

WebWhispers

Internet Laryngectomy Support

March, 1999

Welcome New Members!

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Like the Watch... My Servox Keeps on Ticking

By Paul Galioni

I use a Servox electrolarynx (I have had three over the past five years) and mine get a real work out. I teach at a Community College. My best guess is that I am talking an average of four to six hours a day — more in the beginning of a semester, and less at the end. I also give lectures.

Outside my work, I have done such things as: run cattle over Western Nevada; work a small forest of Japanese Maples; start several construction projects and finish a few of them; work on my pickup; and hike around some Canyons. My Servox gets subjected to a lot of bouncing on horseback; lots of swinging and swaying in my pickup (once I had one rolling around in the bed of the pickup for about two hours of cross country driving banging back and forth against the sides); more dirt and dust than you can imagine; and sometimes reasonably direct sun shine.

I have accidentally immersed my Servox while washing dishes; soaked it with wet hands while cooking and trying to talk at the same time; rolled on it while chaining and unchaining; had it swing and hit rock walls, solid iron, pieces of oak and pine; let it go out of hand when it wasn't around my neck; and had it fall onto concrete, tile, asphalt, linoleum, and bare wood floors.

Apart from the fact that I sometimes felt the fool, never has the Servox suffered more than temporary dysfunction. When it would get wet I would slide it out of its covering shroud and either air dry it for many hours in indirect sun, or run a blow drier on it at low heat being careful not to heat it too much.

The only problems I have had with were one torn membrane (the part that vibrates) and two switches that were either VERY dirty or worn out from so much use. When I have sent mine into Jim Lauder to be repaired, he has generally had it back to me inside a week. It has never been longer than ten days — from the time I sent it in to the time I received it back — and that included a three-day weekend..

Batteries are not a worry. I have noticed that I can tell when my batteries begin to go bad. They don't hold a charge all that long — maybe for only a couple of hours of talking. So I call Lauder and order some new ones which arrive in about three to four days.

Paul Galioni lives in California and can be reached at pgalioni@yahoo.com.

Welcome New Members!

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Living With Cancer

By Jim Sansing

A recent letter to the editor of a Florida newspaper addressed the trials of having cancer, and undergoing chemotherapy with all of its side effects. In this case, the letter addressed an earlier one in which the author was very depressed because of, among other things, the embarrassment of hair loss. She had a problem of how to deal with it. While this is very understandable, the author of this second letter took the high road. She noted several of these side effects that she too faced, but she presented them in a positive fashion.

This is my philosophy, exactly. I have been a cancer survivor since 1980. I practice Pollyannaism — that is, always find the positive. My particular cancer, caused by smoking, destroyed my ability to talk. However, I learned an alternative method of voicing. Over the years, I have been able to help other cancer patients learn to talk by assisting a local speech pathologist. I have worked with the American Cancer Society in discouraging youngsters from smoking. My grandchildren bring their friends and use me as “Show and Tell” as to why they should not smoke. I have met some of the greatest people in the world whom I would never have met otherwise. These are just a few of the many positives I have encountered since my cancer.

A while back, there was a news story in the paper about a young lady who made an outstanding statement. I said then, “I wish I had made that statement.” This young lady had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. She said, “I’m not dying of cancer. I’m living with cancer.” She, with her bare head, a smile on her face and a gleam in her eye, was still living. Moreover, she was going to continue living as long as she could.

One line of thought is that you never really get rid of cancer. This may be, but why waste our time worrying about it. If it is true, no amount of worry will change it. The only way I’ll ever know if I’m cancer free is if I die of some other cause. In the meantime, I will spend my time living. This December, I attended my college granddaughter’s college graduation in Missouri. This month, I will be at her wedding in Minnesota. Next October, I celebrate my own Golden Wedding anniversary. I don’t have time to “die of cancer.”

Read these statements (someone else’s words) and see what a wimp cancer really is.

- It Can Not Cripple Love
- It Can Not Shatter Hope
- It Can Not Corrode Faith
- It Can Not Destroy Peace
- It Can Not Kill Friendship
- It Can Not Suppress Memories
- It Can Not Silence Courage
- It Can Not Invade the Soul
- It Can Not Steal Eternal Life
- It Can Not Conquer the Spirit.

Many of our death certificates will list cancer as the cause of death but until then, we can stand tall. Look cancer in the face and say, “I can beat you.”

Jim Sansing of Pensacola, FL can be reached at sansingj@juno.com



Thank You!

To all of our contributing members.

Murray Allan	Charlie Anderson
Martha Anderson	Patsy Armstrong
Wayne Baker	Mary Bergquist
Ned Bienemann	Bob Blakeley
Grady Bradshaw	Ellen Byrne
Willie Buchanan	Walter Canney
Joe Casey	Scotty Chandler
Philip Clemmons	Carter Cooper
Terry Duga	Rudy Dupler
Clinton Dutchler	Norman Edelman
John Edwards	Bob Fitz
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Pat Wertz Sanders	Joseph Schad
Richard Scheele	Joe Schell
Carl Schultz	Jo Scultz
Clayton Schwalen	Herb Simon
Bobby Stanley	Harmon Swart
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Reno Registration

You can register electronically for the IAL Annual Meeting in Reno in July by clicking on

<http://www.larynxlink.com/Reno/AM-Registration.htm>

and submitting the form shown on that page.

The basic registration fee for the Annual Meeting is \$60.

WebWhispers will be having its Second Annual Dinner during the IAL event.

Darlene Parker reports very strong interest — over fifty people have already signed up. For additional information, contact darlene@cyberramp.net.



TEP Timing

By Glenn E. Peters, M.D..

There are two opinions as to the proper time to do the tracheoesophageal punctures TEP. Some surgeons think the TEP should be done as part of the laryngectomy (a primary TEP). Others, myself included, think it is best done as a separate procedure (a secondary TEP). There are no differences in the speech results in comparing the large series of patients but there are advantages and disadvantages to each approach.

The main advantage of the primary TEP is obvious. Patients will be using their prostheses sooner during their convalescence. A primary TEP also has the advantage that the feeding tube can be put into the esophagus through the puncture instead of through the nose,

making the patient more comfortable.

The main disadvantage has to do with wound healing and maturation of the stoma. The site of the puncture might shift relative to its position in the stoma, making placement of the prosthesis difficult.

I prefer to allow about eight weeks to pass between the time of the laryngectomy and the secondary TEP. I want to see how the wounds heal and, particularly, how well the stoma matures. It helps me to see if the stoma is going to shrink in size, called stenosis, and whether a stoma vent will be necessary. The patient needs to be swallowing well, especially foods like meat, as this indicates that the throat is the proper size. In addition, the passage of time allows for the initial pain and swelling from the laryngectomy to subside.

The down side, of course, is the need to have a second operation and the need to use a Servox for several weeks or months longer after the laryngectomy.

Dr. Peters of the Kirklin Clinic in Birmingham, AL is at Glenn.Peters@ccc.uab.edu.

WebWhispers Nu-Voice Club



WebWhispers is the largest laryngectomy support group on the Internet and a member of the International Association of Laryngectomees.

The Club's officers for the 1998/1999 year are:

Dutch Helms	Webmaster
Joe Casey	President
Darlene Parker	Secretary
Terry Duga	Treasurer

WebWhispers welcomes all those diagnosed with cancer of the larynx or who have lost their voice for other reasons, their caregivers and friends and medical support personnel.

For information on membership, contact Dutch Helms at FantumTwo@aol.com.