

Deaf advocate, educator dies at 86

ACTIVIST: Lawrence R. Newman was a former teacher of the year and an administrator.

BY DAYNA STRAEHLEY
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Lawrence R. Newman, of Riverside, the former president of the National Association for the Deaf, retired educator and author, died Monday in Riverside. He was 86.

Dr. Newman was among the founding faculty at California School for the Deaf in Riverside when it opened in 1953. He taught math there for 20 years, left in 1973 for a four-year stint as a principal in Anaheim, and returned to the School for the Deaf in 1977 as assistant superintendent, a position he held until 1988.

He was the first deaf person hired as assistant superintendent, said Laurie Pietro, spokeswoman for the school. He lost his hearing at the age of 5.

In 1978, after 25 years as an

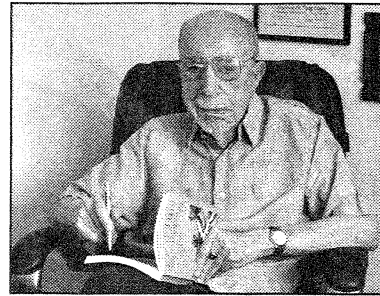
educator, his alma mater, Gallaudet University awarded him an honorary doctor of letters degree, an honorary title he continued to use. He had previously earned a master's degree before coming to Riverside.

Bernard Bragg, a friend for 75 years, recalled Dr. Newman.

"Larry Newman left us on the Fourth of July with a real bang," Bragg said in an email Tuesday. "How appropriate it was, for he had for many years made a tremendous impact on the lives of American deaf and hard-of-hearing children and people through his numerous articles, lectures and books, most of which focuses on education, social and political awareness."

Dr. Newman was named California Teacher of the Year in 1968 and was an early proponent of bilingual education for the deaf using sign language. He emphasized the importance of education in the life of deaf children.

"Education is to deaf peo-



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Lawrence R. Newman signs a copy of his second book.

ple what the Golden Fleece was to Jason in mythology," he wrote. "He was willing to go through many trials and tribulations because if he could get the Golden Fleece, the throne in the kingdom of Greece would be his. If deaf people could get an education, their minds would be set free and the kingdom of the world would be theirs."

Dr. Newman wrote two books, "Sands of Time — NAD Presidents 1880-2003," which was published by the National Association of the Deaf in 2006, and "I Fill This Small Space — The Writings of a Deaf Activist," published by Gallaudet University

Press in 2009.

"I met Dr. Newman in 1989 when, as NAD President, he gave a lecture at a community college in California," relates Gallaudet alumnus Brian Riley. "He regaled the audience in his inimitable style which was comprised of a mixture of swagger, intelligence and good humor — a style which has inspired many hearing parents over the years to enroll their deaf children in schools for the deaf where they could receive an appropriate education."

Dr. Newman is survived by his wife, Betty; a brother, Leonard, of New York City; two sons, Warner and Mitchell; three daughters, Rochelle, Laureen and Carol; grandchildren Megan, Marnie, Nathan, Chelsea, Kirstie and William; and great-grandchildren Sadie, Caden and Stacia.

A memorial service will be open to the public at 11 a.m. Thursday at Mount Sinai Hollywood Hills, 5950 Fores Lawn Drive, Los Angeles.