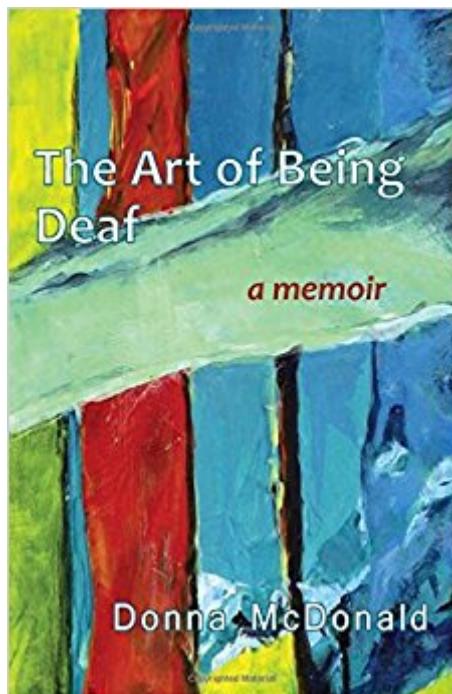


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# The Art Of Being Deaf: A Memoir



## Synopsis

Concerned about aspects of her romantic relationships, Donna McDonald consulted with a psychologist who asked, "Your hearing loss must have had a big impact on you?" At age 45, with a successful career in social work policy, McDonald took umbrage at the question. Then, she realized that she never had addressed the personal barrier she had constructed between her deaf-self and her hearing persona. In *The Art of Being Deaf*, she describes her long, arduous pursuit of finding out exactly who she was. Born in 1950s Australia, McDonald was placed in an oral deaf school when she was five. There, she was trained to communicate only in spoken English. Afterwards, she attended mainstream schools where she excelled with speechreading and hard work. Her determination led to achievements that proved her to be "the deaf girl that had made good." Yet, despite her constant focus on fitting in the hearing world, McDonald soon realized that she missed her deaf schoolmates and desired to explore her closed-off feelings about being deaf. When she reconnected with her friends, one urged her to write about her experiences to tell all about "the Forgotten Generation, the orally-raised deaf kids that no one wants to talk about." In writing her memoir, McDonald did learn to reconcile her deaf-self with her hearing-deaf persona, and she realized that the art of being deaf is the art of life, the art of love.

## Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Gallaudet University Press; 1st Edition edition (March 15, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1563685973

ISBN-13: 978-1563685972

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #579,357 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #97 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Australian #339 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Disabled #535 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific Groups > Special Needs

## Customer Reviews

"It's so terrific to read your memoir. I found it... as someone who's dipped in and out of deaf culture politics over the years as a broadcaster, I really found it an utterly gripping read."  Natasha Mitchell. ABC Radio National  Life Matters. This sensitive and thoughtful memoir ...   Much of the book is devoted to McDonald's conversations with people who had a significant role in her life, but she also includes a thoughtful layer informed by cultural portrayals in both fiction and nonfiction that are deftly interwoven with moments from her personal life. Although there are segments that will tug at a reader's heart, this is no tearjerker; rather, it is a personal and informative look at "deaf lives as told by deaf people." (Publishers' Weekly 3/3/2014) McDonald asks the reader, "What does it mean to be deaf?" Oralism has its share of controversy; to the Deaf community, it is a denying of self, a demand to adapt to the hearing world or else. When a psychologist asked if her hearing loss had a big impact on her, McDonald resented the question but used it as a jumping-off point to reexamine her life. Her personal recollections are fascinating and often stunningly vivid in visual imagery.  VERDICT  Will appeal to those interested in Deaf culture and disability awareness in general, as well as biography enthusiasts.  Library Journal The Art of Being Deaf: A Memoir is not your usual story of growing up deaf in a hearing world, but begins at the author's age of 45, when a consultation with a psychologist over romance woes brought to light her internal barrier between her deaf-self and her hearing persona. ... This memoir is her attempt to reconcile her deaf identity with her hearing-deaf persona, and offers a compelling narrative readers will find engrossing.  The Midwest Book Review "There's a generational story to be told here that is important-McDonald was part of a 'between' generation of deaf kids/students around the globe (but especially in the UK, Australia, developed Europe, and US) who now had access to 'regular' schools but who were still struggling in the shadow-land between deaf schools/lives/identities and the public/regular schools." (Brenda Jo Brueggeman, Ohio State University)"

We all take our sense of connectedness from where we can best find it.  For some deaf people, it is within their own Deaf community.  For others such as me - those oral-deaf people, in the "shadow-lands", scattered across the hearing world - such a sense of connectedness can be buried or lost.  In my memoir, I take the reader into my internal and external worlds, into past and current practices around education for deaf children, and illuminate the changing social attitudes and public perceptions of deaf people. I found that learning about the heritage of other deaf people's memoirs, biographies, and life narratives was enormously helpful to me. In my memoir, I observed, "the hand of mentoring reached down to me across the span of history".  My memoir "The Art of Being Deaf" is, however, much more than a personal examination of my life as a deaf woman. 

It is a story of reconciliation, the search for romantic love, and the quest for answers about what it means to live an authentic life.

Very touching!

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