



January 2021 Newsletter

Renew your membership in our local chapter for only \$15 a year! 3 ways to renew: send your renewal with your name, address, phone number, and e-mail to: East Bay Chapter, HLAA, P.O. Box 12484, Oakland, CA 94604-

2484. See back page to sign up and support National HLAA.

January 9, 2021, Meeting by Zoom! Zoom in and see your friends from HLAA-EBC. Schedule: 9:30 a.m. Meet and Greet; Our speaker will be Neil Bauman, Ph.D., founder and director for the Center for Hearing Loss Help in Lynden, Washington. His expertise includes such topics as hearing loss, coping strategies, ototoxic drugs, tinnitus, hyperacusis, Meniere's disease and Musical Ear Syndrome to name a few. Dr. Bauman has life-long severe hereditary hearing loss. Author of the book *Take Control of your Tinnitus – Here's How*, Dr. Bauman will speak on tinnitus.



Register for this free event here:

www.hearinglosseb.org After you register, you'll be sent the link to join the meeting.

Consider staying after the meeting for AfterWords – a chance to ask more in-depth questions, as well as discuss anything you want with fellow members!

HLAA-EB will post to the California State Association webpage and our website.

Check out our website: <http://www.hearinglosseb.org/> Contact us: info@hearinglosseb.org

MEETING NOTES: *Meeting the Challenges of Living with Hearing Loss in 2021*

At our December 12, 2020, HLAA-East Bay (EB) Chapter Leader Dale Davis led a lively, open-ended discussion with our local members, as well as other guests from out of the area, who joined us today via Zoom. Dale acknowledged that we have, indeed, been experiencing some very challenging times during the past year and which we expect to continue as we move forward into 2021. Nevertheless, Dale remarked that she was proud of our EB Chapter as we were one of the first Chapters to jump on Zoom to offer our monthly HLAA virtual meetings. Dale then proceeded to introduce the ten hard-working individuals who currently serve as volunteer members of our EB Chapter Steering Committee (SC)/Board and also three former members, and their specific roles in keeping the EB Chapter running so successfully. Please see our East Bay Leadership Team on Pg. 4 of this Newsletter.

Hearing Loss Problems in Noisy Environments: Three prompts were announced to help focus the open discussion.

- How do you cope in noisy environments?
- What new devices have you discovered that help?
- Do you have a favorite holiday story to share?

Individuals who have hearing loss (HL) or are deaf often experience a range of associated struggles, depending on type of their HL and/or extent of their HL. Many persons have discovered or learned ways to cope on a day-to-day basis with their specific problems. However, one of the commonly cited problems that has frequently challenged those who are dealing with HL is that of coping with HL in noisy environments. In particular, hearing and understanding speech can be quite difficult and frustrating when there exists a noisy background as may be the case at various social events, conferences, television shows, and driving or riding in a vehicle.

Devices That May Help with Hearing Problems in Noisy Environments: Devices mentioned by participants include:

- ✓ *SoundPrint* has a decibel (noise) meter that allows the user to measure a venue's loudness & then search for a venue based on how quiet or noisy it is as a place for hearing better when meeting up with family or friends.
- ✓ *Roger Select IN* is a microphone by Phonak that picks up a speaker's voice & sends it wirelessly directly into one's ears if placed in the middle of a table, e.g., in a restaurant, or worn by a single person. (See details below.)
- ✓ AudioFocus' founder/CEO Dr. Shariq Mobin described his company's research efforts to develop hearing aid technology that will selectively amplify only certain sounds important to you & build a custom model 'voice print' for hearing & understanding speech of specific people, such as family, friends, & colleagues.

Shared Insights for Successfully Living with Hearing Loss in 2021: Try out these great ideas for better hearing!

- ❖ Accept your hearing loss & take control of it by seeking out timely testing & treatment.
- ❖ Educate others about your hearing loss needs & how they can help you in hearing & understanding better.
- ❖ Plan & prepare properly in advance for participating in events & activities involving noisy environments.
- ❖ Be willing to research & try out available new technology & applications that may help you hear better.
- ❖ Practice regularly good techniques that you have discovered or learned in moving forward with better hearing.
- ❖ Join your local HLAA organization to gain knowledge, support & resources about hearing loss.
- ❖ Become an advocate for yourself & others who are successfully living with hearing loss in 2021 . . . and beyond!

~ Kathy Fairbanks

A REVIEW OF THE ROGER SELECT IN DEVICE by Peter Townsend

When I bought my new Phonak Paradise hearing aids, my audiologist suggested I try out the Roger Select iN. The Roger Select is a round-table microphone (mic). It is primarily made for hearing a group of people sitting around a table or relatively close by. It has 6 directional mics. The mic pointing in the direction of the person talking is activated, and the other mics shut down. I have used it successfully in group situations with one person talking at a time. I haven't been able to give it the real test of putting it in the middle of the table in a restaurant as I don't go to restaurants these days. I did experiment with it in my kitchen sitting across from my wife with the conversations on the radio set at a high volume. It was amazing how well it separated her voice from the background radio talking.

The Roger has a docking station which I have connected by optical cable to my TV. It is the best way to hear the TV. It can also be hung around a person's neck or attached to their shirt where it works as a directional mic.

My new hearing aids have Bluetooth built into them, and I don't need any special receivers. If you have another brand of aids or older Phonak aids, you will have to purchase a Roger RX receiver which plugs into the aids. Alternatively, a streamer like the ComPilot could work. Another option is to purchase a Phonak *MyLink* which connects to the t-coils in your hearing aids. It is expensive, and you will likely need your hearing aid dispenser to set it up to work with your aids. If you are interested in finding out more about the Roger Select, I recommend researching it on Google and/or YouTube. Also, I would be glad to talk to you about it.

WHERE ARE THOSE LOW-COST HEARING AIDS THAT WERE TO BE AVAILABLE OVER THE COUNTER AT STORES?

An article in *The New York Times* dated December 14, 2020, states that by now the over-the-counter affordable, quality hearing aid rules were to have been issued by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to allow these aids to be available by Summer 2021. This process has been ongoing since 2017 when Congress passed legislation allowing the devices to be sold directly to consumers, without a prescription from an audiologist. Then, the FDA was to issue draft regulations by August 2020 to establish safety and effectiveness benchmarks for these over-the-counter devices. Final rules were to take place by May 2021.

However, the process has been derailed by the pandemic. The FDA has been distracted by multiple emergency use authorizations for diagnostics, ventilators and personal protective equipment. Although the FDA promises these rules are a priority, they have no timetable as to when that might happen.

Advocates such as Dr. Vinay Rathi, an otolaryngologist at Massachusetts Eye and Ear, has called attention to the lack of FDA action in an article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* entitled, "Deafening Silence from the FDA". Senator Elizabeth Warren (D), Massachusetts, and Senator Church Grassley (R), Iowa, who were sponsors (among others) of the bipartisan 2017 law, wrote to the FDA commission in November urging action. They noted that "hearing loss continues to be a problem for millions of Americans," and masks and distancing create greater hearing difficulties. Other advocates are pushing for the passage of bill H.R. 3 that passed the House of Representatives last year, but never came to a Senate vote.

One-quarter of Americans in their 60's and nearly 2/3's of those over 70 have hearing loss which leads to social isolation, increased risk of falls and much higher rates of dementia. Unfortunately, only 18.5% of Medicare beneficiaries over 70 owned and used hearing aids. A major factor in not getting hearing aids is cost with the average pair being \$4,700. Other reasons include stigma (a constant reminder of aging and a desire to hide them), the inconvenience of multiple visits to an audiologist for testing, as well as fitting and adjustments. Medicare Advantage plans only cover approximately 79% of the cost, and many cannot afford them. Even Barbara Kelley, Executive Director of HLAA, says she is queried about how to afford the cost all the time.

Consumer electronics companies (such as Apple, Samsung and Bose) are standing by along with start-ups. Venture capital funding is available once barriers come down. Once the new rules are in place, new products and advertisements will pop up in stores and online. However, purchasing a hearing aid and setting it up or troubleshooting may still be confusing, and audiologists who will no longer be the gatekeepers of the devices can still render important services, such as testing, education, counseling, and adjusting devices even if clients bought them elsewhere.

These over-the-counter devices are still in the pipeline. It may be later than we expected, but we can be confident that they will appear (2022??).
Review by Nancy Asmundson

POETRY by Suzanne Yamamoto

A New Dawn Is Here

Wake-up Hearing Loss Americans!
Do you hear a whispering chirp for the New Year of hope?

We have gone through the monstrous COVID-19 Virus no one could imagine;
The masks shield our lips, the six-foot distance even harder to hear the sounds.
We felt dumb and muted, and our hearing impairment rights been tested in-depth . . .



However, we should be grateful that we are not among the dead from COVID-19. And we have the opportunity to explore the new technology for the betterment.

We should also experiment with the spirit of things at the new dawn of humbling moment to think about the great handicapped geniuses' creations, like Beethoven's compelling Symphony #9. Or Helen Keller's spirited courage makes us think deeply about handicapped life differently at the dawn of the New Year!

HLAA – EBC is looking for volunteers! Specifically, we need a Publicity Chair, but other volunteers are needed as well. Please contact Dale Davis, our EB Chapter leader, to discuss the possibilities! Contact: daledavis94605@gmail.com. Leave your number so she can call you.

HEARING AID BATTERIES! Only 17 cents apiece at Costco.

HLAA members can join the hearOclub to have batteries delivered to your home! Use the coupon code **HLAAMember** online at hearclub.com or by calling 833.LISTEN-2 (833.547.8362).

DONATE USED HEARING AIDS and/or HEARING EQUIPMENT! Bag them up and when we meet in person again, see Dale Davis at a meeting or email her at ddavis94605@gmail.com.

East Bay Leadership Team

The chapter is run by a Steering Committee, Leader Dale Davis, ddavis94605@gmail.com, who also oversees the Membership Database.

Outreach, Walk4Hearing Chair, National Chapter Coordinator/Liaison: Susan Jeffries Fitzgerald, susanlj29@gmail.com

Treasurer: Len Bridges, lenbridges3993-hlaa@outlook.com

Programs: George and Susan Fitzgerald, revcgf@gmail.com

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Technical/Audio Loop: Peter G. Townsend, peterg.townsend@gmail.com, Steven Ulrich

JOIN THE NATIONAL HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION – THEY ARE ADVOCATING FOR YOU!

Go to this URL to join today: <https://www.hearingloss.org/make-an-impact/become-a-memberrenew/>

OR, if you prefer to pay by check or card through the mail, Nancy Asmundson has membership forms to send to you or you can contact HLAA at 301-657-2248 or e-mail membership@hearingloss.org.

Your membership form will go along with your payment to 6116 Executive Blvd., Suite 320, Rockville, MD 20852. Call 301-657-2248 or e-mail membership@hearingloss.org.

COSTS:

Regular Membership/year (will receive *Hearing Life* magazine in print and digital format): Individual - \$45; Couple/Family - \$55; Professional - \$80; Nonprofit - \$80;

Online Membership (receives *Hearing Life* magazine in digital format only): Individual - \$35; Student - \$25.

Veteran Membership: Complimentary one-year Regular Membership & Lifetime Online Membership.