



# Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

## North Shore Branch

Published four times a year on the 15th of March, June, September and December. Your submissions are always welcome. Please Contact the Editor: Hugh Hetherington  
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# Mountain Ear

### President's Message Gardening and Giving

Our move from Edmonton to Victoria, the city of flowers, in 1991 opened up a whole new world for me. I fell in love with gardens! At first, I simply “drank them in”, enjoying my neighbours’ labours on my regular walks. As I began to include the beauty and celebration of nature in my life, I found myself becoming more relaxed.

It didn't take long, however, before I wanted to be part of that celebration. I became a gardener too! And as I got my hands dirty, I discovered there are two sides to the art of gardening: receiving and giving.

In the receiving, gardening is therapeutic! I learned to be more patient as I waited for results, to relax and value the “slower lane of life”, and to learn lessons from garden culture itself (e.g., “What are the “weeds” in my life that need pulling out?”) The sunshine, fresh air and exercise definitely contributed to my healthier lifestyle.

When we moved to North Vancouver five years ago, gardening became an absolute necessity. Nothing was growing on our property! We had moved into a house on a lot that had been completely cleared of landscaping. My job was to transform the bare earth into a garden. Needless to say, I learned a great deal about gardening these past five years. ....

The giving side of gardening came as a bonus, and, for me, a pleasant surprise. My garden was helping others! My neighbours and friends would receive clumps of my perennials to put in their gardens and tips from me on garden health. When the garden began to estab-

lish itself, my visitors found a relaxed atmosphere welcoming them from their busy lives. What began for me as a hobby and a necessary task became a gift for others to enjoy.

As in gardening, there are the giving and receiving sides when one is a volunteer. It is easy to see that others benefit when we give; it is harder to see but very exciting when we find that our giving comes back to us!

Some of the benefits I have experienced in being a volunteer are wonderful friendships, greater understanding of others’ needs and a deeper contentment in my own life. When someone thanks me for my gift of time and talents, I am grateful that I made a difference.

I have also learned a great deal. Like my work in the garden, I have learned patience when the results were not immediate, willingness to admit failure and to try again, and to recognize the many gifts others give to me.

I want to invite you to join the growing number of volunteers in our CHHA – North Shore Branch. We know you will not only make a difference in the lives of the hard of hearing, but you will reap many benefits, too.

As the following poem says so well, when we willingly give of ourselves to those who seek our help, we find that we are truly being the persons we are meant to be...

**Two little raindrops were born in a shower,**

*(Continued on page 2)*

**And one  
was so  
pompously proud of his power,  
He got in his head an extravagant notion  
He'd hustle right off and swallow the ocean.  
A blade of grass that grew by the brook  
Called for a drink, but no notice he took  
Of such trifling things. He must hurry to be  
Not a mere raindrop, but the whole sea.  
A stranded ship needed water to float,  
But he could not bother to help a boat.  
He leaped in the sea with a puff and a blare  
And nobody even knew he was there!**

**It Can Be Done**

**By Joseph Morris**

**B u t  
t h e**

**other drop as along it went  
Found the work to do for which it was sent:  
It refreshed the lily that drooped its head,  
And bathed the grass that was almost dead.  
It got under the ships and helped them along,  
And all the while sang a cheerful song.  
It worked every step of the way it went,  
Bringing joy to others, to itself content.  
At last it came to its journey's end,  
And welcomed the sea as an old-time friend.  
"An ocean", it said, "there could not be  
Except for the millions of drops like me".**

Welcome, fellow raindrops! Together we will make a difference on the North Shore. 'Til next time,

Flo Spratt

**CHHA – NORTH SHORE BRANCH  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
Monday, September 23rd, 2002  
St. John's Anglican Church  
220 West 8th Street, North Vancouver.**

**Members' Meeting – April 22, 2002**

Report by: Andrea Gauthier

Our April Members' Meeting was held at St. John's Anglican Church, 220 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street in North Vancouver and was attended by over 35 people including 12 guests. All present were treated to a dynamic and educational presentation by our jovial friend and Branch Secretary, Hugh Hetherington.

As many of you may know, Hugh has a growing collection of hearing aids going back to the very beginnings of these devices. It made me realize how people have been struggling with trying to compensate for hearing loss for many years. Hugh's collection is an example of the human imagination and ingenuity at work.



While it is not easy to live with a hearing loss today, and while we strive for more and more improvements in the devices we use, we must admit science and technology have come a long, long way.

Along with showing us the old hearing aids, Hugh gave a thorough description and explanation of the

development of hearing aids from the acoustical, carbon, vacuum tube and transistor to the modern technologies.

Hugh then went into the characteristics of sound such as amplitude and frequency and the fact that sound must travel through a medium, which creates situations of reflection, refraction, diffraction and interaction.

Finding the right spot to sit in order to hear is not a simple thing!

Then, Hugh listed many adverse listening situations, described the settings and the features on present-day hearing aids which help with those specific situations. Some of these situations included competing speech, constant noise, intermittent or fluctuating noise, reverberant rooms and distant speakers.

What a valuable presentation! It has helped me enormously in my understanding of hearing aids and assistive listening devices and how to assess listening environments I find myself in.

I hope it will remind us all to treat ourselves with compassion as we deal on a daily basis with such a complex disability.

## One of the questions I most frequently get asked

By Hugh Hetherington

“Which is the best hearing aid to buy?” One might as well ask me; “What is the meaning of life?” I could probably come up with a more satisfactory answer to that one, but let's tackle the hearing aid question. This is most often asked by someone considering a hearing aid for the first time, or someone who has decided it is time to replace a hearing aid that has been worn for several years. If the hearing aid is more than a few years old, it is important to know that technology has made tremendous advances in the last few years and depending on the nature of the hearing loss a more advanced hearing aid may make a world of difference. It is important to note that never before has the hearing aid purchaser had to deal with the choices now available, and this is really what leads to the question asked.

Often the questions behind the question might be; “are digital hearing aids better than analogue?” or “which style of hearing aid is better, behind the ear, in the ear, or completely in the canal?” Neither of these questions can be given a simple answer. When asked

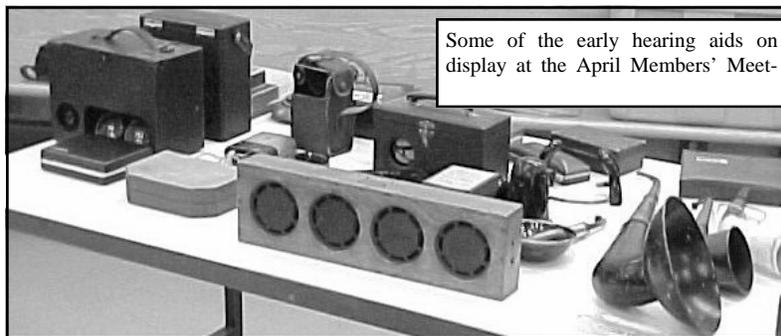
such a question, my reply is usually to tell the individual to make an appointment to see a hearing professional. I will also acquaint them with some of the features of the different types of aid and some of the advantages and disadvantages of each type. To prescribe a hearing aid, the hearing professional must take into account a great deal of information about the client. What is the nature of the hearing loss? In what circumstances does the individual have difficulty hearing? Is it the person's first hearing aid or a replacement? What is the lifestyle of the individual? Is vanity a serious factor? (It shouldn't be, but often is the overriding factor in making the final decision on the style of hearing aid) Is the person prepared to make the commitment required to adjust to wearing a hear-

ing aid? Very often, when a person gets to the point of deciding that he or she might be a candidate for a hearing aid they have gone for many years with a gradual deterioration in their hearing. In effect, they have forgotten over time what the real world sounds like. If this is the case, it will take time to relearn to hear again. This is where some degree of perseverance is required. It is too common an occurrence to just relegate the hearing aid to the bedside drawer and go back to living in a muffled and somewhat quiet world.

Hearing aids are not like prescription eyeglasses. These, you put on and generally speaking your vision is corrected. You may have to get used to bifocals or trifocals, but this accommodation is not nearly as trying as it is to adjust to wearing a hearing aid. Those who wear eyeglasses will testify that they become so much a part of you that you feel incomplete without them.

The motivation should be “to be able to hear again and interpret speech with less difficulty”. With this in mind, it is important to become an informed consumer. You can do this by joining

your local branch of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association. You will find much useful information at their meetings and in the newsletters and magazine they publish. Know what the



market place has to offer. Find out what features are available in modern hearing aids. Find out how long a trial period you can have. Ask to have a telephone switch (t-coil) included. Even if you don't need this for using the telephone it can open you up to a whole world of assistive listening devices, when needed. You will be glad you did.

If I can offer one piece of information, it is this. Put vanity and other issues aside. Go for the hearing aid which gives you the best quality sound and the best features. In the end, you will be glad you did because you will soon find that your major problem will be to remember to remove them before getting in the shower.

## Assistive Listening Systems (Part 1)

By Hugh Hetherington

Have you ever thought about why it is harder to hear in some places rather than others? When you are at some distance from a sound source, whether it is someone speaking or a loud speaker, the volume of sound at your ears will be lower. While this distance can be overcome by increasing the volume, through a PA system, loudness is not all that is needed for good listening. A hearing loss reduces or eliminates many of the acoustical cues that we use to discriminate between sounds. A hard of hearing person must listen carefully to context, use speech reading skills when possible and look for other visible clues to speech content. This can be difficult and very tiring. If the room acoustics are not ideal it can be impossible. Two of the major difficulties that can be encountered are background noise and room reverberation. Both of these can adversely affect speech perception.

Background noise is unwanted sound that masks the sounds you need to hear by competing with them. Sources of this noise could be air conditioning, heating ducts or other types of noise generating equipment. It can also be others speaking, or even radio or television. We are all familiar with the difficulty of hearing at a social gathering or in a restaurant. The truth is, we are living in a noisy world and it seems to be getting noisier.

In reverberation, sound is reflected or bounced off the various surfaces of the room. Since sound travels at a finite speed, different parts of the sound arrive at your ears at different times. The larger the room or hall, the greater the difference in the time the various sounds arrive. This, of course, has the effect of blurring the sound and making it difficult to understand. In other words, the amount of reverberation is a product of the room dimensions and the nature of the reflecting materials. Hard surfaces reflect more sound and soft ones absorb it. You have all experienced the difficulty in hearing the sounds from a public address system in places like airports, arenas, and churches. Even though the speech sounds may be

loud enough, comprehension is difficult or even impossible.

If you are a hearing aid wearer, you know that turning up the volume on your hearing aid is not the answer. This just increases the volume of the desired sounds, as well as, the background noise and reverberation. For the hearing aid wearer, a different approach is what is needed.

What we call an assistive listening system is one of the answers to our listening difficulties. These systems are designed to bridge the gap between the desired sounds and the listener's ear. They deliver the sounds you want to hear undistorted by the room acoustics.

How does an assistive listening system help?



Hugh Hetherington speaking at April Members Meeting

An assistive listening system (ALS) or assistive listening device (ALD) is capable of providing a connection, most often wireless, between the sound source and your ear. I refer to this as 'closing the channel to bridge or narrow the gap.' This drastically reduces or eliminates the effects of distance, background noise and reverberation making

it easier for you to hear and understand. Because the sound is transmitted directly from the source to your ear by the ALS, it's like having the sound source right next to you. The distance between the speaker and your position is no longer a factor. Even if you happen to be sitting at the very back of an auditorium, your ear is as close to the sound as if you were standing beside the speaker. Even in the case of a noisy or reverberant room, you should still be able to hear clearly.

Even people, who don't wear hearing aids, can take advantage of ALS's in theatres, auditoriums, and churches to help make listening easier. For mild to moderate hearing losses, ALS's which employ earphones are very effective. For severe to profound hearing losses, the ALS must work with the person's hearing aid(s) and this requires that they be equipped with what is called a telecoil (T-Coil or T-Switch). I cannot over emphasize the value of the telecoil because it can make

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a whole range of assistive listening devices available to the hard of hearing person.

Generally, an ALS works in conjunction with a standard public address (PA) system. These broadcast the sound from microphones or a sound track to the audience via loud speakers. An ALS can be integrated with this system to transmit the same signals to the ears of a person wearing a hearing aid or using an ALS receiver. The three types of systems generally employed are named for the method in which the signals are transmitted: Induction Loop (IL), Frequency Modulation (FM), and Infrared (IR).

**Induction Loop (IL)** This system uses a wire around the room which transmits an electromagnetic signal directly to the person's telecoil equipped hearing aid. For the hard of hearing, especially those with a severe to profound hearing loss, this would be the preferred system to use. It requires no special equipment on the part of the hard of hearing person. For those people whose hearing aids contain telecoils, these hearing aids are their own personal receiver. For non hearing aid users or those with non telecoil equipped hearing aids, special loop receivers can be used with earphones.

**FM Systems.** These transmit the signals in the same manner as an FM radio broadcast. An FM transmitter is integrated with the regular sound system and transmits the signal to special FM receivers. The receivers are usually pocket sized units to which earphones, neckloops, or silhouettes are connected. The neckloops and silhouettes provide the connection to the telecoil equipped hearing aids.

**Infrared Systems.** These operate on an infrared light beam that is transmitted from infrared radiators located at the front of the facility or theatre. Special infrared receivers, which are usually of the

stethoscope type, are worn by the listener. For telecoil equipped hearing aid users, a special receiver is required into which can be plugged a neckloop or silhouette. Infrared, unlike FM which can be transmitted through walls or objects, must have direct line of sight otherwise the signal will be interrupted or distorted.

Each of these assistive listening systems has advantages and disadvantages. These will be discussed in detail in part 2 of this article in the next issue of Mountain Ear.

## **Managing Your Hearing Loss**

The next MYHL Course will be held at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre commencing on Tuesday, September 17. Sessions will be held for 8 consecutive Tuesdays from 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon. The course fee is \$20.00. For information or registration, please contact Joan Bennett at 604-983-3131 or the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre at 604-925-7280.

## **FAMOUS PLAYERS THEATRES REAR WINDOW CAPTIONING DESCRIPTIVE VIDEO SERVICES**

Famous Players, Inc. has recently introduced new technology which makes movies accessible to their guests who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired. The equipment is called Rear Window Captioning (or the more familiar "closed captioning" and DVS Theatrical (or Descriptive Narration). If attending one of the theatres equipped with these technologies there is no additional charge for the use of these services other than the regular ticket price, however, you will be asked to show some form of identification.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Famous Players' Rear Window ® Captioning System And DVS Theatrical ® System**

***Q: How many Famous Players theatres will initially install these systems?***

*(Continued on page 6)*

## **DONATIONS**

The North Shore Branch of CHHA gratefully acknowledges a donation of \$500.00 from the Howe Sound Lions Club. This donation will be put to good use on the many projects the North Shore Branch is currently undertaking.

(Continued from page 5)

These systems will be installed in a total of 19 theatres across Canada and will all be available to the public on May 3, 2002 (except where indicated).

The theatres are:

#### **British Columbia**

- SilverCity Tillicum, Victoria
- SilverCity Riverport, Richmond
- Colossus, Langley
- SilverCity Metropolis, Burnaby

#### **Alberta**

- SilverCity West Edmonton Mall
- Paramount Chinook Centre, Calgary

#### **Manitoba**

- SilverCity Polo Park, Winnipeg

#### **Ontario**

- Famous Players 8, Belleville
- SilverCity Sudbury
- SilverCity Windsor
- SilverCity Ancaster
- Paramount Toronto
- Coliseum Ottawa (Available as of March 29, 2002)
- SilverCity Gloucester, Ottawa (Available as of Mid-April, 2002)
- Coliseum Scarborough (Available as of November 16, 2001)
- SilverCity North London (Available as of November 16, 2001)
- Coliseum Mississauga (Available as of November 16, 2001)
- SilverCity Yonge & Eglinton (Available as of November 16, 2001, 2<sup>nd</sup> screen available as of May 3, 2002)
- SilverCity Richmond Hill (Available as of November 16, 2001)

#### ***Q: Why have you chosen these theatres?***

Each theatre has a significant deaf or hard of hearing and blind or visually impaired community in the area. As well, we wanted to expand this program across the country so as many people as possible will benefit from the use of these systems.

#### ***Q: How many units will you have per theatre?***

Each equipped screen will have 20 headsets for the DVS<sup>®</sup> and 20 reflectors for the Rear Window<sup>®</sup> Captioning.

#### ***Q: How will your Guests know if a particular movie is equipped with these systems?***

Guests may visit our website ([www.famousplayers.com](http://www.famousplayers.com)), check their local listings, or call the advertised theatre's hot line. Look for the "RW<sup>®</sup>C/ DVS<sup>®</sup>" symbol on the website and in listings. Captioned / described movie listings are updated every Friday.

As generally only one auditorium is currently equipped for these services in selected theatres, it is highly recommended Guests double check to be certain the movie they wish to see is captioned or described.

#### ***Q: Will you reserve seats in the auditorium for Guests who require these services?***

No. Like all our theatres, tickets are sold on a general admission basis. Again, it is highly recommended a Guest requiring Captioning or Descriptive services contact a theatre before hand to check availability.

#### ***Q: Are all movies now captioned and described?***

Currently, there are a limited number of films that are captioned and/or described, but this number is growing, with most studios embracing the technology. As not all movies are captioned or described, it is always recommended one check the Famous Players' website ([www.famousplayers.com](http://www.famousplayers.com)), local listings or call the theatre hot line.

#### ***Q: How do deaf or hard of hearing Guests contact your theatres?***

A Guest may call the Guest Services department at 1-888-3-FAMOUS, Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Famous Players also has a TTY line installed: 416-934-7917.

Bell Canada operates a "teletypewriter" line, which allows for communication between people who are deaf or mute, and people who are not. This line (1-800-855-0511) is operator-assisted 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Our Guest Services Department has been trained to communicate with Bell's relay service.