



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

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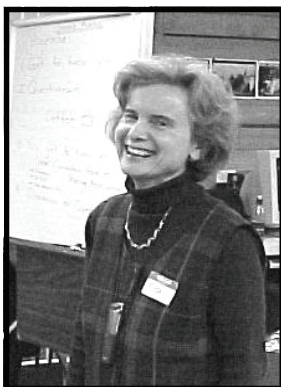
Issue 50 September 2005

Mountain Ear

President's Message

Inspiration is closer than you think!

Have you ever come home from a fantastic trip and thought to yourself, "I hope I will be able to convey to my friends just how wonderful that trip was". Or perhaps you took some panoramic photos of some lovely scenery and when you showed them to friends back home, you thought to yourself, "These photos just don't produce the same feeling I had when I was there".



Well, that is how I felt when I came home from the CHHA National Conference held in Kelowna this past June. This was my first CHHA National Conference which I attended with Hugh Hetherington, Rick Waters, Rosalie and John Williams and Birgit Cook, all of our branch. It was truly an inspiring and educational experience for me. There will be some good articles and photos in the next BC newsletter, "the Loop" which will give you some idea of what we learned.

Yet, despite the articles and photos, you wouldn't be able to appreciate our experience unless you had attended the conference.

Having said that, I am inviting you to an opportunity that is better than articles and photos! You may be surprised to know that this opportunity is available to you right here on the North Shore, and occurs every

month. If you have not yet attended our Sound Advice meetings, then you have missed out on a free and valuable experience that is meant to inspire and encourage you in coping with your hearing loss.

Sound Advice is a support group that is usually facilitated by Hugh Hetherington and myself. Any issue related to hearing aid technology and learning to live with hearing loss is discussed. Even though I have had my hearing loss for over 40 years and have learned a lot along the way, I am still learning new things at each Sound Advice meeting I attend.

Why don't you drop in at our next get together? I know you will be glad you did. See the ad for Sound Advice on page 6 for details. Also, don't miss our AGM on September 19th. We will have a very special and informative presentation there.

See you there!

Flo Spratt

Municipal Community Grants

CHHA – North Shore Branch acknowledges
with thanks

the following grants

District of North Vancouver \$1100

City of North Vancouver \$1000

District of West Vancouver \$ 400

And

**A \$500 grant from the
North Shore Community Foundation**

CHHA – North Shore Branch

Annual General Meeting

Monday, September 19, 2005

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: The Summerhill
135 West 15th Street
North Vancouver



Guest Speaker: Marian Gunn

Western Territory Manager
Siemens Canada Limited

Topic:

How to get the Best out of Your Hearing Aid

Meetings are Hearing and Wheelchair Accessible
Refreshments will be served
Members of the public welcome



Living With Hearing Impairment

Hello, I am Justin Spratt, the elder son of Flo Spratt. I have been living with a hearing impaired mother for more than 17 years and I have learned many things that other people normally wouldn't.

I have learned to appreciate my hearing. I don't just take it for granted as many people do. I do everything I can to take care of my ears. Once I wore my mother's hearing aids to hear what it would sound like. After that experience I found it much easier to take the extra effort to repeat things for her. The amount of distortion that occurs in a hearing aid really struck me at that moment.

I have spent my summer in Whistler working on a demolition crew. I always wear ear protection when I am working with anything noisy, which is usually most of the ten hour shift. I would rather be looked down on for spending extra time putting ear plugs in than losing my hearing.

I also try not to listen to music at an uncomfortable volume. I know from experience that if you crank up the volume your ears will just adjust and the music will eventually sound like it did before you turned up the volume. In the end all that happens is that everything else sounds quieter.

Another thing I learned from living with my mother is to respect other people with hearing losses. While on the job a hearing impaired truck driver was loading a garbage bin onto his truck. The other workers on the site thought that he was trying to ignore their instructions until I pointed out that he was hearing impaired and could probably not hear them over the power tool/jack hammer noise. Immediately their attitude changed. I was a bit ticked off when he started to drive away with me hanging on to the bin while trying to fix part of the load.

While I would not be considered an expert in other disabilities, or even in hearing loss, I have learned a good deal about them. I learned that feeling sorry for people with disabilities will not help them with their condition. I have learned that a disability does not have to take away a person's livelihood.

I have been surprised on occasion when people try to sympathize with me over my mother's hearing loss. It has certainly not meant any loss to my livelihood. I have never woken up and said to myself "oh no, another day with a hearing impaired mother". It feels completely natural to repeat things, answer the phone, and "translate" for her from different accents. Sometimes I find myself surprised that other mothers can hear me the first time I say something. I find myself ready to repeat things only to be cut off by their responses rather than by a plea for repetition.

I believe that I have gained a lot from living with a hearing impaired mother. I will always try to help others understand what hearing impaired people go through. I always try to spread knowledge about how to better communicate with hearing impaired people and I plan to write an article in this newsletter about some of the tactics I use.

Managing Your Hearing Loss Course

The next MYHL course is scheduled to begin on Tuesday, October 4th, 10 AM to 12 Noon at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre. For information call CHHA – North Shore Branch at 604-926-5222. Registration for the six week course will begin in September after Labour Day.

June Meeting

Report by: Hugh Hetherington

The North Shore Branch June meeting was held on June 20th, 7:00 PM at the Summerhill in North Vancouver. Our guest speaker for the evening was Rick Waters, a member of the North Shore Branch and recently employed by the WIDHH (Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing) as Head of their Communication Aids Department. Rick has had a severe bi-lateral hearing loss since childhood and has become very knowledgeable on hearing loss issues over the years, especially on the technical side. The topic of Rick's presentation was "Assistive Devices for Hearing and Safety – Troubleshooting Your Hearing Challenges".

As well as problems related to hearing and understanding, the hard of hearing face many other issues not faced by the hearing population. While some of these issues are concerned with the safety and well-being of the individual, others can be simple lifestyle issues, such as, waking up in the morning, hearing the telephone or doorbell, talking on a cell phone, or timing your boiled egg.

To demonstrate some of the help that is available to solve these issues, Rick brought a host of electronic devices to show and tell. With the assistance of PowerPoint and these devices, Rick took us through many of the scenarios affecting the hard of hearing and showed how these devices could help.



Rick Waters

Rick first talked about alerting devices.

Hearing the Telephone Ring – the available devices range from exceptionally loud telephone ringers to some that flash a bright strobe light when the phone rings

Hearing the Door Bell – A number of devices are available for help at home or even while staying in an hotel. There is a door strobe light that can be clipped to an apartment or hotel door. When someone knocks, the strobe flashes. There is a wireless door chime that can be carried about the house or you can have several chime units in strategic places throughout the house.

Waking up in the morning – There is a wide range of alarm clocks on the market to help the hard of hearing. Some of these have very loud buzzers, flashing lights and even bed shaker units that can be placed under your pillow.

Remembering appointments – A number of models of vibrating alarm watches are available that can alert you to appointments or just time your cooking.

Fire and smoke alarms – A major safety issue for the hard of hearing is when your hearing aids are removed at night and you go to bed for a sound sleep. Even noisy neighbours won't bother you but what happens in the case of fire? There are smoke alarms that have bright flashing strobe lights to awaken you in emergencies. These are similar to those now being installed in many public buildings.

There is even an all in one product, the Alertmaster AM-6000, that can detect sounds from various sources and flash lights or activate bed shakers to alert you to the various conditions such as the telephone, the doorbell, baby crying, smoke alarm or the alarm clock.

In the next part of his talk, Rick spoke about telephone communication. He demonstrated a number of different amplified telephones and telephone amplifiers that can be connected to existing phones or attached to the handset of a payphone or hotel phone

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while traveling. He also mentioned TTY phones, mainly used by the Deaf, and VCO (Voice Carry Over) phones. The VCO phone uses a relay operator who types the spoken message for the hard of hearing person who speaks back to the hearing party in the normal manner.

Next, Rick demonstrated and spoke about the various one-to-one communication products available in the market. These include wired systems like pocket talkers and wireless personal FM systems that include the Phonic Ear Easy Listener, Phonak's HandyMic/Microlink® FM system and the Oticon/Phonic Ear Lexis® FM system. Phonak's newest entry in this field is the Smartlink SX® which functions as both an FM system and a remote control for your hearing aid. One of the more interesting devices Rick showed was the HITEC® Sound Wizard. This device not only functions as a pocket talker with a directional microphone, but also has an add-on telephone module and an add-on infrared module that can be used at the theatre. These types of systems can be very useful in restaurants, social gatherings and lectures.

Rick finished off his presentation by talking about the different types of wireless headphones available for television listening. These are generally infrared systems or 900 MHz (FM) radio type systems. These TV systems, as well as some of the other products mentioned are available in commercial electronic stores.

To see and try out a full range of the products mentioned, make an appointment to visit Rick Waters at the WIDHH Communication Aids Department, 2125 West 7th Avenue in Vancouver. Telephone: 604-736-7391.

Single Sided Deafness

By Hugh Hetherington

Single sided deafness (SSD), also referred to as unilateral hearing loss is the complete loss of hearing in one ear. This is a subject we haven't addressed before in our newsletter and it came to mind because of the number of people I have had contact with over the last few months who are afflicted with this condition. The condition appears to be far more prevalent than I would have thought and according to statistics, each year it afflicts 200 out of each one million of the population. This would mean that about 6000

people in Canada are victims of this condition every year and effectively live in a monaural world.

As a music lover and an aficionado of listening in stereo, I can only imagine what it must be like to live in a monaural world. I can remember back to the late 1940's and early 1950's when Hi-Fidelity music became the rage with the introduction of 33 1/3 and 45 R.P.M. vinyl recordings. Such brilliance, could it get any better? Then stereo recording techniques were introduced to us in the early 1960's and suddenly those old monaural recordings sounded dull and lifeless. Now, of course, with digital sound processing capability, those old monaural recordings can be reprocessed to give spatial ambience to improve listening enjoyment. But, I stray from the point. All of this requires that you have two functioning ears. What can be done for those with SSD? We'll talk about that later in the article.

SSD can be congenital or caused by a wide range of conditions, such as, Meniere's disease, childhood diseases like measles and chicken pox, viral infections, trauma or through surgery for acoustic neuroma tumour. The condition is also influenced by the level of hearing in the "good ear", which can range from normal through any degree of hearing loss from mild to profound.

Noise, in particular, becomes a severe problem. Not only is it difficult or impossible to determine the direction noise is coming from, but also any speech sounds are inextricably interlaced with the noise since all sounds appear to be in one plane. Another problem is referred to as the "head shadow effect". This is the difficulty or inability to hear sounds from a particular direction. Those with SSD have to be particularly aware of listening environments and give special attention to seating arrangements. A good example of this is traveling with someone in a car. Depending upon the side of the deafness, is it better to be the driver or the passenger?

If you are not affected by SSD, it is difficult to realize the day to day problems that this condition causes for those affected. Similar to those with severe bilateral hearing loss, the person may feel uncomfortable in or no longer able to cope with normal everyday situations such as, restaurants, family gatherings, sporting activities, driving a car, business meetings, or just crossing the street. These difficulties often lead to withdrawal from social and business occasions.

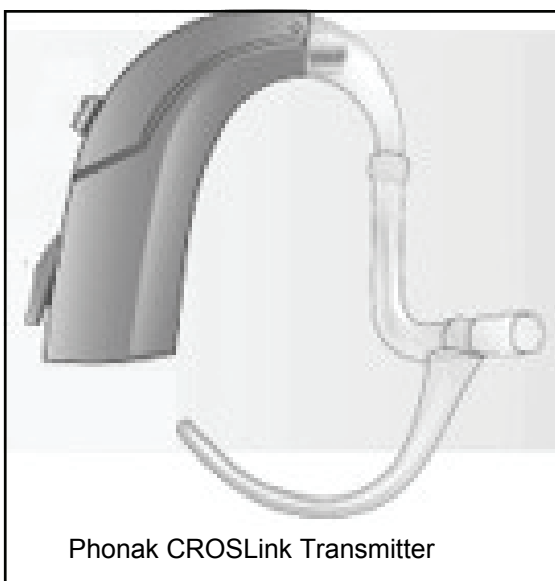
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When SSD occurs, it is vital to have a proper assessment of the situation. Patients should initially consult with their GP and obtain a referral to an ENT or Neurological Physician. Once the condition has been properly diagnosed and medical or surgical intervention ruled out, an audiological assessment can determine the best course of treatment.

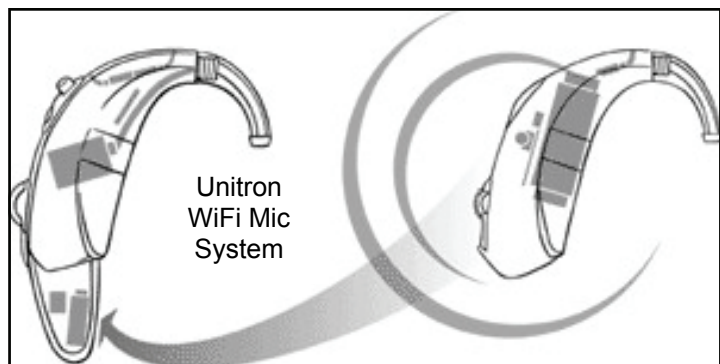
The main solution for SSD is the CROS (Contralateral Routing Of Signal) hearing aid. These can be of a (BTE) behind-the-ear or (ITE) in-the-ear type. Until recently, this system consisted of a microphone fitted to the deaf ear in a hearing aid shell with a wired connection that went behind the head to a hearing aid in the good ear. While the CROS hearing aid doesn't solve the problem for the deaf ear, it does make it possible for a person to hear speech and sound originating on the deaf side, even though it is heard in the good ear. I have talked with people who were really pleased with the CROS solution while some others have said they found it unnatural and annoying and rejected it. Maybe some of this was due to having a wire running between the two sides. A BI-CROS hearing aid works in the same way and is used when the hearing ear has a significant hearing

loss also and requires amplification.

Recently, newer developments have led to the production of wireless CROS / BI-CROS



systems using radio transmission between the two ears. I am also pleased to see that the new micro FM technology developed for hearing aids has led to even greater flexibility. With Phonak's CROSLink® system, the hearing ear can be fitted with any appropriate microlink compatible hearing aid. A microlink receiver attaches to the hearing aid and a wireless FM microphone is worn on the deaf ear. Sound is transmitted wirelessly from the deaf side to the hearing side. Unitron's WiFi Mic® system functions in



the same way. Both of these systems enable the user to take advantage of newer digital technology with a wireless CROS solution. Your audiologist can determine which system is best for you.

If the person with SSD has a significant hearing loss in the hearing ear where it requires amplification, I cannot overstate the importance of having your hearing aid equipped with a good telecoil (T-Switch). This enables the person to use a wide range of assistive listening devices (ALD's) such as, loop systems, pocket talkers, and personal FM systems. These can help overcome the problems of distance, reverberation and background

noise in many situations. A neck loop can also be used with a portable radio, walkman or CD player to provide hands free listening while relaxing or working out at the fitness centre. Even if the person doesn't wear a hearing aid, the ALD solution can be very beneficial by wearing an ear bud in the hearing ear under the circumstances mentioned above.



Also, a system called the BAHA® (Bone Anchored Hearing Aid) is offering an alternative to the CROS system. In the USA, the BAHA received approval from the FDA for treatment of sensorineural SSD in 2002. The BAHA has, however, been available for over 25 years for the treatment of all types of conduc-

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tive hearing loss both bilateral and unilateral. The BAHA is a semi-implantable device that works by conducting sounds from the deaf side through bone conduction to the cochlea on the hearing side. This enables the person to hear and understand sounds from both sides of the head. Many are even able to tell which side the sound is coming from by the difference in sound quality between the bone conduction on the deaf side and the air conduction on the hearing side. With normal hearing in one ear, the BAHA solution gives hearing on the deaf side without the use of a hearing aid in either ear.

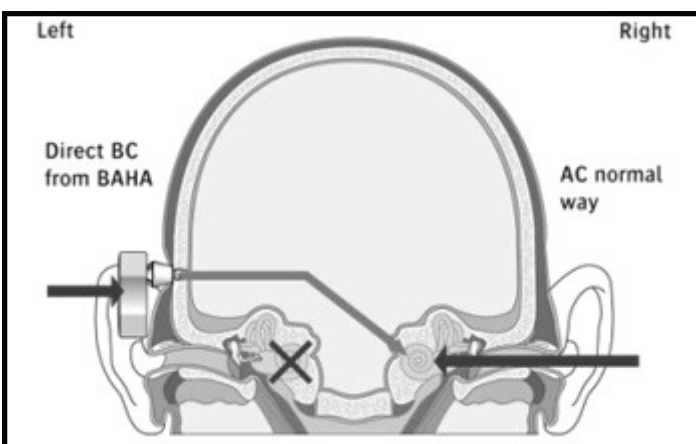
The BAHA system consists of three main parts. (1) A small titanium implant which is placed in the skull bone behind the deaf ear, (2) an abutment to which is attached (3) an external sound processor. Minor surgery is needed to place the implant in the skull and this is often done under a local anaesthetic. Patients leave the hospital the same day. After allowing 3 months for the surgery to heal, the speech processor is programmed and fitted by an audiologist.



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For more information on the BAHA® system visit their website at www.entific.com. Island Hearing Services is British Columbia's exclusive distributor for Bone Anchored Hearing Aids. You can get more information at www.islandhearing.com/



bone_anchored_hearing_aids.htm.

Sound Advice

A monthly series of informal workshops and discussions around issues affecting the hard of hearing.

**Presented by:
The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
North Shore Branch**

The group meets on the **first** Friday of each month from 10:00 AM to 12 Noon at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre's Learning Studio, 695 21st Street in West Vancouver.

Come and join us and other Hard of Hearing people who get together to share and discuss.

When we meet, we discuss topics and issues dealing with hearing loss. We look forward to seeing you there.

Bring a friend, a family member, they are welcome too.

**For Information call: 604-926-5222 or
Fax: 604-925-2286**

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association B.C. Chapter Annual General Meeting

This year the A.G.M. for the B.C. Chapter is being held in North Vancouver.

Location:

**John Braithwaite Community Centre
Harbourview Room
145 West 1st Street
North Vancouver**



Date: November 5, 2005 – 1:30 PM

Agenda

- 1:30 – 2:00 Registration
- 2:00 – 3:30 Annual General Meeting
- 3:30 – 4:00 Break (refreshments provided)
- 4:00 – 5:30 Information Gathering Session

All CHHA members are invited to attend. This is your opportunity to learn more about the goals of CHHA – BC and to provide your input to their activities on your behalf.

All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association or CHHA – North Shore Branch.