



# Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

## North Shore Branch

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## Mountain Ear

### **The Times are Changing! President's Message**

Have you noticed the changes going on around you these days? When we stop to think about it, we usually come to the conclusion that the one thing that stays the same is...change! I happen to like some of the changes in my life and in the life of our North Shore Branch of CHHA. Let me tell you about them.

Just lately, I had become quite cranky about my hearing loss. Like many of us hard of hearing people, I am constantly facing the hurdle of asking others to speak up for me and/or repeat what they said. I was getting to the "fed up" stage. Then, lo and behold, I acquired a very painful ear infection. During this time, I lost even more hearing in my right ear. When my hearing did return after the infection died down, my attitude moved over to the more grateful category. A good change, wouldn't you say?

Our North Shore Branch is also experiencing some wonderful changes. First of all, we have been meeting at the lovely new Summerhill Residence on 15<sup>th</sup> Street just west of Lonsdale. We are very grateful that the Summerhill management has provided us with this space free of charge. We are hoping that those living at the Summerhill will feel welcome to attend our meetings.

We had excellent turnouts for our last two meetings at the Summerhill. Each time, the number of visitors equalled or exceeded the number of members

attending! Hooray! More people are getting to know who we are and are accessing our resources. For those of our members who have not yet seen our new meeting place, we invite you to come out and enjoy the new venue in the New Year.

We are also planning to host more meetings than we ever have! Beginning in February of the New Year, we will lead morning sessions that focus on troubleshooting around hearing loss issues. West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre has offered their learning studio to be used for this purpose. Perhaps those of you who cannot attend our evening meetings will join us at our morning sessions. We also hope that some new faces will appear there, too.

There seem to be at least two reasons for the wonderful turnouts to our meetings. Many of you are inviting people you know who have a hearing loss—you want them also to experience the support and resources that are available within our Branch. A big "Thank you!" goes to each of you who have brought at least one person with a hearing loss to our meetings. You are doing exactly what we as a Branch intend to do in the coming months.

The second reason for our larger turnout may be that more of our hearing friends, spouses and family members are attending. I am particularly grateful to these supporters and advocates of our hard of hearing members. They are in effect saying, "You are not alone. We want to stand and work with you and for you with your hearing loss". A special kudos to all our advocates who stand by our members in different ways.

Are you noticing the changes around you? Often changes help us to see life in fresh or more positive ways. This has certainly happened for us in 2002.

And in the New Year? Yes, there will be more changes. As you read this newsletter, you will have a sense of what is in store for us as a Branch. We welcome any new ideas, thoughts or wishes that will help those in our community with hearing loss.

May you all enjoy the Christmas celebrations and meet the New Year with hope and joy.



## CHHA – NORTH SHORE BRANCH Annual General Meeting September 23, 2002

The venue for last year's AGM was the Summerhill, a retirement living complex at 135 West 15<sup>th</sup> Street in North Vancouver. The location provides a bright friendly atmosphere and has a room large enough to accommodate the 35 visitors and 25 members of the Branch who attended. The major highlight of the short business meeting was the election of the Board Members for the 2002/2003 year. This year's Board is made up as follows:

Flo Spratt, President; Marion Ladkin, Vice President; Rosemary Almond, Treasurer, Hugh Hetherington, Secretary; and three Members-At-Large, Andrea Gauthier, Alfred Kobbeltvedt, and Joan Gouws. The proceedings for the evening were all orchestrated by a PowerPoint® presentation on the large theatre sized television screen at the facility. This new visual method of making our meetings more hearing accessible will be used at future meetings, where appropriate, to work along with our assistive listening systems.

The highlight of the evening was a talk presented by our special guest, Susan Clarke of the Vancouver Hearing Centre. The evening ended with a social with refreshments and time to talk to the speaker and others about hearing problems and their solutions.

### NOTES ON THE TALK PRESENTED BY SUSAN CLARKE, M.A., Aud(C)

By Andrea Gauthier

On September 23rd, Susan Clarke, audiologist and

Director of the Vancouver Hearing Centre, was the guest speaker at our AGM. She spoke on the topic: *What You Should Know About Hearing Aids, If You Only Knew What to Ask.*

The meeting at our new venue, The Summerhill, on 15th just west of Lonsdale, attracted thirty-five new people, along with many of our regular members. It was gratifying to see so many people benefiting from the valuable talk Susan presented. It was so full of information and at the end Susan stayed and answered questions from the audience.

One attendee came in, a first-timer at our meetings, and asked whether it was worthwhile to wait to hear the speaker. He wanted information on hearing aids, which one to choose and where to get the best price. By the end of the evening, this gentleman was full of praise for the event, wanted to become a member immediately and said he had learned more in the hour and a half talk than he had anywhere since he acquired his hearing loss.



The first thing Susan emphasized was the importance of understanding your hearing loss. It is essential to establish a good working relationship with an audiologist who will take the time to explain your audiogram to you and answer your questions with explanations that increase your understanding. She also mentioned that one should ask to have one's audiogram turned into a "palette," a useful tool for understanding audiograms.

The second point emphasized was that times have changed. It's important to ask for what you want, even bring someone along to advocate for you. You must know what areas of difficulty are causing you problems in hearing and what has motivated you to

get help. This will help you to define the devices you need.

It's important to recognise how difficult it is to live with a hearing disability. Emotional issues include isolation and frustration. Susan urged her listeners not to quit, but rather seek out creative ways to help. She said one has to become one's own advocate and that the hard of hearing have a right to be able to attend events and hear what is going on.

Thirdly, Susan dealt with the whole area of hearing aids, describing the different types, from analogue to digital. She said that understanding where one needs assistance will help one to know which type of hearing aid to purchase.

All in all, Susan recommended the following:

- Be educated about your situation
- Be a strong advocate for yourself
- Take the Managing Your Hearing Loss course (she said Joan Bennett who teaches the course on the North Shore is "IT," praising her abilities.)
- When purchasing, know the guidelines - what's best for one person is not best for someone else.

The talk was followed by questions and answers covering every aspect and was a true wealth of information. Thank you, Susan, for an invaluable presentation.

## **MEMBERS' MEETING NOVEMBER 25, 2002**

The Summerhill was again the chosen venue for our November Members' Meeting. 23 members and 22 visitors gathered to hear a panel speak on the topic: *You Are Not Alone – Troubleshooting Your Hearing Loss*. Significantly, the title with its double meaning: (1) You are not alone with your hearing loss, and (2) You are not alone when seeking help with your hearing loss, was chosen because the North Shore Branch of CHHA is available to assist in many ways by providing help with information on hearing loss through its members' meetings, library of books on hearing loss and tinnitus, and this publication *Mountain Ear*. The Branch also puts on a course called *Managing Your Hearing Loss*, taught by Joan Bennett, a qualified teacher of the deaf. This course is funded in part by grants from the City and District of North Vancouver

and the District of West Vancouver.

The panel for the evening's discussion included Flo Spratt, our Branch President as panel moderator; Brad Bice, Head of Communication Aids Department at the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WIDHH); Rick Waters, Human Resources Development Canada; and Hugh Hetherington, Secretary and Technical Advisor to CHHA – North Shore Branch.

Flo Spratt began the presentation by introducing the members of the panel and telling those attending something about what they were about to hear.

Rick Waters described himself as having a severe to profound hearing loss of 105 dB bilaterally pretty well across the entire range of audible frequencies. Without his hearing aids, Rick is virtually unable to hear anything with the possible exception of a rock concert. His hearing loss probably stems from a severe fever caused by measles when he was about age one, and was compounded by prolonged exposure to industrial noise later in his life. Rick's hearing loss was first discovered during screening for hearing loss in grade 2 in the public school system. He was not fitted with his first hearing aid until age 12. In spite of his hearing loss, Rick has gained an MBA degree from UBC and has had two wonderful careers, one as a school teacher and the second working in the communications field with the Government of Canada.

A few of the strategies Rick uses in his day to day life are:

- Educating people around him as to how they can best deal with his hearing loss.
- Asking people to get his attention first, then communicate face-to-face and more slowly, rather than more loudly.
- Choosing to sit at the front of lecture halls and meeting rooms. Alerting the speakers to his problem and asking for co-operation.
- Using amplifying telephones
- Using a cell phone with vibration instead of ringing and a volume control
- Buying a high quality television (digital) so that closed captioning is easy to read.
- Choosing musicals rather than dramas and comedies when he goes to the theatre.
- Telling people at social events and dinner parties that he's lost the thread of the conversation so that he can continue to participate.

- Choosing a good audiologist and working with the audiologist with an open mind.
- Using two behind the ear hearing digital hearing aids with telecoils and zoom microphone technology.
- Giving himself a break from time to time by taking off his hearing aids and reading a book or whatever.

Rick's strategies have paid off for him and he emphasizes that it is important to admit to your hearing loss, get on with life, and to take advantage of the new technologies now available to help with hearing loss.

Hugh Hetherington spoke about his hearing loss, which in contrast to Rick's is a mild high frequency loss similar to that experienced by many seniors. This type of hearing loss is termed presbycusis and is a part of the normal aging process. His hearing loss was probably started through working in a noisy environment over 40 years ago. Hugh doesn't need hearing aids in most situations, but finds them helpful on occasions where there is background noise or in meeting and social type situations. His hearing aids are of the behind the ear type with open molds so that the low frequencies pass through and only the high frequencies are boosted. He finds that this arrangement gives him a more natural sound and helps his speech discrimination in the difficult scenarios.

High frequency hearing loss or presbycusis is the easiest type of hearing loss to deny. It is a very gradual process and many people who experience it are of the opinion that people mumble or no longer speak clearly. In carrying on conversations, context is very important. The person hears sound and it is usually loud enough but some words or the meaning of sentences just don't register in the brain. The consonants like T, D, and F, V and the sibilants S, Z, and SH, CH become very difficult to distinguish between. This type of hearing loss is characterized by the frequent need to ask people to repeat what they have just said. Again, it is very important to communicate face to face and ask people to speak more clearly. Taking a speech reading course is also very helpful.

Watching Television especially with others with normal hearing can be bothersome. The TV needs to be turned up too loud for one and not enough for the

other. Hugh has solved this problem by attaching cordless headphones to the television so that the volume for his wife can be set to her liking and he can adjust the volume for himself through the headphones. Some people do find closed captioning of help here, but it can be very bothersome for some because the words show up on the screen a few seconds after the words have been spoken. Using captioning would be something a person would have to try out to see how it works for them. Television sound is also often recorded with background music, unfamiliar voices, and voices with foreign accents. These all make listening difficult for the hard of hearing person.

Brad Bice from the Communication Aids department of the WIDHH was the man of the evening with the solutions to the problems. There are many, many types of assistive devices available for the deaf and hard of hearing. Most of these are available at the WIDHH Communication Aids Department, some are also available through your audiologist or hearing specialist and there are some devices available as consumer products through electronic outlets like Radio Shack®, London Drugs, Future Shop, etc. Mainly, these would be headphones, wireless headphones, television sets with closed captioning and amplified telephones.

Some of the devices Brad shared with the audience were:

- **Amplified telephones.** There are a number of different makes of these, some better than others. It is a good idea to purchase from an outlet that will allow you to try one or more units before making your final decision.

## Managing Your Hearing Loss Course

The next MYHL course is scheduled to begin on February 18<sup>th</sup> at West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre. This course has now been fully booked and there is a waiting list for the September 2003 course. To get on this waiting list or for information, contact the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre at 604-925-7280 or Joan Bennett at 604-983-3131.

- **Telephone amplifiers.** These are battery operated devices that clip over the handset and can be used at home or even while travelling. There is also an in-line amplifier unit that is inserted in the telephone handset cord.
- **Lamp signalling devices.** These can be used with almost anything that makes a sound, such as, smoke alarms, door bells, baby crying, telephone ringing, etc. There are also some made specifically for the telephone with a built in strobe light.
- **Wireless door bells.** These are available from Radio Shack® and can be useful if you want to have a doorbell in more than one location in your house or apartment. The bell unit could also be carried around with you throughout the house.
- **Personal FM systems.** Two of these were discussed. The Phonic Ear® Easy Listener and the Phonak® miniature FM system that clips onto the bottom of the behind the ear hearing aid. These types of systems are useful for lectures, in restaurants, while travelling, etc.
- **One-to-one communication devices.** There are inexpensive units such as, the Radio Shack® Stereo Amplified Listener and also the more powerful and more expensive units such as, the Williams Sound Pocket Talkers®. There are other makes also available.
- **Vibrating alarm watches.** There are a number of makes of these available through consumer outlets.
- **Strobe light fire and smoke alarms.** Building codes now dictate in some areas for the use of these in public buildings. There are also units available for installation in private homes.
- **Hand held text messaging units.** These provide for e-mail on the go. Send and receive e-mail messages to other units or to home or office computers.
- **TV listening devices.** There are many of these available from various sources mentioned above. Some use over the head earphones, stethoscope type earphones, or receiver units into which can be plugged headphones or a neckloop.
- **Personal neckloops.** Personal neckloops can be plugged into various electronic units such as radios, CD players, and tape players.

- **Dry aid dehumidifiers.** We don't often think about it, but hearing aids are used in a very destructive environment. They have to be used in the rain, cold and the summer heat. The sweat from behind our ears can introduce moisture into the hearing aid. The acidic nature of sweat can corrode the inner workings of the hearing aid over time. To extend the life of a hearing aid, it can be placed in a dehumidifier overnight or when not in use and the moisture will be removed. The small price of a dehumidifier can be a very worthwhile investment for your very expensive hearing aids. Talk to your audiologist about purchasing one of these or visit the WIDHH.

The pleasant and informative evening finished off with questions from the audience and was followed by a social with refreshments.

## SURPRISE

And, what a surprise it was when I was presented with the National Award of Merit. Flo Spratt, our President, invited the Board and me to a lovely tea

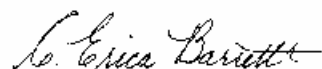


with an exotic special dessert in her beautiful home on October 11th. I want to thank the board for putting my name forward to CHHA National, who accepted the Branch recommendation for this award. None of the work was ever done for praise or for any awards. It was done because we with hearing loss were isolated in our

community; homes; workplaces; schools; churches; hospitals; nursing homes; municipal chambers; exercise classes; any lectures given in the community; in theatres, and our condo's which do not have fire alarm strobe lights for our safety. We needed a voice in our community. We are still isolated because our community does not understand enough about hearing loss. However, they have started-changing somewhat in how they now look at hear-

ing loss. The community has moved forward in some areas. It would be nice if we had accessibility wherever we wanted to attend. We hope one day that people will realize that we also need to be able to communicate. It has been said, COMMUNICATION is the KEY to raising children; in our schools; in our marriage; in our community and then to be able to LISTEN. I am truly thankful for the many volunteers, both hard of hearing and hearing that have helped in every way they could to move the North Shore Branch onwards. The work will continue on with our professional board and with Flo Spratt as our President. Thank you very much for this award. I am very humbled to receive this, and I will treasure it for years to come.

Yours sincerely,



## **There's Something We've Been Missing!**

By Marion Ladkin

Do you remember coming to your first meeting for the Hard of Hearing? It was somewhat overwhelming, I'll bet! "Turn on your T-Switch", loop systems, tinnitus; what are they talking about?

Whatever confusion you felt, you left knowing you would come back for more because you realized you'd found a new world of knowledge about your problems with deafness and about people like yourself.

We've all drawn strength and know-how from our speakers and fellow members, but sadly, most of us have overlooked a wonderful opportunity to explore so much more through the many books and videos we have in our CHHA North Shore Branch library.

In the weeks and months ahead, I hope to change that by introducing you, book by book, to what is available for loan at our meetings. I have been greatly surprised at how interesting and valuable each book has been, and how easily I have absorbed information I hadn't grasped before.

I can assure you that once you try the library you will want to use it again. Watch for more information through book reports in our newsletter and at our members' meetings on the books we have in our library.

## **Next Members' Meeting**

The next regular meeting of the North Shore Branch will be held on February 24th, 2003 at 7:00 PM at the Summerhill, 135 West 15th Street, North Vancouver.

The program information will be announced in the new year. Mark this date on your calendar now. We'll see you all in February at the Summerhill.

Also, starting in February next year we are going to be holding morning support meetings on the first Friday of each month at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre. The first meeting will be held on February 7th 10:00 AM to 12:00 noon in the learning studio.

## **CHHA – BC Conference and AGM**

On Friday, October 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> 2002, the annual CHHA – BC Conference was held at the Sheraton Guildford Hotel in Surrey, B.C. We congratulate the CHHA BC Chapter for once again putting on an informative and entertaining program for those attending. The conference which takes place over the two days is put on in collaboration with the B.C. Parents Branch and there is a host of programs designed for Hard of Hearing adults and their families and for Hard of Hearing Children and their parents and siblings. There are also display booths where providers of hearing aids and assistive devices, as well as other hearing professional groups are able to provide information about their products and resources.

This year Neil Bauman, Ph.D., Director of the Centre for Hearing Loss Help in Pennsylvania was the keynote speaker for the conference. Neil, who is the author of a recently released book on ototoxic drugs gave two very informative presentations during the conference.

Neil's first talk was on ototoxic drugs and how they can affect hearing without us being aware of the damage being done. Ototoxic drugs are various drugs commonly prescribed by physicians and sometimes without warning can seriously harm a persons hearing or balance. Little is known about some of the effects certain drugs can have on hearing and balance, and Neil has spent countless hours researching prescription and over the counter drugs through various sources to compile the side effects on hearing and



vestibular functions. This work culminated in the book *Ototoxic Drugs Exposed – Prescription Drugs and other Chemicals That Can and Do Damage Our Ears*. Note: The North Shore Branch has purchased a reference copy of this book for our library.

Neil's second talk was entitled *Building Functional Families Despite Hearing Loss*. A report on this second talk by our Board member Andrea Gauthier follows in this newsletter.

Another session presented a panel discussing the new health professional college which is taking the place of the current Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Consultants. Taking part in this panel discussion were: Alan Moyes, Executive Director for Legislation and Policy for the Ministry of Health, Randi Monsell, Hearing Instrument Specialist and member of the Hearing Instrument Specialist Society of B.C., Margaret Orme, Audiologist who sits on the Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Consultants, and Regina Ternus registrar of the Board of Hearing Aid Dealers and Consultants.

Another most interesting presentation was given by Jeff Small, Assistant Professor at the UBC School of Audiology. This presentation was entitled *Processing Speech*. Jeff explained many of the complexities of how speech is processed and why a Hard of Hearing person can understand some things that are said and not understand others. The subject matter was fascinating and we hope that we can find space to do a write-up on this talk in a future issue of Mountain Ear.

Other talks included a session for seniors with Marilyn Dahl, Ph.D., former Executive Director of WIDHH, now Treasurer of CHHA National, Dr. Murray Hodgson, Professor and Director of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene/Mechanical Engineering at UBC spoke on noise levels in the classroom and the barrier to learning that the noise creates, and Dr. Janet R. Jamieson, Associate Professor, Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education, UBC spoke on the patterns of interaction among Hard of Hearing children and their hearing peers in the classroom.

All in all, it was a very rewarding event to be able to attend and the two days were filled with education, entertainment, and socializing. The conference ended with the CHHA BC Chapter's Annual General Meeting on Saturday afternoon where a num-

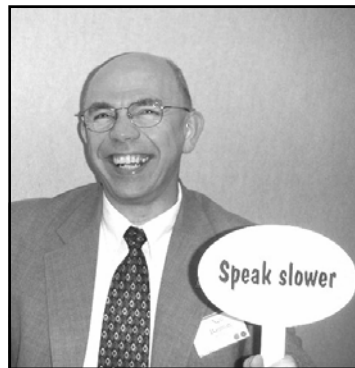
ber of the CHHA Branches in BC gave a report on their activities during the past year. Watch for the next year's conference and make plans to attend. You will be glad you did.

## BUILDING A WELL-ADJUSTED HARD OF HEARING FAMILY

Neil Bauman talk at CHHA BC Annual Conference, October 2002

By Andrea Gauthier.

Neil Bauman, Ph.D. is a very animated and knowledgeable speaker. He grew



up in Port Moody and has in recent years relocated to Pennsylvania to be with his sweetheart. Neil has a number of degrees, including one in forestry and his Ph.D. He also is the owner of a cell phone that incorporates a wonderful insert allowing him to use his T-

switch with it. (Editor's note: This device is the Audex CHAMP which slides behind any Nokia 5100/6100/7100/3200 series cell phone. It provides 30 Db of amplification and has a built-in magnetic loop transmitter for T-coil compatibility.) He says he can hear very well with it.

Neil is the Director of the Center for Hearing Loss Help, Phone: 717-993-555

email: [neil@hearinglosshelp.com](mailto:neil@hearinglosshelp.com). The Center is a resource for assistive devices, education, consultation and coping skills seminars. His website is:

[www.hearinglosshelp.com](http://www.hearinglosshelp.com).

In his talk, Neil touched on many aspects of hearing loss. In a playful way, Neil started off by demonstrating the use of paddles that people in the audience can hold up when they can't hear the speaker. The paddles are slightly smaller than a ping-pong bat and on one side in large print, it says: *Speak Louder*. Another paddle might say: *Repeat question*. On the reverse side of each paddle, a big *Thank You* is expressed.

In a well-adjusted hard of hearing family, hearing people have to think like hard of hearing people.

1. The family has to meet the needs of the hard of hearing person.
2. The family has to meet the needs of everybody, not just the HOH person.
3. The family must have a willingness to compromise.

Neil also talked about many aspects of living.

On the subject of housing and how it often does not meet the needs of the HOH, he said furniture is often backed up against the walls and the lights are low down, making the HOH person's job much harder. He told about how he set up his home environment so that it would work for him. He needed brighter lights on the walls or ceilings and he needed the seating to be closer together. People often scoffed at these changes, saying it wasn't very elegant or aesthetically pleasing but he said it was more important for it be functional.

He told his story about how he and his wife have a reclining loveseat facing two, yes two, TV sets both with remote controls. He watches his TV with the mute setting on and closed captions on. He can't hear the sound on his wife's TV. He states that because he travels a lot, he's certainly not going to have his wife sitting in a separate room by herself, watching TV when he's home! He said, this way, they don't even have to watch the same shows! If he sees something interesting on her channel he flips his to it and watches along with her. This solution includes the need for touch in a HOH person's life to alleviate some of the feelings of isolation. So, it takes courage, creativity and a lot of love to deal with our needs.

There are also emotional and psychological needs:

1. Need to love and be loved. There is no need to miss out on intimate moments. Through touch, he knows he's connected.
2. Need to be respected.
3. Need to belong. He feels less alone when by himself than with people who don't understand his needs.
4. Need to feel needed. To feel useful. It can be scary to be HOH because you feel cut off.

Neil revealed two secrets of success in a HOH family.

1. Treat the HOH exactly like everybody else except

in their communication needs.

2. Treat the HOH differently from everyone else, but only in their communication needs.

Neil made the distinction between a hearing impairment, which he defines as any deviation from normal hearing, and a hearing handicap, which is a disadvantage imposed by society.

For example, if captions or telephones that accommodate T-switches are not available, the HOH people are disadvantaged. Baumann gave the example of Martha's Vineyard, when it was first settled. One person was deaf so the whole community learned to sign. The result was that no one on the island was handicapped.

As people, we all have the same intrinsic value, whether we can hear or not. Society doesn't meet our needs for self-esteem as it often doesn't value people with hearing loss as much as those with normal hearing. One way of conveying our intrinsic value is to say, I have a hearing loss, instead of saying I am hard of hearing. We have to grieve for the loss of our hearing, as do our families. The stages of grieving are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance and do not necessarily occur in this sequence. We sometimes go back and forth.

A person is not ready to get hearing aids until they have reached the ACCEPTANCE stage.

On a final note, Neil lauded the Toastmasters or-

