



## EAR TRUMPETS

One of the first hearing aids was the “ear trumpet.” It had two parts. The first was a cone that amplified sound. The second was a tube that was inserted into the ear. With the “ear horn” inserted, the person using the device would point the cone in the direction of a sound source. The amplified sound then traveled up the tube and into the user’s ear. The user could hear the amplified sound much better.

The science of the ear trumpet produced the greatest difficulties for its users. Larger ear horns amplified sound better. However, large ear horns were bulky. They were difficult to transport. They were also embarrassing for the user. Smaller ear horns could easily be hidden. However, they were neither efficient nor effective.

The beginning of the end for the ear horn came with the invention of the telephone. Alexander Graham Bell’s invention resulted from his work with his deaf clients. The telephone could control the loudness of sounds. This made it perfect for helping the hearing impaired. The first electronic hearing aid appeared in 1898. They were still heavy and bulky. Techniques developed during World War II made possible the very small hearing aids that we use now.

Today, ear horns and ear trumpets appear in cartoons and films. They are used to make fun of the user as old, ignorant or old-fashioned; a much different purpose than originally intended.