

Coping Tips

Learn to relax with deep breathing, yoga, T'ai Chi, or meditation.

Enjoy your family.

Take up a hobby — painting, knitting, or photography.

Reduce and/or eliminate alcohol or tobacco.

Get a back rub or massage.

Take a scented bath with candles and soft music.

Go for a drive in the country.

Swim.

Get counseling.

Play a musical instrument (acoustic style).

Listen to relaxation CDs.

Exercise regularly.

Talk on the phone.

Volunteer.

Get organized; eliminate clutter.

Drink chamomile or green tea.

Ride a bike.

Read.

Volunt

— A Way to P

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: John P. Scruggs

Age: 60

Hometown: Memphis, Tennessee

Occupation: Labor Relations and Employment Lawyer

Marital Status: Married to the Very Understanding Barbara

Volunteering: Served as a Member of ATA's Board/Volunteer Development Committee

As a cavalry platoon leader in Vietnam, I operated a .50-caliber Browning machine gun. My position in the armored personnel carrier was in front of the muzzles of two M-60 machine guns. All this, together with periodic explosions from artillery, mines, and other assorted mayhem made for a very noisy "work environment" to say the least. While I was aware of the ringing in my ears after a firefight, I shrugged it off. I had more important things to worry about. Besides, I thought it would go away after I returned to the real world.

After coming home from military service at age 24, I remember lying in bed at night, listening to the whistling in my ears and wondering how bad it would get as I grew older. I was very concerned, even thought there was a possibility I would go crazy from the sound in my head. The doctors at the VA and my personal ENT physician gave me the standard response: "There's nothing we can do. You'll just have to live with it."

My concern was assuaged somewhat by learning that I could practice hearing conservation to keep the condition from progressing on its own over time. Thus assured, I, like so many others, settled in to "live with it."

At this same time, in 1971, Dr. Jack Vernon and others were forming the American Tinnitus Association. Several years later, on a subsequent visit to the office of my ENT doctor, I picked up an ATA pamphlet and called for information. Shortly, I received a tinnitus information packet from the ATA. I was amazed (and I must say, comforted) by the widespread incidence of this condition. I was not alone! Better yet, there were coping techniques, lists of substances that aggravated the condition, and news about basic research towards an eventual remedy for tinnitus. I

Dealing with Ringing in the Ears Peace and Quiet

immediately joined ATA — one of the best investments I've ever made. Some years later, I responded to a volunteer recruitment article in *Tinnitus Today* and eventually served on an ATA committee.

Because of my experience, I quickly recommend ATA to others who have tinnitus. A young lawyer friend once mentioned to me that he had developed a ringing in the ears and, ominously told me "I don't know if I can live with this." I assured him that not only could he, but he could also take control of how the condition affected his life. I made sure he immediately contacted ATA and got "the packet" — a veritable information lifeline to one lost in the fear and loneliness of an invisible and (to others) silent demon. It has been very gratifying to see him manage his tinnitus with the knowledge and confidence the ATA provides.

Today, there are tens of thousands of young people returning from Afghanistan and Iraq — literally, a new generation with tinnitus. Regardless of a person's politics, these young people deserve all of the appreciation and assistance we can give. Thanks to ATA — and because of ATA and now the VA — our returning veterans will be much

better informed about how to manage their noisy reminder of what it means to serve their country.

How can we not want to do all we can to support an organization that literally rescues people from the brink? Write that check. And contact the ATA about volunteer opportunities in your area. There are people out there who need your experience and your example of "living with tinnitus." 📧

Interested in becoming a tinnitus Support Group leader or joining ATA's telephone/email network of support contacts? If so, please contact Amy Harris, ATA's Director of Research and Support, at 800-634-8978 ext. 218, or amy@ata.org to apply.



Laugh. (Need help? Rent funny videos.)

Take one day at a time.

Count your blessings.

Work in wood (and wear ear protection).

Volunteer at an animal shelter (and wear ear protection).

See a competent doctor.

Seek out reliable information sources, such as ATA.

Find a compassionate support group.

Be involved in your recovery.

Be affectionate.

Examine your lifestyle and make changes to reduce stress.

Be a detective to find out what "lights up" your tinnitus.

Examine your diet. Eliminate possible sources of irritation such as salt, artificial sweeteners, excess sugars, and caffeine.

Do not give up if a therapy or treatment doesn't produce immediate relief.

Keep informed about tinnitus research.

Be kind to yourself.