

# Hearing MAGAZINE Loss

May/June 2009

## Internet Man, Renaissance Woman

*An Interview with Vinton and Sigrid Cerf*

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# Hearing MAGAZINE Loss

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May/June 2009



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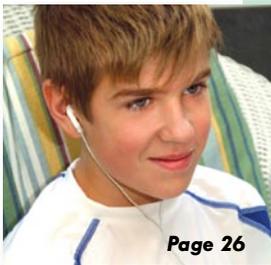
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Hearing Loss Magazine (ISSN 1090-6215) is published bimonthly by the Hearing Loss Association of America, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200, Bethesda, Maryland 20814. Annual Membership Dues are: USA—Individual \$35, Family \$45, Professional \$60, Student \$20, Libraries & Nonprofit Organization \$50, Corporate \$300. Canadian and overseas memberships are also available. Members receive a complimentary copy of *Hearing Loss Magazine*. Single copies of *Hearing Loss Magazine* are available to non-members for a \$5.25 shipping and handling charge.

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Postmaster: Send address changes to *Hearing Loss Magazine*, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200, Bethesda, MD 20814.

COVER: Vinton and Sigrid Cerf. Photograph by Cindy Dyer.



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301/657-2248 Voice  
301/657-2249 TTY  
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Graphic design by Cindy Dyer/Dyer Design  
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## From the Executive Director's Desk

*HLAA strongly believes that hearing aids are not discretionary items but are medical necessities that are a key part of rehabilitating a loss of hearing.*

## Knowing the Gold Standard of Care

Recently I heard the statement “hearing aids are just electronic devices.” Well yes they are electronic devices but not “just” as in merely. Being fit with appropriate hearing aids is the first step in adjusting to hearing loss and an important component of rehabilitation for a lost sense. As long as hearing aids do not give 20/20 hearing, the device will have to be coupled with advice and counseling informed by a thorough evaluation of functioning and lifestyle by a qualified hearing health professional. Walking out of the hearing healthcare professional’s office with an instruction booklet is not going to cut it.

If they are electronic devices then they become discretionary items. HLAA strongly believes that hearing aids are not discretionary items but rather are medical necessities that are a key part of rehabilitating a loss of hearing.

In my former life as a physical therapist I treated patients with amputated limbs and there are parallels that I see. The prosthesis was a key to rehabilitating someone’s ability to walk but it had to be coupled with so much more—mechanics, troubleshooting, muscle strengthening, balance and gait training, skin care, adaptation to the new leg, navigating the world of uneven surfaces and getting back to favorite pastimes and sports, not to mention the psychosocial adaptation to losing the limb, the stigma effect and the family dynamics. I see many similarities between learning to use and accept a prosthetic limb and learning to use and accept a hearing aid.

As a consumer organization we must take responsibility to ensure that people with hearing loss know what to expect when they are evaluated and fit with hearing aids. They should know what the “gold standard” of care is, how to recognize it and whether or not that standard is being met.

Toward that end we have developed a checklist for consumers to take with them to their hearing healthcare appointment—a crib sheet to know what to look for and keep track of with simple checks—yes or no. Go to page 23, tear it out, or copy it for future use. It is also available on our website at [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org).

And be sure to follow the instructions to send us copies so that we can keep track of how well you are being served. ■■■

*Brenda Battat is executive director of Hearing Loss Association of America and wears both a hearing aid and a cochlear implant. She lives in Bethesda, MD, with her husband Joe. She can be reached at [battat@hearingloss.org](mailto:battat@hearingloss.org).*



### Step Up for People with Hearing Loss

Go to [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org) to find a Walk4Hearing™ location near you. There are plenty of opportunities to walk, form teams (family, friends or company teams), raise money for your organization as an Alliance Group, or help out on walk day. Be part of the excitement and raise awareness and money for hearing loss programs and to eradicate the stigma of hearing loss.

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By Michael Stone



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## President's Message

**D**uring the February 2009 Board of Trustees meeting in Bethesda, sharp focus was placed on the organization's financial condition. This is understandable given the current economic crisis. The HLAA staff will do as they have always done: keep expenses lean, focus on creating awareness about hearing loss as a major public health issue and reduce its stigma, and continue to fundraise to support programs.

The Board of Trustees also approved HLAA's current charge which defines the most critical issues facing the organization and outlines the strategy to achieve the goals. Among the important objectives are the following:

- Assist people with hearing loss who seek to improve their ability to communicate.
- Advocate to make all levels of society more communication accessible to people with hearing loss.
- Maintain HLAA as the premier consumer organization for the hearing loss community.
- Expand our network and seek to build state organizations in all 50 states.
- Partner with other hearing loss organizations to achieve common goals.

These objectives are not necessarily new but a systematic coordinated approach to achieving them had been lacking in the past. The codification of our shared goals and objectives along with a detailed implementation strategy provides HLAA with a bright line to follow. It will take time to achieve, no doubt, but the organization has a defined charge.

The Board also held discussions on how to attract qualified individuals to serve on the Board of Trustees. The current process is a bit cumbersome and therefore we are looking at ways of amending the bylaws to improve the nominating process. More information about the Board can be found on [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org).

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# DTV Digital Television Transition

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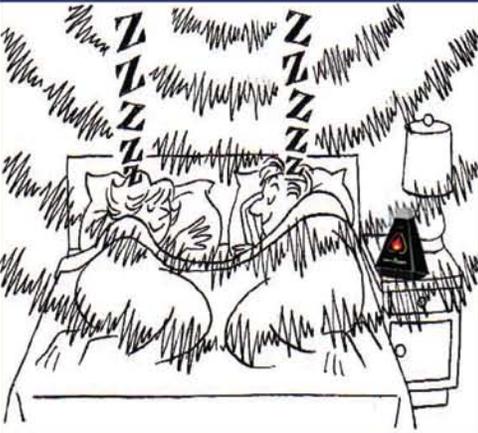
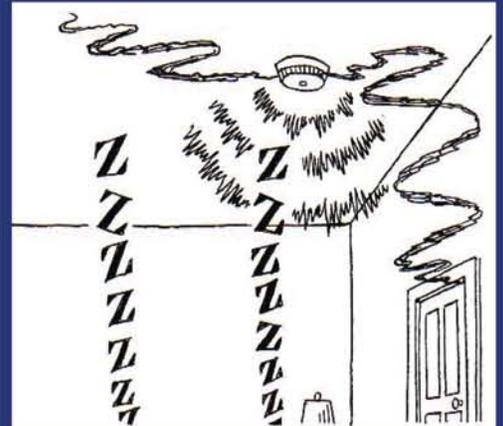
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By Barbara Liss Chertok



**At HCAA's 30th Birthday Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, this June, Vinton Cerf, vice president and chief Internet evangelist for Google, will deliver the keynote address at the opening session.**

**In a pre-convention statement, Dr. Cerf said: "I will talk about technology and hearing assistance including the role of mobile, Internet-enabled devices. The Internet is becoming a pervasive infrastructure and it can be put to good use assisting people with hearing loss to function in the hearing world more effectively."**

**V**inton "Vint" G. Cerf, Ph.D., 66, was born in New Haven, Connecticut, and grew up in Los Angeles. A six-week premature delivery caused his long term sensorineural hearing loss. He holds a bachelor of science degree in mathematics from Stanford University and master of science and Ph.D. degrees from UCLA.

Widely known as one of the "Fathers of the Internet," his contributions have been recognized repeatedly with honorary degrees and awards that include the National Medal of Technology, the Turing Award and the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Dr. Cerf is the co-designer with Robert E. Kahn of the TCP/IP protocols and the basic architecture of the Internet. They met at UCLA in the 1970s.

In the 1980s, as vice president of MCI Digital Information Service, Dr. Cerf led the engineering of MCI Mail, the first commercial e-mail service to be connected to the Internet.

In 1997, they were presented with the National Medal of Technology by President Bill Clinton, "for creating and sustaining development of Internet Protocols and continuing to provide leadership in the emerging industry of Internetworking."

In 2005, they were awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor bestowed in the U.S., by President George W. Bush for their contributions to the creation of the Internet and were inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2006.

Dr. Cerf is working on the Interplanetary Internet together with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. It will be a new standard to communicate from planet to planet, using radio/laser communications that are highly tolerant to signal degradation.

He currently serves on the board of advisors of Scientists and Engineers for America, an organization focused on promoting sound science in American government.

Dr. Cerf is writing several books at once, with only one about the Internet. "I hesitate to say the definitive history, but I will try very hard to characterize the first ten years of it." Cerf adds he may extend the project to cover the first twenty years, before the Internet started to become mainstream in the 1990s.

Dr. Cerf has worked for Google in Herndon, Virginia, since 2005. He has become well known for his predictions on how technology will affect future society, encompassing such areas as artificial intelligence, environmentalism, the advent of Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6) and the transformation of the television industry and its delivery model.

**Sigrid T. Cerf**, 66, was born in Kansas and heard naturally until the age of three when spinal meningitis plunged her into a silent world. She grew up outside the deaf community speaking English and reading lips. The powerful body hearing aid she wore provided her with little hearing, yet she was mainstreamed in public schools, and went on to earn a bachelor of arts degree in art and architectural illustrating from Kansas State University.

As a person who had some memory of sound, Sigrid was considered a

prime candidate for a cochlear implant. Fifty years later, the miracle of a cochlear implant propelled her back into the world of sound, followed by a second implant in the other ear ten years later.

Upon receiving her first implant, Sigrid said: "It was nothing but fun. After being deaf for 50 years, it was the easiest adjustment I've ever had to make." Sigrid has listened to over 500! audio books on a Walkman which has resulted in her ability to function more efficiently as a hearing person in the mainstream. In spite of her early childhood history of profound deafness so soon after acquiring language, Sigrid possesses remarkable listening, verbal and speech skills.

*Dr. Cerf is the co-designer with Robert E. Kahn of the TCP/IP protocols and the basic architecture of the Internet. They met at UCLA in the 1970s. In 2005, they received the highest civilian honor bestowed in the U.S., the Presidential Medal of Freedom.*

The roughly 4,000 American children born deaf each year are also good candidates for cochlear implants if they are caught early in development, when their brains are still malleable enough to learn how to convert sound into meaningful language.

"The window of opportunity is wide open at the beginning of life," Dr. John A. Niparko, Sigrid's surgeon, says, "but generally closed for good by age 12 or 14." Within a few years, Niparko hopes to see the advent of implants that need no external computer or wiring. In the end, he pre-



*In Sigrid's words: Illustrator Sigrid and computer geek Vint, working from home in the late 60s*

dicts, cochlear implants will diminish the need for sign language and special schools.

The Cerfs live in Virginia and have two sons. A son in San Francisco works for Apple and the other lives in Hollywood and is a cameraman. The Cerfs are active with charitable, educational, and professional organizations.

### **Interview with Vinton G. Cerf**

**Barbara Chertok: Your title at Google is Vice President and Chief Internet Evangelist. Why 'evangelist'?**

**Vint Cerf:** For many years, I have been an advocate of the widespread implementation and use of the Internet. Only about 1.5 billion people are online so there are five billion to go. Of course, having more people on the Internet is also good for Google, so that's part of the rationale for the unusual title.

**Google is so widely recognized, its name has become a verb. Why?**

**Vint Cerf:** The Niagara of information that has flowed onto the World Wide Web since Tim Berners-Lee

*continued on page 12*

# Internet Man, Renaissance Woman

## *An Interview with Vinton and Sigrid Cerf*

## The Cerfs *continued from page 11*

implemented it in 1989 has been astonishing. People really want to share their information with the world. But there is so much information that it is hard to find what you are looking for on the Net.

So companies like AltaVista, Yahoo!, Google and others have arisen to help Internauts find the information they are looking for. Google's search engine seems to be particularly able to provide relevant pointers to useful information and has become one of the most popular of the search services.

### **The Internet started to become mainstream in the 1990s. How would you characterize it today?**

**Vint Cerf:** It is a vibrant and growing part of the online lives of over 1.5 billion people around the world. Amazingly, there are nearly 800 million users in Asia. China has more users than North America (about 250 million). Europe has nearly 400 million users. It is also a reflection of the interests of the general public, but that also includes criminal and disruptive elements so we find cybercrime in the middle of this otherwise constructive medium.

*Because so much of the communication on the Internet is in written form, by preference, people with hearing loss are often placed on completely equal status with those of normal hearing.*

Privacy and security are two very precious commodities that are under attack in this online world. As a consequence, legislators and law enforcement officials feel pressure to take action to protect societies' members from harm. Technologists look for ways to improve the properties of the Internet while preserving its openness as much as possible. This attribute has led to the flowering of an endless cornucopia of applications and ideas. The Internet is one of the most democratic instruments of expression in history. Balancing open access and open opportunity to offer information while preserving safety and security will be the major challenge for this next decade.



*Sigrid and Vint mingle with a guest at the First Amendment Awards dinner of the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation.*

### **As co-founder of the Internet, what about your invention gives you the most satisfaction?**

**Vint Cerf:** It is most satisfying to see the widespread adoption and use of the technology in a global collaboration of such magnitude. The open platform has invited an endless array of new products and services and there seems to be no end in sight. It is rare to see an infrastructure that invites the kind of information sharing that the WWW application has triggered. For many people, it has also become a great leveler. Because so much of the communication on the Internet is in written form, by preference, people with hearing loss are often placed on completely equal status with those of normal hearing.

### **You are widely known as one of the 'Fathers of the Internet.' With whom did you collaborate?**

**Vint Cerf:** Bob Kahn started the Internetting program at the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency in late 1972 and then asked me to join him in the exploration of the idea of standardizing ways to interconnect computer networks. We began this work together in the spring of 1973 and within about six months we had a basic design which we briefed to

colleagues in the International Network Working Group at a meeting at the University of Sussex in England.

We then wrote a formal paper that was published in May, 1974. Bob and I worked, among many others, on the ARPANET which was the first large-area demonstration of packet switching technology. There is a score of people who were instrumental in that experiment and, indeed, were it not for its success, Bob and I would not have met and subsequently worked on the Internet idea.

### **As the saying goes: 'Necessity is the mother of invention.' Was your hearing loss a motivating factor in co-founding the Internet?**

**Vint Cerf:** At the time there were networks of computers but they were proprietary. IBM has its Systems Network Architecture; Digital Equipment Corporation had DECNET; Hewlett-Packard had its Distributed System. These proprietary networks did not interwork. Bob and I thought that the U.S. Defense Department should have a non-proprietary and standard way to interconnect any collection of packet-switched networks so we concluded to design the Internet in such a way that its architecture could be globally standardized and implemented by anyone

interested in computer networking. It was intended to be a highly collaborative system and fully distributed so that there would be no central points of failure. Plainly, we succeeded in this endeavor, but luck, timing and the willingness of many colleagues to contribute to the work played important roles.

**In 2005 you were awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom—the highest award a civilian can receive in the United States—and a year later, inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame. What was that like?**

**Vint Cerf:** It was utterly fascinating. The Hall of Fame makes a practice of inducting inventors living and dead. They were playing catch-up the evening that Bob Kahn and I were inducted so we got to see a long line of inventors and their inventions honored. What was most interesting about this part of the event is that these were often inventions we took for granted without remembering that they had not always been around and that someone had to invent them first. Things like zippers and paper clips, batteries and automobiles, and so on.

**Did you ever think the Internet would morph into such a powerful tool and impact so greatly upon the lives of people with and without hearing loss?**

**Vint Cerf:** Yes, this was a major hope of mine. Actually, electronic mail was something that had been 'invented' in the 1960s on time-sharing systems and networked electronic mail was the most popular application of the ARPANET and was invented by Ray Tomlinson in 1971. It was Ray who chose the '@' sign to separate mailbox identifiers from host names in the ARPANET and later in the Internet.

Ken Harrenstien, then a researcher at SRI International, developed something called DEAFNET in the mid-1970s in an attempt to link people with TTYs to the ARPANET and later to the Internet (which did not become widely available to the academic community until 1983 when the Internet was formally rolled out).

I had always considered that e-mail would be a major benefit to deaf users and was motivated to work towards its widespread availability. I worked

at MCI on the MCI Mail system, a commercial e-mail service, also hoping that this could become of widespread use by the community of users who were unable to use the telephone but could use computers or computer terminals for communication.

**During your undergraduate years at Stanford and your graduate years at UCLA, were you given any special accommodations for your hearing loss?**

**Vint Cerf:** No, in some sense I made my own services by helping to work on the ARPANET's protocols and to promote the use of e-mail. Were it not for the popularity of that application, I think I would have had a harder time contributing to the work. Of course, it is very important for your readers to appreciate that I was already by then a 15-year user of binaural hearing aids and was able to use the telephone normally. I was really hearing repaired so I did not need very much in the way of special accommodation, except for patience when I needed to ask people to repeat something.

**Your hearing loss was first noticed around age nine and you began wearing hearing aids at age 13. You later became valedictorian of your high school class. Were your hearing aids a big help then and are they still?**

**Vint Cerf:** They were then and they are now. I felt a real need for them when I realized that sitting in the front row to hear the teacher meant that I often didn't hear the question that the teacher was answering! I still rely very heavily on the help that I get from hearing aids and I am grateful for the utility of this technology.

**Did either of your parents live to witness any of your achievements, and from which parent did you inherit your inventive streak?**

**Vint Cerf:** My father passed away at age 53 just nine months before I completed my Ph.D., so he never really got to see the Internet or even much of its predecessors. My mother is still living at age 93 so she has lived through this entire period of Internet's evolution. My father was a studious and academically competitive person and my mother had

a wonderful sense of humor and a love of classical music. Our home was filled with books and I was encouraged to excel in school. I think I am a product mix of their DNA in the literal and figurative sense.

**You played the cello, and when you were 15, you were invited to attend a master class led by the famed Spanish cellist Pablo Casals. What was that like, and do you still play?**

**Vint Cerf:** I was stunned to hear Pablo Casals' playing at UC Berkeley around 1958. The rich and seemingly effortless way in which he made the instrument sing seemed ineffable and magic. I was by no means a prodigy but felt deeply privileged to participate in this event. Shortly thereafter, however, I was introduced the SAGE (Semi-Automated Ground Environment) computing system at the System Development Corporation in Santa Monica.

My father had a good friend who worked there on its software. I became mesmerized by the possibilities that computers offered and found myself torn between serious study of the cello and pursuit of computing. By 1960, my best friend, Steve Crocker, got permission for both of us to begin using the computers at UCLA while we were still in high school. I shamelessly abandoned the cello for the computer and, 50 years later, I really regret not having kept up with both.

**You have said: 'You can learn something from everyone.' What have you learned from your wife, your two sons?**

**Vint Cerf:** From Sigrid I have learned that the best form of leadership is to simply start doing it. Others will join in and follow your lead. She has done this so many times and with such great effect. The best example is her bread making project that started in 1979. Ultimately she baked about 50,000 loaves of bread in her little kitchen in our house and she sold these loaves and the profits were turned over to charity. She started this on her own, stimulated to do so by the starvation in Cambodia. This poignant effort was picked up in the local press and TV and soon she had many volunteers to take

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## The Cerfs *continued from page 13*

orders, prepare ingredients and deliver loaves.

David has taught me that anything worth knowing is worth knowing well. When he gets interested in something, he really wants to know how it works down to the finest detail and most basic aspect. He is a stunningly good teacher and patient beyond any reasonable expectation. He is a fascinating combination of my interest in technology and Sigrid's interest in art.

Bennett has inherited Sigrid's great heart. He brings enormous energy to any effort but has an ability to empathize with others that I consider a rare gift. He is a creative photographer and, like his brother, he has found ways to marry art and technology. I am deeply aware that both of our sons are products of our respective interests and strengths. Genetics works!

**An author, you are currently working on a total of five books, including a biography of Sigrid. What will you call it?**

**Vint Cerf:** It's going to be titled *I Heard That!* and will tell Sigrid's story of growing up deaf, lipreading her way through school and life, and at age 53, after 50 years of silence, getting her first cochlear implant. It was a life changing experience and a second

implant in the other ear, ten years later, simply added to the quality of life. Sigrid's story is as poignant and as encouraging as any story of overcoming adversity can be.

**You have said you are fascinated with cochlear implants and the computer-brain connection. Would you explain this for us?**

**Vint Cerf:** It's the best example I've seen of electroneural technology. We can take that same understanding and pursue optical implants. Further down the track, some 25 years away, I estimate implants will be used to route nerve signals around the damaged portions of the spine. There are at least two people that I know who have implants that allow them to get up and walk. They were paraplegics. It may sound far-fetched, but then again, years ago, so did the Internet.

**What are your thoughts about the Deaf culture controversy and cochlear implants?**

**Vint Cerf:** Like it or not the population of implantees is going to go up. Deaf parents who have lost their hearing as they grew up are increasingly keen to have their children implanted to ensure the quality of life they remembered from their own youth. It's critical for children to have the implants early, because they learn speech in the first three years of life.

**Back in 1988, you were a strong supporter of commercializing the Internet system, because you felt it wouldn't spread very far. What's your feeling today?**

**Vint Cerf:** Plainly, the commercialization of the Internet was an important step toward its widespread access to the general public. Despite all the continuing concerns for privacy and security, and the tensions introduced by competition (or lack of it in broadband carriage), I still believe that commercialization was the only viable path towards making the Internet something accessible to and affordable by the general public.

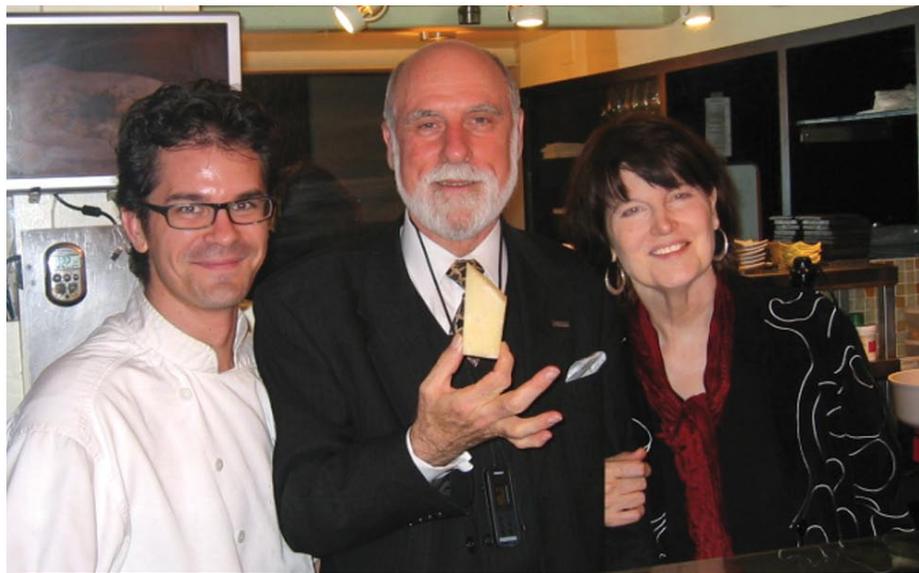
**The Internet was designed for openness and accessibility for everyone around the globe. As a result, we have viruses, pornography, spam and so on. How can we prevent these abuses?**

**Vint Cerf:** Well, you cannot absolutely prevent them but several steps can be taken to mitigate their impact. Using anti-virus software can help. Using e-mail services that filter for viruses and spam can help. Using cloud computing applications can also help because the software in the cloud (e.g., Google applications) can be maintained with more fidelity than each of us can maintain the software in our laptops and desktops (and now our mobiles and personal digital assistants).

We can also engage law enforcement to prosecute when we discover perpetrators of harm through the use of the Internet. That's going to take some work on the international front because the aggressor may be in one country's jurisdiction while the victim in another. Many of the abuses that occur on the Internet are already illegal and can be prosecuted under existing laws. Other abuses may be peculiar to the Internet (e.g., viruses and spam) and may need new laws to cover them.

**In a video, you discuss Net neutrality and how President Barack Obama is helping with it. Tell us more.**

**Vint Cerf:** The president is helping with policies that endorse open and non-discriminatory access to broadband residential Internet services. Net Neutrality



*The Cerfs at Cafe Atlantico (Minibar) with Chef Michael Turner (now at Jose Andres' new Bazaar in Los Angeles)*

is a buzzword for the concept that users should have non-discriminatory access to any service offered anywhere on the Internet. The broadband Internet access provider should not control which services users have access to, nor should they discriminate in favor of their own services in competition with others. Just because a broadband access provider provides the underlying carriage of Internet packets should not give the provider the authority to interfere with the higher level and possibly competitive services of others. Whether this principle needs to be codified in law remains a matter of debate but I think the principle is critical and I believe it to be an accepted position by the present administration.

**Your sense of humor is evident in a video where you are about to address a group and you pull open your suit jacket and you are seen wearing a T-shirt that says: "I P ON EVERYTHING!" How did that go over?**

**Vint Cerf:** I wore this T-shirt at an Internet Engineering Task Force meeting around 1992 and it was intended to reinforce my commitment to put the Internet Protocol on virtually any communication substrate. It went over so well that some guy came running up and stuck a \$5 bill in my waistband.

**You travel around the world as Google's chief Internet evangelist. What is the most fascinating place you have visited? Where haven't you been that you would like to go?**

**Vint Cerf:** Actually, I think the most interesting places have been the ones I visited on behalf of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) which I chaired for seven years. The two places that had the greatest impact on me were Ghana and Kiribati. Both places are challenged to get good access to the Internet and both benefit from it in many ways. Kiribati is a tiny coral reef that extends above sea level in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and struck me as vulnerable to rising sea levels and global warming as well as the economic crisis that grips us at present.

As to where I would like to go that I haven't, I think I would like very much

to make it to Nepal and to see Everest at least from not too far away. I'm no mountain climber but the majesty of the peaks of Nepal have long had a kind of Shangri-La attraction.

**You are working with the Jet Propulsion Laboratory on extending the Internet's reach into outer space. Does this mean Earthlings and Martians will soon be e-mailing with each other?**

**Vint Cerf:** The project began in 1998 with a team at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, and a team at MITRE Corporation in Fairfax County, Virginia. Our purpose was to develop communication standards that would allow human and robotic communication in space with the same kind of flexibility that we enjoy on the Internet here on planet Earth.

This year we will be testing the Interplanetary Internet Protocols on the International Space Station and a spacecraft called EPOXI that is on its way to visit a comet in 2010. Once these tests are done, we will offer the new communication protocols to all space-faring nations to establish a standard communication environment for space exploration in the remainder of the 21st Century.

**How would you like to be remembered?**

**Vint Cerf:** I hope I will be remembered as someone who truly wanted to extend the infrastructure of a communication technology that really promotes the democratic sharing of knowledge on a global basis.

### **Interview with Sigrid T. Cerf**

**Barbara Chertok:** You and I met in California in the 1970s when Vint was on the faculty at Stanford and my husband was a guest scientist there. We were primarily communicating by lipreading in those days. Did you ever dream we would be hearing with bilateral cochlear implants today?

**Sigrid:** No way. Of course such technology was never going to happen. Did we even have a clue what we were missing? Around that time, my hearing dropped from 90 dB to 100 dB hearing after an ear infection. With such limited audi-

© Cindy Dyer



*Sigrid Cerf at home in Virginia*

tory cues, it was difficult to compensate with my lipreading skills. Vint and I found ourselves limiting whom we socialized with, since there weren't many whom I could still lipread. A body hearing aid gave me practically no help and other assistive devices also proved useless.

**You lost your hearing at age three from spinal meningitis and were fitted with a body hearing aid. Your mother took you to the John Tracy Clinic in Los Angeles founded by Spencer Tracy's wife and named for their deaf son. Why did she choose this program for you?**

**Sigrid:** My mother's brother in LA encouraged us to attend Tracy's six-week summer session. New as it was, the school had positively impacted a growing number of children. They even offered a correspondence course which in retrospect was a precursor to the digital education we now take for granted. My mother learned we would both have to work hard to retain my speech and listening skills. The therapy at Tracy went beyond those six weeks and included my mother's close working relationship with my teachers.

Uniquely, my mother advised my teachers to NOT intentionally single me out as a special student. My deafness was never discussed with me,

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## The Cerfs *continued from page 15*

and therefore I was never forthcoming when others misunderstood my communication needs. While sitting in the front row, all I had to do was ask a nearby student to point to a page. That's how many of us got our education in those days.

**The schools in your hometown of Wichita did not offer any special services to students with hearing loss, yet you graduated with honors. You went on to earn a bachelor's degree at Kansas State University in 1965 in art and architectural illustrating. Did you work in your field?**

**Sigrid:** Yes, I became an architectural illustrator for commercial interior design firms in Los Angeles. It was fun to create drawings and paintings of interiors to give them dramatic interest. My favorite project was the renovation of the floating Queen Mary that's docked in Long Beach Harbor. I retired from this work when our first son was two and Vint's travel took him out of town more and more.

**In 1996, after wearing hearing aids for 50 years and your hearing had dropped precipitously, you received a cochlear implant from Dr. John Niparko at Johns Hopkins Medical Center in Baltimore followed by an implant in the other ear ten years later. What's the difference between unilateral versus bilateral cochlear implant hearing?**

**Sigrid:** The difference for me is better comprehension of speech in ambient noise and richer sound quality. The newly-implanted ear had auditory memory, but it had not heard since I was 3 years old. This second implant (bilateral) effectively complements and supplements the hearing from my primary ear, and the improved technology gives clearer speech comprehension as demonstrated in tests given by my audiologist at Hopkins, Jennifer Yeagle. An important thing is to remember to put it on each morning up to an hour before I use the other one. This practice seems to give the new ear better acuity and also allows it to better complement the primary ear.

*"Vint was suddenly married to a 53-year old 'teenager'. After never having access to the phone, for example, I immediately embraced this toy. We had two phone lines, and when he called, he'd find both lines tied up for hours."*

**You took the initiative to develop your own rehabilitation program after you were implanted, but many don't know where to begin. What can you tell a new CI recipient?**

**Sigrid:** I would advise them that any self-therapy is useful, even if they are following a formal rehabilitation course. Never having actually considered my rehabilitation as 'therapy', I considered it a game where I practiced listening, and relied less on visual cues. An example is watching TV. Some news and public TV programs make great sources for relaxed listening practice if you pretend the TV is a radio instead of something to view. Those who still rely on speechreading might watch but turn off the captions whenever possible. New recipients can sometimes be referred to an auditory therapist at their CI center to initiate the rehab process. New software, workbooks and online materials offered by the implant manufacturers can be utilized as well.

**Vint says you want to capture every decibel of sound and carry with you patch cords and assistive devices that connect to every possible sound source.**

**Sigrid:** With my implants, I'm eager—greedy—to have what seems like 'normal hearing' and use whatever assistive system is appropriate for the environment. I use my personal FM system when I'm with someone who mumbles or has a foreign accent. At a lecture, I use the FM transmitter and place it on the lectern, and it transmits a signal to the receiver that I plug into my body processor.

In cars, restaurants and other places where I'm trying to hear several people, I use an auxiliary microphone when needed. It plugs into the jack of my body processor. I use a patch cord to listen to music on my Walkman or listen to books on tape or books on CD. When I watch TV, I use an infrared

transceiver to pick up the audio that goes directly into my body processor—similarly with movies. When I'm on an airplane, I use a patch cord to plug into the armrest. What is neat about this is the crying baby is completely cut off, because the only sound I hear is what's coming from the sound system on the movie.

**You were unable to hear on the phone until you received your first cochlear implant at age 53, yet you claim 'the telephone is usually the easiest form of listening for me.'**

**Sigrid:** Having a phone at one's ear is like listening to a person talking directly into your ear, because the signal-to-noise ratio is ideal. Whenever I can approach this ideal ratio—as I do with all of my assistive gadgets—I maximize my opportunity to hear well.

**You have said the cochlear implant radically altered your life, changing you from an introvert to an extrovert. How did Vint relate to this new wife?**

**Sigrid:** Well, you can imagine how your husband would feel if you announced 'now I don't have to look at you anymore.' A less than flattering way of saying 'now we can communicate almost normally.'

Vint was suddenly married to a 53-year old 'teenager'. After never having access to the phone, for example, I immediately embraced this toy. We had two phone lines, and when he called, he'd find both lines tied up for hours. I might be talking to a telemarketer in Bangalore about English accents in his city and then switch to the other line to catch this guy from Hyderabad who's telling me what his English classes were like. My quality of life had increased, and the husband who was delighted I could finally use the phone discovered he could never reach me. Now he had to resort to e-mail!

**Any favorite hobbies or pastimes?**

**Sigrid:** We love to entertain. I recently hosted 21 women friends from my high school, and we spent a week touring Washington, D.C. One of our favorite pastimes is viewing DVD movies in our new home theater. I'm also a big reader and fan of book clubs,

which are a good forum for observing other people's listening skills and practicing my own. We've accumulated 10,000 books in our library.

**Vint's hearing aid dealer played the matchmaker and introduced the two of you. You have been married for 43 years. Was your mutual hearing loss the attraction, or was it something more?**

**Sigrid:** Vint had—and still has—humor, a warm heart, wisdom, and great sensitivity. Plus he's analytical and could fix almost anything. But what really turned me on was his enthusiasm. When you think about it, people with great social skills are enthusiastic about life. I loved that he could talk to anybody about practically anything. Of course his up-front, can-do attitude about his hearing loss was an inspiration for me to 'come out' about my deafness. He's always shared with people what he needed with a touch of humor thrown in, and by so doing, others would find it easy to meet him halfway. By observing him, I gradually became less reluctant to keep my own listening needs invisible and began to bloom.

**When you accepted Vint's proposal of marriage, did you have an inkling that Vint was destined for success?**

**Sigrid:** I sensed his excitement about what might someday be done with computers. But amidst this private language of geeks, I really had no idea. I soon learned about the demands of being a computer programmer.

Vint would disappear for days. Since I couldn't use the phone, I just assumed I would eventually see him sooner or later. He and his UCLA friends organized their lives around access to the mainframe computers which were often available only when others went home. The pattern continued when he taught at Stanford.

Somehow he combined teaching classes and took red-eye flights on weekends to test the early nodes of the ARPANET (the precursor to the Internet). I had no idea that we'd eventually have the vast Internet and Web to make staying in touch so effortless. We really are resting on the shoulders of these hardworking giants.

**Your two sons live on the west coast. What was it like raising them as a mother with a profound hearing loss, and how do you stay in touch with them?**

**Sigrid:** At its easiest, it was a pleasure, as most parents find. At its most difficult, it was like what parents enjoy when their kids become independent teenagers. The independence appeared to start at an earlier age, because they shouldered more responsibilities on my behalf. I often needed them for help with phone calls, for example. You rarely know what enters a child's mind and how they feel when they sense their parent is different from everyone else's. Vint often sees them on his travels to California. We also phone, e-mail, and do instant messaging and video chat.

**You grew up outside the deaf community—speaking and reading lips. How do you feel about the controversy over cochlear implants for children and the Deaf culture community's choice of American Sign Language over spoken English language?**

**Sigrid:** It's always been a quality of life issue about what parents feel is best for their children and not what the children might want when they're old enough to decide for themselves. Since most parents are themselves hearing, they want their children to maximize their listening and speaking skills and more fully participate in the many opportunities life offers.

As to sign language in theaters, the theaters are failing to meet the needs of the majority of those with hearing loss because the majority of the deaf and hard of hearing population does NOT use sign language. So, the more people that request captions in theatres, the more likely those people with hearing loss—

the non-signers—will be able to enjoy theatrical and other cultural events.

**Is there a humorous episode related to your hearing loss that you can share with us?**

**Sigrid:** Before my cochlear implant days, Vint was running low on cash and needed some to pay a cab driver to bring him home from a snowed-in airport.

*Vint called: 'Hi Sigrid, it's Vint. Can you come to the airport to pick me up?'*

*Sigrid: 'I'm sorry he's not at home. He'll be home soon, would you like to call back?'*

*Vint [screaming into the phone]: 'It's Vint, your husband! Can you pick me up at the airport?'*

*Sigrid: 'I'm really sorry, but he isn't here. He should be home any minute now. Could you call back?'*

*Vint: '[unprintable]'* ■■■■



Barbara Liss Chertok is a former speechreading/lip-reading teacher and a freelance writer. Her articles appear regularly in hearing loss journals. She lost her hearing suddenly at age 21

due to an autoimmune disease and hears bilaterally with two cochlear implants. She has been an advocate of the rights of people with hearing loss since the 1970s and joined HLAA when it was founded in 1979. She is an active member of the HLAA Sarasota Chapter. She serves on the board of the American Hearing Research Foundation. She can be reached at [barbchert@aol.com](mailto:barbchert@aol.com).



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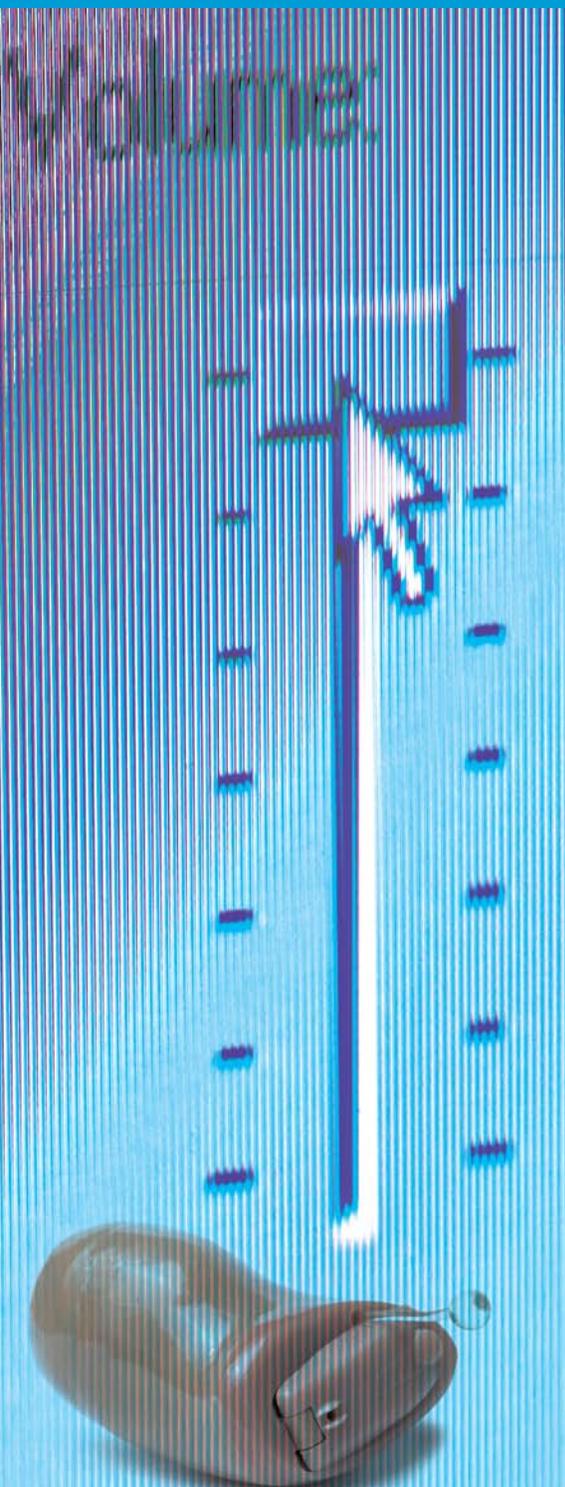
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# Environmentally Adaptive Hearing Aids

## A Look at Digital Hearing Aid Features

By Mark Ross



*Hearing aids have come a long way since the days that a user had to constantly “fiddle” with the volume control in order to get it right. Can today’s hearing aids get it right?*

**T**he only sound dimension that was “adaptive” with my first hearing aid was the loudness. I could choose to turn the volume control up or down, and that was it. True, the aid also contained an accessible tone control with three choices (normal, high-tone, and low-tone), but for the most part, I (and most hearing aid users) left that one alone.

Evidently, I was one of those volume control “fiddlers” that the hearing aid dispensers at the time inveighed against. “Don’t fiddle with the volume wheel,” they would counsel their clients. “Normal hearing people can’t keep adjusting the volume of the sound, and neither should you.”

But they really didn’t know what they were talking about. For example, a 10 dB increase in sound input may double the loudness for a normal hearing person, while for a hearing-aid user this same 10 dB increase may cause an intolerably loud auditory sensation (because of the phenomenon known as “recruitment”).

Conversely, while for a normal hearing person, a 10 dB decrease in sound input may reduce the loudness sensation by about half, for a hearing aid user this same reduction may make the sound totally or virtually inaudible.

### Enter Automatic Gain Control

So to get the loudness sensation right, or as close to it as possible, most hearing aid users at the time employed what I facetiously termed AFC, or Automatic Finger Control (audiologists just love acronyms). We constantly fiddled with the volume control. For many of us, it became an almost instinctive action, one that scarcely occupied our attention. But there were also many people who, for a number of very legitimate reasons, found the necessity of constantly adjusting the volume control to be a difficult or inconvenient task.

Years ago, the hearing aid industry

responded to this by including an Automatic Gain Control circuit (AGC) in their hearing aids. This was, I believe, the first automatic, or environmentally adaptive, feature to be included in hearing aids. And it is probably still the most important. The modern version of an AGC, present in just about all digital hearing aids, is called “Wide Dynamic Range Compression” or WDRC (another acronym, sorry about that).

Basically, what this feature does is adjust the degree of amplification of the entire range of loudness input levels, while at the same time ensuring that no input sound is amplified to the point where it is uncomfortably loud. In a way, this feature does the “fiddling” for the hearing aid user. Soft sounds are boosted in loudness, while loud inputs are toned down somewhat. The goal is to ensure comfortable sound sensations across the entire range of frequencies amplified by the hearing aid, regardless of the changing input sound levels.

### Amplification Programming

The specific amounts of amplification used in hearing aids possessing this feature are set during the fitting process. The hearing aid user makes judgments as to the loudness of input sounds (too quiet, just right, too loud, etc.) in quiet and under various simulated environmental noise conditions, and this information is then programmed into the hearing aid. And there it remains until and unless the hearing aid is later reprogrammed. But does this initial programming get it right, all or most of the time? This was one of the questions asked in a recent study published in the *Hearing Journal*.

### Study of Loudness Variables

The investigator (Dr. Gitte Keidser) asked 28 experienced hearing aid users to keep a structured listening diary for two weeks. At specific inter-

vals during the day, they would log the specific category of background sound they were then encountering (speech in quiet, speech in noise, music, mostly quiet, or mostly noisy). They then recorded their judgment of the overall loudness level of the sound, as either just right, louder or softer than preferred, or much louder or much softer than preferred. All the subjects were individually fitted with an “environmentally adaptive hearing aid.”

The programming goal was to provide a comfortable loudness sensation in the various sound backgrounds. The question asked by the study was: How often did the aid get it right in each of the listening backgrounds? As I consider the results, the answer seems to vary from “not bad” to “not good enough.”

In listening to speech in quiet, only 55 percent of the participants rated the loudness as “just right,” with the others feeling the speech was either somewhat louder or softer than preferred. “Just right” judgments declined when listening to speech in noise, with only about one-third of the subjects feeling satisfied with the loudness; the remainder of the time, they felt that the sound was either softer or louder than preferred. In a noisy situation, with nobody talking, over half the subjects felt that the aid provided a loudness sensation louder than they would prefer. The highest loudness comfort scores were obtained when listening to the radio or TV (58 percent). This makes sense if we consider that here the participants did have access to a volume control, but on the TV set and not on the hearing aid itself.

The study also noted a certain inconsistency in the ratings. Over the course of the study, the participants often found themselves in the same type of listening situation (e.g., speech in noise), either during the same day or on different days. However, they did not necessarily rate the loudness sensation the same each time they encountered a similar type of listening situation. And this should not surprise us. Recall, that during the hearing aid

programming process, the loudness level was adjusted to provide a comfortable listening experience—but only for that day, with that specific speech stimulus and noise background.

The loudness programming was a snapshot of reality but not reality itself. For that, one has to get out of the clinic and into real life. In real life, little about a listening situation is static; the composition of the noise, the person talking, the hearing aid user’s interest in the message, and the physical surroundings are always changing. A one-time hearing aid programming decision cannot, therefore, completely replicate a person’s everyday listening experiences.

### Study Conclusions

Not surprisingly, the study concludes that some individual manipulation of the volume control is desirable, even with an environmentally adaptive hearing aid. The findings indicate “that at least two-thirds of the participants would, at some point, want gain adjusted when in a given class of environment.”

In other words, there is still a need for the tried-and-true volume control. Fortunately, it is possible to have it both ways. The hearing aid can be programmed to provide reasonable “ball-park” loudness in various situations, while an external volume control can be included for finer loudness tuning when desired (for example, manual control of plus or minus 5 dB around the automatic values).

### Premium Hearing Aids of Today

The newest generation of digital hearing aids are simply loaded with environmentally adaptive features. In addition to controlling loudness, they operate on many other dimensions of a hearing aid’s performance. In point of fact, it is the number of these features and the extent to which listening decisions are automatically selected that define a “premium” hearing aid. The ultimate premium aid is one that is presumed to work optimally and automatically in every changing environment. (“Look Ma, no hands.”)

At a minimum, these aids would include the following features: dynamic feedback suppression, adaptive directional microphones, Auto T-coils, multiple channels (up to 20), multiple memories, and various noise reduction or speech enhancement programs. Since understanding speech in noise is the most frequent complaint voiced by hearing aid users, manufacturers have devoted most of their research and engineering efforts in premium hearing aids to address this issue.

The signal processing algorithms employed by many hearing aids are designed to classify incoming sounds as speech in quiet, speech in noise, noise alone, mechanical sounds, impulse sounds, wind noise, and music (not necessarily all in any one hearing aid). Each of these noise conditions requires a special signal processing strategy intended to maximize speech comprehension in a particular environment.

At the premium level, the hearing aid is presumed to automatically shift into the appropriate speech processing strategy, as the nature of the noise background changes. At less than the premium level (e.g., entry, economy, low, mid, or mid-high level aids), a user may be required to manually select a desired program, if it is available (e.g., speech in noise, directionality, music, etc.).

Whether the convenience of automatic shifting is worth the extra cost of a premium level hearing aid is a question that people must answer for themselves, it being understood that the necessary comparative information is being supplied by the hearing aid dispenser.

### Speech Enhancement Adaptation

Speech enhancement programs are another interesting environmentally adaptive feature found in many current advanced hearing aids. Through the use of special detectors, this program analyzes the speech to noise ratio that exists in each channel of the hearing aid. When the speech to noise ratio is positive (speech louder than

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## Hearing Aids *cont. from page 19*

the noise), the degree of amplification (gain) is automatically increased in that particular channel. When the noise signal dominates, the gain in the channel is reduced (perhaps via another adaptive noise program).

Hearing aid manufacturers make a persuasive theoretical case regarding the merits of such automatic features; however, it would be reassuring to hearing aid users if the theoretical merits could be validated by research conducted on human beings. Actually, this comment applies to just about all of the special features found in advanced hearing aids, not just speech enhancement or noise suppression programs.

### T-Coil Adaptation

Automatic telephone coils (Auto T-coils) is another adaptive feature that can be found in many premium hearing aids. All a user has to do is answer the phone normally, and the T-coil in the hearing aid will automatically be switched on. After a stumbling start (the first Auto T-coil did not work with induction loop systems), most hearing aid companies now apparently make provision for both the Auto T-coil and for a way to manually access the T-coil for other than telephone usage (as an assistive listening device receiver).

However, while hearing instruments may include this capability, the aids do have to be appropriately programmed in order for the capability to be realized. Since most new hearing aid users probably have never heard of a T-coil, it is up to the dispensing professional to inform his or her clients what it is, how it should be used with both telephones and with induction loop systems, and what the clients have to do to access it on their hearing aids (e.g., toggling to the right memory).

This is where the human factor comes in; too often, from what I keep hearing, the T-coil is often the forgotten element in the hearing aid selection and fitting process. It may not be as glamorous as the other features in an environmentally adaptive hearing aid,

but it does directly impact upon the basic purpose of a hearing aid, and that is for the person to hear better in many types of situations. As one personal example, I use the T-coil in my hearing aid and cochlear implant while talking on the telephone (a neckloop permits me to use both ears); at religious services, I plug a neckloop into the provided FM receiver; and, finally, I listen to the TV using a small floor loop connected to the TV. It is the T-coil that makes all these functions possible and I can't imagine being without it.

### Data Logging Feature

The importance I place on a T-coil would be immediately apparent to any audiologist who accessed the data logging feature on my hearing aid. This feature, found in about 40 percent of current hearing aids, records a great deal of information about a person's hearing aid usage.

By examining the data log, the hearing aid dispenser can determine the duration of hearing aid usage, the volume control setting, the types of listening environments a person is exposed to, the incidence and extent of volume control adjustments in the various environments, and the actual use of special features (e.g., automatic directional, noise reduction, feedback suppression).

This information can be very helpful for audiologists during counseling and the follow-up process. It can, for example, show that the programmed gain in different environments needs to be changed to reflect the reality of a person's current hearing aid usage.

During a post-fitting visit, the audiologist may look at the hearing aid use data. If the data shows only minimal use of a hearing aid, then the question is "Why?" If the log shows that the person is in quiet 90 percent of the time but has the directional microphones switched on most of the time then, again, the question is "Why?" Does the person understand how to use this feature?

In one real-life example, a client complained that the VC did not work.

Checking the data log, the audiologist noted that the volume control was never changed. It turned out that the client was pressing on the battery compartment when trying to make volume control changes! Before we laugh at this user's ineptness, we should reflect how often we've all done things like this ourselves.

### Still, the Human Factor is Needed

Hearing aids have come a long way since the days that a user had to constantly "fiddle" with the volume control in order to get it right. And there's no doubt that a great deal of creative engineering has made life easier for many hearing aid users in recent years. But I would add the following caveat: There is still a need, in my opinion, for the human factor. Audiologists still have to "listen" to their clients, judge their listening needs and capabilities, and make their recommendations accordingly. And that may include reducing or eliminating some of the "automatic" control for certain operations, such as partial volume control and manual selection of the T-coil. ■■■■

*Mark Ross, Ph.D., is an audiologist and associate at the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) at Gallaudet University. He was awarded the HLAA Lifetime Achievement Award in June 2008. He and his wife, Helen, live in Storrs, Connecticut. To find more Dr. Ross articles on technology for consumers, go to [www.hearingresearch.org](http://www.hearingresearch.org).*



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This article was developed under a grant from the Department of Education, NIDRR grant number H133EO80006. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

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## Purchasing a Hearing Aid: What You Should Know

*Armed with a checklist developed by HLAA, you can help ensure that your hearing aid experience will be a successful one.*

**W**hat do you know about purchasing a hearing aid? If you've never done it, the process can seem daunting. But even if you've been purchasing hearing aids for some time, there may be pertinent questions you haven't asked in a long time, or perhaps never thought to ask at all.

For example, when you go to your hearing aid dispenser to purchase a hearing aid, do you ask to see a hearing aid that includes a telecoil program? Do you know how many microphones the hearing aid has?

Do you know what your hearing aid rating for cell phone use is and how to use that information when purchasing a cell or cordless phone? Do you talk about assistive listening devices? And does your dispenser keep you up to date about alerting devices? Do you know how to best protect yourself in case of a fire or other emergency?

Do you know how much the hearing aid itself costs and how much you are being charged for the services of the dispenser? Those services often include several return visits. Many consumers do not return to the dispenser at all, because they don't want to "bother" the dispenser. It's great to know that return visits are part of the package, and even better to know exactly how many return visits your dispenser provides.

When you purchase hearing aids, state law can provide protections to consumers. Do you know how long you have for a trial period under state law? Do you know what non-refundable fees will be charged even if you return the hearing aid during the trial period?

Consumers Union reported in April 2003 that a woman returned her new hearing aids to her dispenser during the trial period, a week after she got them. The dispenser charged \$4,600 for the aids plus \$270 in non-refundable "mold" and "preparation" fees. When she returned the aids, the dispenser charged a "restocking fee" of \$690. She paid a total of \$960 for a one-week attempt to try hearing aids that she determined she could not use. This woman did file a complaint, noting, "I'm unable to account for your charge of \$690 for restocking. What does this cover?"

We hope you are never charged a "restocking fee" of \$690. Still, you need to know what you could be charged. Some states have stringent regulations protecting consumers; others have nothing in place at all. But even in those states where laws are in place, it's often difficult to find out what the law is. You need to ask the right questions, before you buy.

### Consumer Checklist

Hearing Loss Association of America has created a "Checklist for Consumers" to help you ask the right questions about testing, dispensing and trial of hearing aids. Take the checklist with you next time you purchase a hearing aid, and return completed checklists to our office.

We will aggregate the information and report what we find. We'll be interested to see if there are any trends to follow. And don't worry if you lose it. We will post this checklist, as well information about the kinds of hearing evaluations you can expect to receive on [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org) as well as more information about purchasing hearing aids. ■■■■

*Lise Hamlin is the director of public policy and state development. She can be reached at [lhamlin@hearingloss.org](mailto:lhamlin@hearingloss.org).*

TESTING	YES/NO
<p>Were you given a hearing screening<sup>1</sup> or a full hearing exam<sup>2</sup>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were you given a copy of the audiogram and any other test results?</li> <li>• Were you given a full explanation of all tests?</li> <li>• Were you charged for the examination?</li> </ul>	
<p>Were you told what type of hearing loss you have?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What your audiogram means</li> <li>• Why you sometimes can “hear” but not “understand”</li> <li>• What a hearing aid can do for you and what it can’t do for you</li> </ul>	
<p>Were you asked about the effect of your hearing loss on your daily life at home, at work, in school, while using the phone, etc?</p>	
<p>Did a “significant other” have an opportunity to express the effect of your hearing loss on them?</p>	
DISPENSING	YES/NO
<p>Do you know why a particular type of hearing aid was recommended?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behind-the-ear, in-the-ear, in-the-canal, completely-in-the-canal, open fitting</li> <li>• Were your personal preferences considered regarding style, cost, or remote control?</li> </ul>	
<p>Were hearing aid features explained to you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directional microphones, number of microphones, self-adjusting volume control, etc.</li> <li>• Information about the telecoil<sup>3</sup> and its uses</li> </ul>	
<p>Do the aids fit comfortably?</p>	
<p>Were you able to insert the hearing aids in your ears by yourself?</p>	
<p>Was the following information concerning batteries explained to you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to put batteries in the hearing aid—can you put them in by yourself?</li> <li>• Where you can buy batteries, how much they cost, keeping spare batteries handy</li> </ul>	
<p>Were all the controls explained to you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you operate all the programs yourself?</li> <li>• Do you have the dexterity to operate the controls for your hearing aid?</li> <li>• Do you have the vision to operate the controls and put in batteries?</li> </ul>	
<p>Was the following information regarding the care of the hearing aids and earmolds explained to you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to keep earwax out of the sound bore of the hearing aid</li> <li>• Using a dehumidifier box for night storage</li> <li>• How often to return for regular checkups and cleaning</li> </ul>	

*Checklist continued on page 24*

<sup>1</sup> Hearing screenings are quick and cost effective pass/fail tests to find out if you need an in-depth evaluation for hearing loss.

<sup>2</sup> Hearing exams (assessments) determine the degree of hearing loss, the type of hearing loss, and the configuration of hearing loss and are conducted in a soundproof booth. For more information, visit [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org).

<sup>3</sup> Some states have laws that require consumers to be told about telecoils in hearing aids when they purchase the hearing aid: Arizona, Florida, New York, as of 1/09.

<sup>4</sup> “Real-ear” measures use a probe-tube system that reveals the actual output of the hearing aid while a person is wearing the hearing aid.

<b>DISPENSING</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>
-------------------	---------------

Did you receive written material on the information you received?	
<b>Was the following covered at the time of your first follow up visit?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your listening experiences with hearing aids (in noise, feelings of loudness, discomfort, etc.)</li> <li>• Fit of earmolds (comfort, "whistling" noises)</li> <li>• How to troubleshoot problems</li> <li>• "Real-ear"<sup>4</sup> hearing aid measures rechecked (Never heard of 'real-ear'? See footnote on page 23 and visit the HLAA website for more information about real-ear and other testing.)</li> </ul>	
Were you asked to evaluate any improvement on the effect of hearing loss on your life, at home, at work, at school, when going out, etc.	
<b>Did you receive information about using telephones and assistive listening and alerting devices with your hearing aids?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M/T Ratings for hearing aids, cell phones; labeling for cordless phones</li> <li>• Assistive listening devices using telecoils with audio loops, FM and Infrared systems</li> <li>• Devices that alert for fire and safety, phones and doorbells</li> </ul>	
<b>Were group hearing aid orientation sessions provided?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you attend?</li> </ul>	
Did you receive information about helpful resources such as speechreading classes and support groups such as the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)?	

<b>FULL DISCLOSURE</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>
------------------------	---------------

<b>Did you receive a written contract detailing the services to be provided?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of the hearing aid</li> <li>• Cost of the dispenser's services and number of follow-up visits included in the cost</li> <li>• Date and place of sale</li> </ul>	
<b>Did your dispenser check your insurance status?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call the insurer to verify benefits</li> <li>• Explain the coverage to you</li> <li>• Explain insurance coverage provided by state law, if applicable</li> <li>• Explain any tax credits, if applicable</li> </ul>	
<b>Did the dispenser provide information about the hearing aid manufacturers he or she works with?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disclose how many and which manufacturers s/he works with</li> <li>• Recommend models in different price ranges</li> </ul>	
Did the dispenser provide written information on any warranties provided by the manufacturer?	
<b>Did the dispenser provide written information about the trial period and refund policy?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trial period, return time limits by state law, and by office practice</li> <li>• Fees charged if the hearing aid is returned within the trial period</li> <li>• Whether the trial period is suspended if the aid malfunctions during the trial period and needs to be returned for repairs</li> </ul>	

Dispenser name \_\_\_\_\_ Credentials \_\_\_\_\_

Dispenser's Address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State \_\_\_\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_



## Program Gives the Gift of Sound to Children in Need

Siemens Hearing Instruments, Inc. has renewed its partnership with Quota International to provide free hearing instruments to disadvantaged children.

"Untreated, hearing loss can significantly impact a child's development and communication skills," said Dr. Thomas A. Powers, Ph.D., vice president of audiology and compliance at Siemens Hearing Instruments, Inc. "Seventeen out of every 1,000 children born in the U.S. suffer from some degree of hearing loss and the number rises as the child population ages. There is a critical need in this country for hearing loss education and meaningful hearing solutions, particularly among children in disadvantaged families. All of us at Siemens are grateful to be able to again partner with Quota to provide quality hearing solutions for the children who need them most."

Siemens' hearing loss awareness website can be found at [www.hearitforthefirsttime.org](http://www.hearitforthefirsttime.org). 

## A Life in Signs

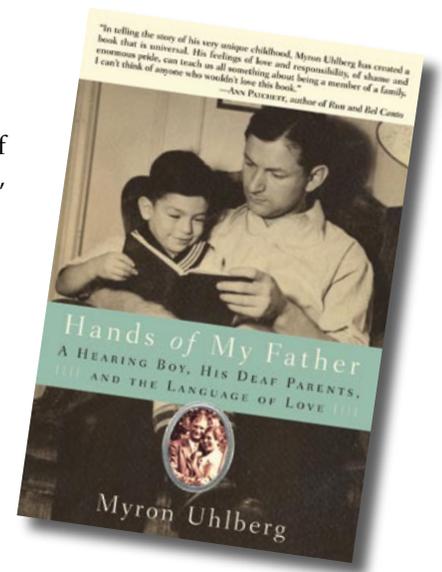
*Hands of My Father: A Hearing Boy, His Deaf Parents, and the Language of Love*

Author Myron Uhlberg describes what it was like to grow up as the hearing son of two deaf parents. The author grew up in Brooklyn during the period spanning the Great Depression, WWII, and the early 1950s. It is a beautifully-told, coming-of-age story that captures the emotional complexities of being a child who had to take on the responsibilities of adulthood from a very young age.

Uhlberg was a pint-sized witness to many of the key moments of the historic era in which he lived. Listening to the radio he had to sign for his father every blow in the historic boxing match between America's Brown Bomber Joe Louis and Hitler's Master Race champion Max Schmeling, while his father signed to him his own translations of newspaper headlines trumpeting every battle on the European and Pacific fronts.

Myron Uhlberg is the critically-acclaimed and award-winning author of a number of children's books. Even if one knows nothing about hearing loss, this book is a compelling story and told lovingly by its author.

*Hands of My Father* is published by Bantam Books Hardcover. 



## Emerging Technologies

MIT's *Technology Review* article "Nanopiezotronics" (March/April 2009) talks about piezoelectric nanowires that could power implantable medical devices and serve as tiny sensors.

One such application is hearing aids where an array of vertically aligned piezoelectric nanowires could serve as a hearing aid. When sound waves hit them, the wires bend, generating an electrical potential. The electrical signal can then be amplified and sent directly to the auditory nerve. ([www.technologyreview.com](http://www.technologyreview.com))

Dr. Zhong Lin Wang, School of Materials Science and Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology, is the chief researcher on this project. He comments, "We are aggressively developing this technology. I believe that I will be able to write an informative article for *Hearing Loss Magazine* in a few years. 



**We want you!** Tell us about your experiences with hearing loss in the workplace and be a part of *Hearing Loss Magazine*! Author submission guidelines can be found at [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org). For information, e-mail Editor Barbara Kelley at [bkelly@hearingloss.org](mailto:bkelly@hearingloss.org).

# Music, MP3 Players and Hearing Health

By Patricia M. Chute

**M**usic surrounds us every day whether we are in an elevator, in a store or sitting in the comforts of our homes. Research has shown that music can have a positive effect on improving the quality of life of individuals undergoing brain surgery, as well as for mothers whose babies were in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

Studies of music and exercise indicate positive relationships between changes in range of motion in children with severe burns and how intensely we exercise. The cultural implications of music can be traced back through history developing from the most rudimentary forms of instruments to the technological evolution available today.

The portability of music has changed markedly through the years as technology transformed from large home turntable systems to "boom boxes" to portable cassette and CD players and now MP3 players. A global market study performed in 2006 indicated that 20 percent of Americans aged 12 years and older own at least one MP3 player and six percent own more than one.

Many educational institutions are utilizing this medium in an effort to bring lecture presentations to students as they go about their daily activities. Medicine has turned to the iPod to educate patients. With a generation that aspires to being more connected, it is no wonder that this technology is rapidly gaining acceptance across the different age groups.

However, as diverse as this technology can be, one should approach it with caution especially with regard to the constant auditory stimulation and its effect on hearing.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards note that exposure to noise during an eight-hour work day should not exceed 90 dB (decibels). For every 5 dB of increase in intensity a halving of exposure time takes place.

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow notes that "Music is the universal language of mankind." Certainly, this generation and those that preceded us have embraced this universal language to relax and energize, to sing and listen and to ignore and attend. However, it is never too early to start telling children about the potential damage that personal music systems can do to their hearing.**

Therefore, if the sound is 95 dB then exposure time should be only four hours; at 100dB it should only be two hours, etc. Damage to hearing, either permanent or temporary, can occur as intensity level increases along with exposure time.

## **Young Adults and Personal Music Systems**

A recent study on young adult use and output levels of personal music systems was conducted on over 1,000 college students. Over 90 percent of them reported using a portable listening system with over 50 percent noting their listening habits as being, on average, one to three hours in duration at medium to loud levels.

Black and African-American students listened for longer durations (five hours or more) and at increased loudness levels. Overall, men listened at higher levels than women. The implications of these trends are alarming when taking into account the intensity issues coupled with exposure time. Vogel, Brug, Hosli, van der Ploeg, and Raat found high school adolescents unconcerned about the potential damage to their hearing from listening to loud music for long periods of time despite awareness of the potential for damage. This kind of attitude gives professionals and parents pause in

considering an effective method of addressing this issue.

Parents can begin with monitoring use of the listening devices by their children at as early an age as possible. A good rule of thumb is that music is too loud if the child is wearing the earbuds and the parent is able to hear the sound while standing next to them. More importantly, parents should not purchase an MP3 player for young children. There is simply not enough data available to determine the effects of continuous listening on such young ears.

Education at an early age about the dangers of listening to loud music through portable MP3 devices should be part of the school health curriculum. Programs should demonstrate the effects of hearing loss on communication so that students can appreciate the results of hearing loss. Although knowledge of danger and subsequent changes in behavior are often elusive, educational programs should still be in place.

The effects that hearing loss has on everyday function ranges from a disruption in communication to learning challenges and psychosocial disturbances. It is senseless to disregard data that clearly demonstrates hearing loss as a result of loud sound exposure. It is even more senseless in light of the way hearing loss changes lives. If, as Longfellow states, "Music is the universal language of mankind" then it is our role as parents and professionals to ensure that mankind is able to communicate throughout our lifetime. ■■■



*Patricia M. Chute, Ed.D., Au.D., was recently named dean of the School of Health & Natural Sciences at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, New York. Previously she*

## Protecting Kids' Hearing: Why It Matters

www.noisyplanet.nidcd.nih.gov/  
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The National Institute of Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, National Institutes of Health covers everything you need to know and more. Order your Noisy Planet posters, car magnet, calendar and more fun things to drive the point home to your children.

*was professor and chair of the Division of Health Professions at Mercy College. Dr. Chute is also the former editor of the Volta Review and a member of the Board of Scientific Trustees for the Deafness Research Foundation. She has been active in the cochlear implant field since 1979 and has over 40 publications, including three books, on this topic. She is co-director of the Network of Educators of Children with Cochlear Implants and was former director of the Cochlear Implant Center at Lenox Hill Hospital and the Manhattan Eye Ear and Throat Hospital.*

### Loudness War

You won't believe what you read about this topic. Go to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loudness\\_war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loudness_war)

### Turn it to the Left

The American Academy of Audiology presents the program, "Turn it to the Left," encouraging people to turn down the volume on their portable sound systems.

Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) is a major public health concern. Theoretically, noise-induced hearing loss is entirely preventable; in practice, exposure to high-level sound is one of the most common causes of permanent, sensorineural hearing loss and inner ear damage.

Recognizing that the risk of permanent hearing loss from noise exposure is very real for individuals of all ages, the American Academy of Audiology has undertaken a campaign to raise public awareness about the dangers of exposure to high-level sound and to raise funds in support of noise-induced hearing loss research. Go to [www.turnittotheleft.com](http://www.turnittotheleft.com).



If, as Longfellow states, "Music is the universal language of mankind" then it is our role as parents and professionals to ensure that mankind is able to communicate throughout our lifetime.

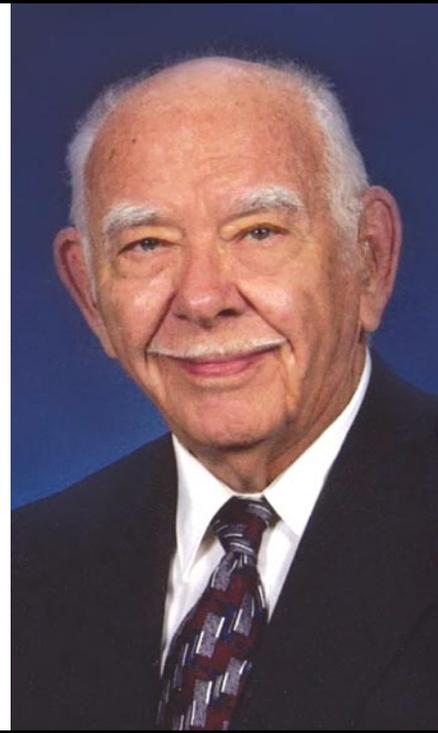
# One Dynamic Visionary Created the Hearing Loss Association of America. Thousands of Believers are Carrying it Forward.

One such believer in our vision was **John Centa** from Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, a caring passionate advocate for people with hearing loss throughout our 30-year history. He was a beloved member of the first Board of Trustees. John was a regional and state coordinator whose work made the Northwest the success it is today.

Not a day went by that John did not find some way to advance our mission. As he would say, "Bring hearing help to others." He so embraced our cause that he joined the Legacy Circle including HLAA in his estate planning. John's gift to HLAA demonstrates his long-term commitment to the work of HLAA. John and Helen Centa passed away last year and generously left a legacy to HLAA.

By including the Hearing Loss Association of America in your estate plans, you can make a powerful statement to assure that, like you, future generations will be enriched by programs and services HLAA provides to people with hearing loss. For more information about the HLAA Legacy

Circle or other giving programs visit [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org) or contact Christopher T. Sutton, director of development and education at [csutton@hearingloss.org](mailto:csutton@hearingloss.org).



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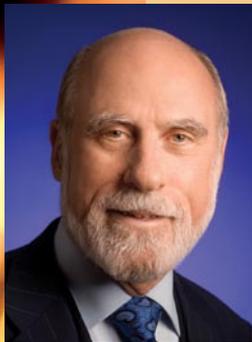
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# HLAA Convention 2009

# NASHVILLE!

**June 18–21, 2009  
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and Convention Center  
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Keynote Speaker  
Vinton Cerf



*Thursday, June 18, 6 p.m.*

We are honored to have Vinton Cerf, Ph.D. deliver the keynote speech this year. Read his pre-convention statement on page 10 accompanying the interview with Vint and Sigrid Cerf.

With an alarming number of military personnel returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with hearing loss, we are committed to supporting them: we have added a page on our website just for vets of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom; we are offering a complimentary one-year membership; we are offering a complimentary convention registration; and we are a partner with the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) to help serve the educational needs of veterans with hearing loss. We welcome Dr. Alan Hurwitz, president of NTID to remark about this project.

Finally you'll have a chance to meet Mark Brogan, Captain, U.S. Army (retired), who will tell his story at the Opening Session about being severely injured by a suicide bomber while serving in Iraq. Veterans of OIF and OEF who would like to attend the convention and/or become a member of HLAA should, e-mail Nancy Macklin at [nmacklin@hearingloss.org](mailto:nmacklin@hearingloss.org) for more information.



*CPT Mark Brogan  
and his wife, Sunny*

## **Research Symposium**

Sponsored by the Deafness Research Foundation ([www.drff.org](http://www.drff.org)), this year's symposium, *An Update on the Latest Hair Cell Regeneration Research*, promises to be an invaluable session, rich with information from the top researchers in the country. More information, including a biography of the researchers is included in the March/April 2009 issue of *Hearing Loss Magazine* as well as on [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org).

## **HLAA 30th Birthday Celebration**

Did you know that when CIA retiree Howard "Rocky" Stone founded this organization as Self Help for Hard of Hearing People



in 1979, the "office" was housed in the basement of the Stone family home in Bethesda, the Americans with Disabilities Act had not yet been passed, and cell phones were not in existence (let alone ones compatible with hearing aids!)?

We've come a long way, baby! HLAA has plenty to be proud of, so come help us celebrate 30 years of providing information, education, support and advocacy for people with hearing loss.

Magician Tom Vorjohan will greet us and stroll among the guests, amazing on-lookers with his sleight-of-hand tricks and antics. (Also look for Tom in the Exhibit Hall earlier in the day.)

Richard McCollough of the American Abilities Television Network ([mirusmedia.net](http://mirusmedia.net)) has generously offered to turn 30 years of pictures into a DVD for the occasion. A special thank you to volunteers Hollace Goodman, Joan Kleinrock and Ann Liming, who have worked tirelessly on the DVD project and to the countless others who contributed photos and mementos.

Then get set for the hottest act in Nashville, *Bruce and Kristi Cline and the Music City Wranglers*, a high-energy interactive show band specializing in country music, both traditional and top 40. Don't know how to line dance? Don't worry, Kristi will give us a lesson!

### Workshops Galore!

To give you an idea of the high caliber of speakers that will present workshops in Nashville, consider the following. We are fortunate to have among our presenters eight professionals from Nashville's Vanderbilt Bill Wilkerson Center: David Haynes, M.D., George Wanna, M.D., Tamala Bradham, Ph.D., William Dickinson, Au.D., Meredith Moss, Au.D., Andrea Hedley-Williams, Au.D., Krissie Rigby, Au.D., and Susan Amberg, Au.D.

Bilateral Cochlear Implant Panel, moderated by former Board of Trustee member



Bruce and Kristi Cline and the Music City Wranglers will help us celebrate our 30th birthday!

and bilateral CI user, Wayne Roorda, will feature all three CI manufacturers. Questions for the panel may be submitted in advance to [cipanel09@yahoo.com](mailto:cipanel09@yahoo.com).

Matthew Gerst of CTIA—the Wireless Association, has teamed up with HLAA's young adult leaders to teach attendees how to use the text feature of their phone to keep in touch with kids, grandkids, and friends.

With over 60 presenters and panelists, you may have a hard time deciding which workshop to attend! See the HLAA website for a complete workshop schedule.

### Saturday Night at the Grand Ole Opry

This is going to be a night to remember! Don't forget to include a ticket with your registration for this communication accessible performance. Busses will leave from the Magnolia Lobby entrance at 6 p.m. for the 7 p.m. show.

### Continuing Education Credits

Continuing Education Credits are approved for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and the National Court Reporters Association. CEUs are pending for the American Academy of Audiology. Notice of approval will be posted on [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org).

### Giveaways

Panasonic is making sure HLAA celebrates its 30th birthday in grand style with a free giveaway! Will you be the lucky winner of a 2009 Panasonic 42" plasma HDTV? Attendees of Convention 2009 will have a chance to see the actual HDTV on display at the Panasonic booth in the exhibit hall, and the TV will be shipped directly to the winner following the close of convention. Winner to be announced at the Exhibit Hall Social on Saturday, June 20, 2009. No purchase necessary to win.

Motorola has generously donated a MOTO Q™ 9h global (for AT&T) for a free giveaway at Convention 2009 in Nashville. The new smart phone comes complete with Windows Mobile® 6.1 Standard and it is GPS enabled. The winner will be announced at the Exhibit Hall Social on Friday, June 19, 2009. No purchase necessary to win.

### Panasonic. ideas for life



Nancy Macklin, director of events, and her cast of local and national volunteers invite you to join the fun in Nashville. She has planned a robust program where there is something for everyone. If you have any questions, contact

Nancy, e-mail [nmacklin@hearingloss.org](mailto:nmacklin@hearingloss.org) or call 301.657.2248.

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Contact Christopher T. Sutton at [csutton@hearingloss.org](mailto:csutton@hearingloss.org) or call 301.657.2248.

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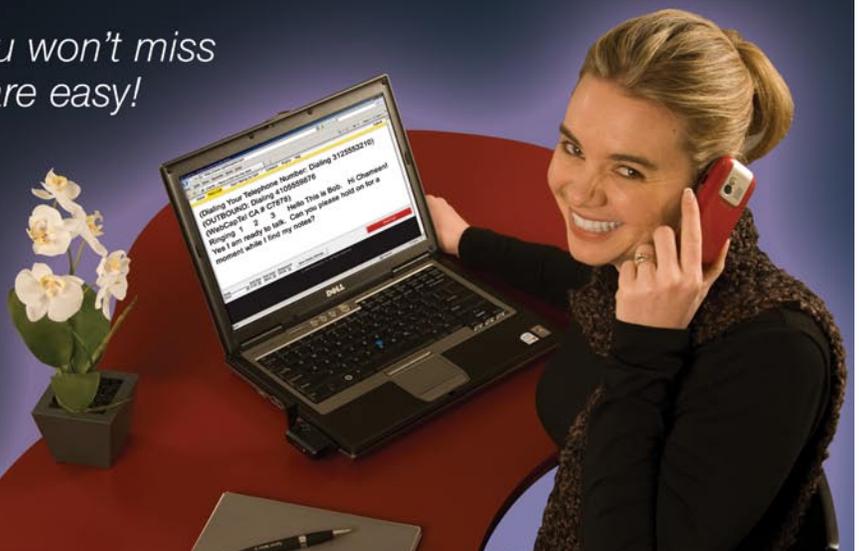
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# Hearing Loss Professionals Offer Kudos to the Academy!

The American Academy of Hearing Loss Support Specialists™ 2009

**W**hen HLAA launched the American Academy of Hearing Loss Support Specialists (“the Academy”) in 2006, the organization envisioned it as a powerful educational forum for people coping with hearing loss and those interacting with them. The Academy’s mission is to provide an easy-to-take (inexpensive, online, self-paced, distance learning) program that establishes core knowledge about hearing loss applicable to a broad audience. Specifically, HLAA intends to build accurate, foundational knowledge about hearing loss, increase understanding, improve services for people coping with hearing loss, and enhance the professionalism and effectiveness of the many people in diverse professions who provide hearing loss support services.

Launching a unique, innovative learning program is no mean feat. Beyond creation and development, it takes time to stabilize, to publicize and grow, and to attract the ideal mix of students. The audience envisioned was a diverse group—from those coping with a hearing loss and simply wanting to learn more, to those whose careers involve supporting people with hearing loss and/or affecting local, state or federal policy.

Among several important functions, the Academy is a tool for advocacy. With increased understanding and a more nuanced comprehension of the challenges of hearing loss, program graduates are empowered to change lives. “I have seen the authority that the Academy learning program has given graduates,” states Gael Hanan, writer, actor, public speaker, and hearing loss consultant.

## Accreditation

We are delighted to see that our vision has been realized. The Academy boasts a wonderful mix of graduates,

and is positioned to grow in exciting ways. In the past few months two major associations have accredited the Academy learning program (the course can be formally used toward the continuing education credits necessary in these career paths)—the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). And the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) is in the process of giving it accreditation.

Becoming accredited through additional associations is a major focus for 2009, because when the Academy counts toward CEUs (continuing education units), professionals nationwide will be incited to take the course and gain accurate information about hearing loss.

## Hear it From the Graduates’ Own Words

“The Academy provided me with the skill set to better serve the hard of hearing community of New Mexico. The curriculum is written by experts in the field of hearing loss and is top notch. In addition, the Academy gave me a better understanding of my own hearing loss. Thank you Academy for spotlighting the importance of education about and for the hard of hearing.”

*Shannon E. Smith, MBA/HRM  
Director of Hard of Hearing Services,  
New Mexico Commission for Deaf &  
Hard of Hearing Persons*

“I’m pleased HLAA...is promoting the program to nurses and others involved broadly in the health field—that’s really needed. The program is valuable because...it is broad based so it covers a range of issues, from psycho-social to technical—including a very important focus on assistive listening devices,

a topic that is often not included in discussions of hearing loss for health professionals. This provided a much stronger base for me when I talk to other health professionals about hearing loss and what is available to persons with hearing loss.”

*Margaret I. Wallhagen, PhD, GNP-BC, AGSF,  
FAAN; Professor, Department of Physiological  
Nursing; Director, John A. Hartford Center  
of Geriatric Nursing, Excellence School  
of Nursing, University of California,  
San Francisco*

“I have been hard of hearing all my life, and had countless examples of struggles. Because of my life experience with being hard of hearing I felt that my knowledge level was extensive, but after taking the HLAA Academy course I was amazed at how much more depth the education and information it offered brought to both my personal life and my career.”

*Olivia Bills  
Hearing Loss Resource Specialist,  
Communication Service for the Deaf, Texas*

“The information learned through the course materials allows me to better reach out and share ways to cope with hearing loss, whether in a work environment or personal situation. The classes are thoroughly educational in all areas of hearing loss...as well as dealing with the human side of ‘hearing less than others.’”

*Lynn Rousseau  
Immediate Past President,  
Hearing Loss Association of Florida*

“As a licensed clinical social worker, a professor of social work, and a person with bilateral hearing loss, I found the course to be a unique blend of research-driven and practical information. The lessons were very well organized, and the accompanying readings

and texts were most helpful. I was able to immediately use the knowledge gained in providing workshops for several HLAA chapters and in social work continuing education programs. The chapter on psycho-social needs of those with hearing loss was exceptional. In fact, a local audiologist has asked if I would facilitate a support group for clients adjusting to hearing loss and wearing aids. I learned so much from this program and intend to refer to the abundant material often!"

*Claudia Dewane, D.Ed., LCSW, BCD  
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania*

"My work as Coordinator of Programs & Services at the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association-Newfoundland and Labrador (CHHA-NL) means working with hard of hearing clients on a regular and continual basis. Past work experience and education as a social work student coupled with the Hearing Loss Support Specialists program provide me with the knowledge base to better serve my clients."

*Aimee Reardon  
Coordinator of Programs & Services  
Canadian Hard of Hearing Association-  
Newfoundland & Labrador*

"This was the BEST course I ever took. As a person with hearing loss and a parent of two sons with hearing loss, I thought it would be a breeze and that I would already know everything. How wrong I was! I learned so many new things that now I am incorporating a lot of this new information in my job dealing with clients with hearing loss."

*Teri Wathen  
Hearing Loss Resource Specialist,  
CAAG, Houston*

*Christopher T. Sutton  
is director of develop-  
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## Learn More About the Academy

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# Having a Not-At-All Bad Hear Day

By Sal Parlato, Jr.

**F**or my stopped-up ears, this particular day started out as a hard one. It included my first appointment with a dentist new to me and to my hearing loss. She and I got off to a good start though, exchanging pleasantries before getting down to the business at hand (or mouth).

The doctor, a specialist, had been briefed by my regular dentist, and our talk required minimal give-and-take about my condition—fortunately, since the opaqueness of her sanitary mask might have muffled her instructions and obstructed her treatment. But, thanks to her patience in unmasking those directions, my hour in the dental chair was routinely painless.

On the way home, I decided to celebrate my surgical survival with a cafeteria Chinese lunch. Usually that soft food allows me to enjoy its problem-free, help-yourself service. This time, however, Catch 21 (not as bad as Catch 22) arose when I ordered iced tea. That request led to “what kind?” followed by what sounded like three choices, which left more than one “Excuse me” and finally an impasse. To the rescue came the kindness of a stranger behind me who, closer up and more clearly, mouthed the brands, *Snapple. Lipton’s or Nestea?*

Back in the more relaxing confines of home, I was greeted by a phone message, but even after two or three playbacks at an increasingly higher volume each time, repetition failed to clarify either the message or the messenger. Was the caller Heidi, Harley, or Holly? Whoever, I was at a loss. To take a stab at answering, I dialed the number I *thought* H/H/H had left, but...bad guess, a wrong number, and a clueless me—at least until my wife Dolores’ later intervention to, yet again, unravel another mystery recording.

**Was I to do or dare to do less than Rocky Stone?  
No way!**

## Seeking Clarification

Another noon-time mix-up gave birth to the equivalent experience of *losing your lunch*, an expression that, in casual parlance, suggests a most repulsive occurrence. For me, though, the phrase represents a social loss that “Seeking Clarification” might have prevented. Here’s how.

By reviewing my novel in his community paper a few years ago, publisher Carmen had done me a good turn, and although he and I had never met, in gratitude I treated him to lunch at “Nick’s Place.” There, in our small talk over antipasto, pasta and pastry, we realized we were fellow veterans of the Korean Era with lots of other things in common. So, before parting we agreed to meet for lunch again that very next week, with my new newspaper friend as reciprocal host at a place to be decided. Over the phone.

*Over the phone.* Uh-oh—that was the rub, because when Carmen called later, I understood that we’d meet at “his place” while he had actually said *Nick’s Place*. Can you guess the rest? Carmen’s forgiving empathy, however, saved the day and our relationship, for he accepted my apology with more than enough residual respect for us to attempt another lunch date at a more clearly spelled-out and agreed-upon site. Eventually, those future appointments always turned out to be at Nick’s Place.

## How Snowy Was It?

How snowy was it? It was so snowy that only six or seven people showed up. Usually the “Open Mic” readings

at Rochester’s literary center draw twice as many writers and poets. That night, though, only the bravest, most motivated, or most foolhardy ventured out. Big crowd or not, I thought the excerpts from my new novel went over well enough. But that was the active part of the evening; the passive was more difficult, because that was when the bouncing-bad acoustics of our Victorian venue forced me to struggle to catch the prose and poetry recited by my fellow authors. The low turnout though, kept the problem from becoming a total loss. How? By giving me more mobility during the give-and-take after each recitation.

Ordinarily, normal classroom-size attendance would have locked our group into more conventional fixed seating—a rigid conformity that would have made it hard for me to dialog with others, either as listener or speaker positioned at a relatively distant lectern. This night, though, our snow-decimated cluster spontaneously sat themselves in a cozy semi-circle, enabling me to move closer to—almost on the laps of—my companions. The result was easier interactive discussion about the material.

My model for such bodily boldness? None other than Howard “Rocky” Stone, founder of Hearing Loss Association of America, *nee* SHHH. As an early member of SHHH living near Bethesda in 1983, I recall Rocky telling me how as a CIA employee when meeting one-on-one with his team leader, he would plop himself down on the edge of his boss’ desk, face-to-face, to guarantee or at least make possible a mistake-free session.

Was I to do or dare to do less than Rocky Stone? No way! 🗨️

---

See page 37 for a special tribute to Sal Parlato, who passed away in November, 2008.



## Salvatore Parlato, Jr.: A Tribute

A long-time member of HAAA, Sal Parlato, author and teacher, passed away on November 12, 2008. He was a member of the HLA-Rochester Chapter and lived in Irondequoit, New York. During the 1954 Korean Crisis, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and wrote a book under the pen name of Chris Madeira, Jr., titled *Marine Corps Boot: In Cold War Parris Island*, based on his experiences at the U.S. Marine Corps boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina. He also wrote a book of poetry he called *A Bad Hear Day*, based on experiences with his hearing loss. Since the 1980s he was a long-time contributor of articles and poetry to *Hearing Loss Magazine*.

After his retirement from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology, he taught sign language classes for children and was an English tutor for the refuge program of the Catholic Family Center.

After corresponding for years with him through letters and later by e-mail, I met Sal and his wife, Dolores, when they came to visit the HAAA office in Bethesda a few years ago. We had a great meeting and I had the chance to purchase a signed copy of *Marine Corps Boot*. Last fall, he sponsored my son, Patrick, and me in the National Capital Area *Walk4Hearing*™. He also loved baseball, football, opera, travel... well, life in general.

This article, "Having a Bad Hear Day," was the last article he submitted to me in fall 2008 before he died. I had accepted it for publication but it didn't make it to print before he left us. Here it is now. I dedicate this article to his wife, Dolores, who said: "Sal was a beautiful human being, and just brilliant.

And, to Sal...Semper Fi. —Barbara Kelley, Editor 



Barbara Kelley presents Sal a personal check for her copy of his book, *Marine Corps Boot*, at the HAAA national office in Bethesda.

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Share your good news. If you have news about what is happening in chapters or state organizations, send 400 or less words and JPG photos (300 dpi) to Editor Barbara Kelley at [bkelly@hearingloss.org](mailto:bkelly@hearingloss.org).

## Georgia's Peach of a Chapter

In 2006 I began a long journey of losing my hearing and was diagnosed with auto immune inner ear disease with hearing and balance dysfunction. I went through a rough time with the psychological effects, hearing aids not adjusted correctly, and not knowing what to expect.

Finally, in January of 2008, I found Hearing Loss Association of America and that there was a chapter in town—the Augusta, Georgia, Chapter. What a life-altering change for me! From the first meeting I finally felt like I belonged with people. It is still a battle sometimes due to my fluctuating hearing but now I can handle and understand better what is happening. Last summer I was asked to serve as president of the chapter, what an honor. I am looking so forward to attending the convention in Nashville and hope to meet you.

Debbie Rish  
Grovetown, Georgia

## A Winter's Meeting in Warm Phoenix

Ann Pruitt, past president of the Boulder, Colorado Chapter, dropped into a Fountain Hills Chapter meeting in Arizona. This February she was



Brenda Battat, executive director of HLAA (left) and Ann Pruitt

traveling in her RV with Hearing Dog Curly Sue and came to listen to Brenda Battat, executive director of HLAA, talk about HLAA and how the organization is focusing on making hearing loss a health issue and raising public awareness about hearing loss through its nationwide *Walk4Hearing*.™

## HLAA-Pennsylvania Gathers Supporters for the Hearing Aid Tax Credit Event

Pennsylvania joins the list of states working hard to bring out people in support of a federal hearing aid tax credit. On March 28 a brunch was held in Ft. Washington, Pennsylvania, to talk about the hearing aid tax credit

with Representative Allyson Schwartz and her constituents.

HLAA is working with a coalition of national organizations supporting the re-introduction of the Hearing Aid Tax Credit bill. At events across the country, HLAA local members and AG Bell members are able to bring in 100-130 people including children with hearing loss to let their representatives know how important a tax credit is to help make hearing aids affordable.

Prior to this event, on November 2, 2008, a large gathering of HLAA members and invited guests came together to celebrate the Hearing Loss Association of Pennsylvania's Fourth Annual Eastern PA Banquet.

HLA-PA presented the 2008 Marcia Finisdore Award for Advocacy to Dr. Louis Sieminski, an audiologist from Kingston who led the campaign for legislation in Pennsylvania requiring that all newborn babies be screened for hearing loss shortly after birth. Keynote Speaker Brenda Battat shared her vision for the future of HLAA and how we can work to make hearing loss a public health issue.

Pennsylvania members do a terrific job of creating awareness about hearing loss. **HTM**

## Vets Welcome Here

A report from the Department of Veterans Affairs estimated that more than 59,000 military members have returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom with hearing loss due to noise exposure. Most often, their hearing loss is caused by the sudden blast of roadside bombs. Visit [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org) for a special section devoted to U.S. veterans of OIF and OEF.

*"Out of all of the disabilities I accrued out of the injury, hearing loss is one of the most noticeable and one with the most frequency of problems for me."*

—CPT Brogan, U.S. Army (retired)



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## HLAA's New Initiative for People Ages 18-35 with Hearing Loss

HearingLossNation is a non-profit online community designed specifically for hard of hearing individuals between the ages of 18 and 35.

Go to [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org) and click on **HearingLossNation** on the home page.



## President's Message *continued from page 8*

The Chapter National Partnership Committee chaired by Jeannette Kanter, Board vice president, has been extremely valuable in providing ideas and bringing the national office and the chapters closer together in their common mission.

I would like to encourage all readers to join us in Nashville for the HLAA Convention to be held on June 18-21. We will be celebrating 30 years of service to all people with hearing loss. **HTM**

*Michael Stone is the president of the HLAA Board of Trustees and is the son of Founder Rocky Stone.*

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By Shanna Bartlett Groves



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Shanna and Scott Groves with their children Weston (8), Ainsley (4) and Jonah (1).

## A Special Delivery



Shanna and Scott Groves

Three-and-a-half years had passed since I lay in the same metal bed, gripping the same rails, staring at the same ceiling, waiting for a baby to be born. The birth of my son had been a joy then. This time, circumstances were different. My labor had started without warning, and by evening, my husband was hurriedly wheeling me down the hall to the nurse's station. It didn't help that I was struggling with a newly-diagnosed hearing loss.

I couldn't understand much of the conversation that my husband had with two nurses about my age. It turns out that my first pregnancy and birth had precipitated a progressive hearing loss that made some speech difficult to understand. As the two nurses met me in the delivery room, their steady voices and direct eye contact made it apparent that my husband had told them I was hard of hearing. When epidural time came, one of the nurses used hand gestures to show how I should lay when the needle was injected.

After my daughter was born, I was taken to a recovery room and greeted by a different attending nurse every few hours. They all seemed to mumble, though I tried to listen to their words closely. Finally I broke down, "Please speak up," I politely asked, "because I have hearing loss, and the hospital noises are too loud for me to understand you."

They cautiously nodded their heads and gave me a brief look that questioned why a 30-year-old can't hear well. Then they re-explained themselves a little louder. I was exhausted from the combination of labor and having to lip read whatever every new nurse that came into the room said.

By the last day of my hospital stay, I had had it with trying to compete with the sound of loud hospital air conditioners as I listened attentively to soft-spoken nurses ask me questions I couldn't hear.

"Hello. I am Monica." The nurse with the Irish lilt and nurturing smile made her way to my bedside.

"How are you feeling?" Her voice was no louder than a whisper, and her accent was distinct. So, one would assume I wouldn't be able to understand her and would have to repeat the hearing loss speech again.

"I'm fine," I answered.

It was amazing that not only could I hear every word she said, but I could also answer her with such assurance. Her familiarity was eating at me.

"I remember you," I said. "You were my nurse when my son was born three years ago."

"Oh," she smiled, "that was a long time ago."

I filled her in on the details of my expanding family and how proud my husband and I were to now have a son and daughter. I told her about the hearing loss, although I assured her I could hear and understand her with no problem.

"I never would have known you couldn't hear well," she said with warm eyes.

As an orderly wheeled me and my daughter out of the hospital the next day, I finally felt calm. It took a nurse named Monica to remind me that, hearing loss or not, I was still the same person I was before. Only this time I had two children to love. ■■■

*HCAA member Shanna Bartlett Groves was diagnosed with progressive hearing loss at the age of 27 after the birth of her first child. She and her husband welcomed a third child into their family in 2007. Shanna has written about her hearing journey in Hearing Loss Magazine (May/June 2008), The Kansas City Star, and MomSense. A version of this story was published in A Cup of Comfort for Nurses (Adams Media). She has completed a novel about hearing loss (Lip Reader, Outskirts Press, summer 2009 release) and can be reached through her Lip Reader blog: [www.shannagroves.blogspot.com](http://www.shannagroves.blogspot.com).*

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