle Scout and was elected into the Order of the Arrow society.

And that "Bummy" nickname goes back a long way. Like virtually all youth growing up in Brooklyn, young Gerald was a devotee of the hometown Brooklyn Dodgers. So animated was he in following the team in the 1940s that his classmates at Gallaudet University dubbed him "Bummy" as a backhanded tribute for his love of the team.

The Dodgers were affectionately - or not so, depending on one's perspective - known as "burn bums" and, thus, Gerald henceforth was "Bummy"

In 1946, Burstein entered City College of New York, but, after a year, his father "forced" him to enroll at Gallaudet College (now Gallaudet University) in Washington, DC., a decision that led to all good things that followed.

He thrived at Gallaudet, becoming active in campus activities for three years. He majored in education and, upon graduation in 1950, assumed his first teaching position: mathematics instructor at Minnesota School for the Deaf.

After 15 years at the school, during which he challenged himself with "spare time" pursuits varied as learning to fly (he successfully soloed) and refereeing high school basketball games, Burstein left to obtain his Master's degree in Administration and Supervision in the National Leadership Training Program at the California State University, Northridge.

Next stop: California School for the Deaf in Riverside.

Over the next 37 years, his roles of educator and administrator at the school, combined with his tireless advocacy on behalf of the deaf, grew his reputation far beyond the school and ranks of the deaf and hard of hearing community.

One of his sidelights became a passion. Burstein is an accomplished parliamentarian, and has conducted more than 200 parliamentary workshops. He is a member of the National Association of Parliamentarians, the California Association of Parliamentarians and is a Professional Parliamentarian with the American Institute of Parliamentarians.

At "hearing" meetings, the parliamentarian sits next to the chair so they can converse in confidence on matters of parliamentary law and procedure. Where American Sign Language is used, a different arrangement is necessary. Burstein pioneered the use of a partition — "Bummy's Box" it is often called — to safeguard the privacy of the exchanges.

So renowned are his parliamentary skills that both a book, *Bummy's Successful Meeting Procedures*,

and the video, *Bummy's Basic Parliamentary Workshop* have been produced.

In 1985, Burstein attended a national deaf convention in France and noted that participants "applauded" by waving their arms and hands in the air. His address was received with a standing ovation, and he never forgot the feeling that came over him.

He later wrote that, "The action was so beautifully synchronized that it was just like a sea of waves and almost made me seasick."

A year later, at a parliamentary workshop in Minnesota, he shared with attendees his experience in France, and relayed how to applaud French-deaf style. His audience mimicked the motion, and soon "deaf applause" was spreading throughout America.

One of Burstein's proudest achievements is his role in obtaining the nation's first statewide Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS). Beginning in 1979, he and other advocates lobbied for the system, and it took nearly eight years for a breakthrough. Persistence paid off, and on January 1, 1987, California became the first state to institute TRS.

Other states followed suit, and when President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, about half the states had TRS. Now, they all do.

The list of awards and honors "Bummy" Burstein has received is lengthy, and is best chronicled at CDR in its newly minted Gerald "Bummy" Burstein Student Center.

Forty-five years ago, Burstein began a love affair with California School for the Deaf, Riverside that exists to this day. Although he retired in 2002, his heart has remained with the school and its students, and now, through the endowed fund with the Community Foundation, his name always will be associated with CDR.