



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

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

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Issue 60 March 2008

Mountain Ear

President's Message "Mishap in Manhattan"



New York City is a fantastic city to visit. In mid January, my husband Doug and I flew to NYC so that he could attend a conference. For three of the five days I was on my own to explore museums, walk through Central Park, shop and take in a tour of Ellis Island. I think that the next time I go, I will need 30 days instead of 3!

You may recall in my September 2007 message I encouraged you to travel and enjoy the sights on your trips. Your hearing disability need not hold you back. I suggested that you take advantage of all the resources available to you, including reading ahead of the trip, using an assistive listening device (ALD) and being assertive in asking for guides to repeat themselves.

After one of my tours in NYC, I have another pointer to make: be prepared to inform the professionals on your specific needs. Do not assume they are all trained in accessibility. Let me explain by telling you what happened on one of my tours in the Big Apple.

Before getting on to the tour bus to visit Ellis Island, I asked the tour guide if she could wear my ALD because I cannot hear without it. She agreed but showed an obvious dislike to the microphone I held out. She said she would wear it after the bus trip and

when the "real" tour began (i.e., on the Island, I assumed).

I sat near the middle of the bus; there were no seats near the front. The tour guide talked all along the way, but I had no idea what she was saying. She did a lot of talking and pointing at sights along the way. Oh well, it wasn't about Ellis Island. I supposed I could just look out the window.

After going through a lengthy security check at the dock, hundreds of people filled the boat for the trip to the island. Because seats were taken very quickly, I took the first seat that I could find, on the lower deck. Again I enjoyed looking out the window.

The boat stopped at a dock and I joined the people leaving the boat. We walked along and I read a sign: "Welcome to Liberty Island". I thought, "Maybe we are going to this island first before we go to Ellis Island". But after a few minutes of walking, I realized the people were not part of the tour group. I had to run as fast as I could back to the boat before it shoved off with my tour group inside.

Back on the boat and after catching my breath, I saw that there was now more room to find a better seat. I went to the upper deck and there was my group, with the tour guide giving her lecture! Quickly I found a seat, but it was not close to the guide. I did not want to interrupt her talk to give her my ALD.

I looked out the window.

When we arrived at Ellis Island, the guide said we could all wander around in the building on our own,

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and gave us the time we had to be back on the boat. By then I realized that I had missed the speaking part of the tour. When she saw me, she told me I should have given the ALD when we got on the boat. I apologized and said I did not know we were to go to the upper deck for the tour.

What can we learn from this story? First, it was not because I was shy in asking for help; I have had wonderful success with previous guides who cheerfully take my listening device for the prospective tour. No, I believe that in this situation, I should have detected that this tour guide needed some enlightenment on hearing accessibility, and I should have provided that information. Even though she was a professional guide, I should not have assumed that she was trained in hearing accessibility.

Second, sometimes those of us with a disability will miss out on some aspect of a tour or event and it cannot be helped. People with visual impairments may not see the sights as well as we do. People with mobility impairments may not be able to access an ancient site (with too steep steps). And we may not hear everything. Cheerfully accepting this fact enables us to enjoy our other abilities to the full.

We certainly can enjoy looking out the window.

Til next time,

Flo



**A Global Community of Communication
Sheraton Wall Centre
Vancouver, B.C.
Wednesday July 2nd to
Sunday July 6th 2008**

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association and the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People invite you to attend the first International Congress for Persons with hearing loss to be held at the Sheraton Wall Centre in downtown Vancouver.

Programs will be of interest to all persons with hearing loss, and for those who live, work and are part of the lives of persons with hearing loss. This Congress is a must to attend if hearing loss has touched your life. Please visit the website at: www.chha-ifhohcongress2008.com.

February Meeting

The February meeting of the North Shore Branch was held on February 18th at the Summerhill in North Vancouver. About 40 people attended to hear our guest speaker, Kenneth Jones of White Rock speaking on the topic of Tinnitus. Ken, who himself has tinnitus, is president of the B.C. Tinnitus Association and is a director of the Tinnitus Association of Canada. He also facilitates the Greater Vancouver Tinnitus Self Help Group that meets on the first Wednesday of each month, except January, July and August, at the All Saints Anglican Church, 12th Avenue and Hemlock Street in Vancouver from 7:30 PM to 9:15 PM. Ken, who uses what he has learned about tinnitus to help others experiencing the same condition, was a former Liberal MLA for Surrey-Cloverdale and also a former City Councillor in White Rock and Port Hardy.

The following editorial is reprinted here with the kind permission of the Peace Arch News. This article featured Ken Jones and his pursuits in raising awareness about tinnitus and appeared in the February 15th edition.

Making His Cause Heard

Hannah Sutherland, Staff Reporter



Ken Jones still remembers the exact day it happened.

On Nov. 8 1984, after stopping at a red light on King George Highway and 152 Street, he was rear-ended in his Toyota Tercel. Jones rotated over the top of his headrest and was whiplashed.

For the first couple of days, the only injury he suffered was the pain in his neck. Shortly after, the noises started.

Tinnitus is hearing sound in the ears or head when no external source is present. It is the result of damages to the cochlea of the inner ear, most often developed from a whiplash injury or exposure to loud noise.

People with the condition often hear a constant ringing in their ears, but noises have also been described as a popping, gurgling, screeching or swooshing

sound. According to the Tinnitus Association of Canada, 50 different sounds have been reported.

For Jones, former White Rock councillor and former Surrey-Cloverdale MLA, the sound he began hearing shortly after the car accident was a constant sssshhhhh noise.

When he first began hearing it, Jones patiently waited for it to go away, unsure of what it was. But the sound persisted, interrupting his sleep, concentration, memory and ability to properly carry a conversation.

His doctor referred him to an ear, nose and throat specialist, who diagnosed him with tinnitus. The specialist told Jones that he would have the condition for the rest of his life and there was nothing he could do about it.

“It’s a message of no hope,” Jones, now 68, says. “It leaves people just destroyed.”

He thinks the lack of support or options given to people when diagnosed with tinnitus leads to feelings of frustration and depression, which Jones often experienced.

“I didn’t really know where to turn,” he said. “How do you deal with loss of hearing for the rest of your life?”

The frequency of Jones’ tinnitus oscillates between 9,000 and 11,000 hertz, whereas the frequency of a normal conversation over the phone is between 300 and 4,000 hertz.

The noise follows him everywhere and there is no turning it off. When he listens to music loudly, the frequency of the tinnitus also increases, constantly competing with surrounding sounds.

But after two years of living with the condition, Jones discovered there was help available.

In 1986, he began participating in a tinnitus support group which met once a month in Vancouver. As he gained further knowledge about the condition, he felt more confident about dealing with it.

He helped the support group, the only service of its

kind in B.C., take the next step and become a registered society. They made a set of bylaws, a constitution and registered as a non-profit in 1991.

“It was because we felt there was a need to better publicize the need for help for people with tinnitus,” he said.

Jones’ involvement with the organization lessened as he delved further into the realm of politics, and in 1994 the society was de-registered due to a lack of upkeep.

Two years later, Jones began facilitating the support group full-time, leading people through discussion sessions and offering information.

To this day, he continues to lead the organization as acting president.

“We’re there to back up the self help group and do whatever I can... to get the message out for people with tinnitus,” he said. “One of my future targets is to get the organization re-registered and get charitable status.”

With more support, he would also like to set up a support group closer to his home.

“I know from many people that there’s a real need for a self help group in the South of Fraser.”

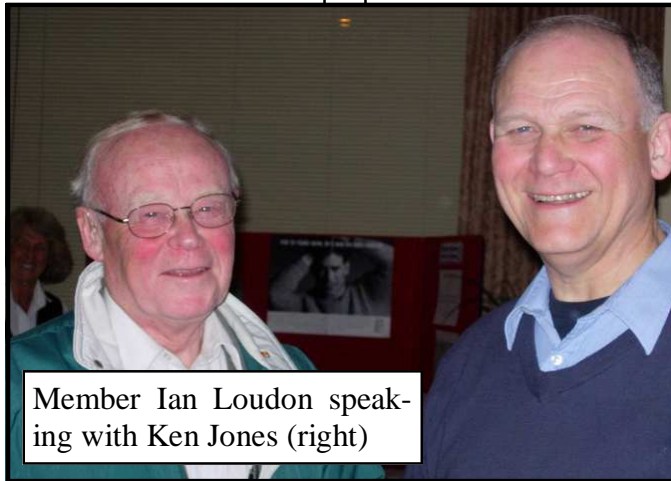
Jones added that the group extends its services to caregivers of people with tinnitus, as they are also affected by the condition and are not often recognized for the help they provide.

“It can be difficult for the caretaker, too,” he said. “I think it’s important that there’s something there for people to turn to.”

On the first Wednesday of each month, Jones drives out to Vancouver for the drop-in sessions. Sometimes he sits for hours on his own and no one shows up, while other days there can be up to seven people.

He does it because he feels he was meant to help people with tinnitus. In fact, Jones believes it’s the reason he acquired the condition.

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Member Ian Loudon speaking with Ken Jones (right)

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“I have a belief that helps me in this – I don’t get anxiety or anxious because you can’t do anything about the past. And I believe there is a plan for me by God or a higher being... that I don’t have to worry about the future,” he said. “(Everything) will work out the way God has planned for.”

Jones has also been taking tinnitus retraining therapy for the last 10 years, which teaches patients to ignore the noise or associate it with a pleasant sound instead.

However, because it is based around not thinking about the tinnitus, Jones’ time spent talking about the condition to raise awareness is counterproductive to the therapy.

“Therapy has been a long process,” he said, adding the tinnitus is still noticeable.

But by having the condition, he has been able to gain knowledge on it and help others. He continues to do it every day, with a smile on his face and a positive outlook on life.

“Just live for today,” he said. “And if you believe that there’s a plan for you in the future, then you don’t have to worry about the future.”

The tinnitus support group meets the first Wednesday of each month, except January, July and August. at 7:30 p.m. Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. at All Saints Anglican Church (third floor) at 12 Avenue and Hemlock Street in Vancouver.

For more information, call 604-535-2204 or e-mail kenjjones@gmail.com

Assistive Listening Devices to the Rescue!

A Primer to Help You Get Started

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Hard of hearing people often lament, “Hearing aids don’t work well for me, particularly in noisy places such as while driving in the car or talking in noisy restaurants.” They then ask, “What can I do in order to better hear my spouse and friends under such conditions? Being unable to communicate freely is putting a strain on my marriage and my friendships.”

Unfortunately, when most people lose some of their

hearing, they are told to get hearing aids, as though hearing aids were the whole answer to hearing loss. The result is they become disillusioned with their hearing aids.

You see, hearing aids are not perfect, and in some listening situations such as in noisy places, or when you are at some distance from the speaker, they can be almost useless!

That’s where Assistive Listening Devices come in. They can largely overcome these two main limitations of hearing aids (noise and distance), and thus help you hear awesomely better.

Picture this. You have your hearing aids on and are sitting in your living room trying to listen to your favorite TV show. Only one problem. Your young grandkids are playing and shrieking right at your feet. Your hearing aids are picking up and amplifying all their racket. Your frustration mounts as you miss most of your program. Your hearing aids are just not helping you in this situation.

Now picture this same scenario. The grandkids are making just as much noise by your feet as before—but you sit there oblivious to their shrieks as you enjoy your favorite TV program—hearing it clearly without any interference. The difference is like night and day. **That** is what Assistive Listening Devices coupled with your hearing aids can do for you. Sounds incredible, doesn’t it?—but once you’ve tried it, you’ll know it’s true!

Generally you can use assistive devices with, or without, your hearing aids—but teamed up with your hearing aids, they can make an awesome combination.

Benefits of ALDs

There are two major benefits of Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs).

First, ALDs can bring distant sounds close to your ears. When you use ALDs properly, it sounds as if a person is talking directly into both of your ears at the same time, and not from a distance. As a result, their speech sounds much clearer—you understand more than you would with hearing aids alone. This is because with ALDs you now hear more of the high-frequency sounds that give speech much of its intelligence. Since these sounds are lost in the air with increasing distance, your hearing aids don’t pick them up as the distance increases. However, properly-used assistive devices do. This makes an enormous differ-

ence to your understanding people talking.

Second, ALDs, when properly used, cut out most background noise since the microphone is much closer to the speaker's mouth than it is to the surrounding background noise. For example, if you are in a meeting and the people around you are coughing, talking, clinking dishes or rustling papers, your hearing aids will pick this up, and you will have trouble understanding the speaker though all this extraneous noise. With ALDs, you will **only** hear the sounds going into the speaker's microphone, not the disturbing noise around you.

Basic Kinds of Assistive Listening Devices

Assistive Listening Devices use various technologies to get the sound from the speaker's mouth to your ears. However, no technology gives significantly better sound than the other—they all do the same thing—deliver beautiful, clear sound directly to your ears.

Therefore, choose a technology based on your needs, what you can afford, what is available to you, and what works best in the particular listening situation you are in, and not on the quality of the sound since it is pretty much the same.

Here are the five technologies in current use today.

- Personal amplifiers
- FM systems
- Infra-red systems
- Induction Loop systems
- Bluetooth systems

Here's a brief look at each of these in turn so you can see why you might choose one over the other in any given situation.

1. Personal Amplifiers

Typically you would use a Personal Amplifier such as the [PockeTalker](#) when you are close to the speaker and are not moving around. For example, listening to your spouse or friend when riding in a car, or conversing in a noisy restaurant. You clip a lapel microphone to the person to whom you are conversing, plug it into your personal amplifier, plug in a [neck-loop](#) (or [Music Links](#)) and listen to your partner via the t-coils in your hearing aids. This cuts out most of the background noise.

The downside of such an arrangement is that you are wired together and thus are not free to move around.

However, in situations where you are both sitting down that is not a problem. You can also use these devices to listen to your TV by attaching the microphone of the device near the TV's speaker and running the microphone cord across the room to your PockeTalker. You can do the same if the person you are talking to is sitting on the other side of the room. This is typically the cheapest way to go. Cost is around \$200.00 with the [lapel microphone](#).

Read our article "[Hear In Noise? You Bet You Can! Here's How](#)" to learn more of the benefits of using a personal amplifier such as the PockeTalker.

2. FM Systems

FM systems use **radio waves** to transmit the sound from the speaker's mouth to your ears. Because there are no wires connecting you to the speaker, you are free to move around, or sit at some distance from the speaker. For example, you can typically be up to 150 feet away from the speaker and still hear just as well as if the person was talking directly into your ears. Of course, this requires the person speaking to cooperate and wear your FM microphone/transmitter.

You can use FM systems even if you have to go into an adjacent room, or if you are outside walking, or riding your bicycle with a friend. You will hear your friend's voice beautifully clear in your ears. One drawback of FM systems is that they tend to be quite expensive—in the neighborhood of [\\$600.00](#) and up, although some are much cheaper and come in around [\\$200.00](#).

3. Infrared Systems

Infrared systems are similar to FM systems, except they use **light waves** instead of radio waves to transmit the sound. Typically, infrared receivers are used in meeting halls/theaters and for watching TV.

However, infrared systems are not as versatile as FM systems because of two things. First, you cannot use them outside, or in a room with a lot of sunlight streaming in—as the infrared component of the sun's rays causes horrible interference. So do many flat-screen TVs. Second, light waves travel in straight lines. Thus your infrared receiver always has to be line-of-sight to the speaker's infrared transmitter (called an emitter). Therefore, if you turn away from the TV, or go to the kitchen, you won't hear anything until you return and face the TV again (line of sight remember). Anything or anybody coming between you and the emitter blocks the signal. I find these problems severely limit their usefulness.

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4. Induction Loop Systems

Induction loops are the most mysterious of the ALDs because they use a varying **magnetic field** to transmit the sound from the speaker to your ears. Yet these are often the cheapest and most versatile systems available.

To use induction loops, you first need to have t-coils in your hearing aids. Induction loops “connect” to your hearing aids via the t-coils. There is no physical connection.

There are two “kinds” of induction loops. One is a [neckloop](#) (which you wear around your neck as the name implies) and plug it into whatever device you are listening to—whether a personal amplifier such as a [PockeTalker](#), or an [FM](#) or infrared receiver, or directly into a radio or MP3 player or iPod. (A variation of the neckloop are tiny devices that sit on your ears, such as [Music Links](#) and silhouettes, rather than hang around your neck.)

The other “kind” of induction loop is a room loop. The typical application for room loops is for meetings, and for listening to the TV. If you install a room loop in your house, you can freely move around anywhere inside the loop and still hear the TV as well as you can sitting right in front of it. I have wired half my house so I can move around anywhere in the living room, dining area and kitchen, or go downstairs, and still hear my TV as clearly as if I were right in front of it. Room loops are relatively inexpensive—under [\\$200.00](#).

To learn more about loop systems and how they can help you, read our article, "[Loop Systems—The Best-Kept Secret in Town!](#)"

5. Bluetooth Systems

The new kid on the block are systems that use Bluetooth technology. Think of Bluetooth as tiny walkie-talkies that allow two devices to automatically “talk” to each other. The range of Bluetooth is quite limited (a maximum of 30 feet, but 20 feet is a more reliable figure). With a Bluetooth cell phone and a Bluetooth device connected to your hearing aids (either directly attached, or via a [Bluetooth neckloop](#)) you can hear and talk on your cell phone even while it is in your purse or pocket. You can use Bluetooth technology to listen to any device that has Bluetooth such as some computers, MP3 players, iPods, cell phones, PDAs (personal digital assistants, etc.)

Phone Systems

While not a separate technology, I’ve made a separate class for telephones because so many people have problems hearing on them. With phones, you can use several of the above technologies to help you hear better. For example, you can use your t-coils to “couple” with your phone’s receiver. You can get [special amplified phones](#) that give you much more volume if that is your problem, or you can use a personal amplifier to boost your phone’s volume. Some special phones have jacks in them so you can plug in a [neckloop](#) or direct audio input (DAI) patch cord. As well, many cell phones have Bluetooth built in.

Connecting Your Hearing Aids to Assistive Listening Devices

ALDs can work with, or without, hearing aids. For most people the question is, “How do I make these wonderful Assistive Listening Devices work with my hearing aids?” Good question. There are four basic methods.

1. T-coils: (Sometimes called telecoils or audiocoils) The most common method of “connecting” ALDs to your hearing aids is via the t-coils built into your hearing aids. Then you plug a personal loop such as a neckloop, Music Link or silhouette into the device you want to listen to. (Note: if you don’t already have t-coils in your hearing aids, ask your audiologist if they can be retrofitted. They are that useful!) To learn more about t-coils and how useful they are, read our article called "[Using T-Coils to Couple Your Hearing Aids to Various Audio Devices](#)".

2. Direct Audio Input (DAI): Some hearing aids and cochlear implants have a tiny jack on the hearing aid itself so you can plug in a “patch cord” and plug the other end directly into the device to which you want to listen—e. g. a radio, iPod, MP3 player, computer or various FM receivers and personal amplifiers. Unfortunately, few hearing aids have DAI jacks.

3. FM receivers: A few hearing aids have special “boots” so you can attach a tiny FM receiver to them and listen to a person via the corresponding FM microphone they wear, but these are expensive and limit you to certain brands of hearing aids.

4. Bluetooth: Similar to the tiny FM receivers (above), but using Bluetooth. Allows you to listen to Bluetooth enabled devices as mentioned previously.

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The latest in hearing aid technology is using a remote control (sometimes called a “streamer”) that allows the above technologies to easily connect to your hearing aids. The remote control contains a DAI jack to directly connect to audio devices and a Bluetooth receiver to connect with any Bluetooth devices you may want to listen to. You simply wear the “streamer” around your neck and it wirelessly “talks” to your hearing aids via its own proprietary technology

Assistive Listening Devices have been one of the best kept secrets in town—but no longer. Now that you know how useful they can be, avail yourself of their benefits. When used with your hearing aids in difficult listening situations, the two make an awesome combination!

Neil Bauman, Ph.D. (Dr. Neil) is a hearing loss coping skills specialist, researcher, author and speaker on issues pertaining to hearing loss. No stranger to hearing loss himself, he has lived with a life-long severe hereditary hearing loss. He became an excellent speechreader at an early age and practices numerous ways to successfully cope with being hard-of-hearing in a hearing world. You can visit his website at: www.hearinglosshelp.com where you will find a multitude of other articles on all aspects of hearing loss and ways to cope.

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

CHHA BC Booth at the 15th Annual Wellness Show

Once again this year, the North Shore Branch organized and helped to staff the CHHA BC booth at the 15th Annual Wellness Show at the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre on February 1st through 3rd.

The Wellness Show, the largest in Western Canada, features about 300 exhibitors covering a multitude of services and products in the Wellness Industry.

I am sure that all those volunteering at the CHHA BC booth would agree that our participation helps to promote hearing awareness and enables us to reach out and provide information on hearing loss and other related issues.

In addition to the CHHA BC, CHHA National, and local branch brochures we had information from the Vancouver Tinnitus & Hyperacusis Hearing and Speech Clinic (SoundidEARS), the BC Balance and Dizziness Disorders Society (BAD), and the Right to Quiet Society. We also handed out many copies of the CHHA Listen magazine and other brochures on protecting your hearing, hearing aids, assistive listening devices and cochlear implants.

Many of the enquirers at the booth were asking about hearing loss for themselves, but a large number asked on behalf of family members or friends with hearing loss.

We would like to thank all of the willing volunteers who took time on their weekend to come down and spend a few hours at the booth. I am sure they would all agree with me that they not only dispensed a lot of information, but learned a great deal in the process, as well. Thank You.

April Meeting

**The next meeting of the North Shore Branch is
on April 21st, 7:00 PM at the Summerhill at
135 West 15th Street, North Vancouver.**

Special Branch Presentation

Hearing Loss Workshop

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.

TINNITUS CONTACTS

(The list below was updated on January 11, 2008)

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