



Jane Biehl, Ph.D., is an HCAA member from North Canton, Ohio, and teaches at Stark State College. Before that she was a librarian for 19 years. She recalls her first job interview in 1974 for the position. She was asked how she could be a librarian with a hearing loss, and be able to work with children. As Jane says, "That question would not even be legal today!"

Dr. Biehl and her hearing dog, Sita, have a website at www.sitaandjane.com.

Mickey Mouse and Yogi Bear

Some things you just don't understand until you get a little older, or, get hearing aids. The author shares a childhood memory of baseball and hearing loss.

No one knew I had a hearing loss. In 1954 children weren't tested for hearing loss like they are today. I thought everyone "heard" the way I did. My mother didn't understand why I pulled her face down in the crib to desperately catch what she was saying. Apparently I had enough residual hearing to hear some sounds. I caught the rest by reading lips, so no one suspected I was missing the conversations around me.

My parents owned a large black and white television set with large speakers in the front. I sat in front of those speakers trying to catch the words the performers were saying. Back then there was no color TV and no captioning.

I loved the cartoons. Mickey Mouse and Yogi Bear were my favorites. Cartoons were popular with me because it was easy to follow the actions and I didn't need to hear all the words to know what was happening.

My father was a huge baseball fan. I watched the batters try to hit the ball, but overall thought this was a boring game. I didn't understand the different pitches. I didn't know what a stolen base meant. The rules in baseball are complicated and that is why it has been often called "the thinking person's game."

Even with the limited money my family had, Dad still always took us to at least one Cleveland Indians game every summer. Like many kids I didn't really watch the game, but I loved the crowds and noise. I could yell and clap and cheer all I wanted. My siblings and I devoured hot dogs, peanuts and Cracker Jack.

I understood from my limited hearing and lipreading how excited my father was when the New York Yankees were in town. His voice would rise as he talked about players like "Mickey Mouse and Yogi Bear." I didn't know much about the Yankees except they were another team from far away and we wanted to beat them bad!

I anticipated going to the stadium and seeing them. When I reached the seats, I would stand on the chair and yell like my father, "Yogi Bear stinks" and Mickey Mouse is a loser!"

People in the stands laughed at me. I didn't understand why I never saw my cartoon friends, Mickey and Yogi, at the ball park. Why was my yelling their names so funny to others? I would travel home with the great taste of stadium mustard and hot dogs in my mouth, but disappointed because I never saw Mickey Mouse or Yogi Bear. All I saw were a bunch of men trying to hit a ball and running around the bases.

When I started first grade, the teacher slapped my hands for not listening. The teacher suggested to my parents that I might have a hearing loss. My worried parents took me to an audiologist and the diagnosis was made that I had a severe hearing loss. I was outfitted with a body hearing aid that was ugly and visible.

However, it opened up a new world of sound for me, and I would wear it despite being made fun of by the other children. With the combination of powerful hearing aids and speech therapy, I was able to understand much more about the world.

My father gave me a gift—the love of baseball. As a little girl I never saw the cartoon characters I cherished, but I got to watch two of the greatest players to ever play the game of baseball. Years later, I realized that Yogi Bear was the famous Yogi Berra and Mickey Mouse was the great Mickey Mantle. I am still a huge baseball fan bemoaning the fact the Cleveland Indians have not won a World Series since 1948. I have written an article on William Hoy, the famous deaf player who inspired the signs umpires use in baseball for strike, ball, safe and out. I still dislike, but respect, the New York Yankees and root against them every chance I get.

Today I can enjoy the games more than ever. At home I have captioning on my television, and at the park I can follow the games because of the scoreboard. Baseball is still the thinking person's game and millions of fans around the world still enjoy this timeless sport. And I still love both Yogis and both Mickeys! 🎬