

## **Maureen Penko's Acceptance Speech for the 2013 Eve Kassirer Award for Outstanding Professional Achievement**

This is such an exciting evening for me and our profession. I feel honoured and privileged to receive the Eve Kassirer Award. Thank you to my nominators **Andree Durieux Smith and Virginia Martin**; the CASLPA awards committee; and especially to my supportive family, in particular my mother **Julie my inspiration** who is here tonight.

I would like to take a moment to share with you my journey into the profession. I have titled my speech **Affordability/Availability /Access: An Unexpected Journey**.

I was a university student in the 70's when I informed my family that a professor in psychology had suggested that I consider this field. My family and others said "what is that; can you get a job when you graduate, does it pay well and where can you train?" I quickly found out that I needed to go out of province .

**Affordability to train out of province** was a factor so I applied for a bursary and received a heritage fund from the Manitoba government to complete my training at Minot State University. In 1977, I graduated with my Master's Degree and the **door opened** when I accepted a job in schools to work in rural Manitoba with the Department of Education, Child Care and Development Branch for the Eastman and Interlake regions. Well, this basically translated into a lot of driving.

I was keen and energetic and thought I knew it all. With an armload of standardized English tests, my CAA membership, an overnight bag and homemade programs, I had begun my journey of practice. Needless to say I was on the treadmill of accelerated learning. I had to shed the skirt and high heeled shoes!!!

I learned about the cultural values of the varied populations that I served and their norms. I learned how to be able to interview their families in such a way that respected their language and culture and on numerous occasions this meant meeting them in their homes on the reserves or on the colony. The meaning of service delivery had changed for me.

I developed rapport with the resource teachers, improved my observational assessments skills, sharpened my rural driving skills and honed in on time management skills for a never ending caseload!

I definitely needed a clinical mentor and supervisor. Fortunately, the Manitoba legislation mandated a year of supervision upon graduation and **Donna Cook McLeod** – a tall lady with lovely with a warm smile – was **available** to be my supervisor.

She was essential to my growth: her positive attitude, feedback, and mentorship were critical. She guided me to attend clinical and association meetings where I was able to build a network of professional contacts.

The **Accessibility door** opened through participation in MSHA and soon after, CASLPA. These associations gave me access to the people in the profession with the knowledge, enthusiasm, commitment, experience and the vision for our profession. It was while attending these committee meetings that I realized that my journey into the profession had really begun.

It was as **national councillor** that I made a close connection with **Virginia Martin**, editor of **Human Communication Canada** and a contributor to both associations in the area of publications; **Andree Durieux-Smith**, researcher in infant hearing screening; **John Gilbert**, chairman of the certification committee; **George Mencher**, chairman of Accreditation of Service programs and **Elaine Heaton**, the first recipient of a site accreditation for the Glenrose hospital in Edmonton. It was through working with them that I met the late **Eve Kassirer** whose efforts through her department at the federal level sponsored initiatives such as the **Task Force on Childhood Hearing Impairment** which increased the awareness of early identification of hearing loss in children and the certification task force. **She was energetic and inspiring.**

My personal highlights came when my two children Lauren and Stephen came into my life and attended many meetings in their basins when I became the editor of the first newsletter Communiqué.

So let's fast forward and the door opens once again and this time for me to participate on the board of directors for MSHA in developing the regulations for a college and contributing to the harmonization of practice standards at the National level. We will all in time be regulated to practice in these wonderful professions with the protection of title of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists.

I hope that many of you will be able to inspire a young individual to enter our wonderful professions and to not stop there but to mentor them to become involved with the Associations as part of best practice. When I look back along my timeline I see critical moments that have shaped my life. Those chance encounters and partnerships affirm that we need to **access** our colleagues and collaborators; to be able to secure the best **available** service and ensure the **affordability of that service** for those who are communicatively impaired.

It has been an unexpected journey

Thank you for this award. I am truly honoured.

Maureen Penko