



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

Published four times a year on the 15th of March, June, September and December by CHHA – North Shore Branch, 600 West Queens Road, North Vancouver, B.C. V7N 2L3.
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Charitable Registration No. BN 89672 3038 RR0001

Editor: Hugh Hetherington

Issue 54 September 2006

Mountain Ear

President's Message A Hearing Friendly Home



What a noisy world we live in! Whenever you return from a hike in the woods or a holiday at the lake aren't you even more convinced there are too many unnecessary and abrasive sounds in our lives?

Life is less stressful with quiet or peaceful sounds. We tend to breathe deeper, our muscles relax, and we smile more often. For example, just imagine the difference between trying to talk with someone in a noisy restaurant versus sitting with him or her in a garden near a pond or stream.

This desire for less stress can be applied in our homes where we have some control over the noise factor. Whether we are preparing a meal or visiting with friends there are two principles we can follow to help create a more peaceful environment. These are: 1. reduce the noise around you, and, 2. incorporate quality sound to enable you to hear well.

Some examples are in order. As you may know, our kitchen is undergoing renovations. To reduce the noise: each drawer and cupboard door is spring loaded so that closing drawers and doors are virtually soundless. Instead of smooth walls and lami-

nate cupboards for sounds to bounce off, we have bookshelves in the eating area and the cupboards now have wood frames. There will be more upholstery and fabric window treatments for sounds to be absorbed. And the stove hood has an external fan so that I can hardly hear it running!



To incorporate quality sound: wiring for the loop system was installed in the ceiling of our kitchen and patio. So instead of hearing the mixer or food processor, I hear music from our sound system like never before! When we sit around the table for dinner, I use my FM handyMic or the loop with a microphone to hear the speaker more clearly, without hearing other voices and/or noise.

The results are amazing. By applying these two principles to our kitchen renovations, the difference is almost like the noisy restaurant versus the garden scenario! It has been a pleasant surprise to find myself more relaxed and smiling more often.

There are many more ways we can apply these two principles. If you have a hearing loss and want to learn more about reducing noise and incorporating quality sound techniques, including how to go about getting the best hearing equipment for you, come to Sound Advice. We meet the first Friday of every month at the West Vancouver Seniors' Centre (for

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September it is the 8th) from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. You can also make a point of attending our AGM on September 18th to hear Dan Paccioretti speak on the topic: Understanding Speech in Noise – FM is the Answer. See the notice on page 6 in this newsletter.

See you there!
Til next time,
Flo



June Meeting

At our June 19th meeting at the Summerhill in North Vancouver we were privileged to have Rick Waters, Head of Communication Aids at the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WIDHH) for our guest speaker. Rick's topic for the evening was "Safety, Security & Communication Aids for the Hard of Hearing". His sometimes humorous and informative talk centred around a mythical "Uncle George" an elderly hard of hearing person who lived alone.



As the story went, attempts to call Uncle George on the phone over three days were unsuccessful. Worried about Uncle George, he made a visit to find out if George was OK. The doorbell went unanswered and the TV could be heard blaring in the living room. After finally finding out that George was alive and well, he discovered that George could not hear the telephone ring and in conversation he had to repeat everything at least three times. He also noticed there was no smoke detector anywhere in the house.

The question is "Who's got the problem?" George doesn't answer when telephoned. Does George Care? Does he even know the phone rang? The goal of the evening was to bring George back to life. What is necessary to help George hear the telephone, hear the doorbell and maybe even improve his social life. What is necessary to bring more order into George's life, let him hear his TV, get him to appointments



on time, and even help save his neighbour's ears.

In answering all these questions, Rick demonstrated a multitude of technological items available in the market today. Many of the items, he brought along to the meeting for "show and tell" demonstrations.

The first goal was to get the TV turned down. For this Rick showed us the many TV listening devices available in the market. From consumer products that can be purchased from electronic stores to more sophisticated devices available at the WIDHH communications store. To help George stay connected, he talked about a wide array of different telephones, both corded and cordless, as well as, a number of different telephone amplifiers for use both in the home and while travelling. All of these items are on display at the WIDHH communications store and are



available to be tried out at the store. If you have difficulty hearing on the phone with your hearing aids, Rick talked about the advantages of hearing on the phone with both ears by using a neck loop or FM system. He also talked

about the cell phone and what was available to make this item hearing aid friendly.

He talked about loud telephone ringers, some with flashing lamps or strobe lights to draw attention. There were also doorbell signalers that flash lamps or strobe lights. There are also complete systems that incorporate all your signaling needs in the home.

Are you having trouble waking up in the morning or getting to appointments on time. Rick discussed the various alarm clocks and signaling systems available.

Some can include flashing lamps and/or a bed shaker to help wake you up.



To help with communication Rick talked about Pocket talkers and personal FM systems. These can be helpful in so

(Continued on page 3)

many situations: In the car; at a restaurant; in the doctor's office; at social gatherings; at lectures; or many other difficult listening situations. The main purpose of these devices is to make sounds louder, to reduce background sounds, and to bring the source of the sound closer to your ears.



To finish off his talk, Rick talked about smoke detectors. No home or apartment should be without at least one of these. What if you can't hear it at night when your hearing aids are removed? These can also be equipped with strobe lights. Rick also emphasized the importance of having your smoke alarms installed by a professional. If you live in a condominium this may be mandatory. Find out if it can be inter-connected with the main building system. Your safety is important. Rick took the time to answer many questions from the audience following his talk. You can visit Rick Waters at the WIDHH Communications Store at 2125 West 7th Avenue in Vancouver.



Thank you, Rick, for a very informative and entertaining evening.

Hearing Losses Are Not All Created Equal

By Hugh Hetherington

During the course of my work for CHHA, I have had the opportunity to meet many people with hearing loss and sometimes their family members. Over the years a few things have become very clear to me. (1) Hearing Loss is one of the most misunderstood disabilities. (2) Two people can have the same hearing loss as shown on an audiogram but their ability to hear and understand speech can be quite different. (3) Some people with significant hearing loss apparently function quite normally in a hearing world. (4) Hearing aids will help some people hear better, while others find it makes things worse.

There are obviously a lot of anomalies here and there may or may not be explanations for all of these. In the last two issues of the newsletter I wrote a two-part article entitled "The Miracle of Hearing." In part 1, I described the ear, its functions and attempted to explain how hearing works. In part 2, I talked about what happens when it goes wrong and some of the things that we can do about it. I feel it is a very important step for people to take the effort to understand their hearing loss. This knowledge can be very helpful in working with your hearing professional to find the solution that is best for you. It can also be useful in explaining your needs to your family members and friends. Remember, they don't know how **you** hear and often make the assumption that louder is better. Sometimes this may work, but more often it doesn't. When they understand your needs, it can make for more harmonious living.

Another thing to note is that if you have had poor success with hearing aids in the past, it may be time to try again. In the last few years digital technology has brought about major advances in hearing aids and associated equipment. Hearing losses that were difficult or impossible to help five years ago with the old analogue technology can now be more adequately dealt with. If you fall into this category, it may be time for another visit to an audiologist.

When hearing aids are not enough to solve all your hearing problems, there are a wide range of assistive devices available to improve your life. These range from pocket talkers and personal FM systems to special devices for the telephone and TV.

To continue on in your education about "hearing" and "hearing loss", I am including in this issue an article entitled "Kinds of Hearing Loss." This article was written by Neil Bauman, Ph.D., and is reproduced here with his kind permission. Neil Bauman, Ph.D. (Dr. Neil) is a hearing loss coping skills specialist, researcher, author and speaker on issues pertaining to hearing loss. No stranger to hearing loss himself, he has lived with a life-long severe hereditary hearing loss. He became an excellent speechreader at an early age and practices numerous ways to successfully cope with being hard-of-hearing in a hearing world. You can visit his website at: www.hearinglosshelp.com where you will find a multitude of other articles on all aspects of hearing loss and ways to cope.

Kinds of Hearing Losses

© April 2006 by Neil Bauman, Ph.D.

Question: Karen asked: What is a reverse-slope loss? I have something called a cookie bite loss. I have no idea what it is, but that is what my audiologist called it.

Answer: These terms refer to the **shape** your hearing loss makes on your audiogram. Each of these shapes have been given strange colloquial names such as ski-slope loss, cookie-bite loss, flat loss, reverse cookie-bite loss and reverse-slope (reverse curve) loss. Here is a quick run down on them.

Normal Hearing

Before you can appreciate what the various hearing losses look like on an audiogram, you first need to know what normal hearing looks like.

"Perfect" hearing theoretically would be a straight line at the 0 dB level (Fig. 1). In actual fact, audiologists typically consider "normal" hearing to range anywhere from -10 dB (negative numbers lie above the 0 dB line) to 25 dB. Fig. 2 shows an example of "normal" hearing.

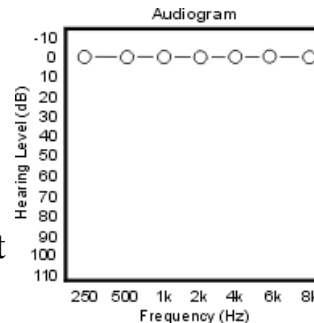


Fig. 1. "Perfect" audiogram

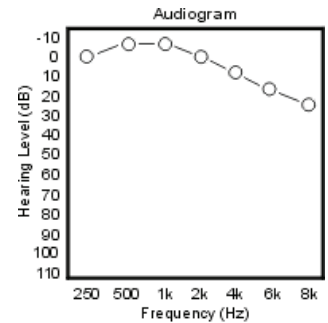


Fig. 2. "Normal" audiogram

Flat Loss

A hearing loss that is approximately the same at all frequencies is more or less a straight horizontal line and is called appropriately enough a "flat loss." or a "flat curve" (which is a bit of an oxymoron). This kind of loss is more common in people with conductive losses. Fig. 3 gives an example of a flat loss.

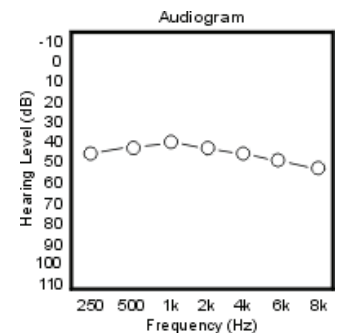


Fig. 3. Flat loss

Ski-Slope Loss

Ski-slope losses are by far the most common kind of hearing losses. These losses get their name from the "ski-slope" shape of the hearing loss on the audiogram. With ski-slope hearing losses, there is little or no hearing loss in the low frequencies but considerable loss in the higher frequencies. Often the mid frequency range is severe to profound.

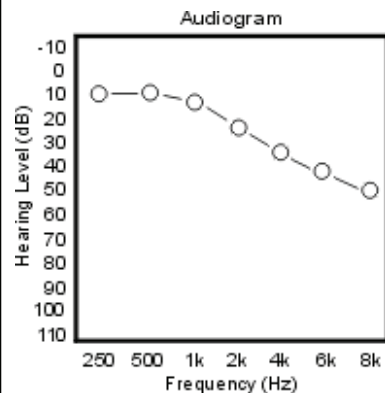


Fig. 4. Mild ski-slope loss

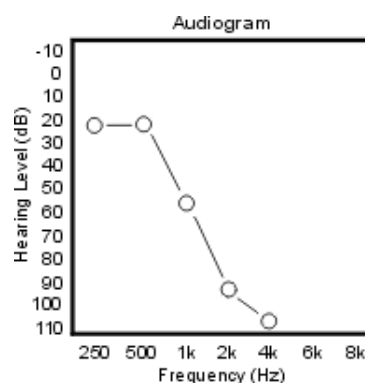


Fig. 5. Precipitous ski-slope loss

The audiogram looks much like a ski slope—the top of the hill is on the left and the slope drops to the right. There is an almost infinite variety of ski-slope curves—some slope down gently (Fig. 4), while others are much steeper. In extreme cases the curve is almost flat in the low frequencies and then, as Fig. 5 illustrates, just about drops straight down (really more like a ski-jump loss)!

Reverse-Slope Loss

A reverse-slope loss is the reverse of the ski-slope loss (hence its name). In reverse-slope losses, the curve is low at the low frequencies and slopes up to the right. Thus, the ski-hill is on the right and drops to the left. A person with a reverse-slope loss hears better in the high frequencies than in the low frequencies.

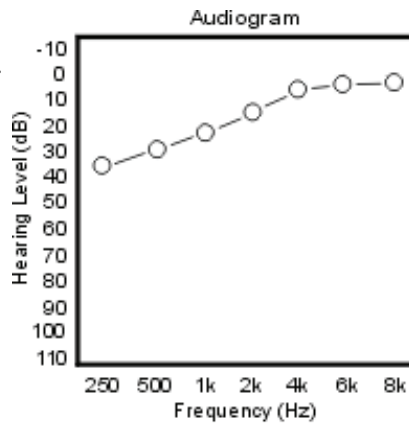


Fig. 6. Mild reverse-slope loss

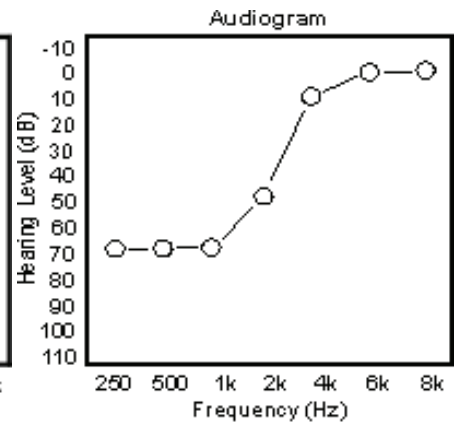


Fig. 7. Severe reverse-slope loss

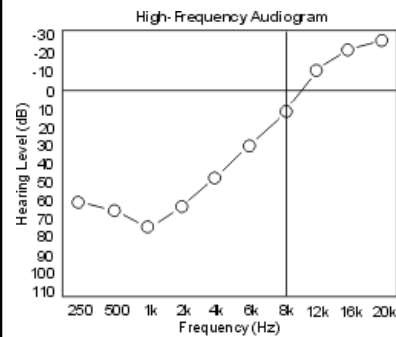


Fig. 8. Extreme reverse-slope loss

This is a very rare kind of hearing loss. Fig 6. depicts a mild reverse-slope loss, Fig. 7 illustrates an severe reverse-slope loss and Fig. 8 shows an extreme reverse slope loss such as I have. Notice that the high frequency hearing extends to and incredible -30 dB. Also note that this audiogram shows the hearing curve up to 20,000 Hz, whereas the other audiograms all stop at 8,000 Hz, the highest frequency audiologists normally test.

Cookie-Bite Loss

A cookie-bite loss looks like someone took a bite out of the **top** of the audiogram (Fig. 9). Thus, the curve is higher at both the lower and higher frequencies and lower in the middle. People with cookie-bite losses hear low and high frequency sounds well, but have a loss in the mid-frequencies. This kind of loss is less common than the ski-slope loss.

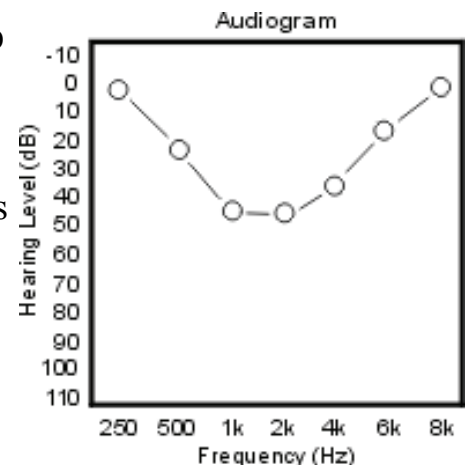


Fig. 9. Cookie-bite loss

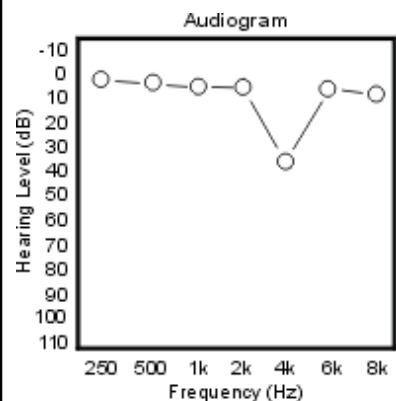


Fig. 10. Notch (noise) loss at 4k

A **notch loss** is a variation of the cookie-bit loss. It looks like a narrow, steep-sided valley (Fig. 10). Notch losses typically occur around 4,000 Hz and are caused by the initial stages of noise-induced hearing loss.

Reverse Cookie-Bite Loss

The reverse cookie-bite loss looks like someone took a bite out of the **bottom** of the audiogram (Fig. 11). This curve is lower at both ends and higher in the middle. A person with this kind of loss hears well in the mid-frequencies but has considerable loss in both the low and the high frequencies. This is also a rare kind of loss.

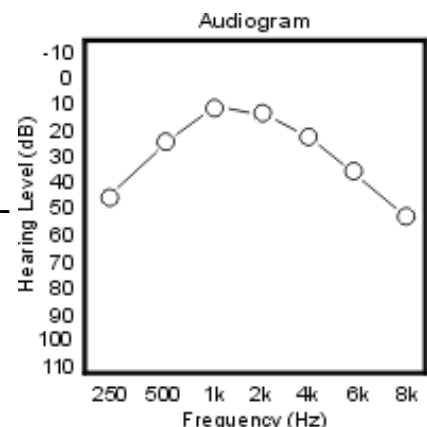


Fig. 11. Reverse cookie-bite loss

Visit Neil Bauman at: www.hearingosshelp.com

Sound Advice

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

(Holidays excepted) at the West Vancouver
Seniors' Activity Centre's Learning Studio,
695 21st Street in West Vancouver.

(No Meeting in July and August)

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.

Subjects to be addressed will include:

Technology; Speech Reading;

Improving Relationships;

Improving Hearing Environments

For Information call: 604-926-5222

Managing Your Hearing Loss Course

Six Mondays Beginning September 18, 2006

1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

(excluding Oct. 9, Thanksgiving Day)

West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre

695 – 21st Street, West Vancouver

Course Fee \$35.00 includes Text Book

For Registration contact West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre 604-925-7280

CHHA BC Chapter
2006 Conference
Trade Show,
Networking,
Annual General
Meeting



Friday, September 29,

12:00pm to 9:00pm

Saturday, September
30, 9:00am to 2:30pm

Including AGM and
Town Hall Meeting

GREAT Speakers!

Also sessions for young adults (16+)

Radisson

Radisson President Hotel & Suites

8181 Cambie Rd., Richmond

For more information visit the CHHA – BC

Website at: www.chha-bc.org

Municipal Community Grants

CHHA – North Shore Branch acknowledges
with thanks the following grants

District of North Vancouver \$1100

City of North Vancouver \$1100

District of West Vancouver \$ 600

**We also gratefully acknowledge generous
donations from the Howe Sound Lions
Club and the West Vancouver Kiwanis
Club.**

Speech Reading Basics Course

Four Mondays Beginning November 6, 2006

1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

(excluding Nov. 13, Remembrance Day)

West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre

695 – 21st Street, West Vancouver

For Registration contact West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre 604-925-7280

Instructor: Birgit Cook, Hearing Rehabilitation Specialist

CHHA – North Shore Branch

Annual General Meeting

Monday, September 18, 2006

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: The Summerhill

135 West 15th Street

North Vancouver

Guest Speaker:

Dan Paccioretti, M.Sc. Aud(C)

Western FM Sales Manager

Phonak Canada

Topic:

Understanding Speech in Noise –
FM is the Answer

Meetings are Hearing and Wheelchair Accessible

Refreshments will be served

Members of the public welcome

No Admission Charge



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.