

NHCA Narrative: Frank Wartinger, Au.D.

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*There's a crack, a crack in everything.
THAT'S HOW THE LIGHT COMES IN!*
— lyrics lifted from "Anthem",
as written and sung by Leonard Cohen

Maybe you've already noticed. There's a movement afoot and the momentum is building. "Light is coming in" at ear level as more and more big-name musicians are tuning in to the "How To" that prevents noise-induced hearing loss. But we're getting ahead of this story.

There are those who are gifted with both a brilliant mind and an inherent capacity to care.

Frank was born into a family of ever-excelling musicians. He was no exception, as he grew into the pleasures of improvising in jam sessions and onstage performances. It came as no surprise that Frank's path included earning a Bachelor of Music degree at Purchase Conservatory of Music in the Studio Production Program. What may have come as a surprise to Frank was the evolution of what became the rest of his story, in parallel with being an accomplished musician.

Frank recounts how, as he progressed through middle school and into high school, he was increasingly aware of the onset of tinnitus, an untimely distraction that became constant and always audible. Eventually, the persistent nature of this condition peaked Frank's curiosity and concern, prompting him to, of all things, purchase several audiology textbooks.

Fast forward. As if responding to a calling, this very active composer, producer, recordist, mixing engineer, and multi-instrumentalist strategically added a graduate degree in Audiology to his professional repertoire of understanding.

Thereafter, Frank began to envision launching Earmark Hearing Conservation; the "crack" that would "let the light come in" to benefit a very deserving sec-

tor of society. Ultimately, it was Frank's desire that it would become a destination where he could combine his love and appreciation for music with his knowledge and professional ability to administer hearing healthcare.



Earmark now serves musicians and music lovers with customized solutions for listening, monitoring, and performance needs. Understandably, the protocol and primary focus for almost every patient begins with the administration of a comprehensive hearing evaluation that objectively dictates the professional counsel and recommendations that follow, whether it be hearing conservation consultation, custom hearing protection options, and/or in-ear monitors - always with an "ear" for the trickle-down availability of new technologies.

Frank has also come to recognize the importance of grassroots endeavors. As a guest instructor, he often stands before a select classroom of university students, where he is given the opportunity to tie an appreciation for all types and styles of music with an introductory course regarding the effects of noise on hearing, which generally leads right into something akin to, "There's no cure for a noise-induced hearing loss. But here's the good news! A noise-induced hearing loss is preventable!" The Q&A session that follows is always rewarding for its spontaneity of having been such a teachable moment.

Here's an update to Frank's lifetime of listening through his tinnitus condition. Quote: "I have completely habituated and no longer have a negative reaction or find tinnitus bothersome. In fact, I now see this as a positive in my life, as it has guided my path into music school, into audiology school, and into my work with patients who are still in the early reactive stages of tinnitus perception."

In April 2022, Earmark introduced and produced the first in a series of “Talking Ears” podcasts. “Talking Ears” is an unscripted Q&A format, very interactive and personalized, with the goal of providing a space for music creators to discuss their hearing needs and issues. Or, simply stated, the guests are primarily music creators speaking on the subject of their ears.

Frank hosts each podcast in the background, focusing “the incoming light” on each guest. Still, it is his warm and casual manner that has already established his reputation for drawing the listening audience to sense, “it’s as if we’re all in the same room.”

Frank readily credits fellow NHCA member, Michael Santucci of Sensaphonics, for having pioneered audiology services in the music industry which has, by extension, resulted in Frank’s very fulfilling vocation. Frank states, “We are increasingly delighted to witness and welcome a steady increase in the number of clinical settings where audiologists are learning (just like I did) about hearing protector products specifically designed for musicians and, subsequently, adding this feature to their service capabilities. It’s truly a niche of hearing conservation – where there are no compliance regulations - that has proven to prevent noise-induced hearing loss.” To which Frank adds, “There’s a great deal of satisfaction in being able to report that this new awareness is actively spreading to benefit our nation’s population of musicians at every level.”

When asked, “To what do you most attribute Earmark’s day-to-day success?” Frank’s immediate response was, “The unsolicited power inherent in word of mouth.” Most business-minded people, when hearing this, will assess this response as being the obvious outcome of having combined business longevity with a stellar reputation for delivering what has been promoted and promised. In this case, being so genuinely authentic is a big plus!



Prepare to be impressed as you visit and read the more detailed commentary presented at earmarkhc.com. The home page accommodates easy access to the podcast and previous “Talking Ears” presentations. Then, you may want to take note of the calendar that lists when virtually taught CAOHC certification and recertification training courses are scheduled.

Oh, yes! Being married with two young children has conditioned Frank to work only half-days as he strives to manage getting everything done in no more than 12 hours every day.

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Author’s footnote: What a personal privilege to interview and become better acquainted with Frank Wartinger. As one of many Past Presidents of NHCA, it is reassuring to realize that Frank represents an emerging generation of hearing conservation professionals who are so fully committed to Our Vision and Our Mission.



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