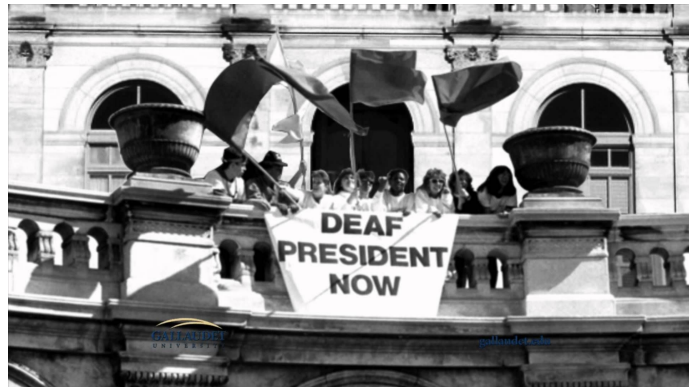


Irving King Jordan

1943-present



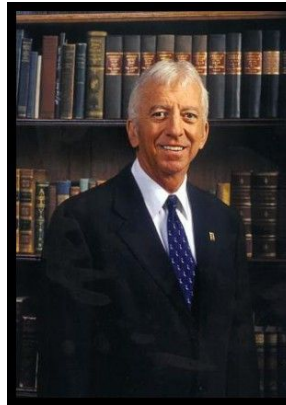
Early Life: Childhood and Career

- While growing up near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Jordan was a Class Clown and his focus tended to gravitate towards socializing instead of his schooling.
- Jordan joined the U.S. Navy, and even with his playful attitude, he had great success with them, earning multiple jobs in his time with the Navy.
 - He still held onto his youthful excitement by riding motorcycles and dancing at nightclubs during his time in the Navy, even though he became more disciplined.



Early Life: The Accident

- Jordan's life was forever altered in a motorcycle accident that occurred when he was 21 years old. The accident caused him to remain in hospital care for over a year, and doctors didn't believe that he would survive the crash. They agreed that if he had they thought he would be left in a coma, however, the only long term issue that he faced was losing his hearing.



I grew up outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in a little town, and went to a regular high school. I was a... very average student in that high school. Then I joined the Navy, and while I was in the Navy, I was in a motorcycle accident and woke up deaf in a hospital.

- I. King Jordan -

Early Life: After the Accident

- After the crash, Jordan enrolled in Gallaudet University, which was a barrier-free institution for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
 - During the beginning of his time spent at Gallaudet, Jordan was introduced to a new world, and faced new struggles. He felt as if he was an outsider, unable to communicate with the other Deaf students , yet he did not feel accepted by hearing people. He was caught between two worlds.
- His limbo between the two worlds could have been what helped him notice the injustices that took place at Gallaudet. Although the student population was Deaf, many of the employees of the university were hearing. This led to many of the hearing individuals in charge making condescending remarks, or treating the students as lesser people.

After Gallaudet and Returning

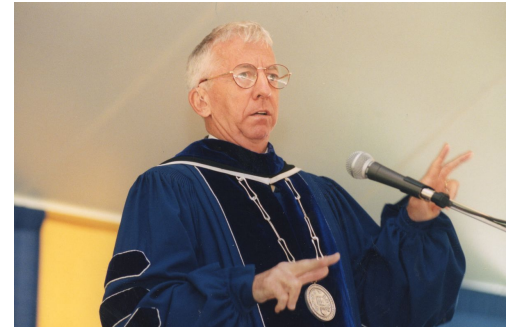
- After graduating from Gallaudet, Jordan went on to earn a Ph.D. in Psychology at the University of Tennessee, reading to fill in the gaps left by verbal lectures.
- When he received his Ph.D., Jordan returned to Gallaudet and became an assistant professor of psychology. After several promotions, Jordan became the dean of the College of Arts and Science.



At Gallaudet, deafness isn't an issue. You don't even think about it. Students can pay attention to accounting or psychology or journalism. But when a deaf person goes to another college, no matter how supportive it is, that person doesn't get the same access.

— J. King Jordan —

AZ QUOTES



Deaf President Now



- In the late 1980s, Gallaudet University was seeking a new president. There were three finalists, one yearling and two Deaf. I. King Jordan was one of the Deaf candidates.
 - There had never been a Deaf president in Gallaudet's almost 125 years of existence.
- Despite student rallies in support of a Deaf president, the school's board eventually chose the hearing candidate.
 - This caused the rallies to become protests as the students began to shut down the campus by blocking the entrances and boycotting classes.
 - Eventually, students marched to Pennsylvania Avenue, heading towards the White House, and Jordan was caught between two worlds once again. While at first he believed he should support the university, he announced his stand with the students. In the end, a board member and the new president resigned, making I. King Jordan the first Deaf president of Gallaudet

I. King Jordan's Impact

- The Deaf President Now (DPN) protests brought important national attention to the Deaf community, causing society to reflect more on the rights of Deaf people.
 - After this exposure, Jordan was in a better place to become a spokesman for the Deaf, and he spent much of his time as president speaking on behalf of the community, and focused on employment opportunities.
 - Jordan remained president of Gallaudet until 2006
- Jordan has been recognized with many honorary degrees and awards, including serving on the *Commission on Presidential Scholars* during the Obama Administration.
- *"What can Deaf people do-even with a college degree?"* an interviewer asked. *"Deaf people can do anything except hear."* - I. King Jordan



Resources:

Ability Magazine I. King Jordan Interview

Extraordinary People with Disabilities by Deborah Kent and Kathryn Quinlan Jordan by Ken Adelman

Gallaudet University Website, I. King Jordan biography entry

I. King Jordan: Reflections on a Changing Culture, NPR interview with Joseph Shapiro and Vikki Valentine.