

This month marks the 102nd anniversary of the birth of an American who found herself in such a prison—and broke out of it. At the age of 19 months, Helen Keller lost her sight, hearing, and speech, and her formative years were spent in utter isolation. But she had two powerful forces on her side: an absolute determination to overcome her handicaps, and the devotion of one person, Annie Sullivan, who recognized the child's innate abilities and helped her construct a bridge to the world at large.

Today, the scientific and medical communities are showing great determination to build more bridges for deaf-and-blind individuals. Research on disorders that cause deaf-blindness is being conducted and supported on several fronts: by the Federal government through the National Institute of Neurological and Communicative Disorders and Stroke, and the National Eye Institute; by universities and other institutions of higher learning; and by voluntary health agencies and numerous groups in the private sector.

America can ill afford to lose the contributions of her deaf-and-blind citizens. Helen Keller became renowned for her writings and her civic spirit at a time when the study of deaf-blindness was in its infancy. Scientific progress will enable the deaf-and-blind to utilize their talents and ideas, and expand their educational and employment opportunities, thereby increasing their contributions to our society.

To focus public attention on deaf-blindness and the hope through research of someday averting this tragedy, the Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 125, has designated the week of June 23 through 29, 1985, as "Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation to observe this week.

*Ante*, p. 99.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week of June 23 through June 29, 1985, as Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week. I call upon all government agencies, health organizations, communications media, and the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-sixth day of June, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and ninth.

RONALD REAGAN

#### **Proclamation 5356 of June 27, 1985**

#### **National P.O.W./M.I.A. Recognition Day, 1985**

*By the President of the United States of America*

##### *A Proclamation*

Since the Revolutionary War, America's men and women have made unselfish sacrifices to defend freedom. In each of America's wars, America's prisoners of war have faced extraordinary hardships and overcome them through extraordinary sacrifices. The bravery, suffering, and profound devotion to duty of our P.O.W.s and M.I.A.s have earned them a preeminent place in the hearts of all Americans. Their heroism is a beacon to follow forever. Their spirit of hope and commitment to the defense of freedom reflects the basic tenets of our Nation.