

# Whispers on the Web

A Monthly Online Newsletter for WebWhispers

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*March 2020*



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# From The Editor's Desk



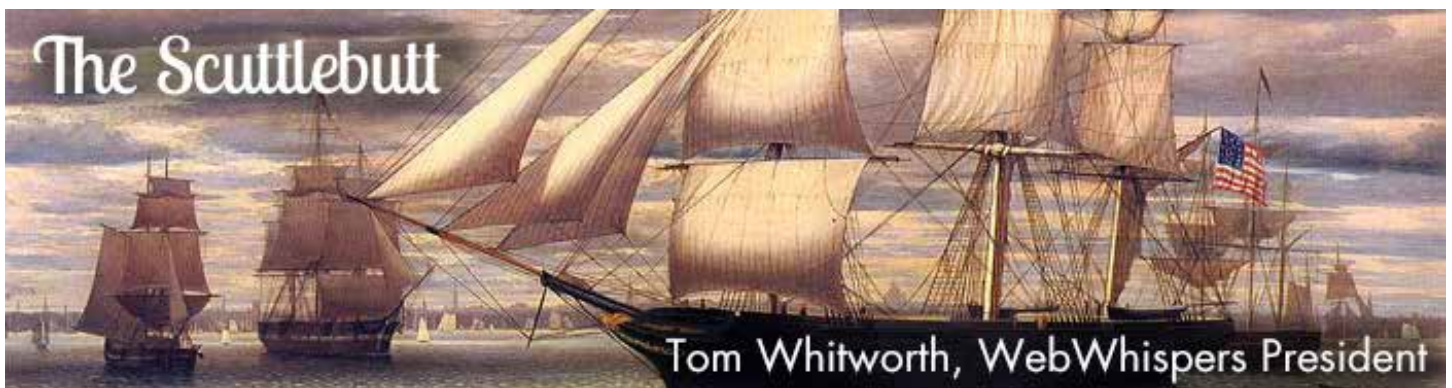
These are challenging times, no doubt about that! But if you are hunkering down at least we can offer you some great reading material. This issue is jam-packed with good stuff and if you want more you can always go to the Whispers on the Web index on our website and read all kinds of articles from our past issues. This month we have info on the upcoming IAL meeting, a message from the director of “Can You Hear My Voice?” about that amazing documentary, more travel travel tales, thoughts on making the world a better place, how to self advocate, another chapter in Doc Holmberg’s fascinating memoir

and a bit of fun from the late, great Len Hynds.

Pour yourself a cuppa and take a few minutes to read it all. And as always we welcome your comments and contributions.

Stay safe and enjoy!

*Donna McGary*



## It's Like Turning Six All Over Again

Six is such a meaningful and powerful number. My 1965 Mustang, which I drove in late high school and college, ran on a six cylinder engine and so do my Ford truck and Chrysler convertible now. We can be six feet tall and we can be six feet under. Six is the number assigned to half a dozen doughnuts and is the standard age of a first-grader in most elementary schools. I remember that six. All the neighbors were hidden in my house when my dad brought me in to my surprise birthday party. They all jumped from behind doors and furniture yelling “HAPPY BIRTHDAY!”.

When mild-mannered, yet talkative Mrs. Ogletree leaped from behind the freezer and screamed that at the top of her lungs, I was so terrified I'm sure I nearly wet my pants. Lately, I feel a lot like I did as that burgeoning six year old. All new life is ahead of me.

Six years ago, I learned to my shock and amazement that I had cancer- again! ( Or still?) The chemotherapy and radiation that we thought had cured me had ultimately failed. The disease was far worse than at my first diagnosis six months earlier. Only several days later, my laryngectomy and radical neck dissection took

place. It was scheduled for three and a half to four hours but was extended to around eight. A tumor was discovered so treacherously close to my spine that consideration was given to leaving it there. There were also other surprise tumors and affected lymph nodes that had to go. That was six years ago March 12, the day I became cancer free, and a new life was begun in me, a life filled with meaning, confidence, passion, and a sincere love for others.

Within only a few weeks after my laryngectomy, I learned of the International Association of Laryngectomees, and of its 2014 Annual Meeting and Voice Institute, which was coming up really soon. Long story, which I have written about extensively, made short- I made it to Buffalo for my first Voice Institute. The event made a total difference in my life, a difference I can't imagine life without.

Though I've said that a million times, I could say it a million more times, only to wonder if my words have ever truly conveyed the value for me in that first voice institute and the ones that followed. You guessed it- I have attended consecutively six IAL Voice Institutes and I joyfully look forward to my seventh in Charlotte, NC, June 10-13, 2020.

Yes, believe it or not, I registered six months ago In October 2019. At the IAL VI, caregivers meet other caregivers and laryngectomees meet one another. Suppliers of products exclusively for our community are there with demonstrations and expertise on what they have to offer us. SLPs and students meet more of us than most have ever seen in one place, and in the span of four days, more CEU credit is available to SLPs than

at any other event I am aware of. There, all of our lives are enriched by a faculty of experts equipped to help us get better and better at this new life of ours.

Here is how to register:

<https://www.theial.com/2020-voice-institute-annual-meeting>

We know that the cost of attending the Voice Institute may be challenging for some. Survivors who are WebWhispers members may apply for a scholarship. Priority is given to new laryngectomees and others attending for the time. Register for the event first, then use the link below to apply:

<http://webwhispers.org/services/voice-institute-scholarship.asp>

(If clicking on the links doesn't work, please copy and paste them into your browser.)

Please note: We understand concerns regarding the Coronavirus COVID-19. At this point, the International Association of Laryngectomees Annual Meeting and Voice Institute is still scheduled as planned for June 10-13, 2020. If that should change for any reason, appropriate measures will be taken, to include refunds of the registration fee, if necessary. The IAL asks that we register as normal so that planning for the event can continue.

*Enjoy, laugh, and learn,  
Tom Whitworth  
WebWhispers President*





# Voice Points

Written by Professionals

Coordinated by Kim Almand M.S., CCC-SLP

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## Can You Hear My Voice?

There were times I wanted to give up. After having my laryngectomy, I was unable to speak for three months. I had a feeding tube for half of a year. Physical recovery was awful. Worse yet, I was saddled with insecurity, fear, and doubt.

I soon learned that these emotions are common among people who have had their voice boxes removed. A laryngectomy alters some of the most basic human functions such as speaking, eating and breathing. I now speak with the aid of a voice prosthesis and breathe through a surgically created hole in my neck called a stoma. Because of the drastic changes in our appearance and a radical change in the way we speak, laryngectomees can easily lose self-confidence and retreat from society, withdrawing into a world where we don't have to speak, eat or be seen in public. But when we self-quarantine, loneliness and depression are sure to follow. There were times when I found it easier to isolate rather than navigate.

I was forced to have a laryngectomy as a result of long-term damage from radiation treatments I received in 1998 for tonsil cancer, however, a majority of people have the surgery as a treatment for active throat cancers. Whatever the reason, it is a life-altering event. It took me more than a year to adjust to the physical changes, and longer to work through emotional and mental hurdles.

In 2017, my doctor and surgeon, Uttam Sinha of Keck Medicine of the University of Southern California suggested I make a film about how to cope with the psychosocial obstacles of living with a laryngectomy, and creating a quality of life that's abundant and joyful. I knew I was not alone in my harrowing recovery experiences, or in the fact that my medical team, family, friends and support groups encouraged me and helped me gain a quality of life better than before the surgery. But I was in a unique position as a laryngectomee and a filmmaker to tell this story.

I went in search of a perfect story to illustrate the topic. I found the Shout at Cancer laryngectomee choir in the UK- a singing group made up of people with no voice

boxes. Now, after two and a half years of development, independent fundraising and production, "Can You Hear my Voice?" is complete.

Through the film, I want to encourage people who are struggling through dark periods of recovery of any kind to hold on. The theme is universal. It's a story of survival and empowerment with a message that will resonate with people combating other diseases, disabilities, or personal struggles, which -- when you think of it -- is all of us.

*Bill Brummel*

*Producer/Director – CAN YOU HEAR MY VOICE?*

*[bill@bbprods.com](mailto:bill@bbprods.com)*



One of our most popular columns in the past was the Speaking Out Column. We are starting it up again and the question for April is:

**These are uncertain times for us all with the recent Coronavirus pandemic. These days, quarantine is more than self-imposed; we are all facing restrictions and disruptions to our daily activities at home, work, and around town. Amid struggles and fear, how do you create a quality of life that is abundant and joyful?**

Please reply to [editor@webwhispers.org](mailto:editor@webwhispers.org)

# Between Friends

Donna McGary

"That which does not kill us makes us strong."

## Advocacy And Why It Is Important To The Laryngectomees

*These are challenging times for everyone. The WebWhispers community is especially high risk and so the following article about self-advocacy is particularly relevant. However, let's keep in mind, we are a pretty tough bunch, so stock up on what you need, don't board toilet paper LOL!!! and enjoy this down time to catch up on your reading! Our newsletter has years of back issues in the archives with loads of great articles should you need some fresh material and inspiration.*

~Donna

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*Ann McKennis specialized in perioperative and otolaryngologic nursing for over fifty years. She is certified Emeritus in both. She has numerous publications in juried journals including AORN.*

*Ann has lectured both nationally and in Europe. She credits her long and happy career to two mentors, one a well traveled US Army nurse and the other a disciplined, Catholic operating room supervisor. Both guided her career and taught her the joys, challenges and rewards of being a mentor. During her clinical years, while others hesitated Ann loved precepting students and new nurses in the OR, many of whom she has followed over the years. After doing a Nurse Internship in Washington, D.C. in 1991, she became interested and involved in politics and policy formation. A long list of colleagues and Chapter members benefitted from her mentoring in this area. She has always enjoyed talking with students about career choices and has been there every step of the way when they chose nursing as their career path. An AORN Chapter member since 1964, she has encouraged all she mentors to become involved in their professional organization on the local level and nationally, if possible. Ann remains active in mentoring new groups of nurses and Chapter members as they become involved, seek office and guide AORN into the future.*

There are many definitions of the word advocate. Basically an advocate is a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy. This person is someone who pleads on someone else's behalf. According to the National Safety Foundation "An effective advocate is someone you trust, who is willing to act on your behalf and can also work well

with the healthcare team."

To advocate means to inform and support. I have been an advocate for many Laryngectomees over the last thirty years and it has been an honor and privilege. My primary goal has always been to teach the Laryngectomee and his or her family or support person how to advocate for the Laryngectomee after they leave the healthcare setting. This has become more important as hospital staff, especially nurses are stretched to the max trying to care for a large number of patients with varied conditions and have little time to spend at the bedside. After all, no one knows more about living with a laryngectomy than you do.

I want to teach you how to advocate for the Laryngectomee and future healthcare experiences.

If you are reading this as a longtime Laryngectomee you most likely have many stories of healthcare experiences that were frightening and perhaps life threatening. "They put an oxygen mask on my face, but I breathe through my stoma". Your medical and nursing staff may have NEVER seen a Laryngectomee, not even in their training. Please consider this your chance to educate your healthcare provider. No one can do a better job.

Why is this important? First and foremost for your safety, You have a golden opportunity to educate those who care for you. According to the CDC medical errors is the third leading cause of death in the United States claiming 250,000 lives. This is a frightening number and I want your healthcare providers to know you are a neck breather, and exactly what that means.

Laryngectomy is not a common procedure. It is usually performed in a medical center and after recovery the patient returns to his or her home, often many miles away and in some instances another state. Your primary care provider, nurse, dentist, pharmacist, respiratory therapist may never have seen a Laryngectomy. The speech therapist in your area may also not be familiar with your surgery.

This is your golden opportunity to teach and explain your airway. All of the vendors of Laryngectomy supplies have

great teaching handouts that are free. These are wonderful teaching aids for everyone. You are the expert! Use them to your advantage.

You may ask “what can I teach these professionals?” Again, remember you are the expert. For friends, family and your healthcare professionals in the community your airway and how you breathe is the most important lesson. However if you are admitted to a hospital for illness or surgery there are other things to consider.

I would start with explaining your airway. How does it work? Explain that there is no connection from your mouth and nose to your lungs. The only way to get air or oxygen to your lungs is through your stoma. Explain to them the type of speech aid you use. They most likely have never seen an electro larynx. If you have a tracheal esophageal puncture and use an in dwelling prosthesis explain what it is and the importance of it staying in place. Explain how you care for it. Let them know what you do for stoma care and how important humidity is to you. Air no longer goes through your nose where it is moistened, but directly in you stoma, so the care of it is very important. Speak to the dietician regarding your nutritional needs. Let them know if you have a feeding tube or cannot chew your food. This can vary widely so make sure they understand. Good nutrition is very important to healing. Tell them any special needs you might have. For example, tell them about shower guards if you use them. Anything special and specific to your surgery should be explained. If an anesthesia provider visits you preoperatively make sure they are completely aware of your airway. Do

not take for granted that they know! This also goes for the professional providing conscious sedation for colonoscopies and other outpatient procedures. It is much safer to assume they are not familiar with the Laryngectomy airway. All these suggestions also apply to the primary caregiver. You are the advocate if the Laryngectomee is unable at the time.

There are many areas you can advocate for the Laryngectomee. Many volunteer to talk about tobacco use at schools and health fairs. This is a wonderful way to teach the public and the children love it. You might visit your local fire station and explain about your stoma. Some first responders may think you have a tracheostomy. You are different because these patients still have a connection from their nose and mouth to their lungs. The Laryngectomee does not.

You can offer to visit nursing schools, hospital Inservices or any venue where people meet for educational purposes. Personally I participated in all these events taking Laryngectomees with me. We even visited our Senators and Representatives in the State Capitol regarding issues pertaining to tobacco issues, Medicare reimbursement and patient safety. The possibilities are endless.

Be aware that all hospitals have advocates if you run into problems. They are there for you.

You have a right to competent care. If there is a problem, report it and use this as an opportunity to advocate for all Laryngectomees. I repeat you are the expert.

*Ann McKennis, RN (retired), CNOR(E), CORLN,(E)*





## Change the World

By Don Renfro

*"Be the change that you wish to see in the world". Mahatma Gandhi.*

It is so much easier for me to say what is wrong with the world and what the world or society needs to do to improve than it is for me to live my life in a way that models to the world the way I see it should be. This kind of goes along with something I learned a long time ago. If I don't like what I am getting out of something (i.e. life, a relationship, a job...) than I need to look at what I am putting into it.

All good words but sometimes the words feel like impossible actions to employ. The need to focus on just me and ignore what is happening around me. Growing up, when caught exhibiting less than desirable behavior, by my parents or another adult, the immediate defense would be "well (insert name) was doing it too". Even as an adult I can remember reciting to the police officer that had pulled me over for speeding saying something to the effect that "the other cars were speeding too."

To move beyond that primitive thinking into a realm where I am responsible for living a life that models what I want my world to be, feels like a very overwhelming undertaking.

When I was in my early twenties I used to spend hours driving around and thinking about the world (gas was pretty cheap). How it was and how it could be. When pondering how to change the world into a better place, I came to the conclusion that the change had to start with the kids. In the schools, teaching the values that would make the world a better place. I rarely if ever saw it as my responsibility to live my life in the manner that would create a world with the values that would create a better world. Even when I would live my life in a positive manner and do the honorable thing such as return a lost item to its rightful owner or bring to the attention of a checker that they failed to charge me for an item or that they had given me the incorrect change. Yes it was a good thing to do but I did not see that as my responsibility to making the world the place I want it to be.

Today I not only see it as a positive action but as my responsibility in creating a world in which I want to live. When I accept that responsibility, I no longer have the luxury of excuses that take me "off the hook". No longer do excuses highlighting someone else's behavior, work to mask my own character defects.

It is this task that leaves me feeling like this undertaking is such an insurmountable task. In some parts of the world the honorable

thing is to admit fault and not only accept the consequences but in many cases the consequences are administered by the one at fault. I have learned to avoid liability or fault. First as a child, if an adult had to come out and intervene in a conflict between two or more children, rarely, if ever did any one of the children step up and say "it was my fault". Even as an adult, on my proof of insurance card, on the back of it is printed to never admit fault at the scene of an accident.

I remember at work one time I was on a conference call that was held throughout the state. During the call the Deputy Director began speaking poorly about my District Administrator (DA) who was unable to participate on the call due to a conflicting obligation. I became defensive of my DA and also my voice (when I had one, ha ha) became intense. The Deputy Director asked me if I was raising my voice at her. I replied instinctively "no". I latter felt bad about my part in the interaction and went to my DA after she returned to let her know that I wanted to contact the Deputy Director and apologize for having raised my voice to her. My DA cautioned me saying that you may not want to do that because you never know what people might want to do with that information. As it turned out my DA was right. I later shared with the Deputy Director in confidence about how I was supported through prayer by a comrade and the Deputy Director wrote the comrade up for praying on state time.

I understand the world I live in does not necessarily share the belief that admitting liability is in itself enough retribution for many circumstances. I myself do not feel admitting a deficiency is always enough to mitigate all and every wrongdoing. I also understand that there are many people ready to "tar and feather" the person at fault, no matter how severe or diminutive the infraction may be.

It is achieving that balance, between liability and responsibility, that creates such an overwhelming burden to living a life where the belief is one should accept responsibility for one's own actions and live life in the image of how I believe the world should be and not put the responsibility of how the world should be on external sources outside of myself.



## Turkish Serendipity

W. C. Baker

Pierre and Hugette were waiting in the Malatya bus station, otogar, for our buses; theirs north to the Black Sea and mine to the Syrian border to the South. I had met the Quebequois couple at Nmrut Dagi, the mountaintop residence of seated Gods with 6 foot tall heads at their feet. Antiochus II had included himself in an auto-deification several millennia ago. But I digress. Pierre and Hugette were French speaking Canadians in their 60s. Pierre, an engineer for a company that made snow-making machines, spoke flawless English while Hugette spoke about as much English as I speak French. That is to say virtually none.

I spent about a week exploring the mosaic-rich Gaziantep, Sanliurfa and Harran, the Islamic birthplace of Abraham and the Biblical home where he lived with Sara and volunteered to obey Yahweh's command. to sacrifice Isaak. I took an overnight bus to Ankara to visit the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations which goes back 1.2 million years to the Paleolithic.

After two days wandering the halls of the MAC I took a bus to Cappadocia. With its fairy tail like rock formations, an 18 level underground city, a monastery, ancient churches and dwellings carved into the rock, Cappadocia is one of the strangest and most interesting places in the world.

Although I couldn't join the beautiful people in the Mediterranean at Antalya, I did enjoy watching. Like the MAC in Ankara, the Antalya Anatolian Museum dates back to the Paleolithic but has an emphasis on Greek and Roman times. A side trip to Helenistic and Roman ruins of Perge and Side showed stadia, aqueducts, theaters, agoras and temples.

The travertine cliffs of Hierapolis with white walls and blue watered pools, have to be traversed in bare feet to preserve their delicate calcium carbonate surfaces. It was worth the trip though, at the top offering this neck breather the opportunity to share the same mineral waters that the Romans enjoyed a couple of millennia ago.

Ephesus was closer to the Mediterranean at the time St. Paul was writing his letters to the Ephesians. (Tarsus, by the way is not far east of Antalya in what is now Turkey) Ephesus is one of the best preserved Roman ruins

anywhere. Within a long walking distance is the town of Selcuk where I stayed. While sitting at an outdoor café in Selcuk having dinner with an American who was sailing around the Mediterranean when, walking down the street were Pierre and Hugette whom I had last seen three weeks ago at the bus station in Malatya. We hung out for the evening and the next morning left the Selcuk bus station for different destinations.

My destination of Canakkale is a gateway to the ancient city of Troy complete with a modern version of its horse. Also easily accessible from Canakkale is the site of the WW I slaughter of ANZA forces at Galopoli. I was fortunate to be in Canakkale on the day that Turkey celebrates its nationhood. All of the many political parties had their shields set up in the town square. The newly organized Lone Wolf Party had a flag with a wolf baying at a crescent moon draped a table set up tended by three young men. I talked with them a lot about the Turkish political system and their place in it. When I left the square, they caught up with me and gave me the flag which hangs in my bedroom now.

I didn't really know where I wanted to go next, so I decided to go wherever the next bus was going. Bursa, as it turned out. On the way there, I studied my Blue Planet to find a place to stay. My first choice claimed to be full, so I lugged my bag onto a bus to my second choice. It too was full so I consulted my book again and walked to a Pension a few blocks away. At last, a place to stay on the third floor. As the pension manager was taking my bag up. I found Pierre and Hugette from Malatya and Selcuk, checking into their room at the landing for the second floor. We were all stunned at the randomness of the situation. The only other person on the third floor was Patricia, a French woman who lives most of the time in Morocco. The three French speakers and I formed a team that went to the music section of the tea house, to the Whirling Dervishes and the Hammam.

We went as a group to Istanbul. I stayed at Patricia's hotel and Pierre Hugette stayed close by. Pierre and Hugette left after two days so Patricia and I had Istanbul to ourselves for two more days before Patricia went back to Morocco. Two days later I returned to California after having spent two and a half months on a trip that started in Tashkent Uzbekistan.





# *The Agony & Ecstasy of Finding My Voice*

A Memoir by Dr. Branton Holmberg

## Chapter 6 "A New Voice"

The minute I left Dr. Crawford's office I headed across campus to the Speech Department and met with what was to be another key person in my life, Bill Wensley, a speech pathologist and head of the Speech Department. Bill had a huge empathy for my problem since he'd been a severe stutterer when he was young.

He once told me about the time he was standing in front of a drug store when someone asked him a question. When he tried to answer it, his efforts to speak caused him to jerk his head backwards as he stuttered and he hit it against one of the plate glass windows and broke it.

Within minutes of explaining what was traumatizing my life, Bill told me of the work they were doing at the University of Oregon (U of O) Medical School in Portland developing a dental appliance for speech impediments like mine. The appliance could be designed to replace the part of my soft palate which had been missing since birth.

Bill hardly finished describing the work they were doing when I knew it was the answer I was looking for and would let me finish my teaching assistant contract. As I sat in his office he called an old colleague of his at the U of O, and set up an appointment for me.

I headed into my 1:00 o'clock lecture feeling better about things. When I gave my lecture that afternoon I looked at my students from time to time. It was a new beginning. From that day forward I began lecturing without using notes because I knew my material backwards and forwards, I'd just been too scared to present it like I knew I could.

Though I never asked, I'm sure the students in the

first class I ever taught must have thought I was the extroverted twin of the introvert who'd been there the first week of class. I was still self-conscious about my speech but it was a lot better than putting my wife and son through the pain of getting sued. That had terrified me the moment Dr. Crawford said that's what they'd do if I quit.

By the end of that fall quarter, after a huge amount of work with Bill, which led to a friendship that lasted for years, I'd been fitted with my dental appliance. The reason it took so long was because I had to learn to control my gag reflex until I could tolerate having a plastic bulb on the end of the dental appliance fit in the back of my throat to prevent most of the air from going into my nasal chambers when I was speaking.

Once it was in place, and I could wear it continually, I'd been granted the wish I'd wished for all my life, clear speech. There was no longer a noticeable amount of air going through my nose when I talked. That feeling was, and is, indescribably wonderful. For the first time ever, I liked the sound of my voice. No let me say that far more emphatically, I loved the sound of my voice.

What happened then was one of the most profound lessons I've ever learned. Margaret, my God sent beautiful wife, along with our son, had accompanied me on my week-end trips to Portland to get the obturator made and fitted. She was in the waiting room while I was going through the final fitting.

When I got there after the final fitting she asked what'd taken so long. I explained they'd put me through a series of tests to determine whether it fit properly. After I explained things she asked when they were going to give it to me.

I was dumbfounded, I'd been wearing it the whole time I'd been talking to her.

I said, "Honey, I have it in, can't you tell"?

"No, but now that you tell me you have it I guess there's a difference, but you sound just like you always have to me".

Her observation was solidly confirmed a few hours later on our way back to Ellensburg when we stopped by my parent's home in Tacoma. After spending several minutes talking with them and neither of them commenting on my wonderful new voice, I asked if they noticed anything different about my speech.

I was sure mom would say she did because she'd taken me to speech therapy to help me improve it. They both said they hadn't noticed anything at all.

It became painfully obvious to me that I'd developed a good speaking ability and had blown what I considered a speech impediment all out of proportion in my own mind. Of course the trigger to it was the air going into my nose making it feel like I was talking through my nose when in fact I'd become quite good at speaking rather clearly.

The moment I could no longer feel the air going into my nose it truly made a new man out of me. I was 26 years old and had a new voice.

For the rest of my 2 year graduate teaching assistantship, I couldn't wait to get to the lecture hall and work with my students. A lifetime of self-doubt about my speech disappeared the moment I started wearing that miraculous dental appliance.

It was during the second quarter of my teaching contract I learned Dr. Crawford never had met with the college

president. The only thing he'd done was sit down with a colleague, Dr. Jerry Gage, who had an office across the hall from his, and told him what he was going through with me. Between them they decided if he didn't make me face up to myself and solve my problem of getting in front of my students, I'd never be a very happy man.

Jack Crawford and I went on to become life-long friends and I bless him every day of my life as being the closest thing to a guardian angel I can imagine. Many years later, after he'd passed away, something he'd been working on helped me deal with the second agonizing speaking trauma of my life.

Graduate school turned into a trip through fantasy land to me even though we had very little money to live on. Margaret got back into nursing to help pay for things. Between what I was making from the teaching assistantship, and she was making part-time as a nurse, our income was low enough to let us qualify for the Washington State Surplus Food program which was part of the state welfare system. Once a month we'd take our coupon book to the surplus food store in Ellensburg and pick up our food supplies for the month. I was very happy to get the help.

When I was getting ready to graduate in the spring of 1964, I got an offer to teach in the Psychology Department at PLC where I'd started my college education and jumped at the chance. I'd fallen in love with teaching and thought I'd spend the rest of my career as a professor at the first college I ever went to.

Dr. Robert Mortvedt was President of PLC, and Dr. Sven Winther was Chairman of the Psychology Department when I began my teaching career as an Instructor. That grand institution still holds some of the fondest memories of my life.





...And because I think we need a little levity here is one of my favorite *Tales of A London Bobby* by Len Hynds from back in July 2014:

A true story of how I met a refined elderly lady in the middle of the night, outside her house front door as I was struggling on the ground with a fighting shop-breaker who was trying to escape. Nevertheless the elderly grey haired lady and myself maintained our conversation in that typical British politeness. Worthy of a smile!

### **“Don’t Be Rude, The Lady Might Hear You”**

One night in 1952 I was on duty at the Brixton Crime Patrol standing in a deep shop doorway to get out of the cold night wind when during the early hours I suddenly saw a face peering around the corner of the road opposite. I had myself a customer, a potential burglar who was about to commit a shop-breaking and was making quite sure that the main road was clear of the odd pedestrian or passing car before committing his foul deed.

Eventually he came out onto the pavement, carrying a brick and raising his arm he hurled the brick at a jeweller’s shop window. Even as the glass pane was falling shattered to the pavement, with an appalling din, he was moving forward to grab his loot and I had emerged from my hiding place and was racing across the road to grab him.

He suddenly realised that I was almost on top of him and threw himself sideways and ran terribly fast down that same side turning with me in close pursuit. After several streets he was beginning to slow down and I caught up with him, but instead of giving up the fool started to fight me. A fist fight went on for a couple of minutes, until at last I got him to the ground with me laying beside him, my legs wrapped round his waist, one of my arms around his neck forcing his head back and my other hand was forcing an arm up his back in a half-nelson.

We had finished up on the deck in this locked in position down the garden path of an old Victorian house and the villain in his struggles was kicking at the street door. I knew that once I got my breath back and tried to stand up with

my prisoner, the fight would start again in his attempt to escape and I knew by the size of this man the trouble I would have. There were no such things as personal radios in those days and very few households had telephones. As I was contemplating my next move, so as not to lose my prisoner, the street door opened very slightly

and a very elderly lady peering round the door with her hair in curlers, looked down in amazement at us.

I asked her if she had a telephone and she said that she had so I asked her to dial 999 and tell them that an officer needed urgent assistance. She vanished and shortly afterwards the door opened again and she said that she had done that.

She then said, “My sister told me to ask you if you would like a cup of tea, Officer, and do you take sugar and we’re afraid we only have biscuits.”

I found it hard not to smile at this but thanked her very much and explained I was pretty tied-up at that particular moment. She smiled sweetly and closed the door.

The prisoner said, “The bleedin’ old cow, she didn’t offer me a cup.” I pushed his arm further up his back until he yelped with pain, “Wotcher do that for?”

“Don’t be rude, the lady might hear you.”

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