

MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

Losing My Hearing: Ginny Mazur says goodbye to the hearing world.

TONY KAHN:

Hi, everybody! This is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of *Morning Stories* from WGBH in Boston. Over the years that I've been doing *Morning Stories*, I've learned to appreciate something about the art of listening. And in today's Morning Story, I had the privilege of sitting down for an hour with a true master of that art, a woman named Ginny Mazur, who with every day is learning more and more about what there is to listen to in her own life as she goes deaf. We call her story *Losing My Hearing*.

GINNY MAZUR:

When I first started to lose my hearing, I got hearing aids. One of the biggest surprises that I had was that the directional signal on my car made a sound. Imagine a symphony orchestra. It's like you can't hear either highs or lows. The violins or the bases. Sounds become muddled and override one another. It's, it's not quiet; it's often clanging and clashing and confusing – kind of like the lid of a trash can as it bangs together . . .

Initially, you really feel like your world is shrinking and shifting. What was once utterly familiar and commonplace, that's no longer accessible. I've already said "goodbye" to a lot of birds. I miss them. I miss the sound of the, the leaves rushing in the trees; I don't hear that. Kids I've lost much of an ability to hear. I don't know if I'm going to completely lose the human voice. That would be about the hardest thing to lose – yeah.

I still have some recordings of my husband's voice, which I listen to. And though there's just elements of his voice that I can perceive, there's incredible familiarity.

[sounds of a cello playing a Bach solo suite]

A loveable, loveable, sweet teacher and musician. [laughs] A person most dear to me. Bob died over three years ago. Since he died, I feel like I wish I had a reprieve from Mother Nature around loss. You know, "All right, already!" And that's not the way it's, it's going. I think I'm saying "goodbye" to the hearing world altogether.

I have to ask people for help. And I've become – I've become more human on account of that – to seeing that other people need help. I've a sense now, you know, that things that don't last in life, so it's important to, to love and to care about what's important right now.

There's a lot more to pay attention to. I can see the twinkle in your eye a lot more than I would have been paying attention, because I'd just be listening to your voice! It doesn't make me as sad as I would have thought a while back, because of the things that any of us would do, I think, naturally to try to, to stay connected with one another.

My mom used to have a little poster on the wall of her kitchen that said, "Bless this mess." We kids thought this was the queerest thing. Now when I think back, and now looking at my life, I think I have a little bit more of a clue of what she was trying to get at. We are human. I don't want it to be perfect. 'Cause then I'm afraid I'll forget that pain that comes out of love.

[sound of cello playing Bach returns]

"Honey, you are loved. Carry that with you wherever you go."

TONY KAHN:

That was Ginny Mazur with today's Morning Story, *Losing My Hearing*. And I'm sitting here with Gary Mott.

GARY MOTT:

Makes me think about how I lost some of the dexterity in my right hand and my, my right leg, and I see other people, how they, they talk with their hands; they're expressive with their hands, and I think, "Boy, I would, I would love to be able to do that!"

TONY KAHN:

The accident kind of cut down your body language.

GARY MOTT:

Yeah!

TONY KAHN:

I never really thought about that, but Ginny pointed out you don't go through life, you don't live to a certain age without a, a profound loss. Somebody I know once said, "You know, we don't go all at once; we go in pieces!"

GARY MOTT:

Right. [laughs]

TONY KAHN:

It's a - you know, it's a constant mourning for parts of ourselves. In Ginny's case, the mourning is also a trip out into the world for all of the things that she

can appreciate in, in some way, if a different way, just as deeply. This reminds me of a line from my favorite poet, William Butler Yeats that leapt out of the page the first time I read it. He says, "Life is love and a continual farewell."

GARY MOTT:

Hmm!

TONY KAHN:

And boy, Ginny's story puts such meat and bones into that line for me.

GARY MOTT:

I know a couple who are both blind. They live alone. They both have jobs. They walk to the train every day. And I think I can only imagine the struggles that they face on a day-to-day basis.

TONY KAHN:

Hmm. I knew a blind guy. I met him in college. I used to read to him, freshman year. We'd both fall asleep to Henry James. [both laugh] He was devoted to acting as if he was not blind. He would walk across the campus without a stick. He would have his socks all worked out for him for which color of shirt for every day. He ended up living next to me years after we graduated from college, and he had married a blind woman.

GARY MOTT:

Umhmm.

TONY KAHN:

And they had a sighted child. One day, when their daughter was about three years old, and they put a bell around her neck so that they could hear if she was getting near the street and they could rush over and pull her back to the sidewalk?

GARY MOTT:

Umhmm.

TONY KAHN:

One day, I saw her walking down the street, holding her father's hand, and leading him. And it was the only time I ever saw him let anybody lead him. And there was this incredible smile on his face, which I'd never seen before. How important it also is to ask for help!

GARY MOTT:

Right.

TONY KAHN:
As Ginny does.

GARY MOTT:
It's absolutely true. You get closer to someone when you ask for help. You know, I think about sixth grade, you know, asking, you know, one of my buddies in gym class to help me zip up my pants. I mean, what a "uncool" thing for a sixth grader to do. But I, I just couldn't physically do it. Recently I asked Laurie to help me trim my nails, and she said, "You know, you, you've never told me that this is hard for you before." And I think she felt connected to me on, on yet another level.

TONY KAHN:
Wow, Gar -

GARY MOTT:
So --

TONY KAHN:
What allowed you to do that?

GARY MOTT:
Sometimes, you know, I just don't have the energy, or I, I'm too tired, or too --

TONY KAHN:
Too tired to ask for help!

GARY MOTT:
Too tired to throw that burden on someone else.

TONY KAHN:
But you know, you just said it yourself earlier, it's not a burden.

GARY MOTT:
Well, yeah - that's true.

TONY KAHN:
It's not a burden for somebody else--

GARY MOTT:
That's right.

TONY KAHN:
- it's a lift. At the end of our conversation Ginny said something really

wonderful to me. She said, "You know, Tony, by the time you're done with this story, I may not be able to hear it. Is there anything you can do to allow people who are deaf to get to this story? I know you can't do it on the radio, but is there anything like "deaf radio?" And I said, "Ginny, I should have thought of this myself, but of course there is! You know, there's, there's the internet, and what we're going to do is make the text of Ginny's story available as part of our RSS feed, and I also did a little video which we're going to make available on the website, for both people who can hear and who can't hear.

GARY MOTT:

<WGBH.org/morningstories> - the video is there. All of our Morning Stories are there as well, in our archive. <morningstories@WGBH.org>

TONY KAHN:

We're definitely playing around with the video. We're certainly enjoying it. If, if you are, we'll keep it up and make more videos available. First and foremost, though, the story is the voice of our storytellers, however, however we get it to you. And we will be back with another Morning Story very soon. So, take care and we'll see you then. Bye-bye.

[music of Bach solo cello suite]

GARY MOTT:

Tony, I've noticed that we've kept our eyes closed -

TONY KAHN:

Absolutely!

GARY MOTT:

- this entire time. The power of the human voice. Maybe it's also 'cause we're in such a small room, here, you know - looking into your blue eyes when you're, you know, one foot away from me. Maybe that would "freak me out."

TONY KAHN:

Three years, and you don't know that my eyes are green! [laughs] Gotta open your eyes a little bit more, Gar! [laughs again]

[End of Recording]

Notes from transcriber:

Tony's comment that "It's a lift" to be asked to help someone else is a perfect segue into a little discussion about the reasons the volunteer transcribers want to help with this project. We all want to feel needed, and are grateful for opportunities to be useful to others.

Transcribed by Liz Cooksey <transcripts_liz@bellsouth.net>