We Sing That They Shall Speak
How Mr. George Shields and barbershop singing are leaving their mark on Speech-Language Pathology in Ontario

By Ayla Alcorn, OT9 and Amanda Indovina, 1T3

Special thanks to Mr. George Shields for agreeing to be interviewed for this article.

If you graduated from U of T’s Speech-Language Pathology program within the last 30 years, you will likely be familiar with a man named George Shields.

You may recall George presenting an entrance scholarship on behalf of the Harmonize for Speech Fund at the very start of your program. Or giving each member of your first-year class a new textbook. Or serenading you with his barbershop quartet at your graduation reception. Perhaps during your working years, you’ve seen Mr. Shields throwing the first pitch at a baseball game in support of the Hanen Centre. Or making gingerbread men with children at the Toronto District School Board.

George Shields is well-known and beloved by current students and alumni alike. However, many are unaware of the extensive support he and the Barbershop Society as a whole have offered speech-language pathology-related causes in North America. The impact this support has had on our field is significant.

Formally known as the “Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc.” (SPEBSQSA for short), the Barbershop Society was founded by two men in 1938 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The aim was to perpetuate the American tradition of quartet singing, but also to give back through charitable service projects. Around the same time, a nonprofit institution called the Institute of Logopedics was serving hundreds of children with speech and hearing disorders in Wichita, Kansas (formerly referred to as “Speech Town, USA”). The Institute of Logopedics eventually gained the attention of SPEBSQSA leadership, and in 1964 became the Barbershop Society’s official fundraising project. A speech therapy centre seemed to suit the Barbershop Society, who were struck by the way music could play a therapeutic role in communicating with patients.

As a young man in Toronto, George Shields was a member of a local church choir that was eventually asked to provide more secular music. Mr. Shields formed a quartet and discovered his love of singing barbershop songs. In 1950, Mr. Shields helped to found the East York chapter of the SPEBSQSA. He was nominated as Vice-President of the chapter, progressed to Ontario District President, and eventually became a member of the International Board. For some time the Ontario chapter continued to provide funding support to the Institute of Logopedics in order to help people receive live-in treatment for communication impairments. Eventually, however, the decision was made to move financial support to similar centres in Ontario and in 1977 the Harmonize For Speech Fund was born.

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Since its inception, The Harmonize For Speech Fund has raised over $5 million for various institutions across Ontario. What many would be surprised to learn is how instrumental Harmonize For Speech has been in the development of many cherished institutions around the GTA. The Speech and Stuttering Institute (formerly the Speech Foundation of Ontario), for example, may not be what it is today if not for the Barbershop Society’s support toward its initial building. The Aphasia Institute, the Harmonize for Speech Clinic Room within the University of Toronto, and the London Speech & Language Centre have also benefited from the fund. In addition to ongoing support for S-LP students at U of T, Harmonize For Speech also provides funds for other S-LP programs in Ontario, projects and seminars with OSLA and SAC, summer camps for children with communication disorders, aphasia camps for adults, support for the two CDA programs in Ontario, and a scholarship for the music therapy program at Wilfrid Laurier University - to name just a few of their current beneficiaries.

While the other North American districts have shifted the focus of their charitable service, the Ontario district of the Barbershop Society has maintained their dedication to supporting those with communication impairments. When asked about this ongoing commitment to the cause, Mr. Shields says that as singers, the thought of having no voice is simply unimaginable. The song “We Sing That They Shall Speak” (written, composed, and arranged by the late Clarence Burgess of the Oshawa chapter) provided the motto that was once adopted by the entire Barbershop Society. Today, it is unique to Ontario and Harmonize for Speech.

The Harmonize for Speech Fund is run completely through volunteers, and as such, has been able to maintain an admirably low overhead cost of 3% per year. While donations have decreased in recent years, the Barbershoppers continue to raise money through their website (harmonize4speech.org), performances, and other events.

Being a U of T alumnus himself (after having graduated from a special business certificate course for WWII veterans with the class of 4T6), Mr. Shields will be eligible for his 70-year medal in 2016. Now in his 90th year, he continues to serve as founding chairman on the board of trustees for Harmonize for Speech. You can still catch him performing with the East York Barbershoppers at events such as the annual U of T S-LP graduation reception or the East York chapter’s upcoming 65th Anniversary Show on May 23rd (https://www.eybs.ca/event-227-65th-anniversary-show). After 38 years, George continues to tirelessly support a cause near and dear to his heart – using the power of song so that others may speak.

If you have ideas for stories you’d like to see in the newsletter or just want to let us know what you think of it, email us at slp.alumni@utoronto.ca We’d love to hear from you!

Mr. Shields’ many letters of recognition and honourary certificates.
ON NOVEMBER 6, 2014 the Distinguished Service Award was presented to Dr. Judy Seligman-Wine, (6T5), at the Annual Awards and Recognition Breakfast. Dr. Seligman-Wine has worked in AAC for over forty years and continues to work as a lecturer and consultant. She also has her own clinic where she provides AAC intervention for young children and their families. The Alumni Association is pleased to share Dr. Seligman-Wine’s acceptance speech with our readers:

My undergraduate degree is a four year B.A. in anthropology at U. of T. When I completed my degree I received a scholarship to do a Master’s degree in anthropology. One day two of my professors called me into the office and told me that they did not think I was suited to work out in the field like Margaret Mead and they thought I should study Speech Pathology, a field that combined my interests in Physical Anthropology and Linguistics. I went home and thought about it, listened to them, and this coming Spring I will mark 50 years as a Speech Language Pathologist. It has been a long, great road.

I started my career as a research assistant for Dr. Bruce Quarrington, a psychologist who did research with beginning stutterers. On many occasions he would send me off to enter his data into the University computer which was then a huge machine which occupied the whole second floor of one of the buildings on campus. The data was punched into long, rectangular cards – 0 and 1 – and if I dared drop the bundle or mix up the cards, hours and hours of work was lost!

For some reason, with great audacity, I became the president of OSHA (now OSLA) when I had been working about six years. At the same time I decided to change jobs and went to work at what was then the Ontario Crippled Children’s Hospital (OCCC), now Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. Ruth Gannon, my classmate and partner in crime in all our practicums, was head of the department. One day she asked me to go to a meeting with a team of people on staff who were looking for a communication solution for a group of children at the center who were non-speaking. I went, reluctantly; we started to use Blissymbols on communication displays with these children with great success and we met other professionals from other centers who were also looking for children who were unable to express themselves through speech. This was the very beginning – the birth – of the field of AAC.

And much of it happened here in Toronto.

I left my job in 1973 and headed out to explore the world. I spent time in Israel, met my husband David, and stayed; I am the mother of 4 and the grandmother of 7 with another one on the way. I spent time in Israel, met my husband David, and stayed; I am the mother of 4 and the grandmother of 7 with another one on the way. I left my job in 1973 and headed out to explore the world. I spent time in Israel, met my husband David, and stayed; I am the mother of 4 and the grandmother of 7 with another one on the way. I was lucky to be in the right places at the right time. I was one of the founders of ISAAC, the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication, served on its Executive Committee, and was Chair of its Board of Directors for a 2 year period. I founded the Israeli chapter of ISAAC, ISAAC-ISRAEL. I have worked in the field of AAC for over 40 years.

Involvement in this field has forced me to keep up with new developments in technology – I am the coolest grandma on the block – the first to have had an iPad! While AAC is a relatively young area of interest within the field of speech pathology, I feel with a passion our responsibility to those of our clients, whether they be child or adult, whether their difficulty be congenital or acquired, to provide them with tools to communicate, thus enabling them to be participating members of our society.

I want to thank the committee who selected me for this prestigious award – for reminding me how much I enjoy being an S-LP and doing what I do. I want to thank my very close friend and colleague Penny Parnes for nominating me and providing me with this opportunity to return to my starting ground after all these years. I also want to thank my husband, David Wine, who passed away several years ago, for all the practical and moral support he gave me which enabled me to travel, study, teach, and work, and my children who learned how to make communication displays at a very young age – it was our family evening activity – no computers then! I still work as a lecturer and a consultant; in recent years I have specialized in working with children with Rett syndrome. I have my own clinic in which I provide AAC intervention for young children and their families. I love what I do and I feel lucky to be able to say – after 50 years – I love being an S-LP. Thank you!
Year One Report

By Mayzelle Parawan, 1T6 and Izabo Deschênes, 1T6

September started off with fun Welcome Week activities such as visiting Toronto’s Centre Island, attending a Blue Jays game, and singing karaoke! Peers in 2nd year were introduced and have been helpful ever since.

Eventually, grad school got hectic as assignments and exam dates were assigned.

Ilna, Jenny, Pascal, Jo, and Catriona (our professors) made our first semester of learning a challenging yet exciting experience.

Matching up with schoolwork never stopped us from having fun. Happiness at 500 University Ave. came in the form of potlucks and hair-braiding sessions.

Life’s Speechie is a “Shake It Off” parody music video we created for hair-braiding sessions.

The program has definitely been stimulating and challenging! Let’s be real, it’s hard to believe that almost two years have gone by since we all stepped inside 500 University Avenue for our very first class as speech-language pathology students. As we sat in room 420, many of us anxiously wondered what the professors would be like, whether this program would be challenging, and if we would become friends with the person sitting beside us.

As it turned out, the professors were enthusiastic and inspiring! Each was unique in their teaching style, which truly helped to bring the content to life. A few of our many memorable moments include constructing artistic forms quickly became a familiar term to us all as we conducted our first ever assessment with preschool clients.

Guest lecturers shared their knowledge and expertise on topics ranging from autism spectrum disorder to voice therapy!

 nit 1 provided us with fundamental background knowledge in Anatomy, Audiology, Speech Physiology, Principles of Clinical Practice, and Child Language.

A miniature 500 University Ave. gingerbread building was constructed for our holiday potluck.

Gifts and thank you cards were given to our professors as tokens of our gratitude for their time and energy.

Even though January was bitterly cold, room 420 remained warm and cozy as S-LP students reunited for Unit 2.

Placement sites were announced. Students were excited to rank their preferences!

Articulation class sharpened our International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcription skills.

The Mindfulness Meditation workshops gave us a mid-day break to relax and unwind.

Hats, gloves, and winter sports equipment were packed for a First Year Winter Trip at Cedar Ridge Camp.

Opera and Night at the Royal Ontario Museum are events we attended to loosen-up when life got too busy.

Longevity, dedication, and eagerness to learn are essential traits one must have to succeed in the program.

Our courses in Fluency and Child Language II will guide us in our placements.

Grad school fosters an environment for growth and professional development.

Year 1 is almost done and we had a ton of fun, but we are excited and looking forward to the future because we know that the best is yet to come!

Year Two Report

By Jaspal Brar, 1T5 and Heather Jurchuk, 1T5

It’s hard to believe that almost two years have gone by since we all stepped inside 500 University Avenue for our very first class as speech-language pathology students. As we sat in room 420, many of us anxiously wondered what the professors would be like, whether this program would be challenging, and if we would become friends with the person sitting beside us.

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S-LP Research Stream Update

We are excited to announce that, in September 2015, the S-LP research stream will be joining the newly established Rehabilitation Science Institute (RSI), formerly the Graduate Department of Rehabilitation Sciences (GDRS). This merger will facilitate administration and student funding. We look forward to promoting research in speech-language pathology across disciplines and with different stakeholders.
In Our Field

Practice, Practice, Practice. That's What Placements Are For!

By Amy Dhindsa, 1T4

IN OUR PROFESSION, AS IN OTHER MEDICAL STREAMS, it is essential to practice putting our theoretical knowledge to work in order to truly learn. The University of Toronto’s S-LP program supports students by devoting about half of their time to clinical placements. Twice a year, a hundred students step out into the working world to put into practice what they’ve learned in classes.

The system seems to ‘just work’ but in fact there is a continuous, coordinated effort by key players that helps placement experiences work for everyone involved. These key players are students, clinical education coordinators, clinical educators on sites, and more broadly speaking, clinical sites, the S-LP faculty, and the university. While the majority of sites are within the Greater Toronto Area, many are in other parts of Ontario (e.g., Peterborough, Thunder Bay), Canada (e.g., Montreal, Edmonton), and international locations (e.g., Philippines, Kenya, Trinidad). The types of sites range from treatment centres to school boards, from private settings to hospitals, from specialty clinics to camps.

Each of these sites needs to be found, nurtured, and mentored. This is the work of clinical education coordinators, Jenny Wadds, Susan Wagner, and Lynn Ellwood. In addition to cultivating clinical education sites, there is considerable legal, site-specific, and departmental work that goes into making these sites a part of the university’s placement network. Much work has gone into creating guidelines for who can be a clinical educator and developing course outlines for what students should accomplish from week to week during their placement time. It is the clinical education coordinators who bridge the worlds of placement site and student needs.

What do the clinical educators at the many placement sites say about their experiences? Every clinical educator says that taking on a student is challenging and rewarding. It takes time to bring students up to speed. The other side of that coin, accord-
Tell us about the first 150 days in office as Department Head.

I started in July, which is a fairly good time to start as chair because most of the institutional meetings begin in September. I wouldn’t say it was a very smooth transition, because my calendar went from being busy to super busy. It wasn’t too overwhelming, but certainly there were a couple of situations where things got hectic and kept me on my toes. Overall I must say it was a very good experience.

What is a day in the life of an S-LP Departmental Head like?

My day starts roughly around 7am and it ends around 6pm in the evening. I start with checking all my emails, because I work with colleagues in different time zones, so people send emails when they are awake and we are still sleeping. After that, meetings start to happen around 8:30 am and go on for most of the day - sometimes 3-4 per day. As chair, you sit on many committees, within the department and also outside the department. I also have to work on projects that relate to my lab such as reviewing manuscripts and my colleagues to continue fostering a strong reputation of our department and help attract the best students and faculty in the future.

What do you like most about the job?

I like the fact that I can help shape the future of the department and work with very intelligent people - students, faculty, and colleagues across the institution. I also enjoy having more involvement in the administration of the institution. As a faculty member, you do some of that, but you don’t always get the details or the complexities of the organization. Being a chair, you also notice how embedded this institution is in society and how this influences our working through policies and regulations that exist outside the university.

What is your vision for the program or what do you wish to achieve as head of the department?

I think we have a very strong program. We have an excellent reputation, both nationally and internationally, but I think there’s always room for improvement. Our research stream students will move to the newly established Rehabilitations Sciences Institute. This change provides opportunities, but it is also a challenge. We will still be very much involved in research and doing work that is relevant for advancing our knowledge and informing our clinical practice. I also hope that our students in the clinical Master’s program get more exposure to some of the research we are doing in the labs, as evidence-based practice is so important. Finally, I hope with my colleagues to continue fostering a strong reputation of our department and help attract the best students and faculty in the future.

What do you like to do in your spare time, when you are off-duty as Departmental Head?

I must admit I don’t really have a lot of hobbies. I drive a motorcycle in the summer, not as often as I’d like, but when the sun’s out, I try to be on the road! I used to be very interested in photography, but I simply don’t have the time. I also have two grownup daughters who I see regularly which I enjoy very much.

What’s new in the department that alumni may not know about?

At this point, I guess the biggest news is that we are currently working on creating a joint position between Holland-Bloorview and our department. This person will be connected to both institutions and that will bring a strong link between the clinical side in pediatric rehabilitation of communication disorders and our department. We hope this person will teach our clinical Master’s students and attract future PhD students to become involved in his/her research. It’s a great opportunity for both our institutions and will help us as a department to build more capacity at Holland-Bloorview.

In an ideal world, what does the relationship between alumni and the department look like? How can they stay connected?

Well I think it’s important for us as a department to continue to reach out to our alumni and for the alumni to know that we are there to support them and that we rely on their support to grow the department, to make it strong, and to support our students. So, we consider this relationship to be extremely valuable and we appreciate all their hard work. We actually have a very good alumni association in our department. They are volunteers so they have limited time, but it’s a very enthusiastic group. As a department we are very proud of them.

ALUMNI EXECUTIVE 2014–15

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Mayzelle Parawan, 1T6
Izabo Deschênes, 1T6

Newsletter layout by Steven Janovsky
THE ALS ICE BUCKET CHALLENGE WENT VIRAL on social media in the summer of 2014 and in doing so, raised considerable awareness of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis or ALS. While just a fun stunt for some, this challenge raised millions of dollars for ALS-related charities and undeniably increased the public’s awareness of this disease. Many chose to participate, and get behind this cause as was evident by the over one million videos posted on social media. Many videos showed people dumping a bucket of ice cold water on their heads, while calling out others to donate to ALS research or complete the challenge. I too participated by dumping a bucket of ice water on my head and donating to support this great cause.

Following this momentum, a movie depicting the life of Dr. Stephen Hawking was released called The Theory of Everything. This touching movie tells the story of Dr. Hawking’s journey through life with the symptoms of this disease.

With all the focus on ALS in the past year, the S-LP Alumni Association has chosen to profile related research taking place in the Speech-Language Pathology Department at the University of Toronto. I caught up with Sanjana Shellikeri, a PhD student in Dr. Yunusova’s Speech Production Lab, and asked about her current ALS research.

Briefly, what is ALS and its impact on speech?
ALS is the most common degenerative motor neuron disease. It results in muscle weakness, atrophy, and fasciculations, eventually leading to paralysis. Disease effects are also seen in speech musculature, resulting in a loss of communicative abilities. Patients with ALS exhibit smaller and slower speech movements, leading to a reduction in speaking rate and a loss of speech intelligibility.

How did you decide to study ALS in Dr. Yunusova’s Speech Production Lab?
I met Dr. Yunusova through my mother, who was diagnosed with ALS in 2010. I was a recent undergraduate in Neuroscience and was very interested in contributing to the medical field. Although I didn’t have much knowledge in S-LP, I was drawn to the idea of research in a disease that was so close to my heart. After meeting Dr. Yunusova and learning about her work, I knew this line of research would be a great fit for me.

In 2014, the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge went viral. What were your thoughts about this challenge and did you or someone you know participate in the challenge? What impact do you think the Ice Bucket Challenge had on the public’s awareness of ALS?
I remember hearing about the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge while I was on vacation in Summer 2014. I was extremely optimistic that people would finally be aware of this horrible disease and its consequences. Many people criticized the merit of this Challenge, saying it was just a popularity gimmick among teens and wouldn’t directly contribute to the awareness of the disease. However, I strongly disagree. I find that after this Challenge went viral, people became much more familiar with ALS and some people even went further to do their own Google searches on the topic. Even if people didn’t donate as per the rules of the Challenge, it was still a wonderful way to get people talking about the disease.

I, myself, didn’t participate in the challenge, however a lot of my family and friends from all over the world did. Because the people close to me already knew a little about ALS, they made it a point to donate even if they completed the challenge. Many of my friends and family dedicated the challenge to my mom, who was ecstatic to see the extent to which ALS was in the limelight.

Can you tell us about your ALS research?
My PhD work focuses on examining the neuroanatomical correlates of Bulbar ALS. Bulbar ALS is a form of ALS that affects the muscles of speech and swallowing function. It has a heterogeneous presentation that is not well characterized. Currently, very little is known about how the structural changes in the brain are associated with the bulbar motor disorder. By establishing this relation, we are hoping to gain a better understanding of the neural degeneration associated with Bulbar ALS. Ultimately, we hope the work contributes to optimizing the identification and monitoring of bulbar disease in a clinical setting. For my project, I will be using neuroimaging techniques (i.e., MRI scans), as well as examining brain specimens post-mortem, of patients with Bulbar ALS and associating the observed structural changes in the brain with speech profiles.

What is the most exciting thing about working on your current project?
The most exciting thing about working on this project is being exposed to cutting-edge technology and using diverse techniques to investigate research questions. The thrill is also in working towards a real-world impact.

A special thanks to Sanjana for sharing her ALS research with us. We look forward to learning more in the near future!
COGNITIVE-COMMUNICATION:
SKILLS FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

--- FEATURING ---

Sheila McDonald – M.Cl.Sc S-LP Reg. CASLPO
Sheila McDonald & Associates
Guelph, ON

Dr. Gary Turner – Ph.D C.Psych
York University
Toronto, ON

When “mild” is not mild: management of subtle but significant cognitive-communication difficulties following concussion and other acquired brain injuries.


Spring Reunion 2015
An Evening of Jazz, Drinks and Appetizers
By Amanda Indovina, 1T3

At this year’s annual Spring Reunion, the University of Toronto celebrates alumni who graduated in years ending in 5 or 0. To coincide with this event, the S-LP Alumni Association is launching its second annual spring social mixer for U of T S-LP alumni and guests. Tickets include appetizers, drinks, and live jazz. It will be a night filled with good entertainment and the opportunity to mingle with friends and colleagues - old and new. The S-LP Alumni Association celebrates our –T5 and –T0 graduates and also welcome all other previous alumni to the jazz event. The Alumni Association looks forward to seeing you at this event and future social events! Stay tuned for more information about next year’s social mixer. Our social committee would love to hear from you! If you have feedback about this event or have ideas for next year’s event, please contact us at slp.alumni@utoronto.ca.

Are you hosting a reunion event? If you and your fellow alumni host reunions, or would like to arrange a reunion event, we would love to hear from you! The S-LP Alumni Association invites UofT Alumni reunion groups to contact us. We would be interested in working together on future events. Please contact us at slp.alumni@utoronto.ca, or on our facebook page, U of T S-LP Alumni at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/295282260212/.