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ASL Rose Newsletter
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"A Shared Love of Signed Languages: Veditz and Fleischer"

While we have had many remarkable leaders in American Deaf history, there are two men who have led uncannily similar lives despite the fact that they lived nearly a century apart. If they gave out Nobel Prizes for leadership and activism in the Deaf community, George Veditz and Lawrence Fleischer undoubtedly would be among the recipients.














George Veditz (1861-1937) is renowned in American Deaf history as the one who pleaded with people everywhere to preserve sign language, and proclaimed it the noblest gift God has given to Deaf people. An accomplished writer and teacher, Veditz was at one time the National Association of the Deaf president, and was deeply



involved with the Deaf community.

Like Veditz, Lawrence Fleischer, Ph.D. (1945-2009) recognized the beauty and importance of signed language. Also a teacher and writer, Fleischer was a staunch community activist starting with his days at the New York School for the Deaf (Fanwood). He served as the president of several organizations, including the American Athletic Association of the Deaf/USA Deaf Sports Federation.

What is remarkable about these men is how much they had in common. Both fought relentlessly to preserve sign language on film, to bring equality to all persons, and to have signed languages embraced, recognized and appreciated.

Take a quick look at this overview of Veditz and Fleischer.

Veditz (August 13, 1861-March 12, 1937)	Fleischer (October 11, 1945-November 1, 2009)
 Name sign: HS Bent V/2 on chin	 Name sign: HS F on opposite shoulder (like "Pittsburgh")
 Exactly 100 years ago, Veditz ensured the preservation of ASL by capturing the language on film.	 Exactly one year ago, Fleischer gave his final presentation at the ASLTA conference, reminding people of the importance of preserving ASL.
 Fluent in ASL, written German and spoken/written English ASL/Written German/Written English	 Fluent in ASL, written English and French Sign Language
 Had multicultural parents (hearing, German immigrants)	 Had multicultural parents (Deaf, Jewish and Catholic)
 Graduated from the Maryland School for the Deaf	 Graduated from New York School for the Deaf (Fanwood)
 Deafened at 9	 Born Deaf
 Graduated from Gallaudet in 1884; was valedictorian with a cumulative grade average of 98.8.	 Graduated from Gallaudet in 1967
 "As long as we have deaf people on earth, we will have signs. And as long as we have our films, we can preserve signs in their old purity. It is my hope that we will all love and guard our beautiful sign language as the noblest gift God has given to deaf people."	 "We learn ASL. We learn through ASL. We learn about ASL. We must remember that ASL is by, of and for Deaf People."
 Twice elected president of NAD	 Twice elected president of AAAD/USADSF
 Presented at the presentation day exercise of the National Deaf-Mute College (now Gallaudet University) on May 7, 1884	 Presented on "Linguicism" at Gallaudet University, and served on the university's board of trustees.
 Works are mentioned in multiple publications, including <i>Deaf Heritage</i> .	 Work is mentioned in Joan Wink's <i>Critical Pedagogy: Notes from the Real World</i> (4th Edition)
 Preserved sign language on film as	 Produced <i>I Love You, But...</i> , preserving

part of a series for NAD	sign language on film
 Among many notable accomplishments was the establishment of Maryland School for the Deaf Alumni Association in 1892, Gallaudet College Alumni Association in 1889, and the Colorado Association for the Deaf in 1904.	 Among many notable accomplishments was the establishment of the Deaf Studies field, which led to the establishment of the Deaf Studies Department at California State University, Northridge.

Veditz helped bring about many changes, such as recognition of signed language, asserting Deaf people's rights, and fighting for Deaf people's civil rights through NAD. Fleischer did the same; he helped form the field of Deaf studies at colleges and universities everywhere. He also fought for Deaf people's civil rights on several committees within NAD and ASLTA, and lobbied time after time for higher standards in deaf education.

[ASL Rose](#) holds the utmost respect for both gentlemen, who did more for the Deaf community than they could ever know. They broke new ground in recognition of signed languages, something that continues to be a challenge even today. They *knew* that signed languages were, and are, a necessity for Deaf people all around the world.

ASL Rose wants to have every Deaf person, young or old, know who Veditz and Fleischer were, why their contributions to the Deaf community and ASL are so notable, and why it is so important that generations of today and future continue Veditz's and Fleischer's work.

In honor of Veditz and Fleischer, ASL Rose's E. Lynn Jacobowitz, Ph.D., and Adonia K. Smith, Ed.D., will present at the [Second Maryland-ASLTA Statewide Conference](#) on October 16. Their presentation, *Carrying Out Veditz's and Fleischer's Dream: [HYES DVD/Book](#) in the ASL Classroom*, will discuss how to incorporate *Have You Ever Seen...? An ASL Handshape DVD/Book* in the ASL Classroom to support bilingualism. They will also discuss the impact Veditz and Fleischer had on today's growing recognition of ASL as an official language.

We must carry out George Veditz's and Lawrence Fleischer's dream: preserve, promote and perpetuate the beauty of ASL and fight for ASL/English bilingualism in educational settings for Deaf learners. ASL is indeed the noblest gift, and it is up to Deaf people today to continue reminding each other of that.

