



# 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.  
Tel: 604-926-5222 Fax: 604-925-2286 website: www.chha-nsb.com  
Charitable Registration No. BN 89672 3038 RR0001

Editor: Hugh Hetherington      Issue 83 December 2013

## 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**



## Prez Mez

*by Mike Hocevar.*

Greetings everyone. We have been learning about the benefits of hearing aids and/or assistive devices through the Summerhill speaker series, our newsletters and the monthly *Sound Advice* sessions. These devices are beneficial both for the wearer and their family and friends and serve to help in their social lives.

So, it startles me when I learn of someone who has purchased hearing aids but doesn't or won't wear them. And this seems to happen more often than you would think. A variety of reasons (or excuses) are involved and need to be challenged, with encouragement to the person to resolve their issues about the hearing aid(s).

True, a hearing aid isn't going to fully correct poor hearing. But a hearing aid certainly can enhance

hearing and can be used in combination with other user friendly devices. Today's technology has made great strides in making hearing aid use a valuable part of maintaining as normal a lifestyle as possible.

I ask someone who has hearing aids but doesn't use them, some simple questions to move their thoughts beyond their own personal reasons. How old are they? Maybe they don't have today's features, especially for use on the telephone. When was your last hearing test? Perhaps your hearing has gone down and the hearing aids need to be tweaked to match it. Did you go back to your audiologist or hearing practitioner following purchase to do fine tuning and to ask questions or tell about what seems to be an issue?

We have mentioned before that the costs of hearing aids include adjustments, servicing and consultation with your audiologist or practitioner, as well as, regular hearing tests. So one should take advantage. It is not a case of being a nuisance by going back until satisfactorily resolving whatever issues there

are.

The board discussed these things a bit at its October meeting when we were thinking about future topics and guest speakers for the Summerhill meetings. It was decided to come up with something along the lines of "I just bought a hearing aid. Now what?" This would provide some kind of guidance or advice so that a hearing aid purchaser will wear their hearing aid. Stayed tuned, this is now a work in progress. And by the way, if you have any ideas about what you would like to hear as a guest speaker topic, let us know.

Recently, Mainland Hearing put on a Better Hearing Expo event downtown. Hugh Hetherington, Caroline Wickham, Bill Friend and myself attended, assisting at the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association BC Chapter booth. Many members of the public came by and learned about our organization. It was nice to see Teresa Hemsing there, a past board member and president of our branch. It featured displays by the different hearing aid manufacturers and hourly talks from their companies. It was fun and educational to see and try out some of the different hearing aid models and assistive devices. Phonak introduced an excellent home phone and a new platform for their latest hearing aids that features automatic switching of frequencies for better sound reception. Their home phone was especially exciting as it automatically connects with your hearing aids and gives you binaural hearing when the phone is brought within a few inches of your head.

I want to encourage you to take advantage of our efforts to keep you informed on all of these exciting new advances in technology by attending our regular Summerhill presentations and monthly Sound Advice sessions at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre. Everyone is welcome and times and places are always announced in our newsletter.

## Annual General Meeting

*Report by: Mike Hocevar*

On September 16, 2013 our 2013 Annual General Meeting was held at the Summerhill in North Vancouver. It was attended by 24 members and 9 guests. Our last year's Board of Directors was re-elected by acclamation to serve for another year. The Board members are: Mike Hocevar, President; Lauren Cot-

terall, Vice-President; Ruth Lapointe, Secretary; Hugh Hetherington, Treasurer; and three members-at-large, Bill Friend, Henry Romain, and Caroline Wickham.

Our Keynote Speaker was Glen Grigg, Ph.D., R.C.C. who gave a presentation entitled "In Case You Were Thinking of Getting Older". The following is a summary of Glen's informative and entertaining talk.

**Hugh Hetherington summed it up right** when he declared, "I never knew so much could be said about aging, did you? That was wonderful, I learned a lot tonight!" These comments followed Dr. Glen Grigg's informative talk spiced with lots of humour, about the impact of hearing loss on our thinking and memory processes as we age.

**The consistent theme** delivered by Dr. Grigg over three annual general meetings in a row now, is for us to recognize and accept our declining hearing. And to realize through many ways how we can and must adjust to carry on with confidence, especially continuing solid relationships with family and in society. His latest presentation explained the psychological effects of declining hearing upon our thinking power. And Dr. Grigg's enlightened message challenged many commonly held fallacies about memory as we age.

**The brain, or central nervous system**, responds and acts to both physical and emotional influences or traumas. Usually by age 26 it is fully developed. Interestingly, our physical development reaches its prime within a couple more years also. Having said this, we can maintain our thinking power in top form by ongoing exercises and challenges to our brain. This includes things like regular reading and writing, learning languages, continuing education, life skills, and cultural involvement. Hobbies, games and crossword puzzles would fit this idea well.

**What Dr. Grigg advised was** that thinking, motor processing speed and reaction slows down but performance is generally not affected. While he surmised that younger people are celebrated for being brighter, it is only because they can think and respond faster. Older people use anticipation and planning better through the use of a more accumulated knowledge.

**In understanding how** thinking doesn't decline but

changes with age, it is useful to examine the concepts of memory concentration and capacity. Selective attention means being focused on something. Older people can act almost as well as young people, particularly when not being distracted. Where younger people usually demonstrate an edge is when controlling multiple competing interests or tasks at the same time.

The idea of a more intensive concentration is sustained attention, or vigilance—keeping track of what is going on in the surrounding environment. This is a more conscious alertness that is often affected by sensory decline like eyesight, and especially hearing since it is a key safety mechanism to ourselves as it works 24 hours a day. Note further, that people who have suffered a major traumatic or life threatening experience are often over vigilant. These issues affect all ages, but set in more and more upon loss of hearing. The brain has to work harder and harder in these scenarios.

**So what about the** relationship of memory to the effects of changes to thinking through aging? First, he mentioned memory loss. Generally we will all have some minor memory loss but nothing as dramatic as popular belief suggests. Memory is mostly affected by how well one learns the material in the first place. Interestingly, the degree of loss is related to one's motivation and attitude about memory as they age. But what has a huge effect on memory loss are the consequences of eyesight and hearing loss—because they cause us to use more and more brain power when these conditions kick in.

**One of the concepts of memory** is called “Episodic” which covers specific life events—what was it like on your first date? Where were you when Elvis died? This kind of memory declines with age. Another is “Semantic”, termed for your general intelligence and knowledge of the world. Intelligence tests prove that older adults do just as well as younger ones except they have a slower retrieval time. When it comes to concentration, or “Selective Attention”, older folks do just about as well as the young, especially if there are no distractions. A bit of a speed decline occurs with “Divided Attention”, that is where one is juggling several tasks at once.

**There is “Perceptual Speed”** which slows down, such as matching socks. Also declining somewhat is

your “Working Memory” about your “inner blackboard” that computes and figures things out. But these can be compensated with techniques to ease a loaded brain through recording things or using technology. But both functions respond to training, repetition and practice.

**Other terms include** “Implicit Memory” to describe performing learned functions very automatically with little thinking effort such as driving, riding a bicycle, etc. An interesting observation that develops over time for “Explicit” or short term memory is that the wonder or wow factor is not the same as for when we were younger, or first exposed. An example may be not necessarily remembering the plot of a movie just recently seen since such an activity is not such a big deal.

**“Source Memory”** is where (the time or place) we learned something. This declines naturally with age. Remembering to do something, is “Prospective Memory”. This changes for “when” but not for “what”.

**Dr. Grigg summarizes therefore** that decline in episodic and working memory causes our brain have to work harder, so compensate with techniques and technology. Remediation efforts—practicing or exercising your skills, is most useful. Remembering that Semantic and Implicit memory isn't affected by age, only the speed is affected but not accuracy.

**It is useful to note that older adults** possess greater **wisdom**. It's the ability to apply knowledge, experience, and good judgment to complicated life problems. It starts in late adolescence and can grow through life. Dr. Grigg indicates that experience, education, having mentors and choosing values that take others into account all help, as does openness, hard work and creativity.

**Like halfway through the story “Alice’s Restaurant”** where singer Arlo Guthrie says, “That’s not what I came to talk about...” and changed to a more specific subject, Dr. Grigg did the same. He switched the focus towards “how hearing fits all this”. He began with a mention about the brain, your central nervous system as aging just like the bones and muscles. Using your brain keeps the change to a minimum. Older people use their whole brain instead of just part; it is why they do about as well as young-

sters. Making sense of information takes a lot of brain power. And our ears, key information sources, decline with age.

**What do you mean, “decline”? I can still hear!** asked Dr. Grigg. But if your hearing was extraordinary, later in life it will become average. You won't hear as wide a range of pitches as you once did. The sounds passing through your ears and into your brain, are not as loud and not as clear. It is because physically, the basilar membrane inside the ear becomes less flexible, along with fewer and fewer receptor cells in the middle ear. This results in sounds being less intense (loud) and not complete—in fragments instead.

**With several schematic charts** Dr. Grigg explained the inner ear workings to introduce the subject of hearing loss being gradual. Because it is such, adjustment over time takes place—as opposed to temporary sudden hearing loss such as when suffering a cold or other respiratory condition or from temporary nerve loss from exposure to loud noise like following attending a rock concert.

**The brain compensates for hearing loss**, especially with heightened concentration and selective attention to make up for volume loss. Memory and analysis as well as experience fill in the gap. But it means using up a lot more brain power and it has limits.

**So the message from Dr. Grigg is** to recognize this and try to save using so much brain power. Some ideas are to use multiple sources of input like speech, sound, visual cues—whatever helps. For example, to read an e-book with audio too eases up on the brain. Closed caption especially with sound will do the same. Dr. Grigg is very much an advocate for learning what assistive devices are out there and to obtain them as necessary.

**Reduce interference** like going slower, reducing background noise. Use assistive devices. These will never correct hearing but they will help. Think how you can improve a given hearing situation. Dr. Grigg points out that the alternative is being confused or nervous and anxious all the time. This is because we develop stress when we're not sure of what we heard. This creates uncertainty and the start of worry and anxiety. Our ears are our continuous safety monitor

so when they fail, you get even more alert and more worried. That turns into stress and makes you vulnerable to sickness.

**Being with other people** takes lots of brain power. After all, “People are complicated,” says Dr. Grigg. “People are weird”. But that is what makes one so lovable.

**Wrapping things up** Dr. Grigg stated that the story that old people lose their brain power is false. All that is happening is that your brain power gets used up making up for hearing, sight and some loss of processing speed.

**Not helping your** ears, eyes and your brain makes it seem like you are losing your memory, concentration and your smarts. Use assistive devices, find great places to hear, and limit the background noise where you can. For your eyes use glasses, magnifying glasses, lights and vivid, clear sights. This gives your brain the time and space it needs to use its power. Appreciate that your brain is doing more and better work than ever before—give it a rest sometimes!

*Dr. Grigg is trained in clinical and counseling psychology and has a private practice in psychotherapy. He also teaches at Vancouver Community College, the Justice Institute of BC and for City University of Seattle in Vancouver. When he is not keeping busy with all of these things, he likes to devote quality time to his grandchildren and to Andrea, his partner who has hearing loss and is a member of our branch. And for his weirdness side to make himself lovable, Dr. Grigg likes to play music on his guitar, especially the Blues. He further mentions he is over 35 which means he has hearing loss too.*

## November Presentation

*Report by: Hugh Hetherington*

On a very chilly and rainy November 18th evening 13 members turned out to hear a presentation given by Victoria McLeod, M.Cl.Sc., Aud(C), Western Audiology Trainer for GN ReSound. Victoria's presentation was entitled "Hearing Loss and Tinnitus" and focused largely upon the effects of tinnitus and its relation to hearing loss and followed up with an

overview of the latest GN ReSound hearing aids and associated products. This included information on the ReSound Verso TS, ReSound's most advanced hearing aid combined with a tinnitus sound generator.

Also present at the talk were Alaina Baker, M.Cl.Sc., Aud(C), Western Region Sales Representative for GN ReSound and Dr. James Nelles, M.Sc., Au.D., Dr. of Audiology who is manager of Sonus Hearing Care Professionals in North Vancouver. Following the talk the three were available to field questions from the audience.

Victoria began her talk describing the multitude of ways in which tinnitus can affect one's life. Some of these include sleep, communication, daily activities, concentration, work, and relationships with others. In other words, tinnitus can seriously affect the quality of life for many people.

In describing tinnitus Victoria explained that it is an involuntary sound perception originating inside the head. It can be perceived in one or both ears. It can be constant or intermittent and can be frustrating because it can only be heard by the affected individual, making it difficult to explain to others what you are going through. People describe their tinnitus in many different ways. Some of these are ringing, buzzing, hissing, roaring, chirping, or like the sound of a seashell held close to the ear.

Victoria went on to tell us that tinnitus is a symptom and not a disease and sometimes needs to be assessed medically to rule out serious causes. By and large, the most prevalent cause is probably related to activity within the inner ear. She explained this by describing how inside the cochlea there are what are called both inner and outer hair cells. The inner hair cells have a tendency to want to work overtime and produce sound but are normally kept in check by the outer hair cells. When this fails the result is the perception of tinnitus and is generally the result of damage hair cells. This means that there can often be hearing loss associated with tinnitus.

Other possible ear related causes can be the degeneration of the tiny bones in the middle ear,

injury to the ears, neck or head, neurological disorders including brain tumors, exposure to loud noises and often a side effect of some medications including some chemotherapy treatments for cancer. In

explaining all of this, Victoria used a diagram of the ear and highly magnified pictures of the hair cells within the cochlea.

In describing tinnitus in another way, Victoria used the analogy of a candle in a dark room. It is perceived as very bright and hard to ignore. But, take that same candle to a restaurant table where the room is bright and the perception of the candle brightness is greatly reduced. Thus, with tinnitus when you are in solitude with no other sounds around the tinnitus can be overwhelming. Introduce other environmental sounds and activity and it can remove some of the focus on the tinnitus. This is the principle in which sound therapy works.

When a person has serious tinnitus, it can involve more than just their hearing system. How a person reacts to tinnitus can involve the limbic system which processes emotions and the automatic nervous system which can cause physical reactions. An example of this would be negative feelings that can lead to physical reactions like anxiety and stress. This can cause the person to put more attention on the tinnitus resulting in a vicious cycle. The treatment of tinnitus involves trying to break the vicious cycle.

There are a number of systems available that work to do this. Two of the most well known are Tinnitus Re-Training Therapy (TRT) and Progressive Tinnitus Management (PTM). These are available through audiologists who specialize in tinnitus treatment.

What is termed Sound Therapy is most regularly employed as a part of any tinnitus management program. It involves the introduction of external sound to help reduce the contrast of the tinnitus to the background environment and is most effective when combined with counseling and a treatment plan. Sound Therapy can be as simple as turning on a fan or even a radio in the bedroom when trying to sleep. There are also special sound generators that can be used to introduce white noise or environmental sounds like rain or running water.

When hearing loss is involved and the tinnitus is slight, just wearing a hearing aid often helps to reduce the effect of tinnitus. Tinnitus Sound Generator (TSG) devices are also available. These are devices like a hearing aid that can deliver sound to the ear.

They help to "cover up" the perceived tinnitus by reducing the contrast between the tinnitus and the environment you are in. These TSG devices can be combined in a hearing aid to include amplification technology to address the hearing loss issues at the same time.

The ReSound Versa TS is a hearing aid product available from GN ReSound that provides this combination of Digital Hearing Aid and TSG in one device. Victoria also showed us examples of a number of other ReSound products and hearing systems including a remote microphone and a device to transmit your TV sound directly to your hearing aids. These employ WiFi 2.4 GHz technology similar to cordless phones and WiFi internet networks.

Victoria also described how the new ReSound hearing products can work with your iPhone or Android cellular phone. These phones can also be used as remote controls for ReSound hearing aids to change programs as shown in the picture.



Victoria summed up her talk by talking about "Habituation" and the reduction of stress and the reduction of negative emotion associated with tinnitus. Although we don't usually think about it, our brain is continually habituating us to sounds around us. She gave an example where if you moved into an apartment that was next to a sky train station where trains went by every 10 minutes you would find the sound very distracting. After living there for several months you would probably find that you don't always hear the trains going by. This is habituation to sounds. Habituation through the use of TSG devices can allow you to live in control of your tinnitus and help to retrain your brain to think of the tinnitus as unimportant. She stated that tinnitus is not curable at the present time, but it can be made livable.

Thank you, Victoria, for an excellent presentation. Thanks also to Jim Nelles for helping to arrange the presentation from ReSound and to Alaina Baker for coming along and giving support. For those that were able to turn out, it was a well spent evening.

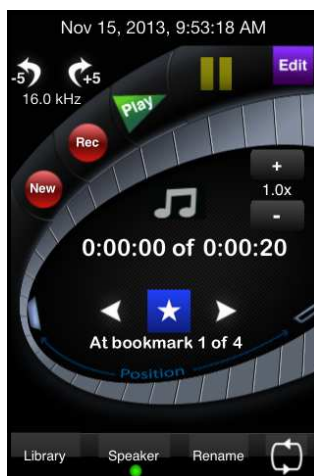
## Gotta Love That iPhone (Part 2)

By Hugh Hetherington

In the June issue of Mountain Ear I wrote about a number of iPhone Apps that could be useful to people with hearing loss. In this issue, since space permits, I would like to talk about a few more, two of which happen to be recording Apps.

This year Apple announced that there were now more than a million Apps available in their App Store. More than half of these are for the iPhone with the rest being native to the iPad. There is a lot of duplication of themes which means for any task in particular you will probably have several choices. Prices are not usually high, generally under \$5.00 and often even free. Before purchasing, though, it is always advisable to read the descriptions fully and check out the reviews, if any.

The first App I want to mention is a voice recorder.



There are a large number of these so if you just need a simple voice recorder to use as a memory jogger or notepad just check out some of the free or very low priced ones. The one I have chosen to talk about is what I would call a full featured recorder. This one, called "HT Professional Recorder", sells at \$4.99 and boasts a number of special features to justify the price. It is also available in an iPad version at the same price.

The main feature that I like about the HT Recorder is that there are four microphone settings. The first is close up for dictating notes like where you parked your car, a shopping list or just keeping track of something you want to remember for later. The second is a conference room setting. This is useful if you take part in meetings and need to review later what you heard or didn't hear. The third setting is for use in auditoriums where the voices are distant. The fourth setting is for music, which selects a higher sampling rate.

In addition to this, some of the other features include



being able to edit the recording by trimming the start and end points, adding to existing recordings later, suspending recording during silent periods, skipping forwards and backwards through recordings in 5 second intervals, speeding up and slowing down playback and playing a recording in a continuous loop. Some additional features include bookmarking locations in recordings, overwriting parts of a recording and compressing recordings to save storage space on your device and for emailing recordings.

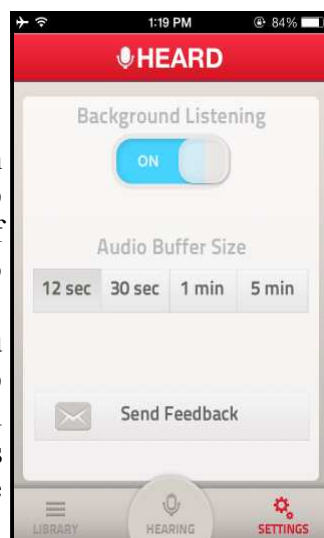
This App has a 4 out of 5 star rating, but the only criticism that I see in the comments is that the screen layout is ugly. For its features, the App is well worth the \$5.00 price tag. You can judge for yourself about the screen layout from the picture on page 6.

The second App that I want to review is a rather unusual one and demonstrates the ingenuity of some of the application developers. This one is called "Heard". It purports to turn your iPhone into sort of a time machine.

How is it used? To give a simple example, suppose you were listening to someone telling a joke and you



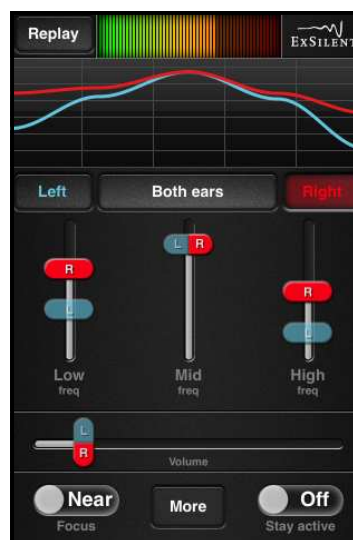
missed the punch line. With this App you can freeze up to the last five minutes of the conversation and go back and listen to it later. The only proviso is that you have to have had the App running in the background and be alert enough to press the button in time to save



the buffer before it starts to be overwritten.

It is initially a free App but to make it worthwhile it has a one time in-app upgrade for \$1.99 which increases the recording buffer to 5 minutes. The free version only records up to the last few seconds which is not very useful. With the paid upgrade you can set the buffer to record the following intervals: 12 seconds, 30 seconds, 1 minute, and 5 minutes. It's your choice. There are only a few reviews and they all give it a 4 or 5 star rating.

It is not an App for everyone, but if you happen to be a person who doesn't like to miss anything, you can set it running whenever you are involved in a conversation. Then, if you miss something important that was said you can capture the last few minutes of the conversation. Each time the button is pressed the buffer is saved in a separate recording shown in the picture. Each recording can be up to 5 minutes in length. If necessary, you can always be discrete about it because no one will know what you are doing when you push the red button on the App.



The third App that I will mention is a Personal Sound Amplifier or Pocket Talker. It is put out by a Dutch manufacturer of hearing aids, Ex-Silent. It is designed to help you hear better in restaurants, parties, meetings, etc. It requires that you use headphones or earbuds. It has a very simple single screen lay-

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.

out which is uncomplicated. Low, medium and high tones can be set independently for both ears to simulate your hearing loss and adjust for a natural sound. The microphone sensitivity can also be set for near or far focus. There are two graphic displays at the top of the screen. The top one is a sound level indicator which moves to show the level of the incoming sound. Below that is a graphic display of the frequency settings for the left and right ears. It can also be set to run in the background so that you can activate other applications while using the personal amplifier. When space permits, I will be reviewing more Apps in future issues of the newsletter.

*Note: If you are viewing the printed black and white copy of the newsletter, you can see the pictures in colour by going to our website and viewing the newsletter on line at:*

***www.chha-nsb.com***

*If you would like to receive your own colour issue by email send us an email at:*

***chha\_nsb@telus.net***

## Hearing Aid Battery Recycling

Bring your used hearing aid batteries to our meetings and we will take care of recycling

CHHA—North Shore Branch Programs are funded in part by Municipal Community Grants from the City and District of North Vancouver and the District of West Vancouver.

## 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**

**(No meeting in July and August)**

**Next Meeting December 6, 2013**

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

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**

**Everyone Welcome**



**CANADIAN HARD OF HEARING ASSOCIATION**

**NORTH SHORE BRANCH**

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Prov. \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail application to:**

CHHA—North Shore Branch

Attention: Treasurer

600 West Queens Road

North Vancouver, B.C.

V7N 2L3

Cheque enclosed

Money Order Enclosed

Charitable Registration No.

BN 89672 3038 RR0001

I wish to support the aims of CHHA and the North Shore Branch and enclose my \$40.00 annual membership fee. (National \$30.00, Branch \$10.00). Membership is paid annually from 1 October to 30 September.