

The Sounds of Silence

I REMEMBER the first time I saw Jon. It was at our youth group. He looked like one of those typical California guys; you know, big and with buff tanned body. He wasn't the "big" kind of guy that I dislike: in fact I liked his kind of "big" too much. He was holding the hand of a young, tall, slim, beautiful girl -- was I ever envious? yes, (I tell you: "if looks could kill") because they looked like a perfect couple. One thing was odd though, the girl seemed to be leading big Jon everywhere, and he was letting her. He seemed indifferent to appearances.

After our group discussion our youth leader told us to go move around and interact a bit. It was our first meeting since school began and we were all quite shy, so he ended up having to split us up into groups. I was in a group which included Jon and the girl, whose name I later learned was Tammie. As usual for me in groups I did most of the talking while all that dreamboat Jon did was nod "yes" or shake his head "no". Jon's hand which Tammie continued to hold was half hidden in hers behind them.

Finally I asked Jon to please say something. Tammie answered for him, saying that Jon wanted to ask, "How are you?" It was then I realised that he was not only blind but deaf and dumb. Tammie was his assistant nurse who was subbing in for his regular one. Holding his hand Tammie could translate for Jon and for whoever he was trying to communicate with through a sign language of touch.

As time went on Jon and I got to be really close; in fact we became best of friends. I learned how to communicate with him through touch so that eventually when we were together we didn't need any one else to translate or be his eyes and ears. As I got to know him, Jon became more talkative with me. I began to forget that these were not vocal sounds. A lot of times he became very philosophical, since everytime he converses, it is important.

But I believe, and I am sure Jon will agree with me, that the most important thing he asked me was to marry him.

It has been some time now since we've had a nurse or attendant for Jon. We have two great kids -- who have no difficulty making themselves heard! But for all of us, being with Jon only increases our happiness as we're enveloped by love in the sounds of silence.