

Letter from Len Bridges. Acting Chair of the Steering Committee for HLAA-EBC

I want to thank those of you able to attend our in-person meeting December 9; it was quite successful with food and beverage provided by the Chapter, and we very much enjoyed being able to be face to face with the in-person gathering, the first after almost 4 years of being shut down due to the pandemic. We are grateful for the Dec. 9 meeting committee, Linda Gee, Connie Gee, Peter Townsend, and George Chin, Sr. for “pulling the rabbit out of the hat” and bringing this event to success. Those of you unable to attend, well, I think that you missed an excellent event; hopefully, next time you will be able to join us.

I also wish to thank the three panel speakers who were there to simply share their individual experiences with their own hearing aids and assistive devices with the intent of educating and providing information. However, by coincidence, they all used some equipment from Phonak, and therefore, primarily discussed their experience with Phonak. Hence, it could have been interpreted that the Chapter was promoting or endorsing Phonak above and beyond other brands and manufacturers of hearing loss assistive devices.

I do want to make clear that this was not the case. The Chapter was not promoting or endorsing Phonak or any other manufacturer or retailer. The Chapter has no intent to promote or endorse any particular manufacturer or retailer. The Chapter does intend to encourage and support each individual becoming knowledgeable and educated about hearing loss issues and charting their own path to satisfy their personal needs. This is consistent with our mission and goals to provide advocacy, information, education, and support.

All three panelists were asked to participate on the panel and to share their personal experience. We are interested in learning how all people handle their hearing loss; if you are interested in volunteering to speak and share your experience with hearing aids and other devices provided by Audible, Beltone, Bernafon, Jabra/Jabra Enhance, Lucid, Miracle Ear, Oticon, Philips, Phonak, ReSound, Siemens, Signia, Starkey, Unitron, Widex, or any other brand, please do let us know, and we will work to provide opportunity as appropriate.

Thank you for being a participant in our East Bay Chapter.

Len Bridges, Acting Chair, Steering Committee

Meeting Notes: “An Informal Panel Discussion of Assistive Listening Devices”

We kicked off our Dec. 9th 2023 HLAA-EB in-person Holiday Party Meeting with lots of tasty food, good conversation, and friendly socializing, Members and guests were urged to collect some food and drink goodies and grab a seat so they could enjoy our informal discussion about Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs). Three persons had previously been asked and kindly agreed to share in an informal panel discussion about their own personal experience with hearing loss issues and any assistive listening devices (ALDs) which they had found useful at group meetings or other events, as well as communicating with colleagues, family and friends.

Panel Participants’ Personal Experiences with Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs):

The informal discussion panel included: Peter Townsend, HLAA-EB Leadership Team Member/Technical/Audio Loop; Gerry Niesar, Former HLAA-EB Leadership Team/Advocacy; Steve Sells, HLAA-Peninsula Chapter Member and former speaker for HLAA-EB on Technology.

Below is a list of some of the assistive listening devices (ALDs) mentioned by panelists or audience members during the informal discussion, as helpful in dealing with hearing loss issues.

Hearing Loops & Telecoils – Useful in improving hearing in noisy meeting rooms, particularly for persons with telecoils in their hearing aids (HA's).

Multi-mic – A pocket microphone that can be passed around to speakers at small group meetings or during conversations with family or friends to help listeners hear and understand voices better.

Pocket Talker – This device may be either plugged into a loop worn around the neck or used with headsets. The device is then put in front of speakers in the middle of the table, and they talk into it.

Phonak Suite; Table Mic & Personal Clip-on Mic – These mics have some special features, such as the table mic's ability to expand or contract the sound range in small group meetings or events, while the clip-on mic can be attached onto a speaker's clothing so their voice can be better heard.

iPhone – Using an iPhone that connects directly to one's hearing aids (HA's) may help in hearing & understanding phone conversations.

Roger Pen – Useful when put in front of speakers in small group meetings or small dinner parties, especially in hearing speakers with soft voices. However, the Roger Pen has now been discontinued.

Roger On Mic – Roger Pen has been replaced by a better Roger ON Mic, which has added new features, with more options available that are automatic and may cut down on background noise.

Smartphones – Now able to run apps like *Google Live Transcribe*, which may be useful in captioning conversations on either iPhones or Android phones.

Wrap-Up:

As audience members polished off the remaining food and drinks, the panelists offered some final remarks and tips as follows:

1. There are lots of assistive listening devices (ALDs) with many features on the market.
2. It is a good idea to do some hands-on research to compare features and costs of the various ALDs available before purchasing any ALDs to be sure they fit your individual needs.
3. It is important to consult your own audiologist and/or personal health provider about your hearing loss issues and the compatibility of any particular ALD with your individual type and level of hearing loss, as well as the hearing aids or cochlear implants you may be using.

Thank you for joining in on our Holiday Party and informal discussion of Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) and, of course, your continuing support of our HLAA-EB Chapter.

-- Kathy Fairbanks

Note from George Chin, Sr.

As promised at the Dec in-person meeting, below are suggested forums to discuss and exchange information about hearing assistive devices:

1. Register for any of the "HOPE" meetings on the HLAA Chapter calendar at:
<https://hlaagroups.hearingloss.org/g/HLAALea>

2. The following are email forums:

1. Create an account at: <https://groups.io>
And send an email to the following with "Subscribe" in the subject line to these email addresses:
 - HLAATech+subscribe@hlaagroups.hearingloss.orgNote: see below for non=device centric HLAA email forums.
2. Join the SayWhatClub at:
 - <https://www.saywhatclub.org/join-swc/>

Non-device centric HLAA [group.io](https://groups.io) forums; subscribe by sending email with subject "Subscribe" to:

- HLAA+subscribe@hlaagroups.hearingloss.org
- HLAAAdvocacy+subscribe@hlaagroups.hearingloss.org
- HLAAGITHL+subscribe@hlaagroups.hearingloss.org
- HLAALeaders+subscribe@hlaagroups.hearingloss.org
- HLAANewsletterEditors+subscribe@hlaagroups.hearingloss.org
- HLAAVeterans+subscribe@hlaagroups.hearingloss.org
- HLAACA+subscribe@groups.io

A New Memoir Coming in May!

"But You Look So Normal" by Claudia Marseille
A Childhood in Silence: My Musical Odyssey

Here I am at age four, trying to make out songs on my little record player after finally being diagnosed with a severe hearing loss and receiving my first hearing aid. I spent hours on the floor trying to decipher the words streaming from the little speaker. My mother recounted that my favorite song was "Oh my Darling Clementine." Yet the rest of the lyrics remained elusive. With my hearing aid, I could hear the music in terms of volume, but as I couldn't lipread what was sung on the LPs, the words remained elusive. Discerning speech from background noise, in this case, the musical accompaniment, is a formidable barrier to understanding conversations for those with hearing loss.



Later, as a teenager, I wasn't able to understand the lyrics of the music that enthralled my peers in the 60s and 70s as they were glued to their transistor radios and record players. Likewise, I couldn't understand the music played at dances and concerts. The absence at that time of closed-captioning on TV and movies further exacerbated my sense of isolation from the world of my peers. As a result, I often found myself on the fringes of essential social interactions, unable to share in the enthusiasm for popular music and culture that so greatly engaged my friends.

However, a silver lining emerged. I learned to play the piano at an early age, something my European parents encouraged. The piano tones were clear, particularly in the middle register, as long as there was no background noise. Accompanying other musicians, however, proved too challenging, as it was virtually impossible to discriminate the other instruments from the piano. So, I gave up my dream of being a professional musician. However, classical music remained my refuge, and I played for my own pleasure much of my life. Piano music evolved into a lifelong source of joy and solace.

Learn more about growing up with a severe hearing loss in my memoir *“But You Look So Normal”* coming out in May 2024. Visit my [website](#) to read more about my story, and [preorder](#) the book.

Marseille is a clear, expressive writer . . . this is an elegantly written memoir that raises awareness and will empower others.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“But You Look So Normal” is a triumphant, encouraging story for those who have faced the challenges of living with a disability and an eye-opening read for those who have not. It is a heart-rending story, but also an account of fortitude and success.”

--*Readers' Favorite, 5-Star Review*

Opportunity to participate in a Project with photos and text about what it's like to have hearing loss with Nancy Rubin

Nancy Rubin, taught in public high schools for 32 years. She began her teaching career as a specialist working with the visually impaired, but soon was called upon to teach a required nine-week course *“Social Living”*. It was always a challenge to pack everything from birth to death into half of a semester. My experience teaching, and that of my students in *Social Living*, is the subject of a documentary *“Hi, I'm Nancy Rubin”*. Her three passions are teaching, photography, and travel.

Her latest project is called *Sound Advice*. It will consist of photos and text about what it's like to have a hearing loss. The purpose of the project is to educate. If you would like to participate, review the following and send her an e-mail:

- Looking for a diverse group of people with a variety of hearing loss issues
- In your e-mail, answer the following questions:
 - What would you like hearing people to know about your hearing loss?
 - What is the most frustrating thing about not being able to hear?
 - Write about an embarrassing or funny incident.
 - Anything else you would like to share about your hearing loss.

The following links will give you an idea of her past projects/exhibits.

Link to FOREVER FIT: Exercising for Life: <https://www.nancyjrubin.com/foreverfit-exercisingforlife>

Link to her website: nancyjrubin.com Her e-mail address: nancyrubin17@gmail.com

**We need your help! Can you volunteer? Contact us at:
info@hearinglosseb.org**

Here is a list of volunteer positions we are seeking to fill:

- **Volunteer Coordinator**: Contact people who said they could volunteer and tell them about volunteer needs. Recruit for those positions.
- **Outreach Coordinator**: Organize a table for our chapter at various street fairs and other venues. Set up the table. Recruit volunteers to help with the events. Reach out to people who participate in our meetings. Let people know about our chapter.
- **Program Team**: Work with Robin Miller to contact potential speakers and arrange for them to speak at one of our meetings.
- **Just want to help?** All of our committees need helpers! All volunteers are welcome!

East Bay Leadership Team

The chapter is run by a Steering Committee, Acting Leader: Len Bridges
Outreach, National Chapter Coordinator/Liaison: Linda Gee, linda.gee4@gmail.com
Treasurer: Len Bridges, lenbridges3993-hlaa@outlook.com
Programs: Robin Miller, robin@robinmillerlaw.com
Technology and AfterWords Small Group: George Chin, Sr., georgechinsr@gmail.com
Membership: Connie Gee, cbgee2014@yahoo.com; Marlene Muir, muircmc@comcast.net
Volunteer Coordinator: (need a volunteer)
Newsletter Editors: Nancy Asmundson, nasmundson@comcast.net; Kathy Fairbanks, mkathyfairbanks@att.net
Publicity: Marlene Muir, muircmc@comcast.net; George Chin, Sr., georgechinsr@gmail.com
Technical/Audio Loop: Peter G. Townsend, peterg.townsend@gmail.com
Website updates: George Chin, Sr., georgechinsr@gmail.com; Peter G. Townsend, peterg.townsend@gmail.com

JOIN HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA (HLAA) – THEY ADOCATATE FOR YOU!

NEW on hearingloss.org: Your decision to do something about your hearing loss begins with understanding what is happening. The Hearing Loss Association of America contracted with Knowlera Media to produce a series of seven, four-minute, captioned videos on hearing loss. Information you need to be adequately briefed on the topic is all in one place in an easy-to-access format. If you think you have a hearing loss or know someone who does, please point them to the videos where hearing health care professionals and people with hearing loss talk about what you can do about it.

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

OR, if you prefer to pay by check or card thru the mail, Nancy Asmundson has membership forms to send to you, or contact HLAA at 301-657-2248 or e-mail membership@hearingloss.org. Your membership form & payment go to HLAA, 6116 Executive Blvd., Suite 320, Rockville, MD 20852.

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

Veteran Membership: Complimentary 1-Year Regular Membership & Lifetime Online Membership.