

Publication of the
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MOUNTAIN EAR, formerly ((SPEAK)) is a publication of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association - North Shore Branch. It is Published 5 times a year on the 15th of March, May, August, October and December.

Your submissions are always welcome. Please contact the Editor:

Hugh Hetherington:

Telephone 604-926-8049

FAX 604-925-2286

The Member's meeting on November 20, 1997 was on the topic "Bridging The Gap" between CHHA, CHHA-BC and Local



Fred Clark and Ann Rowe

Fred Clark, CHHA President, and Ann Rowe, Vice President of CHHA-BC their questions.

Erica Barrett, President, North Shore Branch, welcomed those present and introduced Fred Clark and Ann Rowe, thanking them for coming to be on the panel for this special meeting. Erica then called upon Alfred Kobbeltvedt, N.S. Branch Treasurer, to be the moderator for the evening.



Members at the meeting

Alfred began by presenting brief biographies on Fred Clark and Ann Rowe. He then informed participants that he would start with questions

which had already been handed in and afterwards there would be the opportunity for those present to ask additional questions. The questions and an abridged transcript of the answers given by Fred Clark and Ann Rowe are printed in the newsletter beginning on page 5.

Alfred thanked Fred Clark and Ann Rowe most sincerely for their participation in answering all the questions.

The meeting was followed by a social and refreshments.



Fred Clark and Alfred Kobbeltvedt

Managing Your Hearing Loss Course

A new *Managing Your Hearing Loss* course (12 two hour sessions \$25.00 Tuesday 10 A.M. to noon) will start on 17 February at Capilano Community Services Society. Spouses are welcome free of charge. The instructor is Joan Bennett, B.Ed, Diploma - Ed. of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, CHHA Certified Instructor. The Course is sponsored by CHHA - North Shore Branch. It is funded in part by the District of North Vancouver and the City of North Vancouver and is supported by Capilano Community Services Society and North Shore Neighbourhood House. **If you are interested in this helpful and worthwhile course, please contact Joan Bennett at 983-3131 or FAX to 689-2563 or email bcreativ@axionet.com.**

CHHA-BC Conference and Annual General Meeting

The following are some of the highlights provided by our Treasurer, Alfred Kobbeltvedt, of the November 7 and 8, 1997 conference held in Chilliwack, B.C.

1. PLENARY SESSION: Impact of hearing loss presented by Dr. Jane Hastings. This presentation looked at the psychological effects of a hearing loss on children, teens and adults who are hard of hearing, and their families and friends in existing situations. Dr. Hastings, the key note speaker, a psychologist with linguistics as a specialty put a very strong emphasis on linguistics to denote the relationship of language and speaking. She indicated that if children in early infancy (0-4 years) have been identified early with a hearing loss, they need immediate remedial help to learn the 900 basic English words as a minimum. It is a language acquisition process for children with cognitive losses. This has become extremely important for the development of these children. She claims, and proves, that grammar and vocabulary are absolutely essential for reading in order to overcome the hidden cognitive deficiency problems. If the hearing loss is not diagnosed very early, language acquisition becomes most difficult and stigmatic in later life and will never leave the afflicted person. In fact, she states, many psychological problems in adults can be directly attributed to a hearing loss in the early infant years.

2. Workshop 2: A Moot Court presented by a cast consisting of Marilyn Dahl, Judge, Henry Vlug, lawyer, Maria Gilsig, lawyer, Barbara Dixon, Constable, Marlene Witze, citizen, Catherine Kottmeier, Court reporter, and Averill Paes, witness. This presentation dramatized a day in court with the rights of a



hard of hearing person who has been accused of an offense. It portrayed the lack of proper communication between a hard of hearing person and the police constable under circumstances where there were misunderstandings on both sides (for example the constable thought that the accused was impaired when she suffered from Meniers's disease). The scenario showed the need of a hard of hearing person

to identify a hearing loss when dealing with other people, particularly a member of the police force. But it also showed a real need to instruct members of the police forces how to deal with hard of hearing people.

3. Workshop 4: What is new about hearing aids and what after sales service means. Dana Brylnelsen, Chair of the Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Consultants and director of Infant Development Programmes, BC, rendered a report on the status of the Board. As reported, the three major concerns are: The sale of mail-order hearing aids (i.e. Micro Ear 2000 was convicted but is still advertising and selling), the lack of consumer information on hearing loss, and the need for a consumer protection mechanism to be in place once the Board is dissolved. The Board also drafted a Sales Agreement to be used by hearing aid dealers and dispensers. (CHHA-NSB will try to follow up with this important document and distribute it to our membership. We hope to have it at our meetings. Every one of our members should be reading it and using it. It proposes to spell out Hearing Aid trial, payment and refund policy and other important conditions. We could, even without official imposition, encourage our members to ask to use this document when dealing with an audiologist/dispenser). The second part of the presentation was made by Ken Ganden, Hearing Aid Dealer, Vernon, BC and Chuck Fuller, Audiologist, Abbotsford, BC. The persistent problem with the hearing aid is the microphone, directional or omnidirectional. The new technology is the digital hearing aid which is presently the leading edge: the internal noise generated by the analog hearing aid between the transistors and the filters is eliminated by the reduced circuitry. Perhaps the future will see a combination of digital aids and omnidirectional mike. There is no one single publication or newsletter which covers all the new technological advancement made. Recommendations: always make an appointment with audiologist/dispenser before showing up and ask to use the Sales Agreement form.

4. Announcement by CHHA National: Fred Clark, president CHHA has received increased visibility with the Federal Government. As a result of CHHA's effort, the Federal Government has awarded a \$600,000 grant to CHHA National toward its several projects, including, among others, to publish *Listen/Ecoute* magazine four times a year instead of 3 times, to train 20 people in BC, with 2 weeks in

Victoria and 2 weeks in Vancouver to mediate in conflict situations in the working environment to have hard of hearing people remain in their jobs.

5. Workshop 6: *Keeping Branches Alive and Well*: presented by Anne Rowe and Maggie Dodd. This presentation looked at survival strategies for Branches. CHHA-BC Chapter has its mandate spelled out in its constitution. It will have a publicity handbook available. Three major problems include the aging of the membership, attracting new members and getting and keeping executives to serve on the boards.

6. Workshop 9: *Building Partnerships*: presented by Elwood Major. Three people contributed: Pat Alan, from Lion's Hearing Foundation, Gary Gee from Elks of Canada and Sabine Keil of Pharmasave Wellness Clinic. Each described their organizations, achievements, structure and the availability of assistance. Lions will be amalgamating their sight conservation foundation with the Hearing Foundation, funding the cochlear implant program at UBC. They also have the Access 2000 video available (ask local Lions Branches). Elks Canada funds hearing impairment of children through its local branches. Pharmasave Wellbeing Clinic to do joint presentations to members using their facilities. Ask at local pharmasave branches.

7. AGM Highlights: The new bylaws were approved and passed. The Managing Your Hearing Loss project was presented by Maggie Dodd. The Treasurer's report was presented by Miron Gazda and the Auditors Report was presented and passed. Branch reports included our CHHA-NSB which was presented in its entirety. Our resolution reading "that CHHA-BC petition the Provincial Government that all hearing aids be covered by the Medical Plan of B.C." was vigorously and resolutely supported by Alfred Kobbeltvedt and, under opposition, was passed. Of great significance to the branches was the motion presented by Lloyd Dahl to implement the "Outreach for Awareness Program" (OFAP), a program to help branches to obtain new membership. This was also passed. BC Chapter moved to co-host with one or more branches the year 2002 CHHA National Conference and AGM, perhaps as a joint venture with the National Audiologist Association. CHHA-BC passed a motion to change its official fiscal year from September 30 to April 30 as there is not enough time for the auditor to complete the audit.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Noise Awareness Day has made me much more alert to the many people who do not protect their ears. My husband and I when travelling recently noticed a lot of people using various noisy equipment continuously with no ear plugs. One wonders how long before they have a hearing loss. It would be nice if we could just get new ears when all else fails.



Our 6 year old grandson who was loosing his hearing, recently had an operation (tonsils, adenoids, tubes in his ears), and after the operation to quote him, "I can hear louder." Later when returning to school he said "I have new ears, do not talk so loud." I wish it were that simple for us who have lost

some or all of our hearing to get new ears. Two things that really changed my life were getting the right hearing aids and also closed captioning. I am now working on trying various listening devices, to try and cut down that background noise and to hear better in most situations. I would also stress the importance of using a humidifier every night to remove the moisture in the hearing aid and the tubing. This prevents rust in the hearing aid and helps to make your hearing aid last longer.

A reminder our MEETINGS NOW START at 7:00 P.M. SHARP. This gives YOU more TIME to participate and socialize.

And now I, as well as, the rest of the Board of Directors would like to wish you the Compliments of the Season and the very best in 1998.



SEASON'S GREETINGS

The Board of Directors wish you all the best of the Season and a prosperous and Happy New Year!

DON'T LET LOW-COST "HEARING AIDS" FOOL YOU

Reprinted from: *It's Your Health* October 17, 1997 a publication of Health Canada.

In the last few years there has been an increase in the advertising of low cost "hearing aid" type devices in Canada and the United States. While these products resemble actual behind-the-ear hearing, they make unrealistic hearing enhancing claims, trying in many cases to convince consumers that the devices are actually state-of-the-art products with advanced sound processing technology.

These devices may retail for as little as \$30 and are often sold through mail-order companies or via some US television stations, although at least one brand is known to have been sold in a large retail store chain in Canada. Advertisements and literature for such devices often claim for example that your hearing will be improved, you'll hear things you never did before, you'll be able to hear a small object being dropped at great distances, or that you'll also be able to hear sounds in adjoining rooms.

Some of these devices may state that they are not to be used to correct hearing impairment. However, because of their low cost, claims to greatly improve the wearer's hearing - claims which are often unsubstantiated, and their similar appearance to true hearing aids, consumers may buy one only to find that they have bought a product which is unsatisfactory and that they have been misled. Health Canada is concerned that consumers suffering from hearing loss may purchase such devices instead of a proper hearing aid fitted with the assistance of a recognized hearing care professional.

The Therapeutic Products Program within Health Canada has evaluated two of these hearing devices and has concluded that such devices are often of poor quality and that **they can generate sound levels which could, over time, damage the wearer's hearing.**

On September 10, 1996, Industry Canada's Competition Bureau issued a news release announcing that the company selling one of these devices, the Micro Ear 2000, was found guilty of six counts of misleading advertising under the Competition Act. In this case, the claim that the device could tune out background noise and enable one to hear clear crisp sound was proven false by experts. In the US, Telebrands Corporation, the company marketing another such device, the Whisper XL, has been ordered to pay over \$500,000 to settle consumer fraud suits for falsely advertising the product and selling it without the approval of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Telebrands must also refund the purchase price to any purchaser who requests a refund. As well, between 1994 and 1996, the FDA issued warning letters to several other manufacturers of similar products that made unsupported claims for their devices.

In view of the above, Health Canada urges the public to be wary of the quality and claimed performance of such devices, especially when they are being sold for a fraction of the cost of

a true hearing aid, which normally costs several hundred dollars. If you would like to report an injury as a result of the use of such a device, or report a case where you believe that the device does not meet its claimed performance, please call the Medical Devices Hot-Line at 1-800-267-9675.

You may also contact the Therapeutic Products Programme at one of the following Health Protection Branch offices:

Atlantic 1-902-426-5575

Quebec 1-800-561-3350

Ontario 1-416-973-1596

Central 1-204-983-5451

Western 1-604-666-3845

If you suspect that you have a hearing loss that requires correction, Health Canada encourages you to seek proper medical attention by consulting your physician, who will provide you with referrals to recognized hearing care professionals.

Members' Meeting April 20, 1998

"Psychological and emotional aspects of communication difficulties between family members and hard of hearing people" is the subject for a special presentation to be given at our members' meeting on 20 April 1998. The guest speaker will be Jennifer Shifrin, a registered clinical counsellor and speech language pathologist trained in psychology. She has her own consulting business in counselling services, and has worked with the hard of hearing for 15 years. We welcome you to bring your family members along to this meeting. Please be sure to mark your calendars now for this important meeting.

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association - North Shore Branch gratefully acknowledges a donation of \$250.00 from the Kiwanis Club of West Vancouver.

A man was concerned that his wife might be losing her hearing and decided he would test her. While she was sitting in an easy chair, he came up behind her and said in a quiet voice, "Dear, can you hear me?" There was no response. He moved a little bit closer and said in a slightly louder voice, "Dear, can you hear me?" Again, there was no response. This time he came up right behind the chair and said in a very loud voice, "DEAR, CAN YOU HEAR ME?" At this point his wife stood up, turned around and said loudly, "FOR THE THIRD TIME, YES."

Members' Meetings for 1998

Please mark your calendars now for the members meeting dates which have been set for 1998. All meetings will be held on **Mondays at the North Building, Delbrook Recreation Centre. The meetings will begin sharply at 7:00 PM.** Free parking is available in the parking lot which is accessed on West Windsor Road at Stanley Avenue. (1 block east of Delbrook).

Monday 16 February 1998 Showing of videos, including our own "Communication Access" video.

Monday 20 April 1998 "Relationships within the family with hard of hearing members" (See details on page 4.

Monday 15 June 1998 "Dessert Party" and social evening

Monday 21 September 1998 Annual General Meeting

Monday 16 November 1998 Sharing information about hearing aids and assistive listening devices.

Warnings about ear wax

In case you missed it, this letter is reprinted from the North Shore News, November 28, 1997.

Dear Editor,

On several occasions this year we have had to remove candle wax from the ear canal and from off the outer surface of the eardrum after subjects had their ears "candled," supposedly to remove their own wax.

Because of the inconsistency of the candle wax and its tendency to "mould" to the shape of the eardrum and ear canal, it is technically difficult to remove and can be uncomfortable for the patient.

We would like to caution the public who are interested in having their ears candled: it is not without complication.

If your ears don't bother you, leave them alone.

A small amount of wax is normal and healthy for the ears and does not cause hearing loss.

If you have symptoms such as itching, pain, discharge, hearing loss, bleeding and blocked feelings, see your family physician or someone trained to diagnose and treat ear diseases.

We know of no health benefits from the practice of candling.

H.D. Morris MD

J.M. Smith MD

D.R. Bell MD

Division of Otolaryngology (ear, nose and throat)

Lions Gate Hospital.

Questions and Answers November 20th Meeting "Bridging the Gap"

Question 1, directed to Fred Clark. "How will the Supreme Court decision affect the hard of hearing?"

Fred: As you know, the B.C. Supreme Court turned down signing under the medical plan. However, the Canadian Supreme Court ruled that B.C. must provide sign language interpreters. It is clear that hard of hearing people, too, must have access to suitable communication to meet their needs.

Question 2 directed to Ann Rowe. "CHHA-BC is carrying out Telemarketing. Will a percentage of the income derived from this be given to branches within the geographical area of the branches?"

Ann: Telemarketing is the only source of revenue for CHHA-BC. If the Chapter gets well known throughout B.C. and the income sufficient, it might be considered.

Question 3 directed to Fred Clark. "The size of print in the Listen magazine is too small for many seniors to read. Would CHHA consider issuing a shorter (reduced) version in large print?"

Fred: This is the first time we have had this request. The magazine goes out in both English and French. Large print would increase the size of the publication, but we will look into it.

Question 4 directed to both Fred Clark and Ann Rowe. "Noise is the highest factor causing hearing loss. Would both CHHA and CHHA-BC promote Noise Awareness Day?"

Ann: CHHA-BC will do so.

Fred: Difficult, as we would have to have a specific day across Canada. The day chosen would have to combine Noise Awareness with May Hearing Awareness Month.

Question 5 directed to Fred Clark. "We've heard that CHHA is considering increasing its membership fee. Is this a possibility?"

Fred: Personally, I haven't heard this mentioned. Membership fees are only a token in the overall income for CHHA. The Federal Government has finally recognized the valid work of CHHA. In the last six months CHHA has received grants of over half a million dollars. The Federal Government will cover the cost of the publication of Listen/Écoute Magazine and also a TV program on speech reading scheduled for May 1998.

Question 6 directed to Fred Clark. "The Branch would like to see a brief summary in the Listen Magazine on the role and operation of each of CHHA's sub-committees. Would this be possible?"

Fred: Every Province is represented on the Board of CHHA. Committees are working in the following areas:

- Canadian Transportation Agency - Law Courts
- Speech Reading - Human Rights
- Hearing Aids Standardization - Monitoring Cellular phones
- Audiologists Association

Question 7 directed to Ann Rowe. "Why is CHHA-BC not a member of the United Way?"

Ann: CHHA is a consumer organization. Only Service Organizations can be members of the United Way.

Question 8 directed to Fred Clark. "Our Branch, like other Branches, have husband and wife members. Would it not be possible for just one CHHA membership fee to be paid in these cases?"

Fred: Ian Hamilton, St. John, New Brunswick, is looking into the option of having a Family Membership.

Question 9 directed to Fred Clark. "Sign language is not for hard of hearing and late deafened people. What is CHHA doing about this?"

Fred: In 1992, the deaf developed their own culture, and CHHA was formed to meet the needs of hard of hearing and late deafened people. We never promoted sign language, let alone discussed it in our publications.

Ann: B.C. Chapter has already done some work in this area and will continue to stress the difference.

Question 10 directed to Fred Clark. "Would CHHA consider approaching an airline to assist members to attend National Conferences with reduced rates?"

Fred: For our last National Conference CHHA received a grant of \$40,000 to help branches to send representatives.

Ann: CHHA-BC always funds one person to attend a National Conference.

Question 11 directed to Fred Clark. "Would CHHA consider holding its AGM every two years instead of every year?"

Ann: Constitutionally we are obliged to hold an AGM annually.

Fred: We aim to move around Canada alternating between eastern and western Provinces for our National Conferences and AGM's holding them in different Provinces. The B.C. Chapter has offered to host the National Conference in 2002, perhaps in a joint venture with the National Audiologist Association.

Question 12 directed to both Fred Clark and Ann Rowe. "Would representatives of CHHA and CHHA-BC be willing to attend more Branch meetings?"

Ann: I will take back this request to the Executive Committee of CHHA-BC.

Fred: Provincial representatives on the Board of CHHA could attend meetings.

Question 13 directed to Ann Rowe. "If B.C. Chapter succeeds in establishing a staffed office, would that office be able to carry out some of the workload that Branches are undertaking?"

Ann: Maybe newsletters. I will take this back to the Executive.

Question 14 directed to both Fred Clark and Ann Rowe. "What is CHHA National and B.C. Chapter doing with the increasing number of organizations converting their voice telephone to an automated digital phone answering system which is difficult for hard of hearing people?"

Ann: CHHA-BC has already complained to the CRTC and set a copy of the letter to CHHA.

Fred: Personally, I am not interested in any form of automated digital telephone system, and have told those organizations using it they will lose me as a customer.

Question 15 directed to Ann Rowe. "Concerning the Western Theatre Telemarketing. Who picks the children to attend the entertainment?"

Ann: The Western Theatre Telemarketing picks the children.

Question 16 directed to both Fred Clark and Ann Rowe. "After each CHHA and CHHA-BC Conference, would CHHA publish a report in Listen magazine?"

Ann: It is a question of time and cost. At the moment it is not possible for CHHA-BC to prepare a report.

Fred: Delegates at conferences get all the information and can pass these on to their branches to inform members. CHATTER does give some information.

Question 17 directed to both Fred Clark and Ann Rowe. "What is the best method to attract new membership?"

Ann: The Pharmasave Wellbeing Clinic program is willing to do joint presentations to members using their facilities. This could be a source for new members. Also, by getting the editor of the local newspaper to include an article on the branch.

Fred: It is true our membership is getting older and we need to reach younger people. Maybe Branches should include parents of hard of hearing children as members. Also, perhaps audiologists and hearing aid dispensers.

Question 18 directed to both Fred Clark and Ann Rowe. "What is the best way to improve the links between CHHA, CHHA Chapters and local Branches?"

Fred: The National has never wished to restrict the autonomy of local branches. The National voices the needs of hard of hearing and late deafened people on a Federal level. Increasingly, by means of the internet, CHHA is reaching branches on a local level. It is the way of the future.

Ann: I will get back to Lloyd Dahl, President of CHHA-BC about this question.

At this point, Alfred asked for questions from the floor.

Question 1 from the floor. "Can you deduct Assistive Listening Devices under medical expenses if they are more than 3% of your net income? Also, if you have a disability deduction of \$4,000, how can extra expenses be deducted?"

Fred: Yes, you can deduct ALD costs against your income, but medical expenses are not a refundable tax credit at present.

NOTE: A member pointed out that a number of people don't have sufficient income to pay income tax and therefore do not have the opportunity to claim any medical expenses.

Question 2. "Is CHHA on the Internet?"

Fred: CHHA National has a website and E-mail address.

NOTE: Various websites and E-mail information was given in the last North Shore Branch Newsletter "Mountain Ear". A member informed participants that information on websites and E-mail could be found at libraries and one could use their service to send out information.

Question 3. "My mother has just become a member of the North Shore Branch. I called to get information about hearing aids and was advised at that time not to take up the offer of a free test. I would like to hear your opinion."

Fred: Personally, I had the experience of problems with an in-the-ear hearing aid. Eventually, I went to St. Paul's Audiology Department for a test and I only required a referral from my doctor. I was tested and advised to get a behind-the-ear hearing aid which has been successful. I also have this assistive listening device which is small enough to carry around with me. The Audiology Department does not sell hearing aids which you get from a hearing aid dispenser. The Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WIDHH) is also an excellent resource.

NOTE: The Vancouver Health Audiology Department at #250-555 West 12th Avenue in Vancouver will also do tests and give advice. This only requires a referral from a family doctor.

A member pointed out that there are many different hearing aids on the market, including new expensive digital ones. One must make sure that one gets an agreement to have 30 days to try a new hearing aid, and be able to return it within that period if it does not help. People should shop around to find a hearing aid which suits an individual's needs.

A simple purchase agreement outlining terms and conditions is being prepared by the B.C. Chapter.

Question 4. "Why do we have to send our hearing aids East for future repairs and maintenance? It is very costly."

Ann: Unfortunately, today, hearing aid dealers no longer repair hearing aids. There are so many different ones on the market. One should try and get something in the contract to cover repairs when buying a hearing aid.

Fred: Hearing aids bought through WIDHH special program for people with a low income do have assistance with repairs.

Two questions for which there was no time were about:

- medication and hearing loss

- candling - is it a good accepted practice? (**Editor's note: See the letter on Candling on page 4 of this newsletter**)