Welcome

By Abraham Shulman, M.D., Chairman

On behalf of the Division of Otolaryngology, I wish to welcome you to the 'First International Tinnitus Seminar'.

This seminar—'The First International Tinnitus Seminar'—is an expression of the expectations and goals of our staff to the team approach of those professionals dedicated to learning the basic mechanisms involved in tinnitus; the control of the complaint of tinnitus; the relationship of tinnitus to the control and maintainence of hearing.

The splendid attendance today is an expression of the dedication of all professionals for understanding the treatment and control of tinnitus.

This seminar is dedicated to Dr. Samuel L. Kountz, Professor and Chairman of the Department of Surgery of the Downstate Medical Center, whose foresight, interest and support have been a constant source of inspiration for our staff. His leadership has been responsible for the rapid growth and development of the Division of Otolaryngology. The seminar is an expression of this development.

Welcoming Address

By Calvin H. Plimpton, M.D.

(President, Suny Downstate Medical Center, New York)

It is a privilege to welcome you here to the First International Tinnitus Symposium. May you tintinabulate most successfully! It is an honor for Downstate to be in some measure a host, and in many measures a sponsor through the good offices of Dr. Abe Shulman. As a layman in your field and as an unemployed gland doctor—pill pedlar, hand-patter, internist if you will—I have great respect for sound. In 'Love's Labours Lost' Armado said:

'Warble child; make passionate my sense of hearing.'

And hearing is a passionate sense. It seems still to hold true that the blind are generally cheerful whereas the deaf are morose, even when they are composing Beethoven symphonies!

But your symposium on tinnitus is a lot more complicated than just a matter of hearing. Remember our own days of exploring caves and of finally getting in far enough to that awful, utterly spooky silence, so complete it enveloped us; and then when the lantern went out, the auditory hallucinations danced through our heads. Of course, as children we did not know what to call this. Now we cite sensory deprivation.

But there are many here who are younger and who have never even been in a cave or had this experience. Perhaps, though, they have been in an anechoic chamber—utterly silent—and then when the lights turned out their hallucinations started too.

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Perhaps there is something in our civilization that brings out a crypto-phobia of silence for we not only seem to tolerate noise but even cultivate it in our society. Musak is everywhere and makes us feel comfortable, relaxed and reassured. People even carry tape decks into subways. It is like third degree with noise blaring at you. Sometimes the noise may have been once music but now it becomes so continuous that it turns music itself into an audiovisual hallucinogenic perversion. People go to sleep at night with 'white' sound and the tinnitus, whether it is of internal origin or coming from the environment, becomes an inability to face oneself, to be naked to oneself, to be silent to oneself. The sound barrier has been overcome and has sadly vanished.

Our patients of course, carry this tinnitus, this ogre, with them whether high-pitched or low-pitched, whether all the time or some of the time, and yet do not even have the consolation of writing Beethoven symphonies! With the understanding accumulating from your research, perhaps tinnitus will be understood. This is our faith 'as lightning to the children eased by explanation kind'. So as you meet and gather, regardless of the ambiguities of too much and too little sound, let me remind you of a prayer in Old St. Paul's Church in Baltimore in 1962:

> 'Go placidly amid the noise and haste—and remember what peace there may be in silence.'

It is certainly my most devout hope that from this symposium, as you address that peculiar affliction known as tinnitus, there may be some peace and perhaps we may be brave enough to bear silence on our horizon.

With all very best wishes for a most successful meeting, and welcome again.

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