

Hearing Loops at Home

BY LOUIS “LOU” TOUCHETTE

Lou Touchette is a U.S. Air Force Veteran who worked around jet fighter aircraft for 20 years as a crew chief. He knows full well what being out on the flight line every day, exposed to screaming jet engines, can do to hearing. He also knows the wonders that hearing loops can do for home life. Known to many as Loop'n Lou, he's used his technical know-how to install hundreds of hearing loops in an effort to help others with hearing loss live better lives.

Solving problems with technical solutions has always been in my blood. I'm a retired U.S. Air Force and Boeing quality assurance inspector. Starting in 1993, I became interested in the potential benefits of hearing loops through my involvement with the former SHHH Everett Group in Washington state. Although I now have two cochlear implants, I started wearing hearing aids in the mid-1970s.

My wife always wanted the TV at one volume while I needed it at another—or she'd want to read in silence when I wanted to watch TV. I did some research and realized that hearing loops—also called audio induction loops—might solve both our problems.

So, in 1994, I bought a hearing loop kit from a local LoopAmerica products dealer. In the box was an amplifier, a spool of wire, a patch cord, a power supply and an instruction sheet. I followed the directions and installed the wire around the ceiling of our living room, connecting it to the loop amplifier. Then I connected the amplifier to the audio output jacks on the TV with the patch cord. When I was done, I turned on my hearing aid telecoils and instantly heard the TV—and I could hear it from anywhere in the room. I also could adjust the volume on the amplifier to suit myself. My wife was able to adjust, or mute, the TV speakers to suit herself—without affecting my loop volume. We were both very happy with this new arrangement.

A Man on a Mission

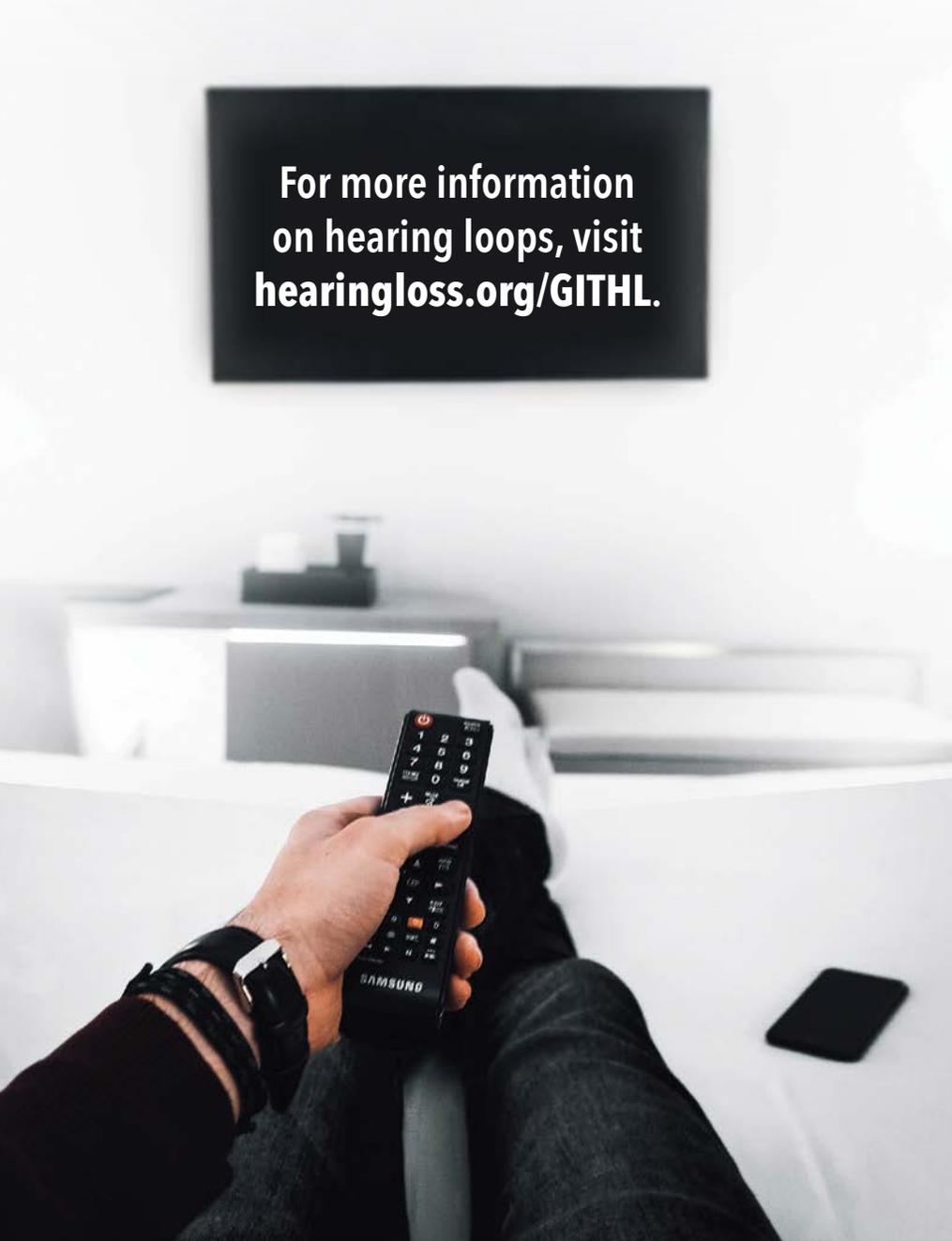
Years later, in 2000, after retiring from Boeing, we relocated to southern Arizona. Since there was no HLAA Chapter in Tucson, we joined a local group called the Adult Loss of Hearing Association. I became a member of its board of directors and a leader of the “Let's Loop Tucson” initiative.

I concentrated on community outreach, giving presentations about hearing loops and explaining how they can help people hear better in their homes, houses of worship and other venues. I also taught home loop installation classes and promoted the importance of telecoils in hearing aids—without which hearing loops are much less valuable.

Over the course of our 17 years in southern Arizona, we saw rapid growth in the number of looped venues. In the Tucson area alone, I'm aware of more than 100 looped houses of worship, libraries, hearing aid provider offices, university classrooms, public service offices, social centers and more.

One More Time

Last year, when we moved back to Washington state, my first goal was to install a hearing loop in our new home in Mount Vernon. I installed one in our den and a second one in the ceiling of the family room. Since the living room is right above our family room, the ceiling loop connects to both the downstairs and upstairs TVs.



For more information
on hearing loops, visit
hearingloss.org/GITHL.

“Meanwhile, word had spread that I knew how to install hearing loops in homes as a hobby. So for many years, I helped others install and enjoy hearing loops. To date, I’ve helped put loops in more than 350 homes. It goes without saying that home hearing loops may have saved many a marriage.”

In that part of the house, I can use the single loop, regardless of which of the two rooms I’m in.

For anyone who might feel adventuresome enough to install a loop in their own home, there are

many websites that offer easy-to-follow instructions and tips. For example, if a room has carpeting, you can easily install a wire under it. Just lift the carpet off the tack strips around the room, place the wire

Looping in Whatcom County, Washington

My wife Linda and I moved back to Washington state in August 2018. We’re hoping to continue to help others with hearing loss live better.

In fact, I have big goals in mind for hearing loops in Whatcom and Skagit Counties.

I’ve joined the HLAA Whatcom County Chapter, as well as the Burlington Cochlear Community Chapter of Cochlear Americas, a support group. In addition, I’m a member of the Skagit County Accessible Community Advisory Committee, where I focus on promoting hearing loops and advising people on installations.

Cheri Perazzoli, director of advocacy for the HLAA Washington State Association and founder of the “Let’s Loop Seattle” initiative, is guiding the creation of the “Let’s Loop Northwest Washington” campaign.

Our loop team participates in health fairs, where we install temporary hearing loops and give demonstrations. We also make loop receivers with telecoils available so people who don’t yet have hearing aids or cochlear implants can put on headphones and hear the same high-quality sound that those of us with telecoils do. We provide loop demonstrations at other venues as well, upon request.

Pushing for Best Practices in Telecoil Education

Hearing health professionals are the first line of education for consumers with hearing loss. These professionals should be educating patients about the benefits of telecoils. The importance of their role can't be overstated.

We believe that once people are fitted with new hearing aids or cochlear implants, and their telecoils are activated, they should be able to immediately try out their telecoil(s) in a calibrated looped office by watching a few minutes of TV. Then, if the sound is too weak or strong, the provider can tweak it before the individual even leaves the office, eliminating the need for a follow-up visit. Once the telecoil has been properly adjusted, the individual should be able

to hear just as well as they did in the provider's office when at any venue with a calibrated loop.

To promote these best practices, the "Let's Loop Northwest Washington" team—myself included—installed a hearing loop in the Western Washington University clinical lab. Now audiology students there can receive proper training on the calibration of loops and telecoils.

"Let's Loop Northwest Washington" will continue to educate hearing professionals about the benefits of hearing loops and the importance of telecoils in hearing devices. Importantly, we'll urge them to install loops in their own offices—so people can test and understand the benefits of hearing loops without delay.

beneath the carpet, and then press the carpet back down onto the tack strip. Alternatively, there are simple-to-install loop pads that can slip under a chair to provide the loop, serving the same function as the wire.

I encourage anyone who wants to install a hearing loop at home to reach out to me with any questions at loutouchette1@gmail.com. **HL**

For more information, you can also go to hearingloss.org/hearing-loop-installation.



Louis "Lou" Touchette served in the U.S. Air Force from 1961 to 1981, retiring as a senior master sergeant.

He was stationed five years in Japan, two in Vietnam and 13 at bases in Montana, Michigan, Texas and Colorado. He holds a bachelor's degree in technical management and a master's degree in procurement management. He and his wife Linda have five children, twelve grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

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