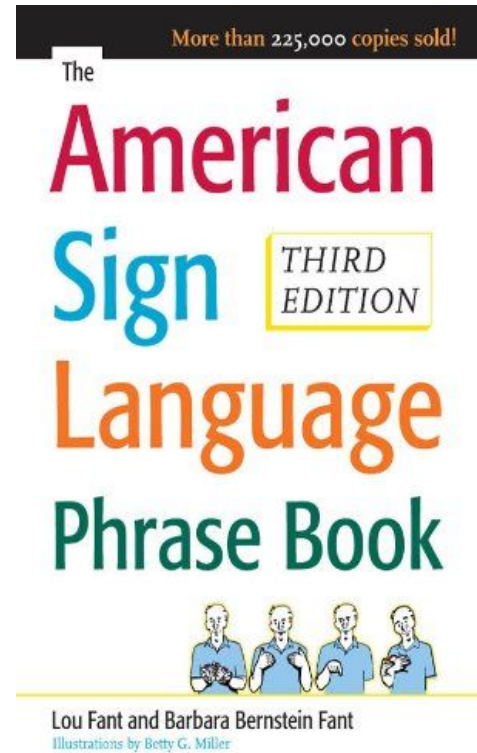




Louis Fant

1931-2001

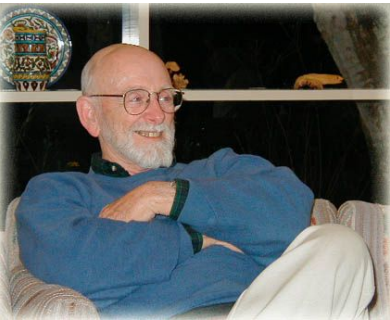


# Family and Education

- Fant was born in Greenville, South Carolina to Deaf parents
  - His first language was sign language, but he says “[he] became bilingual at birth... learning sign language from [his] parents and English from [his] relatives.”
- Louis attended Baylor University with the intent to pursue ministry for the Deaf
  - However, he changed his mind and decided to go into education and earned his masters from Columbia University.
- He started his career teaching at the elementary school level at the New York School for the Deaf
- He eventually joined the faculty at Gallaudet University, and was a “voice” for the Deaf actors in the school productions.

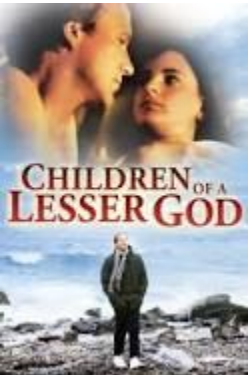
# National Theatre for the Deaf (NTD)

- Possibly due to his involvement in Gallaudet's theater program, Louis became a founding member of the NTD in Waterford, Connecticut.
  - Louis traveled with the group across the United States as an actor, interpreter, administrator and more.
  - Fant felt that the group was important to provide the hearing world a fresh perspective and reflected, *"It's broken down a lot of barriers... made hearing people aware of Deaf people and that they have something to offer in theater, dance, art, literature, all forms of the arts- that only a Deaf person can offer."*



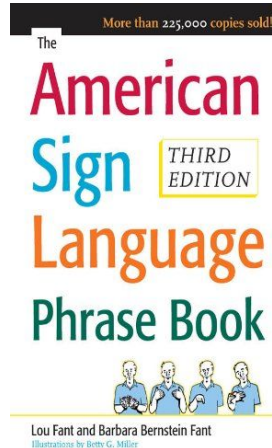
# Moving to California

- After three years with NTD, Fant moved to California, where his love of acting continued to play out.
  - Louis performed locally and in a number of character roles on television, including an appearance on the show *Little House on the Prairie* as well as *Cheers*.
  - Louis also worked in consulting and was a sign language coach for other actors, including famous actress Diane Keaton and Henry Winkler, best known as *Fonzie* on *Happy Days*.
  - Louis also contributed to the film version of the play *Children of a Lesser God* as a sign language coach.



# The End of Fant's Life

- Towards the end of his life, Louis moved to Seattle to teach sign language, run training and work as an interpreter.
  - While in Seattle, Louis concluded his teaching career and retired from Seattle Central Community College.
  - Louis was also recognized by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf for making outstanding contributions to the field. The national Center on Deafness at California also honored Louis with the Daniel T. Cloud Leadership Award.
  - Louis also published 9 books, including The American Sign Language Phrase Book, four articles and contributed to 8 films in effort to promote ASL.
- Louis also coined the term **Ameslan**, a once widely used acronym for *Ame(rican) S(ign) Lan(guage)*.
- Louis Fant passed away when he was 69 years old due to complications from pulmonary fibrosis, and was survived by his wife and four children.



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