



The Listening Post

Fall, 2014

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MHS President's Message



by Robert T. Guison, BC-HIS

I wanted to personally invite each hearing professional to become and maintain membership in the Missouri Hearing Society (MHS). The value is that membership in MHS promotes and protects our ability to practice by watching over events, not only in Jefferson City, but in Washington D.C., as well. I count myself fortunate to have good friends from all walks of life within the hearing field community. We should focus on what we have in common, instead of competitive differences. Being willing to serve the hearing impaired community demonstrates a commitment, beyond the initial sale and fitting of hearing instruments, to that of long term compassion and a genuine interest in bringing them, as much as possible, back to the world of communicating.

MHS is recognized nationwide for the quality of our Hearing Specialists and our outstanding educational program and convention. Having been

licensed in several states, I know this to be true. I respectfully ask that each one of us reach out to a colleague who isn't a member and invite them to join. I recently took the occasion to help out a fellow competitor by servicing a product for them and, instead of charging what he was more than willing to pay; I simply asked that he join MHS which he did. I cite this example not for any praise but to illustrate that if we try and do the right thing, we will have more opportunity to influence for the good of us all ... pay it forward, if you will.

Finally, I would ask that each one of us look to what we can do to promote MHS and our livelihood. Please be willing to reach out through email, phone or at our Annual Convention to any Board member on any suggestion that you might have. Be willing to serve and help out!

Ask your suppliers to hold training events in conjunction with our meetings, instead of competing against it. While attending the "free events" is attractive, in the long run it weakens all of us. I look at MHS as an investment in my license. I have had a great return of my investment over the last 24 years and can, with confidence, promise you the same IF you become involved.



Sign Up a Member Today!

For only about \$10 a month, MHS members receive some great rewards:

- ◆ Personal Growth
- ◆ Legislative Issues Monitored
- ◆ Added Credibility
- ◆ CEU Opportunities
- ◆ Informative Association Website

And, as our membership grows, our industry's voice grows and has a better chance of being heard on issues which impact our businesses daily.

So ... help improve our industry by signing up a new member TODAY! For an application, go to our website:

www.MissouriHearingSociety.org

or

contact the MHS office at:

P. O. Box 1072
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102
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Conscious Ramblings of a 20-Something-Year-Old: *Insightful Conclusions about Life*

by Sarah Bricker, Freelance reporter for the *St. Louis Business Journal*

About the Author: Sarah Bricker received her bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Missouri - Columbia, MO and has received many national and regional awards in recognition of her skills. She has accomplished all of this with severe, genetic hearing loss. She has both auditory and phonetic impairments. To contact Sarah: sarahbrix@gmail.com

“ ... I couldn't
avoid the truth
anymore.”

Can you HEAR me NOW?

Two college boys shout at me across the living room, their white cotton shirts lifted with one hand to conceal their mouths.

“Can you hear me?” “What about now?”

“Hey! Hey! Can you hear me?”

They shout at me through the fabric assuming I can't hear them. I can.

“What am I saying now?” the first says, proceeding to speak softly once more through the shirt.

The other is laughing, his shirt falling back below to his neck. “Dude, that's not nice!” he shouts at the first who is still speaking to me through the thick curtain of white threads.

“Did you hear what I said?” he asks pulling his shirt down off his face. “Did you hear me?” he asks laughing.

I heard him, but I didn't *hear* him.

Everyone has something they are ashamed of. For me, it was my ears.

It began when I was 13, but it wasn't noticeable until I was a junior in high

school. My parents and friends simply believed me to have an incredible ability to focus and zone out against distractions. I let them think that for a long time. When my teachers started asking questions about it at parent-teacher conferences junior year, my parents realized it wasn't “focusing,” and I couldn't avoid the truth anymore.

My ears weren't normal. They still aren't normal.

In high school I could hear just a little bit better than my 45-year-old father, which as anyone can tell you wasn't great. I didn't believe my parents when they said I had hearing loss, and I stubbornly refused to be tested or be cautious with what hearing I did still have. An avid runner year-round, I blasted music through snug-fitting headphones and through the stereo while driving to the barn, the volume so loud the car vibrated.

By the time college came, my hearing had deteriorated further and when I was tested it showed a significant loss

“Ramblings ...” >p3

“What I could hear, I couldn’t understand.”

in both the ranges of volume and frequency. As a freshman and sophomore I was still incredibly ashamed of my hearing loss, feeling as though it made me an alien, an outsider, someone with a disability that made everyone treat me differently. I avoided telling anyone I could about it including teachers, new friends, roommates and boys I dated.

When someone found out, the look on his or her face was so painful, so shameful, that I did everything I could to avoid it. I often stayed in, avoiding parties and bars so as to escape the possibility of someone finding out I couldn’t hear normally. I avoided dating or getting close to people. I avoided concerts, football games and anywhere where there was loud talking, loud music or where it was dark.

Why? Because at these places, some people, when they did find out – often sadly because my best friend drunkenly told them – would suddenly do a double-take, stumble in our previously flowing conversation and make an excuse to leave. Instead of being the girl they had just been flirting with, I became a leper, someone they were disgusted or disturbed by.

My hearing loss made me abnormal. It made me ashamed. It made me hide. It made me frustrated.

Despite my attempts to avoid loud music and to actively conserve my hearing loss, by junior year of college, my hearing had progressively worsened to affect not only my personal relationships but also my ability in the classroom. While throughout high school and the first couple years of college I had been able to take notes, hear the professors and perform spectacularly from any

location in an auditorium, come junior year, if I wasn’t in the front row I might as well have not been in class.

At this point my hearing was so minimal I ceased to feel normal at all.

I could not hear my professors from the back, side or even middle of the room, and if their face wasn’t visible from where I sat, their words, though heard, were indistinguishable from sounds one hears from a babbling child. I could hear music, but I could not understand more than five words of the lyrics for the entire song. I could hear TV shows and movies at the theatre, but I could not tell you what was said, what was going on or even sometimes if someone was even speaking; subtitles became a necessity. I could no longer hear the birds sing in the morning or the whistles blown at swim meets and football games. I could not interpret words on the radio, nor words spoken through a microphone. Bars became my own personal Hell, and school was suddenly hard for the first time in my entire life.

What I could hear, I couldn’t understand. What I couldn’t hear, I grieved the loss of it.

Hearing became work, the mere act of trying to listen as exhausting as running eight 400m sprints all out. I struggled to hear professors speak, and often left class in tears born of frustration and anger.

I hated myself and sometimes my family for this problem; after all it was genetic. I even hated my brother sometimes, for until me only the men in my family had experienced such significant hearing loss. But above all, I hated everyone else for being normal.

“Ramblings ...” >p4

“ ... he didn't seem to fully grasp my hearing loss.”

At a certain point, my shame lost its driving force. I had to choose between struggling in silence or finding a way to adapt and work with my hearing loss not against it. In fact, for me as journalism major, letting go of my shame and embracing the courage to open up was absolutely essential.

I was a sports reporter. Reporters have to interview – in person and on the phone. I am horrible on the phone, it is my other Hell, and interviews today are still a nightmare, but, with an entire summer ahead on the sports beat and an editor who demanded nothing but the best, I had no choice. I sucked it up. I braced the wind and told them all.

I told my editor, Greg Bowers, first; in an email and months before the summer would start. He called me into his office. We met, he talked, and he didn't seem to fully grasp my hearing loss. He would understand better later on. So would some of the other editors.

My hearing that summer was so bad that people often had to call my name multiple times until I heard them, and this was often the case in the

bustling, noisy, phones-always-ringing newsroom environment of the *Columbia Missourian*. I got in trouble a few times with people and professors who thought I was ignoring them, being rude and arrogant. They did not think so after I explained I couldn't hear them.

By the end of the summer, I had 32 published articles and had gained the respect of my editors and peers. By the end of the summer, I'd told the entire newsroom and my 70-plus article sources the following: "I have significant hearing loss, auditory and phonetic, so I apologize if I make you repeat things." And, by the end of the summer, I realized I'd learned to work *with* my hearing loss.

I had subconsciously learned to read lips. I had instinctively figured out how to do my job without my ears. I had adapted, using my eyes to counteract the lack of my ears.

And, I had gotten so good, so incredibly good at reading lips, that I hadn't even realized I'd done it until the end of the summer.

“Ramblings ...” >p5

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“Acceptance is a powerful thing.”

My sources never knew I did this, reading their lips. They simply believed me to be mature for my age, professional and attentive, for I always looked them in the eye. They knew I had hearing loss, because I told them, but none of them ever realized how bad I had it, never realized that in reading their lips I was masking how severe my disability really was.

And, that in truth is what it is. A disability. I have a disability.

It is not as severe as others, and I can't say I suffer as those without limbs, without sight or without certain abilities do. My disability doesn't actually keep me from doing anything; it just makes everything a little bit harder. But, it is still a disability, and it affects who I am and how I can do things.

I had to accept this – having a disability. I had to label it what it was – hearing loss, a disability. I had to accept that no matter what I tried, whom I prayed to or what stars I wished upon, nothing would make my hearing normal again. I had to accept that it was irrevocable, a permanent element of who I was.

Acceptance is a powerful thing. Acceptance allowed me to let go of the anger, to accept and work through the frustration. It allowed me to realize nothing was impossible but that I just had to find a different way of doing it. Acceptance gave me pride and cast away my shame.

Acceptance made me open, honest and carefree about my damaged ears. It made me brave.

“Ramblings ...” >p6

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“I’m not different from you ...”

Months after the summer term, a professor and editor at the *Missourian*, Elizabeth Bixby pulled me aside and asked me about my reading lips. She asked how I did it without my sources knowing, and did it help in my interviewing. I told her it did help, that it made me a better reporter, because it created constant eye contact and interaction with the source. Reading lips forced me to look more at the person and less at my pad of paper, forced me to listen intently, remember more and write faster. When she asked me how I did it, I couldn’t really answer her.

I tried to explain how I did it, but I couldn’t. I realized after she left me that while my father’s and uncle’s hearing loss had forced them to learn to read lips, mine in coming on sooner and faster had forced me to do so long without knowing it. Nature had gifted me with compensation; my eyes instinctively counteracting the degradation of my ears. I couldn’t explain to Prof. Bixby how I read my sources’ lips without them realizing it, because I didn’t know how I did it. I simply did it. I still do it.

And, you know what’s funny? My hearing loss actually made me a better reporter. In having to adapt, in having to listen harder and work harder, I interviewed better and I wrote better. My hearing loss landed me awards from the Associated Press Sports Editors Association, the Missouri Press Association and the Society of Professional Journalists Mark of Excellence.

It’s still hard living and working with my hearing loss, and on a daily basis I struggle with it. It’s hard to speak on the phone or have quiet intimate conversations. Secrets are annoying and frustrating, and I only go to

movies at home in Dallas because they have captioned showings. My friends, family and loved ones are all understanding, and while sometimes they get frustrated with me, never once do they make me feel stupid, ashamed or *different*.

It will always be hard. I do and will always struggle personally and professionally every day.

But, every day, to whomever I meet, new or old, I tell them or remind them: “ I have hearing loss, so please bear with me.”

I don’t say I’m sorry anymore, because I’m not going to apologize for who I am.

I am disabled, and that isn’t going to change.

I’ll never hear the birds sing or understand TV and music without captions. I’ll never be privy to whispered secrets and romantic bed-talk spoken in hushed tones is something I will never be able to appreciate.

I have hearing loss, and it is a disability. I will never be *normal*, and that’s ok. I will always have this problem, but I won’t be ashamed.

So I can’t hear...

So what?

I’m not different. I’m not stupid. I’m successful, driven, smart, an award-winning journalist and in love.

I’m not different from you, and depending on who you are, I may even be better.

So again ... I can’t hear ...

So what?

What’s your point?

Exactly ... **There isn’t one.**

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From the Desk of the Director

Ozarks Technical College • Springfield, MO

E. Lynn Royer, MEd, BC-HIS

Fall is an incredibly busy time of year with much to celebrate for the rest of the year, as well as much to celebrate for the future of the hearing impaired communities whom we all service. Fall is also a great time to share with the Missouri Hearing Society membership what's been happening with our students and around the campus at Ozarks Technical College (OTC).

OTC has been recognized as 36th in the nation among all community colleges which offer two-year degrees. What an awesome time to be at OTC!

Graduates and Licensing Updates

We had 47 students graduate in the Annual Commencement Ceremony on May 18th. We are incredibly proud of each student for their accomplishments and determination to enter our profession to serve the hearing impaired.

We have had approximately 20 students take and pass the written examinations in various states, primarily in Missouri. We have licensed professionals in Illinois, Iowa, West Virginia and Missouri, thus far. We had four students this last practicum test session who will have to return and take the practicum exam again for Missouri. For all other states listed above, the pass rate is 100% for the written and practicum exams. Missouri's test results thus far show some weaknesses in Audiometric Interpretation for our students and we are working diligently to improve student performance in that area. Mock practicum sessions are also given free of charge to students prior to their testing dates, even if they have already graduated from the program.

The Ted Venema CEU Workshop Was a HUGE Success!

On July 26th, OTC welcomed Ted Venema to our main campus where he presented a full-day workshop to our students and other professionals. It was a huge success. We offered six CEU's approved through the State of Missouri BEHIS office, as well as approval from the International Hearing Society. Other than Dr. Venema's airplane adventures to get him to Springfield, Missouri, the one-day training was a great success. More workshops will be held in the future, so stay tuned for future training dates and topics to begin in January 2015.

Sertoma "Celebrate Sound" 5K Walk

Sertoma will be hosting its annual "Celebrate Sound" 5K Walk on the campus at MSU in Springfield on September 27, 2014 beginning at 10 a.m. OTC's HIS Program has formed a team and will have its bus on the MSU campus, We will be offering hearing related services and tours of the bus.

Anyone interested in learning more about Sertoma or the Walk, please visit the Sertoma website at <https://www.sertoma.org/asoundinvestment>.

The Staff at OTC

Last but not least, I would like to share with the Missouri Hearing Society membership some information about our staff. We have had a lot of changes over the last several months which I feel are worth mentioning! Our staff information is listed below. Please do not hesitate to contact us any time we can be of assistance.

We are gearing up for our next Cohort which will begin in January 2015. We will be converting to 16- week courses at that time and we will have one group of students who will begin each January. The courses will be online, with Simulation and Lab Sessions just as before. Simulation is a very interesting and innovative topic which we will explain more fully in the next issue of the MHS' *The Listening Post*.

For more information about our Hearing Science Program, please visit: <http://www.otc.edu/alliedhealth/13080.php>

OTC HIS Faculty:

"We have 155 years of experience in the field of Hearing Instrument Science"

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- ♦ Dianne Senay, AuD
- ♦ Robert Siegel, AuD
- ♦ Lisa Elmore, Licensed HIS, AAS HIS Graduate
- ♦ Elizabeth Fernandez, AuD
- ♦ David Shepard, B.S., AAS HIS Graduate