

Hearing MAGAZINE Loss

September/October 2007

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When Good
Captions Go
Bad: HDTV
Accessibility

Convention
2007
Wrap-Up

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Hearing MAGAZINE LOSS

Volume 28, Number 5

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Frozen by Fear

Within the membership of the Hearing Loss Association of America, we have hundreds of people who have the potential to make a difference through their involvement and leadership.

One summer in North Carolina, the wooded campus, where my office was located, became infested by snakes. These were not the dreaded copperhead snakes, water moccasins, or rattlesnakes that frequent my home state. We had a problem with large black snakes. A four or five-foot long snake might be hanging from a tree outside your office, or curled up beside your car.

The situation took a new turn when the maintenance crew found a snake curled up beneath my desk. My staff all swore they did not put it there, but I had my doubts.

Despite assurances that these snakes were not poisonous (though they could bite), life at the office changed. Walking to my car, sitting at my desk, and even visiting the restroom became tense activities. Pulling open a desk drawer took some time and usually involved a large stick and a flashlight.

Fear changed my everyday behavior, as it does with all of us. Sometimes fears are insecurities or uncertainties. Sometimes our fears stem from a childhood incident or an adult trauma.

Within the membership of the Hearing Loss Association of America, we have hundreds of people who have the potential to make a difference through their involvement and leadership. Yet, they often hesitate because of uncertainties or insecurities. Perhaps their fears are justified after years of communication struggles in the workplace, at home, or in the community. Maybe some feel beaten down by years of discrimination or isolation.

There are several challenges that people face when deciding to get involved in a cause like hearing loss.

1. Mindset of scarcity. This mindset occurs when someone feels a lack of something needed to even make it through life. Usually this is financial, but could involve time or energy. A person may legitimately feel that so much time and energy is spent just

“There are people whose lives will be changed, waiting only for you to step forward from the shadows to get involved. It is not easy, but it is worth it!”

trying to communicate in everyday living, there is nothing left to give.

2. Unsure of what to do. A person may want to be involved, but is simply unsure of the next step. Usually, it is the first step that stops people from moving forward.

3. Afraid of making a mistake. We all dreaded the red marks we saw in school. We remember the sinking feeling we had when a paper with lots of red lines and scribbles on a paper was returned to us. No one wants to see that repeated as adults.

4. Someone else is more qualified. This is the idea that someone, somewhere is more qualified to do something than we are. “Leave it to the professionals” would be a favorite phrase for this struggle.

So how do we handle these issues? Each and every one of these challenges is a legitimate problem. These are not mistaken thoughts; these are real problems.

Practical Considerations for Overcoming These Real-Life Concerns

Most people who get involved in anything already feel “maxed out” to some extent. If the perfect volunteer is wealthy, rested and bored then we will never have any volunteers. People give of their precious and limited resources because something is so important to them personally they


feel compelled to step forward.

The first step, perhaps the hardest one, is just to show up. You can show up for the chapter meeting, attend the association business meeting, or attend local training. One has to start somewhere in order to eventually find a place to serve. Even national leaders are people who had a first-time meeting experience. There was a time when they were a visitor and no one knew them, except maybe the person who invited them. Show up, and see what happens!

One of my favorite quotations is: "If you don't make mistakes, you're not working on hard-enough problems. And that's a big mistake." (F. Wozniak).

Any time we take a chance or take a risk, we are stepping outside our comfort zone. We should not be surprised when we make mistakes. Admit them, try to avoid them the next time, and keep moving forward. Do not let fear of mistakes paralyze you.

If you feel someone else is more qualified, you are probably correct. The problem is that person is not here and they are not stepping forward. We do not need them; we need *you*. Bring whatever you have and make whatever difference you can. We do not need a few people who are doing big things; we need thousands of people who are doing small things.

The final word on these issues is that if the people who truly understand hearing loss on a personal level do not step forward to create awareness, promote our organization, and educate others about hearing loss, then no one else will. There are people whose lives will be changed, waiting only for you to step forward from the shadows to get involved. It is not easy, but it is worth it! 

Terry D. Portis, Ed.D., is executive director of the Hearing Loss Association of America. He can be reached at tportis@hearingloss.org. You can read the executive director's blog at www.lightkeepersjournal.org. He and his wife, Denise, and their two children, Kyrsten and Christopher, live in the Washington, D.C., metro area.



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Alexander Graham Bell
ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING



President's Message

Across the country there are thousands of us who are leading richer, happier, and more productive lives because Rocky Stone had a brilliant idea and the determination to make his message heard.

November is founder's month for the Hearing Loss Association of America when we celebrate our beginnings. This November the board of trustees, at its meeting in Bethesda, will discuss and approve an ongoing way to remember and recognize Howard E. "Rocky" Stone.

In 1979, Rocky established our organization as Self Help for Hard of Hearing People. He had the wisdom to understand that people with hearing loss don't have to be consigned to a life of isolation, the vision to see that there are many things we can do to improve our communication with others, and the spirit to spend years carrying his message to people with and without hearing loss.

What he knew was that hearing loss can have a deadly effect on our relationships—whether at work, with friends, or within the family. What he refused to accept was that nothing could be done to change that disastrous dynamic. He knew that people with hearing loss can and should have a rich and satisfying quality of life as part of mainstream America—and that communication is the answer. This simple but powerful idea continues as the guiding light of our organization to this day.

Millions of people who have never heard of our organization have reaped the benefits of Rocky's idea. Whenever any of us with hearing loss picks up an amplified telephone or flips on captioned television, or asks for an assistive listening device at a theater, or watches a captioned movie, or talks on a captioned telephone, we are able to do so because of Rocky's conviction that technology can and must help people with hearing loss stay connected.

A Legacy of Self Help

Certainly, this is a lasting legacy of Rocky Stone. But those of us who are members of the Hearing Loss Association have benefited from an additional legacy—his idea that we can learn

and share and put into effect many small strategies that, taken together, will have a large impact on the quality of our lives. He knew, and we know, that even the best hearing aids, the most up-to-date cochlear implant, the largest array of assistive devices, and completely accessible technology are not enough. They don't replace the human ear.

Despite all the advances—and they have been huge—communication glitches will continue to occur. Hearing people won't know or will forget the best way to communicate with us. We won't understand what is being said or we will mistakenly think we do. To keep our communications on track, we need to know an array of supplementary strategies to set things straight and, just as important, be willing to use them. Self help, while no longer part of our name, is still an essential part of who we are.

Across the country there are thousands of us who are leading richer, happier, and more productive lives because Rocky Stone had a brilliant idea and the determination to make his message heard. Those of us who knew him will never forget him, of course. But, the Board wants to be sure that those who never had that privilege know what a remarkable thing he did. By the time you read this, the Board will be discussing the best way to remember and recognize our founder.

Do you have a suggestion that we should consider? If so, we would welcome your input. Please e-mail me by October 15. Rocky's legacy deserves to be well remembered. ■■■

Anne T. Pope is president of the Hearing Loss Association of America Board of Trustees. She lives in New York City and can be reached at president@hearingloss.org. She welcomes your comments regarding Founder's Month by October 15, 2007.

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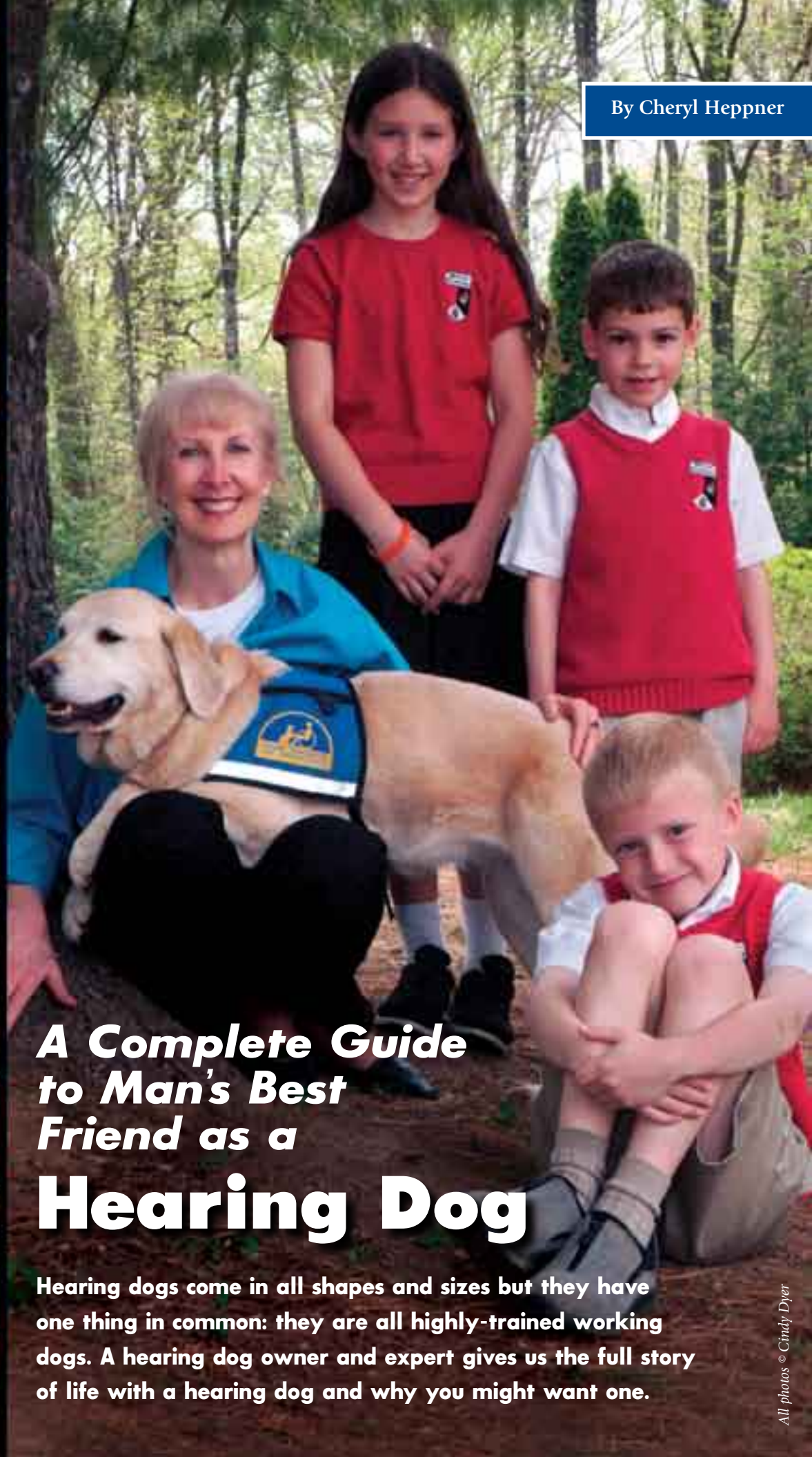


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By Cheryl Heppner



A Complete Guide to Man's Best Friend as a Hearing Dog

Hearing dogs come in all shapes and sizes but they have one thing in common: they are all highly-trained working dogs. A hearing dog owner and expert gives us the full story of life with a hearing dog and why you might want one.

It had been a long, tiring day. I sat on my hotel bed, kicked off my slippers, and picked up the magazine next to my hearing aid on the bedside table. I was eager to climb under the covers and read until I dozed off. Suddenly a reddish-golden paw touched my leg, and I turned to see Dana, my hearing dog, whip around and head toward the door.

Following Dana to the door, I peered through the peephole and saw nothing but an empty hallway. Puzzled and a bit annoyed by Dana's false alert that seemed to indicate someone was knocking on the door, I headed back to bed. I had taken only a couple of steps when Dana's paw pushed hard against my thigh, and she wheeled once again toward the door. Her body language made it clear that it was imperative for me to respond immediately, so I cautiously opened the door to check for someone outside the range of the peephole.

As I began to crack open the door, Dana pushed through the crack and into the hallway. There was no one in sight, and now I was really irritated. I called her, but she refused to come back. I walked toward her and reached to grab her collar, but as soon as I approached she ran a few more feet up the hallway. Again I walked toward her and made a grab; again she ran a few more feet from me.

Then my temper, about to explode at Dana's mischief, suddenly evaporated. I saw people from other rooms scurrying for stairways. As I tried to get my bearings and comprehend what I was seeing, I realized that I could feel the vibrations of many feet pounding, perhaps mixed with the vibrations from loud alarms going off.

Dana's extraordinary intelligence and training got me safely out of the hotel during a fire that night. It earned her my much increased respect and trust. It also helped me, for the first time in my life, to relax enough to get a good night's sleep without another human in a hotel room.

Hearing Dog Alerting

I didn't really understand or appreciate the difficulty of finding a sound. It just seemed to be something automatic that people and animals did if they could hear. Hearing dogs like Dana are trained to alert their human partners to sounds. They usually alert through physical contact to get the partner's attention, and then take action to connect their partner to the sound they are alerting for.

My profound hearing loss occurred shortly before my seventh birthday from spinal meningitis. I've had three hearing dogs since 1974. Toby was a Shetland sheepdog that I trained myself, and it showed. She used her high-pitched bark to alert me. It was conveniently in the very narrow range of sound I could hear, at least as long as she was nearby. The barking alerts were great for me, but not so great for people who came to visit. This was especially true in Toby's later years. By then my husband Fred and I had three other Shelties who thought she was a goddess and copied her behavior.

For my second hearing dog, I chose to apply to Canine Companions for Independence (CCI), and happily, they accepted me. I'd seen one of the program's service dogs at a conference in Washington, D.C. and I was completely taken by the seamless work, trust and affection of both dog and partner.

Canine Companions for Independence matched me with Dana, a golden retriever, who used one or both paws to alert me. Our partnership lasted from 1991 to 2002, when ironically she had to be retired due to progressive hearing loss. Galaxy, my partner since 2002, is also from Canine Companions for Independence. She is a Labrador/golden retriever cross who alerts me by touching and pushing me with her nose.

The Variety of Hearing Dogs

Hearing dogs come in all shapes and sizes. Many people prefer to have smaller hearing dogs because there's less to bathe, groom, feed,

and pick up after. Smaller dogs also fit more easily under restaurant tables or airplane seats.

One of the best hearing dogs I've met was a tall standard poodle with regal bearing, and I've seen "pocket pets" give alerts to their partners.

Things Hearing Dogs Do

Some of the sounds hearing dogs can alert to are a door bell, door knock, teakettle whistle, kitchen timer, telephone ring, smoke alarm, alarm clock, and the various beeps and bells of kitchen and laundry appliances. Once the partner learns how to do sound training with a hearing dog, new sounds can be added at any time. It just takes practice, patience, rewards to keep the dog motivated, and a willing, dedicated training partner to produce or activate the sound being trained for.

Each person with a hearing dog has to think about their lifestyle and make decisions about which sounds they will want the dog to do. Some sounds can be difficult or impractical. There can also be unintended consequences. Californian Paul Ogden's first hearing dog was trained to alert him and lead him to people who called his name. This is a good thing when trying to locate someone calling you in a house, but Paul was also a college professor. Students would see him on campus and get a kick out of calling his name and having his hearing dog escort him to them. As you might imagine, this could lengthen the time it took him to get across the campus.

Before receiving my cochlear implant, I couldn't hear a telephone ring unless I was sitting next to it or close by. I chose not to use my hearing dog to alert me to my phone at work or at home because both places had multiple phone lines and all the phones had rings that sounded alike. Using a flashing light to alert me when my phone rang made more sense than having Dana alert me whenever any of the phones rang. On the other hand, I found it surprisingly easy to teach both Dana and Galaxy to

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Hearing Dog

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alert me to the distinctive vibration/ring tone pattern of my pager. This freed me from having to wear the pager all the time.

Some hearing dogs will be good at generalizing sounds and don't have to be trained to alert to the same sounds in different locations. Galaxy alerts me to a teakettle whistle or kitchen timer in anyone's house, as Dana did before her. It hasn't escaped me that they excelled at alerts for anything in or around the kitchen, home of the yummiest treats. Teaching a dog to alert to a baby cry is another sound that can be a good idea.

Beyond the sound work, hearing dogs can learn other handy things. One of my personal favorites is having Galaxy locate and retrieve keys I've dropped, especially when I'm outside at night or struggling with an umbrella in pouring rain!

The Challenging Work of a Hearing Dog

The work of a hearing dog is very challenging. Not only is the dog expected to alert its partner to a sound even if it is tired or asleep, it must alert for the sound every time it occurs. Other kinds of assistance dogs are given a command or encouragement to do their work. A hearing dog has to start working without any direction or motivation from its partner.

A hearing dog must recognize a sound it has been trained to alert to, find its partner and give the partner an alert. Then it must locate where the sound is coming from, lead the partner to it, or lead the partner to a target area identified for that alert. This process requires five steps that have to be accurate and happen very quickly. Any failure could mean that the partner will miss a phone call, visitor or pot boiling over. Hearing dogs that can do all these things consistently and well are truly extraordinary.

When I arrived home with Dana, fresh from graduation at the Canine Companions for Independence training center in New York, I lived in a three-story townhouse and worked in a building with rooms on either side of a long stretch of hallway.

In both places, Dana would try to alert me to a sound and then become confused about where to take me. I couldn't figure out why her work could be so perfect in New York but not in Virginia.

I was fortunate that Adele Polk, the newest of my staff, had previously worked for a hearing dog program and had a hearing dog herself. She knew what was happening. She explained that Dana's confusion was the result of the sounds reverberating and echoing. All Dana's sound training had been done using the same two rooms at the training center, which had very different acoustics and background sounds. As a result, Dana had developed a habit of always alerting me from the same side and then heading off in the same direction to find the sound. With practice, Dana learned to quickly zero in on the location of sounds in her new home and workplace, and lead me to them.

The complexity involved in locating sounds is a major limitation on the sounds a hearing dog can alert to. To get the best consistency and accuracy, the sounds must be ones that don't happen just one time but are repeated. Hearing my name called might wake Galaxy from sound sleep, but she'd need to hear the sound again—and maybe several more times—in order to find her way to it.

Although a hearing dog will learn the specific five-step process there can be some exceptions. An important one for me is the alert for a smoke detector. When Galaxy hears this sound, she is trained to alert me and then lie down. This tells me that I need to immediately leave the building. Otherwise, following our usual pattern, Galaxy might well be leading me in the direction of a fire.

Gaining Independence *By Denise Portis*

I have been in training for over a year and was matched with Chloe, my hearing assistance dog, this past January. I trained for a partner so that I could gain some independence. Chloe alerts me to the doorbell, timers in the kitchen, the telephones, and my name being called. It has been a great relief to know I no longer need my children to alert me to sounds when my cochlear implant (CI) is off.

I have mild to moderate symptoms of Meniere's, so Chloe was also trained to help me with my balance, a problem many with hearing loss seem to have. I am going up and down stairs with much more confidence now.

A bonus I was not expecting was learning to watch where Chloe looks.

Only having a CI on one side, at times I have trouble with direction. Chloe never fails to look in the direction in which a voice or environmental sounds are coming.

I will have an "empty nest" in a few years with our two children being off to college. Chloe will really be a valuable partner when that happens.

Denise Portis is a member of the Frederick, Maryland, Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America. She is married to Terry Portis and is a teacher who currently home schools the Portis' two children, Kyrsten and Christopher. Denise and Chloe were trained at Fidos for Freedom.





In May, Cheryl Heppner and Galaxy visited Siena Academy in Great Falls, Virginia, where children saw firsthand what a hearing dog can do for a person with hearing loss.

Qualities of a Good Hearing Dog

Hearing dogs must possess qualities beyond good health and intelligence. They must have a work ethic so strong that they are self-motivated and enjoy working. It also helps to be the kind of dog who can work fast.

Martha Hoffman, author of *Lend Me an Ear*, a book based on her experiences as a trainer for the San Francisco SPCA Hearing Dog Program, wrote that dogs who were naturals for hearing dog work would prefer to go to sounds even when distracted by offers of food. These naturals were also active, quick to wake from sleep, and extremely curious about everything around them.

A hearing dog must also have a number of crucial qualities to go safely out in public. At the top of the list is good temperament. The dog must be friendly and adaptable. If startled, it must have the ability to continue paying attention, respond to commands, and remain under control.

My hearing dogs and I have experienced all kinds of situations. At one large airport, when I walked into the restroom with Dana, a young girl began screaming uncontrollably in fear, jumped at least three feet onto a coun-

ter housing a row of sinks, and covered in the corner, still screaming.

Strange children have suddenly tried to hit my hearing dogs; other children have tried to pull the dog's hair, ears, or tail. People on bicycles, rollerblades and skateboards have appeared out of nowhere. Cars, trucks and buses have backfired and blown their horns close by. Horses pulling carriages have appeared, clapping down city streets. Helicopters have flown overhead. Other pet dogs and even other assistance dogs have tried to attack my hearing dogs.

Another crucial quality for a hearing dog is outstanding social etiquette. Sniffing merchandise in stores, grooming, scratching, excited greetings, jumping on people, growling, barking, eating food on the floor or sidewalk, and other behaviors are not acceptable in public places.

Some individuals with hearing dogs choose to keep them for work that is largely at home and within their yard. As a result, these partners may not concern themselves with training for good public behavior. I think that is unfortunate because learning this behavior helps when taking the dog to the

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Some Reading Resources

If your library or bookstore doesn't have these books, you can find them online at places like www.Amazon.com, or through the International Association of Assistance Dog Partners at www.iaadp.org.

Chelsea: The Story of a Signal Dog (1992) By Paul Ogden

A book with personal experiences of a husband and wife with hearing loss and their hearing dog, written by the husband.

The Canine Good Citizen: Every Dog Can Be One (second edition)

By Jack and Wendy Volhard

A handbook for understanding good public behavior for a dog and how to accomplish it.

Lend Me an Ear: The Temperament, Selection and Training of the Hearing Dog (1999)

By Martha Hoffman

A detailed book about hearing dogs geared toward trainers; many very interesting discussions and stories of people with hearing dogs.

Partners in Independence (1997)

by Ed and Toni Eames

A book about assistance dogs which touches on their history, traveling, care, and has a section on disability rights.

Some Web Resources

AKC's Canine Good Citizen® Program: www.akc.org/events/cgc/index.cfm

Assistance Dogs International: www.adionline.org/

Delta Society: www.deltasociety.org/ServiceAccessAccess.htm

Department of Justice (Business Brief on Service Animals): www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/svcanimb.htm

International Association of Hearing Dog Partners: www.iaadp.org/

Hearing Dog *cont. from page 13*

vet's office, going for a neighborhood walk, or visiting friends or relatives with the dog. There might also be emergencies such as a flood that could require evacuation from the dog's familiar surroundings to more chaotic ones.

Some partners have been fortunate to have hearing dogs that go beyond being good at what they do to a level of greatness. These dogs have qualities that can't be taught, which make them special.

The night that Dana's actions got me to safety during the hotel fire, she broke the rules. She used intelligent disobedience to lure me out the door and down the hallway. It was only one of thousands of times she found magical ways to communicate important information or bring me comfort. I have heard from many other partners whose hearing dogs connect with them in a very powerful way.

Galaxy is full of empathy. Dog trainers have a saying that emotions travel down the leash; Galaxy and I would be a classic example. But Galaxy's gift goes beyond that. I have had a number of powerful experiences where she sensed deep and painful emotion in

The Magnificent Flying Bogster

By Sara Laufer

Bogie, my two-year-old Golden Retriever, blissfully flies through the air, alerting me with zeal to the phone, the door, the timer, and the occasional cat who ventures into our yard. The MFB, as my boyfriend calls him, earned his nickname shortly after Bogie and I became a team in 2006.

Bogie was napping tranquilly on the living room loveseat one evening when the doorbell rang. Instantly—as if electrified—Bogie catapulted to the sofa where I was reading, clearing about six feet of airspace in his flight, his paws in spread-eagle fashion, and his floppy ears looking like wings because of the force generated in his launch.

While he was airborne, Bogie was poised, and his expression was one of unadulterated joy. His landing, alas, was not graceful. Bogie—all 65 pounds of him—hit my lap with a fwomp! that knocked my breath right out of me. I gasped for air as Bogie ran between the door and me until I finally greeted our visitor.

Sara B. Laufer is a demographer and consultant specializing in disability research and policy analysis from Davis, California. Sara and Bogie Laufer are graduates of the San Francisco SPCA Hearing Dog Program. Her website is www.whatgirl.net. Photo by Daniel Jones.



other people and has gone to them to give them comfort. Dana also had this amazing gift, so it no longer startles me.

Sometimes you get humorous stories from the behavior of these wonderful dogs. Recently I heard from

a woman who bought a weather radio. The radio's alarm went off at 4:30 in the morning, before she'd had time to teach her hearing dog to alert her to it. The dog, stunned awake by the sound, jumped on the bed. Not having had any prior instruction, he apparently decided to cover all the bases. He nudged her on the face, on her arms, in her ribs, on her legs, and then dived under the covers! When she peered down at him, all she could see were two eyes and a brown nose looking up at her from under the sheet.

Etiquette for Public Interactions with Hearing Dogs

There is etiquette for public interactions with a hearing dog and its partner. You should always assume that the hearing dog and its partner are working, and do nothing to interrupt their work. This doesn't mean you can't say hello, ask a question or exchange pleasantries, but it does mean that you should always ask the partner for permission to interact with the dog.

Hearing dogs may have a high work ethic and enjoy doing their

© Cindy Dyer



Cheryl says, "One frequent questions I am asked by children is 'does your dog bite?' When Cheryl released Galaxy from duty and the children were able to pet her, they learned she was more likely to lick them than to bite them. As instructed, the children asked permission before petting Galaxy.

work, but maintaining that enjoyment takes motivation from the partner. Each dog is different, but all dogs have something they love to do. It can be food, petting, praise, toys, play or any number of other things. I once knew a dog whose greatest joy in life was to have a clump of grass thrown in the air for him to shred.

Toby loved verbal praise and the occasional treat as a reward, but I never had to worry about her interactions with other people. She was not interested or distracted by them, even people with food or cool toys. Her breed tends to bond closely with one person or a family and doesn't have interest in anyone else.

I always told people that I could teach Dana to do anything if there was food involved. Throughout our time together, she was either eating or looking for her next meal. I never gave permission for anyone to give her food. Dana also liked petting, but it never trumped food for motivation. If someone asked to pet her and it was appropriate, I would give Dana a "release" command so she knew that she had been temporarily released from work.

Galaxy is motivated by food, petting and play. I allow petting on my command but not food, and I use play as a reward if appropriate. In case you're wondering how I have defined "appropriate" petting for Dana and Galaxy, it depends on the situation. I wouldn't want petting from a child whose hands are sticky from a lollipop, or when I am in a restaurant where my dog is doing a fine job of being discreet under the table, or where stopping for the petting might block the foot traffic in a mall.

Some of my public forays can be a great source of amusement. A couple of years ago I was walking with Galaxy down a sidewalk in Washington, D.C. As I came to a crowded area, people suddenly started to leap from my path. I was momentarily puzzled until I realized that my dark sunglasses to battle the glare from the brilliant sunlight made these people think that I was blind. It was all I could do not to burst

out laughing. I was quite touched by their vigorous courtesy.

I am mistaken for a blind person fairly often because people are still not very familiar with hearing dogs. They see my dog wearing its bright blue CCI vest and jump to conclusions. My husband Fred once overheard a couple who saw me walking with Galaxy at a mall; they were arguing over whether I was blind or faking it.

Some Common Questions

The most frequent question I am asked comes from children and parents: "Does your dog bite?" I am sometimes successful in not snickering before replying that Galaxy would be more likely to lick them to death. Then, as a tip for future interactions, I thank them for asking me before petting her and tell them how helpful that is.

Here are a few of the other questions I am most often asked:

How does your dog fly with you?

Assistance dogs don't have to be shipped as cargo on a plane. They can fly with their partners, so Galaxy accompanies me as I traverse the airport, go through security, and board the plane. During the flight she likes to be in the space under the seat in front of me; I think it gives her that ancient wolf-den sense of being protected. From this position, she also gets to keep an eye on me. Her favorite thing about flying is going through security because the agents have to give her a pat down. Sometimes she has to work hard to restrain herself from going all wiggledy-boo with happiness.

Why do you have a hearing dog when you have a cochlear implant?

I enjoy all the things I can hear with my cochlear implant, but I don't think I've ever needed a hearing dog as much as I did the first three months after my implant was activated. I had been deaf for over 40 years and the world was full of sounds I couldn't recognize or had never heard. Gas pumps that talked to me, plumbing that made odd and

continued on page 16

Laws That Cover Hearing Dogs

The International Association of Assistance Dog Partners and Delta Society are among the organizations that can provide information about the rights of hearing dogs and their partners to access in various settings and situations. Here are some laws that apply:

The Americans with Disabilities Act

Among the civil rights laws that protect the access rights of people who have hearing dogs and other assistance dogs, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is probably the best known. It covers accessibility in employment, state and local government programs, and public accommodations. Examples of public accommodations are businesses and organizations that serve the public such as restaurants, hotels, theaters, doctors' offices, pharmacies, stores, museums, libraries, parks, private schools and day care centers. The ADA does not cover private clubs and religious organizations, though they may be required to make their programs and services accessible by another law if they receive state or federal funding.

The Air Carrier Access Act

Air travel access is covered by the Air Carrier Access Act of 1986 (ACAA). It has protections for the right of people with disabilities to be accompanied by their service dog on commercial air carriers or when accessing services owned or operated by commercial air carriers.

The Fair Housing Act

The Fair Housing Act protects individuals with disabilities in most types of housing, except for certain single-family homes, including their right to have an assistance dog.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act covers accessibility for children in schools up to age 21.

Hearing Dog *cont. from page 15*

unnerving grumbles, cell phones that chirped like birds—who knew?

I would look at Dana when I was puzzled by a strange sound. Using her body language as a guide, I could often pinpoint where the sound was coming from and whether it was something routine to ignore or something unusual that might be a possible concern.

Seven years later, I still need a hearing dog. I have only one cochlear implant; my other ear has no hearing at all. I can't hear distinct sounds in the presence of noise like traffic, conversations around me, or fans running. What I do hear I don't always recognize, but now it's Galaxy I look to for cues. If someone calls my name, I might recognize it, but I have no idea which direction it's coming from.

I'd still want to have a hearing dog if for no other reason than the sense of security. When my cochlear

implant battery dies, when I take off my cochlear implant processor at night, when I'm swimming or in the shower, I'm completely deaf. Unlike technology, hearing dogs don't need batteries or electricity to run.

Why do you bring your hearing dog here since your dog is not working? (asked in stores, restaurants, etc.)

My dog is always working when she is with me. You build a powerful bond with a dog when you are together 24 hours a day, and you learn to recognize and interpret small things about each other from a constant stream of information. Galaxy will make eye contact with me and then turn her head to stare in the direction of the building's exit if she needs a toilet break. Should I be too focused on the task at hand to take this hint, she will start to gently tug her leash in the direction of the exit.

If someone is bearing down rather dangerously on me from behind as we walk together, she'll pin her ears a bit

to the side of her head and furrows will appear on her forehead. Her tail will wag a certain way when one of my staff arrives in the office and another when it's someone new to the office. One day, while shopping for food, I heard a horrible crash and looked to her in alarm. She startled a bit, and had her head facing one direction with her ears cocked, but then she relaxed, so I did too. Two or three aisles later, in the direction she'd been looking, I found an entire stacked display of cans had come crashing to the floor.

There are many other reasons why my hearing dog goes with me almost everywhere. I might be stopping to shop on my way home and I wouldn't risk that she might be stolen or hurt if left in the car, not to mention that it could be too hot or too cold for safety. It's also not uncommon for hearing dogs to get separation anxiety when separated from their partners.

By taking Galaxy with me everywhere possible, I can have opportunities to constantly practice good public behavior and continue adapting to new situations. This is very important to me, because when I travel, I want to know that her behavior will be impeccable anywhere. I will need to eat out, go shopping, get my fitness workouts, get my haircut, catch a cab, attend receptions and hey, maybe visit a modern art museum with some massive, wild and crazy sculptures.

Aren't you concerned about people with allergies to dogs?

Yes, I am very concerned about that. I appreciate it when people inform me of an allergy to dogs. Although I may have the legal right of access to public places with my hearing dog, I believe it's important to look for solutions where both my need and that of the person with the allergy can be met.

At my local gym, I made arrangements with another woman who had allergies. These included coming on certain days at certain times and "parking" my hearing dog in certain areas as I did my workouts.

Jesse and Liddy—Athletes and Scholars

By Jesse Fonner

Liddy is an adorable black Labrador and we were meant to be together. We both graduated from the San Francisco-SPCA Hearing Dog Program in June 2005. At the time, I was a 23-year old student at Stanford University and Liddy was 1-1/2 years old.

Every day, Liddy and I attended class, office hours with professors, meetings, study sessions, and social events. She came with me to my daily gymnastics and springboard/tower diving practices, keeping a watchful eye on me as I somersaulted and twisted in the air. She won the hearts of many faculty, staff, friends, and classmates alike. In fact, Liddy became somewhat of a celebrity on campus.

I have a profound hearing loss in both ears and Liddy alerts me to many environmental sounds by nudging me with her nose and leading me to them. The most important sounds are the fire alarm, door knock, kitchen timer, emergency vehicles screaming by, ATVs zooming up behind us, etc. Liddy and I are active and outdoorsy. We love to walk, jog and explore trails. Liddy is my guardian angel!

Jesse Fonner graduated from Stanford University this June with a master's degree in urban planning. He was on the varsity diving team at Stanford. He lives in the Washington, D.C., area, and is pursuing a career in the urban and transportation planning field. His parents raise puppies for the local chapter of Guide Dogs for the Blind.



Fielding Tough Comments

I've also had several people make similar comments that concerned me because of their perceptions and implications. Here are three of them with my responses:

I think it's awful that your dog never gets to play.

Just because my dog is an assistance dog and works for me doesn't mean that it doesn't get any down time. My hearing dogs have all loved to play, and play time for them is always built into every day.

Toby loved to run. Dana loved to play "crackerdog," an entertainment of her own creation which combined some haphazard combination of zooming around the yard, leaping, and getting low to the ground to make quick, sharp turns. Galaxy loves to chase a frisbee or ball. On days when weather made it impossible to go outside, my dogs have had a grand time playing hide and seek as my husband and I found creative places to hide around the house. This play was also great for practicing their skills for locating sounds.

You were always so independent; I can't believe you got a hearing dog.

A hearing dog has made me feel so much more independent! I can relax more because with my hearing dog I always know more about my surroundings and feel more protected from danger.

My hearing dog and I are dependent on each other. A partnership like this, built totally on trust, is one of the most rewarding things anyone can experience.

I don't feel safe in my neighborhood, so I'd like to apply for a hearing dog because I need protection.

Hearing dog programs do not train their dogs for protection. These hearing dogs might alert you to the sound of an intruder, but they are selected for friendliness, not for ability to attack.

What Partners Like Best About Their Hearing Dogs

Years ago, I helped to set up a group for hearing dog partners in my area. At one of our meetings we talked about what we liked best about having canine partners. We agreed that it wasn't any one of the many great things they are trained to alert us to. It was something harder for us to define. The world has an added richness because of the information our dogs give us. We discover things we wouldn't know about without them. And, there is such relief in knowing we don't always have to be in a state of high alert. We trust that our dogs will do their jobs and we will know of anything important.

One hearing dog partner captured it well. "There is much my hearing dog does that is not about alerting that contributes to my overall safety and ability to pick up on things I otherwise would not notice," she wrote. "I see him as being as essential as my glasses and hearing aids, which I also don't ever leave at home."

Challenges in Having a Hearing Dog

There are challenges in having a hearing dog, too. When I got Dana, I found four things were tough to adjust to.

One was the loss of anonymity. I was used to just going about my business, but a dog in a public place can attract a lot of attention. The second was dealing with confrontations. At one convention center, I was stopped and hassled by different security guards 12 times in two hours. I was refused admittance to restaurants, and cab drivers would suddenly be off duty when they saw I had a dog. These two challenges are far better now. I've learned to handle the attention and the confrontations. There's more public acceptance and awareness of assistance dogs, and I write down the license plate and license numbers of the offending cab drivers!

The third challenge was adjusting my busy lifestyle—with regular travel and lots of meetings—to the needs of a dog who would be with me all the time. I had to plan carefully to work in

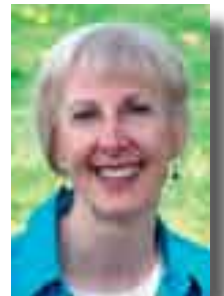
regular meal times and play times. On the rare occasion when my dog was off the usual schedule or a meeting ran overtime, I had to walk her even if it was pouring outside. And, no matter what city I was in, what time it was at night, or how tired I felt, the last thing I had to do was walk my dog before I hit the sack.

Those changes to my lifestyle long ago became second nature and with such a rewarding partnership, I don't resent them a bit. However, I am still struggling with the extra time now required for air travel due to the increased security checks.

My fourth challenge was the change in my everyday life. I am a power shopper unless I am on vacation. I want to get in a store and get out as quickly as possible. But, with a hearing dog, I couldn't just zip into a grocery store for a few things, or walk around a mall for long without being stopped by people who were curious or wanted to pet my dog. That's still very much the case, but most of the time I just celebrate the fun I can have in meeting a lot of warm and interesting people. When I'm in a really big hurry, I try to avoid making eye contact and hope that will send the message that I'm absorbed in something else.

All of those challenges were small compared to the one that was toughest by far, facing and accepting the time I would have to say goodbye to a partner. That will never, ever, get easier. 🐾

Cheryl Heppner is the executive director of the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons (NVRC). Established in 1988, NVRC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization serving counties in the Northern Virginia region.



Read Cheryl's companion article, "Is a Hearing Dog for You?" on www.hearingloss.org. For more in-depth information, go to www.nvrc.org.

By Brenda Battat



National Update

National Update on Hearing Aid Tax Credit

House Representatives McCarthy and Ehlers introduced a Hearing Aid Tax Credit Bill (HR 2321) and Senator Coleman the Senate version (S1410) in May. This is the third time that the bill has been introduced. Be sure to thank your congressional representative if they are already signed on as cosponsors. If not, then encourage them to become cosponsors. To see the list of cosponsors in the House of Representatives and the Senate, go to <http://thomas.loc.gov> and search for "Hearing and Tax Credit."

Smoke Alarms Unable to Awake Millions of People who are Hard of Hearing

According to the July 2007 study, Waking Effectiveness of Alarms for Adults who are Hard of Hearing, the typical audible signal used by smoke alarms failed to wake up 43 percent of tested subjects with mild to moderately severe hearing loss despite the fact that all were able to hear the 3100 Hz tone when awake. Strobe lights woke up only 27 percent of the hard of hearing subjects. For more on this study and Hearing Loss Association of America's comments, go to www.hearingloss.org. Click on the press release on the home page.

How Do I Know if I Own a Digital TV?

As of March 1, 2007, all TV receivers must contain a digital tuner. Sellers of TVs are required to disclose to customers if a TV does not include a digital tuner. Look for this information on TVs:

"This television receiver has only an analog broadcast tuner and will require a converter box after February 17, 2009, to receive over-the-air broadcasts with an antenna."

For more information about the switch to digital TV go to the FCC's website at www.dtv.gov.

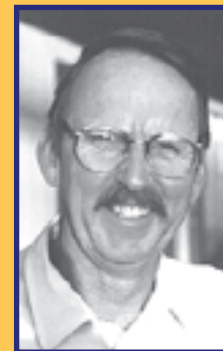
General Technologies

AT&T Model 1719M Answering Machine – \$69.99 (\$7.00 P&H)

If you use an answering machine, or would like to, this may be the way you can **hear** and **understand** your messages by having the option of listening with headphones, neckloop, silhouette, direct audio input, or even cochlear implant adapter cord. The 1719 has 19 minutes of digital recording and features that also include:



- Time/day/year stamp
- Two-way call recording
- Outgoing announcement
- Bypass call screening
- Toll saver
- New messages first
- And many more features including remote access to change outgoing message, remote turn on/off, etc., plus all the benefits of digital technology.
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When Good Captions Go Bad

HDTV Accessibility

By Larry Goldberg



By now most people have seen the big and beautiful future of television: high resolution, wide-screen, enormous TV sets with images so life-like the action seems to jump right out at you. But, where are the captions?

This new type of television, with images as big as life is known as HDTV, high definition television (also known simply as “digital TV”).

What you may not have seen are the closed captions that go with it, even though the new TV sets are required by law to carry the captions and virtually all programs are required by law to be captioned.

How can this be? After all, the TV Decoder Circuitry Act of 1990 stated explicitly that, “As new video technology is developed, the Commission [FCC] shall take such action as the Commission determines appropriate to ensure that closed-captioning service continues to be available to consumers.”

The FCC recognized the will of Congress and updated the built-in caption decoder rules in July of 2000. The new rules stated that:

Manufacturers must begin to include DTV closed caption functionality in DTV devices in accordance with the rules adopted in the Order by July 1, 2002.

Not only that, the FCC also updated its programming requirements to assure that programming produced for these new TV sets would be captioned as well. In that same July 2000 order, the FCC stated that as of the July 2002 date when the digital TV sets had to have caption decoders, all programming produced for those news sets would be required to be captioned. (For more on what the FCC rules say about captioning and digital TV, see “Summary of FCC DTVCC Requirements” on page 23.)

Why Are People Still Frustrated When They Try to Turn on the Captions?

So how is it that, five years after these rules went into effect, many people with hearing loss are frequently frustrated when trying to turn on the captions in their new, very expensive, digital TV equipment?

Why is WGBH and the Hearing Loss Association of America, the NAD, TDI, and every other agency which serves caption consumers, being flooded with complaints and concerns about being left out of this brave, new world? There are many reasons why “Good Captions Go Bad.” Here are a few:

The Retailer

Let’s start at the beginning—your neighborhood consumer electronics store. As an old advertisement once said, an educated consumer is our best customer. So, of course when you make the big decision to plunk down anywhere from \$1,000 to \$2,000 or more on a new HDTV set, you want to test drive your new TV before purchasing it. For a person who has trouble hearing or can’t hear at all, this means taking a look at the caption display, options and controls.

Looking at the caption display is just not possible in most of the stores which sell digital TV sets. The store displays will only show the “canned,” or pre-recorded material the store has created or purchased to show off their sets to their best advantage. This is usually a DVD full of movie trailers and promotional information that has not been captioned. And even if it was captioned, the connection between the DVD player and the HDTV sets cannot carry closed caption data.

Why not just tune the HDTV set to a broadcast or cable channel? How about checking out a baseball or football game that is supposed to look so amazing in high-def? Because most stores are either not set up to receive broadcast or cable signals or they fear that a competitor’s commercial will show up all over their store.

But tuning in a broadcast signal with its captions is the best and only way to really know how the captions will look on your new set and is the only way for you to test this essential feature and its controls—such as turning the captions on and off and adjusting their size, font, color, background and other user controls.

User Controls?

That's right, the FCC regulations include many of the features originally identified by deaf and hard of hearing caption users as essential for the improvement of the look-and-feel and usability of closed captions.

This 1995 study, funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and conducted by the National Center for Accessible Media at WGBH (NCAM), highlighted the key elements of a potential advanced TV closed caption system: user control of size, color, background and other stylistic elements of closed captions. Those features were eventually incorporated into the FCC's DTV caption decoder rules.

So if you can't try out the user-controlled caption features on the HDTV sets in the local Best Buy, Circuit City, Wal-Mart, or other big box store, how will you know if the manufacturer of a particular set has done a good job making the caption display and user controls both pleasing to the eye and usable to the owner?

Unfortunately, if you can't test-drive the captions in the store, you are even less likely to find out information in the user manual or website. The most detailed information about the implementation of closed captions on most store or manufacturer's web sites is simply a check mark next to the fact that the set supports closed captions. In addition, magazines like Consumer Reports and websites like Epinions (www.epinions.com) rarely if ever examine or compare caption features and usability.

So, what you are left with is word-of-mouth and the recommendations of friends—the most common way most people make their purchasing decisions

in any case. What can help is to ask your organization to host a section of their web site or a blog to gather user experiences and help others make educated buying decisions.

The Set-Top Box

Throughout the United States, the percentage of people who subscribe to a cable or satellite TV service (and now, telephone company) has been growing every year. In some large cities like Boston, cable and satellite penetration is as high as 90 percent.

In addition, the number one reason that HDTV sets are returned to stores is that consumers weren't aware that their new set requires a new HD-capable cable or satellite set-top box (and a new dish in the case of satellite). Of course, you can also use an antenna to receive the new digital signals and not have to pay for a subscription service (see <http://www.antennaweb.org/> for more information), but you won't be able to watch any cable channels if you opt for the free, over-the-air path.

With your new HD-ready set-top-box (STB), along with a higher monthly bill, you will receive a new device that can get between you and your captions. Under FCC rules, these boxes (primarily manufactured by Motorola and Scientific Atlanta—now owned by Cisco Systems) must be able to decode the HDTV caption data (data formatted to the specifications of a standard known as CEA-708). FCC rules however don't specify that user control of captions has to be easy, or even rational.

In the case of the widely proliferated Motorola DCT series of HD cable boxes and similar STBs, the caption control menu can only be found if *you turn the cable box OFF!* That's right. Caption on/off controls as well as selection of all the features required by the FCC are not in the menus you see when you turn on your cable box.

Users can only access the secret "firmware" menu in the box by turning the power to the cable box off and then pressing the "menu" button. The menu which now appears gives you

control over both aspect ratio and caption styles. This information can be found in the manual posted on Motorola's website.

The link for the manual is http://broadband.motorola.com/consumers/products/DCT6412/downloads/DCT6412_User_Guide.pdf. After looking at the manual instructions on the website, do you have all that? What this all means is that, until these STBs are redesigned to give ready access to the caption controls in the main menu, it will take a very knowledgeable cable or satellite installer or a highly educated consumer to make sure captions can indeed be viewed and controlled at will.

(It should be noted that a recent test of the AT&T HomeZone hybrid satellite TV/DSL service used a less common STB that does in fact provide more direct access to the caption controls.)

The Role of the Broadcasters, Cable Networks and Satellite Program Providers: Are the Captions in the TV Signal?

So let's say you selected a new HDTV set based on a friend's recommendation and a successful test in the store (for instance, a broadcast of the Red Sox trouncing the Yankees with beautifully displayed captions). You bring your set home, have the cable installer bring over the new HD STB and test the display of captions on an analog broadcast (like your local PBS station) and an HD cable channel like Discovery HD.

Captions are coming through fine, so you send the installer away with a happy, "thanks a million!"

Since you know that the FCC requires that almost 100 percent of all TV must be captioned as of last year's deadline (January 1, 2006), you assume you'll get captions on any and every channel, right? Well, not quite...

There are both inadvertent technical mistakes and deliberate policy decisions that prevent you from seeing captions consistently as you surf through the hundreds of channels

continued on page 22

Captions *continued from page 21*

you now have access to on your new HDTV set.

The technical problems most frequently come when a local broadcaster, a network or cable or satellite provider improperly converts the analog TV captions (CEA 608) to DTV captions (CEA 708). Commonly available professional equipment is available that “upconverts” the captions to work on the HD versions of broadcast and cable and satellite channels. It’s just that this equipment isn’t always correctly installed or adjusted and at times needs to be reset to assure proper operation.

In addition, the FCC has not clarified an important interpretation of their caption rules, the one that says:

Exempt Programs and Providers.

For purposes of determining compliance with this section, any video programming or video programming provider that meets one or more of the following criteria shall be exempt to the extent specified in this paragraph.

Programming on New Networks.

Programming on a video programming network for the first four years after it begins operation.

The question is, are new HD channels, whether broadcast, cable or satellite, considered “new networks” even if they substantially or in part repeat already captioned analog TV programs? The FCC has been asked for clarification but has yet to respond to this issue.

HDMI, RGB, YPbPr, DVI, Component—Oh My!

To make the best possible pictures and sound appear in your new home theater system with surround sound and large wide-screen, high-resolution display, the consumer electronics industry has developed high-end connection standards and technologies to link your cable box and other video sources (like DVD players) to your big display.

Unfortunately, some of these connectors *cannot* carry caption data from the video source to the display. Those

connectors include the HDMI (High Definition Multimedia Interface) and component connectors (labeled RGB or YpPr).

In the case of HD cable and satellite set-top boxes, this isn’t so much of a problem since the FCC requires that those boxes decode the captions and send the open-captioned video signal to the display. The HDMI and component connectors maintain the picture quality and captions and look just great on the display.

Unfortunately, the FCC decoder circuitry rules do not explicitly cover other video sources like DVD players (and their next generation offspring BluRay and HD-DVD—more on these below). So these devices aren’t (yet) required to decode caption data if they happen to carry it.

This means that if you want to watch closed captions from a DVD movie on your HD display, you will need to use either of the lower-quality connectors—S-video or the standard composite connection (usually a yellow plug with an RCA connector). Then you can turn on the closed captions from the display’s caption control menu. Or you can watch the English subtitles if supplied with the DVD movie.

The FCC did consider this factor when issuing their DTV closed captioning rules. Here is what they said in their July 2000 Report and Order (MM Docket No. 95-176):

53. Other Devices. Although we did not propose closed caption decoder requirements for television interface devices whose primary function is other than delivering television programming, such as VCRs, DVD players, or personal video recorders, we know that these devices are used by consumers in connection with their television sets to view closed caption programming. In order for viewers to receive closed captions when using these devices, it is not necessary for these devices to have decoding capability. Rather, all that is required is for the device to pass through

the closed caption information to the decoder in the television set. We expect that such devices, and any other similar new devices, will pass through closed captions unaltered and intact to the decoder in the attached digital television. Manufacturers of such devices should ensure that this continues to be the case as the transition to digital television progresses.

It is clear from the above excerpt of their rules that the FCC expected manufacturers to pass caption data from all video source devices to DTV displays and thus didn’t require decoders to be built into VCRs and DVD players. With the advent of HDMI and other connectors which *do not* pass the caption data through, it appears that the FCC will need to reconsider this section of their rules.

DVD Becomes BluRay and HD-DVD—Closed Captions Become...Lost?

Finally, as we are all now aware, TV technology is advancing at a rapid pace. The latest entries into the marketplace are the successors to the original DVD player, the new BluRay and HD-DVD formats. Boasting higher-quality pictures and sound to accompany new home theater systems, and new interactivity features, these competing formats are already widely available (though still expensive).

Unfortunately, like the very first DVD players that were manufactured, these new players do not support closed captions. The original DVD players did not support the line-21 caption (CEA 608) data format for analog TVs, but a subsequent update allowed the players to carry that data and assured that the built-in decoders in our TV sets would be able to decode the captions.

Now we are facing the same design decision (or oversight) all over again. For a variety of reasons, neither of the first generation BluRay or

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Summary of FCC Digital Television Closed Captioning (DTVCC) Requirements

Decoder Operation

The Order adopts the requirement of Section 9 of EIA-708, with the following modifications:

- Decoders must support the standard, large, and small caption sizes and must allow the caption provider to choose a size and allow the viewer to choose an alternative size.
- Decoders must support the eight fonts listed in EIA-708.¹ Caption providers may specify one of these eight font styles to be used to write caption text. Decoders must include the ability for consumers to choose among the eight fonts. The decoder must display the font chosen by the caption provider unless the viewer chooses a different font.
- Decoders must implement the same eight character background colors as those that Section 9 requires be implemented for character foreground (white, black, red, green, blue, yellow, magenta and cyan).
- Decoders must implement options for altering the appearance of caption character edges.
- Decoders must display the color chosen by the caption provider, and must allow viewers to override the foreground and/or background color chosen by the caption provider and select alternate colors.
- Decoders must be capable of decoding and processing data for the six standard services, but information from only one service need be displayed at a given time.
- Decoders must include an option that permits a viewer to choose

a setting that will display captions as intended by the caption provider (a default). Decoders must also include an option that allows a viewer's chosen settings to remain until the viewer chooses to alter these settings, including during periods when the television is turned off.

- Cable providers and other multichannel video programming distributors must transmit captions in a format that will be understandable to this decoder circuitry in digital cable television sets when transmitting programming to digital television devices.

Covered Devices

- All digital television receivers with picture screens in the 4:3 aspect ratio measuring at least 13 inches diagonally, digital television receivers with picture screens in the 16:9 aspect ratio measuring 7.8 inches or larger vertically (this size corresponds to the vertical height of an analog receiver with a 13 inch diagonal), and all DTV tuners, shipped in interstate commerce or manufactured in the United States must comply with the minimum decoder requirements we are adopting here.
- The rules apply to DTV tuners whether or not they are marketed with display screens.

- Converter boxes used to display digital programming on analog receivers must deliver the encoded "analog" caption information to the attached analog receiver.

Compliance Dates

- Manufacturers must begin to include DTV closed caption functionality in DTV devices in accordance with the rules adopted in the Order by July 1, 2002.
- As provided for in the Commission's rules establishing requirements for the closed captioning of video programming adopted in a 1997 Order, programming prepared or formatted for display on digital television receivers before the date that digital television decoders are required to be included in digital television devices is considered "pre-rule" programming. As stated above, this order establishes that date as July 1, 2002.

Therefore, programming prepared or formatted for display on digital television after that date will be considered new programming. The existing rules require an increasing amount of captioned new programming over an eight-year transition period with 100 percent of all new nonexempt programming required to be captioned by January 1, 2006. ■■■

¹ The eight font styles are defined as follows: default (underlined), monospaced with serifs (similar to Courier), proportionally spaced with serifs (similar to Times New Roman), monospaced without serifs (similar to Helvetica Monospaced), proportionally spaced without serifs (similar to Arial and Swiss, (casual font type (similar to Dom and Impress), cursive font type (similar to Coronet and Marigold), and small capitals (similar to Engravers Gothic). In parentheses following each font style is a reference to one or more fonts which are similar to the style.

Captions

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HD-DVD specifications support the advanced CEA 708 closed caption data format. And even if that caption data was on the disk and could be passed to the display, the preferred HDMI or component connectors couldn't carry the data to the HDTV.

Industry representatives believe subtitle formats should be acceptable to caption consumers and that user control of caption size and style can be developed, at least for the BluRay technology. Though theoretically possible, there is much development necessary to make this a reality. The irony is that, when BluRay and HD-DVD players are built to include recorders and tuners, they will be required by the FCC rules to support CEA 708 caption decoding.

The solution would appear to be that the manufacturers of these new video technologies should begin building advanced caption format decoders into their devices now, instead of waiting for the recorder/tuners to force the issue. This development would solve both the caption support and HDMI problems at once.

Where to Now?

Here are some ideas that would improve caption consumers' experience when approaching the first purchase of new digital TV equipment:

- Absolutely insist that captions be demonstrated when shopping for a new HDTV set. Do not take "no" for an answer even if it means asking the clerk to set up an over-the-air antenna in a back room.
- If using cable or satellite TV service with your new HDTV, insist that the cable or satellite company's installer show you how captions are turned on using their set-top box. Warn them that you will be demanding this when you place your order. Write down what he

shows you (if he can get it to work) and if he can't insist that a more senior tech be sent to your home immediately.

- Make your concerns, needs and frustrations known! It is an unfortunate truth that in order for any of the problems listed above to be solved, caption users have to make themselves heard. That means letting your local TV station, cable provider and consumer electronics store know that they are not fully serving their customers. It means looking up information about HDMI, BluRay, HD-DVD, cable set-top boxes and letting them know that the technology is not serving an important segment of the marketplace. It means banding together with your friends, neighbors and national organizations to be sure your voice is

heard and complaining to the FCC, your congressional representatives and other decision-makers who can effect change.

- Finally, after all is said and done, these problems will be fixed, one way or another. With patience and persistence, good captions won't go bad and will look better than ever!

Larry Goldberg is the director of the Media Access Group at WGBH in Boston. This article was originally published by TDI and is an outreach and policy paper from the Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family National Center for Accessible Media at WGBH (NCAM).



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The Midwest Welcomes Members to the Heartland

C O N V E N T I O N W R A P - U P

Hearing Loss Association of America 22nd Annual Convention • Oklahoma City • June 21-24, 2007

By Christopher T. Sutton

Thanks to our attendees, presenters, sponsors, communication access team (CART, sign language and ALDs providers), national staff, volunteers, and the Oklahoma City host committee, we enjoyed another communication accessible convention complete with trade show, research symposium, workshops, and good old mid-western hospitality.

Grand Opening and Reception of the Exhibit Hall

This year the Exhibit Hall was officially opened with a reception where we celebrated the attendance of over 75 exhibitors who displayed their many products and services for people with hearing loss. Exhibitors and attendees interacted over hors d'oeuvres and drinks while testing equipment.

I. King Jordan Opens the Conventienn with Keynote Address

I. King Jordan, Ph.D., returned to the Hearing Loss Association of America after nearly 18 years since he first presented to the organization's con-

vention in 1988 in Rochester, New York. Dr. Jordan, who recently retired from Gallaudet University as its first deaf president focused his keynote on his belief in the "many different ways of being deaf," and how those who are deaf must respect others who are deaf. He also discussed the protest at Gallaudet that led to the ouster by the Gallaudet Board of Trustees of the new president to succeed King, Jane Fernandes. Dr. Jordan received a standing ovation by the audience.

During the Opening Session Ultratec was presented with the Hearing Loss Association of America Access Award. The Access Award is present to those who have provided or improved communication access in a significant way for people with hearing loss. HLAA members have valued Ultratec's contributions for decades to expand access to telecommunications for people with hearing loss. CEO and President Robert Engelke accepted the award.

Awards Breakfast

The Awards Breakfast, sponsored by Ultratec, celebrated the many achievements and success of work of the state

organizations, chapters, and members across the country.

To see the list of awards recipients, and photographs, visit www.hearingloss.org and view the Convention page.

Get-Acquainted Party

A popular start to every convention is the Get-Acquainted Party. Sponsored by AT&T and organized by the local host committee, the atmosphere provided local flavor and fun. There was line dancing, a humorist, and festive decorations to complement the atmosphere.

Annual Meeting, Workshops, & Sessions

The Board of Trustees held their annual meeting where attendees heard the report on the organizational and financial state of the Hearing Loss Association of America.

This year's workshop program offered four main tracks in which attendees could attend: Healthy Living,

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Left: Angie Nibert, Colin Cantlie, Flo Innes, and Lynn Rousseau in the Oklahoma Spirit.

Below: Terry Portis, Marcia Finisdore and Anne Pope. Marcia is the recipient of this year's Howard "Rocky" E. Stone Humanitarian Award.



A big thanks to the local host committee!



Lise Hamlin



Attendees were treated to a special performance by the Oklahoma Fancy Dancers.



Terry Portis (left) enjoys the offsite event at the Harn Homestead and Museum.

Convention 2007 *from page 25*

Relationships and Communication; Hearing Technology; Advocacy and Access; and Employment.

Along with these sessions, several companies such as Advanced Bionics, Cochlear Americans, and Ultratec held sessions for consumers to learn more about the products that they offer on the market and how to properly use them.

Offsite Event: Harn Homestead & Museum

This event sponsored by Cochlear Americas was held at the historic Harn Homestead and Museum where all were welcomed to the barn with an Oklahoma-style barbeque, entertainment, and games. Oklahoma hospitality and spirit was spectacular with a family of cattle ranchers and ropers.

Early Risers' Walk

To celebrate the success of HLAA's Walk4Hearing and to encourage chapters and states to hold their own walks, attendees attended the early risers' walking tours of historic Oklahoma City. Anne Pope, Ronnie Alder, and Toni Barrient were on-hand to discuss the Walk4Hearing program and how chapters and state organization can start them in their areas.

Association Banquet

This was an exceptional evening where attendees were able to experience the best of Oklahoma City in the company of their friends. A superb dining experience was accompanied by unparalleled entertainment by a performance of the Oklahoma Fancy Dancers. The world-renowned Native American dancers are a professional dance troupe and powwow champions.

Marcia Finisdore received the Howard E. "Rocky" Stone Humanitarian Award during the banquet. This award is given by the Board of Trustees to honor a past trustee for extraordinary contribution toward the furtherance of the objective and



George Ewell, Silent Call Communications

personal exemplification of the philosophy envisioned by the founder of Self Help for Hard or Hearing People, Howard E. "Rocky" Stone.

Research Symposium

"Quality of Life and Individual Differences for People with Hearing Loss," was this year's topic. Themes covered included: little public understanding about the causes and consequences of hearing loss; how hearing loss creates barriers to effective interpersonal communication; communication struggles can lead to depression and anxiety resulting in significant challenges at home, in the workplace and in social settings; people react differently; cochlear implants and hearing aids don't always lessen the impact; and more. Presenters included core researchers Dr. Carren J. Stika of San Diego State University, Dr. Patricia Kricos of the University of Florida, and Sue Erdman.

For More on Convention 2007

For additional pictures and convention highlights please visit our website at www.hearingloss.org.

Join us in Reno, Nevada, June 12-15 for Convention 2008.

For more photos, see page 33

Rocky Stone Scholarship Recipients

The Board of Trustees established a Rocky Stone Scholarship Program to encourage young people with hearing loss to attend Hearing Loss Association of America annual conventions. Founder Rocky Stone was a staunch believer in our conventions where people could learn and benefit from mutual support. He believed lives were changed after attending a communication accessible convention focused solely on people with hearing loss.

For more information about the scholarship and nomination form, go to <http://www.hearingloss.org/convention/RSScholars.asp>. The deadline to apply for Convention 2008 in Reno, Nevada, is April 11, 2008.

Oklahoma City Welcomes This Year's Recipients

Amy Bosworth *Comfort, Texas*

Amy and her husband Clay are the parents of three children ages 15, 8, and 2. The two younger children also have hearing loss. Amy has written for *Hearing Loss Magazine* and is a strong advocate of newborn infant hearing screening.

Amy commented about attending the HLAA Convention: "The convention meant a lot to me on several different levels. As a parent, to be able to hear Dr. Jordan speak and meet him afterwards was an honor. I took away much information my children will benefit from for years. As a recent cochlear implant recipient, the convention this year also had special meaning. Being able to meet new people and re-connect with those I had not seen in many years was amazing. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to have met Founder Rocky Stone several years ago and am thankful once again for the opportunity he has given both me and my children."



The Bosworth family from top: Clay, Amy, Joshua, Whitten, and Annaliese

Beth Ward *Sharon, Kansas*

Beth is a case manager for adults with physical and cognitive disabilities. Hearing loss is no stranger to her family. She has a cochlear implant, a 15-year-old daughter with bilateral hearing loss (moderate-progressive), a father with severe/profound hearing loss, a grandfather with profound hearing loss, and an uncle, cousin, and two brothers with hearing loss. She is a certified teacher in general education but before becoming a case manager she taught children with hearing loss ages birth to five.



Beth commented about attending the HLAA Convention: "I was able to learn a lot about some of the newer technology that is available, meet people I've corresponded with online for several years as well as new people, and take in the city sights. I particularly enjoyed visiting with people who have hearing assistance dogs, and finally meeting Terry and Denise Portis. Everyone was friendly and it was just a nice, relaxed, comfortable atmosphere. I definitely plan to attend another HLAA Convention in the future."

Beth Ward

Evaluating the Performance of a Hearing Aid in the Real-Ear

What a Little Hearing Aid Tweaking Can Do

By Mark Ross



In this age of the latest and greatest technology, there is a plethora of tests used to fit a hearing aid. Dr. Ross talks about them and why real-ear measures should be done routinely during every hearing aid selection and follow-up appointments.

Years ago, the usual audiometry session consisted of pure-tone threshold testing across frequency (the audiogram). For a “comprehensive” examination, it included a test of word intelligibility under quiet conditions. Compared to that period, we now have a plethora of tests to evaluate a person’s auditory status.

Diagnostic hearing tests can identify abnormalities anywhere in the auditory system, from the middle ear, through the midbrain, and up to the auditory cortex. A person’s ability to recognize speech can be examined by a host of standardized tests, from the understanding of individual phonemes to the ability to recognize sentences in the presence of background noise interference. The challenge nowadays is no longer to develop additional tools in the clinical armamentarium, but to ensure that the ones we have are administered when necessary.

Concomitant development has also taken place in our ability to evaluate the performance of hearing aids. At first, audiologists were limited to speech discrimination tests of questionable validity in assessing a person’s performance with hearing aids, coupled with the ubiquitous question, “How does this sound?”

Nothing wrong with this question; I have asked it myself and of myself. But a brief listening experience with a new hearing aid or adjustment in some unrealistic situation (say, a quiet office) is no substitute for an objective evaluation of a hearing aid’s performance.

Test Boxes

About 25 or 30 years ago, when affordable hearing aid test boxes were developed, it became possible for the

average hearing center to objectively assess a hearing aid’s performance. Up to this point, an audiologist would have to depend upon the information provided by the manufacturer; i.e., the hearing aid “specifications” (consisting of a description of the hearing aid’s amplification characteristics, special features, etc).

The manufacturers obtained this information using an industry-wide standardized test procedure. While important and, indeed, necessary, these specifications did not directly relate to the specific hearing aid being selected for the particular individual.

In this procedure, which is still being used by every hearing aid manufacturer, the hearing aid output is delivered into a small cavity (a 2cc coupler) which is intended to simulate the ear-canal dimensions of an *average* adult; but these results do not apply to any *specific* human being. This is a significant point and will be elaborated on below.

The equipment the manufacturers employed in performing this measure was much too sophisticated and expensive for the average hearing aid center. When commercially available hearing aid test boxes did become available, audiologists could now check the electroacoustic performance of a *specific* aid for themselves. They no longer had to depend solely on the specifications provided by the manufacturer.

Additionally, audiologists could now supplement the standardized tests run by the manufacturer with additional ones applicable specifically to the particular individual being fitted with the hearing aid. This capability was a major step forward in the entire hearing aid selection process and is still useful as a broad guide in

the initial selection of a hearing aid for a client. But, as with the manufacturer's specifications, the information developed with these new hearing aid test boxes was still based on the dimensions of a coupler that simulated the presumed ear canal cavity of an average ear.

Digital Hearing Aids

With the advent of digital hearing aids, it became necessary to program a hearing aid before fitting it. (Previously, hearing aids were simply adjusted with a screwdriver!) Programming requires the incorporation of specific amplification target goals. These targets are based on extensive clinical research and can be used "as is" or modified for particular individuals. In the usual programming process, targets and their variations are displayed in a visual format on a computer screen.

Adjustments can be made while the aid is being worn, with the consequent listening changes evaluated by the hearing aid user. Each such adjustment is also visually displayed on the computer screen. However, the response curves that are shown on the screen display only the *relative* changes in the amplification characteristics of the hearing aid; i.e., in comparison to one another. They do not actually show the amplified sound pattern actually occurring in an individual's ear canal.

Unfortunately, many hearing aid dispensers appear to view either or both the coupler measures and/or the programming displays as indications of the amplified sound patterns being delivered into a person's ear canals. However, as already stated, neither the coupler responses nor the programming displays are meant to apply to any specific person.

Child versus Adult Ear Canals

Consider children, for example: We know that—because children's ear canals are much smaller than adults—a given hearing aid's output would be much higher for them than it would



be for grown ups. (This is because greater sound pressure is produced in a smaller cavity relative to a larger cavity, given the same sound input). Thus, if audiologists depended solely on coupler specifications to fit a hearing aid to a child, they could be overamplifying the child; i.e., providing too much sound.

If the ear canal of an adult was larger than the average, the actual hearing aid output would be less than the coupler indications in that person's ear. This individual could be under amplified, perhaps for some frequencies more than others. A truly accurate hearing aid fitting would take both of these possibilities into consideration.

Programming displays also have limited applicability (although still useful). These do not include the possible acoustic variations introduced by microphones, the hearing aid receiver (the "loudspeaker"), or the variability in individual ear canal dimensions.

Therefore, while both coupler measures and programming displays are extremely useful, they do not tell us the actual sound energy being delivered by a *particular* hearing aid in the ear canal of a *specific* individual. For that, we need real-ear measures.

Real-Ear Measures

In real-ear measures, what is displayed is the actual acoustic energy



Figure 1. The basic set-up for a real-ear unaided response. This will portray the unique resonance characteristics of a person's ear.

Figure 2. The basic set-up for a real-ear aided response.

My thanks to my colleagues and friends at the University of Western Ontario for providing these figures.

that exists within the ear canal of a particular person. This can be done with and without a hearing aid. When a person is wearing an aid, a flexible tube is inserted alongside the hearing aid and terminates between the tip of the earmold and the eardrum. This tube leads from the ear canal to a microphone situated outside the ear.

The sounds detected by this "probe-tube" system reveal the *real-ear* output of the hearing aid for the individual wearing it. It's not a guess and not an estimate; it depicts the actual sounds reaching the eardrum of the hearing aid user. No other measure of hearing aid performance can do this. Real-ear measures should be done routinely during every hearing aid selection procedure and repeated routinely during follow-up appointments (more on this below).

Figure 1 shows the basic set up of a real-ear measure for the unaided condition. The probe tube can be seen leading from a small black box (containing the microphone and associated electronics) into the ear canal.

Figure 2 shows the set-up with a hearing aid in place. In this figure, the tube has been inserted alongside the hearing aid; its termination point is slightly beyond the tip of the earmold.

Test Stimuli

Audiologists have many options when selecting the specific type of

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Real-Ear Measures

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test stimuli to use. The first generation of real-ear systems employed a tone stimulus that swept from the low to the high frequencies. With the development of multi-band hearing aids, many of which included various types of automatic functions (automatic gain control, noise management, feedback cancellation, etc.), it became necessary to develop stimuli other than pure tones with which to evaluate a hearing aid's performance.

Composite noise, which simulates exposure to an average speech signal, was introduced and is still being used. With this stimulus, it is possible to predict how much speech audibility is being provided by a particular hearing aid; however, composite noise is still an artificial stimulus. What is clearly not an artificial stimulus is an actual speech signal.

In the newest generation of real-ear measurement systems, real speech is being used as test stimuli. This added capability has been termed "speech mapping."

In using an authentic speech signal, it is possible to test a hearing aid

While other dimensions will often enter into the hearing aid fitting process (i.e., different input sound levels, compression characteristics, etc.) audibility still has to be the major goal in fitting a hearing aid.

If a person cannot hear the speech signal, there is no way in the world he or she is going to be able to understand it.

with all its special features operative. The overall impact of these features can then be viewed just as they would normally affect a speech signal in real life. Effectively, with a speech mapping procedure, what you see (on the computer screen) is what you get.

Real Speech is the Best Test

Of course, an actual speech signal is ever-changing as words flow and intonation varies. It is, however, possible to freeze a snapshot of the speech signal at any instant in time and to depict an acoustical average of

the speech energy. The signal can be generated "live;" that is, a spouse or parent can talk into the hearing aid, or prerecorded stimuli can be used.

Certainly, there is no more valid test signal than real speech. What makes the display particularly valuable, however, is that the speech signal is charted as an audibility curve relative to the threshold of hearing, thus displaying just what a person can or cannot hear. This is shown in Figures 3 and 4.

The test results are plotted in reference to the familiar audiogram, as depicted by the blue line with the Xs. All speech sounds that fall below the hearing thresholds are inaudible (i.e., not loud enough for a person to hear).

The asterisks at the various frequencies indicate the point at which sound becomes too loud. The major amplification goal is to "package" the speech energy between the threshold of hearing and the threshold of discomfort. In other words, speech should be loud enough to be heard but not so loud as to be uncomfortable.

The green striped area in Figure 3 shows the speech signal. As can be seen, the acoustical energy in a speech signal stretches from low to high frequencies, with an intensity range of approximately 30 dB at any frequency. The green line running through the striped area depicts the average level of the speech signal.

Note in Figure 3, how the amplified speech signal is mainly audible only in the low frequencies. This person (and yes, this represents a real human being) can only hear those amplified speech sounds that fall above (higher than) his auditory thresholds. However, as can be observed, most of the high frequency energy in the speech signal falls below (i.e., is less than) the thresholds.

This represents the part of the speech signal that is inaudible to him. This person can "hear" all right, because of the low frequencies, but would have a great deal of difficulty "understanding," because he cannot hear the high frequencies.

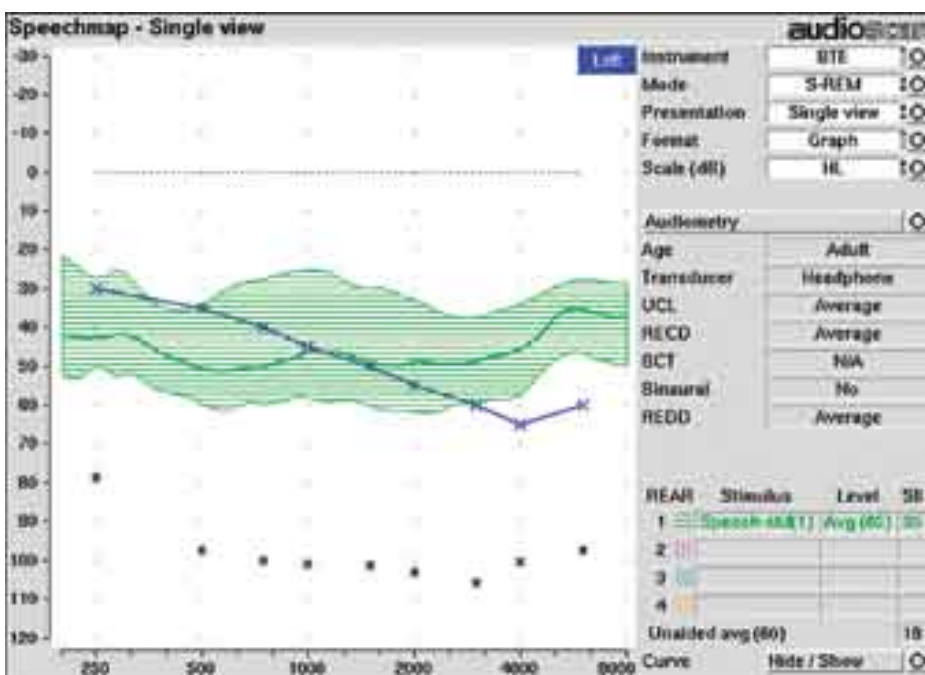


Figure 3. An example of deficient aided output as displayed with a real-ear system. (Figure courtesy of AudioScan.)

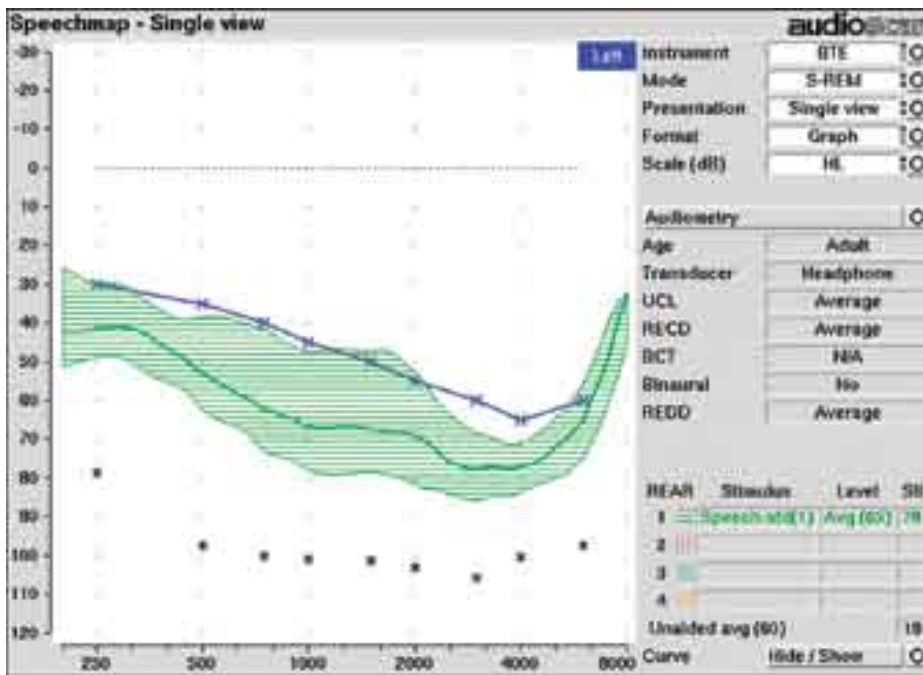


Figure 4. The same subject as in Figure 3, but now with an improved amplification output. (Figure provided by AudioScan.)

Of course, there are a number of other reasons why people with hearing loss complain that they can often “hear but not understand,” but one major one is displayed here, in a visual form that is very easy to understand.

This situation is relatively easy to correct by reprogramming the hearing aid and, with a real-ear system, directly observing the results of the modification. This can be seen in Figure 4.

This is the same person, but his hearing aid has now been adjusted for a more appropriate amplification pattern. Now note where the green area is located (remember, this depicts the energy in a real speech signal); the entire amplified speech signal falls above (is higher than) his auditory thresholds, but is below the threshold of discomfort. The entire speech signal is now audible. This looks to me like an excellent hearing aid fitting.

While other dimensions will often enter into the hearing aid fitting process (i.e., different input sound levels, compression characteristics, etc.) audibility still has to be the major goal in fitting a hearing aid. If a person cannot hear the speech signal,

there is no way in the world he or she is going to be able to understand it.

The differences between Figures 3 and 4 represent just one example of the value of doing real-ear measures. Many other examples can be given. The interactions between a particular person’s hearing loss and his or her specific hearing aid requirements are uniquely personal. Each person has to be tested individually.

I do not understand how hearing aid dispensers can fit hearing aids without knowing whether the aid is providing their clients with the most appropriate level of audibility across frequency. This is worth repeating: There is no more important dimension to comprehending a speech signal than audibility.

It is impossible to comprehend a sound signal that one doesn’t hear at all. When heard just partially, some degree of comprehension is often possible, thus obscuring an inadequate hearing aid fit; however this degree of comprehension would come at a cost of much effort, lots of guesses, and many errors. Real-ear measures are not perfect, but they do take the hearing aid fitting process one major step forward.

Real-Ear Tests

Clearly, therefore, real-ear tests can provide hearing aid dispensers with valuable hearing aid fitting information. Unfortunately, while about 50 percent of dispensers possess the requisite equipment, less than a quarter “almost always” administer real-ear tests to their clients.

One reason they frequently give is “that it takes too much time.” In my opinion, considering the stakes involved for people being fitted with hearing aids, there is little merit to this argument. According to some leading experts in this field with whom I have consulted, it takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes to run a complete real-ear test battery. This doesn’t sound like too much time to me.

It’s not as if there is any serious professional disagreement about the merits of real-ear testing. According to the *Guidelines for the Audiological Management of Hard of Hearing Adults*, recently published by the American Academy of Audiology, the inclusion of these measures is strongly recommended in all hearing aid fittings.

One recent hearing aid development may help undercut the “too much time” argument. Starkey recently developed a line of hearing aids in which one’s personal aid doubles as a real-ear measuring device. In this procedure, the flexible probe-tube leads back to the microphone of the hearing aid itself, instead of outward to an external microphone (as seen in Figure 5 on page 32).

The hearing aid microphone now becomes the real-ear measuring microphone. The aid is prepared for personal programming, just as in any digital hearing aid, with the aid tethered to the external programming unit by a wire connector.

However, instead of simply controlling and adjusting the aid’s electroacoustic characteristics, the program is now also designed to both measure the amplified sounds in the

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Real-Ear Measures

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ear canal as well as to produce the sound stimuli (via the hearing aid receiver) that is to be measured.

It evidently requires only a little more time to set up than would be necessary in fitting any hearing aid, but with accurate real-ear measures as a pay-off. Using one's personal hearing aid in this fashion is rather a neat development.

One other interesting feature of this system is that it also compares the real-ear measure with the actual coupler response for that specific hearing aid (completed in the factory and stored in the aid). The difference between these two measures (real ear and coupler) give what is termed the "real ear to coupler difference" (RECD).

This can be a powerful metric, particularly when fitting hearing aids to young children, since only one probe-tube measure need be done; any further analysis of the hearing aid's performance can then be accurately predicted via easily obtained coupler measures.



Figure 5. A recently introduced hearing aid that both measures and produces the stimuli for a real-ear measure. (Figure courtesy of Dr. Jerry Yanz of the Starkey Company.)

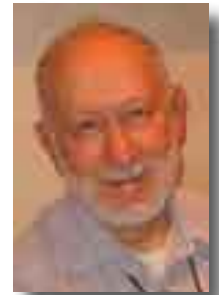
In Summary

Real-ear measures provide the most accurate portrayal of the sound amplification characteristics of a particular hearing aid for a specific individual. While other means of evaluating the performance of a hearing aid are valuable, they should not be used in lieu of real-ear measures. It is this latter measure, and only this latter measure, that shows the final product of the amplification process.

While there may be amplification dimensions that cannot be easily displayed; at the present state of the art, real-ear measures are our best bet to actually see what it going on where it counts the most—in a person's real-ear.

How people actually then use this raw acoustic information available to them is another, though equally important, question, one that takes us to another often neglected area—aural rehabilitation. ■■■

Mark Ross, Ph.D., is an audiologist and associate at the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) at Gallaudet University. He and his wife, Helen, live in Storrs, Connecticut. To find more Dr. Ross articles on technology for consumers, go to: www.pa-shhh-org and www.hearingresearch.org



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Left: Beth Wilson, second from right, accepts the HLAA Employer Award on behalf of Raytheon Company.



Terry Portis presents Robert Engelke, CEO and president of Ultratec, with the Hearing Loss Association of America Access Award.



Joe Gordon of New York



Anne Pope presents a Spirit of HLAA Award to Lois Johnson of Texas.



Jeanette Kanter, of Rochester, NY, was presented with the Keystone Award.



Pamela Dennis-Thomas and Susan Mazrui of AT&T in cowgirl attire at the Get-Acquainted Party.



Anne Pope presented a Spirit of HLAA Award to Danita Testerman of Oklahoma.

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Listening Skills...Revisited *continued from page 38*

7. Ask insightful questions. Ask the speaker to clarify a conflicting idea or expand on a point. Ask for examples. This shows you are listening and you may actually learn something. ("Huh?" is not an insightful question.)

8. Listen for meaning behind the words. The speaker may be expressing joy, sorrow, fear, anger or love. Facial expressions and body language are clues. For instance, if a person says, "my mother died today" you would expect a sorrowful expression and perhaps drooping shoulders and tear stains. It is not a good idea in that case to answer "how nice!"

9. My advice to add to Morgan's: watch your body language, you may be telling me more than you know. 🗣️

Betty Coombs lives in Banning, California, and is the vice president and founder of the Hearing Loss Association of Beaumont, California.

In Memoriam

Clyde Black, Member and Former Board Member

Clyde Black, 81, of Zabcikville, Texas, died July 19, 2007, following a long illness. He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Ouida Black. He graduated from Texas Tech University in Lubbock with a bachelor's degree in animal husbandry in 1948. Clyde's huge presence gave clues to his earlier life. While at Texas Tech, he played football and was right tackle for the Red Raiders. He owned and operated Black Farm Services of Zabcikville, retiring in 1982 after 21 years in business.

Both Clyde and Ouida were well known in the SHHH/Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) community. He was a national Board member of Hearing Loss Association of America (at the time called SHHH) and served as the first Texas state coordinator for the organization. He was also the first commissioner who was hard of hearing for the Texas Commission for the Deaf, now the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitation Services/Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. He and Ouida traveled across Texas helping to form new chapters and encouraging existing chapters.

Founder Rocky Stone and Clyde were close friends for many years. In 1999 Clyde received the Howard E. "Rocky" Stone Award. The recipient is chosen by the Board of Trustees to honor a past trustee for an extraordinary contribution toward the furtherance of the objective and personal exemplification of the philosophy envisioned by Howard E. Stone, the late founder of Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, now called the Hearing Loss Association of America.

Tommie Wells, national board member and friend from Texas comments: "Clyde was a fine Texas gentleman in the best sense of that description. I met Clyde and Ouida at my first SHHH Convention in Little Rock in 1990. Ouida noticed me wandering at loose ends and asked if she could help me. She saw from my name badge that I was from Texas and she called Clyde over and they took me under their wings."

Ouida Black requested that memorial donations in Clyde's memory be made to the Rocky Stone Endowment Fund at Hearing Loss Association of America. Donations can be made online or sent to: Hearing Loss Association of America 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200, Bethesda, MD 20194, www.hearingloss.org.





Listening Skills... Revisited

The popular author takes some old ideas and makes them new again.

Correction

Andrea Marlow, M.A., CCC-A, cochlear implant audiologist, was the co-author with Courtney Carver for the article, "Cochlear Implant Mapping: What Every CI Candidate Should Know" (July/August 2007 *Hearing Loss Magazine*). Her name was inadvertently left off of the article. Credit goes to both of these knowledgeable authors.

Years ago when I was a librarian in an elementary school, I was given the task of teaching Spanish-speaking kindergarten children. The children knew only Spanish and I knew only English.

Further, I had no teaching credentials. That is when I learned that teachers have lesson plans and teaching tools. I was given a variety of these teaching tools to use as I pleased just so the children learned to speak English.

The one teaching tool that interested me most was titled "Listening Skills." Keeping the attention of the children was my first priority. I thought that even if they did not learn anything, I would.

Perhaps because I was so interested in the subject, I discovered that the children became very quiet and attentive. I am not sure to this day whether the children learned this skill from me or not, but I learned something that has served me very well over the years.

Incidentally, the children did learn to speak English, probably from the other children. I did not learn Spanish.

Now, more than 20 years later, I found an article in the *Riverside Press Enterprise* newspaper written by Pat Morgan about listening skills. For people who are deaf and hard of hearing, this is probably old news. Having had a hearing loss all my life, I learned early in life to read lips and to pay attention.

All I can hope is that this article will be read by hearing people.

I have found that wearing a "Face Me" button helped for perhaps 15 seconds. The words spoken slowly and distinctly would last about 10 seconds. I still bite my tongue when people interrupt and can't wait to get their two cents in before I have completed my first sentence.

The suggestions listed in the article by Pat Morgan are good but I could add a few. Morgan lists these things (with a few of my edifications):

- 1. Make good eye contact with the person or persons speaking.** This shows you are interested in what is being said. (I could add that if you are speaking to someone with a hearing loss, get his or her attention before you start speaking.)
- 2. Look interested.** Try not to let your mind wander or think about how you will respond. (I can add that when your mind wanders so do your eyes and we know you have lost your attention.)
- 3. Don't interrupt.** Let the other person finish speaking before you speak. (My addition to this is: you may be surprised to learn that what you were sure he or she was going to say is something entirely different.)
- 4. Provide feedback.** This can be verbal or just a nod or smile.
- 5. Don't monopolize the conversation.** Allow the other person to speak. (My addition to this is to say that for a person with hearing loss, monopolizing the conversation is compensating for the hearing loss and they don't have to strain to hear as long as they are talking. I suggest that people who do this might need a hearing test.)
- 6. Focus on what the person is saying.** What is the main idea? What are the specific details? (For me, if I know the subject it helps to be able to read your face much like reading the title of a book. If the title gives me a clue to what's inside I can better understand what you are going to say.)

continued on page 37

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