

SHHH NEWS

Spring 1983

SELF HELP FOR HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE P.O. BOX 199,
HORNSBY, NSW 2077



SHHH COMES TO AUSTRALIA

All beginnings are special times in life. Sometimes they are sudden and unexpected; at other times well planned and prepared; sometimes exciting and stimulating; at other times routine and mundane. But always, I think, they are challenging.

Perhaps the real challenge of SHHH coming to Australia was that it contained a mixture of all these elements. The initial stirrings probably go back to the latter part of 1981. It was one night in October of that year when I first wrote to Rocky Stone, of Washington, U.S.A. — founder and President of SHHH — asking if he would consider coming to Australia. It was really an impulsive act. At the time I was working for the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Hearing Impaired

group (later known as the Hearing Impaired Association) and looking around for new ideas. Some time earlier, I had been given a copy of a SHHH Journal (Sept/Oct 1980 issue) and had been very impressed by its constructive approach to problems which had bothered me for many years.

A couple of weeks later, Rocky replied in the affirmative — YES — he would be willing to come! While I sang for the joy of it, I also knew that I had to find some way of making it all happen. Then began 12 months of hard unremitting effort, involving a team of people, which culminated in a lecture tour called *The Hurt That Does Not Show*. This tour, which ran for three weeks in Sydney during October 1982, thanks to the generous

sponsorship of Esso Australia Ltd., gave many people their first introduction to Rocky and SHHH.

Spurred on by the enthusiastic response to his ideas, Rocky organised the foundation meeting for SHHH in Australia, one week after the lecture tour. From that small beginning, attended by approximately 40 people, SHHH in Australia is now beginning to take root — and take off! We have (August 1983) a management committee of SHHH (Australia), of whom you will read details in the profiles following, and five local groups meeting monthly in Turrumurra, Epping, Narrabeen, Bondi Junction and Chatswood.

For those of you who are not familiar with the aims of SHHH in Australia, I would like to summarise the main ones. We are setting out to provide:

1. An environment of support and self-help for hard of hearing people, their relatives and friends, using small local groups with an emphasis on sharing.
2. An educational program covering all aspects of hearing loss, for hard of hearing people, their relatives and friends.
3. Motivation and incentives to help hard of hearing people take their rightful place in the community.
4. A lobbying force to represent the needs of hard of hearing people before government and community agencies.



There, in a nutshell, is SHHH in Australia. It is our hope that, with your help and involvement, this small but interesting Australian beginning will grow and develop into a powerful force in our own land and beyond.

Mary Sparke
President,

SHHH
(Australia)

BEGINNINGS

Mary Sparke

Quite appropriately, I think, we have chosen *Beginnings* as the theme of our first Australian Newsletter, so it would seem an opportune time to talk about the philosophy of beginnings. It seems to me that while the actions and achievements of beginners are important, so too, are their driving forces. Like most adults, I have coped with a great number of beginnings during the course of my life, some of them quite challenging — and as I grow a little older, I am beginning to think more philosophically about beginnings. I am interested in investigating what causes beginnings, what motivates them, what characterises them, what makes them succeed.

In brief, it seems to me that beginnings are often caused by some great need — e.g. we enter the workforce because we need to earn our living; during a train strike we often need to find an alternative way to get to work. The motivation for a beginning is often the alleviation of a need in one's own life, or the desire

to help others alleviate a similar need. Some characteristics of beginnings could be uncertainty and the need for planning, preparation and decision-making, while success factors are hard work, determination, initiative with some good luck thrown in.

Because at this stage of my life I am tending to think of beginnings very much in terms of SHHH, I would like to apply these thoughts to SHHH beginners, and Chapter beginners in particular. I like to think of them as people, who through their own experience of living with a hearing loss, or coping with a hearing impaired family member or friend, have grown into a deep understanding of hearing loss and its innate problems. I like to think of them as people with drive and initiative, who won't let this disability stifle their real selves, people who are ready to help others in the struggle. Often they are very busy people, who in some miraculous way, find the time and energy to fit this ever-

increasing effort into their normal schedule. I also like to think they are well informed, innovative, creative — people who plan with vision and foresight and work hard to carry out their plans. And finally, I like to think they are people who share, listen to the suggestions of others and don't become disheartened when some plans fail, as they surely will.

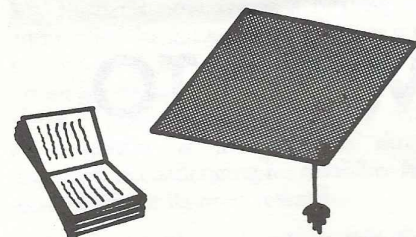
Perhaps you are thinking that all this sounds too idealistic, too out of the reach of most of us. And perhaps, except in the case of some highly gifted individuals, you are right. Most of us don't combine all of these good things in the one person. So what do we do? To me the answer seems obvious. We must use our *collective skills*, we must discover our weaknesses and strengths and go ahead together, sharing and achieving in ways that best suit our collective needs. Yes — SHHH beginnings are heavy with challenge!

Never Too Late To Begin

Learning situations permeate the whole of our lives. The classroom is not the only place where adults learn. If you reflect and perhaps test what has been learned in the past week you might conclude that newspapers, books, meetings and maybe just listening to other people have all provided new information. Non-verbal communication also can account for a lot of adult learning.

We are all adult learners, some pursuing education more than others. Unfortunately, those with a hearing loss may gradually lose their zeal to be in group situations because of personal indignity and frustration. If radio, television and classroom situations are avoided, it is indeed unlikely that adults can keep pace with others in society.

It is important that those with a hearing loss should use their dedication and extra drive to influence the powers that be, to improve the presentation of adult education programs. Some simple improvements such as tape recording facilities, amplification of speech and the liberal use of visual communication would greatly enhance your prospects. Society as a whole will listen to people with



*"To wonder
is to begin
to understand"*

special problems. Some people with special problems have overcome long odds to take advantage of all manner of offerings made by community agencies.

It is anticipated that SHHH members will lead the way in actively seeking out and using adult education agencies. In the past many adult education co-ordinators have been unaware of the needs and wants of all members of society. The time is right, the technology is available and society will listen.

In less than twelve months your chairman, Mary Sparke, has made an extraordinary contribution in effort and time to increase public awareness of your

organisation. Mary is to be congratulated on the success of her endeavours to date. Mary's supporters, too numerous to mention, have also contributed to the organisation's success and no doubt you will all proceed together to foster the aims and objectives of SHHH.

I personally wish you all well with your new venture and hope that your newsletter will bind and strengthen your membership.

Ken Gibbon
Adviser
N.S.W. Board of
Adult Education

COMMUNICATION

... doesn't just happen

A common dictionary definition of communication is: 'to have an interchange (as of thoughts and ideas)'. This seems a good departure point for examining my claim that communication doesn't just happen. It can't. Because by its very nature, communication involves a minimum of two and frequently many more people. It will be a rare occasion indeed in our everyday activities that a hearing impairment will not affect the person whose hearing isn't what it might be.

It is equally rare, but less frequently considered, that this effect is experienced solely by the person whose hearing is impaired. In fact, hearing impairment **invariably** has a ripple-on-the-pond effect... not only does it affect the hearing-impaired person, it also affects every other person with whom he/she comes in contact — family, friends, workmates, bus driver, the ticket seller on the railway station, at the theatre, at the football game...

It looks like that gets to be a considerable number of people. So what's to be done about it? Who should 'fix it'?

The most common response would be: 'They orta...'. Not a very specific, constructive or helpful answer. In this instance, many people can help. For example, your doctor will need to rule out on-going pathology. The audiologist can help with management of non-medical aspects including testing and helping you to maximise communicative efficiency in many ways, including evaluation and fitting of hearing aids and other assistive devices when indicated.

However, the greatest contribution can, and must, come from those with the greatest experience of hearing impairment. This means those closest to its effects — that is, hearing impaired people **and their friends and families**.

It is the contributions from these directions that are the most exciting aspects of the progress of SHHH (Australia) in its short life. As most of you are aware, the group started with the enthusiasm of a few dedicated and able people and has already made excellent progress in attracting many more of the same.

Well, what is there to do? Many things. What about the quality of hearing aids, the place and usefulness of other aids



such as amplified telephones and captioned television? What can be done about sales tax on and tax deductibility of hearing aids and other necessary devices? About greater communications access in public places? About unnecessary deafness resulting from noise in industry, in recreational activities, in young people indulging in too many discos and rock concerts?

The list is very long. It isn't endless and the longest journey starts with a single step. Working together as a team, many more steps than one have already been taken. This newsletter itself is the result of continuing teamwork. Several SHHH groups are already meeting regularly, and many useful contacts have been established with valuable resource people in such areas as adult education and technical aid for the disabled. Detailed planning for the proposed Hearing Resource Centre at the Hillview Community Centre in Turramurra is well under way. In other words, in a very short time SHHH in Australia has come a very long way. However, as well as safety, there is also strength in numbers, and so long as the responsibility is shared with each individual taking his or her part, the achievements of SHHH will continue to grow, to the benefit of us all.

Welcome aboard — we need all the help we can get!

Jenny Rosen

Dr Jenny Rosen

Dr Jenny Rosen is the remarkable Head of the Audiology Unit at Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Hospital. Jenny sees audiology not just as diagnoses, instruments and audiograms, but also as people battling with a huge communication barrier. Her emphasis is on positive things, constructive actions. To this end she has planned and implemented an innovative approach with her workshops in living skills for hard of hearing people, their relatives and friends.

Over the years Jenny has been the support base for the local self-help movement — first in helping the Hornsby-Ku-ring-gai hearing impaired group to get off the ground — and, then in a wider way through her involvement in,



and assistance with the Rocky Stone Tour and SHHH. Without her help and guidance, this self-help group may never have got under way. Thank you Jenny for being our catalyst.

PROFILES



Mary Sparke
President SHHH (Australia)

If it had not been for Mary's enormous drive and vision SHHH may never have reached Australia. Mary worked as a teacher for many years until her hearing problem meant she could no longer cope with the classroom. She then turned to a scientific career and now works as a laboratory technician with Esso.

Mary knows all too well the havoc that a hearing loss can create with one's career and with one's ability to cope in a 'hearing world'. Her conviction that more could be done and made available for hearing impaired people led her to start the Hearing Impaired Association which was later to become SHHH.

Mary has worked to establish liaison with a wide variety of community workers, dealing with many different issues. She sees this as a way of utilising community resources and helping to break down the barriers between hearing and hard of hearing people.



Libby Harricks
Vice-President SHHH (Australia)

Libby is our energetic and capable Vice-President. Her head is always swimming with new ideas which she carries through with remarkable enthusiasm and speed. People — all people — are her great love and she has settled very happily into the demanding job of co-ordinating Chapter affairs and guiding new ones into a happy and purposeful existence. She is sending out feelers in many new directions and making all sorts of wonderful community contacts. Libby, a pharmacist by profession, brings her skills in dispensing to SHHH. But, here she dispenses — ideas, kind words, encouragement, a helping hand when needed.

L.W.D. (Bill) Taylor, M.B.E.
Treasurer SHHH (Australia)

Bill was thrown into the deep end when he took on the Treasurer's job. Luckily his experience as a master mariner with the British Merchant Navy taught him the elements of survival in water! Migrating to Australia from England in 1948, Bill joined the Department of Shipping and Transport and later became the N.S.W. Regional Controller of the Federal Department of Transport. He was awarded the M.B.E. in 1972.

His moderate hearing loss has not daunted him and since retiring, he has continued his interest in community activities — as a Director of the Missions to Seamen N.S.W., as a member of Sydney Rotary and now as Treasurer of SHHH (Australia).

Invaluable for his male point of view and careful deliberations, Bill, with considerable support from his wife Joan, is a very able member of the committee.



Shirley Davis
Secretary SHHH (Australia)

Shirley watched her mother's growing isolation due to a hearing loss and is determined that her own hearing problem will not affect her similarly. She is particularly sensitive to the needs of the older hearing-impaired people that she meets in her job, nursing the aged. With

her husband Lindsay frequently away at sea (he is a Master Mariner) and with three older children, Shirley finds time to work for SHHH. Shirley's caring attitude, commitment to the aims of SHHH and ability to type, led to her position as Secretary of the national committee.



Edith Cox, M.B.E. Editor

Edith brings with her to the National Committee many years of experience in community work for which she was awarded the M.B.E. in 1980. For many years she held senior posts at Sydney Teachers' College and was the head of the Department of Secondary Teacher Education before her retirement.

Her interest in SHHH was fostered by Mary Sparke when, as a representative of the Volunteer Centre of N.S.W., Mary asked her to join the committee organising the Rocky Stone Tour to Australia.

As a hearing person she is invaluable for her views 'from the other side'. With her experience in publishing newsletters from several organisations, she was rapidly made our Editor.



Rocky Stone, Founder and President of SHHH

SHHH is now an international organisation with members in U.S.A., Canada, Mexico and Australia. It owes its existence to the wisdom and insight of Rocky Stone, who was

intuitive enough and experienced enough to realise that there could be and should be a better quality of life for hard of hearing people.

With characteristic vigour and determination, he has devoted his retirement to the rewarding task of building and developing a self-help movement aimed at improving the life style of hard of hearing people, their relatives and friends.

We, in Australia, were fortunate enough to be able to meet him and hear him at the end of last year. His dedication and enthusiasm have inspired us to help build up and extend SHHH in Australia.

"A Salute to the Connoisseur of Symphonies."

No doubt many great statesmen, and others of renown, have passed into the pages of history still guarding the secret of an infirmity which was more likely to cause derision than sympathy.

Up until the Middle Ages (and even today in some communities) the deaf were cast in the role of the village idiot — the butt of continuous cruel jokes. (Remember James Mason's portrayal of that figure in the film 'Ryan's Daughter'?) It is probably fair to accept the year 1770 as the great turning point in the acceptance of the deaf person as being capable of making noteworthy contributions to the world's storehouse of knowledge, culture and greatness. It was the year of the birth of Ludwig von Beethoven.

♪ Silence In Harmony ♪

In Beethoven we have the classic example of the ravages of deafness inflicted on a confident, exuberant young man — as well as the most gifted musician the world has ever known. Yet when confronted with the alarming signs of deafness he reacted in ways easily recognised by our contemporaries. *He tried to hide it.* He retired to Heiligenstadt, near Vienna. Yet, in the loneliness and the solitude of his deafness Beethoven bequeathed to the world a composition of symphonies, the very pinnacle of musical perfection.

Although at this stage Beethoven was

only hearing sounds through his brilliant intellect, his symphonies mark the boundary line of an entirely new epoch in the history of music. His works became a phenomenon with which the whole hearing world has produced nothing comparable.

Let no man say 'Thus far shall you go, and no further'. Let no man set a boundary to man's aspirations, nor relegate his fellow-man to the flotsam and jetsam of society! Education in its true role is but the nurturing of the latent potential of the individual. Combined with a little understanding it enabled Helen Keller to shine as a warm courageous personality. Then, there were such talented people as Thomas Alva Edison, Winston Churchill, Johnie Ray and our own Sir William Morris Hughes — all have successfully wrestled with the problems and frustrations of deafness. In coping with deafness perhaps they moulded the solitude of silence into a retreat where they have assessed the merits of much that needed quiet contemplation and consideration.

Beethoven probably had his symphonies programmed in his memory and perfected in the sound-proofed auditorium of a brain insulated from all acoustic interference. From such a setting emerged the famous nine symphonies. We take courage from our departed colleague and gratefully acknowledge our debt of gratitude on behalf of all men for the beauty and harmony of his musical compositions.

Jim Murphy

Chapter Beginnings

'Many small groups spread over a large area' is the aim of SHHH in reaching out to hearing-impaired people and the community. But groups don't just happen and the circumstances in which they begin will be different for each group.

Guidelines for running a group are in the Chapter Manual but each group is encouraged to develop individually within the overall philosophy of SHHH of education, self-help and sharing.

To start a group only a few motivated and enthusiastic people are needed to meet together informally to share common needs and aims — and, the group has begun.

Alternatively, one key person can call together a meeting to launch a group. Such a beginning will be more formal and it is not until the group members are willing to take responsibility for their group that the group is really under way.

In arranging regular monthly meetings a venue will be the first consideration. Private homes are an excellent starting point or look to using a room in a local community centre, senior citizens centre, school or church hall. These rooms can often be used rent free for non-profit groups.

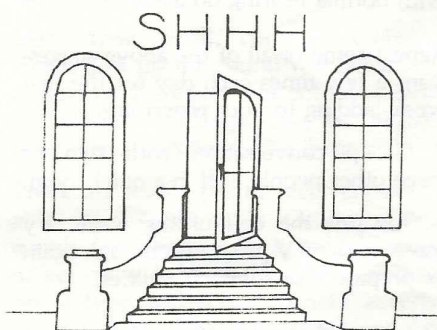
A suitable meeting place will be quiet, away from traffic noises, and preferably carpeted to improve the sound. Seating should be flexible ranging from a small circle to a more formal meeting arrangement. Visual aid equipment, e.g. black or white boards and overhead projectors are all helpful as are tea-making facilities,

as most of the sharing is done at 'coffee time'.

Publicise SHHH using community notice boards, articles in the local paper and on local radio. Reach out to community resources — the Audiology Unit of your local hospital, E.N.T. Specialists, speech therapists, social workers, the nearest Hearing Centre of the National Acoustic Laboratories, hearing aid dealers. Be inventive in spreading the word and finding suitable speakers for the meetings.

In the future, local service clubs may be able to support the group, helping with the purchase of a suitable sound system so that people may comfortably follow the meeting.

Look too, to the great variety of talent that will be found within the group.



"The hardest step is
that over the threshold."
James Howell

How many are electricians, teachers, good at writing or typing? Good! Use them all:

Ensure that while speakers may be of great interest, time should be spent in sharing and discussion, with everyone encouraged to participate.

Once ten or more people are meeting regularly and a committee of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer are running the group, then the group is ready to draw up its by-laws and become a Chapter.

All that is needed are a few people with initiative and the enthusiasm to start their own SHHH group!

Libby Harricks Chapter Co-ordinator

Getting used to your hearing aid

by Joan Grant

For some time now, you have not been hearing sounds or speech very well. Now that you have a hearing aid, sounds you have forgotten or heard only softly, will be quite loud, as in fact they have been all the time. Traffic, footsteps, rustling paper, dishwashing, even your own voice, will sound unnaturally loud to you when you first wear your aid. People with normal hearing (including you before developing a hearing loss) also hear these noises loudly, but they have learnt to ignore them while concentrating on those sounds, such as speech, that they are interested in. When you relearn to push these unwanted noises aside, you will find that your hearing aid will be helpful in understanding speech, even in fairly noisy situations.

There is one way in which you can make sure that this process of learning to hear again is successful. That is to make sure that you work up gradually from easy listening situations (e.g. conversation with one person in a quiet room) to more difficult conditions (group conversation), and finally to the much more difficult club or party situation where background noise is quite high.

Gradual Progression is the Key to Success

Remember Rome wasn't built in a day! It may take several weeks to get to the last stage described above. Here are some suggestions to help you on your way, adjusting your pace as necessary.

The First Week:

1. When you first get home after being fitted with your new aid, sit down in a quiet room and put it on. Just listen to all the sounds you can hear and try to identify them.

2. Then try listening to your own voice — read the paper out loud. Your voice may seem strange at first, but you'll get used to it fairly quickly — at least you won't speak as loudly as you used to!

3. Next, have a conversation with one other person, making sure you are still in that quiet room. Here you can get used to the sound of another person's voice as well as your own.

By this time you probably need a rest, so why not take the aid off and make a cup of tea or coffee.

4. Now you could try your aid with TV/radio. You may need to adjust the volume control of the aid a bit. Choose a quiet program such as quiet conversation or the news (though you may have some difficulty with on-site reporting — those

Joan Grant is an audiologist in private practice in Eastwood, N.S.W. Audiologists provide professional advice on all non-medical aspects of hearing and hearing impairment. This involves the testing of hearing, advising on hearing difficulties and the prescribing and evaluation of hearing aids.

This valuable advice Ms Grant provides for people she has just fitted with a hearing aid. This advice could also be of use to those needing 're-education' to get more effective use from their hearing aids.



with normal hearing do also).

Repeat some or all of the above suggestions a few times each day for the first week, adding to your repertoire:

5. Group conversation with two or three other people, still in a quiet room.

6. Towards the end of the week, try some noisier TV programs, though again be prepared for some difficulties.

The Second Week:

By now you will probably be wearing your aid fairly consistently every day, though maybe not yet all day.

7. Now try a meeting or church, and a film or play. Make sure you sit towards

the front, in the centre if possible, and not too close to the loudspeakers if at a film. You may have difficulty first time around, but with practice things should improve. You may find your 'T' switch useful here, if the hall has a loop system installed — the aid's microphone is off and so background noise doesn't interfere.

8. Next exercise is the telephone. You will have been shown how to use the hearing aid with the phone. It's a good idea to practice with a friend who's a good talker!

By the end of the second week, you may already feel quite at home with your aid in most situations — good work! If not, a little more practice will be needed.

Finally:

9. The club/cocktail party is the last one. You may need several weeks of practice with all the above situations before you feel comfortable with your aid in these most difficult listening conditions. But if you now wear the aid consistently every day, even if you feel you don't need it, you will be so used to it that it will be a part of you, and coping with the background noise will be much easier. Remember too, that you will get a lot of help from watching speakers' faces: **Listening & Looking Go Together!**

The Work Situation:

If you are working, the same principle of gradual progression applies, though of course it will be more difficult to structure your situation while at work. You may find you need to get more practice at home before you are happy with the aid at work. But don't leave it too long to venture out with the aid — try it for a short time each day, gradually building up to full-time use.

Further Comments:

The important thing to remember is that most successful hearing aid users feel that their aid is a part of them, and they wear it all the time (except when asleep), even when they may not really need it. But, because they wear it all the time, they are used to hearing through the aid; and so, when in difficult listening situations, they are already used to the sound of the aid, and thus find it easier to hear well.

A correctly fitted hearing aid will not make your hearing worse. When you have reached the stage where your aid has become a part of you, you may find you depend on it a lot. You may even wonder how you got by without it,

continued from previous page

because now if you remove it, things are very difficult indeed. You have become a successful hearing aid user and obviously get a lot of benefit from your aid. This is the reason for your dependence. It is not because your hearing has deteriorated. You now hear what you used to miss, and depend on your aid to do so. Of course if you ever feel your hearing has changed, you should get it re-tested.

A Hearing Aid is an AID to Hearing:

A hearing aid amplifies sound. It does not necessarily make complex sounds such as speech any clearer. However, with a correctly fitted aid, only those frequencies you need are amplified, and only to the extent necessary. And so in this respect, the hearing aid does help to improve the clarity of speech.

Your hearing aid is what it says it is, an **aid** to hearing. It will not bring your hearing back to normal — you are still using the same damaged auditory system. And so, you will probably still have difficulties in some situations and some guesswork will continue to play a part. But if you use what you get by **Listening**, add to it what you get by **Looking**, and throw in some help from the context of the conversation and your imagination, you should come up with

COMMUNICATION

Joan Grant B.Sc., Dip.Ed., M.A.,
M.Aud.S.A.(C.C.).

SHHH is learning and sharing



Learning and sharing is what SHHH is all about. Learning about our hearing loss helps us to understand and cope better with our problem. We learn from the 'experts' invited along to speak at our meetings and we also learn from each other. Each of us has something important to share — be it information or understanding.

The following SHHH success story illustrates how this works.

Let me introduce Reg, who tells me with a grin "no dates please — just say I feel 50!" A few months ago it was another story. Reg was in low spirits due to poor health and a severe hearing problem. Rosalie, his wife, had hoped a change of scene would help, so they moved from Melbourne to Sydney to be near a daughter.

Shortly after moving to Sydney, they heard about SHHH and attended one of the first meetings at Turrumurra. I remember them well — Reg keeping

very much in the background while Rosalie did all the talking. Reg was terrified that he would be asked a question he wouldn't hear. This fear had made him withdraw from people completely and without a lot of encouragement from Rosalie, he would never have been there.

During that night Reg had been encouraged to have a check on his hearing at Hornsby Hospital Audiology Unit. This confirmed his need for a new aid which greatly improved his hearing ability. Reg also bought a small directional microphone to use with his aid in noisy situations — a wonderful boon at SHHH meetings!

Those first apprehensions that Reg felt on attending the meetings were quickly removed. Everyone was interested in how well he coped and marvelled at the change in him. Instead of staying in the background, Reg actually enjoyed the company of others knowing they also understood the problems he faced. Rosalie, too, gained greater understanding in how to communicate better with hard of hearing people.

I could never doubt the role that SHHH can play in helping the hearing and hearing-impaired bridge the communication gap when I see Reg so full of new confidence. His new aids have given him back sound and SHHH has given him back people. Welcome back Reg!

Libby Harricks

"Infra-Red" comes to the Seymour Centre



The University of Sydney's Seymour Theatre Centre has an infra-red sound system which officially began operating on 22 June when the show 'Tanzi' opened in the York theatre. The system enables people with hearing difficulties to sit anywhere in the theatre and hear actors on stage as well as if they were sitting in the front row.

The new system has been installed in the Seymour Centre's Everest and York theatres at a cost of around \$15,000. The

system consists of two directional microphones, an infra-red transmitter and infra-red radiators. The sound picked up by the microphones is passed through the transmitter to the radiators. These emit infra-red waves which are received by equipment worn by theatre-goers with poor hearing. Volume is individually adjustable.

Users wear small, cordless receivers which pick up the sound without interference or distortion. The softest speech or whisper on stage can be heard, wherever a user sits in the theatre.

There are two types of receivers available at the Seymour Centre. One, mainly for those with a mild hearing defect, is a lightweight plastic stethoscope type, with a front panel that rests on the chest. The panel contains the receiving unit lens and volume control. The other type, for those with hearing aids, can be worn using either a clip or a lanyard connected to the hearing aid by an inductive plate. There is also a head-phone attachment which may be fitted

to a hearing aid.

Manager of the Seymour Centre, Mr Robert Love, says the aim of the infra-red sound system is to provide sound enjoyment for those with a range of hearing difficulties. Since the system has been installed, it has brought immense pleasure to those who have used it.

"We hope this new service will bring back many thousands who gave up theatre-going years ago simply because they couldn't hear what was being said on stage. Many thousands of Australians with hearing problems have been missing out on one of the cultural pleasures of life. This need no longer be the case."

Infra-red sound systems are widely used in the U.S.A., says Mr Love, in theatres, cinemas, churches and conference centres. "There'd scarcely be a large theatre in the U.S.A. without such a service."

Anyone wishing to use the infra-red sound system during a Seymour Centre performance can arrange to do so at the Cloak Room desk in the main foyer.

Adapted from Seymour First in N.S.W. with Infra-red Sound by kind permission of The University of Sydney News.

Communication...



Who

is



Responsible?

When I was 21 I met a man who captured my admiration with his commanding presence, direct approach, drive and enthusiasm. He was an outstanding teacher who discovered and used hidden talents in children with learning difficulties to improve their self-image and ability. I soon learned that this challenge to problems was reflected in his dealings with life.

We married and had four children, but difficulties would arise over his lack of response to my need for sharing and small talk when in bed together — the only peaceful place in a busy household. I would interpret this lack of response as lack of interest and be very hurt.

Other aspects of his behaviour worried me. Special family occasions — birthdays, Christmas — a time of joyous confusion, would be met with almost fear and panic by him. He would be at war with us all but never able to explain what was wrong. His feelings of not being understood were frequently followed by depression and remorse. The children felt he was paranoid and who could blame them? I no longer planned parties for fear he would create a scene.

He would not answer the phone even though he would be in the same room. Why was he so difficult about some things when I knew that he really loved me? At work he was as dynamic and dedicated as always — an environment which was in his control! Was he a split personality or were we, his family, the problem? I did not know where to turn to for help.

A community survey on hearing problems run by audiologist Dr Jenny Rosen gave us the answer. My husband was a volunteer because he felt he may have a hearing problem. It was found that he

had a 25% loss in one ear but a 75% loss in the other — the side I sleep on! A childhood virus had probably started this progressive hearing loss.

The E.N.T. specialist he was referred to, felt that no aid would help and this he accepted. He wanted us to be more tolerant while his attitude remained the same. His once beautiful voice would be raised, followed by anger and confusion for us all. We could not live this way!

It wasn't until we *both* became involved in SHHH that family life became easier. I found the emotional distress, fears and frustrations we had lived with for so long were similar for *all* 'hearing-impaired families'.

My husband now wears a hearing aid and realises he *has to learn to use it* for it to be successful. When wearing his aid, he no longer needs to shout to hear his own voice. I now see him once more with even greater admiration — his direct approach in challenging his disability has again brought its own rewards.

For my part, through taking that first important step towards self-help, I have found that the help received comes also from giving. To share this part of my life with others through SHHH, has opened up a new dimension to human relationships, which surely is life at its best.

... A SHHH Member

Production of SHHH NEWS

This paper was produced through the joint efforts of Marion Lloyd, Caroline Power, Dorothy Webb, Jim Murphy, Libby Harricks, Edith Cox and Mary Sparke. It is the result of a newspaper production course, funded by the N.S.W. Board of Adult Education, under the guidance of Sean Kidney. Typesetting was by The Typographers — 439 8866. For all enquiries about SHHH, please write to P.O. Box 199, Hornsby N.S.W. 2077.

Hiding behind Walls

Irritated voices, sharp responses, critical faces and over-careful speech are early memories of mine — early experiences of trying to communicate with other human beings.

I became afraid of being thought 'dull', 'stupid' and 'inattentive' so I chose to withdraw, to hide and protect myself from my fears of being different and unacceptable. I compensated by being very smart when I did contribute to conversation. I also chose to judge others as 'stupid', 'slow' and 'non-understanding' of my 'clever' observations. My way of understanding my deafness and difference led me to believe, quite seriously, that most people were not worth knowing anyway! I enjoyed saying that I preferred animals to people!

This process of shutting myself off has only become clear to me recently, since I became involved in a course concerning self-awareness. In communicating and sharing with others, I have at last begun to enjoy and value the company of other people, all of whom have their own difficulties and little fears in relating effectively to one another.

I have been greatly supported by being with, and talking to, other hearing-impaired people. I now realise that I don't have to be afraid of what people think — after all, it's only what they THINK! I now have a sense of my own power and the right to be heard in this world because I am alive, unique and therefore valuable — like everyone else. I can ask others to speak clearly and slowly, and to repeat, if necessary, because I value their 'aliveness' and their contribution to my life.

Suddenly the world is full of people — wonderful people — people I want to know and share with. Where have they been all this time? Hidden behind my own barriers!

Caroline Power

