

Unexpected moments of understanding

Gael Hannan, hearinghealthmatters.org
November 21, 2023

It's all in the small stuff. The ordinary small stuff that, just when you think nothing will surprise or thrill you again when connected to the words *hearing loss*, something unexpected happens.

Perhaps a moment when accessibility is provided when you didn't anticipate it. Or when, for whatever reason, sound becomes clearer, a conversation becomes easier. Another human suddenly, *without being prompted*, remembers to remove a ball hat or faces you squarely before starting to speak.

Meaningful events in ordinary, appreciated moments.

One of these flashes happened to me this week when I attended a hockey game with my family in San Jose, CA. Me, a hockey non-fan married into a hockey-mad family, who for over 30 years has failed to grasp anything beyond the basics of the game. Also, arenas are loud, LOUD. But on the jumbotron at the hockey arena – captioning appeared with the important information! Not only just who scored a goal, but other stuff that I simply would not have heard. I was as excited as a non-lover of hockey can get.

My friend Myrtle Barrett has always been an inspiration for me on my hearing journey and in my writings on hearing loss. Myrtle became deaf as young woman, and she went for decades without assistive technology. Her empathetic and service-oriented lifeview made her a successful social worker and a dynamic advocate for people with hearing loss. In her early 60s, she dragged her heels to get a cochlear implant and I was grateful to hear about and see firsthand some of the dramatic moments in her new life of hearing such as this:

“Shortly after my cochlear implant was switched on, I went for a walk with my nephew. I was mes-



Join us on December 14 for our monthly social meeting

Join our friendly monthly meeting!
Please bring something for our holiday **Gift Exchange** (not over \$10 value)

Bring your news, questions, or concerns about hearing loss, or just come to eat and visit. We hope to see you!



4:00 pm, Thursday, December 14
Hof's Hut, 2147 Bellflower Blvd., LB

Free parking in the lot behind the restaurant

merized by the sound of gravel beneath my feet. I may have heard the scrunching sounds long ago before I went deaf, but I'd lost the memory of it. But now, I was screaming ‘*Oh my dear God, what's that sound!*’ as I ground my feet this way and that. I was so excited that my nephew walked away, leaving me screaming. He told his dad I was acting like a nut case. And I felt like one, too; I was a happy, crazy woman.”

At a male choir performance during a hearing loss conference, I sat next to Myrtle. The male chorus started Leonard Cohen's powerful *Hallelujah*, and the hair rose on my arms as I watched her hear music for the first time in thirty years. “My heart is beating so fast,” Myrtle said. “It's taking everything I've got not to get hysterical.” (Understandable, given her

(continued on page 2)

Chapter Calendar

December 14 at 4:00

Chapter social meeting at Hof's Hut

Lip reading practice: Wednesdays, 9:30-11:30 a.m. at Weingart Center

No lip reading class on Dec. 27

No Board meeting this month



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

from **Gail Morrison**

Report from Leisure World

I attended the LWSB HOH (Leisure World Seal Beach Hard of Hearing) support group meeting recently, where Don Craig led the group. We had three new members with one sharing that he went to bed hearing and upon waking up in the morning, with hearing loss. Another new person is a gal I used to work with in Orange County!

Don shared his journey in providing captions for us. He stated that he had no help from Leisure World. He went to the Recreation Department with no success. Their excuse was that it is just for a few people. He researched on YouTube and elsewhere until he found a way to provide captions for us. He has an Android smart phone and is using Live Transcribe through his Android and Zoom. (I probably have missed something more technological.)

Don is legally blind, yet took it upon himself to research until he found a way to provide captions for us! He's a former elementary teacher.

LW is a senior community with many clubs and meetings. Our new member stated that he doesn't attend these other meetings because he can't hear. LWSB could be a leader in the senior world if they would provide captions at these clubs and meetings! Of the 44 million people with hearing loss in the USA and 9,000-10,000 people living in LWSB, statistics are showing that at least half of this population has some level of hearing loss. LWSB is missing a great opportunity to serve the HOH/Deaf residents to enjoy their senior years instead of shutting them down.

Happy Holidays!



Register for Zoom meetings from our sister HLAA chapters

HLAA National Organization

ReSound Auracast Broadcast Audio and Hearing Aids: The Future of Wireless Sound has Arrived

Wednesday, December 6, 8:30-9:00 am

Wireless streaming via Bluetooth® technology has changed the way people who use hearing aids hear and interact with sound. Now, a brand-new version called Auracast™, in conjunction with Bluetooth Low Energy (LE) Audio, will allow hearing aid users to connect to and share multiple sound sources in a variety of public places and with loved ones, all without the need for intermediary devices or third-party apps. In October, ReSound released ReSound Nexia, the first hearing aid that supports Bluetooth LE Audio including Auracast broadcast audio. Details on Auracast and how it can be used with Nexia, will be discussed.

Presented by Jenn Schumacher, Au.D.j, an audiologist and medical writer with more than a decade of experience in the hearing aid industry.

[Pre-register for webinar](#)

unexpected moments of understanding

(continued from page 1)

recent public freak-out over mere gravel.)

A few years ago, during the Christmas season, I was doing a presentation in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. One of the event organizers, also a recent CI recipient, mentioned that one of the saddest aspects of her deafness was no longer being able to enjoy Christmas music. Somehow, she had missed the tutorial on connecting, and before you could say deck the halls, we plugged her CI system into an iPod, and we got teary (there are many types of tears in hearing loss) as we watched Silent Night fill her head.

The unexpected communication moments aren't all this dramatic and most aren't that newsworthy to other people. But to us, they are exquisite moments of unexpected pleasure. When Madison, our 7-year-old granddaughter, came close to me and clearly enunciated, "Gigi, would you like to play a game of crib?" it was one of those "small-stuff" moments that rocked my world.

<https://hearinghealthmatters.org/better-hearing-consumer/2023/joyful-unexpected-moments-of-understanding/>

Impact of hearing loss on brain regions tied to dementia explored in new study

hearinghealthmatters.org
November 29, 2023

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA — According to new research published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* this past week, researchers from the University of California San Diego and Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute delved into the relationship between hearing loss and its potential impact on the brain.

The study, led by principal investigator Linda K. McEvoy, Ph.D., from UC San Diego's Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health and Human Longevity Science and senior investigator at the Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute, aimed to explore how hearing loss might be linked to changes in specific brain regions.

Brain Changes in Patients with Hearing Loss

By conducting hearing tests and MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scans, the researchers observed microstructural differences in certain areas of the brain among participants with hearing loss.

Their findings indicated that individuals with hearing issues displayed distinct variations in brain regions linked to auditory processing, speech and language comprehension, and executive function.

"These results suggest that hearing impairment may lead to changes in brain areas related to processing of sounds, as well as in areas of the brain that are related to attention. The extra effort involved with trying to understand sounds may produce changes in the brain that lead to increased risk of dementia. If so, interventions that help reduce the cognitive effort required to understand speech — such as the use of subtitles on television and movies, live captioning or speech-to-text apps, hearing aids, and visiting with people in quiet environments instead of noisy spaces — could be important for protecting the brain and reduce the risk of dementia."

—Linda K. McEvoy, Ph.D., Principal Investigator

The study, a collaborative effort between UC San Diego and UC San Diego School of Medicine investigators, utilized data from the Rancho Bernardo Study of Health Aging, involving 130 participants who underwent hearing tests in research clinic visits between 2003 and 2005, followed by MRI scans from 2014 to 2016.

According to Dr. Emilie T. Reas, Ph.D., an assistant professor at UC San Diego School of Medicine and co-author of the study, "The results underscore the importance of safeguarding one's hearing by limiting exposure to loud noises, using protective gear in noisy environments, and minimizing the use of ototoxic medications."

Dr. McEvoy highlighted the potential significance of interventions that reduce the cognitive strain associated with understanding speech, such as using subtitles, hearing aids, and opting for quiet environments for conversations. These measures could play a crucial role in safeguarding brain health and lowering the risk of dementia, suggesting a potential pathway to mitigate the impact of hearing impairment on cognitive function.

<https://hearinghealthmatters.org/hearing-news-watch/2023/hearing-loss-dementia-brain-change/>

Chapter President Gail Morrison appears in Leisure World Weekly newspaper —



Gail Morrison (l) learned about iPhone features from Cristina Vegas at Video Producers Club office.

Video Producers Club

Cristina Vegas is available to teach residents about iPhones and iPads on Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-noon. To make an appointment with her, email cvegas2017@gmail.com.

At her last appointment, Vegas gave Gail Morrison tips on how to use the iPhone, including how to multitask while on a call, and that users can press the green phone icon in the leftmost of the screen to get back to the phone call. They also looked at some accessibility settings and some features of the Notes app.

—Ivy Kung

Copyright (c) 2023
Leisure World Weekly, Edition 11/23/2023

A veteran shares his experience with HLA

Teri Breier, communications specialist, HLA
November 9, 2023

An active member of HLA's Veterans Across America Virtual Chapter (VAVC) since 2021, Vietnam vet Steven Sterry and his then-new hearing service dog, Zochi, were profiled in Hearing Life magazine's Fall 2022 issue. In honor of Veterans Day, we asked him for an update on his many activities supporting veterans, both with and without hearing loss.

A long career serving veterans

Rev. Steven Sterry, 80, developed hearing loss and chronic tinnitus through exposure to repeated naval gunfire from the U.S.S. Galveston (CLG-3), while stationed on this guided missile cruiser over a nine-month period during the Vietnam War. Subsequently, he worked for 20 years assisting veterans with employment related issues as a Veterans Employment Representative with the State of California Employment Development Department (EDD). There, he helped military veterans find work and deal with physical and psychological issues that prevented them from keeping long-term jobs.



Steven Sterry with his hearing service dog, Zochi.

After retiring, Steven pursued his calling to the ministry and was eventually ordained first as a deacon, then as a priest in the Anglican Church of North America. Currently, in addition to his role as associate pastor of a local Anglican church, the Whittier, California resident serves as director of ministry and education for the United States Conference of Chaplains, is an

affiliate member of Cru Military Ministry and serves as an ombudsman and military outreach member for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, a voluntary military support agency under the U.S. Department of Defense.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, he was also community sponsor to three Veterans in Prison (VIP) groups at the California Institution for Men, in Chino and one at the California Institution for Women in Corona, which are open to all inmates who have served in the military.

Currently, Steven is involved with a U.S. Department of Defense project, under a contract to General Dynamics Corporation, which he learned about through HLA's [Veterans Across America Virtual Chapter](#) (VAVC). He participates as a panel member in peer reviews of medical study proposals related to hearing restoration or prevention of noise-induced hearing injuries.

Discovering HLA and the Veterans Chapter

In 2015, Steven and his second wife, Jeannie, attended his 55th high school reunion in Belmont, CA, with both their service dogs in tow: Montera, his first hearing dog—a Labrador/Golden Retriever mix from [Canine Companions](#) (CCI), and Daisy, a Chihuahua/Terrier mix trained to alert his wife to the onset of migraine headaches. In a conversation about their service dogs, a classmate (Raegene Castle) shared information about HLA. While attending online meetings of the HLA Peninsula Chapter in San Francisco during the pandemic, Steven learned about, joined and became actively involved in the VAVC in 2021.

“My ministry is supporting military veterans, and the HLA Virtual Veterans Chapter gives me the opportunity to hear about other issues with which I can help them,” he says. “I believe there are many veterans with hearing loss who would benefit from membership in HLA and the VAVC. Although the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides first-rate equipment, it provides very little focused morale or emotional support to veterans with hearing disabilities. The HLA Virtual Veterans Chapter has the

(continued on page 5)

veteran shares his experience

(continued from page 4)

potential to reach all those veterans with hearing loss who need us.”

Recently, Steven has joined with other VAAVC members to advocate for the VA to provide assistive technology like live captioning for online telemedicine services and activation of telecoils in VA-provided hearing aids, so that recipients may take advantage of [hearing loops](#) in public settings.



Attendees of the HLAA 2023 Convention luncheon for members of the Veterans Across America Virtual Chapter, including military veterans, their families and HLAA staff and board members.

Hearing dogs for veterans

Steven received Zochi, his second hearing assistance dog, from CCI in June 2022, and is an enthusiastic proponent of the organization. As a team, they are often invited to attend local military fundraisers, including an annual veterans' charity golf tournament each November.

Steven encourages other veterans, both with and without hearing loss, to consider getting a service dog, and often helps them apply for the Service Dog Veterinary Health Insurance Benefit (VHIB), a special VA program that provides veterans with veterinary care and medications for their service dogs.

“It’s important to know that eligibility for this program is restricted to service dogs that have been trained and gifted by a nonprofit member organization of [Assistance Dogs International](#), like Canine Companions. A medical doctor must recommend the veteran and their dog and demonstrate that there is no more suitable assistive technology available to them through the VA. Because benefits are not retroactive, they need to apply for the program as soon as they get their service dog.”

HLAA salutes and supports our veterans

The mission of the HLAA Veterans Across America Virtual Chapter is to provide education, be an advocate for veterans with hearing loss and provide a support system to help them to return and adjust to civilian life.

Hearing loss and tinnitus are the most common military service-connected disabilities, affecting an estimated 3.6 million American veterans. If you are a veteran with hearing loss, or serve as a caregiver, you are invited to attend the online VAAVC meetings, every third Tuesday of the month. [Visit our website](#) for more information and [join the online discussion forum](#).

Any veteran who would like to attend the annual HLAA Convention for the first time will have their registration fee waived—please reach out to convention@hearingloss.org



Join Hearing Loss Association of America — Your membership supports our chapter

Join HLAA to become part of the one organization that represents the interests of 48 million people with hearing loss in the U. S., providing information, education, support and advocacy to people with hearing loss.

Individuals \$45/year • Couple or family \$55/year

Read about the benefits of membership and join online at <https://www.hearingloss.org/make-an-impact/become-a-memberrenew/>

Or call for more information: (301) 657-2248

For more information about our chapter, visit hlaa-lb-lakewood.org

Questions? Contact us!

Email: info@hlaa-lb-lakewood.org

Phone: (562) 549-3086

DISCLAIMER: We believe the information contained in this publication has been compiled from reliable sources. However none of the contributors, sponsors, or anyone else connected with the Informer in any way whatsoever can be responsible for the appearance of any inaccurate or libelous information or for your use of the information contained in or linked from these pages. If you need specific advice, for example, for your particular hearing concerns, please seek a professional who is licensed or knowledgeable in that area. We further do not recommend or endorse any product or professional but supply such information as a public service.