



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

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Tel: 604-926-5222 Fax: 604-925-2286 email:chha_nsb@telus.net
Charitable Registration No. BN 89672 3038 RR0001

Editor: Hugh Hetherington

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Mountain Ear



**The North Shore Branch Board
of Directors wish all
our members and friends
a Happy Holiday Season
and a Healthy and Prosperous
New Year**



President's Message

Disability no obstacle for...me?



On the front page of the November 25th "E" section of the Vancouver Sun, an article title caught my eye. It said, "Disability no obstacle for builder of custom bicycles". I read the whole article, and it inspired me. Al Bergman, a promising mountain biker, broke his back at age 26. Instead of giving up, he is now, 6 years later, a custom bike builder! He is quoted as saying, "I feel that I might not be riding bikes, but to provide a quality ride for other cyclists is a great feeling of satisfaction."

Like Al, many of us have also lost something very precious that often takes us out of the mainstream of

normal living. We don't always hear what others are saying, and, as a result, we are left out. Do we give up and become reclusive? Or could we join Al with his perspective? Perhaps something like, "I feel that I might not be hearing everything, but to provide enjoyable conversations for others is a great feeling of satisfaction"?

There are times when I have difficulty making that statement. But I am getting better at sitting back and truly enjoying a group of people in my home who are all having a wonderful conversation without me. I opened our home to the visitors, I provided the meal, and I may even have started the conversation ("So what do you think about...?"). But the subsequent discussion and witty jokes are often lost on me.

People like Al Bergman are challenging me to think differently. Instead of seeing my disability as an obstacle, I can make a choice that will result in less

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

resentment and more contentment. In groups where I cannot participate, I can say to myself, "I made this wonderful conversation happen! These people are enjoying each other, and that gives me satisfaction."

Do you understand Al's framework on life? I believe that, instead of being served, Al has decided to serve others, using his gifts of cycling love and knowledge.

Many people enjoy this time of year as a time of giving to one another. Perhaps we as hearing impaired people will choose to give more of ourselves and, as a result, have greater satisfaction.

Til next time,
Flo

F.K. Spran

CHHA—North Shore Branch Annual General Meeting

Report by: Rick Waters.

Our Annual General Meeting was held at the Summerhill on September 18th at 7:00 PM. With 28 members and 11 guests present, our Annual Report, Financial Statements and Budget for 2006-2007 were approved and a new Board was elected. (See Page 4) With our Vice-President, Jim Wilson stepping down this year, he was replaced by Andrea Gauthier, previously a Member-at-Large, and Andrea's position was filled by new member Karen Hunter, whom we are very pleased to welcome to the Board.

Following the business portion of the meeting, our guest speaker, Dan Paccioetti, M.Sc., Aud(C), Western Area Sales Manager, Phonak Canada, spoke to us on the topic: Understanding Speech in Noise – FM is the Answer.

Things are changing rapidly in the hearing instrument field, and perhaps the most dramatic change is in the area of FM devices. With a hearing loss, it's important to keep abreast of the changes in technology, particularly when the technology has such great benefits for us.

Dan started by explaining how FM works, and why the technology helps us in many situations. You've probably all noticed how moving closer to the

SmartLink-SX



The gateway to
communication

speaker, especially in a noisy situation, makes it easier for us to hear what's being said. As Dan pointed out, that's exactly what FM technology does—it brings the speaker much closer to our ears.

At the heart of every FM system there are two units: a transmitter that sends the sound our way, and a receiver (or ideally two) that picks up the signal,

turns it back into sound, and directs it to our ears. Modern FM units are very small, and consist of a combined transmitter and microphone unit. These devices typically have very sophisticated arrays of microphones that can be user-adjusted to pick up sound from all directions (omnidirectional) or set to a very narrow zoom pattern, to pick up sound from a single speaker, while ignoring much of the background noise we don't want to hear. In the Phonak line, the Smartlink® transmitter has all of these features, plus it can also be connected to an external audio source, such as a television, a music system, or even, with an adaptor, to the telephone.

Taking a look at receivers, the trend again is to make them ever smaller, and to fit them directly to the hearing aids, or in one case, right inside the hearing aid case. Modern hearing aid FM receivers are what engineers call synthesized, which is a fancy way of saying that they can detect the presence of an FM transmitter, and automatically tune in to the correct frequency. This makes them much easier to use.

Because FM is inherently complex, designers have been working to make them as simple to use as possible. The new EasyLink® transmitter is an example with only one push button for the user to worry about. The MyLink® receiver is another simple, relatively low-cost item that incorporates a neckloop, enabling any hearing aid user who has telecoils (T-Switches) to hear the signal right through their hearing aid(s). This combination is small, light, and can be used for conversation, to hear the television, music system and, with an adaptor, the telephone.

Another feature in high end FM transmitters is Blue-

(Continued on page 3)

tooth technology. Bluetooth is simply a radio technology that allows two electronic devices to “talk to one another”. The main application is to allow hearing aid users to talk using the cell phone. In use, the SmartLink® and the cell phone are “paired” using the handsfree menu on the cell phone. Once the units are paired, which means that they will now respond to each other, cell phone calls become much easier to handle.

When a call comes in, the cell phone sends a message to the SmartLink®, which in turn switches the hearing aids to FM, and sends the ring signal to the hearing aids. To answer the call, the user pushes the green phone button on the SmartLink®, and begins talking. There is no need to handle the cell phone. The SmartLink® picks up the user’s voice, and sends it on to the phone. At the end of the call, the user simply pushes the red button on the SmartLink®, and the phone automatically hangs up.

After the talk, Dan showed the devices off, and answered many questions from members who are curious about FM technology, and how it might benefit them. He also arranged a follow-up meeting at the Summerhill on October 3rd to allow those interested to come back and try out some of the technology.

Thank you, Dan, for sharing your time and knowledge with us at our AGM.

November Meeting

Report by: Andrea Gauthier

Our November members’ meeting took place at The Summerhill on Monday, November 20th with 20 members in attendance and eight newcomers. We are always pleased when new people join us, so keep spreading the word about our organization and bring family and friends along when you can. We can all learn something new from each other.

Our guest speaker was Henry Lam, M.Sc., Aud(C), from the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WIDHH). Henry is an Audiologist with a specialty in Oral Rehabilitation. He spoke to us about Effective Ways to Communicate for the Hard of Hearing.

Henry told us a bit about the work he does at WIDHH. This includes classes on Communication covering such things as speechreading and learning

about hearing loss. They take place at WIDHH on Wednesday afternoons.

The focus of Henry’s talk was Repair & Communication Strategies, strategies that can be used when there is a communication breakdown. A communication breakdown occurs when the natural flow of conversation is interrupted, by asking someone to repeat. For example, It is when one person is not able to receive the message for whatever reason or the message is either not heard or heard, but not correctly

The strategies include:

Repetition: Repetition can be tedious for the one asked to repeat. In order to avoid this, one strategy would be to ask for partial repetition by stating what you heard so far.

Rephrasing: Some words are more difficult to understand and by using different words the listener is better able to key in on what is being said.

Confirming: This is a good strategy when dates and places are being talked about. This gives the opportunity to use yes or no answers which are easily understood. This is also a great strategy to use on the telephone.

Topic/Keywords: Context is very important in conversations with the hard of hearing. If one knows what the conversation is about, many words become more easy to understand.

Written cues: When all else fails, you can always fall back on the notepad and pencil.

For each repair strategy, Henry gave numerous other examples of situations and demonstrated how one might apply that particular strategy.

In the second half, Henry opened up his talk to questions and answers. These went on for quite a while as we all have so much we want to understand and we can get ideas from others.

Afterwards, everyone gathered to enjoy the wonderful refreshments so generously offered by Marion Ladkin. It was time to share some social time with each other.

Our thanks to Henry Lam for his wonderful presentation.

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.



Your CHHA—North Shore Branch Board members

(From left to right)
Flo Spratt, President
Rosalie Williams, Secretary
Birgit Cook, Member-at-Large

Karen Hunter, Member-at-Large
Andrea Gauthier, Vice President
Henry Romain, Member-at-Large
Hugh Hetherington, Treasurer

MY NEW CELL PHONE

By: Andrea Gauthier

I'm not wishy-washy about technology. I either love it or hate it. Two of the characteristics contributing to my attitude are that it is "front-end loaded", meaning that usually it requires a large investment of time with an uncertain payoff. The other characteristic is that technology is an intermittent reinforcer. You struggle like crazy and, suddenly, you get some fantastic payoff. You continue to struggle and sometime later, you don't know when, another payoff! Psychologists will tell you these are the most powerful reinforcers, making people buy lottery tickets regularly because they know, somewhere along the way, there will be a payoff. It might be after ten tickets, it might be after a hundred. People will hang in there. And I continue to wrestle with new technology.

I bought my first computer back in the late 1980s, one of the first MacIntosh computers, the one with the tiny monitor I later saw being used as a fish aquarium at Mac Station! I saw an art teacher demonstrating the drawing tools and I was completely seduced. Of course, when I got my computer home, it was not doing what the art teacher had been doing...but I never regretted my decision.



The telephone is not a friend to most hard of hearing people and I'm no exception. Neither is multitasking. So I couldn't really see myself wanting to acquire a cell phone. It's bad enough trying to use a telephone at home!

When I fell last May, while in my garden, and shattered my elbow, my views about cell phones did a 180 degree turn. If it had not been for the letter carrier who had just come by and helped with her cell phone, I might have been laying on the sidewalk for quite awhile. I live in a very quiet neighbourhood and my husband was at work.

When I found myself in Emergency on a cot in the corner of the entrance way for several hours, it was next to impossible for me to arrange to make a phone call to family or friends for help.

It's been a long journey and I did acquire a cell phone two weeks ago, after putting in hours and hours of time, making inquiries and learning about things. I hope this article might save you many steps and some frustration.

There are two things to keep in mind. As hard of hearing people, we have to customize most things. Each of us has a unique hearing situation and a particular lifestyle and we have to try things out to see

(Continued on page 5)

what works. The other is that we are usually, and understandably so, shocked at the cost of hearing devices. We simply have to decide if the device is going to make us feel, first of all, more safe, and secondly, increase the quality of our life. Continuing to lobby governments to provide some support to the hard of hearing is one way to bring about some change in this area.

Throughout my research on telephones, I appreciated more than ever the Western Institute for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing. This non-profit organization is a wonderful resource for one-on-one help from other hard of hearing people who know from personal experience what is out there and how to make use of it.

My friends at WIDHH responded to numerous e-mails filled with questions. This saved me many steps. They provided me with a handout called "Making the Connection" with tips on cell phones for the hard of hearing.

I eventually drew up a list of requirements that any cell phone I considered would have to have.

What made the whole thing possible for me was starting by acquiring a Clear Sounds CLA7 Neckloop. This neckloop is not just a receiving/listening neckloop as we find them on FM systems. This neckloop has a microphone and is a sending device.

What I had to do next was find a telephone with a headphone jack. Most but not all cell phones have a headphone jack. When I plug the Clear Sounds neckloop into the headphone jack and turn on my "T" switch, I can hear very much better. The neckloop has a volume control as well.

Other features on my list, based on recommendations from WIDHH as well as my own personal needs include the following:

1. A standard 2.5mm headset jack. However, an adapter can be used and is included with the neckloop to accommodate a 3.5mm headset jack.
2. Must work on a CDMA network. In the Vancouver area, both Telus and Bell use CDMA networks. (Don't ask me to explain this. My affinity for technology will only go so far!)
3. Speaker phone feature. This is not a standard feature but it is very important. You should be able, if at all possible, to hear the phone without the loop, if not too well, at least to some extent, and the speaker-phone feature might enable you to do this.

4. Large keypad buttons. While there is not much variation in the size of the buttons, I found the small variation still made it easier for me to use.

5. I chose a phone with BlueTooth capability because I want to have the option of getting a blueTooth enabled FM system at some time. There are quite a few cell phones with this feature.

One of the challenges with choosing a cell phone is that you'll want to try out the sound but this is almost impossible to do without getting on board with a company. Sometimes there is a 14-day trial period but this only allows you to return the phone and try another one. In my view, this makes it important to choose a company you feel good about. I spent a lot of time talking to Telus and Bell before deciding which company I wanted to go with. There was a lot for me to learn and understand and in the process, I learned more about the support the staff would be able to give me, how much understanding they had of their products, and how much time they were willing to put in to help me, given my requirements as a hard of hearing person.

When it came to choosing a phone, I was told that the quality of the sound is reflected in the cost of the phone. I decided, since sound was a big priority, to go with a more expensive model. This means that my phone has all those bells and whistles you see people playing with, at the mall. I had to really stay focused on the features I needed and not be distracted by a "camera that will take panorama views!"

Given my lifestyle, I want to use my cell phone for safety, almost entirely. I still don't want to have phone conversations when I'm out. It's a relief not to have to concern myself with such things. Only a few close family members will know my number and I can choose when to make phone calls. I have also arranged to have my cell phone number blocked so that I don't receive other calls on it. You can arrange your phone to work for you.

Just like other assistive listening devices and new technology, I will have to work out a way to carry this equipment with me, what to store it in, should I wear it on a belt around my waist, or will I find it in the bottom of my purse, how will I organize the recharging of the batteries... ?

A decision I made, following all this research for the

(Continued on page 6)

cell phone, was to acquire a cordless phone for home use. As it has a headset jack, I am able to plug in my Clear Sounds neckloop and find a comfortable place to sit to have phone visits with family and friends, some of whom live far away. I can hear better with less effort.

I won't go into a lot of detail regarding the "plan" I chose, to go with my phone. Because getting the right phone was so important, because of my hearing loss, I found it too confusing to try to choose the phone and the plan at the same time. I really didn't have the information I needed, to make the decision.

I decided to choose the phone, with a 14-day return policy, so that I could truly try it out. In order to do this, I bought a "pay-as-you-go" card for \$25 that will last me two months. It looks like this will work for me in the longer term. This allows me an average of five minutes per day. I don't expect to use up this time so it ends up costing me the price of my phone, the start-up cost, and about \$12 per month on an on-going basis.

I am very happy with the choices I have made. I have accepted that it will take more effort for me as a hard of hearing person to stay connected to others but I'm very determined to do it as much as possible. All in all, that is a personal decision. You have to feel that the effort is worthwhile, in the context of your whole life, and that it adds to the quality of your life.

I would like to thank Rick Waters for answering all my questions, for his patience, knowledge and positive outlook. Thanks also to Sharon Miller. I urge you to support WIDHH in any way that you are able. We need them.

CHHA—North Shore Branch Website

The North Shore Branch announces its new website at www.chha-nsb.com. Please take the time to visit our website where you will find information about the Branch, a photo gallery, pictures of our Board members, articles, meeting notices, newsletters and a newsletter archive where you will find all the back issues of our newsletter since the beginning of publication in 1995. There is also a link to our Hearing Aid Museum which is being built for us by Neil Bauman of www.hearinglosshelp.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; Coping Strategies;
Improving Relationships;

Improving Hearing Environments

For Information call: 604-926-5222

Managing Your Hearing Loss

Our next Managing Your Hearing Loss Course is scheduled to begin on Monday, February 12th and runs for 8 consecutive Mondays at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre.

The course will include:

- ◆ **Coping Strategies**
- ◆ **Hearing Aid Technology**
- ◆ **Assistive Technology**
- ◆ **How to Reduce Stress**
- ◆ **Speech Reading Essentials.**

Registration begins December 6th at the Seniors' Centre. For information call: 604-925-7280

Course #384567

Fee: \$35.00



**Fantasy Land Hotel
West Edmonton Mall**

For more information
visit the conference website at:
www.chha.ca/conference