

# ILA LISTENING POST

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ISSUE NUMBER THIRTY      AUGUST 1989

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## President's Perspective

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Dear ILA friends,

By the time you receive this *Listening Post*, it will have been over four months since our 10th Annual Convention in Atlanta. Since March, your executive board has been active working for you and ILA. Most of you are aware that this issue of the *Listening Post* is the first of our new newsletter editor, Jane Rhoads. Please show her your support and appreciation by sending her news and items for inclusion in the newsletter.

You may have been wondering what we've been doing since the convention to accomplish our goals for ILA; here are a few highlights. The Executive Board had its first successful audio conference call on April 30, 1989. Most of us were apprehensive about having ten enthusiastic ILA officers on the phone at one time. We wondered if we would actually practice what we preach by following suggested guidelines, listening without interrupting, and checking for understanding. In true ILA form, we **did** listen and stay on task.

Efforts to strengthen our international membership outreach are continuing. Tim Gilmor has had ILA promotional materials translated into several languages (Spanish, German, French, etc.). Phil Emmert has the transcriptions and we hope to have specialized brochures available in the near future.

Charles Roberts has done an admirable job in computerizing and updating our files. With accurate records about past and present members, we now have information to help us respond more quickly to membership



needs and concerns. This information is also critical for helping us reach individuals who have let their membership lapse. Charles is encouraged by how many new members we're attracting.

Visibility is critical to the continued growth of ILA. Bob Bohlken has designed and piloted a "Listening Across the Curriculum" promotional package. He has prepared a step-by-step guide for college and university ILA members who want to invite respected ILA representatives to present in-house programs on their campuses. Bill Arnold and Phil Emmert have been actively finding ways to get listening panels/programs accepted at other regional and national association meetings. In fact, we may have an opportunity to have a international summer conference next

summer in Dublin, Ireland. In addition to these activities, Dick Hunsaker is sharing his SCA membership lists with Tricia Andersen.

As you may remember, in 1988 I formed a special ILA Task Force to develop a three year plan and to establish specific goals to begin the next decade. Larry Barker, chair of the Task Force, will have a report to share with the Executive Board in August. The Task Force comprised of Carolyn Coakley (past president), Manny Steil (Life Member), Andy Wolvin (Hall of Fame), and Charles Roberts (Executive Director) will also report directly to the International Listening Association membership in the next issue of the *Listening Post*.

The Board will meet in person in Indianapolis on August 12th. We will have an opportunity to visit the 1990 convention hotel, work directly with Jim East our local arrangements chair, respond to needs from Ethel Glenn our program planning chair, review committee progress and needs, as well as respond to inquiries from you. We appreciate the notes and letters you've been sending...keep up the good work.

As you can see, ILA continues to grow and change in positive ways. Remember, we need your help...if you haven't already, become an active member of ILA by participating in at least one committee.

*Kittie*

Kittie W. Watson



# Announcements

## Have You Submitted a Program Idea for the Convention?

The Program Committee, chaired by First Vice President Ethel Glenn, is making an all-out push to encourage the highest number of submissions of papers and program ideas for the 1990 ILA Convention that has ever been received in any past year. A submission form was included in your April *Listening Post*, and you should have received another copy in a recent mailing. If by chance you have lost both copies, you can still submit—just send your suggestion, including the proposed title, target audience, a brief abstract, estimated program length, and any special needs such as room arrangement or audio-visual aids to:

Dr. Ethel C. Glenn  
First Vice President, ILA  
Department of Communication  
and Theatre  
UNCG  
Greensboro, N.C. 27412

Most program slots are one and one half hours in length, which can be either a long solo program, a short workshop, or 2, 3, or 4 papers combined. People are also needed to chair programs, which involves introducing the speakers and collecting the abstracts and session evaluation forms.

As most of you know, the ILA Executive Board adopted a recommendation at its March 5 meeting that we move toward a divisional structure. The three divisions would be Business/Consulting, Education, and Research. Members of the 1990 Program Committee have been appointed based on their expertise in those areas. They are Greg Enos and Manny Steil in Business/Consulting, Susan Ellen Bacon, Elaine Mahone, Wayne Bond, and Deborah Borisoff in Education, with Lisa Vickers serving as the student representative, and Victoria Emmert and Michael Purdy in Research. If you are having trouble coming up with a good program idea, give one of them a call and do some brain storming. They are all good "idea" people. They will be

the ones who make the final decisions about programs for the Convention.

So, get your submission in by the August 15th deadline. What new and interesting work have you done on listening in the past year? New research? New teaching technique? New consulting opportunities? Put it into a paper and submit it for consideration. Help make this the best Convention ever, so that we continue to see each new year outstrip previous ones in the quantity and quality of top notch programs that characterize ILA Conventions!

## ILA NEEDS YOUR NOMINATIONS Call for Nominations

It is time once again to choose the leaders of ILA. The future of ILA depends on the leadership chosen by you through your involvement in the nominating process. ILA must have dynamic, committed leaders. If you believe that you can serve ILA as an officer, please submit your own name.

ILA members must be nominated for the following offices:

First Vice President  
(ascends to President)  
Second Vice President  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
Member at Large  
(Public Relations)  
Member at Large  
(Coordinator of  
International Members)

If possible, please contact the individual you are nominating before submitted his or her name so we can ensure that the person is interested in serving as an officer.

Nominations should be sent to:

Harry B. Cook, Chair  
ILA Nominating Committee  
Academic Advisement  
Center  
Southwest Missouri  
State University  
Springfield, MO 65804-0094

## Awards Committee Seeks Nominations for 1990 Convention

ILA needs and wants to honor those who have made important contributions to the organization and to the field of listening. Plan NOW to help ILA give deserved recognition by choosing your nominees, completing award forms, and submitting them by December 15, 1989. Qualifying criteria, official forms, as well as names of past winners will appear in the next issue of the *Listening Post*. The categories are:

**LISTENER OF THE YEAR AWARD** to a nominee of national or international prominence (outside of education) who has demonstrated the principles and standards of effective listening.

**HALL OF FAME AWARDS** for achievements in academic, business or other settings over a number of years.

**RESEARCH AWARDS** for members and/or groups, as well as for both graduate and undergraduate research projects.

**SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS** for outstanding and/or unusual service to ILA.

1990 Awards Committee:

Tony Clark, Chair

Marvin Cox

Michael Pursley

Kittie Watson, ILA President

(Ex Officio)

Dean Thomlinson, First Member at Large (Ex Officio)

## ILA Membership Increases

Charles Roberts, Executive Director, reports that membership in the International Listening Association has increased by 54 since the Atlanta conference. At the time of the spring conference there were 244 paid members in the association; the membership is now 298. This increase is due to the enthusiastic recruitment by our current members.



# What's Happening

## News and Notes About ILA Members

### Call for Presenters— 1990 ILA in Indianapolis

To focus local attention on the 1990 ILA to be held in Indianapolis, the local arrangements committee would like to make the services of selected listening experts available to Indianapolis businesses and industries as well as teachers.

The day prior to the beginning of the 1990 conference, we would like to arrange for ILA speakers to make presentations on listening or memory to selected major industries and possibly a general session to be offered at the Embassy Suites Hotel, which would be open to the general public. The fee for this service would go directly to ILA's treasury minus actual costs to pay speakers' expenses for coming a day earlier.

If you would be willing to make such a presentation, please write or call the following: James R. East, IUPUI, 425 University Boulevard, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46202, telephone (317) 274-4887.

## Editor's Note

For the past four years Ethel Glenn has served as editor of the *Listening Post*. During this time we have looked upon our newsletter as a source of conference information, news about colleagues and an invaluable collection of listening activities and information. On behalf of the association, I would like to thank Ethel for her service. In addition, I would like to express my personal thanks to Ethel for all of her assistance as I assumed the editorship of the *Listening Post*.

The International Listening Association is a dedicated and a vital association, and it is my desire to reflect this spirit in the *Listening Post*. I would like to thank all of you who contributed to this issue, and urge your continued support of the *Listening Post*. The newsletter is truly a reflection of us: our ideas, our knowledge and our dedication to the importance of listening.

**Harry Cook** has been busy training academic advisors at Southwest Missouri State University how to listen. He has also authored the listening section of the SMSU Peer Sponser Training Manual and will present a workshop for the program in August.

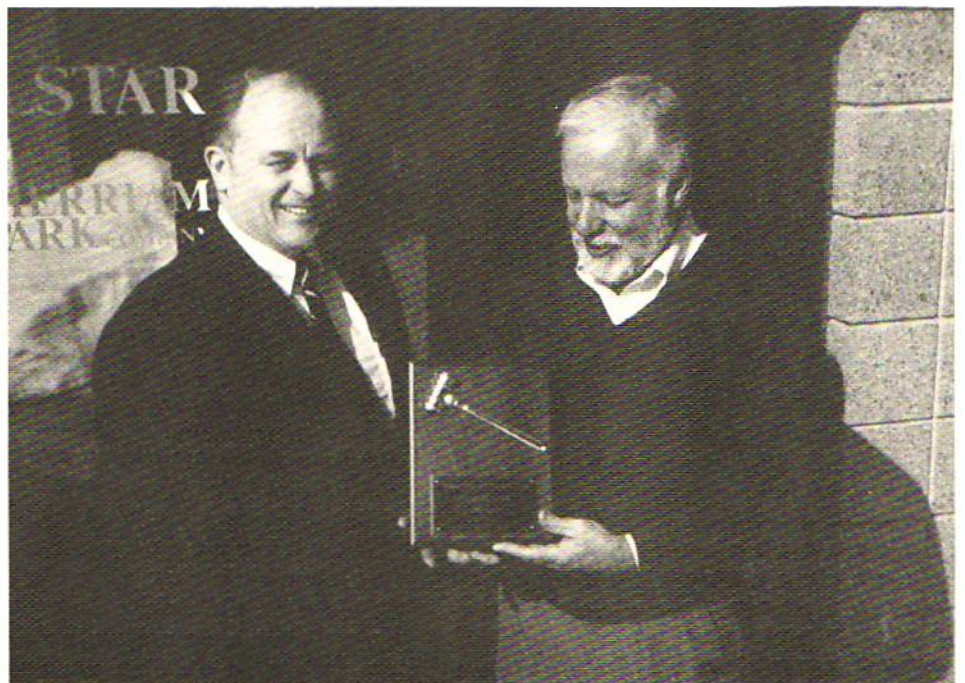
**Harry Farra**, Geneva College, reports that Baker Book House published his manual on preaching, *The Sermon Doctor*, this past April. ILA members will be interested since he includes a chapter on listening, "Earn the Right to Preach by Listening." *The Sermon Doctor* is available from Baker Book House, P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49502-1608 or ordered through any bookstore.

**Frank W. Freshour** has been busy preaching the word about the importance of good listening. In April he presented a

session to the International Reading Association conference in St. Croix. The first week in May he shared the platform with Congressman Newt Gingrich, the minority whip. This was at the Mass Marketing Insurance Institute 20th anniversary convention in Atlanta. The second week in May Frank was the featured speaker for the U.S. Department of Labor, Inspector General Conference in Orlando.

**Mary Louis Shannon** has been nominated as "Teacher of the Year" at Florida Community College, Jacksonville. In addition, she has been nominated to the *World Who's Who of Women*, 1989 edition and was listed in *The International Directory of Distinguished Leadership*, 2nd edition. Mary Louis is also the operator of Shannon Communication Consultants.

*We like to know what you've been doing! Please send short reports about your latest activities, awards and honors to: Jane Rhoads, Reading & Study Skills Center, Box 109, Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67208.*



Bob Miller, past president of ILA, holding a plaque commemorating his service to the association. The plaque was presented by Lyman K. Steil, also a past president.



## Elementary Task Force

The Elementary Task Force has undertaken four major projects this year. We invite all of the members of ILA to become involved by contributing to any or all of the following:

First, Sara Lundsteen is coordinating the compilation of an annotated bibliography of materials, articles, and other references for teachers and students in the elementary grades. If you have written or read something that you feel should be included please drop a note to Sara at the School of Education, P.O. Box 13857, U. of North Texas, Denton, Texas 76203.

Second, Elaine Mahone is compiling a list of resource persons/consultants interested in providing training specifically for elementary teachers. If you would like to be included on that resource list, Elaine can be reached at North Trails Area Ed. Ag., Box M, Clear Lake, Iowa 50428.

Third, Mary Bozik is contacting SCA officials in regard to the development of a K-6 communication competencies list. Mary asks if you have an interest in volunteering to work on this project, to please contact her at U. of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614.

Lastly, the committee would like to conduct a workshop for teachers in the Indianapolis area during the 1990 conference. This workshop would be conducted in a block on Saturday morning. ILA members are encouraged to submit elementary proposals for the conference. Additional suggestions should be sent to SusanEllen Bacon, 147 Hightide Drive, Decatur, Illinois 62521.

Each of the Committee members is looking forward to hearing from you!

*SusanEllen Bacon  
Training Ltd.  
Decatur, IL*

## Reserach Committee Update

Activities within the Research Committee are progressing normally. Steve Rhodes is trying to adjust to his switch from vice-chair to chair. Vicki

Emmert is working on assuming her new role as vice-chair while at the same time trying to finish her dissertation and move with Phil from Wyoming to Virginia.

The committee still plans to publish a book of readings related to the papers presented at the Atlanta Pre-conference. Steve, Phil, and Belle Ruth Witkin are serving as the editors. Currently, they are working on a revised outline and have started the process of finding a publisher. Authors of papers presented at the pre-conference have been working on revisions of their papers and will be sending those to Steve shortly.

As vice-chair, Vicki Emmert will be in charge of programs sponsored by the research committee for the ILA convention in Indianapolis. Until the Emmerts get settled with a permanent Virginia address, please send any program ideas to Steve Rhodes.

Poster boards concerned with research efforts is one new program idea we would like to try at the Indianapolis convention. If you have been part of a poster board session before, know anything about how to set up such a session, and/or would like to be a part of a poster board session, please contact Carine Feyten.

*Steve Rhodes  
Western Michigan University*

## First Lady Responds to Request

As a member of ILA Executive Committee and Public Relations Committee, I wrote President Bush and First Lady Barbara Bush separate letters asking each of them to adopt listening as part of their own public images and to promote listening as a pet public service project. Barbara Bush responded very graciously by note stating that she thought listening is a worthy project, but that she is concentrating her efforts on literacy, the homeless and volunteerism. I think that ILA members with expertise in the area of literacy instruction should combine efforts and ideas and present to the First Lady the importance of

listening skills in learning to read and write. We may convince her to aid us in promoting verbal listening competency.

As ILA members, we may want to approach each of our own state governors and their spouses to accept listening as their public service projects.

*Bob Bohlken  
Professor of Communication  
Northwest Missouri State University*

## Listening Awareness Day a Smashing Success!

Listening Awareness Day 1989 was a smashing success in Atlanta in spite of my absence because of the efforts of several people who organized the Parade of States including Dr. Mary Louise Shannon, Edie Cole, Dorothy Carver, and Tricia Anderson.

The following states responded with LAD proclamations.

Alabama	Montana
Alaska	New Jersey
Arizona	New Mexico
Arkansas	New York
California	North Carolina
Florida	Ohio
Georgia	Oklahoma
Illinois	Rhode Island
Indiana	South Carolina
Louisiana	South Dakota
Maine	Virginia
Maryland	Washington
Massachusetts	West Virginia
Michigan	Wisconsin
Mississippi	Wyoming
Missouri	

In addition to the thirty-one states which responded favorably, the mayors of Washington, D.C. and Jacksonville, Florida issued LAD proclamations. The president of Southwest Missouri State University also joined in by submitting a letter of declaration, joining with Missouri Governor John Ashcroft. Our first international LAD proclamation was issued by Anitgua.

The real success of LAD belongs to the ILA members who joined with me writing to their governors because most states will not issue proclamations unless a constituent makes the request. Several



non-ILA members whose arms were slightly twisted helped us in states where no ILA member resides. One proclamation was requested by a nine year old student.

Please take a few minutes to write a short letter of thanks to the governor of your state to let him or her know that ILA members really do listen!

Harry Cook

## Suggestions for Promoting Listening

ILA members who are teaching at the college level have an excellent opportunity to promote listening in their region this fall through listening awareness workshops. The goals of these workshops are: 1) to initiate the teaching of listening across disciplines, 2) to create an awareness of the listening skill in presentational group and interpersonal communication through the media and 3) to promote the International Listening Association.

In higher education there is a concerted effort to improve classroom instruction with emphasis on coordinating teacher styles with learner styles. There is no better way of improving classroom instruction than through the improvement of both the instructor's (presenter) and the student's (receiver) communication skills, especially **listening**. With this premise, I convinced Northwest Missouri State University's administration to fund three days of workshops on Listening Awareness and teaching Listening Across Disciplines. The funding included honorarium and

expenses for Kittie Watson, ILA's current president and Larry Barker, a past ILA president to serve as experts in residence for two days. It was a success! Thirty-six (15% of the faculty) Northwest professors from twelve disciplines devoted five hours to attend without financial remuneration the workshop on teaching listening across disciplines. Approximately one hundred and twenty students, faculty and guests attended parts of the five hour workshop on Listening Awareness and assessment. Two hundred brochures promoting the workshops and ILA were mailed to institutions of higher education within a 200 mile radius of Maryville, Missouri. The Missouri Governor, John Ashcroft, signed a proclamation declaring the week as Listening Awareness week in Northwest Missouri. Our state representative, Everett Brown, attended part of the conference and spoke on "Listening in the Legislative Assemblies" at a luncheon. The Listening Awareness workshops received attention in four regional radio stations' newscasts, one television newscast and four regional newspapers. The local paper ran four stories, two of which contained photographs. All news releases made mention of the International Listening Association.

Even if you cannot get the funding for such an extensive workshop, perhaps you could fulfill the above stated goals by personally promoting the teaching of listening across disciplines in your institution by either your own workshop, a "bring your own brown bag lunch workshop," or interdepartmental written communication.

I suggest you encourage your colleagues to discuss with their students or have their students write a composition on the following:

1. Explain what personal characteristic (your own as a listener) interferes with or influences most your listening to my classroom lecture (preoccupation, tired, uninterested in subject, etc.).
2. Describe what of my behavior or characteristics as a lecturer interferes with or influences you most as a listener (speech rate & quality, vocabulary, demeanor, appearance, etc.).
3. Explain what classroom characteristic interferes with or influences your listening most in this class (noise outside, other students, size, windows/walls, etc.).

The above topics serve as means of creating an awareness of listening in and to classroom lectures. When sharing this information with your colleagues, you will want to give ILA recognition and promote membership.

Consultants can adapt these topics to meet their specific purposes also.

For more topics on classroom lecture listening, check *Experimental Listening* a publication of ILA, especially page 13.

Bob Bohlken

Professor of Communication

Northwest Missouri State University

## Important Addresses

Remember these three important addresses:

<b>International Office:</b>	Executive Director, Charles Roberts P.O. Box 90340 McNeese State University Lake Charles, LA 70609-0340
<b>The Listening Post:</b>	Jane Rhoads, Editor Reading & Study Skills Center Box 109, Wichita State University Wichita, KS 67208
<b>The ILA Journal:</b>	Robert Bostrom, Editor College of Communication University of Kentucky Lexington, KY 40506

*"Great ideas, it has been said, come into the world as gently as doves. Perhaps, then, if we listen attentively we shall hear amid the uproar of empires and nations a faint flutter of wings, the gentle stirring of life and hope."*

—Camus



# Lost Art of Listening

Editor's note:

Sandy Stein, Tucson, Arizona  
is an active ILA member.

If you think you're a good listener, listen up. Most people who think they are good listeners really are not.

Sandy Stein, a communications expert who helps change bad listening habits through seminars at Hughes Aircraft, says poor listening is widespread and it causes the loss of life, opportunity and time every day.

"How many members of each species did Moses take on the Ark?" is Stein's first question to seminar participants. Most people answer, "Two or three," but the correct answer is "none." Moses never stepped foot on Noah's ark.

Stein, an assistant in personnel development at Hughes, catches her seminar participants with this test. Most people pick out the key words like "ark" and "species" but do not listen to the entire question.

Are we forced to limit what we listen to because there is too much information to process? Stein says no.

"We only process what we perceive has immediate value," Stein says. If information does not have high value or risk, people turn on "remote control," Stein says.

## Bad listening habits

- Tune out the speaker because the topic seems boring.
- Stop listening to speaker because of poor delivery.
- Become emotional because of differing view and stop listening.
- Concentrate only on the facts and miss the larger picture.
- Be inflexible in note-taking and unable to accommodate an unorganized speaker.

She encourages people to listen even if they think the subject matter is unimportant, because it could well turn out to be useful. When Stein goes to a conference and the speaker is boring, she tries not to tune out. She listens to the speaker and picks up tips on how not to address a crowd.



JOEL ROCHON/Tucson Citizen illustration

"(Listening) is the nicest thing you can do for anybody," Stein said.

Stein enjoys the challenge of helping correct poor listening habits. She admits to having once been a poor listener herself and still works on correcting poor listening habits. She said she often interrupts people and tries to do too many things at once.

Stein realized she was trying to do too much at the same time when her daughter sent back a birthday card on which Stein had written, "Love, Dad and Dad."

Stein recommends a strategy to improve listening skills. Every day she chooses one person to listen to all day, without interruption when possible. She keeps a log of her progress and compares notes at the end of the week with a friend who does the same.

Stein also tries to focus on one task at a time at work, keeping her desk uncluttered so other projects will not distract her.

She has other tips to improve listening:

- **Ask questions.** Stein encourages



# Activity

asking a "stupid" question in order to avoid a dumb mistake. You must take responsibility if you did not hear something, don't understand terminology or concepts.

- **Do not pretend to listen.** Stein is often asked if it is all right to fake listening if you're busy. Stein says it is better to tell someone you are busy than to pretend to listen. It can be hurtful and annoying to the person talking if you do not listen.
- **Forget prejudices and biases.** Do not let biases or prejudices prevent you from listening to someone. Dislike for a person's clothes or personality can prevent you from focusing on what they say.
- **Listen to yourself.** Do not talk without listening to what you are saying. Make it easy on whomever you are talking to, Stein says.
- **Pay attention.** You must make a choice to pay attention, Stein says. The mind processes information three times as fast as it comes in, so people often "tune out." It is important to keep checking back in instead of checking out, she says.
- **Don't just listen with your ears.** Listen with your sight, taste and touch, not just your ears. Focus on all your senses.
- **Listen to inanimate objects.** Listen to your car, for example. Don't ignore the oil light or you may have to buy a new engine if yours burns out. Be perceptive to everything around you.
- **Avoid distractions.** If you can, choose a quiet place to talk to someone. Be prepared to listen, unplug the phone and avoid distractions.

Stein thinks it is ironic that we spend 45 percent of the day listening to others, but we have no formal listening training. She suggests teaching listening skills in schools. Stein considers it just as important as reading, writing and math.

"It's worth it to your job, marriage and work relationship to listen," Stein says. "It can be very expensive when you don't."

by Ann-Eve Pedersen  
Reprinted with permission from  
*Tuscon Citizen Contemporary*

## The Man and The Wind

*At the ILA Convention there were several workshops on "Listening to the Self." This story is about listening (or not listening) to the self, the intuition, the "still, small voice" within.*

by  
Elisa Carbone  
Silver Spring, MD

Once there was a man who lived high on a cliff overlooking the sea. He loved to paint. He made his colors from the cornflower and thistle, from the ocean grass and salt spray rose that grew near his house. He painted beautiful pictures of the sea.

One day the wind came to him as he painted. It ruffled the waves of the sea and said, "Young man, go to town to seek your fortune."

But the young man said, "No, I love to paint. I do not want to go to town to seek my fortune. I will stay here."

What the wind knew and the young man did not know, was that there was a rich man travelling through town. He was looking for a picture. He was willing to pay one hundred gold pieces for a single picture of the sea.

No one in town knew of any picture of the sea, and the rich man sadly went away.

Years went by. Because the man had spent so much time painting, he had neglected his farm and so he was very poor.

He was lonely and wanted a wife. He knew her in his heart: she had thick dark hair, and eyes the color of the sea in a storm.

The man began to work very hard in his fields so that he would no longer be poor.

One day the wind came to him as he worked in his fields. It brushed his cheek and said, "Man, go to town to find your mate."

The man said, "I am poor. Who would want to marry me today? I will stay here and work hard in my fields. Then my mate will come to me."

*"Friends are those rare people who ask how we are and then wait to hear the answer."* —Ed Cunningham

What the wind knew, but the man did not know, was that a wise young woman had come to town looking for her mate. She had thick dark hair and eyes the color of the sea in a storm. When she could not find him, she sadly went away.

Years went by and the man became old. His paintings sat rotting in the barn, and he had lived alone all his life.

One day the wind came to him as he sat in his house. It blew through a storm and cried, "Old man! Old man, come out of your house and save yourself!"

But the old man said, "No, I will stay in here where it is safe."

The wind blew, and the house fell, and the old man was crushed under the heavy beams.

And the man's soul, as it rose up from his body, looked down at him and whispered, "Poor old man. Why did you not listen to me?"



### ILA LISTENING POST

#### Listening Post Deadlines

The Deadline for all Listening Post materials (Includes articles, ads, photographs to appear in the next issue) is September 11, 1989.

### ILA LISTENING POST NOW ACCEPTING ADVERTISING

To provide service to ILA members and suppliers, the ILA Listening Post will accept advertising. Acceptance of all advertising will be subject to editorial approval.

#### 1989 RATES

Full Page . . . . .	\$250.00
1/2 Page . . . . .	\$150.00
1/4 Page . . . . .	\$75.00
1/8 Page . . . . .	\$40.00

All ads must be camera-ready and pre-paid. Send all material and ads to:

JANE RHOADS, Editor  
Reading & Study Skills Center  
Box 109, Wichita State University  
Wichita, KS 67208



# Hardening of the Ears

Timothy R. Brock, Captain, USAF  
Vandenberg AFB, California  
Condensed from *Combat Crew*

Combat crew members are constantly reminded of safety, checklist discipline, crew coordination, attention to detail, and status monitoring, but there's another tool of the trade we all take for granted—until it's missing. I'm talking about effective listening, an essential skill we all need to perfect.

"Big deal," you're probably thinking. "I listen just as well as anyone else." That's the problem. Research shows most people only listen at a 25 percent efficiency level. Try to pass a check performing at this level. Every day, listening errors cause safety violations, equipment damage, personal injuries, and even death.

Consider this example of how poor listening caused a safety violation and a painful experience for a missile combat crew. During a field evaluation, the commander directed the deputy to "verify the Enable switch is set on the Enable panel." The deputy incorrectly responds. "Enable switch to the SET position, locked." This was a procedure the crew had performed every alert. But the deputy wasn't listening. Instead, he performed a step from another checklist the crew had also performed many times in the missile procedures trainer using the same piece of equipment. This simple listening error resulted in a weapon system safety rule violation. In addition, the crew received a major error and a letter of reprimand. Add to this what it cost SAC to retrain this crew, just because someone didn't listen. Listening errors occur every day.

Why do these errors happen? Combat crew members are very safety conscious. Extensive training stresses checklist discipline, crew coordination, and technical expertise to get the job done correctly and safely. Maybe that's part of the problem. Could it be we're so well trained and familiar with our job that we've developed "hardening of the ears?"

Like hardening of the arteries, hardening of the ears restricts circulation (in this case, communication). Like heart disease, hardening of the ears slowly builds up over the years. The only way to

battle it is to know some of the symptoms and remedies. Here are three symptoms to look out for:

**Pygmalion listening.** This is one symptom too many of us are guilty of. With pygmalion listening, people say what we expect them to say. Stated another way, we hear what we expect to hear. You've seen it happen—you're reading a demand-response checklist to your crew partner, he or she parrots back the checklist step and then does something different. When someone says "I agree," or repeats the checklist step back, we don't know what they're agreeing to. We don't know if they're listening or parroting. This symptom is often associated with the comment. "But I thought you said..."

**Battling boom boxes.** Here's another common symptom of hardening of the ears. It usually happens during those hectic alerts or challenging MPT rides. What happens is each crew member talks at, rather than communicates with, the other. They're each running a checklist with their own agenda, neither paying attention to the other. They appear to be communicating, but in reality they're not. You might as well play two tape recorders at each other. You'd achieve the same results.

**Old head syndrome.** This one's sneaky because it's easy to fall into. Here the listener prejudices the content of the message based on who said it. For example, the "seasoned" individual is prejudiced against inputs from junior personnel due to a "teach me if you can" or "know it all" attitude. Likewise, junior crew members allow someone else's position and experience to prejudice them. They leap to the same conclusions the commander makes because they expect the commander to be right.

How can you get control over "hardening of the ears" before it causes you unnecessary pain? Like heart disease, there are no quick fixes; however there are three remedies you might try.

**Get the wax out of your ears.** First, recognize effective listening is a neglected tool of the trade you must improve. You can't correct a problem if you don't know it exists. You may think you're a good listener. Prove it. Rate your

# Resources Available

*Experiential Listening: Tools for Teachers and Trainers*, edited by Carolyn Gwynn Coakley and Andrew D. Wolvin is now available through the International Office for \$16.95 plus \$3.05 for shipping and handling.

Back issues of the *Journal of the International Listening Association* are also available for \$12 per copy.

These resources can be purchased from Charles Roberts, P.O. Box 90340, McNeese State University, Lake Charles, LA 70609-0340.

## MAKE A NOTE OF IT

1990 ILA Convention  
Indianapolis, IN  
Crossroads of America

March 7-11, 1990  
Embassy Suites-Downtown

Hosted by Indiana University -  
Purdue University at Indianapolis  
(IUPUI)

perception of how well you listen on a scale from 1-10. Then ask your crew partner to do the same. The results may surprise you.

**Is there a listenologist in the house?** Second, get trained. Don't just read about listening. Find a training program taught by an expert on specific listening skills. You don't learn to swim by reading about it and then get training from a nonswimmer.

**Raise your listening awareness level.** Develop a listening strategy. When we speak without thinking we usually get into trouble. The same occurs when we listen without thinking. The next time you're on alert or in a trainer, focus on what your crew partner is saying and evaluate it. Don't say "I agree" unless you do. Your crew partner is counting on your help to correctly process the checklist. Don't blindly rely on your crew partner's expertise, listen.

We can no longer afford to neglect this silent "tool of the trade." Remember good crew members use all their tools of the trade.