

To paraphrase a famous American who once visited Berlin and is, to my understanding, much loved by many Deutschlanders, John F. Kennedy, from the steps of the *Schöneberg Rathaus*, said *“Ich bin ein Berliner.”* Well, *klar,... Ich bin ich....Ich bin nicht ein Berliner.* As I understand it, the literal translation for *“Ich bin ein Berliner”* is “I am a dough-nut” with the inclusion of the indefinite article, *ein*. Perhaps, JFK should have said *“Ich bin Berliner,”* and we would be spared the culinary reference. *Aber. But..Berlin gefällt mir sehr.* Berlin excites me...

Walls can be handy little things; they can hold up a roof and can provide shelter from the weather. They can also serve as a blank canvas for expression. This street art I found on the internet a while back, but just the other day, Jason and I were bicycling south from the *Oberbaumbrücke* along *Schlesische Strasse* on the east side of the *Kreuzberg* when lo, and behold, there it was before our very eyes.



The artist is BLU, remains anonymous to this day, had apparent illicit beginnings in Bologna with street art, and is gaining popular status

throughout Europe and the world. I encourage you to check out this artist.

The work takes up the whole north-side exterior wall of a building. The subject of the piece is that of a handcuffed figure in a tie. Perhaps this is a metaphor for the price of success writ large on a two-dimensional space... a wall. Beyond the wall there is so much more than what the figure itself is aware of. Maybe, if the figure were able to expand into the third dimension by conflating the wall it exists on, it would breathe and move amongst us and become aware of other possibilities that would include breaking out of those handcuffs. Does it really want to do this?

Does the universe conspires to give us what we want? Or, are the reasons we put up walls indicative of our attempting to prevent this from happening? Getting what we truly want? Paulo Coelho, from *The Alchemist*, seemed to think so. I have titled this noteKey:

“de-Constructing WALLS as post-Modern CODAs”

de-
Constructing
WALLS

as post-modern CODAs

To me, the term post -Modern implies after the modern era, *nach die modern Zeitrechnung*.

What else can we do after landing on the moon? That event happened 42 years ago this month. I remember it as yesterday. I was 14 years old staring into that television watching it happen. LIVE. Or, rather, given the speed of light and the distance between the earth and the moon, a full second after it actually happened.

What this landing symbolized for many who were watching, was “that was that”...”*das war das!*” There was nothing else to achieve. To some it signaled the end of the modern era and the beginning of the post-Modern. Everything was defined, everything was known, or at the least, thought it was known. Things like disease, hunger, science, economics, anthropology ... we only needed to tie up a few loose ends. In our sphere, experts told us they knew how to educate deaf. And, codas? ...Who were they? Who were we?

In the modern world, many codas were silent. Some were not. We were struggling with our identity. The experts said we weren't deaf. But we felt that way about hearing...we weren't listened to. We were something... other. What we found out as outline by Sheila Jacobs was that we have parts. It is only when, thanks to Millie Brother, we started in 1983 meeting on a regular basis, as adults, we found what these other parts consisted of and that these parts were part of our collective...our literature...our expressions...our art..our discourse!

<http://youtu.be/fdZ1XO3CLpQ> : 25 Years Since First Think CODA... 1983 to Now (video)

All of this stuff we engage ourselves in now comes after a time when people thought everything was known. So, it fell to us to define who we are. Coda, Children of Deaf Adults, is a post-Modern expression. It is in post-Modernity that I, you, us, get to write our history. And that's why we are here.



This is a photo taken in Perth, Australia. Thank you, former CODA International president, Carmel Bateson, for providing it to me. How many of you here can say you have a street corner with your name on it? First as well as last name? William Hay. Anyone?

Of course, I have shopped into this photo the current hyphenated extension of my last name; dash Southwell. For those of you who are unaware I will catch you up...but will do-do quick.

As I said, my first conference was in Denver, Colorado, 1997. I had been wanting to go for a few years before that but was unable. But actually, I don't think I had the full picture because in hindsight if I did have the full picture, I would've. But I was looking. I heard the call but where was it! Where did I belong? I was having issues let's just say.

My first conference was an eye opener, it was a... moon landing, but also, my first conference helped me realize that I had constructed this big wall around me. That it had kept me from others, associates, family, people I was in relationships with. I was in my second marriage and it wasn't right.

My first conference in Denver, 1997, helped me realize that what I wasn't being honest with myself and I witnessed other codas, some who are no longer with us: Sally Roshak, Brenda Smith, Gary Sanderson, and others...living their lives on their own terms. That's what I wanted. And, that conference helped me realize to get there I had to start deconstructing that wall, even if it meant one brick at a time.

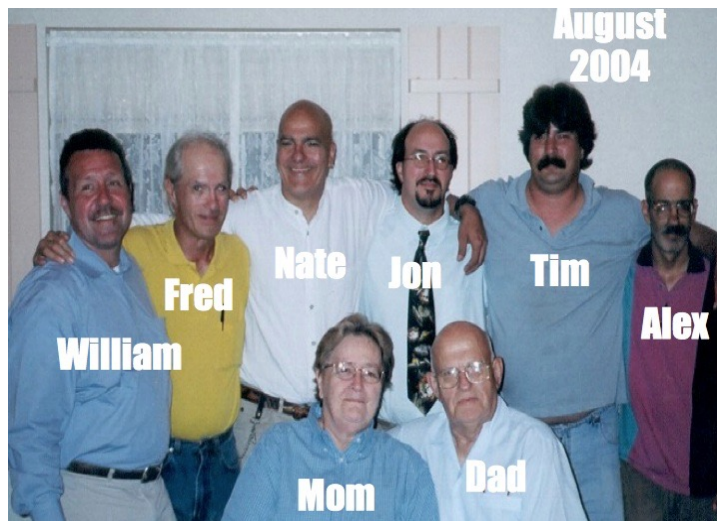
The following year, 1998, I went to my second conference in Alexandria, Virginia. CODAVA. Just outside of Washington D.C. It was there that I sat on the newcomer's panel and related my first conference experience with three other codas: Sammy Parker, Allyne Betancourt, and Joy Goodman. In the front row of the audience was Jason Southwell, newcomer.

That conference was for us a budding romance. Before the conference even got started we were in each other's orbit. We were in a bar called Cobalts and it was there we shared our first kiss. Who else was there announcing to the world our situation?... Gary Sanderson.



The next morning, Jason's mother had showed up in the lobby of the hotel to visit. I was on my way down there to meet her and Jason, when I crossed paths with the prophet Gary. "Guess who's future mother-in-law is in the lobby!" Gary said in passing.

All I'll say is that soon after that we were living together in Miami; given the statutes of the United States and the state of Florida, we weren't allowed to get married....yet. But, given the legal system, you can change your last name to anything you want. So, in November, 2000, on the morning after the Bush/Gore presidential election ... we stood separately before the honorable Judge Lawrence King in the state of Florida and had our names changed to Hay-Southwell. Jason's sign name is [JD]; his mother give him that name.



My parents gave me the name [W] on the right side of the chin, William. My father's name is Robert. He grew up oral deaf. Little "d" deaf. He met and fell in love with my mother, Dorothea. She more big "D" deaf. Father's last name Hay so friends gave him the sign name [GRASS]. So, my name [W] is articulated on the right side of the chin. Son #2 came along: Frederick [F] on the right side of the chin and then son #3, Nathaniel [N] on the right side of the chin.

Mother wanted daughters so bad! So, mother and father kept trying and went on to have three more babies, but all boys. Jonathan [J] on the inside elbow, Timothy [T] on the inside elbow, and Alexander [A] on the inside elbow. Why on the inside elbow? Mother is Dorothea [D] on the inside elbow.

After being approached in May 2010 to be Notekey (or is it keynote, I don't know which is right anymore) for this conference; *Ich hatte zu fragen, bist du sicher?* I had to ask, are you sure? Do you have the right person? Lots of things ran through my mind. ..

Run Lola Run ... *Lola Rennt* ... that German Deutsche film with Franka Potente where her character is given several chances to re-run events in order to avoid a series of mistakes that prevent her from accomplishing what she is trying to do. I will not try to do this. But I may meander...I may jump around going from A to Z...Point?

***Aber letztlich, aus meinem Erlebnis, Berlin ist ein wunderschöner Ort!*...but ultimately, from my experience, Berlin is a wonderful place. It is also a place from which we can all learn in this post-Modern era.**



Located on the Kufürstendamm, or for short, Ku'damm, the name of this sculpture is “Berlin” and it is a broken chain that symbolizes the severed connection between East and West due to the wall. We have all grown up with this wall. Some more than others. This area was one of the most heavily bombed during World War II. Through the space of this sculpture one can see the Gedächtniskirche in the background.



Here, is a closer view of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche, Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. During reconstruction, instead of tearing it down, Berliners decided to bolster it up. Today, it is a reminder of the past and of what can happen.

Sadly, both the “Berlin” sculpture and the Gedächtniskirche are currently unavailable for

public viewing. The sculpture has been moved due to boulevard reconstruction and the church is covered in a scaffold while being worked on.

**This is what the church
looked like in earlier
times:**



I had been here to Berlin twice already and was looking forward to coming back again when asked to be the keynote. I hope I will always be able to come back here and visit and explore around a little bit more. I feel a connection here. I hope everyone who is here for the first time for this conference...will return, at least once. You find out more about a place the more times you return. I think we all would agree that's pretty obvious. *Klar.*

You tend to slough off some of that original perception, some of that baggage, and take on more of the native point of view, sorry, that's the anthropologist in me. I should say the other, but for us, the other is not so much that other. The other is already in us. And I think, if I may be so bold to state, the hearing and the deaf, are like us. The only thing that separates us ...are these walls. Walls between us and the hearing. Walls between us and the Deaf. Walls between us and each other. And, we know this! *Wir verstehen das!*



I attended a Lutheran School from 1st through 8th grade. The principal's name was Mr. Zabell and he was also my teacher from 5th through 8th grade. One odd thing I remember about Mr. Zabell, is the way he would eat an apple in three bites. You could count the bites as they would go down by watching his huge adam's apple: one-two-three...gone.

The second thing I remember was that he had this habit of after everything he explained to us, he always appended the German word for "Understand?", "*Verstehen?*". So, he would say ..."Believe me when I say I will be calling your parents to let them know you were chewing gum in school!... *Verstehen?*" Of course, I knew, right then and there, who's he gonna call? We didn't have a phone at home.

I feel so sorry for our coda brothers and sisters, *Brüder und Schwestern*, who are coming of age now. Their parents, instead of TTYs, now have video phones, e-mail, texting....Was it not a golden age for us, or what?

But you know, CODAs growing up today, someday in the future are going to have a conference on an orbiting space station...and I'm going to be there as one of our oldest members... as a hologram...I'll be in the yearbook photo with two or three others under the heading: **Attended 55 Conferences. We'll be standing there high five-ing each other. Hey!**

One of the most profound inventions of our time with the most impact has got to be the Internet. We're the ones who had to adapt to the changing technology. Young codas today are already tied into the Internet from the womb, for sure; all because their parents needed an Internet connection to have a video phone or an ipad to send emails, an iphone to send text messages...or video messages. Anyone here have to walk over to the neighbors to use their phone to make a call for mom and dad? {raise of hands}. Don't have to do that anymore!

Growing up though, I admit, I got away with a lot of things...but today? {mimic phone} "Yes interpreter 3221955...this is William. Yes, I know, it's my Mom and Dad. (always picture, both be sitting together...always) ... Uh? ...Interpeter, they're asking me where the hell am... You're welcome. ... I'm with friend...you know who...you finish meet, guy who blinks always...yes...yes...*genau...ja*... home by midnight!? Why?...I'm not the boss?... Okaaaay." (hang up)

People complain about technology all the time but you know it may be saving our culture. Did anyone see that article favorited by Jennie Pyers last month on Facebook? "Teenagers Revive Dead Languages through Texting." CODA-speak could live on! Thanks to us!

Entschuldigung...excuse me..I got side-tracked; there was a third thing I wanted to mention about Mr. Zabell and it probably should

have been the first thing mentioned. One evening, my brother Nathan needed help with his homework. I was watching television. Father figured that I should be able to help him. I refused. This was a brother-brother thing...father pissed!

Next day, during school, father walks into the building and up to class room door. Mr. Zabell sees him through the glass. He goes out to talk to my father. I am mortified. Next few moments Mr. Zabell is back in the classroom, father gone. Mr. Zabell proceeds to embarrass me in front of whole class. "So, you refuse to help your brother with his homework. You would rather watch TV and disobey your father (It was a christian school afterall). Is that any kind of behavior for an oldest brother? *Verstehen?*"

Entschuldigung, excuse me, *bitte*, *Ich* meander....but I just want to add something perhaps justifying why I accepted this generous request to notekey. Believe me when I say, codas have special powers of perception, and we should trust these powers more and more, and take advantage of them. It was after the 2002 Conference in Philadelphia. Jason and I were staying a couple days in a NYC hotel just off of Central Park. We roller-bladed, saw some shows, and visited a struggling actor friend of ours, Yosvany, who was working in a bar called Sam's. Sitting at the bar, I could look up the front steps toward the solid door entry which had a vertical slit of transparent glass on both sides; each, perhaps a couple centimeters wide. Something inside me told me to look up at a particular moment and I watched people pass by the slit windows on the street level. Many figures passed by and I saw what amounted to cross-sections, one after the other. I got hung up on a set of two cross-sections and could hear my mind saying "That was Mary Ann Hickman and

Margaret Collier!" ... I was so certain of it and made my observation known to Jason. He got up and ran out onto the sidewalk and down to the intersection and sure enough there amongst the masses waiting for the light to change so they could cross were Mary Ann and Margaret. He yells...they hear nothing! He Deaf yells and they both turn...They came down to Sam's and we introduced them to our friend and we all had a great visit. The Universe conspires to give us what we want. But that is only one example of coda powers.

Here's another example. You may choose not to believe this but I'll go ahead anyway. Jason and I were here in Berlin in 2003 for 4 days. On that trip we railed across parts of Europe for a whole month starting and ending in Amsterdam. It was my first time in Europe. Trains here are great, by the way. Manuela was working in Geneva at the United Nations and we were able to spend some time with her there. While here in Berlin, we had yet to meet any of the other Berlin codas and we stayed in a Bed and Breakfast in *Prenslauerberg*, one block away from where Suzo and Dirk currently have a *Wohnung*, an apartment, I might add. From here, our planned trip took us north to Rostock where we caught a ferry to Sweden to visit with Olga.

On the train we traveled through Western Pomerania and saw a stunning rural landscape. We had our own compartment and large views and I think I was still pinching myself that all this was real. I grew up in Michigan and during that whole time this area we were moving through might as well have been the other side of the moon. It was the other side of this iron curtain that had separated us. A wall imposed through geo-political discord. Of course, it no longer existed but we were behind that arbitrary boundary...on the other side.

I think it was at this moment I felt FUR-ON-ARMS. I looked at Jason and he was looking at me. WRONG-WHAT? He told me he had FUR-ON-ARMS. After further talking we revealed to each other that while sitting here looking at the countryside passing by, we both felt a familiarity which we couldn't explain. It was a déjà-vu moment. The sense was overwhelming...after talking it through, we decided that perhaps it was just this whole situation of traveling where we were. We went on with our trip and after experiencing a real smörgåsbord on the ferry, we landed in Sweden and eventually met up with Olga and her husband, Sven for a wonderful visit.

A year and a half later, I was at the home of my parents in Michigan and was going through a box of old photos and newspaper clippings and came across an obituary of my mother's great-grandfather. It talked about how he had emigrated with other family members to the United States from an inland port of the Prussian Empire named Szczecin in the 1870s. That explained the FUR-ON-ARM moment I had. Szczecin is in the Pomeranian region. Online, we located the ship's passenger manifest and found the Schwebke name, my mother's family name...looking further on the list, we found Kasper's...a family name in Jason's family tree. Is that eerie or what? Maybe coda power?

An overriding majority of people in the world believe in re-incarnation, that's a fact. I'm not sure if I do but I believe that its really not that important if you do or don't. Apparently, according to those who believe, we come to this dimension with a purpose or goal of a life lesson to take away with us to the collective consciousness from where we continue on and on until....what? But we also chose the circumstance of our earthly situation. If that's true, than we all

chose to be born hearing to Deaf parents. I imagine that we all could think of more than a few life lessons to take away.

Where else to talk about walls than here in Berlin? To our coda brothers and sisters here in Germany...*Brüder und Schwestern hier auf Deutschland*...I look at them and I see...very brave, courages... *sehr mutig, sehr stolz, sehr coda. CODA Dach*...means Children of Deaf Adults...*Deutschland, Österreich,- der Schweiz*...Germany, Austria, Switzerland... *der Dach*, the German lexicon for roof. The roof that is over us all.

At this conference we have many lands represented: Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, Sweden, Austria, United States, Netherlands, and Deutschland...did I miss any?

So here we are under the same roof. And we have this wall that keeps the roof over our heads. Only CODAs can come through this semi-permeable wall.



Out there though, there are different kinds of walls...there are beneficial walls and there are walls that are bad. There are walls that keep things in and walls that keep things out. There are physical walls, actual structures consisting of matter, and there are walls that we create in our minds, still a very real part of experience. And funny enough, are not the walls that we construct in our minds the ones that eventually get expressed out there in the world as actual structural physical walls? Doesn't all that structural matter have to begin somewhere? Might it not all begin in our minds? If we constantly mull over the possibilities of what can exist out there; and then moments, experiences, collapse these waves of possibilities into actualities.

This is my 13th CODA International Conferences and I have heard 12 Notekeys. All inspiring in their similarity and their individuality. How lucky am I to speak at this venue. How lucky I am to travel the world and meet other codas in their homeland. International CODA has taken place outside of the United States now, 3 or 4 times? Finland, Australia, Spain and Deutschland. So, when I was asked to speak, I had to say, yes!

In preparation for this Notekey, I tried to think about when I first became aware of this deaf-hearing dichotomy in the world and in my neighborhood. I was trying to think of those moments when I had first started building walls to protect who I was and to protect my family. It goes back to the time when I was in Kindergarten. Before this I don't think I ever thought about the Deaf label but I must have been aware on some level.

One of my earliest memories is of me standing in the back seat of our car with my mother seated. My father was driving and we were passing by this big building and all these kids running out the front door. Mother says, NEXT YEAR YOU WILL GO THERE...I had no idea what she was talking about but it looked exciting. So, that was where I was going to be attending kindergarten.

Let me share with you what my kindergarten teacher, Miss Pollock, said to my parents as it appears on my progress report:

Physical growth and health:



“William is an active and energetic child. He can relax well at rest time but is usually very talkative. He is inclined to be careless and spill at lunch time...”

Social growth:

“William has made a good adjustment to school. He is very independent , but seems to desire adult attention...He still tells on others too much and is inclined to be over-concerned with what others are doing... He is a good leader and often

assumes the role of leader. It is still hard for him to let others do the directing at times.”

“He is usually courteous , but he frequently interrupts conversations. He is very independent.”

Emotional growth:

“He is an alert and enthusiastic child...is often over concerned about what others are doing. ..He gets very excited and talks loudly. He sometimes gets angry quickly, but he shows more self control lately.”

Language Arts:

“William is very mature in language development...He has good speech habits except that he often uses the wrong tense of verbs and occasionally gets pronouns confused.”

“He shows interest in stories, but he interrupts by talking out of turn. He can recall familiar stories and tell stories from pictures....He shows imagination and has many ideas.”

Art:

“He has many ideas and expresses these ideas in his drawing. He enjoys drawing and spends much time at it.”

Science:

“William shows much interest in science activities. He is eager to know why things happen as they do and how things work.”

I’m compelled to talk about my best friend growing up...Mark. We actually went to Kindergarten together at the Northville Main Street Elementary School in Michigan. We attended the morning session. We actually walked together the four blocks to and back from school everyday. We were also sandbox buddies. He’s the first friend I can remember.

His mother was Marcia and his father, Norman. That’s how I would refer to them: Marcia and Norman. Other kids in the neighborhood would be aghast when I called them by there first names. They thought me bold and quite rude. I responded innocently “That’s their names!” We had name signs for all my parent’s adult friends. It shouldn’t be so different to call Marcia and Norman by there first names. Mark and his family conversed in English using voice.

We had four seasons in Michigan and it was always evident which season you were in. It was also always evident by looking over at Norman and Marcia's yard. Besides being a great, meticulous housekeeper, Marcia grew beautiful flowers. Around her entire backyard was a three foot border of color that reached up across the south side of the house and spilled into the front yard. Norman had poured a concrete sidewalk all around the house so that no one need step on Marcia's beautiful Garden of Eden. When us neighborhood kids would play it was always cool to do it in Marcia's yard because you could run all the way around the house with your feet never leaving pavement.

Marcia took great care in one section of the front yard where you could find her showcase. She could be seen in it at least once everyday bent over with her butt raised high in the air. She'd be filling, or weeding, or fertilizing, or clipping, or racking or a host of several other activities centered around her prized flowers. They were usually flowers with bright large hearty blooms. There were roses and dahlias and peonies and a host of others that I could never name but she could. I really didn't take much notice of the beauty she had created there; only that she always spent a lot of time there.

It was Norman who also built the sandbox in the middle of their backyard where Mark and I played for hour at a time.

One day, out of nowhere, he stopped what he was doing and said to me, "Your mother is dumb."

My eyes widened. Where did this come from? My best friend just called my mother dumb! My response was quick, "She is not!"

“Yes she is!” he says with strength.

I could feel the frustration in me start to rise. My thought on that word was yet rounded but at that age but I knew that the word dumb was not a nice word. I had to let him know that my mother was not dumb.

“If my mother is dumb then so is yours.” I settled for the misery-loves-company defense.

“No!” I could see his father in his face, “My mother is not dumb. She can talk!”

I never thought my mother couldn’t talk. I talked to her everyday. I was perplexed.

Mark then added, “My mother says that your mother is dumb...just like an animal.”

I froze. He was calling my mother a dumb animal, like a cow or a dog or some such.

“ You’re mother can’t say words. If she is at the grocery store and the cashier asks her something she can’t say anything back to her.” I was stymied because my mother went to the grocery store all the time. She didn’t drive at this time but I know she went grocery shopping regularly. Of course, my father had to drive her. I went shopping with her. I never noticed a problem. What was he talking about?

I stood up, threw the plastic shovel down and steamed back to my yard. I didn’t want to play anymore.

Mark's statement didn't come back to me until I laid in bed that night trying to fall asleep. It took awhile. My mind raced in circles. I decided that in the morning I would do something. I started to fade and all of a sudden it was morning. When I got out bed, all was quiet. Mom and Dad were still asleep. I put on the same clothes I wore the day before and headed down to the kitchen. There was a drawer there with all kinds of utensils and amongst them I found the scissors. Without thinking too much if anyone could see me, I headed out the door and over to Mark's place. Amidst Marcia's flowers I saw this one row several feet long lined with large stems balancing huge colorful blooms. I proceeded down the line and snipped off each flower head. With each cut a huge bloom fell to my feet in almost slow motion. When I got to the end I looked back and saw a row of decapitated flowers. Holding on to the scissors I headed home and replaced them in the kitchen drawer.



I felt elated and complete. Thinking this I went back to bed for a short nap. Strangely, I don't remember what happened after that, if there were any repercussions. Not that there were never any repercussions for plenty of other things. I'm sure Marcia wondered what had

happened to her flowers or maybe they really weren't that important to her. What did happen from this incident was my wall got a little higher and a little thicker.

As codas, we can learn how to recognize the walls we have built and how important it may be to bring them down. How we do that is why we are here. We know that the world is what we make of it, consisting of our wants and experiences. I encourage everyone here to continue sharing these stories of yourself because it is through these expressions that we learn about ourselves and the lives of others around you. Bringing down walls begins with your own effort. First you recognize what keeps you separated from those around you and then collectively we all help to bring the walls down.

It happened here in Berlin.



I did go to my first conference and I did meet my partner....and, like a prodigal son, have been accepted back into the Deaf Community and this distinct sphere called CODA. A place where I can be myself and continue my journey...*die Reise geht weiter.*

