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MOUNTAIN EAR is a publication of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association North Shore Branch. It is Published 4 times a year on the 15th of March, June, September and December.

Your submissions are always welcome. Please contact the Editor:

Hugh Hetherington:

Telephone 604-926-8049

FAX 604-925-2286

e-mail: [hughh@vcn.bc.ca](mailto:hughh@vcn.bc.ca)

## President's Message

Once again we are approaching the Christmas Season. It is a busy time for most of us as we get together with family and friends to celebrate. For the hard of hearing person it can sometimes be difficult in the many get-togethers, to hear and understand everything that is going on. Communication is such a fundamental part of the festivities. I hope that our theme for the past year, "Coping with your hearing loss", and the issues discussed at our members' meetings were of some help to those who attended. We tried to put a lot of emphasis on assistive listening devices, and I know that, for me, these have made a world of difference. We will continue to emphasize the use of assistive devices in the coming year.

At our most recent Board meeting, the Directors have

established our theme for the year 2000. This will be "Safety for the Hard of Hearing". We will be arranging for guest speakers to address the many aspects of this theme at our members' meetings.

Members' meetings will be held in February and April and the Annual General Meeting in September. We hope that most of you will be able to attend and we trust that the programs we arrange will be of great benefit to all.

I would also like to point out that the schedule for our newsletter, "Mountain Ear" is changing. This will be published four times in the coming year, March, June, September and December.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Board of Directors of the North Shore Branch, to wish

*Erica Barrett*



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## CHHA B.C. Conference October 29-30 1999

Report by Erica Barrett

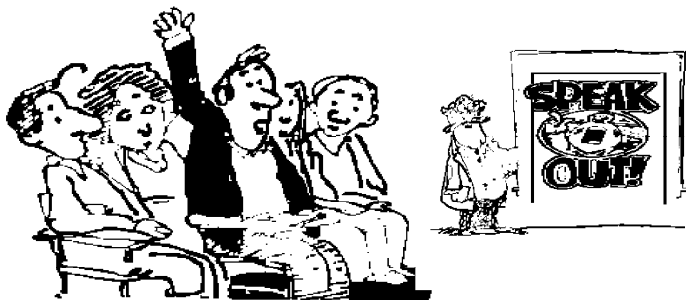
This year's CHHA B.C. Conference took place at the Sheraton Hotel in Surrey on October 29th and 30th and was followed by the B.C. Chapter's Annual General Meeting. The conference was opened on Friday with remarks from Lloyd Dahl, CHHA B.C. President; Colin Cantlie, CHHA National President; Donna Chisholm, President of the Parent's Branch and a number of others including a representative from Surrey Council.

### PLENARY SESSION #1 DEALING WITH CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

This opening session was moderated by Marilyn Dahl with panel members who were hard of hearing since childhood, Ruth Warrick, Editor of Listen Magazine, and who is studying for her Doctor's Degree, Pamela Ehlers, audiologist, Cathy Boyes, Evan Franey, and a youth called Joel. Many issues were discussed, including problems that arose during their school years. Many who grew up hard of hearing will relate to these which include: Rejection, giving the impression of not trying hard enough, feeling the need to work harder than others, insecurity, shyness, embarrassment by their hearing loss. They spoke of the tendency to daydream when they could not hear. This had a positive effect on imagination and eventually led to the ability to write stories.

The feelings of loneliness were spoken about during camping trips, when after lights out the hearing kids could talk the night out.

Pamela, the audiologist spoke about denial of her hearing loss. It is common to go through denial and, on average, it takes a person about 7 years before



doing something about hearing loss. She was told that she would only need her hearing aid at school and most of the time it sat in a box in the teacher's desk.

It was interesting to listen to Joel, a high school student. He spoke about the frustration of the math teacher mumbling, and because of the French teacher's accent, he finds it extremely difficult to hear the lesson. It was pointed out that one can be excused from taking a foreign language in school if you are hard of hearing.

In Joel's younger years of denial and frustration, he decided to get rid of his hearing aids by flushing them down the flush tank, bye, bye hearing aids. He did this apparently more than once.

It appears that the needs are not being met in the education system and so it was pointed out that it is our responsibility to see our needs are met and we need to be aggressive about it.

On the subject of resumes, the opinion was expressed that you should NOT tell about your hearing loss on your resume but to bring the subject up in your interview where you can explain about your concerns and difficulties better. Every situation is different, though, so the call is yours on how to handle this.

### PLENARY SESSION #2 THE JOY OF LEARNING: SELF ESTEEM, MOTIVATION AND FEELING COMPETENT.

The presenter was Dr. Susan Van Gorp, Assistant Professor & Program Director-Deaf Education, California State University with moderator Susan Lane, Elks Hearing Resource Centre.

This presentation discussed how self-concept/esteem develops and is affected by the important people in a hard of hearing child's life and how we can help our children be more self motivated: learning for the joy, rather than for the external rewards.

The Professor talked about the reward system of stickers. Let your child make mistakes and choices and most of all be consistent.

Some ideas for questions when talking to your child, include: "How did you figure this out?", "What is the next key?", "How do you feel you did?"

"What went well today?" is another good question when talking with your child. Have your child make goals for themselves, and their own choices where possible.

### PLENARY SESSION #3 EXPERIENCES OF LATE DEAFENED PEOPLE

Moderator, Sharon Zarifeh with panel members Ray Forseth, Pat Davis, Joe Jacques and others.

The discussion centred around how the experience of becoming deafened has affected their lifestyle and how they have learned to manage their disability. There was anger and frustration at becoming hard of hearing and there was also a great feeling of loneliness. Their social life seemed to die and depression set in.

One mentioned that an employer took his employee to an audiologist. The panel talked about closed captioning and how that changed their world. Learning to adapt is not an easy situation. Other things that helped included using the TTY and e-mail.

#### PLENARY SESSION #4 COCHLEAR IMPLANT UPDATE

Moderator Donna Chisholm, President of Parents Branch with panel members Dr. S. Pijl, Audiology, St. Paul's Hospital; Dawn Delicati, Audiology, Children's Hospital CI Program; Helen Tuck, Rehabilitation VOC, CI Program; and Terry Tylka, Rehabilitation, Elks CI Program.

This was a very interesting session.

Cochlear Implants are done from 18 months to 16 years in children.

You need to have a profound loss in both ears and enough inner ear for the implant. Medical consent is at age 12. Recently a 78 year old was implanted who had a loss of 70 decibels in both ears.

The operations are done on a basis of first come first served.

Doctors are allowed 10 operations per year. The quota for this year is already used up and next year is also spoken for.

This was a most interesting program and there was a lot of material to cover in a very short time with the result the speakers spoke very quickly. The telecomputer had a hard time keeping up and the words disappeared off the screen so fast I was unable

## **CHHA-BC Conference October 29-30, 1999.**

Report by Andrea Gauthier.

I attended a large part of this conference and, as usual, learned lots. The first thing I learned was that Surrey is not so far away from North Vancouver as I had thought! I had an approximately 30-minute

traffic-free drive to the Conference, with easy parking.

I get so much out of attending this conference each year. It inspires me and gives me hope when I see people dealing with their hearing disability in such a pro-active way. I realize I'm not alone. I am full of admiration for the people who are willing to share their personal experiences with us. They demonstrate how much courage it takes to live in the world as a hard of hearing person and they show us how to do it.

WIDHH Audiologist Pamela Ehlers' presentation was particularly appreciated as part of a panel on Dealing With Challenging Situations. She said that the most damaging thing she does to herself as a hard of hearing person is to limit herself. She also provided information about waterproof hearing aids as she is a kayaker and talked about how important physical activity is for the hard of hearing. While assistive devices are expensive, they are important ways to maintain a link with others.

The presentation celebrating the International Year of Older Persons was inspiring and fun! Much thought went into this as Lloyd Dahl, President, CHHA-BC, Linda Tobias, President, VLHH and Bob Sochowski, President, CHHA Victoria and member of CHHA Board, made toasts (at 9 am with sparkling ginger ale) to people who had furthered the cause of hard of hearing people through their inventions and social action over the past century.

An opportunity to learn about new technology in hearing aids was provided by Grace Shyng, Chief Audiologist, WIDHH. You might want to check out WIDHH's website at [www.widhh.com](http://www.widhh.com) for information on this topic.

Being a rather non-technical person, I tried to gather the main ideas from Grace's presentation, and what I came away with was her excitement about the new technologies. but a caution as well about the amount of time involved in getting the digital hearing aids working well. This requires numerous visits to the audiologist and waiting as the hearing aid has to be returned to the manufacturer for any adjustments. She said this can lead to a great deal of frustration for the client and the audiologist.

Just in case you think people mumble a lot, Grace said that, in her view, Canadians do and she explained that Chinese, Spanish and Russian are languages which are more forgiving for hard of hearing people because they contain more vowels. She said English is more difficult as so many words hinge on a final consonant which is sometimes hard

## Next Members' Meeting

**Monday, February 21, 2000**

**St. John's Anglican Church, 220 East 8th St.**

**North Vancouver**

**Time: 7:00 PM**

The guest speaker will be Jennifer Shifrin, B.Sc. M.Ed., M.A., Registered Clinical Counsellor and Speech Language Pathologist. Jennifer was the guest speaker at our April 1998 Members' Meeting and we have had numerous requests to ask her back again.

Mrs. Shifrin's Topic will be *The Impact of Hearing Impairment and How to Minimize*

## Making Changes

By Erica Barrett.

HEARING LOSS is something we CANNOT CHANGE so we must not waste time on trying to change that. What we can do is accept the fact that our hearing loss is here to stay and move on to making the changes that will help us to get on with life.

With so many types of hearing aids and listening devices available today, and even some less expensive assistive devices, which have come to our attention and have been shown at our meetings recently, it is possible for you to make the move back into the hearing world rather than withdrawing into isolation.

I have a very profound hearing loss, but, have found it possible to hear in restaurants and other noisy locations. I am able to take part at large gatherings and noisy dinners. I have also found that I can use the telephone most of the time by means of the T-switch on my hearing aids. The exceptions are when the caller speaks with an accent or a dialect I am not familiar with. I inform these people right away that they will have to fax or mail me the important information as I am hard of hearing. I also let people know when they speak too fast. I ask that they slow down if they want me to hear the important information. Most of the time they apologize. Remember, though, with a T-switch, you must hold the receiver over the top of your hearing aid, which is behind your ear, and not over your ear in the usual manner. You may also need to turn up the volume on your hearing aid. It takes practice, but what a joy to be able to use the telephone for the voices one knows. I also use an amplifier on my telephone. Listening devices have been such a tremendous help to me and help me feel like a part of the hearing

world again. I do not hear every word, but at least I can participate, whereas before I felt totally isolated. I can't emphasize enough that you need to have what is called a TELEPHONE SWITCH (T-coil or T-switch) in your hearing aid in order to use most listening devices. If you are not familiar with this, be sure and ask your audiologist about it. I find the behind-the-ear hearing aid is more powerful than the in-ear hearing aid. If your hearing aid is an older model, you should also be aware that vast improvements in technology have taken place in just the last few years and it may be time for another visit to your audiologist. The important thing is to get the right hearing aid for your hearing loss and with a telephone switch so you can use listening devices and loop systems to get back in touch with the events in your life.

There always are some restrictions but one has to keep trying and make the necessary CHANGES. I believe that having the right equipment for all occasions makes it much easier on my family, friends and associates. This is now possible with the inexpensive listening devices your branch has available for you.

It certainly helps one's SELF ESTEEM when one makes the NECESSARY CHANGES. When I am using my neck loop or boots which connect devices directly to the bottom of my hearing aids, the wires showing tell everyone that I have a hearing loss, exactly what I want them to know. I am not ashamed or embarrassed about this.

This makes such a difference right away. Whoever I am with knows that I have a hearing disability and makes the effort to communicate with me effectively. I just want to be able to participate in the hearing world wherever I am.

We need to make sure that in all circumstances our needs are met, whether at work, in school, at church, in meetings, theatres, on transportation, in the hospital or ambulance, at the doctor or dentist, etc. Only you can make sure your needs are met, no one else can do it for you. Living means accepting change. The first change to make is to ACCEPT the hearing loss. Once that is done, the anger, frustration,

## Question and Answer Feature

If you have a question on a hard of hearing issue that you would like answered in the newsletter, please submit it to the editor at the numbers listed on the first page.

We will try to answer your question or find someone who can and print it in the next issue of the newsletter, space permitting.

## Trade Display Room CHHA BC Conference

By Hugh Hetherington, Editor.

By all accounts, the CHHA BC Conference was again a great success this year with many interesting and informative presentations and workshops. In addition to the two reports on the conference included in this edition of Mountain Ear, we should also mention that there were a number of interesting trade displays by manufacturers and organizations. These displays gave those attending the opportunity to see and discuss with the representatives some of the hearing aid and assistive listening products available in the market. Keeping up with the latest technology is important for the hard of hearing and helps to make for a more informed consumer. The Companies and Organizations with displays this year were:

Costco Hearing Aid Centre had a display of their PERCEPTION® Hearing Aids. They carry a full line of analogue, programmable and digital hearing aids.

Widex Hearing Aids featured their Senso® range of fully digital hearing aids. Their display provided a number of informative brochures both on their products and information on hearing loss.

Oto Hearing Products Ltd. put on a display of their various types of earmolds and line of custom made hearing protectors. Their display was very informative and showed some of the many materials available for earmold products.

Phonak Hearing Systems featured their PowerZoom® hearing aids and their MicroLink® system with a HandiMic microphone/transmitter and an audio shoe with an integrated receiver which attaches to the base of their hearing aid.

Cochlear Corporation featured their Nucleus®24 cochlear implant with some informative brochures and publications.

The Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WIDHH) had a display of many assistive devices for the deaf and hard of hearing. They also featured Beverly Biderman's book, "A Journey Into Hearing" for sale. Biderman, hard of hearing from an early age, relates her experiences before and after receiving a cochlear implant and her book is recommended reading for all hard of hearing persons.

Assistive Listening Device Systems, Inc. (ALDS) featured a wide range of Hearing Accessibility Solutions. They had many of their product lines on

display.

Pacific Magnetics, Inc. a new entry from North Vancouver into the field of assistive listening devices had a display of loop systems, which included personal neck loops and room loops. They are also developing a personal neck loop compatible with Cel Phones.

DesignEar® put on a colourful display of artistic custom designs for converting your old or new hearing aid into a work of art.

## Safety For the Hard of Hearing

In our preparations for moving into the year 2000, the Board of Directors of the North Shore Branch thought long and hard about a choice for the theme for our coming members' meetings. The past year concentrated on issues to help us cope with our hearing loss and concentrated on being able to hear better in all types of listening situations. Assistive listening devices were stressed, but it also became apparent that there are other assistive devices to help in other ways.

Safety, of course, is always a concern for everyone, but for the deaf and hard of hearing there are very special problems and often these are not given a lot of thought in the community at large. There are, however, many assistive devices to help in this area and we thought it would be informative to search these out over the year and bring them to your attention along with other ideas to help with safety concerns.

When a hard of hearing person takes his/her hearing aid out at night to go to bed, it may be a blessing when there is a noisy party at the neighbour's house. The downside is that you have now gone into a world of silence and the noises of the night which might spell danger go unheard. This is especially true for the person living alone. Fire and smoke alarms are mainly designed for the hearing population and while there are devices specifically designed for the hard of hearing, availability and cost may not be well known by those who might benefit from them.

There are many other situations which range from leaving the tap running to not being aware of an emergency vehicle approaching while driving. This theme will give us an opportunity to learn about flashing lights, bed shakers, hearing dogs and perhaps some other devices or tricks to help compensate for the lack of sound. Stay tuned and we will see what information the year 2000 will bring.

## Why Hide Your Hearing Loss?

By Hugh Hetherington, Editor.

“Why hide your hearing loss? These were the words that appeared on the banner above one of the display tables at the CHHA BC Conference on October 30, 1999. Artist, Stuart Guilbault working through McNeill Audiology in Victoria, B.C. is offering a new service trade marked “DesignEar” ®. The service will convert a hearing aid - new or old into a work of art. Stuart Guilbault will create a new design for you or you can chose a stock design. Their brochure reads: *“For many years, manufacturers and people with hearing impairment have endeavoured to ‘hide’ hearing aids. Great expense has gone into making hearing aids smaller and even invisible. This works for many people. However, behind-the-ear hearing aids are often the most appropriate style and require less maintenance”*. To find out more information about “DesignEar” ®, you can contact McNeill Audiology at 250-370-2833 or Fax 250-370-2858. Their email address is mcneill@coastnet.com.

We should applaud Mr. Guilbault’s efforts to bring the “hard of hearing” out of the closet. Just think, if there were as much stigma attached to vision impairment and wearing eyeglasses, we would be going around tripping and bumping into things and generally going about our day in a total blur. Why must we accept this blurring of sound because we refuse to own up to a hearing loss?

While not everyone may wish to make a fashion statement with their hearing aid, the idea behind the concept is very sound. Appealing to one’s vanity with phrases like “Can’t be seen”, “hidden in the canal”, “completely invisible”, etc. may not always be in the best interests of the hard of hearing person. It could only be so if the hearing aids completely restored normal hearing.

It is generally accepted that the larger behind-the-ear hearing aids are able to provide more features, better hearing correction and lower maintenance costs. However, in talking to hearing aid manufacturers and audiologists, the opinion is that the hard of hearing would rather have a small in the canal aid which cannot be seen, even if at greater cost.

The hard of hearing would like equal access in the hearing world. Certainly one of the first steps must be to take responsibility and own up to a hearing loss. Perhaps at one time there was a certain stigma attached to deafness. That is how the word “dumb”

which means “mute” was often erroneously used as a synonym for “stupid”. Hearing loss is difficult to hide and this myth is certainly perpetuated when we make inappropriate responses during conversations. I am sure any hard of hearing person can relate to this fact. We appear to live in a more enlightened age now, and there is certainly no reason why wearing hearing aids should be any more embarrassing than wearing eyeglasses.

For many, hearing loss is a fact of aging. Living in today’s noisy environment, some hearing loss may even be inevitable during our early or middle years. The sooner a hearing loss is recognized and addressed, the less likely it is that the person will forget how to hear. Yes, I said “Forget how to hear”. When a person has normal binaural hearing, the brain is able to directionalize sound and sort out what we want to hear from the unnecessary background noise clutter. As hearing deteriorates, the speech sounds

that we need to hear become less intelligible and merge with the background clutter. As this deterioration is generally a gradual process, it may be many years before we realize that people really aren’t muttering and that it is our hearing loss that has made their voices less distinct or the television sound more muffled. Amplification of the lost sounds at this stage often meets with the claim that the hearing aid makes the background noise too loud, or that turning on the tap sounds like Niagara Falls. Relegating the hearing aid to the bedside drawer, after spending so much money on it, is not the best idea. Perseverance in learning how to hear again in a world of sound may be the only real answer.



Some of Stuart Guilbault's designs on display at the CHHA BC Conference

We must realize that there is no pat answer to this frustrating problem. Coping with a hearing loss is an individual matter and it is up to you to find a good hearing professional and be willing to work with them to find the right solution for your situation. Make sure they are able to select from a number of different brands. Be aware that you are entitled to a trial period with your hearing aids. Try a different type or brand if the first one doesn’t work out. Realize that expensive is not necessarily the best, but don’t expect miracles. Your lifestyle may only require an assistive listening device for use in certain situations, but if hearing aids are the answer, follow the advise of your hearing professional, and be prepared to put in the effort and time it takes to learn to hear again. Consider taking a speechreading course. Join a self help group like the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association. But most important of all, own up to your hearing loss, seek support from those