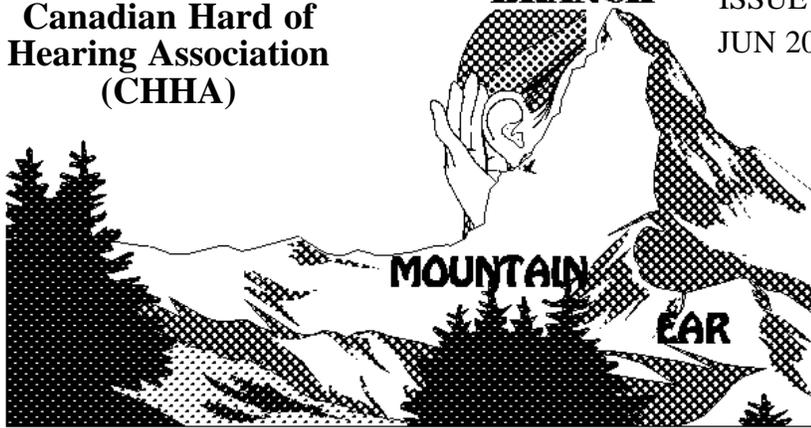


Publication of the
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(CHHA)

**NORTH SHORE
BRANCH**

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The sunny days and warmer weather have signalled that summer has finally arrived. We would like to wish you all a wonderful summer whether you are travelling, camping, or staying home and just enjoying the wonderful scenery right here in Vancouver.

MEMBERS MEETING IN APRIL

We had a very wonderful informational presentation by Margaret Fraser at our members' meeting. There is an article in this newsletter for those who missed it.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Your board and volunteer committees work hard behind the scenes in an effort to ease the isolation of hard of hearing people in their community and beyond. Some of the behind the scenes that we are doing:

Advisory to the Vancouver International Airport: Your listening device technician will be working with CHHA BC to help see that the airport is made more hearing accessible. Changes always take time.

Advisory of Disabilities Lions Gate Hospital: We have attended 3 meetings about the needs of various disabilities and we recommended logo's on the charts and beds of patients so nurses and staff know what disability they are dealing with. We hope in the future to have workshops dealing with each disability. We asked if each association for the various disabilities could have video's they could show to the staff at the hospital to help inform them how to deal with the various disabilities. We recently purchased a new video from the New York League of Hard of Hearing on how to talk and relate to hard of hearing

persons in hospitals We also mentioned that a record be kept about the hearing aids and a container supplied to keep hearing aids in at night. We will keep you posted on this.

Advisory of Disabilities on Adaptable and Affordable Housing: One never knows what may happen in life that might bring about the need for affordable or adaptable housing. We have managed to get strobe lighting added into the building recommendations. We talked about sound barriers and also lighting. A special meeting was held in May at the City of North Vancouver to inform developers of the requirements for adaptable housing. Our listening device technician looped the meeting room for the hard of hearing and a report on the meeting was submitted by Flo Spratt for this issue of the newsletter.

We filed a report on Isolation of the Hard of Hearing in our Community at the Lionsview Senior Coalition Group. The members of this group consist of the three north shore municipalities, North Shore Health Region and many other groups on the North Shore.

We receive the minutes from the other organizations so we know what is going on in our community and if it relates to hard of hearing we attend these meetings. As the rooms are not hearing accessible, it makes it difficult for us to attend the larger meetings, however many are attended by your president.

WE NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS

There is always volunteer work available.

Right now we need someone to look after the mail and puruse the various minutes that come in from other community meetings and forward anything related to hearing problems to the president. We need someone to take over the Newsletter. Your listening device chair has been very busy and would like to

have someone else do the newsletter. We need people to serve on the fund raising committee, someone to file our Newsletters, and those of other branches and other organizations in binders for reference.

With EVERYONE HELPING wherever they can, we will keep moving forward in your community to make it accessible for hard of hearing people.

GETTING TOGETHER FOR COFFEE IN THE AFTERNOONS at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre. If you are interested in attending please phone our office at 988-7115.

ANNUAL MEETING

MARK ON CALENDAR September 17 - 7:00 p.m. St. John's Anglican Church, 220 West 8th Street, North Vancouver, B. C.

We have an excellent speaker lined up that I am sure you will not want to miss. This is our

S. Erica Barrett

CHHA - North Shore Branch Members' Meeting

Monday, April 23, 2001.

Report by Keri Armstrong.

Held at St. John's Anglican Church, 220 West 8th St., North Vancouver 7:00 pm

The meeting was opened by Erica Barrett who welcomed the members of the North Shore Branch to the meeting. A list was passed around for volunteers to sign up for jobs or committees they would like to participate in. Also, members were asked to provide their email address if they would like to receive notification of meetings by this means. If you were not at the meeting and would like to provide this information, please call our office at 980-7115 and leave a message.

Continuing with our theme of prevention, Alfred Kobbeltvedt introduced our speaker for the evening. Margaret Fraser is Coordinator of the Community Support Network for Adults at High Risk and the OAK Tree project, which teaches individuals how to minimize the risks of abuse and neglect. She co-ordinates the program for Adults at High Risk of Abuse and Neglect ensuring that their best interests are met.

Abuse is apparent in many different guises. Individuals of all ages may be affected by abuse and not know it. It is important for individuals who are

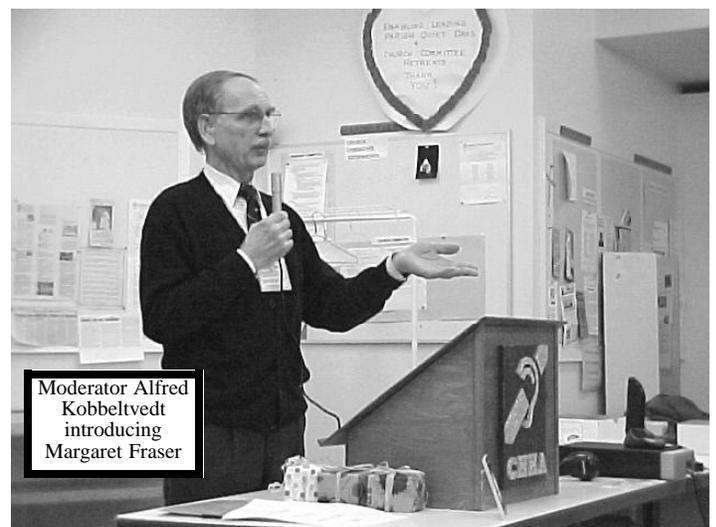
exposed to abuse to know and understand the circumstances surrounding the onset of an abusive episode in order to avoid these types of situations. Abuse and neglect include financial abuse or exploitations, physical abuse, neglect by self or others, psychological or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, medication abuse, and violation of civil and human rights.

In February of 2000 new legislation was introduced in British Columbia in order to protect all individuals from abusive situations. The Adult Guardianship Act encompasses anyone over nineteen years of age and came about through the voice of concerned citizens. The main concepts of the Adult Guardianship Act include reducing the cost of protecting yourself from abuse or neglect, being able to voice your opinion when you are incapable of doing so personally, and it provides access to others for making requests on your behalf.

There are four parts to the Adult Guardianship Act. The Representation Agreement Act provides direction by yourself for someone to act on your behalf in financial, legal, and person health care and major medical care. The Representation Agreement Act is based on personal beliefs and values and may include a living will, making those requests legally binding (note, a living will is not a legally binding document on its own).

The second part of the Adult Guardianship Act includes health care consent and facilities admissions. This gives permission to the designated individual to follow your medical wishes and/or make decisions for you when you are physically or mentally incapable of making those decisions yourself.

Adult Guardianship is the third factor in the Act. It addresses abuse, neglect by others and self-neglect.



The legislation in this document is essentially for personal protection. Finally the Public Guardian and Trustee Act prevents undesignated individuals from obtaining any financial records while allowing those designated to act on your behalf when the situation arises.

Representation Agreements

Individuals may choose to write two separate representation agreements in order to protect their privacy. One may disclose legal and financial requests and the other may disclose personal and medical requests. In this way all wishes are carried out, however, you may appoint separate individuals to control your wishes as you see fit. A Standard Representation Agreement does not have to be signed by a lawyer, however, it is suggested you discuss your wishes with other individuals to ensure your needs (medical, personal, financial, and legal) will be taken care of properly.

Some examples of what may be included in a Standard Representation Agreement are how much health care you will require, who will care for your home or cook your meals, how will bills be paid (loans, insurance), who will ensure your financial arrangements are in order (pension cheques, income tax, deposit cheques), will you need to sell your property or car, consent for minor and/or major health and dental care. While it is important to have a representation agreement, it is essential to discuss your wishes with your family members, your lawyer, and your doctor to ensure your wishes are properly carried out.

In a Broader Powers Representation Agreement the extent of control by your designated individual is greater. In this agreement a designated individual is able to sell your house, buy a condo for you, initiate and control major investments, run your business, make arrangements for any dependants. A key difference between standard and broad representation agreements is that in broad agreements the designated individual is capable of overriding health care decisions made by you, if it becomes necessary. For

example, if you are mentally incapable and refuse to accept medication, your representative may direct the doctor to go ahead and provide medication. These powers are in place to protect your health when you are not sufficiently aware of the surrounding circumstances. You should discuss with your representative your wishes and instances where you expect them to step in on your behalf. Broader Representation Agreements also gives your representative the power to make End-of-Life decisions.

In contrast to a Standard Representation Agreement,

Broad Representation Agreements must be signed by a lawyer and witnessed. Copies should be provided to physicians, lawyers, bank managers, religious affiliates (priest, minister, rabbi etc) and family members or friends with whom you are in direct contact and who will be a part of your care. Banks and other institutions have a process in place to honour representation agreements and some may take initiative on your behalf if they notice a change in spending habits.

Changes to Representation Agreements can be made either through a lawyer or (as in the case where a standard agreement is created and not signed by a lawyer) by creating a new agreement stating at the top that you “revoke

all previous representation agreements”. This nullifies all agreements that had previously been signed by you. Ensure all agreements created are dated so designated individuals can ensure your most up to date wishes are carried out. For families that have disagreements or disputes regarding Representation Agreements it is possible to designate a monitor or third party mediator to ensure your best interests are taken into consideration.

Some people will find it reassuring to designate a second representative to ensure someone will be available to represent you, when required. This can be stated in the agreement and in case your first representative is not available, the second one will take over. In some cases you will not feel comfort-



Guest Speaker
Margaret Fraser

able designating anyone you know. In these cases you may appoint the public trustee's office, however, they may cover only financial needs. In addition, if the public trustee is designated, ensure all aspects of your agreement, as well as, ethical views and beliefs are discussed and agreed upon with them and in writing.

Meeting Conclusions

A brief discussion was held at the conclusion of the presentation. Hugh Hetherington thanked Margaret Fraser for providing us with a wonderful and informative presentation. Margaret Fraser was available after the meeting to answer questions and to provide further information on specific topics to those of us who were interested. If you would like further information on any of these topics, Margaret Fraser may be contacted at 604-982-3320.

Linda Hepworth made the door prize drawings and winners were delighted with their prizes.

Adaptable Design: "What is it & Why is it a Trend"

Report by Flo Spratt.

On May 9, a gathering of about 50 developers, architects, city planners and members of the public met at North Vancouver City Hall to hear a panel of people who are directly involved in adaptable design. Adaptable design is a concept that refers to ensuring that public facilities, transportation and residences are accessible to all, regardless of ones level of ability (i.e., visual, mobility, hearing, mental, speech). In other words, there should not be any barriers in the community that prevents anyone from being a full participant.

The purpose of the meeting was to gain an understanding of what adaptable design is, why it is necessary, and what is needed to meet the needs of the growing population of people who wish to enjoy a full life in their community.

Al Nixon, President of the North Shore Division of the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver, was the seminar moderator. After describing the growing need for adaptable design and its short and long-term benefits, he introduced the panel members. The panel was composed of Sheila Gilmour, (Lionsview Seniors Planning Society), Pam Horton (North Shore Disability Resource Centre) and John Neumann (Advisory Committee on Disability Issues). Each gave a short oral presentation on the purpose of adaptable design, from their personal and profes-

sional perspective. Sheila Gilmour emphasized that, because there are more people getting older who have some form of disability or health challenge, it is imperative that developers take the needs of this population into consideration when designing residences and public places. Pam Horton stated that, at present, 17% of the population has some form of disability. In her words, the bottom line is that people with disabilities don't want to move every time they develop a new problem or more serious disability as they grow older. In other words, if buildings are built with adaptability in mind, moving would not be an issue for anyone, whether they develop a disability or their disability becomes more severe.

John Neumann described his role as Coordinator on the Advisory Committee on Disability issues. His particular focus has been on providing suggestions for the guidelines on adaptable design.

Following the panel members' presentation, John Neumann gave a slide presentation on Good and Bad Design in public places such as sidewalks, curb cuts, pedestrian crossings, construction sites, public phones and bus stops. It was quite an eye-opener to see the many obstacles to accessibility for people with mobility disabilities as well as the blind. For example, the many sidewalk signs that merchants put up are a serious hazard to the blind and wheelchair bound as they obstruct the sidewalk in unpredictable patterns.

The second half of the afternoon was led by Cheryl Kathler (City of North Vancouver), Bev Neilsen, (Neilsen Design), John Neumann, Pam Horton, Sheila Gilmour and Percy Melville (City of North Vancouver). They gave an overview of the Guidelines, with special mention of the three levels of accessibility (Level 1 being compulsory adaptations while Level 2 and 3 are suggestions that are highly encouraged).

The question period covered a range of aspects. Of particular interest to the hearing impaired population, the requirements for the hearing impaired were discussed. For the Level 1 (i.e., compulsory), wiring for visual alarm system must be installed in the living room and minimum one bedroom, connected to fire alarm system. The code also identifies at Level 2 and 3 (i.e., suggestions) for the common rooms to provide carpet and drapes to absorb sound and lessen echoes. At this time, the guidelines do not apply to single-family housing. Only public housing is under the guidelines.

In conclusion, the seminar was very informative and

an excellent building block in the relationship between developers and a unique and growing population of consumers. Although little time was spent on the needs of the hearing impaired population, it is significant to note that these needs are beginning to be heard. This is a step in the right direction, and this step reflects very hard work done by a few vocal and determined advocates of the Hard of Hearing. We wish to give a special Thank You to Erica Barrett, our Branch President, who has attended many meetings of the Committee on Accessibility in Housing at City Hall. She has provided vital information to the committee on the needs of the

The following article "Assertive Listening and Hearing Tactics" is an excerpt from a paper written by Dr. Mark Ross, Ph.D. The full text and other writings by Dr. Ross may be viewed on his website at www.hearingresearch.org.

Assertive Listening and Hearing Tactics

by Mark Ross, Ph.D.

Americans have a love affair with noise. You can't eat in a restaurant, drink in a bar, attend a reception, shop in the local supermarket, or even be put on "hold" on the telephone, without being bombarded by loud sounds (usually masquerading as music - as judged by someone else!). Young people think that the normal position for the volume control of their stereos and TV sets is when their sternums begin to vibrate. Loud sounds are considered mood enhancers and equated with life, activity, and "having a good time". And if some sound is presumed to offer a psychological boost, why more of it must really be elevating! In short, we live in a noisy world, one that seems to be getting noisier all the time.

Somehow, most people still manage to engage in what passes for oral communication regardless of the loudness level of the background sounds. (Though I do wonder about the quality of a communication exchange that is being rendered at the top of one's voice). Most people, that is, but not those of us with hearing loss. We find these noisy circumstances distressing and stressful and often can't understand a word someone else is saying. Indeed, the deleterious effects of noise upon speech comprehension is the most frequent complaint made by people with

hearing loss. But all this seems to be off the topic; how does the fact that we live in a noisy world fit in a paper that is titled "assertive listening and hearing tactics"? It fits because in many of these difficult communicative situations, people with hearing loss can exercise some control over the listening environment. We can ask that the loudness of offending sounds be reduced or we can maneuver ourselves to a more favorable listening position. This is, broadly, what I mean by the term "assertive listening and hearing tactics".

The concept of assertive listening and hearing tactics has many facets and I'll try to cover a number of them in this paper. All of them derive from several underlying assumptions. The first is that everyone involved in a conversation has an investment in the accuracy of the exchange. Communication is a two way street; it's not only you that wants to understand, the people you talk to also want you to understand. Why else are they talking to you? (Yes, some people are only interested in hearing themselves talk, but they're a minority - really!). The second assumption is the fact that you, as the hearing-impaired person, are the only one who knows whether or not, or how much, you did understand of a conversational exchange. And if you didn't get it all, only you really know what went wrong. Saying "what?" or "huh?" when you didn't understand something does not help your conversational partner understand exactly why and what you missed.

And that leads to the third assumption, one that needs to be emphasized again and again. As a hard of hearing person in a conversational situation, you can't simply be a passive presence. You can't just stand there and assume that people will be sensitive to your hearing difficulties and that they will do the right things. Some will some of the time, but few people will do so all of the time (it doesn't make them "bad", just human). As the person with the hearing loss, we must assume that you will be taking the major responsibility for ensuring your own speech comprehension. If you can't or won't do as much as you can to help yourself, you cannot realistically expect that others will do it for you.

You are listening assertively when you can make specific suggestions - in a polite, but forthright manner - that will improve your comprehension of speech. Not apologetically as if you did something you are ashamed of. Assertive listening does not mean making angry or hostile comments when something interferes with your understanding ("if

you'll take your damn hand away from your mouth, maybe I'll be able to understand you better"!). Assertiveness is educational; you are helping others understand why and what they must do to be more effective communicators. Hearing tactics, on the other hand, are the devices and stratagems you may use to enhance your communication ability in any given situation. It's the specific steps that an assertive stance permits you to take (like asking someone to change seats with you in a living room party, or using an external microphone to pick up someone's voice at a noisy reception). It's not always easy to change the habits of a lifetime and assert one's own communication needs in a conversational situation. It doesn't have to be done all at once, and will get easier the more you do it. Some of the suggestions I made below may be a good place to start. Let's talk about different situations and see how assertiveness and hearing tactics can play out and develop in real life.

Noisy Situations

You enter a restaurant or a bar with one or more dinner (or drinking) companions. The PA system is going full blast. Before you take your seat, you ask the waiter if he/she would please turn the sound down. You make this request nicely: not "shut that damn thing off", but "I have a hearing loss and I don't hear well when there's too much noise". And if the waitperson thinks you're being an old grouch, that's their problem, not yours. The point is that you have to do it, not your spouse or your dinner partners. They may not even be aware how much the background sounds disturb you. This is a reasonable first step to take on the road to a generally more assertiveness listening stance.

Only once, in the years I've done this, have I been refused (after several requests by different people in my party, the owner came to our table and indignantly asserted that "the music is part of our ambiance and we're not going to turn it down". We left and haven't been back since). As a bonus, you'll find that either most of the other patrons are not consciously aware that the background music level has been diminished, or that they positively prefer the relative quiet. In a survey appearing in the January 1998 issue of *Bon Appetit* magazine, it was found that 44% of the people patronizing a restaurant found that noise was the least favorable aspect of the dining experience. We are not alone.

The next step (a hearing tactic) is to look for the quietest table, away from the crowd. Ask the waitperson. He/she usually knows the best (quietest location). If the tables are close together, select a seat furthest

away from the other diners. (You really can't shut them up, as much as you may like to). This table will usually be some distance from the kitchen or the piano player. If you're with more than one person, try to insinuate yourself into the middle seats, with the one you can hear best (your spouse, for example) furthest from you. (There'll be plenty of opportunities to talk to this person later).

When the waitperson seats you at the table and starts reciting the specials, either have her or him stand next to you while going through the recitation, or ask to see a written version of the specials. There is almost always one available. Again, you inform this person that you have difficulty hearing and this will help you. You're doing more than helping yourself, but also helping other people with hearing loss who will come after. Not only that, you may actually know what "special" you've selected to eat that night!

If you eat out moderately frequently, you're going to be developing a list of restaurants that not only serve good food (the point of this excursion, of course), but where you can also engage in some good conversation. Restaurants do differ in the amount of noise

The author of the above article, Dr. Mark Ross, Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus of Audiology, University of Connecticut and has served as Vice President of the SHHH Board of Trustees. He writes a regular column for *Hearing Loss - The Journal of Self Help for Hard of Hearing People*, called "Developments in Research and Technology." He has published and lectured extensively on topics dealing with hearing loss. As an individual who has worn a hearing aid for almost 50 years, Dr. Ross brings a special degree of credibility to his publications. We will try to feature other writings by Dr. Ross in future editions of *Mountain Ear*.

CHHA - North Shore Branch

Annual General Meeting

September 17, 2001 7:00 PM

St. John's Anglican Church

220 West 8th Street

North Vancouver, B.C.

Family and Friends

Are welcome to attend