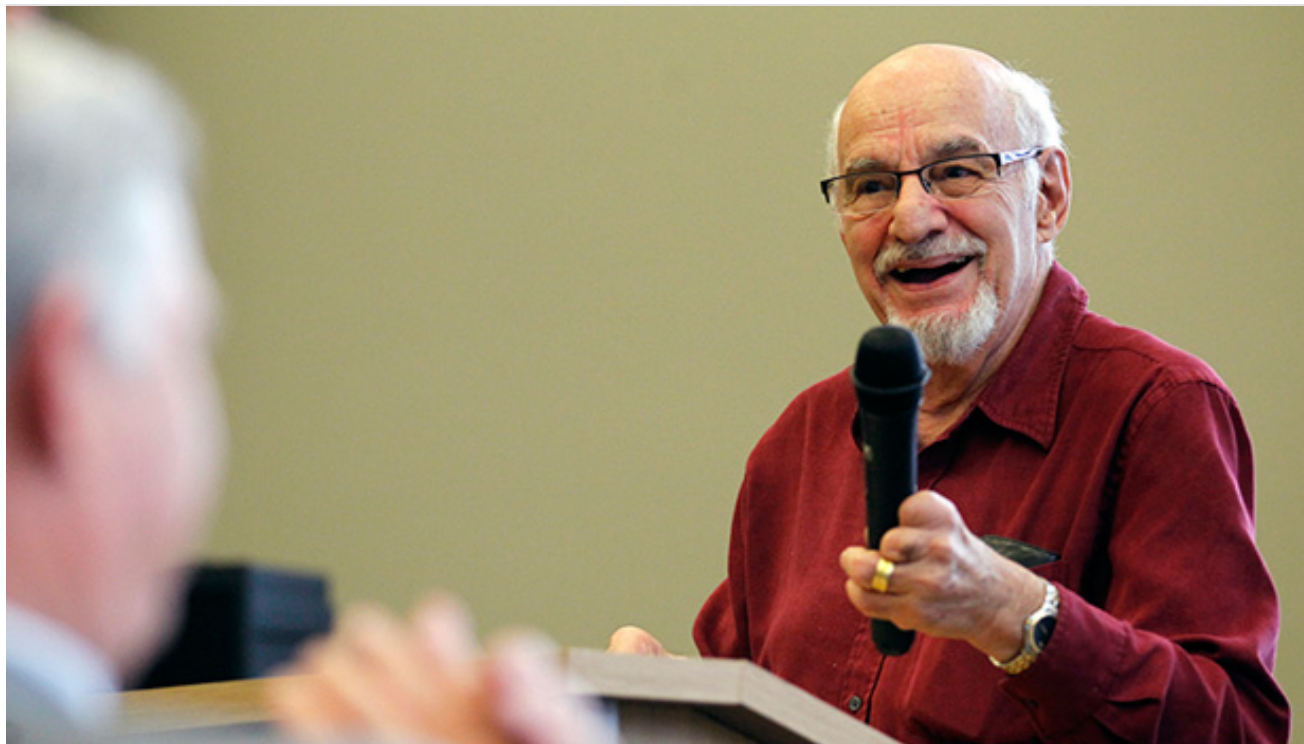


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Joseph Slotnick dedicates \$1.5M to Deaf Studies program

At the age of three Joseph S. Slotnick was driven into a world of silence after meningitis robbed him of the ability to hear. With the support of his parents Slotnick went on to achieve great success as a computer engineer, and now is honoring their memory with a \$1.5 million bequest to Fresno State's



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Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Studies in the College of Health and Human Services.

The gift establishes the Joseph S. Slotnick Distinguished Professorship in the Silent Garden, an endowed faculty position that will bring experts in deaf studies to teach at Fresno State and work with the community.

Slotnick says the gift is designed to help the parents of deaf or hard of hearing children learn and understand. "My desire is to leave a lasting legacy that allows each and every person, regardless of the challenges they face, to grow and thrive," he said.

When Slotnick lost his hearing in the 1930's, his parents Dr. Morris M. and Esther B. Slotnick were advised to send their son to boarding school and sever all contact. Slotnick was subsequently sent from his home in Houston, Texas to one of the nation's few boarding schools for the deaf in Massachusetts. In order to follow her four-year-old son's progress in school, Esther rented a room nearby and watched her son's activities through a one-way mirror as he studied.

"By observing me she was able to learn how we could better interact and communicate," Slotnick said. "Her unwavering dedication and support has been fundamental to my success in life."

After graduating from eighth grade, Slotnick entered a private high school for hearing students and was immediately advanced to his sophomore year. He quickly adapted to learning in the hearing world, graduated fourth in his class and went on to study at Harvard University. With encouragement from his father, Slotnick became the fifth deaf person to graduate from Harvard.

Slotnick's long career in computer programing and systems analysis includes work with System Development Corporation, a pioneer in computer software.

He was also involved with the development of the TTY telecommunication device for the deaf or hard of hearing.

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Through his involvement in the deaf and hard of hearing community Slotnick met his wife Mary, whose daughter Teri is deaf. Mary says she can truly relate to her husband's parents, and the lifetime of joys and challenges of raising a deaf child. "Times were much different when my daughter Teri was born. I had the opportunity of working with an innovative deaf education professor. It is our hope that this endowed professorship will create similar opportunities for future generations of parents and children."

The Silent Garden was established by Fresno State professor emeritus Dr. Paul W. Ogden, a long-time friend of the Slotnicks.

"The silent world of those who are deaf or hard of hearing too often makes those individuals invisible to the hearing world," Ogden said. "The Silent Garden helps to bring awareness and understanding in order to foster communication and opportunity."

Ogden published numerous papers and articles about educating deaf and hard of hearing children. His book "The Silent Garden: Raising Your Deaf Child" was first published in 1982 and translated into Spanish in 2002.

The Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Studies in the College of Health and Human Services at Fresno State trains professionals to work with deaf and hard of hearing children, their families and other professionals. The program's goal is to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing children become successful and productive citizens with full access to educational and professional opportunities. The more than 1,500 alumni of the program play an important role in the lives of many children, youth and adults, helping them to thrive personally and professionally.

This gift is part of the university's [Campaign for Fresno State](#), an initiative to raise \$200 million for scholarship, faculty, programs and facilities. It is the first comprehensive campaign in the university's history and among the largest in the CSU system. The campaign will conclude this spring, with the final fundraising total to be announced in April.

For more information or to schedule an interview with Slotnick, contact Kathleen R. Schock, the director of media and development communications at 559.278.2756 or kschock@csufresno.edu.

Joseph S. Slotnick Video



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- [College of Health and Human Services](#)
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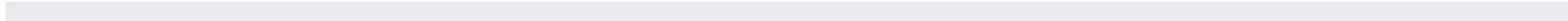
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