

the mirror

North York's own newspaper

Wednesday, July 15, 1970

WILLOWDALE
EDITION

No Sound speaks up for the world of silence

By LORI MATSUMOTO
Community living editor

No Sound, the soon-to-be-released autobiography of Julius Wiggins who has been speechless and deaf from infancy, is the story of a man who overcame his handicap and made it on his own.

While it does take the reader into the sometimes lonely world of the deaf, it does so with humor.

The book reads easily and will bring back memories to many people who grew up in Metro prior to the war years.

Julius Wiggins was born in Toronto and grew up here. His love for the city and its idiosyncrasies are obvious.

He and his wife and three children lived on Acton Avenue in Downsview for 10 years before moving to Fair Lawn, New Jersey to begin publishing the Silent News a year and a half ago. The Silent News with a circulation of 4,000 is a monthly newspaper carrying news specifically for deaf people.

Mr. Wiggins and his son Morton, 14, were in Don Mills last week to visit his brother Sheldon Wiggins, 40 Godstone, en route home from a conference in Belleville.

The new book, Mr. Wiggins' first, is to be published shortly by the Silent Press and will be distributed in both the United States and Canada.

No Sound is the story of a boy who became



JULIUS WIGGINS, right, who has been speechless and deaf from infancy, poses with his son Morton, 14, and his soon-to-be released autobiography No Sound. MIRROR photo

deaf at the age of six months following a severe cold, infected mastoids and an operation for appendicitis.

It tells of his years as a student at the School for the Deaf in Belleville; recalls what it was like to deliver milk by cart in the Kensington district with his grandfather during the war, when the Belleville School was closed and he had to attend a hearing school; of his first trip to magical New York and the courtship of his wife Harriet, also deaf.

No Sound covers his days as a furrier, a trade learned from his father and grandfather, and how he designed a mink hat that was to gain acclaim from fashion

critics both in Canada and abroad.

And it tells of the joy he and his wife experienced when each of their three children was born with hearing intact.

And finally it tells of the work involved in setting up a newspaper — particularly when neither the publisher nor the editor can hear.

The book has been in the planning for six years. Mr. Wiggins was aided by Flora Clark, also deaf, who wrote the first draft; Sarah Dona, who revised and wrote the final draft; and Sheldon Wiggins who did some preliminary editing and helped his brother with the introduction.

Today both Mr. and Mrs. Wiggins depend on

their three children to answer the phone for them and relay messages. Morton travels a great deal with his father, takes pictures for the paper and often acts as an interpreter.

In fact, at the age of 12, Morton went to court for his parents who wanted a zoning variance to build an enclosed porch behind their house in Fair Lawn.

Morton not only won the case but when he told the zoners he hoped to become a lawyer board attorney Joseph Sproviere jumped to his feet and said "Please, we have enough competition in this profession now, without dealing with a person of your great intellect."

The Silent Press, Inc.

Its Publications Are for the Deaf

By TOMM SPRICK
Herald-News Staff Writer

FAIR LAWN — Why would a deaf man leave a lucrative furrier business to start a newspaper and write a book when he knew nothing of the industry? The answer, says Julius Wiggins, was to "fill a need."

Wiggins is publisher of the Silent News, the only monthly newspaper for the deaf in the United States. The newspaper is put out by his publishing company, the Silent Press, Inc.

Wiggins, who was reported to be one of the best fur men in all aspects of the trade, gave it up to start the newspaper. "I foresaw that the mink business was on the decline," he said, talking through his son by sign language. "I saw the need for a deaf newspaper. There is a deaf magazine, but deaf people need their hands to talk, so I came up with the idea of a newspaper. Then they can wrap it up and put it in their pocket."

Another need he fulfilled was to bring to hearing people the realization of what it's like to be deaf. He has done this through his book, "No Sound," published by Silent Press Inc. Raised in an era when there were few aids for the handicapped, Wiggins takes the reader to his world, a silent one, and makes him see its barriers that normal persons seldom understand fully.

Wiggins was six months old, explained the worst part of being deaf. "When an infant sees his mother and is always subjected to the sound of 'mamma,' he makes a basic association. But if he doesn't hear this wonderful word, he cannot do this."

"Thus vocabulary is the first and main deprivation of the deaf. Many thoughts and mental pictures have to wait until the deaf person has a vocabulary that can explain them even to himself," he said. This basic understanding is supplied to the reader by Wiggins in his introduction and must be retained throughout for a fuller understanding of his life.

"Dim Sensation"

Wiggins, who was born and lived in Toronto, Canada, was "baffled by the fact that his parents moved their mouths, even when they weren't eating. 'I had a dim sensation that it was important, and it wasn't until much later that I learned the dim sensation was sound. It was meaningless, but I could identify it as important,'" he said. By the time he was 9 or 10, he had acquired a preliminary vocabulary.

The book traces his life at home with parents who were very patient but possessed little understanding of his life at the Ontario School for the Deaf in Belleville, Canada. It focuses on a deaf working man attempting to fit in a normal world and how he succeeds.

After his school years, which are recalled very vividly, Wiggins moves into the fur trade that he learned in part from his father.

Wiggins left for New York City when he was 18 years old and worked in a number of fur houses before he finally started his fur business with his hearing brother.

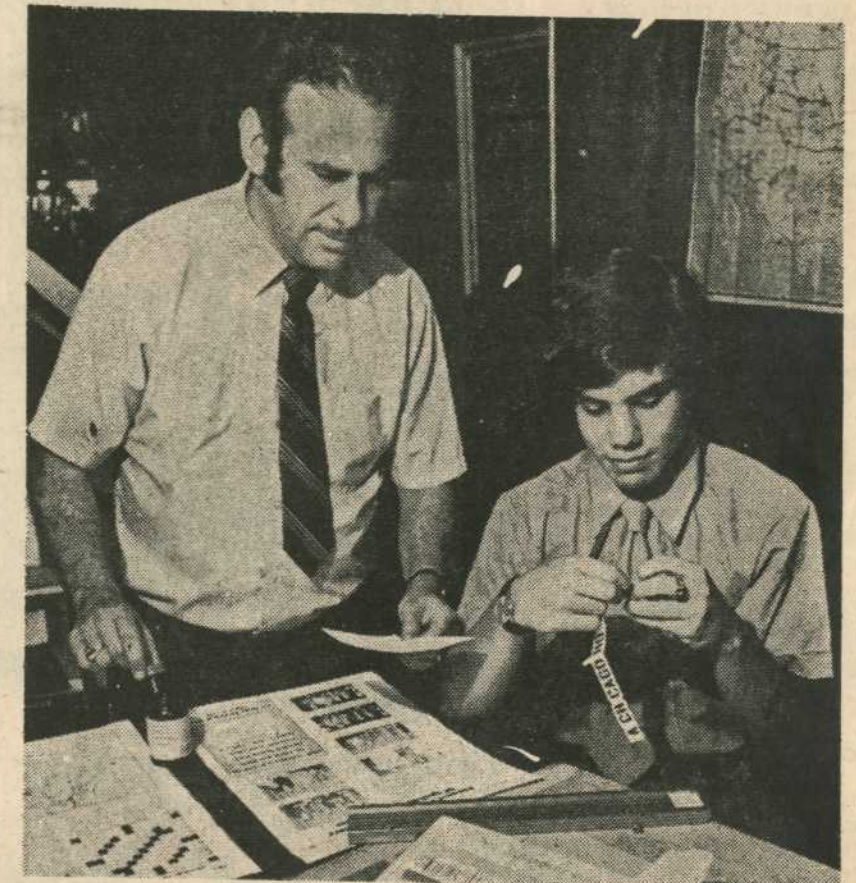
Years later after he had met and married Harriet Berkowitz and they had three children, the entire family moved here. Since that time, Wiggins has concentrated on the newspaper business instead of the furrier game.

He has been publishing the newspaper for the past year and a half and is "hopeful that eventually it will go bi-monthly and then possibly weekly."

The current circulation is over 3,000 copies but most of the circulation is on the east coast. Wiggins said, "We are trying to go further west, to get more clubs' information on it."

The paper is a family venture, and all the children assist in its make-up. Adele, a high school junior, has been answering the phone since she was two years old. The first issue of the paper was put out by his first son, Morton, 14. The youngest member, Steven, a first grader at Warren Point Annex, has not started answering the phone for his parents. Wiggins' wife Harriet types and lays out all of the copy which includes news, four nationwide gossip columns, sports, recipes, club news and a column which straightens out problems for the deaf.

What future plans does Julius Wiggins have? The first is continuous improvement of the newspaper, more books for and by deaf persons and finally to have his book accepted and widely read. Morton said, "My dad always has ideas, he never sits around; he always wants me to do something."



DEADLINE'S NEAR — Julius Wiggins, left, and his son Morton start laying out next month's edition of the Silent News. Wiggins, deaf since he was six months old, has been publishing this paper from his basement at 23 Wayne Road, Fair Lawn for over a year. It is the only monthly newspaper for the deaf in the United States and has a circulation of over 3,000 copies.