**Publication of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA)**

NORTH SHORE BRANCH

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our first meeting of the year 2000 was held on February 21. We were delighted to see such a good turnout of members and visitors to hear our popular speaker Jennifer Shifrin. Jennifer spoke about the *"Impact of Hearing Impairment and How to Minimize Your Losses"*. Jennifer's presentation and encouragement of audience participation made it a most enjoyable meeting. We hope to have Jennifer speak with us again in the future.

## NOISE AWARENESS DAY

International Noise Awareness Day is April 12, 2000. We should all think about how we can lessen the noise that continually surrounds us. Noise is one of the major causes of hearing loss. Music being played too loud, lawnmowers, leaf blowers, electrical tools, motorcycles, etc. The North Shore Branch of CHHA has donated copies of the video called *"Stop That Noise"* to the North Shore libraries. This video was produced by the League for the Hard of Hearing, New York and will help you to understand what a large factor noise is in causing hearing loss.

Your hearing cannot be replaced once it is lost. Hearing aids and listening devices are only helpers. It is imperative to be aware of the risk of noise and to take care to protect your hearing with hearing protectors. Loss of hearing and the consequent inability to communicate is devastating.

Hearing Aids are expensive and need to be replaced every 5 to 10 years. Be sure to see an AUDIOLOGIST as soon as you are aware of your HEARING LOSS.

## HEARING AWARENESS MONTH

The month of May has been designated as Hearing Awareness month. Some members of North Shore Branch make presentations at various facilities during this month in order to bring hearing loss awareness to the community.

## CHHA B.C. CONFERENCE

The CHHA B.C. Conference will be held November 3rd and 4th at the Delta Airport Hotel in Richmond.

Members participating in Jennifer Shifrin's Workshop at February Members' Meeting

Some of us have attended these conferences and found them educational and a great time to be together meeting old friends and making new friends who are hard of hearing. If you have not attended one of these Conferences before, please do consider going this year. Let us know if you are able to attend.

## CHHA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The National Conference will be held in St. John's, Newfoundland on May 25th to 27th. Newfoundland is such a beautiful Island and you might consider taking this conference in and then travelling the

Island. My husband and I have been back twice to Newfoundland. We are always taken aback by the beauty, their music and basically unhurried lifestyle. One really should, if they can, take this opportunity before there are too many tourist changes. This would be a good time to work the Conference in with a vacation. Let us know if you would consider attending.

## ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICES

The North Shore Branch is interested in providing information that will enable you to hear better. Many people are missing out in life by not having listening devices that will enhance your listening ability, especially in restaurants, meetings, etc. Pacific Magnetics Inc., which is a North Shore Business, now manufactures inexpensive loops, the loops can then be used with various items one can purchase at Radio Shack or other retail outlets. The Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing also stocks many listening devices as well as devices to alert you in case of fire, door bells etc. I especially like the bed shaker alarms clocks as you can relax and have a good night's sleep knowing you will awake at the right time. We are asking Brad Bice, who looks after ALD's at WIDHH to demonstrate some items at our April 17th members' meeting.

## NEXT MEETING

Our next Members' Meeting will be held on April 17th and we plan to have a presentations on safety for the hard of hearing. Please see the meeting notice on page 6.

## CONFIRMATIONS

When our phoning committee calls, it would be a great help if you would be kind enough to confirm your attendance. This helps us to have enough tables and chairs set up and for Clarence Bleackley to know how many goodies to make for our social gathering.

## VOLUNTEERS

We are always looking for volunteers to carry on the work of the North Shore Branch. Please let

*Co. Erica Barrett*

# MEMBERS' MEETING

Report by Andrea Gautier.

On February 21st, a highly successful workshop on the subject *The Impact of Hearing Impairment and How to Minimize your Losses* was presented by the North Shore Branch. The room was filled with the glow of discussion and involvement as 27 members, 20 guests and 2 children participated in the workshop presented by Jennifer Shifrin, a North Vancouver Registered Clinical Counsellor and Speech Language Pathologist.

Jennifer Shifrin Conducting workshop at February 21st Members'

With the help of the highly skilled and compassionate Jennifer Shifrin, our CHHA-NS Branch was able to provide a safe environment for members to voice their feelings and concerns. The courage of those who spoke up was a gift to us all.

Jennifer started off by saying that, while attention is being paid to the technology of aids to hearing, there is still little if any attention being given to the feelings of adults experiencing hearing loss, and of their loved ones.

While acknowledging that there is a point at which all has been done to improve our hearing losses, the values and attitudes that we carry can either increase the loss or minimize it. We were invited to examine these and how they impact upon our lives.

I laughed when I saw Jennifer put a huge X on top of the word *polite* and replace it with *caring and respectful*. How can we be caring and respectful of others and how can others be caring and respectful of us? Is it caring and respectful to pretend to hear what someone is saying? Does it increase closeness?

At times we seem to be repeating over and over what we need from others, thinking they aren't even trying. A hearing member told us she would be thankful to someone who was willing to remind her to speak clearly or face the person to speak, because she does not want to be an inconsiderate person.

Members' Meeting Continued from page 2.

We need to define our needs and to have the respect of those closest to us is worth demanding. Try to project an image that says you are comfortable with who you are and prepared to receive respect.

It can be tiring to often be telling people what we need, so it's very important to take breaks and to focus on the most important relationships, remembering that health is about balance. What would you say if the closest person in your life said: "teach me how you want to be loved?"

There were many examples shared and positive ways of responding to them were offered. I'm sure everyone learned something new.

A big thank you to Jennifer and to our Board members for organizing such a valuable evening.

## CLOSED CAPTIONING

By Erica Barrett.

It is difficult to cover everything that is available for those who have difficulty hearing at our members' meetings, so in this article I would like to talk to you about CLOSED CAPTIONS for TELEVISION which provides great benefit to the Hard of Hearing.

Captions are like subtitles in a foreign movie. The text is usually printed at the bottom of the screen for you to read. Captioning can be provided by an external decoder, or by using a television with a decoder built in. External decoders are available from Roger's Cable and are simple to attach. Roger's will provide these free of charge if you are a Roger's subscriber and if you have documentation from your AUDIOLOGIST or DOCTOR. You may have to pay a nominal deposit fee which is refunded at the time you return the decoder.

All television sets manufactured since 1993 must contain a built in caption decoder if the picture tube is 13" or larger. Closed Captioning has changed my life and I can now enjoy the news and other programs. Most programs on the major networks are captioned both during the day and during prime time evening hours. For additional enjoyment, you can rent popular movie videos to pop into your VCR and sit back and relax without straining to hear every word. Just make sure that the closed captioned symbol is shown on the back of the video, either CC or a open square with a tail.

# In Memoriam

**The Board of CHHA - North Shore Branch was very saddened to hear that Lloyd Dahl, our friend and President of CHHA - B.C. Chapter passed away suddenly on February 29, 2000. Lloyd has been a great friend to the Branch and at our 10th Anniversary Celebration was presented with an award of recognition for his assistance to the Branch over the years.**

## Closing the Channel to Narrow the Gap

By Hugh Hetherington, Editor.

Gap! What Gap? The gap I am referring to is the space between the source of sound that provides the auditory message we wish to hear and our eardrum. This is not a phrase I have heard referred to in audiological circles, but neverless it is an important consideration to hard of hearing persons, as well as, persons with normal hearing.

Let's define the channel also. Again, speaking simply, a channel is the route the sound takes from the source to your ear. This channel can be through various mediums, such as, air, wires, radio frequencies, infrared light, fibre optics, etc. to name a few. Radio and television are prime examples of channels.

If you remember your high school physics you will probably be aware that the power or intensity of sound travelling through air varies inversely with the square of the distance. Simplistically speaking, because there are other factors involved, this means that at 2 feet away the power has diminished by a one-fourth, at 4 feet, a sixteenth, and 8 feet, by one sixty-fourth.

Air is actually a relatively poor channel for the transmission of sound, and is best in quiet surroundings. Even to a person with normal hearing, this gap can cause difficulty when it becomes too great, or if there are other factors involved such as background noise. To a person with impaired hearing, however, this gap is artificially increased by the degree and nature of the hearing loss.

How do we narrow this gap? Let's take a simple example. Suppose you are sitting in your living room listening to the television set. If you are having difficulty hearing you turn up the volume. This doesn't actually narrow the gap, but it does increase the sound power to counteract the loss of sound caused by the gap. This method of narrowing the gap might be satisfactory if you are watching TV alone. If, however, a person with normal hearing is listening with you, the level of sound may become annoying to that person. If your hearing loss is very severe it may also become annoying to the neighbours.

This is an artificial way of narrowing the gap, but it is very widely used in many ways: (1) having a person raise their voice, (2) using a public address amplifier at a meeting, (3) Shouting to someone at a distance to get their attention. It is also the method used by fitting a hard of hearing person with a hearing aid(s), although the amplification is done at the receiving end and amplifies noise and distortions, as well.

While these methods may be satisfactory in many circumstances, technology provides us with better and more efficient ways of narrowing the gap. For the television example, for instance, the HOH person might use headphones. This would bring the TV sound right up close to the person's ear. This shortens the gap between the sound source and the ear from a few feet to less than and inch. Headphones can be connected to radios and TV sets with direct wire connections or can employ FM or Infrared technology with cordless earphones.

A simple example of closing the gap that everyone is familiar with is the telephone. This device closes the gap between houses, cities, and countries bringing a far away voice directly to our ear. We don't normally think about the medium involved, but it can include many of those mentioned above.

Another example is when we tune our radio or television to a station. In this case, we have effectively narrowed the gap between the source of transmission and our ear from many miles to a few feet or inches. Radio transmission is thus a very effective means of narrowing the gap. For the HOH person, this means can be employed through the use of personal FM or Infrared systems. These broadcast over short distances and bring the speaker's voice directly to the ear of the HOH person using earphones or coupling to the person's hearing aid. The coupling to the hearing aid can be accomplished with a number of methods; direct coupling with a boot which connects the sound via wires to the hearing aid; magnetic or inductive coupling using a telecoil (T-Switch) in the hearing aid; or even through the use of miniature FM receivers which connect directly to the hearing aids.

To narrow the gap, many elaborate systems are available to the hearing aid user and should be taken into consideration when deciding what type of hearing aid to purchase. These systems can vary from less than $100 to many hundreds of dollars. One of the simplist and most effective means of ensuring that you will be able to narrow the gap for yourself is to ensure that your hearing aid is equipped with an alternate means of input in addition to the microphone. Generally, this means a telecoil or connections for a boot. The main difference between the two is that the boot requires wires to your hearing aid, while the telecoil is wireless.

The telecoil offers many advantages and permits the hearing aid user to take advantage of a wide range of assistive listening devices and loop systems. It permits the hearing aid user to listen to the telephone with reduced background noise interference. Public meeting rooms may be fitted with room loops and these can be taken advantage of merely by turning a switch on your hearing aid. The voice of the speaker is brought directly to your ear from the microphone via magnetic induction. Personal neckloops can also be used in other settings with personal amplifiers, FM systems, Infrared Systems, Cell phones or radio and television. (See the following article on neck loops)

Space limitations prevent this article from discussing all the various possibilities available to the HOH consumer. To ensure that you get the best possible solutions to your hearing problems, please be sure to discuss your lifestyle and hearing problems with your

## 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.

# Use of Neck Loops for Hard of Hearing Persons

## What is a neck loop?

A neck loop is a short wire which can be worn around the neck of a hard of hearing (HOH) person to magnetically couple with hearing aids that are equipped with what is called a T-Coil or Telephone Coil. These T-coils are often provided on behind-the-ear hearing aids and less often on in-the-ear hearing aids. The neck loop can be plugged into many types of assistive listening devices, such as pocket talkers, small personal amplifiers, personal FM systems, personal infrared systems, cordless earphone systems and others. The hearing aid usually has a 3 position switch labeled **'O - T - M**' which stands for **'Off - Telecoil - Mike'.** When switched to the **'T**' position the microphone is cut out and replaced by the telecoil which picks up sound by magnetic induction from one of the above mentioned electronic devices. This has the advantage of eliminating or reducing background noise and delivering the electronic sound directly to the HOH person's ear. This effectively increases what is called the 'signal to noise' ratio and can work to the advantage of the HOH person in noisy environments such as restaurants, social gatherings, in transportation vehicles, etc.

## Why not use earphones or ear buds?

FM and Infrared hearing systems equipped with earphones may not always be suitable for everyone with a hearing loss. The main problem is that with a significant hearing loss, the volume may have to be turned up so loud that it becomes annoying to others sitting near the hard of hearing person. Also, if the hearing loss is quite profound, no matter how loud the system turned up, the person will not be able to hear satisfactorily. Hearing aids on the other hand are tailored to the person's hearing loss and will normally provide satisfactory sound with input from a neck loop.

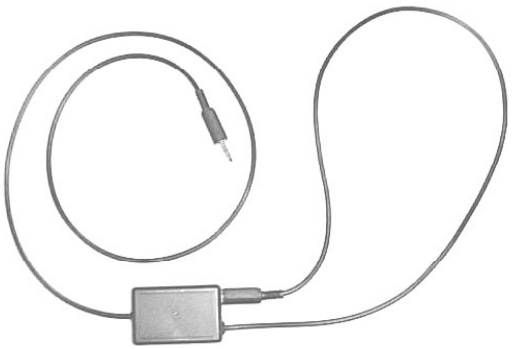
## Why is the T-coil sometimes referred to as a Telephone Switch?

The T-coil was originally designed for use with the telephone and allows the hearing aid to pickup the sound from the telephone receiver by magnetic induction rather than air conduction. The main advantages of this are the reduction in background noise and no squealing from feedback when the phone is pressed against the ear.

## Are there other uses for the T-coil?

These T-Switch equipped hearing aids can also be used with what are called loop systems. These can be loops which surround a whole room or area of a room, These are often used in meeting rooms where there might be HOH persons present. Other locations, such as, churches and theatres may be equipped with FM or Infrared systems. The neck loop described above can be plugged into the FM or Infrared system, and by switching the hearing aid to the **'T'** position the HOH person can receive the sound as if the speaker were right up close to the listener.

## How do I go about using a neck loop?



They are simple to use. Just plug the loop into the FM or Infrared receiver and place the loop around your neck. Switch your hearing aid to the **'T**' position, adjust your hearing aid volume, if necessary, and you will be able to hear the speaker much better. The speaker must use the microphone. If the room is equipped with a room loop, you have only to switch your hearing aid to the **'T'** position to pick up the sound.

## Can neck loops be used in any other way?

Neck loops can also be used with other systems, such as, radios, some TV sets, cordless headphones, and many other assistive listening devices. Neck loops are also now being manufactured to be used with certain cell phones.

## What if my hearing aid doesn't have a T-coil?

If your hearing aid is not equipped with a T-Switch you will not be able to use loop systems, but you can use earphones. When purchasing a new hearing aid, you should discuss having your hearing aid equipped with a T-coil. The small additional cost can be well worth it if your lifestyle includes attending meetings, social gatherings, attending church or theatres. The T-coil may well be your ticket back into a more rewarding social life.

For more information, contact the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association - North Shore Branch. The

# NEXT MEMBER'S MEETING

The next members' meeting will be held at St. John's Anglican Church, 220 West 8th Street in North Vancouver at 7:00 PM. We will be asking members of the RCMP, Ambulance & Fire Departments to speak to us about safety. Brad Bice, of the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will also be present to show us some devices available to improve safety for the Hard of Hearing.

Please be sure and mark this date on your calendar, and remember that friends and family members are always welcome to attend.

The meeting will be followed by a social with refreshments and there will also be a 50/50 draw and other door prizes.

**Meetings are HEARING and WHEELCHAIR accessible**.

# Secret hotline for Coutts crew

(Reprinted from the NZ Sunday Star*Times February 20, 2000)

## YACHTING

By Andrew Sanders

NEW ZEALAND'S Black Boat is wired with Kiwi ingenuity - and now earpiece communication technology allows skipper Russell Coutts to talk clearly to his America's Cup crew.

The previously secret, hitech system was to have been publicly revealed yesterday, but a lack of wind wiped out race one of the final between Team New Zealand and Prada.

As long as the wind kicks in, racing will now start today.

TNZ has always been regarded as a Cup technology innovator and the system, being used for the first time in an official yacht race, continues the trend. Its development can only make the Italians wonder what other innovations they face in the best of nine series.

Bowman Dean Phipps and front of the boat partner Joey Allen, who are the furthest from Coutts, will be among the earpiece wearers who will benefit enormously.

A circuit beneath the deck carries the skipper's instructions to his crew.

The system was the brainchild of Phonak New Zealand Ltd, a North Shore based company which became involved after providing hearing aids for TNZ designer Laurie Davidson.

The Kiwis always feared the fleet of helicopters swooping over the Hauraki Gulf racecourse and other noise would make it difficult to hear shouted, on board instructions.

Phipps is a big fan of the technology.

"In the 1995 challenge in San Diego, there was so much noise we couldn't hear ourselves speak," he said.

Russell Coutts thought there was a need to have some sort of communication which didn't require us to shout from one end of the boat to the other. Now he speaks into microphones (near the boat's two steering wheels) and what he says is carried around the circuit. As long as you are wearing the hearing aid, you pick up anything which is said in the loop. "He can be saying how he wants to position the boat at the start or how to position ourselves in relationship to the other boat." America's Cup rules prohibit the yachts from carrying equipment which can pick up communications or signals sent from off the boat.

The rule eliminated one Phonak product but the company's manager for technical services, Rex Lyes, adapted another earpiece which had been used to help blind swimmer Jason Griffiths.

"His coach was having a lot of trouble because she was having to run to the other end of the pool and tap him on the shoulder with a stick to let him know when to turn," he said. "I developed this water proof earpiece and some magnetic beacons which were placed at the end of the pool, and they sent out a signal to let him know where the end was."

TNZ crew members, including Phipps and Allen, required a similar water-proofed earpiece as they are frequently soaked.

The circuit's signal can be picked up above and below the deck, and it is especially beneficial to Allen, who spends much of his time sorting sails in the yacht's sewer.

It means that even though he can't see the next mark, he has a better idea of what is happening above.

The circuit has a magnetic field which carries the signal, but it works one way only - the crew is not able to speak to Coutts.

The system, which was trialled last year, was later set up on both NZL60 and NZ57.

Phipps said the earpieces had improved on-board communication.

"It also cuts down the confusion. It also cuts out the yelling and the screaming which you heard during the challenger series."

Phonak developed the system for no charge.

Lyes said the company hoped it could make a small