



*ALDAcon 2007—Rochester, New York*

Awards Luncheon—Doctor Michael Harvey

**JANE SCHLAU:** I've asked Christine Seymour, our President-Elect, to please have the honor of introducing our guest speaker. Christine?

**CHRISTINE SEYMOUR:** Thank you.

Hello again. It is my honor. I just met Dr. Harvey for the first time today, though I have known who he was for quite sometime. Dr. Harvey provides training and consultation on hearing loss and deafness. As a clinical psychologist, he has a practice in Framingham, Massachusetts, and he does consulting at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry and School of Audiology. He writes regularly for the Hearing Loss Magazine for HLAA. He has written a number of books that many of us have read. And if you haven't, you might want to pick up on them, including *Listen With the Heart: On Relationships and Hearing Loss*, *The Odyssey of Hearing Loss: Tales of Triumph*, *Psychotherapy* and others.

I know he has been a presenter at both HLAA and ALDA in the past. While I haven't actually heard him speak, I have read some of his materials and have learned, have used things that I learned from his materials in my own work, working with clients on hearing loss. And it is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Harvey as our keynote speaker this afternoon.

(Applause)

**MIKE HARVEY:** It's indeed a pleasure to be here. Thank you very, very much.

I hate humidity, particularly Boston humidity. I don't mind heat, but Boston summers, unlike Rochester summers, are typically a package deal, hot, Hazy and humid. I met Paul on one of those days about five years ago. I was a bit cranky. To make matters worse, I had plans to go on a picnic the next day and it was going to rain. Nothing was going right.

But I managed a smile when I greeted him in the waiting room. Paul Smith is his real name, as he gave me permission to share this with you. He was 50 years old, and very depressed. Although he had been profoundly deaf in his right ear since birth, he manages quite well. He had been extraverted and a successful salesman. That is until ten years prior, when for some unknown reason he lost his hearing in his good ear.

He couldn't do sales anymore. He suffered from severe tinnitus, which he described as a high pitched whirring sound in his ear, and that internal noise robbed him of his sleep. He suffered from a host of pretty scary medical conditions as well. In his words he felt like "Throwing in the towel."

Almost immediately, I got a grip on my so-called problems and put them in perspective. He had much more to complain about than the weather.

Parenthetically, as we began to talk, he mentioned that he had been stuck in traffic on the way to our appointment. Initially I gave his complaint about traffic as much credence as my earlier lamentations about humidity, and I said something like: Yes, it's a bitch, isn't it? But he continued. He talked at some length about his anger and frustration in traffic jams, and with those stupid Boston drivers, et cetera, et cetera. He would beep his horn, feel his blood pressure rise, scream obscenities out of the window, but remain stuck. In fact, one of his goals for therapy had to do with controlling his anger while on the road. So for a bit of time we talked about anger management in the car.

Well, you know, from a non-psychological perspective, this makes absolutely no sense, right? One would ask: My God, you've lost your hearing, lost your job, lost your sleep, so why on earth are you talking about traffic jams?

However, from a psychological perspective, it makes tons of sense. For being stuck in traffic was a metaphor for how Paul felt about his life. I asked him what else makes him feel stuck and angry. "professionals who don't take my complaints seriously," he said. "People who aren't willing to repeat themselves, and being told by others that what I can't understand isn't important and isn't worth repeating."

He recounted several instances of being minimized by peers in an amateur photography club that he had recently joined. Perhaps some of this sounds familiar to you. Let me read you something that was sent to me by a sign language interpreter. "I met a deaf man my junior

year in high school and decided right then that Deaf culture and ASL were my passions. Ten years later, we were married and I became an interpreter.

In 1994, as the Americans with Disabilities Act got under way, I watched my husband get fired for requesting an interpreter for a training session. This was after working diligently and well for this employer for over four years. Then, the employer claimed that my husband had quit rather than being fired, so they wouldn't have to pay unemployment. The discrimination lawsuit my husband filed dragged on for three years and during this time I watched him change from an empowered Deaf man to a bitter, angry person consumed by the inequities of oppression."

Paul was also consumed by the inequities of how he was treated. In the psych literature this is sometimes referred to as "Secondary Trauma." You know, it's not so much one's disability, loss of hearing, that affects people, but it's also the insensitivity of others, the secondary trauma.

In Paul's case, he felt helpless and angry, like he was trapped in a traffic jam with nowhere to go and with others around him going on their merry way.

I'm reminded of a quotation by then Harvard University professor Cornel West, himself an African-American. In his words, "I waited and waited and waited. After the ninth taxi refused me, my blood began to boil. The tenth taxi refused me and stopped for a kind, well dressed, smiling female fellow citizen of European descent. As she stepped in the cab, she said: This is really ridiculous, isn't it?"

"Ugly racial memories of the past flashed through my head. Years ago, while driving from New York to teach at Williams College, I was stopped on fake charges of trafficking cocaine. When I told the police officer I was a professor of religion, he replied 'yeah, and I'm the flying nun, let's go, nigger.' Those memories cut like a merciless knife at my soul as I waited on that God forsaken corner."

Many people internalize the secondary trauma, the insensitivity of others, by irrationally assuming that they somehow deserve it. "Other people ignore me, therefore I must deserve to be ignored."

And the therapeutic task is to put the blame on others where it belongs, without blaming oneself. I will never forget Bill Russell. Some of you may have seen him. Bill Russell was a magnificent basketball player for the Boston Celtics. I'll never forget watching

him. He is a very tall sort of African-American man who just brought the Celtics victory every time.

During an interview he recalled what his mother used to tell him as a child before he would go out to play basketball in the driveway. "When I was five years old she would tell me," Bill said, "that people would walk by me and say mean things. But you need to remember that their words mean more about them than about you."

However, Paul didn't fall into that trap. He didn't deem himself as unworthy of people's courtesy and respect. He felt helpless and was pissed off. And as we explored those feelings further, his fear and his terror became more clear. The terror of being trapped or consumed by losses and of being victimized by the cruelty of others.

As he was talking, I thought of a letter a hard-of-hearing person once sent me. "Dear Dr. Harvey. I'm in my 60s, married and have two grown children. Although I parachuted from airplanes in the war and had other so-called challenges in my life, nothing can compare to the terror of feeling alone in a crowd after losing my hearing."

It's potent stuff.

So what does one do with this helplessness, anger and terror? What does one do with it? When Paul and I were discussing these feelings, I thought of the afternoon of 9/11. And every one of us can remember what we were doing that day, right? Every one of us.

After being glued to the TV, to that horrible video clip of the planes crashing into the World Trade Center all morning, I spent the rest of the day weeding my garden. I had not weeded my garden that much since and I probably never weeded it that much again. But on that day it got a full, full work out. It got my undivided attention.

Again, from a non-psychological perspective, this makes no sense. But psychologically, as I was kind of watching myself doing it, it made tons of sense, even while I was in the garden. It felt like one of the few things I could control in the midst of a world that felt very much out of control. It gave me strength to cope with the aftermath of that terrible day and it also resulted in better tomatoes and basil.

I asked Paul to tell me about his photography hobby. Paul told me that he bought his first real camera in 1980 and quickly became the family historian, photographing the holidays, birthdays, vacations, et cetera, like "normal people."

In that coincidentally, just before he completely lost all of his hearing, his interest in photography began to grow. He had planned a family vacation to the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone partially to introduce his son to the national parks and the great outdoors, and also to start taking some more serious scenic pictures.

But as it turned out, he couldn't take his family on that trip because he had to have ear surgery. So later on, he ended up taking the trip himself. And since then he has become a very serious photographer, regularly going on safaris across the country and has won many, many, many awards.

When Paul talked about his photography, he came alive. His eyes beamed. He sat forward in his chair. I saw a real animated, live person with tons of passion. He was no longer stuck in traffic.

So we met for several more sessions, off and on since about 2002, about five years. Among the lessons Paul has taught me—yes, it's true, therapists do learn from their clients, too—Paul has taught me about the importance of balance between going out in the big bad scary unpredictable world and enjoying some respite and so-called emotional refueling. a very, very, very important concept, emotional refueling.

Paul's passion and expertise in photography resulted in much more than great photos. It fed his soul. It emotionally refueled him, gave him enough emotional fuel to better tolerate the barriers he felt as a late-deafened adult.

A couple of years ago I suggested that he look through his thousands of photos that he has taken and I asked Paul to bring in one of his photos that represented to him how he felt as a late-deafened adult. The next week he brought in that photo. Several months later, he gave me that photo for Chanukah to hang on my wall. The title of that beautiful, beautiful photo is *Lost in the Fog*.

Look at that photo, *Lost in the Fog*. It's a very, very powerful photo, it's a very beautiful photo. And Paul said, what all of you I'm sure have noticed, in his words, "That is a beautiful tree, but isolated, all by itself."

I've got to tell you that's among the most special presents I have ever received. Mostly because it's from Paul's soul and also reflects his artistry. And I have it hung over my desk. Every day I look at it. And it inspires me. It inspires me even when I'm filling out those darn insurance forms, it inspires me when I'm doing my work, and it inspires me even when I'm playing Sudoku on my computer.

It also makes me sad. That photo also makes me very sad. During one of our meetings, I don't know if he noticed this or not, my mind was elsewhere for a few minutes. I wasn't paying attention. I was imagining that that photo had more trees, not just one. The nerve of me wanting to tamper with his art. I was thinking of sending him an anonymous email or something, just asking him to add at least one more tree to the photo. No. That wouldn't be good manners, and besides, he probably would have figured out who sent the email anyway.

But, you know, then my mind kept going. And as Paul was talking, I was having another fantasy. What if Paul came to ALDA? He had never been before. What if, just what if I was giving a speech to a bunch of people at ALDA about Paul, with his photo on the PowerPoint screen, and with Paul in the audience? What if we had salad as a first course, then Pasta, then Cordon Bleu and then the brownie? What if?

But it's obviously a crazy fantasy. Well, maybe it isn't. And some of you may be able to figure out where this is going. So let me just say so. Sometimes fantasies do come true. And I want to thank you, Paul, for the lessons that you have taught me. And for sharing this beautiful photo with me. Because it isn't just shared with me. When people come to my office, they typically say: My God, what a beautiful photo! And instead of saying yes, thank you. It is beautiful, isn't it? I tell them your story, as you know.

So your photo and your story has not only inspired me, but also serves as an inspiration to others who view it. So ladies and gentlemen, I have the honor and the pleasure of introducing To you Mr. Paul Smith.

(Applause)

**PAUL:** I want a refund on that session that you were day dreaming on.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

**MIKE HARVEY:** And let me ask for comments or questions directed to me or to Paul. We have some time.

**AUDIENCE:** Thank you. Thank you for sharing.

**AUDIENCE:** What does Paul think of his first conference so far?

**PAUL:** I'm actually amazed at the technology that is here. I'm amazed by the camaraderie and the support that you give each other. And I've

only been here for a short period today, but I've learned a few things. So, I commend you all for the organization and for what you're all doing to help each other out.

**AUDIENCE:** I know I was looking at the picture and I had a totally different perspective. Because I'm looking at it and I see the road and I see that you don't know what is at the end of the road.

**PAUL:** No one ever knows that.

**AUDIENCE:** Have you ever looked at it that way?

**PAUL:** Nobody ever knows what is at the end of the road. But thanks for noticing that.

**AUDIENCE:** Can we get copies of the picture?

**PAUL:** Dr. Harvey would be happy to send them to you. What do you want, 16 by 20s?

(Laughter)

If you send an e-mail to Dr. Harvey, I'd be happy to e-mail you a copy, anybody that is here. I presume everybody will know how to contact Dr. Harvey, so I'd be happy to share that image with everybody.

**MIKE HARVEY:** I'll just tell you my e-mail is:  
MHarvey2000@Comcast.net.

**PAUL:** If you don't get it now, I'm sure everybody organizing the conference will know how to get in touch with Dr. Harvey.

**AUDIENCE:** Where was the picture taken?

**PAUL:** That is in the Great Smokey Mountains, in an area known as Cade's Cove. There is a road there called Sparks Lean. It's a magical place in the spring and fall. You're almost guaranteed fog just about any morning.

**AUDIENCE:** What other kinds of photographs do you take?

**MIKE HARVEY:** What kind of photographs do you take?

**PAUL:** Beautiful photographs.  
(Laughter)

**AUDIENCE:** Nature, trees, people?

**PAUL:** Yes, yes, yes, yes.

It kind of really doesn't matter. As long as I have a camera in my hands, I'm a happy camper. But my main interest in photography is outdoor landscape photography. And it wasn't until a year or two ago that I realized that a disproportionate number of my images, this not being one of them, has water. About 70 or 80 percent of the images that I take have water.

I drove out here from Boston and I stopped and saw a friend Wednesday in Amsterdam, New York, and since then I've been out photographing waterfalls in the area and many more to go specifically in the Rochester area. And I'll be going off to Niagara Falls, which I have never been to before, and I lived in Boston all of my life. So I'm excited about that.

**AUDIENCE:** The reason I ask that question is because sometimes the kind of pictures you take has a spiritual connection. I take pictures of nature and flowers, because those things help my spiritual connection. So I was just wondering about yours.

**MIKE HARVEY:** She takes pictures and it helps her spiritual connection. And she is wondering if that is something that you experience as well.

**PAUL:** Ummmm, I don't know how to answer that. Photography does a lot of things for me. When I'm out in nature, I feel totally alive. I don't feel as though I have any handicaps or restrictions. I don't know, I—I never knew I had any artistic tendencies. When I was growing up I was always encouraged in the academics. I think I actually flunked finger painting in kindergarten.

But since I picked up a camera I found out that there is this great creative artist that has been hiding away for about 50 years. So I try not to question it. I have a very understanding family. Whenever the boss says I can go, I go. And I will particularly go for six, seven, eight weeks at a time, go camping. Get lost in the deserts of the Southwest and just do my photography.

**AUDIENCE:** This is a very beautiful picture. And I was just wondering if you have shows around the country. And if so, where have you had shows?

**PAUL:** Thank you for asking that. I'm active in the camera club community around Boston and in the suburbs. This past summer for the first time I was a presenter at the annual New England Camera Club

Council annual conference at UMASS Amherst. I did a slide show entitled *Beautiful America*.

At the second showing, a gentleman approached me afterward. He was a vice president in charge of programs for an organization called Photographic Society of America. And he asked me if I was interested in coming out to Portland, Oregon, next year, to do my show for them. I asked him was that a rhetorical question? Of course I'm interested. So I'll be there next August 31 and September 1 and that whole week.

**MIKE HARVEY:** Someone had a question way back there, yes?

**AUDIENCE:** Hi. How are you doing with your hearing loss? Do you feel you're coming out of the traffic jam?

**PAUL:** No. I got behind a real slow poke this morning coming over here. That hasn't changed at all, except I held my tongue. I didn't curse at her. But I can't repeat what I was thinking.

**AUDIENCE:** Mike, can you please repeat your email address? I'm not sure that we saw it correctly on the screen. Just do it one more time. Thank you.

MHARVEY2000@Comcast.net.

**PAUL:** Today, as an added bonus, I'll send you to a Web site that does have some of my slide shows on it, set to music. So you can see a lot more of the kind of work that I do.

**AUDIENCE:** Yes. Do you prefer black and white or color, and why?

**PAUL:** Mainly I'm a color guy, traditionally, historically. But over the last couple years I have taken a strong interest in black and white. And I do convert a lot of my work today to black and white from color, thanks to the technology available with digital cameras and computers and so on.

And some of my—I went to Yosemite two years ago and had a splendid week of rain, snow, fog, et cetera, and so on, every day. I had a different beautiful scene. And I typically email home pictures to a lot of my camera club buddies. And since 2005, my friends have called me Ansel Smith, after Ansel Adams, the famous landscape photographer who did a lot of black and white in Yosemite.

**MIKE HARVEY:** So thank you everybody.  
(Applause)

