

ILA LISTENING POST

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Sharing the Experience

Jacksonville Summary: The Twelfth Annual ILA Convention

by Diana Corley Schnapp

"It was a perfect convention."

Those were the words of one delegate to the twelfth annual ILA convention in Jacksonville, Florida. In the opinion of many people, the program, local arrangements, and opportunities to be with other "listeners" added up to the same conclusion.

Wayne Bond and his planning committee produced an outstanding program with something for every interest group. Two pre-conference meetings set the pace. The K-12 group met off-site, a gathering which resulted in the proposal that we do it again next year in Seattle. The research committee also sponsored a very successful pre-conference. During the regular convention, a number of new people as well as some of the familiar faces shared their expertise on topics sponsored by all interest groups. The variety of presentations included workshops, formal paper presentations, panels, and even a puppet show!

ILA is growing and changing! Attendance was the highest for any convention thus far. Interest groups are moving toward stronger representation not only on the program but on the board as well. Manny Steil and his awards committee expanded the "Listener of the Year" award to recognize twelve individuals from many public areas including such categories as political, education, business, and media.



Tour guide at St. Augustine.

Mary Louise Shannan and her local arrangements committee provided many enjoyable alternatives to programs. Did someone say FOOD? From the breaks to the hospitality hour to the meals, a variety of tasty morsels pleased palates. To accompany the food, the music of harp, piano, and renaissance musicians filled the air. Jacksonville

Landing offered shopping and nightlife. Since Bob Bohlken did not find sin at "Hooters," he joined the bus trip to St. Augustine. The group may not have found the fountain of youth, but they certainly found showers! Still another dining experience was available at the dinner theatre presentation of "Camelot."

What really makes ILA conventions special, however, are the people. Several who were absent last year rejoined us. We missed those of you who couldn't be there and, hopefully, sent you cards to say so. Each person who attended will have different memories and impressions. As for me, as I dozed on the plane on the way home, I kept seeing the faces of the dear people from all over the western hemisphere with whom I had spent a delightful few days. See you in Seattle. Have a great year!

Record Convention Attendance

Attendance at our twelfth anniversary convention was a good indication that the ILA is doing better than ever. There were 176 paid conventioners at Jacksonville, positively destroying the record for attendance set the previous year (157). In addition, a number of members and non-members attended the pre-convention research symposium and the workshop held on Wednesday. Seattle is so worried about crowd control in 1992 they are contemplating hiring Bob Bohlken to handle the "sin factor" during the ILA convention and have arranged for overflow rooms in various outlying communities.

Listening to Difficult People

by Ethel C. Glenn,
1990-91 President

The ILA has changed my life since I joined it six years ago. Not just the obvious facts such as many wonderful new friends and the opportunity to serve, first as *Listening Post* editor, then as your Vice President and President. On a deeper level, the connection has given new depth and focus to my interest in listening, both as a teacher and as an individual who tries to practice what she preaches. For many years, I taught listening as a tangent or offshoot of speaking. Now I know it is the other way around—listening is the central skill—effective speaking can only follow effective listening.

Last fall I attended a workshop done by National Seminars of Shawnee Mission, Kansas, that was titled *Working With Difficult People*. It was based to a degree on an earlier book by the same title. As I sat in the workshop and tried to absorb all the techniques for what to say in difficult situations with difficult people, I was struck with the idea that teaching us what to say—how to respond in a positive, non-confrontational manner—should be prefaced with how to listen to these difficult people in the first place. Merely learning response patterns and some cues as to when to plug them in is little more than memorized parroting. What we who study and teach listening should add to the instructional design is how listening impacts on the effectiveness of the responses. Those replies that grow from true, empathic listening hold far more promise for aiding and easing problem dialogues than do pre-learned, pat answers.

Soon after that workshop, I was struck with another idea—listening to difficult people or in difficult situations is what listening training is all about. If every speaker were brilliant, dynamic, full of wonderful ideas, clearly and energetically articulated, and those ideas challenged and interested me and fit my frame of reference and adhered to my belief and value system—well, I think I'd be a good listener all the time. We all would. We wouldn't need listening training. That bring me to what I want to talk about for this few minutes today—listening to difficult people. I

have no magic formula to help you with this task. Perhaps if I share with you some of those more difficult people I know, you'll know them also, and our shared awareness will be our first step. Dr. Carol Travis, in the article "Learning to Live with Difficult People," defines the difficult person: "I am not speaking of the nuisances who cross our paths and vanish—mean-tempered drivers, surly salesfolk or moviegoers who talk all through the film. I refer to the people who drive us crazy, but whom we can't ignore or leave—coworkers, neighbors, relatives, friends."

In my case, since I am a college teacher, my first two examples are difficult students who challenge my patience semester after semester. The first comes at the beginning of a new term. My department, like many speech communication departments across the country, has soared in popularity in the past decade. But the resources allocated to us have, unfortunately, shared no such soaring. So, we must turn away many requests for places in our classes, restricting both the number of majors we accept and those students who would like to minor or just take a few courses. If I had the proverbial dollar for every time I've had to say, "No, I'm sorry," I could retire early and avoid those students forevermore!

I don't like saying no—I wish every student could take several of our courses—I know what valuable theories and skills we have to share. If I were the Provost for Academic Affairs, I'd triple the size of our faculty and give us a huge, new building! So, when the flow of students starts, I find it hard to be impressed with any of the following: "Yes, but, you don't understand—I have to work in the afternoons and I just have to go into that morning section." "I know it's closed, but I went by the classroom and there are at least 10 empty chairs." "I did preregister, but my father forgot to mail in the check on time and the computer threw me out. Since it wasn't my fault, you have to let me in." "No, I have to have Professor Smith's section—my roommate had Professor Jones last semester and didn't like him at all." "But you don't understand—I have to have this class this semester or it will ruin my whole life!"

Patience, Ethel, patience, I say to myself. You've heard these complaints hundreds of times—but to this student, it's new—and it's important!

The other difficult student comes into the office after I've given the first test, on which she had made a 65. "I'm very upset about my test grade," she begins. And my ever-optimistic mind jumps forward and thinks, "Oh, she's going to ask me how to study for the next exam." But no, she launches into a persuasive effort to convince me that she is a superior student who is accustomed to making only A's and that she will not accept anything lower in my course. The implication is clear—it's my fault that she made a 65. Showing her that 10 of the 25 students in the class made 90 or better and that the mean was 84 doesn't phase her line of thought. "But you don't understand," she says. "I just can't accept a D. Won't you just throw this one out and then average the other tests together? How about an extra credit project? Let me take the test over again? But you just don't understand—" This student is difficult to listen to—not only, have I heard it many times before, but it seems so shallow, so misdirected.

I have a colleague who is difficult to listen to because somewhere along the line he embraced verbosity, pomposity, and redundancy as his guiding principles of oral communication. Do you know the word *pleonastic*? I just learned it last year—it describes one who uses more words than necessary to denote sensible meaning! When he comes in my office or catches me in the hall to discuss some student or a university problem, I find my psychic energy sources draining to the wrist of my left arm where my watch is—wondering how long I'm in for. Every simple comment he makes needs a preamble to the introduction and a peroration after the conclusion! If he were one of my own children, I'd say, "Get to the point!" But, he isn't, and I know I have to suspend my disquietude because he usually always has something important and insightful to say, and is a strong advocate for our students. Yet, pleonasm does make for difficult listening! Whether it be a one-on-one dialogue or a platform speaker or lecturer—anyone who talks too long,

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The Role of Organizational Listening —

by Dr. Charles C. Spence,
Florida Community College
at Jacksonville

Editor's Note: Dr. Spence presented this address at the noon luncheon, Friday, March 8, 1991. The speech was so well received that it is being reproduced here in its entirety.

Good afternoon, and welcome to Jacksonville, Florida. You've certainly brought your group to the right state—our wonderful weather, of course, and our unofficial symbol is something near and dear to the heart of your organization—a pair of EARS!

Seriously, thank you for inviting me to join you today. I'd also like to especially thank Mary Louise Shannon, who, along with her colleagues, has devoted so much of her time to the International Listening Association. We're very proud of your efforts.

Having put in more than a decade as the chief executive of two community colleges, I have great respect for the art of listening—a respect that increases each year. In fact, as I have learned and grown over that time, I become more convinced that listening, not speaking, is one of the critical functions of an effective chief executive. We think of CEO's as persons who should be able to articulate, at all times, the direction and vision of the organization, and of course, we should be able to do just that. But without an ability to really listen to the organization—both on an individual level and to the organization as a whole—those articulations become empty words, devoid of the real essence of the organization.

We have an interesting, college-wide listening "exercise," if you will, going on right now at the College. It's known as strategic planning, and it is grounded in the ability to listen to the staff, faculty and students associated with the College. It also recognizes the need to listen to the institution itself, and if you don't believe an organization has an entity and identity of its own, just come visit us at FCCJ.



Mary Louise Shannon and Dr. Charles C. Spence.

Our strategic planning sessions are truly an exercise in organizational listening. Our facilitators for the first phase of the program were outstanding listeners, and they had an almost uncanny ability to hear our comments on many levels, then bring them together into cohesion. Our first session asked individuals whose service with the College ranged from a few months to twenty five years to reminisce about the College's history since it began accepting students in 1966. The assembled group listened and was spellbound as, one by one, people remarked on their recollections of events over the years. Their individual observations, each colored by the time, personality and people with whom they had worked, were woven together into a fabric which became a collective history of the institution—and listening played a very large role.

The next step involved organizational listening on a deeper level—an attempt to hear about the values and goals of the people within the College. As individuals formed smaller groups, then larger ones—we began as a group to hear themes that "spoke" to the institution as a whole. In fact, several of the values that were articulated during the sessions related to the fine art of listening—such as quality communication, responsive action, truth, honesty, and the value and

dignity of the individual. Finally, we came back together to formulate our FCCJ mission—the culmination of our organizational listening process. The result was a mission that, in one sentence, speaks volumes about who we are, what we value and where we're going.

Now the truth is: I could have written that mission statement myself. If I sat in my office over the course of an afternoon, I could have come darn close to the wording of the mission statement that took more than fifty people and several hundred man-and-woman hours. But I felt that it was eminently more important that the listening process take place—that everyone in our organization was represented, and that each participant would be heard. The process of listening was what separates the mission statement we now have from the one I could have developed by myself. And it's better than I would have done alone!

That's a critical difference when you intend to ask for consensus and action based on an organizational agenda.

The danger of being an organizational leader is that you think you can write the mission statement yourself. You may think you could do it more quickly and with possibly more global thought than your staff. Merely setting

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First Timers' Impressions

Editor's Note: In the past, the post-conference *Listening Post* always featured an article written by a first time participant. This year I asked all first timers who attended the Saturday morning coffeebreak to contribute their impressions of the conference to the *Listening Post*. My thanks to all of you who so willingly participated in this activity.

J.R.

"The ILA Convention granted my wishes to find sessions that were enriching and exciting. The leaders and participants provided tools and techniques for me to expand my present and future plans. Of course, everyone I met was warm and friendly. What a rewarding series of experiences!"

—Mae Lovern

"I wish to thank the ILA for providing me the opportunity to present my paper in the student debut session and further for encouraging me by coming to listen to the student papers. My first experience with the ILA has been exciting and supportive. I thoroughly enjoyed the friendliness of the members and the opportunity to listen and learn so much from all of you. Best of all you were kind enough to listen to me and make my small contributions seem worthwhile. You do practice what you preach! Thank you all."

—Marion Boyer,
Western Mich. Univ. grad student

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my first ILA conference. All the physical needs and organizational matters were taken care of with good taste and dispatch without sacrificing the underlying care and love that all good listeners have."

—Richard Millen

"ILA: Warm people with new and renewed friendships + an involving program of valuable insights through energized presentations = good food for mind and body! Thanks."

—Judy Lease

"Two thumbs up! Cheers to ILA!"

—Robert K. Bell

"How great to present a program to an audience of expert **listeners**. It was a wonderful turn-on. I hope I can attend more conventions."

—Vi Asmuth

"Such a friendly group and excellent, well presented seminars. The information was pragmatic, and I look forward to next year's conference."

—Ashley Barden

"My impressions: 1. This is one of the most up-scale conferences I've been to in a longtime—so much food, so good. 2. The people at this conference seem so friendly and so genuine. The ILA really acts like it's a big family. 3. So many of the conference sessions offer not only practical information for my classes, but also good information for a richer family and work life."

—Joyce Swofford,
Clayton State College, Morrow, GA

"My name is Jennifer McIntyre. I'm a student at Fernandina Bch. High. This conference has provided me with a new growing experience. I have benefited from it greatly."

"As a first-timer at an ILA Convention I find myself pigging-out on the workshops. In one day I have heard several presentations, plus a marvelous presidential address. For me as a 33 year seminary educator this is a highly stimulating learning experience."

—Edward Waltner, Elkhart, IN

"The ILA is such a close group. I am impressed with the knowledge and expertise generated by the members and the respect members have for one another. I'll be back."

—Judy Isserlis

"I found members to be exceptionally welcoming and warm. Not only was it beneficial from a professional point of view, but also the most comfortable conference I've attended in a long time."

—Todd Thomas, Auburn University

"My first impression of ILA is that people do 'practice what they teach'. I was impressed by the excellent listeners that comprise the ILA."

—Jane Johnson

"What a terrific group! Everyone made me feel so welcome."

—Rebecca Brent,
East Carolina University

"I really enjoyed listening to the speakers that were here. I went to one for high school students about mediation and the whole thing was very interesting."

—Mary Pettit, Fernandina Beach High School, Leadership Class

"A group which in my guess, continues to place emphasis on the reasons you formed an association twelve years ago! (Cause I'm hearing and learning lots about listening!)"

—Jo Jennings,
AT&T Training Manager

"I am a high school student at New Utrecht High School in Brooklyn, New York. Attending a conference filled with professional listeners intimidated me at first. Then when I gave my presentation and found that everyone wanted to hear my message, I relaxed. All the ears were fine-tuned to what I had to say. I guess it shocked me because I've never been listened to that way. As a young person, adults don't think what I have to say is worth their time. Five days in this "listening" atmosphere found me reluctant to leave. I want to be a part of Seattle, to meet others like Richard Millen, who sent me back to my own mediation table with more confidence."

—Gina Kuylen, high school student

"Attending my first ILA convention has been an outstanding social and academic experience. It was remarkable to find professors, published authors, people highly respected in their fields so respectful, receptive, willing and able to listen and learn from teenagers. These "listeners" made me feel good about myself and what I was doing, even though this was the first time I have ever been so removed from my own environment. As a graduating senior this experience comes at a time when I am choosing a career. I am seriously considering communication as my major in college. Why not stay connected to such special people and experiences?"

—Christine Maggione,
high school student

Editor's Note

I would like to thank all of you who have shared your personal successes, committee reports, learning activities and insightful articles. Your contributions are the *Listening Post*. A special thanks goes to Harvey Weiss who acts as our "official" photographer.

As we enter a new ILA year, please keep those articles, activities and reports coming! Your participation is invaluable.
Jane Rhoads, Editor

Tribute to the "Chronologically Mature"

by Bill Gering

What I have to say serves as a response for those of us who are chronologically mature when someone asks us, "How are you?"

There is nothing much the matter with the Colonel and Nick and me;
We are about as well as we can be.
We have constant arthritis in our knees,
And when we talk too fast, we tend to wheeze.
Our pulse is weak; our blood is thin—
But we are O.K. for the shape we are in.

The doc says our kidneys are out of whack,
And each has an ache in the base of the back,
Our hearing is poor; our sight is dim,
And everything seems to be out of trim.
We are not the persons we once have been—
But we are O.K. for the shape we are in.

We have arch supports under our feet,
Or else we could not walk here with you to meet.
Sleeplessness bugs us night after night,
And in the morning we feel a fright!
Our memory is fading, our head tends to spin—
But we are O.K. for the shape we are in.

The moral is as this tale we unfold,
For those of us who are growing old:
It is better to say, "I'm fine!" with a grin,
Since you really don't want to hear
About the shape we are in.

What's Happening

News and Notes About ILA Members

Sandy Stein received the Outstanding Achievement Award for Human Resources from the American Society of Training and Development and the Superior Corporate Performance Award from Hughes Aircraft Company. Congratulations, Sandy!

Congratulations are also in order for **Patricia Anderson** who was married on December 29, 1990 to Tim Lancaster in Greenville, North Carolina. Tricia reports that they are living in Greenville and "we're happy!"

Melissa Beall, University of Northern Iowa, presented two listening workshops "For Those Who Listen" in the Lincoln Public Schools. One workshop was for high school teachers, the other for elementary teachers. In addition, she presented a workshop on "Connecting Critical Listening and Critical Thinking" at the Nebraska Speech Communication Association Convention. Beall was also elected Vice-President (succeeding to the Presidency) of the Central States Communication Association.

Dick Quianthy was recently named the Outstanding Community College Educator by the Speech Communication Association. The award is made to the community college educator who most

"exemplifies excellence in teaching, scholarship and service to the profession."

Dick also reports that there is a new publication, *COMMUNICATION IS LIFE*, available from SCA. The publication is the result of the communication competencies conference in which several ILA members participated. The book includes a strong rationale for teaching listening and speaking skills, teaching and assessment strategies, criteria for training assessors and more. This book may be of particular interest to ILAers. (The current price is \$9.00 for SCA members and \$10.00 for non-members.)

Harvey Weiss, communications instructor of Robbinsdale Cooper Senior High School and Lend Me Your Ear, Inc., has been granted a 9-week mini-sabbatical to write a two week listening skills curriculum for grades 9-12. The curriculum will be based on the new state mandated Outcome Based Education. Mini-sabbaticals are designed to get more people out of the classroom to pursue academic projects and to recharge their interest in classroom excellence. The school system is most interested in assessment of listening skills for all grade levels. Harvey hopes to draw on the expertise of the members of ILA in his new endeavors.

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.



Bill Gering with Ralph and Lucile Nichols.

Awards — 1991

1991 James I. Brown Student Paper Winners

This year's competition for the James I. Brown Student Paper Award was really exciting. There were 11 submissions for the judges to consider and all three finalists were given a cash award.

The author of the top student paper was Todd Thomas of Auburn University. His paper, *A Re-examination of Listening and Sex Difference: Distinguishing Biological vs. Schematic Gender and Content vs. Relational Listening* was directed by William Villaume and Margaret Fitch-Hauser.

The second and third place winners were Barbara Keith of Arizona State and Lisa Vickers of Auburn. Barbara's paper, *Perception of Listening and Communication Satisfaction in the Attorney-Secretary Dyad*, was directed by William Arnold. Lisa's paper, *The Distribution of Communication Time*, was directed by Margaret Fitch-Hauser.

A big thank you goes to the three judges of this year's competition. They were Michael Purdy of Governor's State University, Robert Bostrom of The University of Kentucky, and Phillip Emmert of James Madison University. Not only did they have the difficult task of rating all 11 papers, they also each took the time to write useful comments for the authors.

An Award Recipient Responds

To my ILA Friends,

No one was more surprised at being selected for the Hall of Fame than I. You see, I have not written a book, although I contributed to one. I have not hosted an ILA convention, but I did help with the very first one in Atlanta. I have missed three annual conventions because I was out of the country, but tried to make up for that by attending our little Dublin summer meeting and by holding a mini-convention with Lawrence Wong in Singapore. I have not presented at all of the ILA conventions, but at most of them. I was secretary, but never proceeded on to the presidency, having to pass up the opportunity twice due to international commitments.



Recipients of 1990-91 ILA Awards.

What, then, does that lovely plaque stand for? I like to think that it is a symbol of faith placed in those of us working "in the trenches," daily wrestling with the job of turning theory into practice, and making practice look respectable. There are many people about who still think as did that reporter for the *Washington Post* who sneered at our convention in 1982. Thanks to you who have written books about listening, book salesmen no longer snort with laughter at my request to see their selection of listening books as one did in 1977. Thanks to you who pounded on doors in your state's department of education we can all now hold our heads high as we do yet another workshop on listening. Thanks to you who opened the doors of business and industry to the practicality of listening training, a bridge between academia and the business place has been built. And thanks to you who do hard core research, studying how humans treat this ubiquitous behavioral act, for we teachers use your grist for our mill.

When Manny Steil presented the award to me, he mentioned a few of the things I have done to further the goals of ILA. True, my efforts have ranged from composing the motto at that fateful August, 1979 meeting, to naming and writing the first issue of *The Listening Post*, with Sally Webb, to broadcasting statewide a semester's listening course on Wisconsin Public Radio, to doing it again via slow screen TV for 9 campuses on the University of Wisconsin System.

But most of my time has been spent "in the trenches," teaching listening to thousands of people in hundreds of audiences here and abroad. Some of us are "doers" and do not take the time to measure what we do; we just do it and we do it with style because of all of the research, the publications, and the sharing of ideas which have come from this organization.

So I choose to look upon this honor as one given to all of us "doers," and in an organization as alive as ILA, that doesn't leave out many.

Sincerely and Happily,
Alice Ridge, Membership #3

1991 Nichols Award

Each year the Institute for the Study of Intrapersonal Processes (ISIP) presents the Ralph G. Nichols Award to recognize the best research and/or theoretically based paper presented at the International Listening Association conference.

The top three papers at this year's conference were: *Gender Roles, Biological Sex, and Differences in Listening Comprehension and Emotional Perceptivity*, Kitti Watson, Tulane University and Steven Rhodes, Western Michigan University; *Listening to Problematic Texts: Inferences in Response to Textual Disturbance*, Margaret Fitch-Hauser and William Villaume, Auburn University; and *Listening in the Public Interest: The Juror as Information Processor*, Belle Ruth Witkin.

Elementary/Secondary Education Preconvention Seminar Big Success

Wednesday, the day before the Jacksonville ILA Convention began nine ILA members of the Elementary/Secondary Task Force met at the Yulee Primary School, in Yulee, Florida to present a series of listening seminars to members of the Nassau Teachers Association. A very energetic group of teachers met the nine ILAers and the seminars were underway. Seventy-five elementary teachers and twenty-five secondary teachers from all grade levels and subject areas actively engaged in discussion, lecture, and activities for teaching listening. The seminars began at 4:00 p.m. and teachers and ILA presenters were still discussing listening at 9:45 p.m. From the comments and evaluations, the Preconvention Education Seminar was a big success in both numbers attending and the quality of programs presented.

The success is due in part to Susie Berkheimer's excellent selection and coordination of the ILA presenters and Kristi Alvarez's capable coordination of the Nassau Teachers Association. These

two individuals performed herculean tasks in making this event a reality.

Helping Susie Berkheimer, Silver Spring, MD, in the presentations and arriving in Jacksonville much earlier than most of the Conventioneers were Frank Freshour of Tampa, FL; Sue Ellen Bacon, a consultant from Decatur, IL; and Mary Bozik from Cedar Fall, IA. These presenters worked with the elementary teachers while Robert Fogg, Millersville, PA; Carolyn Coakley, consultant from Laurel, MD; Carole Grau of Brooklyn, NY; Wayne Bond of Montclair, NJ, and Melissa Beall from Cedar Falls, IA conducted sessions for the high school teachers.

Kristi, a geography teacher from Fernandina Beach High School and the teachers of the Nassau Association were very gracious in their welcoming the ILA presenters from all parts of the United States.

ILA expresses its appreciation to Susie Berkheimer, Kristi Alvarez, the ILA presenters and the Nassau Teachers Association for establishing a model for other interest groups and task forces to follow for establishing joint projects between ILA and community groups. With more successes like this Preconvention Education Seminar, more people will be listening about listening.

Thank You for Show of Appreciation

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the many personal letters and notes applauding the Jacksonville convention. I was appreciative of your kind remarks and applause at the convention but to receive letters (one thoughtful person even wrote my husband a note of thanks) substantiated my belief that ILA members not only listen—they care!

Many wonderful people assisted me in making the arrangements for the largest number ever at an ILA convention. Foremost, my wonderful institution, Florida Community College, our president Dr. Spence for his support and great keynote speech, the Jacksonville Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and the wonderful Omni Hotel staff. The harpists, the Renaissance minstrels and the Russian pianist send their regards. The cab company, the Dinner Theatre staff and the St. Augustine tour guide have told me they have never been with nicer people—and I agree—you graced our city—and left your mark! Wayne, Ethel and I prayed and worked together and we thank God—and you!

—Mary Louise Shannon

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aside the hours for an admittedly time-consuming effort such as our strategic planning process requires discipline on the part of a busy president. But if a chief executive falls prey to listening only to himself, then an organization cannot ultimately succeed.

There's another pitfall to being at the top. The people—generally those just beneath you in the hierarchy—sometimes want to tell you what they think you want to hear. Sometimes they just parrot what you say. At other times, they color information so that it supports what they believe you want the information to convey. This is a dangerous situation, and results in an executive being even further removed from his organization, and ultimately, the truth.

I have found that too few people feel

they can relate the unvarnished truth; for whatever reason, they feel that a divergent viewpoint will be a threat. I hope that's not true. I particularly enjoy hearing different points of view—and I believe most intelligent people do.

For many of us, it's a "reality check." It makes us think, defend and ultimately feel more comfortable with our viewpoint. And while we may not be convinced by the argument to change our minds, we may have a better idea of the subtleties which surround any issue, and of which we ought to be aware.

In fact, I believe that people who hold power have a **specific obligation** to be good listeners. Democracy is based on effective listening. Many of our public officials have had to learn that the hard way. We can each remember instances where failure by a public official to listen to his constituents has

predicated his downfall. In the arena of elected officials, the failure to listen to constituents usually results in swift defeat at the ballot box. In the arena of customer satisfaction, the failure to listen results in decreased sales and profits. In the sometimes mercurial world of organizational leadership, the failure to listen brings more subtle, but no less damaging results. The price is a dysfunctional organization and finally, failed leadership. The arrogance of not listening has caused more than one executive's fall from power.

Today, I applaud your efforts to bring the best qualities of listening to the forefront of the public consciousness.

As I have said, we at the College feel very strongly about using the listening process to move our institution forward. Congratulations on doing the same thing on a broader scale.

President's Perspective

From the evaluation forms, your many cards, calls and comments, we can declare the ILA Jacksonville Convention a huge success—success in diversity and quality of programs, success in attendance, and success in the hospitality and arrangements. On behalf of the ILA membership let me thank all of you, the program committee, program presenters, the many committee members, the participants, and those of you unable to attend but who contributed ideas, committee work and support—thank you for making Jacksonville another memorable convention.

With our renewed and new friendships, new ideas and challenges gained from Jacksonville, we now can turn our energies and enthusiasm to another year of growth and extension of the ILA goals and purpose.

Sunday following the convention, the new board met to begin its year of work. The meeting was very productive. You have elected an excellent board. The board members are hard working, dedicated, creative and fun.

With the Board's and your help, I hope we can accomplish some of the following objectives. I hope we can strengthen, as a result of many of your suggestions and requests, the role the Life Time Members and Sustaining Members play in the organization. Continued attention to International Outreach is needed. I hope the model set by the Education Task Force for contacting and working with groups in the cities where we hold our conventions can continue. The Research Committee will be encouraged to continue its fine work. Now is the time to start planning for the next International Summer Conference. As a result of our connecting last summer with the ICA, we were successful in Dublin, Ireland. ICA is planning to meet, I believe, in Sidney, Australia in summer of '93. I am looking for someone to head up our plans for a Summer Conference with ICA that year. And I plan to be as supportive to Judi Brownell, Program Chair for '92 as Ethel was to me; and that support was substantial. These are just a few of the objectives we need to address. Others will become clear as the committees are finalized.



Ethel Glenn introduces the 1991-92 officers.

In the last few years, the organization has grown in membership. We had 175 attending our convention over 157 the year before. Our Newsletter and ILA Journal are established and maintaining quality. The successes of our members in presenting listening to the corporate, business, education and community settings are many. The organization structure is strong and improving as a result of your many creative ideas. The writing and research of many of our members are beginning to gain a wide audience and acceptance. A pattern of growth is evident. We now need to keep that "growth momentum" going. With your support, ideas, participation and commitment, we can continue the growth—a growth that is steady, planned and purposeful. A growth that reflects we are listening.

The Executive Board is scheduled to meet in Seattle in September for its second session. If you have suggestions, ideas or agenda items you want us to consider, give me a call. And when I call you for committee assignments, I just know you will respond to the requests with that famous, enthusiastic ILA "yes." Lets keep that "growth momentum" going. Happy Listening,

Wayne Bond

Help Requested: Historical Research On Listening

We have very little historical material on listening. I have been collecting historical material on listening from every available source. Right now I am concerned about how listening has been thought about and practiced in Western culture (later I want to continue some earlier work on other cultures). I have excerpts from Ptahhotep, the Bible, two quotes from Hebrew texts on the importance of listening, fragments from the Pre-Socratics, rhetorical material from Plato (Gorgias and Phaedrus), Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Quintilian, and an essay by Plutarch on "Listening to Lectures." I also have a few fragments from other Greek and Roman sources including Aquinas. So far I've limited myself to the ancient world but given time I will take on later historical periods.

If you have reference to any historical materials or commentary on historical listening, please send them to: Michael Purdy, Division of Communication, Governors State University, University Park, IL 60466. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Announcements

ISIP Announces Changes in the James I. Brown Student Paper Award

Some exciting changes have been announced in the James I. Brown Student Paper competition. Starting this year, all three finalist in the college division get a cash award and high school students will have their own division starting next year.

ISIP has decided to increase the awards for the student papers competition. Beginning in Jacksonville, all three finalist were awarded a cash award. First place received \$200 plus a Sustaining Membership to ILA. Second place received \$150, and third \$100.

The ISIP Advisory board also created a separate high school division. The winner of this division will also be given a small cash award. Secondary Division members, please encourage your students to submit their papers next year.

The new chair of the James I. Brown Award committee is Phillip Emmert. Let's fill his mailbox next year!

Send submission to:

Dr. Phillip Emmert

Department of Communication
James Madison University
Harrisonburg, VA 22807

Journal Advertising 1991 Issues

Now is the time to take an ad for the 1991 issues of the *Journal*. You can alert our readers to new books, new programs, or other exciting information by placing an ad in the *Journal*.

The rates are as follows:

Full Page Ad\$195

Half Page Ad\$100

Cover\$250

Every attempt will be made to meet your requests. Please send camera ready copy and a check to:

Dr. William E. Arnold, Editor
Department of Communication
Arizona State University
Tempe, AZ 85287-1205

[602] 965-5559

Public Relations Up-Date

ILA's public relations committee has distributed three, five second public service announcements to 365 public radio stations in the United States. We hope that those ILA members associated with a public radio station will encourage that station to play the announcements. We also would like to know if you hear one of the announcements.

If your university radio station is not affiliated with NPR see if they are willing to air these messages. Anyone wishing copies of the tape may obtain it by contacting Carole Grau, 770 Rugby Road, Brooklyn, NY 11230.

As always, new ideas are being sought on how to make the International Listening Association more visible to the public. If you have ideas on public relations and/or wish to be a part of the 1991/92 Public Relations committee, please contact Carole Grau.

Call for Manuscripts

You are invited to submit your research to the *Journal of the International Listening Association*. We are seeking your articles related to any aspect of listening. To guide your thinking, listening is more than an aural process. It encompasses all of the senses and can incorporate nonverbal behaviors as well. In fact, all attitude change research could be rewritten with a listening focus and thus be appropriate for the journal. The journal editorial staff believes in methodological pluralism. While a multimethod approach is preferred, all research methods are acceptable provided the research is sound.

The journal operates on a system of blind review and can offer you a short turnaround on your manuscript. To submit, send three (3) copies of your manuscript to:

William E. Arnold, Editor
Journal of the International Listening Association

Department of Communication
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona 85287-1205

[602] 965-5559

Special Projects Sought

Do you have ideas for special projects? Do you have a suggestion for a summer conference, a pre-convention conference, a special convention activity, need a special survey, an idea for a contest, a publication, a retreat, exchange teaching, house swapping or whatever? Send a scribble to:

Mary Louise Shannon
Florida Community College
at Jacksonville

101 W. State St.

Jacksonville, FL 32202

or call me at 904-633-8161 and I'll listen!

New Directory Reflects Membership Growth

The 1991-92 Directory will soon be sent out. Charles Roberts indicates that the vital statistics of over 350 members in good standing will be included in this issue of the directory. This is an increase of over one hundred (100!) members since 1989. At this rate the next directory will have a two volume format!

Call for Nominations

It is time to begin the process of selecting the next officers of ILA. We are fortunate because there are so many talented individuals in our organization who are willing to serve. If you know someone who would make an excellent contribution, nominate that person for one of the following offices. If you are willing to serve as an officer, please nominate yourself.

The following offices need nominees:

First Vice President Elect (ascends to

First Vice President in 1993;
ascends to President in 1994)

Second Vice President

Secretary

Member-at-Large (Special Projects)

The nominating committee will also need five new members for next year as well.

Please send your nominations by September 15, 1991 to: Victoria Emmert, Chair, ILA Nominating Committee, 1215 Woodcrest Circle, Harrisonburg, VA 22801.

Focusing Attention: The Crux of Listening

by Michael Purdy

I think everyone acknowledges that focused attention is the *sine qua non* of effective listening. If someone is not attending they will definitely not understand, remember, or be able to respond meaningfully to anything we say. I received two books this year that direct attention, that speak to methods for becoming more awake and aware. The first is *Taming your Gremlin: A Guide to Enjoying Yourself*, by Richard D. Carson (Perennial Library, 1986). The other is *The Miracle of Mindfulness: A Manual on Meditation*, by Thich Nhat Hahn (Beacon Press, 1987). Carson's book actually guides us to more than

sharpening our attention, it helps us to become aware of our habits of attention and self-talk that undermine our ability to enjoy ourselves. The main vehicle of achieving a more joyful self is awareness. Carson tells us "To simply notice is to be aware—to pay attention. Simply noticing has nothing to do with asking yourself why you are like you are although these answers will become obvious to you as you pay attention to yourself." Simply noticing puts you in touch with things as they are happening, "you experience yourself and your surroundings" through an awareness of your contact with them. To be aware is to be directly grounded in reality, not in "thoughts, fantasies, ideas, memories."

Hahn's approach is in the tradition of Buddhism. He explains mindful

living (ultimately the same as meditating) in a series of letters to the youth of a school in South Vietnam. The task for a listener is to be mindful of listening as we are listening. That is when we are listening we are only listening. Just as when we are doing the dishes or riding on the commuter train we are just doing the dishes or riding. We don't wash the dishes to get through so that we may do something else. We don't ride the train to get to work. Nor do we listen so that we can move on to something else. Hahn's philosophy reminds me of someone who said the point of dancing or music is not to dance or play so as to get to the end of the piece. So why do we listen mindlessly?

In the last chapter of this short book Hahn tells a short story of Tolstoy's of a king who wanted to know: 1. What is the best time to do each thing?, 2. Who are the most important people to work with?, and 3. What is the most important thing to do at all times? After searching far and wide the king learns these answers from a hermit in the hills: 1. The most important time is now as it is the only time over which we have dominion, 2. The most important person is the person you are with, and 3. The most important thing to do is to make the person you are with happy! Giving our full listening attention to the person we are with will make everyone happy.

Both books are stimulating in and of themselves; both also provide a solid foundation for focusing our attention to listen with our mind and body fully engaged in a dialogue.

ILAers on TV

Keep your eyes peeled for a broadcast on public television with the title BEYOND HATE. It may be aired in early May or held until next fall. The show includes taped interviews between Bill Moyers and the New Utrecht High

School Peer Mediators. Mr. Moyers and crew visited the school last December and conducted some provocative interviews with these high school students. Carole Grau and two of these mediators presented at the Jacksonville convention.



Gina Kuylen and Christine Maggiore, New Utrecht High School.

Important Addresses

International Office:	Executive Director, Charles Roberts Box 10090 A East Tennessee State University Johnson City, TN 37614-0002
The Listening Post:	Jane Rhoads, Editor Reading & Study Skills Center Box 109, Wichita State University Wichita, KS 67208
The ILA Journal:	William E. Arnold, Editor Dept. of Communication Arizona State University Tempe, AZ 85287-1205

Who Are We?

by Rob Anderson
Edwardsville, IL

Speak.
Language is a finding, waiting for you.
It has no place, living wide for itself—
breathing through the mouth, teaching
without scribing
what is in store. No mere inventory,
it waits to restore you and me,
wandering, to our shared slow gaze.
"Well, should we start again?" "Why?"
"We already have." "When?"
"Just now." "Where?"
"Here." "How?"
And nothing now is unavailable. The
who
is a we with sheaths of talk
even silences cannot help but respond.
Listen.



ILA LISTENING POST

Listening Post Deadlines

The Deadline for all Listening Post materials (Includes articles, ads, photographs to appear in the next issue) is July 1, 1991.

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.

1991 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

Listen to Seattle

by Judi Brownell

Seattle is a busy seaport, an educational center, a recreational paradise. Its rich history has shaped its present and its progressive community spirit moves it steadily into the future. If you stand on the shore of Elliott Bay, and if you're very, very, quiet, the wind will bring you the sounds of shipyards, the strains of music, the roar of planes from the Sand Point Naval Air Station. Let's stop and listen to Seattle.

If you close your eyes and go back in time to 1851, you'll hear the sound of covered wagons and the conversations of early settlers as they end their long journey from Illinois. Soon, the sound of saws and falling trees fill the air as lumbermen provide building materials for California's booming gold rush towns. Henry Yesler built his sawmill on a hilltop. Wait, you can hear the sound of logs being skidded down the hill and into the bay. The first skid row was right here in Seattle.

Years pass, and one day a miner, listening carefully from his porch, hears a faint and faraway whistle. Seattle has finally been linked to the transcontinental railway network. During the 1880s, the city is filled with the noisy bustle of newcomers pouring in from the east. Seattle's population grows steadily until, around 1910, it becomes the largest city in the northwest.

The sounds of a busy harbour become louder. Seattle's shipyards boom during both world wars. The need for war planes also stimulates the manufacture of aircraft, which continues to be one of Seattle's largest industries.

With the opening of the Lake Washington Floating Bridge in 1940, and the construction of other major freeways soon afterwards, folks coming from all directions have easy access to the 1962 World's Fair, the Century 21 Exposition. Now hear the sounds that fill the air! Children squeal and their parents gasp as they marvel at the Space Needle. Visitors cheer their team to victory at the Stadium. The fair also leaves a legacy; years later, the Seattle Repertory Theatre is housed in the Seattle Center Playhouse, and the breeze carries the music of voices and violins as

the world-famous Seattle Opera and the Seattle Symphony Orchestra perform in the Opera House.

Seattle offers all the things you expect of a major metropolitan center. But Seattle also holds surprises and delights that you may not be expecting. The enchantment of Seattle is as much in the beauty of its natural surroundings as in its colorful downtown areas. Remember John Denver's song to Annie, "You fill up my senses, like night in a forest, like mountains in springtime, like a walk in the rain..." Seattle provides sensory experiences that capture the imagination. The Olympic Mountains rise to the west, the Cascade Mountain peaks are to the east. Rainforests, miles of shoreline, and moderate temperatures make Washington a place for all seasons and for all people.

A visitor listening to Seattle today hears and senses many things. But before you open your eyes, let's travel for just a moment into the future. It's early March, 1992. Outside the windows of the Edgewater Hotel, ships pass silently and seabirds soar overhead. Listen closely. Do you recognize the voices? The laughter? Isn't that Wayne Bond, welcoming friends to the ILA Convention? Isn't that Belle Ruth Witkin, describing the events that have been so carefully planned? And over at the table, isn't that Mary Wise, greeting the many first timers as they register for program sessions? Can you feel the excitement as ILAers anticipate the lively exchanges that will be taking place during three days of convention activity?

Imagine yourself in a city of many sights and sounds, surrounded by colleagues who bring diverse talents and perspectives, listening to innovative, exciting programs—you are truly part of a listening MOSAIC.

Listen for the call of ILA and join us in Seattle.



(continued from page 2)

especially when the time exceeds the substance and content of the topic, can challenge our best listening skills.

Another category of speaker who tests my listening forbearance is exemplified in my own experience by both a cousin and a good friend. This is the speaker who, upon discovering that I have a very different belief on a controversial issue, cannot let the topic alone. Every time our paths cross, sooner or later the subject will be brought up. The cousin is an extreme animal rights activist, who opposes all research done on animals and avoids eating meat. While I want animals protected from pain and misuse, and am a terrible sucker for the needs and wants of my own two cats, I accept the fact that advances in medicine have depended heavily on animal research. And I enjoy a good steak from time to time. We have different opinions and values—some of you in this room would align with my cousin, not me. That's fine—we have room enough for many opinions. With my good friend, the issue is abortion—we are on different sides of the issue. We should be able to handle our difference, for our shared interests greatly exceed our opposing attitudes, and we enjoy many activities in common. The problem comes when one or the other of us—from forgetfulness, stubbornness, or the inability to give up our proselytizing, once again reiterates the same old line of argument. It is difficult for me to listen, and I'm sure others find it equally difficult if I forget that I cannot convert everyone to my way of thinking. I even have friends who are Republicans—but we won't talk about that!

Several other difficult people come to mind. The speaker who truly murders the King's English—I freely admit I'm something of a snob when it comes to preferring textbook grammar. When the "don't got noes" cause me to pay more attention to the words than the idea behind them, it's difficult. Or the person whose voice is excessively nasal—almost like the dog who moans at the high frequency whistle, my ears respond negatively. Or the occasional young homemaker friend who needs five minutes to tell me how many loads of

laundry she did that day. Or the man who does not ask me first to stop him if I've already heard his joke—or ever pause long enough to let me tell him that I've heard it at least a dozen times before! I used to find grandmothers who talked about their grandchildren a bore—that was until I had some grandchildren of my own. Now I'm a SOGPIP along with the best of them—do you know about the SOGPIP—Silly Old Grandmother, Pictures in Purse. I hope we aren't too difficult to listen to!

One final example is quite different—much more serious—yet it placed me in an extremely difficult listening role. A darling elderly lady friend developed severe Alzheimer's disease. Her conversations were filled with confused, distorted references to the past—mixing yesterday and fifty years ago in the same thought. As her mind struggled to make sense of the world around her, she often became hostile and verbally abusive. Her own devoted daughter sometimes left in tears when her mother did not know her or accused her of stealing her money. As a listener, nothing I could say would help. I was embarrassed for her, knowing how humiliated the pre-illness woman would be if she knew her present behavior. Yet this sweet soul wanted someone to listen constantly—I have the greatest admiration for the nurses and caregivers who were with her for hours each day. My visits were brief. I didn't know how to be a good listener in this special situation.

Well, I could give you more examples. You have some you could share with me. After we spend a little time with these difficult people, we may become impatient, begrudging what we think is wasted time—we just want to get on with our lives. Or we're bored—we've heard it all before—why bother to listen again. Sometimes we even feel hostile, argumentative, a bit belligerent toward those folks who don't fit our image of interesting speakers, and who, despite all of our efforts, will not change their behavior to conform to that image!

Yet we know, as cognitive therapist Dr. Christine Padesky wrote, that "difficulty, ultimately, is in the eye of the beholder." It is not that other person who makes me impatient, bored, or hostile—I make myself that way when I forget what it means to be a good

listener. Movie critic Gene Siskel advised listening to people we don't like "In a strange way," he said, "talking with people who have no value to you whatsoever is a way to find out about yourself and what you can be." And talking with **valued** people, who for one reason or another are difficult to listen to, can bring you in closer touch with yourself. If you believe, as most of us probably do, that the best marriages develop when the two people learn to talk and listen to each other honestly and effectively, then remember the wedding vows—while it may be easier to listen to **richer, better, and in good health**, you signed aboard to listen equally to **poorer, sicker, and worse!** And that's where the real challenge comes in.

As I said in the beginning, it is easy to listen to fascinating people—but much harder to listen to those who are difficult. ILA stands for good listening in all situations and on all occasions—not just the comfortable and fun ones. We know that the listener, as much if not far more than the speaker, controls the tone and direction of the communication. Difficult people can become fascinating people when we listen with genuine patience, empathy, and love.

On a recent episode of *A Different World*, Whitley accepted a challenge to be totally silent for 24 hours. One of the college students, observing her clinched lips and refusal to speak, asked if she was hard of hearing. The reply was, "No, she's just hard of listening." As your outgoing President, that is my challenge to myself and to all of you—let's don't be hard of listening. Let's apply what we know so we can enjoy and profit from listening to all people. And we may discover that, indeed, difficulty is in the ear of the receiver.

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND THE

13th Annual ILA Convention

March 4-8, 1992

Seattle, Washington
The Edgewater Inn