

Triumph Over Deafness
Transcript

N.B. Individuals have been named where possible. Due to the nature of this film, some words have been written phonetically. Some actions and scene changes have been listed in *italics* for clarity.

[Opening music: Beethoven's 'Symphony No.9']

Narrator: "All mankind are brothers plighted" - such is the simple yet profound theme of Beethoven's choral symphony. Today the whole world can listen and be inspired and refreshed by the music and its message. Yet few of us know that Beethoven composed this mighty 'Ode to Joy' after he had become almost completely deaf. Overcoming this most tragic handicap, Beethoven bequeathed to the world a masterpiece for which humanity will be eternally grateful.

The Wilson family are listening to the choral symphony - all except Mrs Wilson. Her hearing has slowly failed over a period of years, and she can no longer hear the voices of her family or her friends. Deafness is a handicap that passes almost unnoticed by those of us who enjoy normal hearing. But in recent years, much research has gone into finding ways and means of lessening the handicap. And a visit to the deaf clinic at Manchester University is one very good way of showing what's being done in this field.

Scientist: Good morning.

Mrs Wilson: Good morning.

Scientist: Will you put the telephone to your ear, like that? When you hear a sound in the telephone, put up your finger, and put your finger down when the sound stops. I want to find the quietest sound you can hear.

Narrator: Mrs Wilson has been sent to the university clinic by her doctor, to find out how much hearing she has left, and what use she can make of it. Hearing tests are made with an audiometer, which produces a series of pure tones from very low to very high, and they can be varied from very soft to very loud. The patient listens carefully, and assists in the job of measuring accurately the amount of hearing which is still left in each ear.

The audiometer test is already showing that Mrs Wilson has sufficient hearing left for her to make use of a hearing aid. A further test is made. Mrs Wilson listens through various hearing aids of different design to a recorded voice which is reproduced through a loud speaker at normal conversational loudness.

Machine: The gamblers tried their luck.

Mrs Wilson: Can't get the first word. Sounds like "tried their luck".

Machine Soldiers wear khaki uniform.

Mrs Wilson: Soldiers wear khaki uniform.

Narrator: A simple method of scoring shows which hearing aid gives the best results.

Then there are lipreading classes. When speaking, the words form very subtle images on the lips and face. By lipreading, you interpret these images as you would a series of silent moving pictures.

Teacher: He offered him a job as batman. What did I say then?

Mrs Wilson: A job as batman.

Narrator: Help for the deaf child is more complex and difficult, for the very young deaf child usually grows up to be dumb. This is Maureen, age four. She was born deaf, and hasn't yet learnt to speak.

Female Teacher: Watch, Maureen. Go... Go... Go... Would you like to try? Now you try. That's right, put it in there. Go... Go... Will you try her?

Male Teacher: Go... Go... Go... Go... Go...

[The male teacher stands behind Maureen.]

Male Teacher: Go!... Go!... Go!... Go!... Go!

Narrator: The test proves that Maureen is very deaf - much deafer than Mrs Wilson. But Maureen's mother is reassured that her child need not grow up to be dumb if she will agree to send her to a special junior school for the deaf.

The atmosphere of these special schools corresponds as near as possible to that of a school for normal children. The teacher speaks to the child at all times, and there is no sign language or gesture. Soon the child adapts itself to the new circumstances and begins to look for, and imitate, speech. The first attempts of the born-deaf child are often silent, as you see with Frieda, aged three.

Teacher: Where's the cow? Yes... the cow... Cow... Cow. Where's the aeroplane? Yes, aeroplane... Aeroplane. Where's the bear? Yes, bear. Yes... bear.

Narrator: Frieda's voice will come eventually. Colin is playing at 'puff the feather', but actually he's learning how to form his 'b's and 'p's.

Teacher: Puh... Now look, Colin.

Colin: Puh, puh.

Teacher: What a good try.

Colin: [Indecipherable.]

Teacher: Colin, hammer.

Colin: [Indecipherable.]

Teacher: Yes, hammer.

[Cut to another teacher and child.]

Teacher: Can you say 'Buh buh buh buh buh'?

Girl: Ma muh muh muh muh.

Teacher: Buh buh buh buh buh.

Girl: Muh muh muh muh.

Teacher: Buh buh buh buh buh.

Girl: Muh muh muh muh.

Teacher: Beeeeeee. Beeeeeee.

Girl: Maaaaaah.

[Cut to another teacher and child.]

Teacher: Yes, that's your book. Look, what's this. Arm. Arm.

Eileen: Arm.

Teacher: Arm, that's right.

Eileen: Dooooor.

Teacher: Door... look... eye.

Eileen: Eye.

Teacher: Eyes.

Eileen: Eyes.

Teacher: That's better... Look, dear... How-se.

Eileen: Hoooow.

Teacher: Sss.

Eileen: Ss.

Teacher: That's better. Eileen, look Eileen, bye-bye.

[Cut to a teacher with a group of children.]

Narrator: Most of the children make very good progress, and in a little more than a year or so, they not only obtain a fair vocabulary of spoken words, but can read and write many of them.

Teacher: What's that say?

Children: Bbbbraam.

Teacher: That's right, look. What's this?

Children: Bow.

Teacher: Yes, this little girl called Mary has a bow... What's that?

Children: [Various responses.]

Teacher: Look, John.

Children: Door.

[Cut to another teacher and group of children.]

Teacher: Mary, come here, dear. With your parcel. Come along. What's this?

Mary: Parcel.

Teacher: A parcel. And who's the parcel for?

Children: Mary!

Teacher: That's right... Sit down on the floor. Shall we open the parcel? What's this?

Mary: String.

Teacher: String. String. Now what's this?

Mary: Paper.

Teacher: Yes. What's this?

Children: Paper.

Teacher: Paper. That's right. Shall we open the parcel? What's in the parcel? Now then, wait a minute.

Mary: Book.

Teacher: A book. What have we got here?

Mary: Pencil.

Children: Pencil!

Teacher: What's this?

Mary: Toffee! Toffee!

Teacher: That's right, toffees.

Children: Toffees!

[Cut to another teacher and group of children.]

Narrator: These six-year olds are having an arithmetic lesson, but whatever the work or the play, the emphasis is always on lipreading and speech development.

Teacher: Tell me, s'it?

Child: Seven.

Teacher: How much?

Child: Eight... eight.

Teacher: Come on... now tell me, how much?

Child: Eleven.

[The board is cleared, and the teacher writes a sentence on it.]

Teacher: All together.

Children: We went to a farm.

Teacher: Donald?

Donald: We went to a farm.

Narrator: The partially deaf child is helped further by powerful hearing aid equipment. This enables her to hear more distinctly, which helps her to correct some of the errors in her own speech.

Teacher: Ba ba bee bee bee. Ba ba bee bee bee.

Girl: Ba ba bee bee bee. Ba ba bee bee bee.

Teacher: Tell the man to open the gate.

Girl: Open the gate.

Teacher: Put the cow in the field. Put the horse in the field. Tell the man to shut the gate.

Girl: The gate is shut.

Narrator: About the age of seven, the children pass on to the upper school. In the junior school it was found most practical to keep the children in age groups. But in the upper school the partially deaf children are taught in classes separate from those who are severely deaf. This enables the partially deaf child to advance at a much faster rate than those who are handicapped by severe deafness. The curriculum of subjects is much the same as for children who attend normal school, but the emphasis continues to centre on speech development and correction.

That the severely deaf child is slower in speech development than the partially deaf will be seen in the following two classes. The first will be a class of twelve year old girls, all of whom are practically stone deaf. They are about to begin their English lesson.

Teacher: What is the picture about? Thelma?

Thelma: A fair.

Teacher: What is the woman selling?

Children: Balloons.

Narrator: The very deaf child has to make a tremendous mental and physical effort to talk, and so with them speech recovery is never complete.

Teacher: Where... are the bananas? Dorothy? That's right, tell it to the class.

Dorothy: The bananas are in a bag.

Teacher: Now look - a box.

Dorothy: A bake-s...

[The teacher draws on Dorothy's hands.]

Dorothy: K...Ss.

Teacher: Now put them together.

Dorothy: Ks.

Teacher: Now then.

Dorothy: Bo-ks.

Teacher: That's right, now tell it to the class.

Dorothy: The bananas are in a box.

Teacher: Good, sit down.

Narrator: With the partially deaf child, however, speech recovery is often complete, and most of the boys in this amplifier class will grow up to talk quite normally.

Teacher: Now I'm going light the candle, and heat the wire, and I want you to watch what happens.

[The teacher conducts the experiment.]

Teacher: What happened when the wire was heated?

Child: The wire must have gone longer.

Teacher: And what happened when the wire was cooled?

Child: The wire must have gotten shorter.

Teacher: Alright, that's very good.

Narrator: In addition to scholastic work, there are art classes and manual training of all kinds, as well as sewing and domestic science classes for the girls. Schooling finishes at about the age of sixteen, and the pupils have the choice of leaving, or staying on at school in order to receive a thorough training in one of the various essential trades, such as carpentry, boot-making and repairing, tailoring, baking, and dressmaking for the girls.

A most unexpected and happy adventure in the lives of partially deaf children is music. This was made possible by the development of special hearing aid equipment such as you saw being used in the amplifier class.

[Children sing]

Narrator: To assess the value of aural teaching for the deaf, you must remember that in the very near past many of these children would have grown up to be dumb as well. By aural teaching, many deaf children, particularly the partially deaf, are encouraged to try and recover the full use of their voice. This is very important, because in the past the partially deaf child, through being backward in speech, and apparently slow in understanding, was often grossly misunderstood and treated as being unusually stupid or troublesome, or even mentally deficient.

One thing is now clear. Less than fifty years ago, very few of these children whom you see here would be talking. Still less would they be singing and dancing as they are today. We can all help in this work. A little sympathy and understanding for those whom we know to be deaf is in itself sufficient to spur them on to greater efforts and thereby help them further in their triumph over deafness.

Scientist: What I want to explain to you now is this - that you can help Maureen at home tremendously, just by getting her to lipread and talk.

Maureen's Mother: But what is going to happen to Maureen when she grows up? Will she lead an ordinary life?

Scientist: Come in, Molly.

[A woman, Molly, enters.]

Scientist: This is Maureen. I want you to tell Maureen's mother what you did after you left the school for the deaf.

Molly: Yes, certainly. I went to a secondary school and took a school certificate. After that I went to an ordinary training college to study domestic science.

Maureen's Mother: But can't you hear anything at all?

Molly: No. I was born almost completely deaf, just like Maureen. I sometimes think that I can hear very loud noises, but I am never sure. But I certainly can't hear people talk, and I never have heard people talk.

Maureen's Mother: But you talk so well yourself.

Molly: And so will Maureen.