

Musings from the TV Room



By Denise Portis

Denise Portis talks about using the telecoil in her hearing aid to watch and hear TV. What a surprise she was in for when she switched it on!

Denise Portis has had a hearing loss since age six as a result of a car accident. She is a graduate of Tennessee Temple University and is currently a stay-at-home mom to Kyrsten and Christopher. She says she enjoys this "job" more than any other position she has ever held. Denise is a big supporter of SHHH as she recently started a chapter in Frederick, Maryland, and is married to SHHH Executive Director Terry Portis.

If you would like more information about chapter meetings in Maryland or any state, visit the chapter page at www.hearingloss.org.

I had a personal loop system hooked up in my living room this week. My husband set the loop under "my" chair and attached it to the television. At first I was skeptical, because I have relied on closed captioning for a number of years now.

I was amazed at what I could hear!

I use the T-switch (telecoil or T-coil) on my hearing aid often. Sometimes I use it with my FM system at meetings, and sometimes when the room has an audio loop. (Although that is rare and a completely separate topic!). However, I have never used the T-switch with a personal loop system to watch TV. My preconceived notion was that I would only hear amplification of the voices.

The first thing I just had to watch was *The Fellowship of the Ring* on DVD. As a *Lord of the Rings* fan, I dismally sat through four different trips to the theater when it first came out in attempts to "hear." (My family shares my passion for Tolkien so luckily they enjoyed coming with me four times.). I couldn't wait for it to be released on video/DVD so that I could really "hear" through closed captioning!

After enjoying the captioned version at home, I thought I had experienced this movie to its fullest...NOT! I almost jumped out of my chair when I heard ole Gollum's voice for the first time. (Jumping out of your chair in fright renders the aforementioned personal loop ineffective!) My children at first were tickled at "the things Mom was actually hearing."

I'd pause the movie often to ask, "What was THAT?...That noise right here?...What was THAT?????"

Their prompt reply was: "That's the noise the horses make when their hooves hit the ground, Mom!"

Another ten minutes pass, and again I pause the movie, "Oh my gosh! What is that SOUND? What is that???"

Again, their reply: "Mom, that is the sound of leaves crunching when their boots hit the ground as they walk through the forest!"

At this point they were sitting on the edge of their seats! What sounds will Mom hear next? I noticed out of the corner of my eye that they kept poking each other and smiling as I literally sat there with my mouth hanging open!

In another five minutes, "Oh geeesh! What is THAT? What is that SOUND?"

Now, this one took a minute or two for the kids to rewind, review, and figure out what I was hearing. Then, they announced, "That is the wind whipping through the trees!"

New-Found Hearing in the TV Room

I could continue, but suffice it to say that I spent many minutes crying my eyes out for what I was hearing! My family couldn't figure out if I was thrilled or upset! I heard noises in this movie that I had forgotten about. I had forgotten that footsteps would stomp, stomp, stomp up the stairs of an old tavern. Too long it had been since I heard the water from a small stream as it tumbled over the rocks.

So, I sat there — crying and laughing, pausing and questioning. I enjoyed a movie with my family, and enjoyed it using my hearing. (The kids? Well they were getting a little tired of all the pausing! Who could blame them?)

My husband, just as excited, did all the sound checks: "Is it working okay? Can I adjust the volume? What are you hearing that you haven't heard before?" (Grin. Talk about individual attention!)

I fear my housework may suffer, and perhaps we'll be living on take-out pizza for a while. After all, I have a whole shelf of movies to "hear" again!