Canadian Audiologist

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Happenings

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It wasn’t just a job: It was personal!

By David Kirkwood

Dear Friends,
As many of you have already read, I have retired from Hearing Health & Technology Matters (HHTM) after four extremely rewarding years as a founding editor. But before leaving the scene, I have some parting words for our readers, whom I have been writing for and about for longer than I could ever have imagined.

A COMMUNITY OF FRIENDS

I still remember something Bill Mahon told me back in 1990 when I succeeded him as editor of one of the hearing industry trade magazines. Bill told me how amazingly friendly people in the hearing care field were, almost like family, he said.

Having been a journalist for most of my adult life, I had developed the healthy degree of skepticism that the profession demands. So, I took Bill’s words with the proverbial grain of salt.

Soon, though, I discovered that he was absolutely right. As I began attending meetings of the alphabet soup of organizations concerned with hearing loss—AAA, IHS, ASHA, ADA, HIA, SHHH (now HLAA), AAS, and BHI, among others—I found that, across the board, the people I met could not have been more welcoming nor more helpful to a newcomer who knew next to nothing about hearing aids and hearing care.

Within a short time, I had made lots of new friends, people I looked forward to seeing at meetings and talking to on the phone. A good many of them became personal friends whom I also saw and continue to see outside of work.

PEOPLE WHO CARE

I’m not sure why people in hearing care tend to be so friendly, but I have some thoughts. First of all, these are men and women who truly care about other people. That’s why they have chosen work in which the goal is to make life happier and more fulfilling for the people they serve.

Now that’s true of many professions, including other areas of healthcare. But more than for, say surgeons or optometrists, it’s essential that audiologists and hearing aid specialists enjoy and be skillful at talking with and counseling patients—patients who are likely to be in distress because of their hearing loss and often because of other age-related conditions as well.

Patients who don’t hear well are also likely to be frustrated that their hearing aids don’t work as well as their eyeglasses, even though they cost much more and are a lot more trouble to take care of. All this means that the hearing care field places a high premium on personality traits such as

compassion, patience, a sense of humor, and just plain good nature, which are also great qualities in friends.

NOT ENOUGH SPACE

It's not surprising, then, that when I look back over 25 years of covering hearing care I realize that my fondest memories are of the people I have met, the friends whose help and companionship I value so much. I would love to name all of you who have been important to me, but even the Internet doesn't have space enough for that! So, with apologies to many others, I want to acknowledge a few of the people who have been especially important to me in my tenure in this field.


Bob Martin

As an editor covering a profession in which I had no training or prior experience, I have depended heavily on contributions from experts. I was fortunate to inherit one of these, Bob Martin, an audiologist who had already begun writing his popular Nuts & Bolts column when I became his editor. Bob, who is now on our team at HHTM, brings to his writing a down-to-earth style combined with an almost missionary zeal to make practitioners and consumers aware of the "miracles" (one of Bob's favorite words) that hearing care at its best can sometimes deliver.


Gus Mueller

Certainly no one taught me more about the world of audiology and hearing aids and how best to cover them than my long-time contributing editor, Gus Mueller. Gus, famous for his Page Ten articles, his entertaining talks, and his 25-year stewardship (with Jerry Northern) of the Audiology Trivia Bowl, helped me in many ways, including with his unerring ability to identify timely topics to write about and to suggest the best people to interview on those topics. But, best of all, it's just a lot of fun working with or hanging out with Gus.

UNSUNG HEROES


Jerry Laux

One of the greatest satisfactions of being an editor is that every day or week or month you turn out a publication that is a tangible product of your labors, one that your audience can read and pass judgment on—for better or for worse. But what readers do not see or appreciate are all the people behind the scenes whose contributions are no less important than the editor's. I'm thinking especially of those people who sell the advertising that keeps our publications in business.

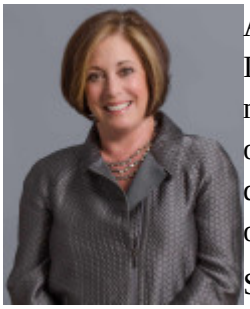

Martha McGarity

For 20 years I worked with two of the best of them, Jerry Laux and Martha McGarity. At conventions all over the country and beyond, Jerry and Martha and I spent hundreds of hours serving booth duty in exhibit halls. We met with countless readers, writers, manufacturers, organization leaders, and publicists. We shared meals and drinks from Phoenix to Philadelphia, from Seattle to Savannah, and almost everywhere in between. Martha and Jerry both preceded me into retirement, but the bonds of friendship we forged during all those years of working together

remain strong.

I'd also like to recognize a few of my favorite freelance writers, whose names may be unfamiliar to most readers, but whose excellent feature articles enhanced the quality of my publications. I'm thinking of Don Radcliffe, a talented science writer who had previously edited a hearing industry monthly; Judith Nemes, who never said no to an assignment no matter how many other deadlines she had; and to Sara Bloom, who has been writing great stories for me since the 1970s, when I was editor of a newspaper in the New York suburbs. I am grateful to you all.

All the people I've cited so far were colleagues. But in my work, I have also relied on assistance from leaders of the numerous non-profit organizations in the hearing care community.



Carole Rogin

Among these are my good friend Carole Rogin, president of the Hearing Industries Association (HIA), whose operations she has skillfully managed for more than 30 years. Drawing on her long experience and her rare combination of candor and discretion, Carole offered wise advice that helped me handle the delicate task of objectively covering the same industry that was the main source of our publication's revenues.

Strong competition is healthy for any publication, and in Karl Strom, who has been editor of Hearing Review since its launch in 1993, I was up against one of the best. Karl also happens to be as kind and decent a person as you'll ever meet, so it's all the more gratifying that Review and HHTM now enjoy a cooperative relationship.

SAVING THE BEST FOR LAST

My years with Hearing Health & Technology Matters have been in many ways the highlight of my career. After having been an employee for all my working life, it was wonderful to become an owner with equal partners, but no boss.

It has also been exciting to launch an entirely new and different type of publication, one where each member of our expert panel of editors has autonomy over his or her section of HHTM. This unique structure has produced a publication where, every week, readers find more original and diverse content related to hearing and hearing care than is available anywhere else. They also turn to us for exclusive stories and breaking news. And, readers appreciate that we are staunchly independent—beholden to no company or other organization.

Now, just over four years since we launched our enterprise, my partners and I have the satisfaction of seeing HHTM firmly established as essential reading for people who share our conviction that *Hearing Health Matters*. We have drawn nearly 1.5 million page views from people in more than 200 countries, and our audience continues to grow with every passing month.

THE HHTM FAMILY

The best part of my experience at HHTM has been the joy of working with such a remarkable group of friends and colleagues. Let me tell you a little about them.



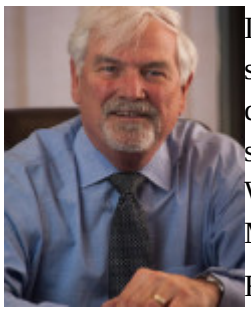
Without our chief financial officer, Holly Hosford-Dunn, who shared my vision of what our publication could be, HHTM would never have got off the ground. Holly, who was our first editor-in-chief, is a tireless worker and a superb manager. She was so committed to making Hearing Economics the insightful blog section that it is that she returned to college to get a BA in economics, which she added to her master's in audiology and PhD in hearing sciences.

Holly

Readers of the popular Wayne's World section of our blog are aware that its editor, Wayne Staab, knows just about everything there is to know about audiology and hearing aids. But what only his partners know is how essential his tireless work as advertising manager has been to making HHTM financially sound. I am honored that this internationally renowned audiologist has taken over from me as editor-in-chief.



Wayne



Bob

In his entertaining and very popular Hearing International section of HHTM, Bob Traynor, another of our founders, covers an incredible range of unusual topics related somehow to hearing. Where else have you read about the War of Jenkins' Ear, The Royal Order of Screechers, or the Mona Lisa Syndrome?

From day one at HHTM, Judy Huch, editor of Hearing Health, has been drawing on her experience as a private-practice audiologist to offer information of value to practitioners, while doing double duty as our social media marketing expert.

One of HHTM's original goals was to be a forum where providers and consumers of hearing care alike could share their ideas and experiences. We have achieved that goal largely thanks to Gael Hannan, a gifted writer, whose always funny, yet occasionally poignant accounts of living with hearing loss (and with "The Hearing Husband") have drawn tens of thousands of hard-of-hearing readers to our site.



Gael



Judy



Alan

Because we have a large team of editors, HHTM can cover niche areas that are of extraordinary importance to a certain percentage of consumers and their audiologists. For example, Alan Desmond shares his expertise on vestibular conditions and their treatment at Dizziness Depot.

At Hear the Music, Marshall Chasin, displays his quirky humor and a passion for music in advising how musicians and music lovers can be helped with their hearing loss.



Marshall

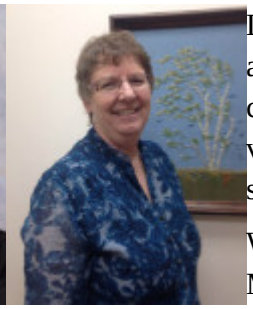


Jane

In HHTM's second year, Jane Madell, one of America's best-known pediatric audiologists, joined us and began writing Kids and Hearing. There, Jane offers clear, straightforward ideas on providing help for those whose entire lives may be shaped by the quality of care they receive.

HHTM's quick success allowed us to attract additional talent. As mentioned above, we were delighted to have Bob Martin join Judy Huch as co-editor at Hearing Health.


Angela


Lolly

Last year, we recruited two prominent private-practice audiologists, Angela Loavenbruck and Lolly Wigall, to be co-editors of Hearing Views. While Angela and Lolly have very different writing styles, both bring strong, clearly stated opinions and a wealth of experience to their posts.


Frank

We were also fortunate to have Frank Musiek bring Pathways to our blog last year. There, Frank and his team publish cutting-edge posts on neuroaudiology and central auditory disorders.

And, I must mention another of those unsung heroes, or heroines in this case. It is thanks to Stephanie Pretzer, our Internet guru, that our editors' fine work gets read around the world each and every week.

WELCOME BRIAN


Brian

Along with all my goodbyes, I want to say welcome to Brian Taylor, who has succeeded me as editor of Hearing News. A rising star in the under-50 generation of audiologists, Brian has written numerous excellent guest posts for us over the years and will be, I am certain, a great asset to HHTM.

AT LONG LAST

I know, I've gone on for far too long. So, if you are still with me, thank you for your patience.


Annie and David, in Copan, Honduras, February 2015

Trust me, I am not still writing out of any desire to delay retirement. After 40 years of having publication deadlines constantly hanging over my head, I am delighted to be freed from that pressure. Now, I can look forward to reading HHTM as it grows without any work on my part. Best of all, I will have more time to spend with my wife, Annie, both here in New York and traveling the world together.

The reason I've written at such length is that it's taken me a lot of words to try to express the gratitude and affection I feel toward all those friends I made during my 25-year tenure covering this field. So, finally, to all of you, thank you and farewell.

- David H. Kirkwood

The Hear the World Foundation and Good News: A Highly Promising Partnership for Hearing Protection

According to the latest figures from the WHO, some 1.1 billion young people across the

world are putting themselves at risk of hearing loss due to unsafe listening practices. The Hear the World Foundation wants to help put a stop to this and has therefore signed up to be a prevention partner of Switzerland's leading concert promoter Good News. Under this groundbreaking partnership, the foundation is to provide fans with free noise protection ear-plugs at all Good News concerts. The Hear the World Foundation will also be present at venues, raising awareness of the dangers posed by excessively loud music and encouraging concert-goers to protect their hearing.

As a prevention partner, the Hear the World Foundation will be promoting its extensive hearing protection campaign at all Good News events, reaching some 500,000 concert goers every year. As well as free hearing protection, selected lyrics from songs by famous Hear the World ambassadors will form the main element of the campaign encouraging concert-goers to protect their hearing.

Partnership to Begin at Unheilig Concert in Zurich

The highly promising partnership will be launched at the Unheilig concert on April 25 in Zurich's Hallenstadion stadium. Unheilig singer "Der Graf" is both a trained audiologist and a Hear the World ambassador and began supporting the foundation in 2012. "I know from my own experience how important good hearing is for our quality of life," he says. "Many people fail to appreciate that hearing loss affects people of all ages, not just the elderly. I support Hear the World as an ambassador because I want to get even more people enthusiastic about hearing, which is a fascinating subject. After all, we know that music is one of the greatest gifts in our lives – and we need good hearing in order to experience it."

Working Together to Enable People to Enjoy Music Without Any Restrictions

The Hear the World Foundation is a Swiss nonprofit foundation set up in 2006 by Sonova, the leading manufacturer of hearing solutions. The foundation works to prevent hearing loss and supports people, particularly children, who are in need. Lukas Braunschweiler, CEO of Sonova and President of the Hear the World Foundation Board explains: "Our partnership with Good News marks a further milestone for our foundation and exemplifies the preventative work that we have been doing for many years. We want as many concert-goers as possible to protect their hearing. Here is something that few people know – noise-related hearing loss is irreversible." Good News CEO Gérard Jenni adds: "In the Hear the World Foundation, we have found a partner that is an excellent fit for Good News. Both of us have the same aim – enabling people to enjoy music without any restrictions. We are looking forward to experiencing many concerts together."

Good News is the market leader in the Swiss concert industry. Highlights this year include the Foo Fighters in St. Gallen, the Sonisphere Festival featuring Muse in Biel/Bienne, Die Toten Hosen in Zurich, and the Rock the Ring Festival in Hinwil, which includes acts such as Billy Idol and Toto.

Key tips for protecting yourself against noise-related hearing loss:

- **Do not turn music up too loud**: noise levels below 85 dB are considered safe for our hearing. If you listen to music through audio devices, do not turn it up any louder than 60 percent of the maximum volume.
- Listen to music through **headphones that fit well and block out background noise**, as this will enable you to enjoy music at a low volume even in noisy surroundings.
- **Wear ear-plugs** at concerts and clubs and in other noisy environments. They can reduce the noise level by 5 to 45 dB.
- Use **smartphone apps** to measure the level of background noise.
- Keeping a sufficient distance from the source of the noise helps to prevent hearing damage.

- To give your ears a rest, make a conscious effort to take **breaks from listening** and turn off all noise sources.
- Have your **hearing regularly checked** by a hearing care professional.