



Alandra's Lilacs: The Story of a Mother and Her Deaf Daughter

Tressa Bowers

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When, in 1968, 19-year-old Tressa Bowers took her baby daughter to an expert on deaf children, he pronounced that Alandra was “stone deaf,” she most likely would never be able to talk, and she probably would not get much of an education because of her communication limitations. Tressa refused to accept this stark assessment of Alandra’s prospects. Instead, she began the arduous process of starting her daughter’s education.

Economic need forced Tressa to move several times, and as a result, she and Alandra experienced a variety of learning environments: a pure oralist approach, which discouraged signing; Total Communication, in which the teachers spoke and signed simultaneously; a residential school for deaf children, where Signed English was employed; and a mainstream public school that relied upon interpreters. Changes at home added more demands, from Tressa’s divorce to her remarriage, her long work hours, and the ongoing challenge of complete communication within their family. Through it all, Tressa and Alandra never lost sight of their love for each other, and their affection rippled through the entire family. Today, Tressa can triumphantly point to her confident, educated daughter and also speak with pride of her wonderful relationship with her deaf grandchildren. *Alandra’s Lilacs* is a marvelous story about the resiliency and achievements of determined, loving people no matter what their circumstances might be.

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