

*Notes for a speech I gave at the  
Midwestern ASHA Convention*

*They gave me  
a standing ovation  
because I talked so  
long I suppose*

AS I LOOK AT THIS VAST AUDIENCE OF MY FELLOW WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD, I CANNOT HELP BUT WONDER WHY YOU ARE HERE. BANGED AND BUFFETED BY THE NOISE OF THOUSANDS OF SPEECH PATHOLOGISTS ALL TALKING AT ONCE, SATED AND SHEPHEITED BY TOO MUCH INFORMATION THRUST UPON YOU IN TOO SHORT A TIME, SURELY THE WISER COURSE WOULD HAVE BEEN TO STAY IN BED - HOPEFULLY YOUR OWN.

SURELY BY NOW YOU HAVE LEARNED WHAT ALL OF US WHO CONSTANTLY DEAL WITH PEOPLE IN TROUBLE MUST LEARN - THAT ENOUGH IS ENOUGH AND THAT WE MUST PROGRAM INTO OUR LIVES SOME ESCAPE AND PRIVACY. IN AN ANCIENT AND WISE BOOK IT TELLS ABOUT THE LOVELY VALLEY OF EPHRAIM WHERE ONE CAN GO TO RESTORE ONES SOUL. SURELY BY NOW, AS THIS CONVENTION COMES TO A CLOSE, YOU NEED AN EPHRAIM MORE THAN YOU NEED TO LISTEN TO A STUTTERER TALKING ABOUT STUTTERING.

YET YOU ARE HERE - AND GOD HELP ME, SO AM I, FAR, FAR AWAY FROM MY OWN EPHRAIM, THE DEEP FOREST WHERE I GO TO CLEANSE MYSELF SO THAT AGAIN YEAR AFTER YEAR I CAN SERVE THE TROUBLED SOULS WHO FEED UPON MY FAILING STRENGTH AND DRINK FROM MY SMALL CUP OF TIME SO THAT THEY CAN SHARE THE HUMAN HERITAGE OF SPEAKING FREELY. SO BE IT. SOMEHOW I MUST SERVE YOU AS I HAVE SERVED THEM AND THUS AT THIS MOMENT OF CONFRONTATION I ASK MYSE AGAIN THE OLD QUESTION I HAVE ASKED AT THE BEGINNING OF A THOUSAND THERAPY SESSIONS: WHAT IS IT THAT YOU NEED FROM ME?

DO YOU COME HERE THIS MORNING BECAUSE YOU FEEL YOU DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THE STUTTERING. WELL, NEITHER DO I. DO YOU COME BECAUSE YOU HAVE TRIED AND FAILED TO HELP SOME YOUR CLIENTS WHO STUTTERED. I TOO HAVE TRIED VALIANTLY AND FAILED WITH SOME OF MINE. ~~BEYOND~~ SURELY YOU DO NOT HOPE THAT I MIGHT PULLER THE STUFFED RABBIT OF A NEW STUTTERING CURE OUT OF MY THERAPEUTIC HAT AND SHOUT, AS OTHERS HAVE DONE, EUREKA. HERE IT IS. I HAVE THE SECRET. IF SO, I SHALL DISAPPOINT YOU. I AM NOT THE MAGICAL MONARCH OF MOO. THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF STUTTERING IS FULL OF SUCH CLAIMS BUT THE STUTTERER IS WITH US STILL - USUALLY AS STILL AS POSSIBLE. I HAVE HELPED A LOT OF PEOPLE TO BECOME FLUENT BUT I HAVE CERTAINLY NOT FOUND THE CURE FOR STUTTERING.

IF I DISCERN YOUR NEED CORRECTLY, IT IS THAT YOU FEEL SOMEWHAT CONFUSED AND LOST IN THE FOREST OF STUTTERING. THERE ARE SO MANY THEORIES, SO MANY CONFLICTING RESEARCHES, SO MANY CLAIMS AND COUNTERCLAIMS OF SUCCESS THROUGH THE USE OF THERAPEUTIC PROCEDURES THAT OFTEN SEEM DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER. BEING LOST, YOU SEEK A GUIDE, PREFERABLY ONE WHO HAS SPENT HIS LIFE IN THAT FOREST AND WHO IS NOT HIMSELF LOST, ONE WHO HAS BLAZED A CRUDE TRAIL.

I AM A CHILD OF THE FOREST.

NOT JUST WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHICH WAY TO GO OR I. I KNOW THAT YOU ARE TRULY LOST WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU ARE BUT WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'VE BEEN. OFTEN IT IS WISE TO BACK TRACK A BIT TO GAIN A SENSE OF DIRECTION BEFORE PLUNGING ONWARD OR CIRCLING IN THE SAME SWAMP. OR BEWAILING ONE'S LOT.

SO LET ME US TURN AROUND AND LOOK BACKWARD A PIECE TO SEE HOW STUTTERING WAS UNDERSTOOD AND TREATED BY YOUR PREDECESSORS WHO WERE EVEN MORE LOST THAN YOU.

TWENTY

~~WHAT WAS IT LIKE~~

WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE A STUTTERER IN THE FIRST THIRTY YEARS OF THIS CENTURY? WELL, IT WASN'T PLEASANT. IN THAT ERA, ~~EVERYONE~~ THERE WERE FEW SERVICES AVAILABLE TO ANY OF THE HANDICAPPED. THE CRIPPLED WERE MOCKED. THE DEAF WERE JOKED ABOUT. THE CEREBRAL PALSID, MENTALLY RETARDED AND EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED WERE HIDDEN IN THE BACK ROOMS OR PUT IN ASYLUMS. NOT UNTIL AFTER WORLD WAR I DID THE REHABILITATION MOVEMENT GAIN ANY STEAM. WIDESPREAD IGNORANCE, INTOLERANCE, AND CRUELTY WERE EVERYWHERE. THE STUTTERER, EVEN MORE THAN THESE OTHERS, SUFFERED PROFOUND REJECTION, BECAUSE OF CERTAIN BELIEFS AND STEREOTYPES.

LET ME LIST SOME OF THESE BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES AND ILLUSTRATE THEM WITH SOME ANECDOTAGE:

STUTTERING IS A PERVERSION. NOT JUST A HABIT, BUT A DIRTY HABIT \* AKIN TO MASTURBATING IN PUBLIC. IT WAS EVIDENCE OF SINFUL THOUGHTS OF EVIL FEELINGS.

When I was a little boy, complete strangers would slap me across the face if I stuttered before them. They did so to break me from my bad habit. Don't you dare stutter. Stop that! ~~They~~. Shame on you! THEY TOLD ME I HAD SINNED, THAT I SHOULD PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS FOR MY EVIL THOUGHTS. THEY TOLD ME TO PRAY HARD. OR I'D NEVER BE ABLE TO TALK. So I did. (Church tale here)

STUTTERING IS A NEUROLOGICAL SPASM. A verbal epilepsy or chorea. ~~IT~~ THE SPASMODIC BEHAVIOR, CONTORTIONS, JERKS ARE CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT YOU ARE HAVING SOME KIND OF A FIT. Or that you're CRAZY.

I was doped with bromides. Put to bed. Forbidden to take part in strenuous activities or sports. Once, after a very severe bout of struggling and jerking to get some word out, an old Finlander caught me, held me tight and put a stick between my teeth so I wouldn't bit my tongue off, he said. Another time much later, when I asked a cab driver to take me to a certain hotel, he took me to a psychiatric hospital instead, thinking I was having a grand mal seizure.

STUTTERING IS A VERBAL PHOBIA, AN IRRATIONAL FEAR OF SPEAKING. "ITS ALL IN YOUR HEAD" THEY TOLD ME. CONVINCING YOURSELF THAT YOU DON'T NEED TO STUTTER. ( Slogans; self suggestion; Coue. Stammering institutes. DISTRACT YOURSELF. TOUCH YOUR FINGERS. LOOK ALTERNATELY AT THEIR EYES AND EARS AND NOSE AND MOUTH. COUNT TO SEVENTEEN. SAY I CAN I CAN! (Figure eight.) Swift's visualization method. NOTHING WRONG WITH YOU. ITS ALL IN YOUR HEAD.

STUTTERING IS A DISORDER OF THINKING, OF FORMULATION. THINK WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO SAY BEFORE YOU SPEAK. REHEARSE IT OVER AND OVER AGAIN. YOU'RE TRYING TO TALK FASTER THAN YOU CAN THINK. TALK SLOWLY. STOP AND START OVER AGAIN. FEEL YOUR PULSE AND SAY YOUR WORDS IN TIME TO IT. SAY ONE WORD ON A BREATH. WRITE OUT WHAT YOU ARE TO SAY BEFORE YOU SAY IT. MEMORIZE, MEMORIZE, MEMORIZE.

STUTTERING IS DUE TO NERVOUSNESS. YOU'RE TOO TENSE, TOO EMOTIONAL. YOU'RE TOO NERVOUS (WHATEVER THAT MEANT) STRANGERS, THOSE WHO WERE KINDER, ADMINISHED ME TO CALM DOWN NOW, DAMMIT! TOLD ME TO RELAX AND TAKE IT EASY, SON. NOW WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU TRYING TO SAY? SPIT IT OUT! SPIT IT OUT!

Picture one of the many relaxation sessions at one of the institutes that we attended. We had one every hour or so for ten minutes. Teacher on a stool intoning.

Hypnotic relaxation.

Hindu relaxation.

Jacobson's methods.

STUTTERING IS DUE TO A LACK OF WILL POWER. YOU DON'T HAVE TO STUTTER. JUST MAKE UP YOUR MIND THAT YOU WON'T. BUILD UP YOUR MENTAL STRENGTH! BUILD UP YOUR CHARACTER. BREAK EVERY BAD HABIT THAT YOU POSSESS, NO SMOKING. NO COFFEE OR SWEETS. COLD SHOWERS THREE TIMES A DAY. GO WITHOUT EATING UNTIL NOON. GO WITHOUT SLEEP. DO MENTAL MULTIPLICATION. THINK POSITIVELY. CHANT TO YOURSELF: I WILL, I WILL. I can speak.

( Speak deliberately, voluntarily, very consciously. Don't ever lose your self control. Tale of Aly Ezzat.)

STUTTERING IS DUE TO THE LACK OF A SENSE OF RHYTHM. STUTTERERS NEVER STUTTER WHEN THEY SING. ( Unfortunately, I did.) YOU HAVE BROKEN RHYTHMS IN YOUR SPEECH. ACCORDINGLY, WE SPENT HOURS PRACTICING SPEAKING WHILE WALKING OR MARCHING, WHILE USING DUMBBELLS, METRONOMES, PACERS OF ALL KINDS, TALKING IN UNISON, ECHOING, SINGING.

(At one of the institutes, we practiced armswinging, finger pinching. Tale of the swimming pool)

STUTTERING IS DUE TO SHYNESS. YOU LACK CONFIDENCE IN YOURSELF AND THAT'S WHY YOU STUTTER. THEY EXHORTED US TO BE ASSERTIVE, TO USE A LOUDER VOICE AND EMPHATIC INFLECTIONS. WE SPENT HOURS SHOUTING NOT ONLY TO EACH OTHER BUT TO OURSELVES. GET MAD. FIGHT. USE BIG GESTURES. Hand supine, hand prone and the ictus. (Ruth Wedarik.) POSTURE THERAPY.

THERE WERE MANY OTHER SUCH BELIEFS.

YOUR TONGUE IS TOO WEAK. TONGUE EXERCISES. PEBBLES IN MOUTH.

YOU DON'T BREATHE RIGHT. BREATHING EXERCISES. THE SIGH PRINCIPLE.

YOU'RE THROAT IS TOO TIGHT. ( HOW I GOT MY HEAD JERK)

we

If ~~one~~ looks dispassionately at this motley array of therapeutic techniques, we find throughout a common theme - the way to cure the stutterer is to have him PRACTICE SPEAKING NORMALLY. THE EMPHASIS WAS ON PUNISHING STUTTERING AND REWARDING FLUENT SPEECH.

THE IDEA THAT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO MODIFY AND SHAPE THE STUTTERING BEHAVIORS SO AS TO MINIMIZE ABNORMALITY AND ENABLE THE STUTTERER TO BE FLUENT EVEN THOUGH HE DID STUTTER did not appear until the 1930's.

## BIRTH

WITH THE ~~COMING~~ OF OUR PROFESSION OF SPEECH PATHOLOGY, IN 1931), THINGS BEGAN TO CHANGE, THOUGH VERY SLOWLY, AND INDEED MANY OF THESE OLD BELIEFS AND METHODS ARE FOUND TODAY NOT ONLY IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD BUT IN OUR OWN COUNTRY.

BUT LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THAT BIRTH. I WAS THERE. At that first convention. I WAS THERE AS A SEVERE STUTTERER BECAUSE I HAD HEARD THAT THERE WOULD BE A SYMPOSIUM ON STUTTERING AND ALL THE MAIN AUTHORITIES WOULD PRESENT PAPERS ON THE SUBJECT.

The contrast between that convention and this one may be apparent when I tell you that only about 100 people attended. There were speech teachers (ELOCUTIONISTS), singing teachers, psychologists and physicians. Smiley Blanton, Swift, West, Bleumel, Robbins, Kenyon and others each got up in turn and speaking WITH THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY, told us their THEORIES of the nature of Stuttering, outlined their methods briefly, and then told of their CURES. Each ONE WAS IMPRESSIVE AND PERSUASIVE AND SINCERE AS HELL but to a stutterer like me WHO HAD UNDERGONE MOST OF THEIR THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMS IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER, they were talking nonsense. WITH EACH SPEAKER I BECAME MORE AND MORE DEPRESSED. I DIDN'T GIVE A DAMN WHAT THESE GREAT AUTHORITIES' OPINIONS WERE. I DIDN'T BELIEVE THEIR CLAIMS OF CURES. MY HOPES EBBED.

And then, up strode Lee Edward Travis to the platform, young, virile dapper. HE MADE NO CLAIMS. HE DID NOT TRY TO SELL US ON ANYTHING. HE DID NOT EXHORT US TO BELIEVE IN HIM. Instead, he quietly and calmly outlined his cerebral dominance theory, said it was just a hypothesis, said that it explained perhaps why the stutterer's speech was broken, and described some of the research that seemed to support that hypothesis. HE THEN DESCRIBED A TREATMENT BASED UPON THAT HYPOTHESIS AND OUTLINED SOME OF THE TESTING THAT STILL NEEDED TO BE DONE. ABOVE ALL, HE INSISTED THAT WE HAD A LOT OF RESEARCH STILL TO BE DONE AND THAT ANY TREATMENT SHOULD BE BASED UPON THAT RESEARCH. AND NOT ON AUTHORITATIVE OPINION.

TO ME TRAVIS'S PRESENTATION CAME AS A SHAFT OF LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS. I WAS SKEPTICAL OF HIS NOVEL THEORY BUT IT WAS COHERENT AT LEAST. BUT I WAS MOST IMPRESSED BY HIS HUNGER FOR THE TRUTH ABOUT STUTTERING AND HIS WILLINGNESS TO TEST HIS ASSUMPTIONS AND BELIEFS. BACK THEN NOONE DID ANY RESEARCH ON STUTTERING. NO ONE EVEN THOUGHT OF DOING ANY. YOU JUST GOT A STUTTERER AND USING ANY TRICKS AT YOUR DISPOSAL YOU SOUGHT TO EVOKE SOME FLUENT SPEECH. TRAVIS' APPROACH WAS NEW.

I FELT MUCH AS I DID WITH ARNO AND ARNE, TWO FINNS WHO HAD PROMISED TO TAKE ME TO A HIDDEN LAKE IN THE GREAT FOREST BY THE HURON MOUNTAINS WHERE LUNKER TROUT WERE SAID TO BE PLENTIFUL. (Etc.) Tale about them)

SO I WENT TO IOWA. AN EXCITING PLACE. HOT ON THE TRAIL OF THE NATURE OF STUTTERING. EXPERIMENTATION OF ALL SORTS ALL THE TIME. WE WERE EXPERIMENTAL ANIMALS BUT ALSO EXPLORERS. VERY LITTLE THERAPY. TOLD TO SHIFT OUR HANDEDNESS, TO DO VOLUNTARY STUTTERING RATHER THAN INVOLUNTARY STUTTERING. I HAD NO CLINICIAN. GROUP MEETINGS WHERE WE RECOUNTED OUR DISCOVERIES. TALKING AND WRITING.

Bryngelson, Jasper, Don Linsley, Herren, Steer, Milisen, John Bleedner, Johnson  
HYPOTHESIZE, CHALLENGE, TEST. DRUGS, BRAIN WAVES, EMGS, BREATHING, PUPILS

THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE - Formulate, challenge, and test - SOON LED US TO REBEL AGAINST THE STRICTURES AND METHODS OF THE CEREBRAL DOMINANCE THEORY. We were trained to doubt everything, to seek the truth, to hunt for exceptions.

So it was that JOHNSON and I threw off our casts and began using our right hands again. And He and I, though friends, began to investigate the psychology of stuttering, knowing from our own mouths that and our own histories, that much of stuttering involved distorted perceptions and that much of our stuttering consisted of learned responses to the expectancy of stuttering or its occurrence. THAT IT WASN'T JUST NEUROLOGICAL SPASM DUE TO CONFLICTS IN THE PROGRAMMING OF MOTOR IMPULSES AT THE CORTICAL LEVELS.

I REMEMBER WELL THE INTENSE CRITICISM I ENCOUNTERED AT A MEETING OF THIS ASSOCIATION IN 1936 WHEN I PROPOSED THAT THE BIG BULK OF STUTTERING CONSISTED OF LEARNED AVOIDANCE, POSTPONEMENT, STARTING AND RELEASE BEHAVIORS. THEY SAID THAT I WAS NAIVE, THAT STUTTERING WAS A NEUROLOGICAL PAROXYSM. THEY SAID I WAS BLIND NOT TO REALIZE THAT IT WAS JUST ANOTHER NEUROSIS. THEY STOOD UP AT THE END OF THAT MEETING AND SURE GAVE ME HELL.

NOW BRIEFLY, LET ME SKETCH THE MAIN COURSE OF THE THINKING AND THERAPY REGARDING STUTTERING DURING THE FORTIES, FIFTIES AND SIXTIES.

Despite the experimentation at Iwa and elsewhere, the main theme of during the thirties was MENTAL HYGIENE and PSYCHOTHERAPY.

IN THE FORTIES, DUE TO THE INFLUENCE OF JACOBSON AT CHICAGO, THE BASIC METHODS WERE THOSE OF RELAXATION AS EVIDENCED BY FOGERTY, GIFFORD, HAHN.

IN THE FIFTIES, SEMANTIC THERAPY BECAME DOMINANT. THOUGH OTHER POINTS OF VIEW COMPETED THERESWITH.

IN THE SIXTIES, WHAT IS NOW CALLED TRADITIONAL THERAPY, SEEMED TO BE THE MAJOR TREND. THE MODIFICATION OF STUTTERING BEHAVIORS. Behavior modification and operant conditioning and servo therapy began to get prominent.