

## Tooth Vibrator, Lion's Brain

# Necessity And Vanity Dictate Hearing History

Fashions may shift from the mini-skirt back to the droopy 30s or funky 40s, but human vanity, it seems, hasn't changed much since the caveman first sported his fur apron. The constant chase after the latest look is a costly business, but when coupled with the need to minimize a physical defect (shortness, girth, or loss of hair, teeth or hearing) history proves that price is no object.

The first Queen Elizabeth had an extensive (and expensive) wig collection to hide her scanty locks, and Napoleon changed waistcoat fashions across Europe to make himself look taller and thinner. What some of history's wealthiest dandies and court ladies did to conceal their loss of teeth makes fascinating (and horrifying) reading. But a recent study by the Ontario Hearing Aid Association shows that efforts to cope with deafness without appearing to do so have really taxed man's ingenuity down through the ages.

Small fortunes were spent by leaders of fashion on various aids to hearing, and even on wooden dentures. If some of those who suffered under these instruments of torture could see the sophisticated aids available today, the results

achieved (and the comparatively modest price-tags) there would undoubtedly be an upheaval in many an ancient burial ground, says Joseph D. MacDonald, President, Ontario Hearing Aid Association.

"Deaf" aids and instruments, speaking tubes and trumpets were being invented and used as far back as the Crusades, when the Albigenes (a religious sect in northern France) argued the comparative merits of stag, boar, reindeer or other animal horns to "bring the said words close". The poorer citizenry fashioned tubes from large, rolled-up leaves, or just cupped their hands around the ear (as is still done today).

Although ear trumpets or tubes did serve to concentrate sound energy through limiting the pathway to the ear, their main "aid" was to alert the speaker to talk more loudly, MacDonald says.

During Regency and Victorian days, ear trumpets came in many fashionable (but cumbersome) styles. The dandy who could afford such an aid might choose from the "Banjo" or "London Dome" models or ornately decorated polished brass, or sport a flattened version which could be

concealed in a leather pouch. Young women favored ear "coops" and head-bands which could be hidden in their elaborate coiffures.

Other bizarre devices included hearing urns located near the chair of the afflicted person, acoustic beards and bonnets, and even an acoustic fan. This popular device, made of flexible culvanite (hard rubber) with a handle, was held with the top edge against the upper teeth. Sound vibrations were gathered through the fan area and conducted via the teeth and bone into the inner ear area.

Teeth also played a major role in the "Dentaphone", a round, flat case fronted by a thin, cone-shaped diaphragm. The user held the device in his hand and received sound via a small wooden "bit" gripped between the teeth. Despite its high cost, this one only functioned for those with a sturdy set of uppers!

Mobility was often sacrificed for vanity. Special chairs were built with the backs shaped like the prow of a canoe, focussing the sound to the ears of the occupant. In 1819, King Goa VI of Portugal had an elaborate throne constructed with trumpet bells built into the armrests, connected to his ears by tubes. Kneeling courtiers spoke into concealed resonators in the arms.

The sporting blood could have his binoculars fitted with a binocular ear trumpet, the barrels of the binoculars acting as resonators to amplify the sound and channel it to the ears.

If you couldn't afford such luxuries, you might, in the 13th century have tried inserting a lion's brain into your ear, lubricated with some "strong oil" (if you ate the brain, however, you might "go mad!") Hildegard of Bingen, a 12th century scholar, maintained

he could cure deafness by holding a lion's right ear (just cut off, of course) over the patient's ear, while muttering an incantation. More recent "healers" prescribed "auditory massage" produced by "ear exercises".

Other "cures" which enjoyed brief popularity through the years included medicated earpieces, electric belts, special diets guaranteed to restore hearing, and devices that sputtered sound or flashed colored lights.

The drive to hear distinctly while at the same time concealing total or partial deafness has led to cruel exploitation through the years, Mr. MacDonald says, and some of these fraudulent methods and devices have persisted until fairly recently. As late as the 1920's, an inventor called Charles Fensky who claimed to have produced an "audiophone" which, he said, was "radiumized" by a substance called "hearium" was exposed by the American Medical Association.

Today, hearing aid dealers work closely with medical doctors to provide and service reliable and effective hearing aids, MacDonald says. The highly sensitive and cosmetically attractive lightweight aids available today at reasonable cost are the culmination of thousands of years of research, which began as far back as Greek physician-writer Claudius Galen.

The modern hearing aid is a sophisticated electronic instrument difficult to design and requires special skills to fabricate, says MacDonald. "Some of the parts are so small that they must be assembled under industrial microscopes." Designed particularly to reproduce human speech with maximum clarity to another particular human ear, it is much more than a miniature hi-fi or stereo

system, he explains.

"With the demand from users for hearing aids which are both cosmetically acceptable and physically comfortable, hearing aids are available today in a variety of shapes and types, including instruments worn in the ear, or behind the ear, or in the temples of eyeglasses."

Ontario hearing aid dealers who average more than 20 years of experience in fitting, selecting, and servicing aids, strive to keep abreast of new developments with retraining courses and seminars. To prevent a reappearance of merchants and methods aimed at exploiting the misery of the hard of hearing, the Ontario Hearing Aid Association

sponsors a 45-day guarantee which is binding on all its members. The purchaser who finds the hearing aid with which he has been fitted unsatisfactory will receive immediate satisfaction," says MacDonald. To back this up, he has letters of high praise from the Ontario government, as well as the Consumers' Association of Canada, and newspaper complaint columns, praising the Association for the way in which it has rid the industry of unethical practices.

The day of the tooth-vibrator, the lion's brain and the flashing lights is over in Ontario, and Joe MacDonald and his OHAA intend to see that it stays that way.

## Notice:

### Employers and Employees New Employment Standards Act

Effective January 1, 1975 the new Employment Standards Act covers the existing standards: minimum wage, vacation pay, overtime pay, termination pay, collection of wages and provides for:

#### Public Holidays

Employees are entitled to seven paid statutory holidays: New Year's Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Dominion Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. (Conditions and exceptions apply in certain situations.)

#### Overtime Pay

Overtime pay at time and one-half the regular rate for hours in excess of forty-four in a week.

#### Equal Benefits

The Equal Benefits provision will be brought into force at a later date.

#### Pregnancy Leave

Pregnancy leave is extended to seventeen weeks for employees with one year's service or more and covers all employers having one or more employees.

#### Transportation

The Act no longer requires an employer to provide transportation for female employees finishing or starting work between the hours of midnight and six o'clock in the forenoon or prohibits females under 18 working after midnight.

These are the principal amendments and changes to the Act.

For detailed information regarding exemptions and application of the standards contact your nearest Ministry of Labour office.

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Hamilton—1 West Ave. So.       | 527-4501 |
| Kenora—208 Robertson St.       | 468-3128 |
| Kingston—1055 Princess St.     | 542-2853 |
| Kitchener—824 King St. W.      | 744-5211 |
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| Sault Ste. Marie—125 Brock St. | 949-3331 |
| Sudbury—1538 LaSalle Blvd.     | 566-3071 |
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| Windsor—500 Ouellette Ave.     | 256-8278 |



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## THE GOSSIP GAME

Most of us take delight in discovering the follies and sins and shortcomings of others and in chatting knowingly about them. Gossip does bring us some cheap comfort, giving us nice feelings of superiority. Our weaknesses and failures do not seem so serious when we can compare them with the monstrous ones of some people we know. We like to gossip because it generally makes us feel much better about ourselves.

Behind much of our gossiping is the mechanism the psychologists call "projection". There is the tendency to attribute to others our own reprehensible attitudes and feelings. A London psychiatrist, Dr. J.A. Hadfield, has commented on this tendency:

"In judging others we trumpet abroad our secret faults. We personalize our unrecognized failings, and hate in others the very faults to which we are secretly addicted. Like the lark fluttering with agitation over her nest, we exhibit most flagrantly the very thing we would hide."

Think about that the next time you are tempted to assist in the distribution of malicious rumors about someone you know.

Censorious gossip generally tells more about the person who does the gossiping than about the victim. In Albert Camus' novel, *The Fall*, the narrator gives this warning to his companion: "People hasten to judge in order not to be judged themselves.... The judgment you are passing on others eventually snaps back in your face, causing some damage."

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