

The Voice of ELSA

New series #1

Spring 1997

Magazine of the European League of Stuttering Associations

Welcome to the *Voice of ELSA* - we really hope you haven't been holding your breath since the last issue of our magazine ! It's two years since VoE last appeared, and I have now become Editor of the publication so that if we don't appear regularly in future, you'll know who to blame !

We do hope you will find that inside this edition there is plenty to interest you - sorry if the content seems a little dense but in order to keep costs down we aim to keep the number of pages as low as we can. As before, we ask that you copy VoE for distribution within your own association and country; naturally we are dependent on your co-operation in this, but hope you will agree that maintaining links and networking information between us can only be of benefit to us all. Stuttering self-help associations are welcome to publish extracts from VoE (for example in your national magazines and newsletters), but please acknowledge the source.

We hope you will contact us anyway; our ELSA meetings are unlikely to be possible more than once a year, and even that is subject to funding continuing to be available, so VoE provides a real opportunity to continue and develop our links between times.

Voice of ELSA can only flourish with your help, and essentially by receiving your news, your articles, your thoughts and opinions: please send your material for the next VoE as soon as possible. Our intention is to publish a further edition before the 1997 ELSA meeting in the autumn, and of course after this long gap it would be great to be able to produce VoE regularly and enable it to help stimulate an ongoing exchange of information between all member associations and individuals.

You can fax material to me (24 hours a day!) on +44 1227 711869, or leave a message anytime on the same number. I hope to hear from you soon. *Thanks to everyone who has sent material for this issue.*

- Tim Powell, VoE Editor.

Welcome to the board !

Since VoE last appeared, two new faces have joined Konrad Schäfers and Edwin Farr as ELSA officials, or "board members".

Alien Timans, from Maastricht in the Netherlands, is 25 and last summer completed her studies in French and German. Elected during the ELSA meeting in Fakse, Denmark in late 1995, Alien says she "hopes to bring useful ideas into ELSA, and to co-operate well with the other officials."

Anita Scharis Blom was born in the Netherlands but after meeting her Swedish husband, moved to Sweden in 1987. Anita, 32, has stuttered since she was 9; she says, "I was very proud to be elected as an ELSA official at the meeting in Köln, Germany last autumn. I am Secretary for the local chapter, and international contact for the Swedish Stutterers Association, SSR. I never felt better in my life, even though I stutter - now I just want to share that feeling."

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"Liberation of the stuttering energy"

Antero Tiilikka reports from Finland on the 1996 Nordic Stuttering Seminar

The Association of Finnish Stutterers arranged a seminar for stutterers from the Nordic countries in September 1996, over 3 days in the Solvalla Sport Centre near Helsinki. It has long been a custom to have a Nordic Stuttering Seminar annually in one of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

This time the seminar was concentrating on *Liberation of the stuttering energy; it's channeling and discharging*. The programme included papers about the causes of stuttering and of its behaviour, and also different workshops.

As the introduction, Ms. Maire Lempien - a well-known speech therapist in Finland who works at the Neurological Department of Helsinki University - presented a paper about behaviour of stuttering and brain functions. She pointed-out that it is only in recent years that research on neurology and stuttering have joined forces, with the result that we can now understand many connections between them. Stuttering can have neurological or psychogenic background. In the former case, stuttering is always connected with some defect in the motor centre of the brain, as can clearly be seen in *Parkinson's disease*. In the latter, however, feelings too are involved, because the nerve fibres from the cerebrum go through areas of the brain which are affected by feelings. This is demonstrated by the fact that psychogenic stuttering can disappear once and then return, which happens very seldom in case of neurological stuttering.

Dr. Mikael Grönroos, a physician on voice, speech and language disturbances (and a stutterer) presented a new theory of stuttering based on research of his own, and of Perkins, Kent, and Curlee presented in *Journal of Speech and Hearing*, in August 1991. Its essential idea is that in development of speech, an important factor is the integration of the linguistic content, segmental to the rhythmic, suprasegmental one of speech. The stuttering is suggested to have its origin when these two functions of speech do not synchronise with each other.

The third paper was presented by Mr. Daniel Nylund. His lecture was not directly connected with stuttering, but with the relations between *You and Me*, and with the rôle of honesty. A little child is honest with his or her wishes and needs, but, as s/he grows, learns that other people do not accept all of them. In this way, the child is losing its honesty. Every person has the right to have wishes and needs, and should be free to communicate about them to others, but of course they often cannot be fulfilled. Any connection with stuttering?

The first day of the seminar also included several workshops, including: *Freely Painting Your Energy, Rhythms, and Mime & Body Language*.

On Saturday, further workshops consisted of these themes: *All feelings are important, Find your voice by singing, and Opening one's energy by Moving, Breathing, & Voice*. At the end of the day, participants were offered the first performance of pantomime theatre *Cry from my innermost* by Markku Laitinen, which was met with sincere applause from the audience. Saturday evening was concluded by a sauna bath at the nearby lake, which for stutterers from outside Finland was surely something to remember for a long time. A special workshop focussed on *Tai chi*, which is of ancient Chinese origin.

Over 60 participants from all Nordic countries left Solvalla on Sunday for home, and the general feeling was that this seminar had been very successful and had featured many different views on the origins of stuttering and its behaviours. The participants were very grateful for all that to the head of the organising committee, Ms. Marja Launis, who had together with the other members been preparing for the seminar for more than a year in advance.

The next Nordic Stuttering Seminar will be arranged in Lillehammer, Norway, in summer 1997, and will include a presentation of Markku Laitinen's *Cry from my innermost*. ♦

Do you have some news of yourself or your national association, and want to write about it for the next edition of *Voice of ELSA (VoE)*? Great! Please write to: ELSA, Gereonswall 112, Köln, Germany. Or you can send it by fax (any time) to VoE editor Tim Powell on +44 1227 711869. (Tim's mail address: Owl House, 7 The Avenue, Hersden, CANTERBURY, Kent, CT3 4HL, U.K. Write soon!

I will not repeat this

a personal view from Des Cunnane, of the Irish Stammering Association

Prior to the Irish Stammering Association's "Open Day" last June I did a number of interviews for local radio stations. One interviewer focused on the stammering situation and the embarrassment experienced by both stammerer and listener: "Who," she asked, "has the greater responsibility to change? The stammerer or the listener?" The question continued to bother me for some time after the interview; it demanded a satisfactory answer.

The conclusions drawn, by a group of Irish employers, regarding stammerers who presented themselves for interview also bothers me and is, I feel, linked to the question above. The problem, they suggested, was not the stammer but the fact that the stammerers came across as being "tense, nervous and insecure." My instinct then was to protest: but, but, but ... surely? Did they not appreciate that shame and embarrassment are inextricably linked to stammering? The stammerer is stuck in a mess of sticky stammer. He cannot break free. Society judges him, not only by what he says but by how he says it. The stammerer is "tense, nervous, insecure" because s/he is the odd one out at the party, the native in exile.

But inspiration can be taken from those who have struggled and freed themselves from the stammerer's plight. I have chosen to briefly scan the lives of two such men from my own country; one living and one dead.

Proinsias de Rossa is our present Minister for Social Welfare, and a stammerer. He struggles on many of his words but is not "tense, nervous and insecure". He always maintains eye contact and makes his points clearly, despite his speech difficulties. Polls taken over the past year have shown him to be the most popular Minister in the Irish government. He would seem to be the living demonstration of John Updike's thesis: "people who talk too easily and comfortably, with too much happy rolling of the vowels and satisfied curling of the lips around the grammatical rhythms, rouse distrust in some atavistic, pre-speech part of ourselves; we turn-off. Whereas those who stutter win, in the painful pauses of their demonstration that speech isn't entirely natural, a respectful attention, a tender alertness. Words are, we are assured, precious."

Patrick Kavanagh did not stammer but he struggled with and resolved the stammerer's plight - that of being "not like another". His misfortune was to be born, a sensitive youth and a poet, into a small, close-knit community where a man's worth was judged by his skill at farming. Ironically, his delight in words and inclination to dig with the pen rather than the spade was what set him apart. He wrote: "A poet is never one of the people. He is detached, remote. And the life of small-time dances and talk about football would not be for him. He might take part, but he would not *belong* ... and as I grew up not exactly "like another" I was installed the fool." During these years he was bound by social opinion and the stammerer's fear of being laughed at.

But later he discovered the secret of survival - not to care. "It took me many years to learn and to re-learn not to care ... a man who cares is not the master."

"Forget the men on Brady's hill.
Forget what Brady's boy may say.
For destiny will not fulfill
Unless you let the harrow play."

After many years of struggle, Kavanagh found the inner freedom to express himself and his best poetry ensued. Rejecting his earlier, darker poetry he concluded: "All true poetry laughs inwardly out of grief-born intensity; tragedy is undeveloped comedy, not fully born."

Those of us who have lived most of our lives with a stammer know how difficult, lonely and alienating it can be. But the tragic perspective is a life-denying one, focusing only on darkness. It may leave us feeling "tense, nervous, insecure". The comic perspective is life-affirming. It knows the darkness but chooses to celebrate in spite of it. In the words of Kavanagh it frees us, ultimately, to "Praise, praise, praise, the way it happened, and the way it is." ❖

MARINA GRAPPA writes from Bologna, Italy: ...

"As regards the topic of employment for stammerers, I'd like to introduce a bill - stammerers (just like disabled people or those unemployed for a long time) should be able to be engaged with some small benefits to the employer. For example, the compulsory contributions from employers could be cut at least partially whatever the age of the person. We have to fight in order that we can be indemnified in this civilised society, as we are fighting also to get over our stammer." ❖

**"STUTTERING SELF-HELP AND THE SPEECH THERAPY
PROFESSION"**

Verena Mentzel reports on ELSA's Seminar in Köln, Germany 18-20 October, 1996

I am 22 years old and I have been a member of the German stutters association *Bundesvereinigung Stotterer-Selbsthilfe e.V. (BV)* for nearly 2 years. Since I got to know about ELSA at the World Congress in Linköping, Sweden in 1995 I always wanted to attend an ELSA meeting, but this was my first opportunity to do so.

Following the previous ELSA meeting (November, 1995) in Denmark, the 1996 meeting was arranged in Köln, Germany. Since I live quite close to Köln, I didn't want to miss such a meeting, which was practically just around the corner for me. The meeting was attended by 39 people, representing 16 countries. I was one of 8 representatives from Germany's association.

This year's seminar topic dealt with the relationship between self-help groups and speech therapists. There has always been a somewhat strained relationship between self-help groups and therapists since the self-help movement - which has been gaining ground in our societies since the early 1970s - and professional therapy have co-existed.

On the one hand self-help groups often tend to show reluctance towards co-operation with therapists because they have doubts towards therapeutic methods, and experiences have taught them to be sceptical about promises of a possible cure. On the other hand, speech professionals often criticise the efforts of self-help groups, for what they perceive as hindering the achievement of goals: for example not working at their symptoms, replacing the former social isolation of various members by an isolation of the group. Despite these problems, improvements in the relationship between both groups can be observed in a lot of countries; it is the aim of the different countries to help to further improve this by collaborating and thus promoting each other. The ELSA meeting has therefore been a good opportunity to address this topic.

After a report on ELSA's activities and an introduction of this year's seminar theme from the three co-chairs Edwin Farr (UK), Konrad Schäfers (Germany) and Allen Timans (Netherlands) on Friday, speakers and working groups started properly on Saturday. The rest of Friday evening was spent getting to know each other.

There were two speakers on Saturday: Jan Bouwen, a speech therapist from the Netherlands, and Åke Byström (a stuttering speech therapist) from Sweden gave presentations on the question: What do speech therapists expect from stutters self-help groups, and vice-versa? After each talk, working groups were formed to discuss different aspects from each talk, and to consider how to improve co-operation between the self-help movement and speech therapy.

To avoid prolonging my report, I won't give a detailed description on the results of the discussions, apart from the presentation of the actual relationship and the expectations amongst both groups, two goals were formulated as being the main objectives resulting from good co-operation between self-help groups and speech therapists:

- to get good information about stuttering
- the improvement of stutters' well-being.

Both groups can complement one another best by working out clear definitions of how to work together. Acknowledging and supporting the abilities and achievements of each other will bring the greatest benefit for stammering people.

On Saturday afternoon, the group was invited to visit the office of the BV where it's chair, Martin Harde from Hamburg, talked about *The work of the BV and it's co-operation with speech professionals*. After that, participants had time to visit the centre of Köln and the cathedral.

On Sunday, there was a final discussion on *The way ahead - how can self-help groups and speech professionals co-operate in the future?* With Konrad Schäfers stating his intention to stand down as co-chair of ELSA in a year's time, the meeting unanimously voted for Sweden's Anita Blom to join the Board as a new ELSA official, or co chair.

As in all international or European meetings, communication must have been an even greater challenge for the majority of the participants: apart from their stammering, most had also to deal with speaking a foreign language. But as always - at least, in all the seminars I have taken part in - this wasn't any problem at all. Acquaintances were easily made, experiences exchanged. And although I didn't expect to know many people except for a few German participants, I recognised quite a lot of

people who also attended the World Congress in Sweden in '95.

There was a great atmosphere during the whole meeting, and it was a great feeling to be part of it. Every representative contributed a lot of information about the self-help group in his/her country, as well as a lot of interest for the other organisations (I went home with a whole bunch of leaflets about ELSA and stuttering organisations of the different countries).

I'm very glad that I took part in this seminar and I'm sure that it hasn't been my last ELSA meeting. I would like to thank the organisers who made the meeting possible, and all the participants who have helped to make the seminar a great success. ❖

One of the nice aspects of the meeting in Köln was the return of some countries to the ELSA scene. One was Belgium; Carmen van Pul and Martine de Vloed sent this short piece:

"For both of us, this was the first time that we took part in such a weekend. The subject spoke to us and another challenge was that we could meet people from other associations. The association in Belgium is brand new, and during this weekend we got a lot of new ideas which we can realise in Belgium. It was a very instructive weekend. The speakers were very good and they had a very useful subject. Also, in the evenings we had a nice time together. Also we want to congratulate ELSA for the excellent organisation of the whole weekend. This was a first, but surely not our last weekend - we're looking forward to the next time. And to all of you, we'll hope to see you next year!"

Carmen & Martine ❖

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France is another country now happily reascent within ELSA after a fallow period. There are two active associations in France: AVB and APB. Both now take this opportunity to introduce themselves to readers of VoE.

OVERCOME STUTTERING ! Hubert Zeiger on a French initiative

Stuttering is a very complicated problem, which concerns about 600,000 people in France. Being aware of the little information available concerning stuttering in France, we created an association (in May '96) to promote the existing means to assist persons who stutter and to allow them to meet. Its means of action are information, through different ways, and meeting organisations.

The ASSOCIATION 'VAINCRE LE BÉGALEMENT/OVERCOME STUTTERING' (AVB) was created with the following goals:

- to gather persons who stutter together so they can talk about their problems and know that they are not unique with their handicap.
- to listen to these people and answer their need for communication by allowing them to participate in activities, in meetings, the exchange of experiences and participation in conferences or congresses on stuttering.
- to inform about existing methods in the world of helping stutterers and to disseminate information about research and of our connections in Europe.
- to advise and help - if the stutterer wishes - in the choice of a method enabling him/her to overcome stuttering.

• to collaborate on works and research carried out on stuttering, in particular with the *International Stuttering Association (ISA)* and the *European League Of Stuttering Associations (ELSA)*.

• to inform that there are methods, which are easily accessible, to help persons who stutter. Among them are the databases of AVB and ISA, available through the *Internet*, which provides to persons who stutter information about current research, publications, meetings and conferences

We would like to take the opportunity of this article to make a call to everybody: we are collecting information about everything done in the field of stuttering. We would therefore be most grateful to receive any information about your organisation or about organisations you know of in the field. Thank you in advance for your kind collaboration in sending us any of these documents. We are sure that it will be of help to many people.

We look forward to your response. ♦

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STRASBOURG, FRANCE.

In this leading article from the December 1996 newsletter of *Association Parole-Bégaiement (APB)*, APB Secretary General **Anne Marie Simon** introduces the other French stuttering association.

The association APB was officially born in March 1992. At that time, we were dreaming of a foundation which would gather enough goodwill to improve the deplorable situation - I mean regarding therapeutic possibilities or social image - concerning people who stammer in France. We had thought gathering stammering people and professionals for one common work was certainly attempting the impossible, but this could specifically help us to overcome the intra-professional tensions and, above all, to progress in the knowledge of this problem, helping to remove the silence and shame felt by numerous suffering people.

Nowadays, APB has 300 members, 57% practitioners and 42% people concerned about stammering. We notice growth in parents of children who stammer, either joining or receiving information from APB. The numbers of practitioners or stammerers has not risen above 50% since facts about prevention were sent to clinicians. Numerous speech therapists have joined recently. It is difficult, because of joining/re-joining dates of members, to know exactly the movement during previous years. Today, 635 people have subscribed at least once since APB was started. Let us salute 51 members who have been loyal since 1992, most of them engaged in the board of directors, different working parties, or as provincial correspondants.

It will take some years to reach the position where a foundation can be created. Nevertheless, this aim remains very strong because the credit of a foundation - moral or financial - will alone be able to cover the many fields where work is needed: administration files, information, prevention, training for therapists, reimbursing medical expenses, vocational integration.

Little by little, APB is realising its aims, but as a young organisation with beginner volunteers, we are finding problems with time, finance, and sometimes with divergent points of view of the different member categories. The work of recruiting members is parallel to publicity produced by our actions. We gained 10 new members in September '94 after one published article in *L'Orthophoniste* (the speech therapist), organ of the speech therapists national federation. We thank them for this publicity. Recruiting stammering people or their families is much harder than informing practitioners. We hope that the prevention campaign in the schools will help information to reach the general public more.

Demand is often expressed for APB to train therapists, but we can't do this. Probably this was behind the non-renewal of some practitioners, who account for 65% of non renewals. Actually, belonging to an association has to mean more than receiving the fruits of the work of a little number of active members. People concerned by stammering find, *de facto*, an interest in our association's life. But therapists, in the midst of this, have to find other reasons to work than their own direct professional interest, or be accused by some members of 'taking advantage!'. Examples could include: participating at certain working groups (prevention, vocational integration etc.), writing for the newsletter, taking interest in the Documentation Centre to enrich it - there is a lot to do!

The call for help to each member is still more insistent than in our first days! Write your

reactions, your internal movements, phone, E-mail, come and work with us ! ❖

ASSOCIATION PAROLE-BÉGAIEMENT, BÂTIMENT PHARMACIE, LABORATOIRE DE RECHERCHE, SUR
LE LANGAGE / INSERM, HÔPITAL DE LA SALPÊTRIÈRE, F-75013, PARIS, FRANCE.

APB's Jean-Paul Palisser contributes a personal experience:

CHALLENGE: SELLING

When I was a child, I was unable to say one word without stammering. Now, I am a civil servant about to reach retirement. I have fluent speech and when, from time to time, I stammer - I do not care. I do not focus my energy, my thought, on the words I have to say but on what I have to tell.

One day, when I was aged 24, I saw an announcement in a local newspaper for a representative. I do not know why, but I decided at once to ask for the job ! The boss accepted me and I wanted to be the best seller. Now, I may tell you I thought I was not the only crazy man on Earth, but I was definitively happy.

Can you imagine my stress just the day before the first "DAY" ? Actually, it was easy to repeat the same words several times, the same arguments, and I was on a kind of "cloud". I was in another body with another personality. Day by day, I was becoming increasingly confident and I sold very well. I improved the number of customers. I slept in hotels and ate at restaurants every day.

I stopped selling because I preferred to have a sedentary job and a good family life, but I was so proud ! Anyway, speaking is really a pleasure at this point - I am a talkative person. ❖

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY, FORENINGEN FOR STAMMERE
I DANMARK !!"

Per Fabach Knudsen tells us of a happy anniversary

The Danish Association for Stutterers recently celebrated their 25 years anniversary with a conference for around 100 people. The conference theme was *A life with stuttering*; one parent and five stutterers gave a 20-minute presentation about different periods of life: to be parents for a child who stutters; stuttering in school; stuttering and adolescents; stuttering and the choice of education/job; stuttering and employment; and stuttering and marriage. Afterwards there was a presentation about *Myths, prejudices and ignorance about stuttering* followed by discussion among a panel of 6 people from a wide range of society. The conference was extremely successful: all the participants (speech therapists, stutterers, parents of stutterers, politicians etc.) were very pleased with the arrangement, also because so many new angles of the problem were touched upon. ❖

Per works at the Stuttering Information Centre of Denmark:
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Playing golf and speaking

by Åke Byström

Lately I came across some articles on the analogy of playing golf and speaking (with a stutter): "Shaking from 135 yards" by Steve Hood Ph.D (*Letting Go*, 1996); and three articles from Australia - "Can stuttering be controlled?" (Winston Purdy), "Reply from John" (John Swancy) and "Reply from Woody" (Woody Starkweather Ph.D) - all from *Speaking Free*.

I've taken a great interest in this field of thinking since 1991, and I've been looking for people who would be pleased to join me in my efforts to fully understand the similarities between speaking and playing golf.

The first person to write in this field, to my notice, was John C. Harrison, in *Letting Go* (in late 1980s/early 1990s). Reading his article made me contact John, and we started to exchange ideas about speaking and how to conquer your fears when speaking in front of an audience. We found that we shared many of the same thoughts.

I tried to interest more people to participate in a golf tournament at the 3rd International Convention of People Who Stutter, at San Francisco in 1992. But I wasn't too successful - there turned-out to be just the two of us, John and myself. And my Speaking/Golf programme ideas did not convince John as much as I wished. For me, the result was that I did not manage to make myself understood, or interest stuttering golfers in this promising opening to effectively practice good speech in tandem with good golf.

I made another unsuccessful attempt at the subsequent 4th International Convention, in Linköping, Sweden, in 1995. I felt the problem was that I could not make myself understood. What is my point? It's like this.

I think I know what it takes to become a professional in both speaking and playing golf - despite the handicap of stuttering. The reason is that I happen to be a professional speech teacher who also knows a little about playing golf.

But to be able to show the relationship between speech training and golf training, I need to co-operate with a golf professional who also knows a little about stuttering. Therefore, I would like to make a general call for stuttering golfers and golf professionals in particular. I think now is the right time for a golf tournament/seminar where we could discuss the corresponding aspects of speaking and playing golf **doing and learning**. I know I have some interesting points to share with you that you can't afford to miss!

I am 57 and soon I will retire from my teaching position at Linköping University. The Speech Academy of Sweden can carry on my speech skills and language knowledge, but none of them can play golf! So what I can show you about *The better you speak the less you will stutter* will have to feature a special aspect on speech practice programmes that infuse them with a "fun-filled" feeling. I hope this will attract you, and challenge your practicing in a very exciting way. I know how to do it - I have tried it; but I need your help to demonstrate it, in order to make myself understood.

Perhaps the third time, in South Africa in 1998, will become a step forward in the direction of a *Speak better golf and play better speech* programme. I'm writing these lines, planning for a workshop at the 5th International Convention of People Who Stutter. I'm hoping to meet you golfing stutterers in South Africa in 1998.

You're welcome to join me in a workshop - doing & learning - in golf and speech with a fun-filled feeling! ♦

Åke Byström, Lillgårdsgatan 27, 35 LINKÖPING, Sweden. ☎/fax +46 13 16 15 21

News from Austria During 1996, the Austrian self-help movement's financial problems enlarged (writes Hans Kröpf), but we were happy to find Ingrid and Renate, who work voluntarily in our office. Concerning public relations, we spoke on TV and radio; we organised new therapy courses and some weekend seminars. For 1997, our main project is to publish a therapy guide for Austria, listing speech therapists and how they work. Register self-help meetings in Austria don't work the way they should - perhaps we can get some tips from other countries, to refresh us. ♦

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ISOLATION

a personal view from DAVID PREECE

Why did British Stammering Association (BSA) trustee David Preece wait 55 years to make his first trip outside of the U.K. ? Surely not because he stutters ... ? Read on

Usually, when writing stuttering articles, I'm quite methodical. I'll produce two or three drafts, keep to the theme and include a personal angle which (hopefully) other stutters will find interesting. With isolation, though, playing such a large part in my life it seems important just to write it, get the emotions down on paper and live it, as it was in the past for me and how it is now.

I never found it easy to make contact with most people or even events going on around me. I'd usually show complete indifference and remain aloof from everyone and everything if I could. Most situations would defeat me: at school I was shy, quiet and would retreat into reading any book that was to hand, rather than confront my speech. Language, though, in literature always interested and inspired at school; little else seemed important. Lost in a fictional world of characters (none of whom I remember stuttering !) was a great comfort and I became somewhat of an introverted loner.

Our school buildings were grouped around a communal sports field and, though the classrooms were segregated by gender, we all shared the playing field. During that time the boys formed friendships with the girls across the field seemingly with ease; except for me, hampered by a stutter that I couldn't control and embarrassment that I couldn't contemplate, even if I ever did summon up the courage to make contact. I could only admire, wish and sigh from my self-imposed solitary silence; an early example of my isolation.

Much, much later, as a happily-married man with two adult sons and with years of speech therapy experience behind me, I often wonder why I didn't make more of an effort - not only with the opposite sex but with everything else in my life.

It is only in recent times, with the confidence that therapy and maturity brings, that my speech is under reasonable control and I am able to be more outward-going than I ever was. No situation really holds any fear now and I just enjoy life as much as I am able. My involvement with the BSA has helped me greatly in meeting new people over the last eleven years at conferences, Open Days and other events and the same feelings of friendship and optimism surfaced again during the autumn '96 ELSA seminar on self-help held in Köln, Germany. This was my first trip outside of the U.K. (how about that for 55 years of isolation !!)

The Köln experience was very special and I revelled in the enjoyment of the occasion. The delegates came from all parts of Europe, and were very welcoming to this newcomer in ELSA affairs. They all, despite some severe stuttering, made light of their problems and communicated naturally, not in some forced, determined way that some stutters adopt. No-one seemed isolated or even seemed to have experienced that condition. Yet, at some stage, all of them undoubtedly had. It was encouraging that many of them were young in years, yet experienced in ways of making themselves known to others in a manner I could only envy and wish that I had had those natural skills at their age.

This showed very clearly to me that no stuttermen need be afraid of communicating with anyone ! There must come a point when we are no longer prepared to sit on the side-lines of life and watch silently. We need to take part, to express our opinions, to voice our feelings with non-stutterers and stutters alike. I had realised that and had been doing it long before the trip to Köln, but it was so encouraging to see others from all over Europe making contact so effortlessly and not being conscious of isolation at all. Long may I remember that lesson in human contact !! ❖

Editor's note: since his ground-breaking trip to Germany for the ELSA meeting, David has also travelled to France and Ireland - clearly, there's no stopping him now !

Stuttering self-help: a psychotherapeutic approach

Developing stuttering self-help in "new" countries has always been a core aim for ELSA. In recent years, the activity from Lithuania's "Stuttering Problem Club" (LSPC) has been a heartening demonstration of this. This article - specially translated and presented for VoE by Inga Romanova - is an extract from issue #2 of *Centras*, newspaper of the Youth Psychological Aid Centre (YPAC) under which the LSPC operates.

The following notions were presented in the diploma paper for bachelor's degree of Audronė Macijauskaitė and Audrius Matukas, entitled *The effectiveness of psychotherapeutic seminar for stutterers*, under the guidance of Dr. R. Kočiūnas and Dr. K. O. Polukordienė.

"It is widely held that stuttering is only a speech problem, but that is not true - stuttering is a problem of speech and communication. That's why psychotherapy can help the stutterer to a large extent.

Nowadays it is not precisely conceived why stuttering occurs. Stuttering is a multi-factoral problem, the emergence of which can be caused by various reasons - biological, psychological and social.

The stutter contributes to personal and communication problems like the fear of speaking, fixation on speech, reservation. One can suppose that often it is not a stutter *per se* that causes problems, but fear of communicating caused by a stutter and the lack of communicative abilities.

Summarizing the data found in scientific literature and observed in practice, it appears that pharmacological and logopedic impact alone cannot solve the problem of stuttering. Psychotherapeutic impact (especially if carried-out in a group) covers more aspects of the stuttering problem, allows deeper and wider comprehension of the relation between a person and the stutter, and helps to better understand other personal communicating difficulties.

It is estimated that following combined psychotherapy (when different individual and group methods are applied):

- intensity and frequency of stuttering lowers significantly,
- personal human abilities strengthen,
- the level of anxiety decreases,
- the person becomes more active, more communicative.

YPAC has been holding 40 hours duration seminars *Speech & communicating* for 4 years. Main initiators of these seminars are the members of LSPC, established in 1992. The programme for these seminars was compiled by Dr. K. O. Polukordienė. During the seminar participants spend all day, for 5 days a week, taking part in various psychotherapeutic groups on:

- developing communicative skills,
- art therapy,
- self-help,
- psychophysical relaxation,
- rôle-playing games, etc.

A logopedic group is also held, and participants can have an individual session provided by professionals. The authors of this paper carried-out a research of effectiveness of one such seminar. Their conclusions were:

- ① After the intensive psychotherapeutic treatment the stutterers' attitude to the stutter changed statistically significantly, specifically:
 - negative attitude towards the stutter declined (so that the fear of speaking decreased too),
 - acceptance of a stutter increased (meaning that a contact with personal stuttering improved - it would be easier to "talk" with and overcome it).
- ② Stutterers' self-esteem and appreciation of their communicative abilities improved statistically significantly. Level of personal anxiety decreased.
- ③ Participants became more free from stuttering, began to understand personal difficulties.

⊕ This seminar, *Speech & communicating*, is an effective pattern of psychotherapeutic treatment model, which can be recommended to apply in practice.⊕

This work and the results obtained inspire LSPC to continue organising such series of treatment. The only obstacle to this is financing it. A lot of specialists are involved in this work. The real costs amount to Lit2000 (U.S. \$500) - in fact, the seminar can be attended free of charge at present, because of the low income of the population, especially young people. Adding the accommodation in Vilnius during the seminar (which is covered by the participant), the cost exceeds the ability to pay. Up to now the seminars have been financed by YPAC (fees to the specialists and organisational work) and by Vilnius Clinical Psychotherapeutic Centre (premises, part of the specialists). But this is not easy to do or maintain. Now we have to think how to ensure the financing to continue this work. ❖

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The Lithuanian Stuttering Problem Club

(This information taken from a sheet distributed at the ELSA meeting, Köln, 10/1996)

Since 1992, the LSPC in Vilnius has provided the only centre for stutterer self-help in Lithuania. It unites all the people who are interested in and who deal with the problem of stuttering: stutterers, psychologists, logopedists. The members of the club gather together once every 2 or 3 months. They also work in the self-help group.

Generally the group meets for 1½ hours every last Friday of each month. The fear to speak, feelings that we don't dare to exchange with other people, searching for the ways which would lead to a freer and more fluent speaking - this is what appears again and again like the main problem of stuttering.

Olga Novosiolova, a student of psychology from Vilnius University and a member of LSPC made an opinion poll among the self-help group members about how important these groups are. Her conclusions were:

① Usually 6/7 persons take part in a self-help group. The main reason why they don't want to participate in the group is their lack of time. 33% of those questioned would take part in these groups more frequently if they lived nearer Vilnius. A possible solution to this problem is to found similar groups in the other regions of Lithuania.

② 96% don't doubt the usefulness and advantages of self-help group because:

- most problems can only be solved in this way & new solutions may be found (34%)
- co-operation in the group enables exchange of opinions on some problems (19%)
- the group encourages them to be sure of themselves (12%)

③ They often don't take part in discussion because:

- they "are not sure if what they have to say is really important" (44%)
- they are unable to overcome fear of speaking. Stuttering is for them a big obstacle to communication with other people

- the problem discussed was not important for them (13%)

④ Main problems of stutterers mentioned:

- employment • socialising with people of other sex • the control of speaking.

We hope you will get an impression about the work and problems of our group. We would be pleased if you could share your experiences with us. Please contact:

Mikšiojimo problemų klubas/Lithuanian Stuttering Problem Club
Rasy 20 2014 Vilnius Lithuania ☎ (370-2) 614715 fax (370-2) 614739

UNITED NATIONS STANDARD RULES ON EQUALISATION OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Anita Blom gave an important introduction to this UN standard at the ELSA seminar in Köln. The rules cover all aspects of a disabled person's life and show how social, political and legal changes can enable disabled people to become full and equal citizens of their countries - all UN member states have signed the rules! For detailed information sheets, please contact the ELSA office.

The neurosis of stuttering - an alternative view
on the problem of dysfluent speech

During a summer meeting of the Polish association of People who Stutter (PAPS) in Darłówko in 1996, Krzysztof Szamburski (University of Warsaw) organised a therapy based on treating stuttering as a neurosis. Many PAPS members took part in this therapy and it found it a very interesting experience.

The etiology of stuttering has never been satisfactorily explained. This study is an attempt at treating stuttering as a neurosis. For the stuttering neurosis to occur there have to be a whole series of circumstances. An individual experiences an emotional conflict, s/he has a pre-disposition to stuttering and a situation arises leading to disfluency. Symptoms of stuttering are in such an understanding the symptoms of a neurosis and their task is to protect their subject from the effects of an experienced internal conflict expressed in anxiety. The reduction of anxiety is a powerful reinforcement and entrenches the symptoms. This is followed by generalisation, which means that the symptoms occur in ever newer situations which are accompanied by negative emotions. A secondary anxiety arises, which causes a rise in communication problems and in the subject's daily life. The stuttering neurosis, which at its onset played an adaptive rôle for the reduction of anxiety, becomes a source of an increasing lack of adaptation. ♦

News from PAPS by Andrzej Wojtowicz.....

The Cracow section of PAPS organises meetings every Monday at the "J" club in Cracow. Other sections of PAPS organise from one to four meetings a month. Apart from Monday's meetings, we try to make some occasional meetings and parties, for example St. Andrew's Party in November, and one month later the festive Christmas Eve with beautiful Polish carols. At the end of the year many of our members took part in a 5-day mountain trip. During this short holiday we greeted the New Year. The Cracow "J" club has been successfully existing for 10 years, so in January we had a special club party.

At the suggestion of the "J" club of Toruń we created a data base of people who have connections with PAPS, have private access to Internet and want to correspond using the net. Now there is only about 15 people in the database, but we hope that in a short time this will increase. We are now using the Internet to communicate and we publish a newspaper (first issue 12/1996).

Our e-mail address: PZJ@ULTRIX.UCI.AGH.EDU.PL ♦

.....and Anna Cholewa

PAPS has been run for over 8 years now. We currently have about 300 stutterers as full members, and this figure is increased by innumerable well-wishers.

We meet on 8/21 Dniejowskiego Street every Monday about 5 p.m. Sometimes we meet even more often: We have two groups:

- ♦ the regular older members, who have been active for a few years,
- ♦ a team of children aged 9-13.

As part of the therapy, our friend Lucyna Jankowska who is a psychologist (Editor's note: Lucyna is an old friend of ELSA's, too!) has various exercises with the group. Additionally, the therapy is held a few times each year out of Cracow: during excursions in mountains, congresses, summer and winter therapy camps which are available for a wide group of stutterers from the whole of Poland.

Our sympathisers are generally stutterers' friends. When they come to a meeting or a party, they become so familiar with our environment that they even start to stutter a little - it might sound incredible, but it's true! ♦