



# Mountain Ear

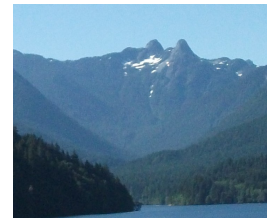
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## From the Desk of the President

*by Alan Dion*

Hi to you all, on this beautiful June afternoon, and welcome to this my latest time to write this message. It has been a long time since I addressed you all in print, and a lot has happened in that time. As a very brief review, I'll run through a very few points since I last wrote. Far more on several topics will be covered elsewhere later in this newsletter.

My absence was caused by ill health, and although I'm not in my prime, or any where near it, I am still here, doing my best, still running "Sound Advice" at Silver Harbour, and hoping to carry on for some time yet.

But, I was called back when the Branch was in need, and it needed someone to pick up the reins when Hugh Hetherington (What can I add to what we all know and feel about this man) became unable to continue to carry the Branch any further.

As you all know, Hugh is no longer with us; more of that also later in the newsletter.

Also, and hopefully not news to anyone, CHHA-NSB is also no longer "fully" with us. Although we have not completely disappeared, we are limping on under the joint guidance of a limited board, and with the assistance of the BC Chapter. In this regard, I would like to express my thanks to Mike Hocevar and Ping Lau, both serving with me on the Board together with Ruth Warick, of CHHA-BC, also helping us on the board.

I'm not sure where the above will take us, but I do know that we will do our very best.

So, where are we now. Under the auspices of CHHA-BC, we will continue to hold Sound Advice at Silver Harbour, more on that in a moment. I am currently moving to have some North Shore representation on the

BC Board, and hope to have something to say on that over the course on this Summer.

For this season, we have one more Sound Advice at Silver Harbour on Monday June 22<sup>nd</sup>. This will be the very last session at this location, which will be closing its doors that very week.

For your information, our Sound Advice sessions continue to attract 8 to 10 people per session, we'd love to attract more.

Starting this September, Silver Harbour have asked us back, and I have agreed, but with a small change in our schedule. Sound Advice will now be held, beginning September, on the THIRD Monday, after lunch at 1:00 pm.

So, Sept. 21; Oct. 19; Nov. 16; Dec. 21, at 1:00 pm, for your calendars. Please join us, often, and help to keep the spirit of the branch going. You may also learn something, plus, I'm sure all of you have something to teach, or at least share.

The NEW Silver Harbour Senior's Centre is located at 2325 St Georges Ave, North Vancouver. Their website is [www.silverharbourcentre.com](http://www.silverharbourcentre.com)

It's been a privilege to serve you in the past, and I hope that we can continue in some manner in the future. If you would like to contact me in the future, please feel free to send me an e-mail at [alan123.dion@gmail.com](mailto:alan123.dion@gmail.com) or you can call me at Silver Harbour for information about our sessions there at 604 980-2474. If they cannot answer your questions they will forward a message to me.

Have a wonderful summer, sit back and listen to the birds.

Alan ■



## **Celebration of the life of Hugh Hetherington**

*by Susan Gelinas*

On April 27, in lieu of a Sound Advice meeting, a celebration of the life of Hugh Hetherington was held at Silver Harbour Seniors' Centre. The celebration was facilitated by Dr Ruth Warick, president of CHHA-BC, and Alan Dion, president of CHHA-NSB. Close captioning was enabled by Leah from Accurate Realtime Reporting Inc. Tea, coffee & cookies were on hand. Attendees were asked to sign a Remembrance Book.

Hugh had requested that his family not have a funeral nor place an obituary in the paper, but we, the members of CHHA-NSB, needed a way to say goodbye to Hugh and Hugh's son gave us permission to hold this celebration. We were honoured to have Hugh's son and daughter-in-law, Paul and Melissa, present.

Celebrations of life are tricky. They are sad because we are aware of how much we miss the person. They are joyous because we remember all the things that made that person special to us. They are comforting in that we see the common threads in the stories people tell. They are enlightening because we hear stories we hadn't heard before and we see another side of the person and that person becomes more special to us. And they are thought provoking because we can see how that person touched each and every person present.

Hugh's celebration of life was all that and more. A number of people spoke and following is my recap of their presentations. I am laughing as I write this because Hugh did not like the word "recap"—said he had never heard it and very reluctantly let me use it in the newsletters when an article was a summary of a meeting.

First up to speak was Mike Hocesvar, current board member of CHHA-NSB, and past president of CHHA-NSB. Mike has a profound hearing loss as well as being legally blind. He met Hugh in 2010 and within a year had joined the board. Mike spoke of how very proud

Hugh was of our branch and what a real guiding factor he was in shaping the programs that we run. Hugh encouraged initiative but he always wanted the work we did to be manageable. Hugh and Flo Spratt ran the Sound Advice meetings and Mike called it a "one-two punch". Flo spoke about coping strategies. Hugh talked about the latest hearing aid technology. Mike thought Hugh's love of tech started when he was working for BC Tel and computers were being brought in. He continued learning about technology into his retirement and brought that knowledge into his roles with CHHA-NSB. He learned about loop systems and set them up for the Sound Advice meetings. He also took it upon himself to get involved in setting up loop systems in churches. He also went out to people's houses to help install TV links. Mike emphasized that Hugh did not take money for any of this; he did encourage people to make a donation to our branch. And when COVID bulldozed us, Hugh was up to the challenge and learned about Zoom and set the Sound Advice meetings up on Zoom.

Another fantastic thing Mike felt that came about because of Hugh's leadership was our evening meetings of guest speakers. These meetings were held 5 times a year at the Summerhill retirement home up until COVID, then they took up a platform on Zoom.

Mike pointed out that Hugh also served as treasurer, and at different points of time, President.

Mike also wanted us to know that Hugh did have a little bit of life outside of CHHA-NSB. He loved music and often listened to the BBC broadcast for symphony orchestras. He enjoyed walks on the West Van sea wall and that kept him fit. Mike and Hugh shared a love for British Columbia Maritime history and West Coast boats. In recent years, he joined the SS Master Society and worked on preserving and restoring the 1923 last steam tugboat, the SS Master. He loved both Japanese and Chinese food.

Mike gave a shout out to Paul and Melissa for caring for Hugh in his last months so that he could stay in his beautiful West Van bungalow. We all thank them

Mike emphasized how passionate Hugh was about his work with the hard of hearing community. "We're all the beneficiaries from it. We are so grateful that he embraced the concept of livable communities for the hard of hearing in West and North Vancouver."

Next up was Ping Lau, a current board member of CHHA-NSB, the new kid on the block as he referred to himself. Ping spoke humorously of his journey to get hearing aids and becoming a member of the North Shore branch of CHHA and joining the Sound Advice meetings on Zoom. He came out of each session learning something new, including how many ways there was to lose your hearing aid. Several months later, Hugh asked Ping to join the board of directors, much to Ping's surprise and terror. Hugh reassured him that all he had to do was raise his hand, say yes. Hugh was very persuasive in a very polite manner and he had Ping very quickly assisting at both Sound Advice meetings, arranging chairs, greeting people, but, thank God, not cleaning the furniture or wiping the floor. It was an eye opener to Ping when he started attending board meeting to see how much Hugh did as treasurer, then when Alan resigned as president, Hugh took on that role, then when another member resigned, Hugh took on the secretary role. So Hugh was a man who covered everything-Ping had never seen that. Ping spoke of visiting Hugh last summer to find that he had been house bound for a month. Hugh thought he had long COVID, but tests showed that his kidney function was very low. Hugh chose not to have dialysis; he just didn't want to increase his health span. So right now, Hugh is resting in peace.

I (Susan Gelinias) was next up. I was a board member for 10 years as well as website co-ordinator and co-editor with Hugh on our newsletter, the Mountain Ear. I don't think I would have done any of that without Hugh's influence, and the respect to me and confidence in me that he had. We worked well together, not always agreeing, but always working things out. He was smart and kind and helpful. He was proud of the work CHHA-NSB did in the community. It was incredibly important to him that people get the best experience out of their hearing aids. His love of gadgets pushed him to take an interest in all the gadgets that were available to supplement hearing aids and pass that knowledge on to anyone who would listen to it. He was a humble person, not always taking credit when he should. There was one sentence he used to introduce CHHA at Sound Advice Meetings and that was "We are hard of hearing people helping other hard of hearing people." I think that sums up how Hugh saw himself. He felt that he was getting as much as he was giving. I really want people to know that many people, myself included, have lost a true &

loyal friend, and that the hearing community has lost an anchor. I hope that we can carry his memory forward and that his legacy be that we continue his work in the north shore hearing community.

Mandy Fisch, Hugh's audiologist for 20 years, took up the podium and we were all fighting tears. I'd love to reprint her whole tribute here, because it captured Hugh as deeply as anyone could. Mandy came to know him not just as a patient but as a truly remarkable person. I'll highlight words that stood out in Mandy's tribute: "gentleman", "kindness", "quiet dignity", "genuine care for others", "generosity of spirit", "gave his time and energy endlessly to help the hard of hearing", "tech genius", "shared really great friendships with them and that was part of what he loved", "thrived on figuring out the issues", "never asked for anything in return", "warmth about him that people were drawn to", "quiet charm", "not overbearing", "especially admired by the ladies". And Mandy's final words: "Hugh made everyone feel seen, supported and heard. He leaves behind a legacy not just of kindness but of meaningful impact. Quietly improving lives one person at a time. He will be deeply missed. And fondly remembered."

Neil Bauman, PhD, owner of the website [hearinglosshelp.com](http://hearinglosshelp.com) came up from Lynden, Washington, to share his memories. Neil was a frequent speaker at our Evening Meetings (pre-COVID, our Summerhill meetings), always providing thought provoking information about hearing loss. Many of his articles have appeared in issues of the Mountain Ear. He has written many books, including "Talking with Hard of Hearing People", distributed by CHHA-NSB to members and local hearing aid clinics. Neil and Hugh had been friends for 24 years and bonded over Hugh's private hearing aid collection. Neil set up the website [hearingaidmuseum.com](http://hearingaidmuseum.com) to display the hearing aids, as well as provide write-ups. The museum flourished without advertising it. People from all over the world sent pictures of hearing aids and devices and asked them to be identified. Neil refers to their frequent phone calls, and zoom meetings and their interesting conversations, and how much he learned from Hugh. It also sounds like they shared a lot of laughs looking at what was sent and puzzling over some items. I know from editing the newsletter that Hugh held Neil in high regard and enjoyed all the back and forth contact and information that was provided. Neil is adamant that the hearing aid

museum continue and is negotiating with an audiologist to take it on. Neil also spoke about what a wonderful photographer Hugh was and how they would walk along the water and take pictures. Neil considered Hugh a dear friend and to quote him “I’d like to say farewell, friend Hugh. We’ll all miss you and I will definitely miss you.” Neil had provided copies of his books that he signed at the end of the celebration-thank you, Neil.

Ruth Warick took the podium. As part of CHHA-BC, Ruth thought Hugh had just been a presence in the hard of hearing community “like forever”. Ruth referred to Hugh as an amazing leader in the North Shore and as its greatest ambassador. She acknowledged the pride and the sense of humbleness he took in the branch. She remembers him as a very smart man, very knowledgeable about technology, embracing change, even when AI snuck into our board meetings. He was a kind man, always took the positive approach. Ruth said that leaders like Hugh don’t come along too often and that his shoes are almost impossible to fill. She said that we can be very grateful that we had him in our community, that he devoted his retirement years to the hard of hearing and we are the better for it. Ruth will personally miss him, but also on an organizational level, as most present will. Her last quote: “But I thank you for being part of our lives and my life.”

Rick Waters runs a peer support group in Vancouver for cochlear implant recipients or for those who are looking into receiving a cochlear implant. He has spoken at our evening meetings and has contributed articles to the Mountain Ear as well as our website. He came over from Vancouver to pay tribute to Hugh. He used to work on the North Shore and when his hearing started to affect his work, someone suggested he come to one of the Sound Advice meetings. This must have been in the early days when the meeting were held in a church near Lonsdale. I had to laugh at Rick’s story about the first time he met Hugh, because Hugh’s persuasive charm had Rick helping him set up the loop system for the meeting. Rick said that Hugh built the CHHA-NSB branch into one of most successful organizations of its kind in Canada. Within a few minutes of meeting Hugh, he learned that Hugh was one of those volunteers that didn’t complain, just got down to business, became the secretary, the treasurer, lobbied for grants, edited the newsletter, wrote the articles. Rick talked about Hugh’s wonderful sense of humour, and how he made a person

feel really welcomed. And Rick’s last quote: “So we were very blessed to have a guy with that energy, and that sense of community, and like the rest of you, I will really miss him.”

Anne Hunter, a member of the branch, spoke briefly about Hugh and how he got her hooked on the loop system and how she is fighting for loop systems to be installed. Her quote: “So again, like everybody here, we’re here because we loved him so much and we appreciated all the work he’d done. And thank you.”

Another speaker told a story of going to some of the West Van Sound Advice meetings from 2004 to 2006 and how Hugh gave her a handheld decibel reader so she could test out the reading in her workplace and that helped her with the health and safety regulations at work.

Ruth was able to set up 2 recordings from people who could not attend. The first one was from Gael Hannan. Gael is a renowned humorist, author and speaker on hearing loss issues. She has presented at NSB several times. Hugh had a lot of respect and admiration for her. Her quote: “Hugh was one of those people who just made things happen. And I enjoyed every meeting, every interaction, every phone call, every FaceTime that I had with him and I was lucky to speak to the North Shore group on special occasions. “Hugh, I will always be grateful for what you shared with us in your lifetime. I want to say thank you on behalf of people with hearing loss for everything that you did.”

The second recording was from Flo Spratt, now living in Arizona. Flo and Hugh facilitated the Sound Advice meetings for 20 years. She shared a story of her first attendance at a Sound Advice Meeting, where Hugh stood up and told the audience to turn on their T-coils. Flo was surprised, because she had only used hers for the telephone. She was shocked because she could hear directly in her ears. Flo calls Hugh a very remarkable man. She talks about how much Hugh knew about technology and how eager his was to share that knowledge. He knew he was sending people home with tools in their pockets to help them with their hearing lives. He was a continued inspiration to Flo, always passing on the current knowledge. Flo’s quote: “And I want to continue doing that as well just by helping others remember there are solutions to our hearing issues that we have.”

The last part of the session was Q & A about what was happening to CHHA-NSB. Alan & Ruth fielded those questions. To summarize, CHHA-NSB will be closing and will be folded into CHHA-BC, which operates out of the Wavefront Centre at 8<sup>th</sup> & Quebec. The number of CHHA-NSB members has dwindled. Several of the board members were having health issues and we weren't able to find replacements. And we just didn't have the bodies to do the work to keep the branch going. CHHA-BC **will** keep Sound Advice meetings going. There was a May meeting and there will be a meeting on June 22. As usual, there won't be any meetings in July and August. The meetings will resume in September in the new Silver Harbour at the Harry Jerome Centre, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month at 1pm, starting September 21<sup>st</sup>. Dates will be posted on the website [www.chha-nsb.com](http://www.chha-nsb.com) We also hope to resume the monthly emails reminding members of the meeting dates. Please email [northshore@chha-bc.org](mailto:northshore@chha-bc.org) if you have any questions or concerns.

Financially, CHHA-NSB was in good shape due to a large contribution from Carrell Hearn. Several years ago, a yearly scholarship was set up in her name to be administered by CHHA National. That scholarship will continue. In addition, in recognition of Hugh's achievements, an annual scholarship will be set up in his name for a student in BC working in a study program that will benefit the hard of hearing in BC. CHHA-NSB funds will be transferred to CHHA-BC and continued to be used to help the hard of hearing on the North Shore.

As a final note, one speaker wanted to thank all the speakers and all of the people who made a tribute to Hugh. "He's a wonderful man and I think he's shining down on us because the organization smacks of him. He's somewhere making sure this thing went so smoothly so thank you very much all of you."

We noticed that some people were taking pictures. If you would like to share them, please email them to us. Also, some people were too shy to speak at the podium. If you would like to say a few words to honour Hugh, please email us at [northshore@chha-bc.org](mailto:northshore@chha-bc.org) I've set up a page on the website "In Memoriam of Hugh" to which I can add peoples' tributes. ■

## Mike's Musings

*by Mike Hocevar,*

*Past President CHHA-NSB & current board member*

There's quite the shakeup currently in progress to our branch as many of you know, with the recent terminal illness & passing of our driving force, Hugh Hetherington, who would have turned 90 on May 30<sup>th</sup>.

After 30 years our CHHA North Shore branch is dissolving and our assets will be absorbed by CHHA BC. Nobody wanted this but the reality is that there isn't a viable board of directors available to carry on.

Hugh really was the rock star of the branch, right up to the end. Many deserved tributes were expressed at April's Sound Advice meeting.

Not only was Hugh a gifted administrator handling the books and the required peripheral obligations under the provincial societies act, but his sheer passion about hard of hearing issues led to much of the branch's success.

Whether it was arranging the guest speakers, setting up the meetings, paying personal visits to members' homes to set up TV Links or resolving tech issues, keeping up with the latest hearing aids & listening devices by regular drop-ins at the various hearing aid providers, creating the Mountain Ear newsletter with Susan Gélinas and so much more, it all added up to ensuring that the branch played its part in supporting a Livable Community within the North Shore communities. Hugh was so proud of what our branch accomplished and he was proud of the great recognition our branch received in the Canadian hard of hearing community.

What next, then? Members want to see CHHA have a continued presence here. Alan Dion, our president, is vigorously encouraging CHHA BC to sanction continuing the monthly Sound Advice meetings at Silver Harbour Centre. CHHA BC president Ruth Warick is working closely to facilitate these meetings. She has advised, too, that a scholarship in Hugh's memory has been approved.

So perhaps we'll see adversity turned into opportunity as we are taken under the CHHA BC umbrella. Maybe some creative events and so on will be provided on the North Shore from time to time in addition to maintaining Sound Advice. It may be the end of an era, but hopefully the start of another. It's what we'll hope for. ■

**CHHA North Shore in Transition:  
Honouring the Past, Supporting the Future**

*by Ruth Warick, President, CHHA-BC*

For many years, the North Shore Branch has been an important part of the hearing loss community, offering connection, support, learning opportunities, and advocacy close to home. Its work has touched many lives, and its contribution to building a stronger, more inclusive community deserves both recognition and gratitude. As North Shore moves through a change in status, our intention is to honour that history while helping create a practical and sustainable path forward.

The decision to dissolve the branch was taken at a special meeting of the members held in November 2025, following a bylaw update that allowed North Shore's remaining records, documents, and assets to be transferred to CHHA-BC after outstanding liabilities were settled. CHHA-BC also committed to supporting the winding down process and taking on financial and administrative responsibilities in the transition period, and North Shore leaders Alan Dion and Mike Hocevar committed to the continuation of its popular, long-standing Sound Advice program.

This transition also comes in the context of significant leadership change. The passing of Hugh Hetherington in January 2026 was deeply felt across the North Shore and beyond. Hugh was a longstanding leader, former president, and a generous volunteer whose technical expertise, financial stewardship, and kindness helped sustain the branch over many years. At a Celebration of Life event on April 27, members spoke movingly of his advice, his leadership, and the many ways he helped build hearing accessibility in the community. His loss was not only personal for those who knew him, but also profoundly affected the branch he had guided for so long. As reported at the Celebration of Life event, we are looking at establishing a lasting legacy of a scholarship in Hugh's name.

North Shore has a proud legacy, built through commitment, friendship, and service. We move forward with appreciation for all that North Shore has contributed, and to continuing its important Sound Advice programs.

Sincerely,  
Ruth Warick

## Sound Advice

Presented by:

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association  
North Shore Branch

When we meet, we discuss topics and issues dealing with hearing loss.

Subjects to be addressed include:

- Technology;
- Speech Reading;
- Coping Strategies
- Improving Hearing Environments

Silver Harbour sessions will be held at its new location at 2325 St Georges Ave, North Vancouver. These sessions will be held as **in-person** meetings on the third Monday of each month at 1 pm.

2026 Fall sessions are scheduled Sept 21, Oct 19, Nov 16, & Dec 21

There are no meetings in July & August

For Information email [northshore@chha-bc.org](mailto:northshore@chha-bc.org)

We look forward to seeing you.

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.