

Cochlear Implant Diary

Name: Michael Ernest

State: MD

Age: 60 (at time of implant)



Picture taken 3/15/2002

Occupation: Research Scientist

Education: Assoc. Arts, BS (Physics), BA (Math), and MBA

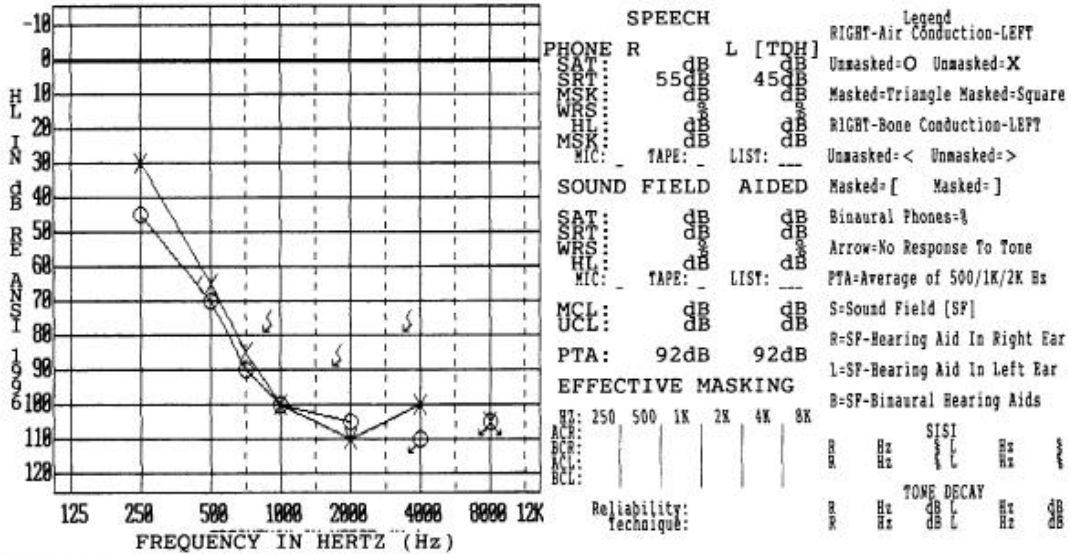
History: First diagnosed at age of approx. 15 years with same pattern as shown below except it was indicated that my low frequency hearing was "better than normal". I was taking a physical trying to get into Merchant Marine Academy. Could not even pass simple test of hearing a watch tick or understanding a whisper from a distance. I immediately went for an audiogram. I recall it was not conducted in a sound proof booth as they do now. In high school when I was placed in a seat in back of room I had difficulty hearing and struggled through some classes. When I went to college, I attended night school for all my education. In general classes were small and I would always sit at the front. I was able to take good notes by speechreading. That is basically how I survived! At work, I always had problems with large meetings where people asked questions and I was always searching the audience for that person. I even had one person who I was friendly with tell me that people thought I was aloof as I would not respond when she called my name. Well that was because I could not hear her. I think they were unaware of my hearing problem, as I was able to converse very well in dyadic situations. Reason for considering implantation: hearing is getting worse and had no success with hearing aids. Technology such as voice mail, telephone and videoconferencing makes it very difficult to function properly since hearing impairment is probably one of disabilities that business will adjust to the least.

Date: Feb. 2, 2001
 Audiologic examination

Patuxent Medical Group
 Audiology
 2 Knoll North Drive
 Columbia, MD 21045

AUDIOLOGIC REPORT

NAME: ERNEST, MICHAEL ID#: 230215 DATE SEEN: 02-01-2001
 ADRS: DOB: - - AGE: SEEN BY: D. WAGNER, MA/CCC-A
 CITY: TEL: - - REF' BY:



COMMENTS:

Hx: Longstanding severe-profound sensorineural loss AU. Mr. Ernest has tried hearing aids in the past and did not find them to be beneficial. He is interested in pursuing a cochlear implant consultation.

HT: mild loss at 250 Hz dropping to severe-profound sensorineural loss AU. Could not test word recognition (very poor). Speech awareness thresholds were in agreement with tones.

Tymps: Type A - WNL - AU

- Rec:
1. follow up with primary physician for referral to JHH for cochlear implant consultation.
 2. hearing evaluation 1-2 years.

Date: March 2001

Requested primary care physician for referral to Johns Hopkins for evaluation as an implant candidate.

Date: Mayish

Did not hear anything for several months. Called primary care physician who had sent audiogram to Hopkins back in March, but Hopkins was very slow to follow-up and said at earliest could schedule initial evaluation in August.

Date: Junish

HMO would not issue a referral to Hopkins (out of network), but arranged consultation with a surgeon in their network. The surgeon was not associated with any group that had a systematic program for implantation and follow-up rehabilitation. Told me it was a simple operation.

Date: August

Finally got HMO to agree to initial examination at Univ. Md. which has a program for cochlear implantation. Univ. MD re-evaluated hearing and confirm earlier findings. Univ. MD was helpful in pressuring HMO referral office to agree to begin further screening for candidacy.

Date: August 30, 2001

Fitted with hearing aids in both ears for trial.

Date: September 24, 2001

Battery of tests with and without hearing aids confirmed candidacy.

Date: October 19, 2001

Met with Univ. MD surgeon (Hinrich Staecker) who did a physical examination and went over some details of the procedure. He requested certain pre-op testing including CAT scan. Surgery set for December 27, 2001 while on vacation to minimize time away from work.

Date: October 26, 2001
CAT scan.

Date: December 10, 2001

Pre-op testing.

Date: December 27, 2001

Went to Univ. MD hospital at 6:30AM as surgery was scheduled for 8:30AM. There was a mix-up as to what ear was to be implanted. I pointed to my right and the nurse wrote left on the surgical form. I straightened this out when the anesthesiologist came into the prepping room. For some reason surgery did not start until 10:00AM. I was in surgery until 2PM. Came out of anesthesia about 4PM at which time they decided I should stay overnight for observation because of concern over blood clots. Did not sleep well since I normally sleep on my stomach and could not do so because of the bandage. By the way, I took this as a vacation day so I would not miss a day of work. I figured I would be quickly back to work after new years. Boy was I wrong!

Date: December 28, 2001

Not a lot of pain, but did have a lot of congestion from flu-like symptoms. After a light breakfast my wife (who has been great through the entire thing) appeared and said I would be checking out. A doctor came in and changed my bandage. The surgeon stopped by to see how I was doing. At this point I was quite disturbed, as my hearing was very bad. I could not understand how it could be that much worse than when I went in.

Arrived home early in morning and went right to bed. Did not sleep very well. My arms near the elbows were very sore-I assume this was from being strapped down.

Date: December 29, 2001

Little pain, but respiratory congestion kept me feeling bad. Slept a little better that night.

Date: December 30, 2001

Took off the hospital bandage. My wife put a new one on. No new bleeding, so my healing seemed to be progressing well.

Date: December 31, 2001

Feeling a little better. Stayed up until 11PM. Slept fairly well

Date: Jan. 1, 2002

Took the bandage off. Still not over the congestion. Sleeping is still difficult, as I cannot easily lie on the stitches. Hearing is starting to come back. Apparently, congestion caused some blockage of Eustachian tube in "good ear".

Date: Jan. 2, 2002

Decided to stay off work until the stitches are out on Jan. 4. First day to venture out of house and drive. Put a little time on treadmill-walking only to start. The doctors told me no weight lifting.

Date: Jan. 3, 2002

Getting all the paperwork together for visit with surgeon tomorrow.

Date: Jan. 4, 2002

I had the stitches removed. No problems noted. Went back to work in the afternoon. A lot of notice from co-workers. Not surprising - see comment on February 22.

Date: Jan. 5, 2002 - Feb 1, 2002

Even having given up all hearing in my right ear, I notice only minimal difference in hearing. Just as bad as ever, but no worse!

Date: Feb. 2, 2002

Only a few days before hook-up. I am really getting anxious, but concerned I might be in for a letdown. Hookup day was delayed because the audiologists were expecting new software to be on hand and also arranged for Cochlear representative to be on hand to help out with the mapping using the new software.

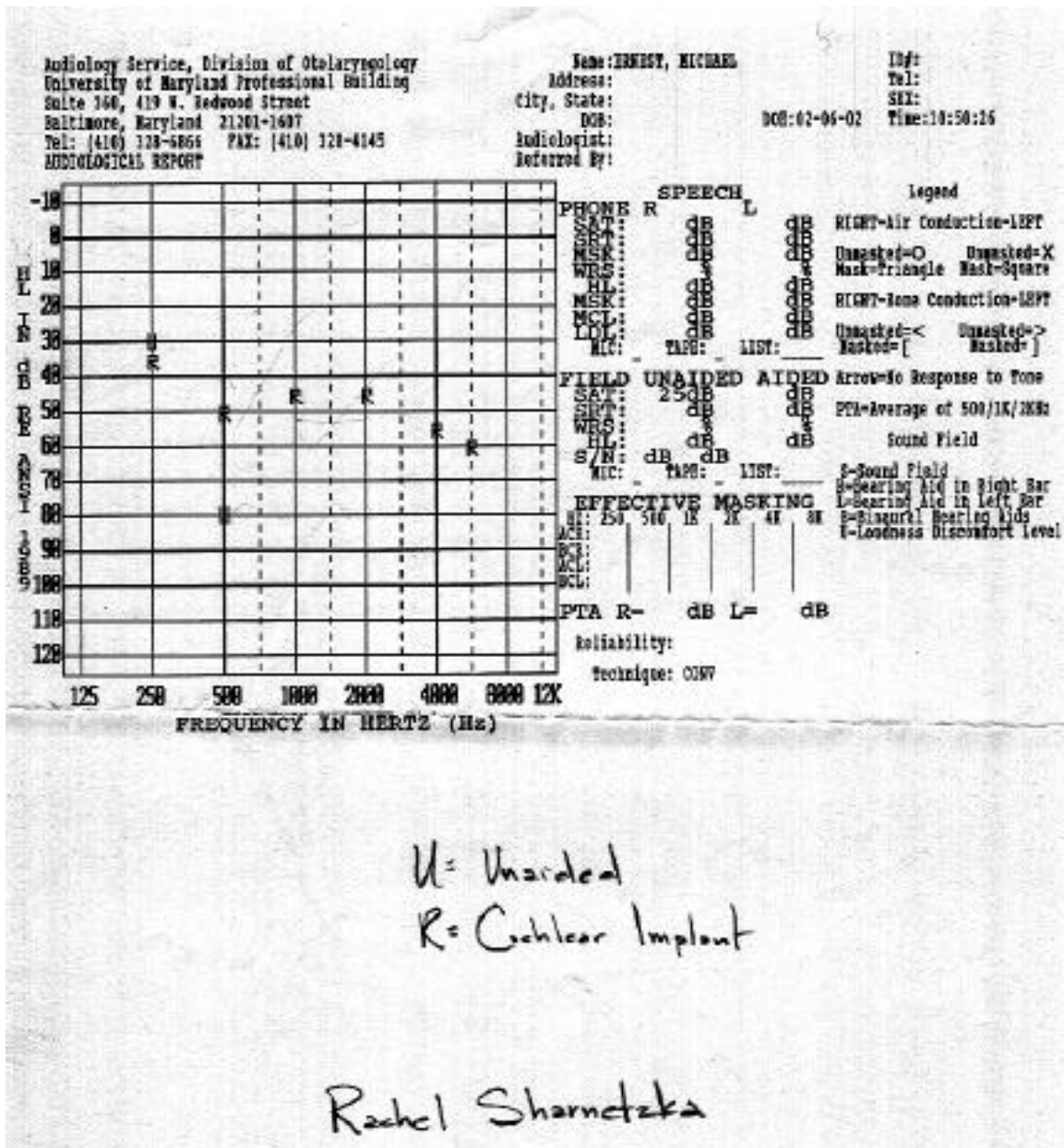
Date: Feb 5, 2002

First hook-up session was 2 1/2 hours long checking out the electrodes which were all functioning properly. First mapping was with ACE. No immediate improvement in speech recognition. Company rep did not show - was sick! Plus the new software was not available yet either! The software is not for my benefit anyway as it is mainly, so I understand, to make it easier for the audiologist to do the diagnostics and mapping. I took this picture with my videocam to send to my kids (one is in Indiana and another is in Florida). Here it is below. CI seems to be up higher than I thought it would be!



Date: Feb. 6, 2002

Second day mapping done with CIS. This seems to be better as I can hear a lot of new and weird sounds. I am still not able to improve on speech recognition without speech reading. A quick audiogram showed close to normal hearing pattern with the CI. Without it was very poor. See the audiogram below (this was taken without using earphones in the sound proof test room-different from previous audiogram I showed previously).



Trying out some of the programs (both CIS and Ace) for week before next visit. Because I have poor tolerance to loud noises they reduced the high frequencies on one and both highs and lows on another of each. I found that the sounds were too low and gave me little volume control.

Date: Feb. 7 -8, 2002

Been wearing it to work all day. Cannot see any improvement in speech recognition. My wife has been reading to me, but I still have use speech reading. Put an ear muff type

hearing protector on my left ear as I seem to be relying on my so-called "good" ear. This forces me use the CI.

Date: Feb. 12, 2002

Third day mapping done to modify both CIS and ACE programs. Now have two of each in BWP. Most of time I am using ACE, but I tried some music and seemed a little better with CIS. Still a long way to go. Still relying on captions. Still not able to improve on speech recognition without speech reading. Still using ear muff.

Date: February 20-21

Had a meeting with French Canadian and two company personnel on 2/20. The CI helped me hear, but not much benefit to speech recognition. Guess what happened? - the batteries conked out in the middle of the meeting. I had to excuse myself and get a couple batteries from my office to put in. A lesson learned!

Audiologists (I have two really nice ones that have been working with me) gave me some of the exercises from the Cochlear manual. My wife has been going over these with me. I am trying with and without the earmuff-hearing protector. Still cannot understand the words without speechreading. Frustrating when you cannot understand when you own name is spoken!

Date: February 22

A guy at work has a young granddaughter with a CI and noted that my transmitter seems to be located up higher than hers is.

Just got some holiday pictures back one of which included a shot of the stitches. My wife just had to take a picture of that (see below). Now that I see it, I did not realize how awful it looks. I can imagine what the people at work thought!

Went to a retirement party for a fellow employee. A lot of people in a big meeting room. Good news is I could hear all the conversations going on, but could not understand much unless I did some speechreading. It was very noisy with all the talking going on.



Date: February 24

Did some woodworking today and took hookup off. They advised not to use when I am working with noisy power tools.

More practicing with my wife reading to me. Tried with and without speechreading. Some of the polysyllable words I am able to pickup (without speechreading) after having heard them with speechreading. I guess every little step counts.

Date: February 25

CI definitely lets me hear things I would normally not hear. Conversations in my outer office, etc. More practice at home with my wife. Tried the various programs. Still cannot clearly pick one over another. I do equally well or equally poorly depending on one's point of view. Hopeful that next mapping in a couple weeks will be an improvement.

Date: February 26

Nothing exciting at work. Took off CI and went out and ran before my wife got home from work - temperature was near 70 today. After dinner, my wife gave me another lesson with. Using the earmuff on my "good ear" and relying totally on the CI, I did very well with the sentences by speechreading. She then covered her lips and gave them to me again in random order.

Some I was able to get okay, but some I could not. The fact I could relate the sounds to my memory of the sentences seems to be progress.

Date: February 27

Last night was the first time I put in some rechargeable batteries. They lasted all day until about 7PM tonight. Oh, I did take it off when I got home because I was weight lifting and don't want to take a chance of knocking it by mistake. But as soon as I stopped, I put it back on. It is starting to become a part of me.

Date: March 1

Took a day off (actually vacation leftover from last year). Got up early as I had to put a new battery in my computer. Took an hour to replace and hook up the wires. Works fine. Went out and got haircut-I think I am going to have to get a haircut more frequently now I have the CI.

Did some woodworking-finishing up my winter project - weather was warm enough to do some sanding and staining outside. Impregnated the sawdust with Jacobian stain to make the grout. I want to get it finished before grass cutting and gardening comes around. Took the CI off. I do not see any real need to wear while I am woodworking. I decided to send this diary to the people who requested it.

Date: March 3

Visited my granddaughter today. She is just starting to talk and it is really nice to hear her soft words. Do not understand them too well, but my wife said she could not understand either.

Date: March 12

Went for a remapping today. Got 3 new ACE maps and left one of CIS in. Got back to work and went right to meeting. Heard speaker with microphone pretty well. Trying to see which new ACE program sounds better.

Date: March 17

Using the new ACE program with increase in low frequency range. Two versions of the same, one with higher output.

Date: May 28

I went for a new mapping now that they have the new software. They made 4 new maps but only put in 3, as I wanted to keep the better one from previously. They included 2 maps with ADR0 and one high rate map, which I like very much so far. All maps are ACE now. They were pressed for time since the session lasted for 2 3/4 hours, but were able to get my new 3G programmed. I like it, but still plan to wear my other unit. The 3G is great when I work out with weights, as I had to take the other one off for fear of busting it.

Date: June 1

This is the first time I wore the 3G out. Really nice not to have the wires when wearing just a tee shirt. Still getting use to the controls. I notice then the sound cuts down when background noise like running a faucet, etc. Anxious to get the best maps in the 3G.

June 11, 2002

My technician called me as I was leaving the lab and I immediately returned. He noted before the CI, I would have kept on walking away. Glad to see someone notices an improvement.

June 26, 2002

I went to an Orioles-Yankees game and wore my 3G. As I expected the batteries conked out before the game was over. I had taken some batteries, but decided against putting them in because of concern of losing a part and the fact of the matter it was incredibly noisy because of the crowd noise. I noticed that once it conked out, my hearing from good ear was awful until I yawned. It seems as though the CI takes over my hearing. Very strange-have noticed this before, but became very obvious today.

August 19, 2002

Had a new mapping with Neural Response Telemetry with Cochlear person (Ginger) training the 2 audiologists at UMAB. Telemetry suggested a far different kind of map than the usual C and T setting routine. It was programmed on both the BWP and the 3G. So far it is very much different. Extraneous sounds like flipping pages, walking up wooden stairs and squeaky doors drive me up the wall. Seems worse on the 3G. But maybe they can learn something from this.

August 26, 2002

Today I went to a seminar with various prominent professors (one German) speaking on separation science topics. I gave my new NRT based map on my BWP a try and it generally worked well. I was able to hear and understand a very high percentage of the presentations, but did have some problems with questions from the audience. I could probably have raised the sensitivity setting, but that is a pain! Depends on how interested I am in the questions!

November 19, 2002

I went for a new mapping mainly because the one program on my 3G is driving me nuts. Crazy sounds with the cracking noises from stuff like opening cellophane bags. My visit had 4 people involved (usual Rachel and Cara, along with Ginger Grant of Cochlear and a student or trainee). Ginger pretty much run the show with Cara on the computer as Rachel was a little late. I went through the usual T settings (I am beginning to dislike doing this with a passion) and C settings. Well, they put a new program in my BWP and modified it to work in the 3G. I still am having a hard time getting use to this new 3G program with increased high frequency C settings increased. I will be giving it a good test

as the other program works well and I have less discomfort with it. Ginger claims I need the higher frequency enhancement for speech information. Seems that it is getting more difficult to make significant improvements!