

THE STUTTERING FOUNDATION

Malcolm Fraser

One person can make a difference

A digital history of persistence, practical help, and a foundation built to serve people who stutter.



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One person can make a difference.

THE IDEA AT THE CENTER OF MALCOLM FRASER'S STORY



THE EARLY YEARS

A family shaped by stuttering

Malcolm Fraser grew up in a family where stuttering was personal: two of the Fraser brothers stuttered. His own experience would later inform a lifelong commitment to practical help, research, and public understanding.

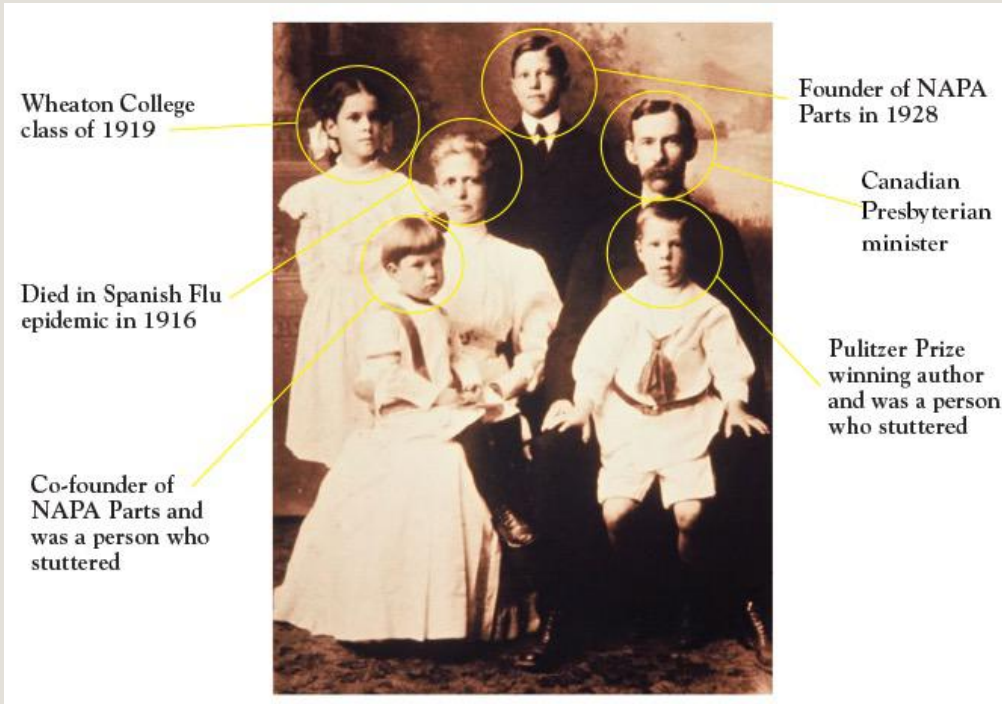


Malcolm Fraser, circa 1906.

FAMILY

The Frasers, circa 1906

The photographs in this history preserve more than dates. They show the family context behind a mission that eventually reached far beyond one household.



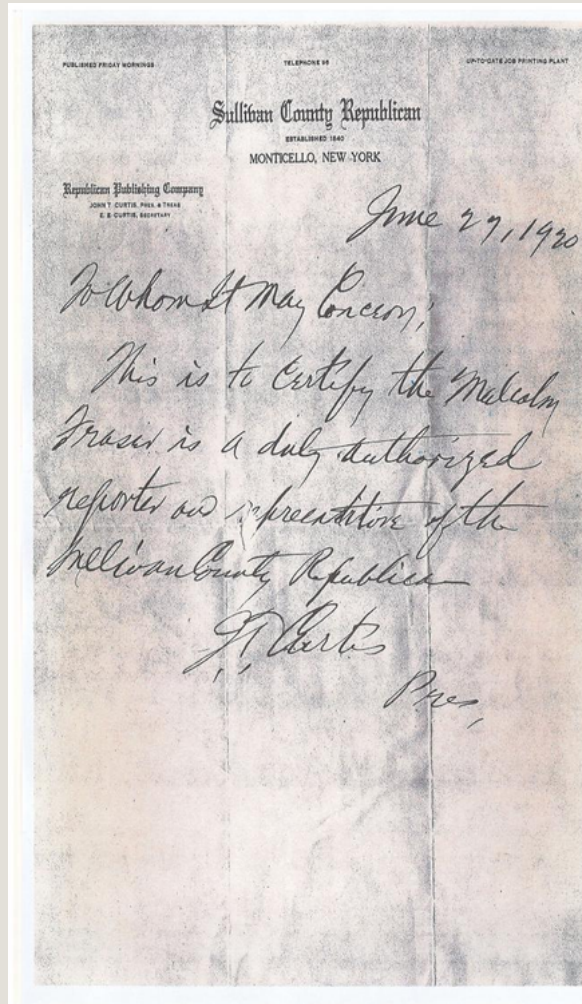
The Fraser family, circa 1906. Two of the brothers stuttered.

Student journalist

As a young man, Fraser worked on his high school newspaper. Communication, enterprise, and the determination to be heard would remain recurring threads throughout his life.



High school newspaper editorial staff.



Reporter credential, 1920.

1920

A working reporter

A surviving credential identifies Malcolm Fraser as an authorized reporter and representative of the Sullivan County Republican, dated June 27, 1920.

EDUCATION

Hamilton College, 1920

Fraser's education was not a straight or easy path as it included him shoveling coal to pay tuition before earning an MBA from the University of Pittsburgh in 1924.



Hamilton College, 1920.

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The road to success was long and difficult.

FROM THE ORIGINAL PRESENTATION



LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Ambition, work, and an instructive failure



Standard Statistics Company - now Standard & Poor's - was among Fraser's early employers.



He served as private secretary to J. Stanley Smith and helped with the Kingsley Club for Stammerers.



Ko Ko Nut Syrup failed when the product went bad on store shelves - a memorable lesson in resilience.

1930

A new chapter in Atlanta

Fraser joined Genuine Parts Company, associated with NAPA, in Atlanta. His business career developed alongside the persistence and practical judgment that would later sustain a charitable organization.



Genuine Parts Company, Atlanta, 1930.

Work, partnership, and family



Malcolm courts Charlotte, 1935.



A NAPA store in Charlotte, North Carolina, 1935.



The Memphis NAPA warehouse, 1938.



Founder Malcolm Fraser with Jane.

FAMILY

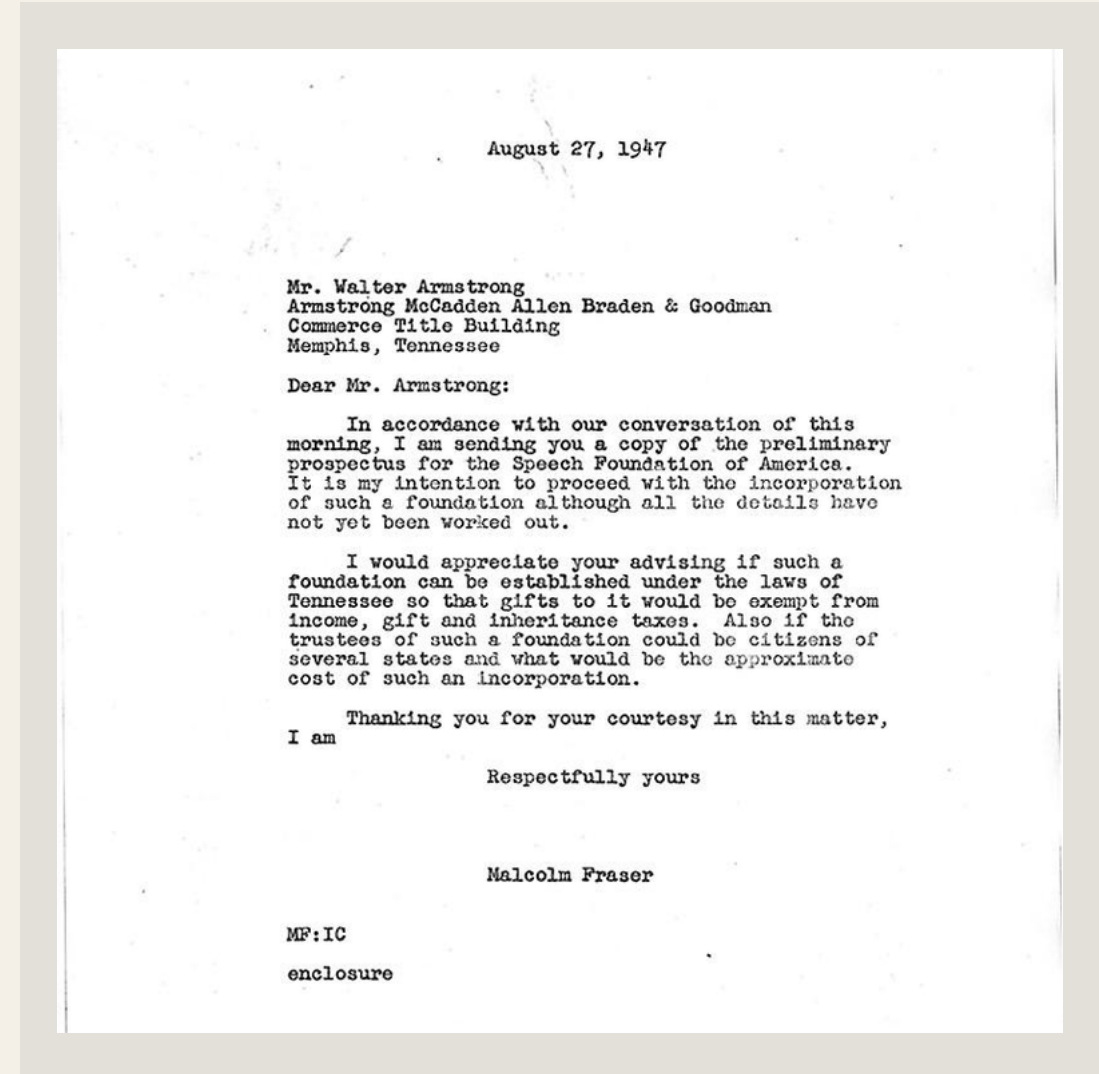
Malcolm, Charlotte, and Jane

The Foundation's story is also a family story. Charlotte supported its early work from home, and Jane Fraser would carry its mission forward.

1947

Putting the idea in writing

A letter from Malcolm Fraser to Walter Armstrong records the founding of the Speech Foundation of America -- cutting-edge legal counsel for its time.



Letter concerning the founding of the Speech Foundation of America, 1947.



A SIGNIFICANT COMMITMENT

\$5,000 in 1947

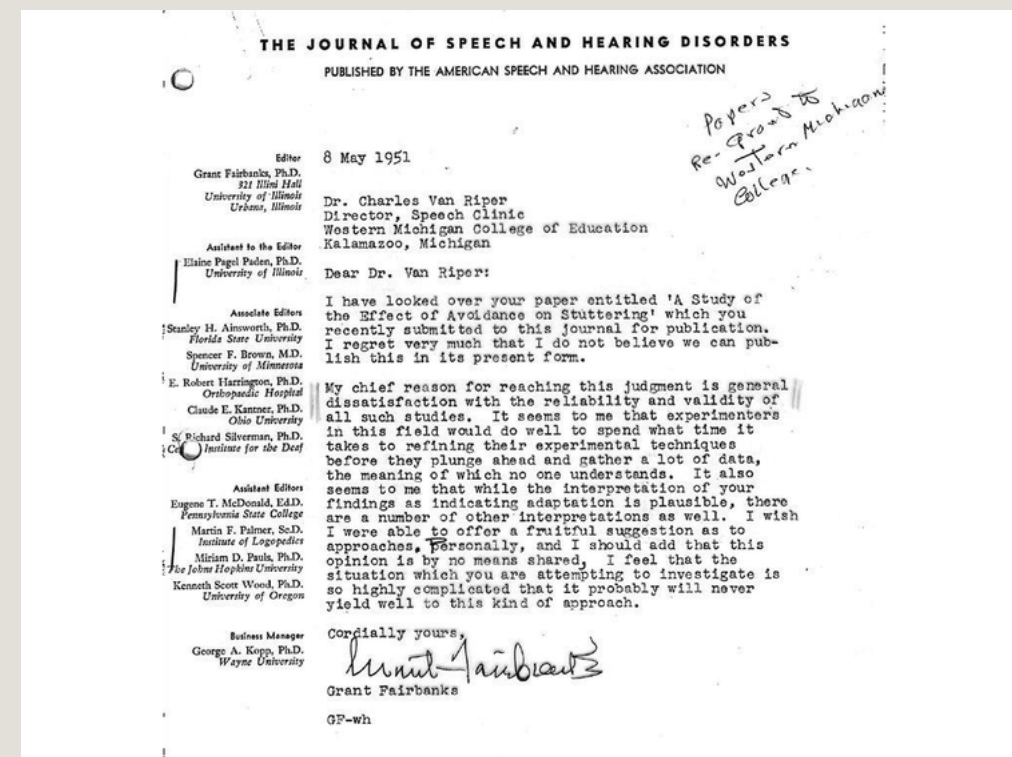
At a time when a new house cost about \$3,000 and a new Ford about \$1,000, Fraser's \$5,000 gift was substantial - especially for a 44-year-old building a new charitable effort.

The Fraser home in 1947.

1951

The first research project

The Foundation funded Charles Van Riper's study of avoidance and stuttering. When the study was rejected for publication, disappointment gave way to a new direction for the organization.



Foundation correspondence from the early research program.

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Do not plunge ahead and gather a lot of data, the meaning of which no one understands.

FROM A REJECTION LETTER TO DR. CHARLES VAN RIPER

December 5, 1955

Mr. Joseph G. Sheehan
416 21st Place
Santa Monica, California

Dear Joe:

I have an interesting proposal to make and I would appreciate your reactions to it. A Mr. Malcolm Fraser of Memphis, Tennessee, several years ago set up the Speech Foundation of America, to be devoted to the eventual solution of the problem of stuttering. As I understand it, in order to have the contributions to the Foundation deducted for income tax purposes, a certain amount of these funds must be spent annually in fulfilling the aims of the foundation. In past years, grants have been made to various educational institutions to carry out experimental therapy programs, research programs, etc. Mr. Fraser recently asked me for other suggestions and among them was one in which he is interested. It is this:

That during the post-Christmas holidays of 1956, a selected group of individuals with a professional background and interest in the problem of stuttering meet at some hotel in Florida for a week. Their project will be that of planning a comprehensive and all-out program of basic research, experimental therapy and theoretical formulation for the disorder. Represented in the group would be one top-notch person or more from the various disciplines of psychology, psychiatry, cultural anthropology and speech therapy with the latter having the largest membership, the whole group not to exceed ten or twelve. All expenses and an appropriate honorarium would be taken care of by the foundation. The objective result of this conference would be a publication which would outline the program and offer concrete projects and suggestions for its solution. It is felt that such a program could serve as a map of future activity, crude and inaccurate perhaps and with much terra incognita, but one which would insure an integrated attack by workers all over the world. The age-old disorder of stuttering still afflicts too many and few of us would deny that a team approach to the problem is needed. This project may aid greatly.

1955

A comprehensive program

Van Riper wrote of an all-out program of basic research, experimental therapy, and theoretical formulation - bringing leading experts in psychology, psychiatry, anthropology as well as SLPs together for sustained discussion.

→ I feel that the success of such a conference would be greatly enhanced by preliminary planning. It might otherwise degenerate, as so many similar discussions of the topic have done, into argument, attack and defence rather than true exploration. Since the project is still tentative and unstructured, may I ask that you consider the whole business confidential, at least until after we meet.

Mr. Fraser suggests that three of us meet this year to do the planning for the conference itself. The foundation would pay our expenses to some central meeting place for this purpose. Would you join me in this preliminary planning? Mr. Fraser has suggested the Peabody Hotel in Memphis. I am inviting Dr. James V. Frick of Pennsylvania State College at State College, Pennsylvania to be the third person. If you are interested, could you meet with us, Wednesday and Thursday, December 28-29? There is only a short time left to plan this preliminary meeting - and I wonder if you would not give me your reply by return mail?

If you cannot help in this preliminary session, would you be interested in joining us a year from the coming holidays and who else would you suggest to take your place now? In any case would you not let me hear from you by return air mail?

Sincerely yours,

C. Van Riper

Speech Clinic
Western Michigan College of Education
Kalamazoo, Michigan

Letter from Charles Van Riper to Joseph Sheehan, 1955.

Conferences that produced practical tools



The 1964 conference developed Treating the School-age Child Who Stutters.



The 1970 conference focused on conditioning in stuttering therapy.

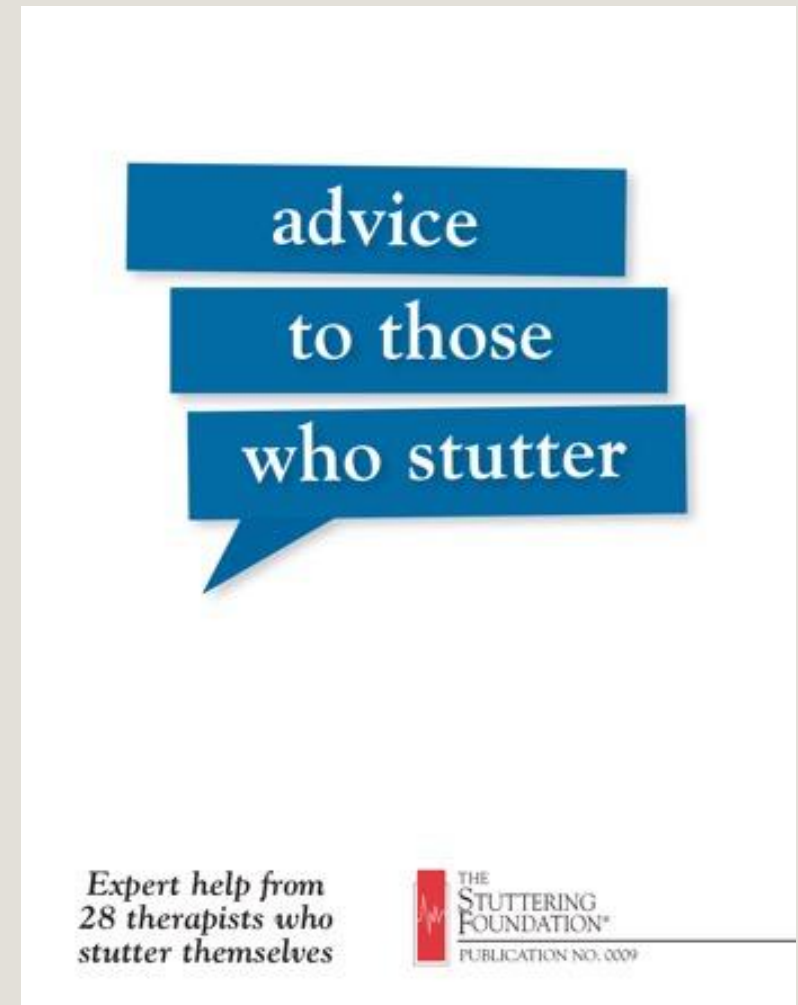


A 1972 conference focused on film production.

PUBLICATIONS

Knowledge designed to travel

Each conference resulted in a new publication or film. The Foundation's books were created to turn expert discussion into practical help for people who stutter, families, teachers, and clinicians.



A selection of Stuttering Foundation books.

BEHIND THE WORK

A home-based operation

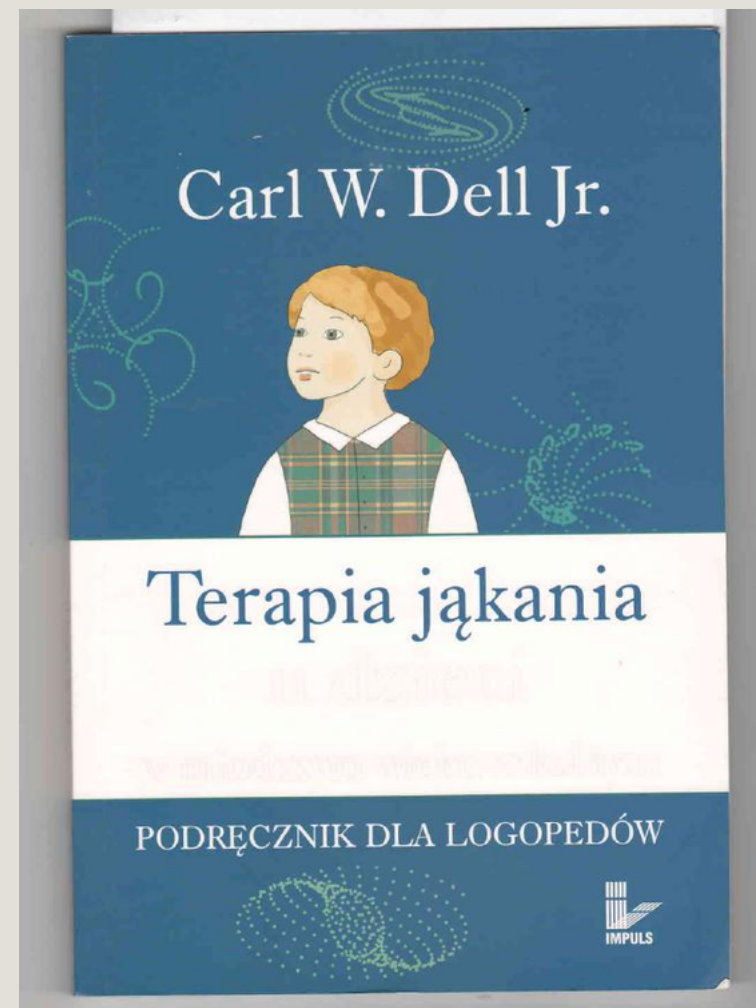
Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, Charlotte Fraser shipped Stuttering Foundation materials from home - a quiet logistical effort behind the organization's growing reach.



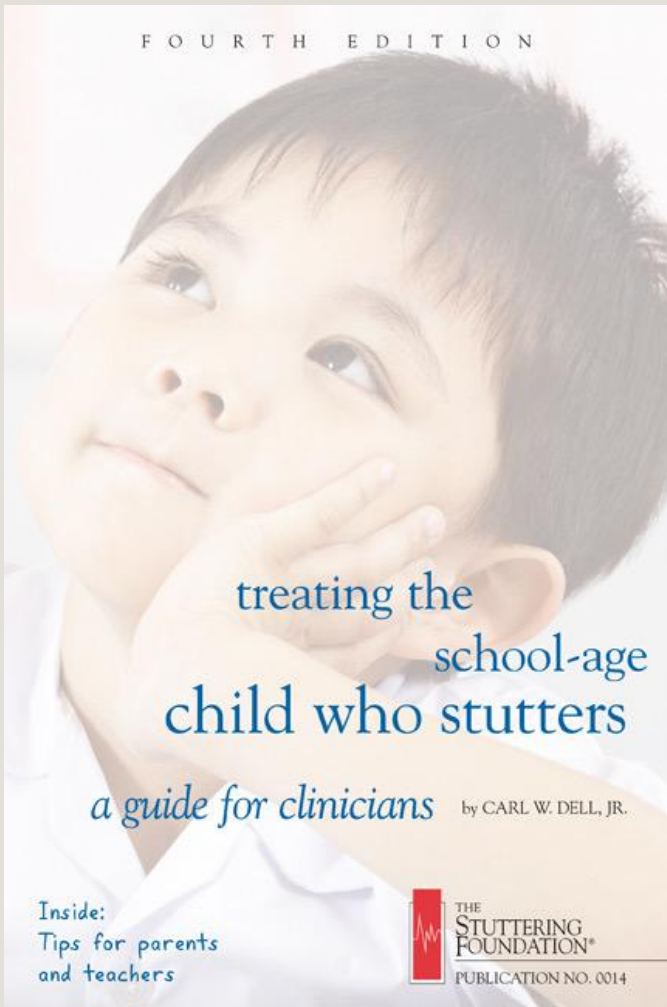
Charlotte Fraser shipping Foundation materials from home.

Translated across languages and cultures

Foundation books have been translated into 45 languages. Self-Therapy for the Stutterer alone has appeared in 26 languages, often translated by people who had been helped by the materials.



Translations of Foundation publications.



SPECIALISTS

A pilot program becomes a model

Letters between Charles Van Riper and Malcolm Fraser in 1971-72 advanced the idea of specialist training. The Foundation sponsored Carl Dell to train with Van Riper and supported work focused on school-age children.

Archival correspondence on specialist training.

1985 ONWARD

Intensive clinician training

Hugo Gregory pursued the specialist-training idea with the Foundation and Northwestern. The first two-week summer program began in 1985 with 15 trainees; the workshop model later expanded to other locations and more than 1,000 participants.



SFA/Northwestern Workshop, Class of 1998.

PUBLIC ACCESS

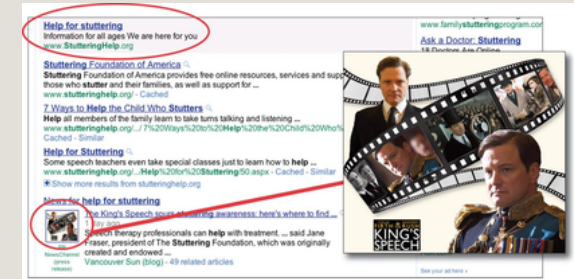
Making help easier to find



Donated outdoor space placed Foundation information before large public audiences.



News and media outreach broadened awareness across communities.



Online search made trusted stuttering information easier to discover.

AWARENESS

Meeting families where they were

Convention outreach, newspaper publicity, public service advertising, and practical materials connected people with credible information and help.



Bette and Dean Williams at the 1990 American Academy of Pediatrics Convention.



PUBLIC SERVICE

Voices amplified at national scale

Radio public service announcements recorded by John Stossel, Mel Tillis, and around The King's Speech reached thousands of stations. Donated print, broadcast, outdoor, and online space multiplied the Foundation's reach.

Public service outreach featured in the source presentation.

From mailboxes to digital learning



Online video brought familiar experts and practical guidance to new audiences.



Books and educational materials continued to connect people with help.



Digital learning created new ways to ask questions, explore evidence, and share resources.

2026

A modern front door to help

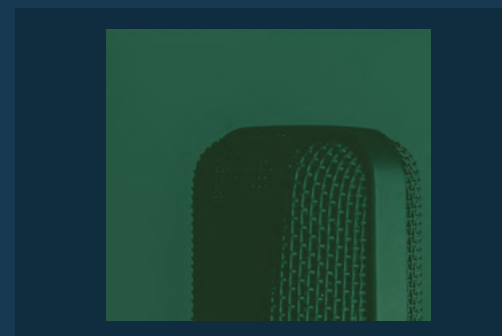
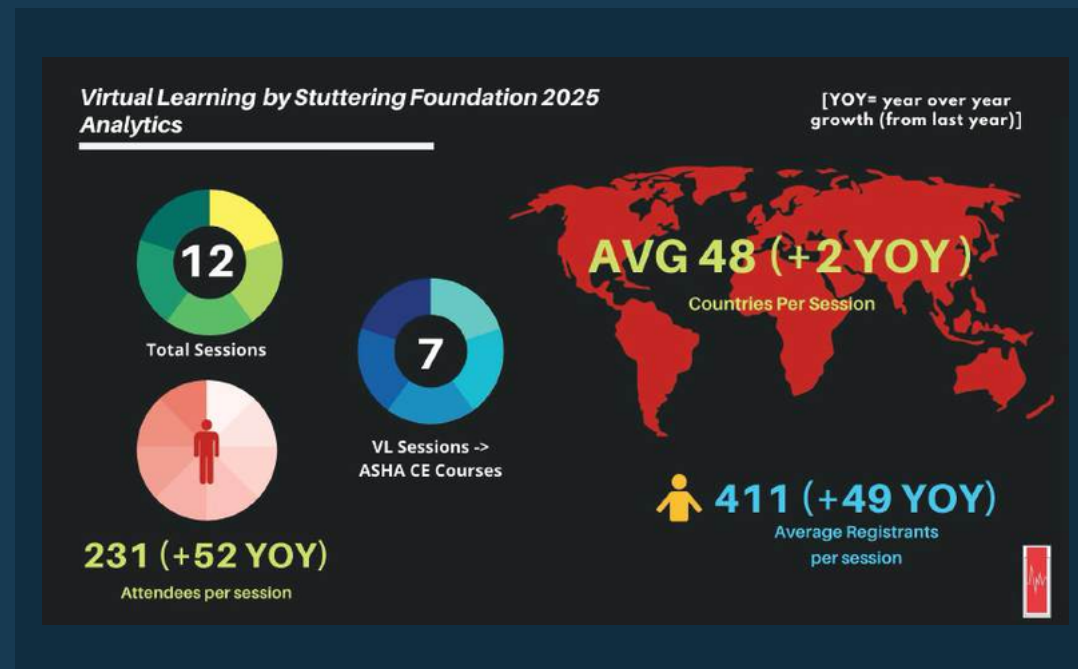
StutteringHelp.org now brings more than 1,800 published pages into a cleaner, more accessible experience. The 2026 rebuild improved mobile presentation, navigation, performance, and the systems that support future growth - extending the Foundation's commitment to reliable information wherever people seek it.



The redesigned StutteringHelp.org shown in the Spring 2026 magazine.

Learning without borders

The Foundation's educational mission increasingly reaches beyond the walls of a classroom. In 2025, 12 Virtual Learning sessions averaged 231 attendees and represented an average of 48 countries. The growing podcast likewise carries clinical discussion, research, and personal stories to listeners worldwide.



75+ episodes

105,000+ downloads

Listeners in 164 countries

Sources: Spring 2026 and Fall 2024 magazines.

MALCOLM FRASER'S MODEL CONTINUES

Training specialists. Sharing knowledge.



Malcolm Fraser believed that better-prepared clinicians could change countless lives. Nearly four decades of intensive Foundation workshops have created a far-reaching network of specialists. International conferences and digital distribution now carry that knowledge to an even wider audience.

2024 Eastern Workshop, Boston

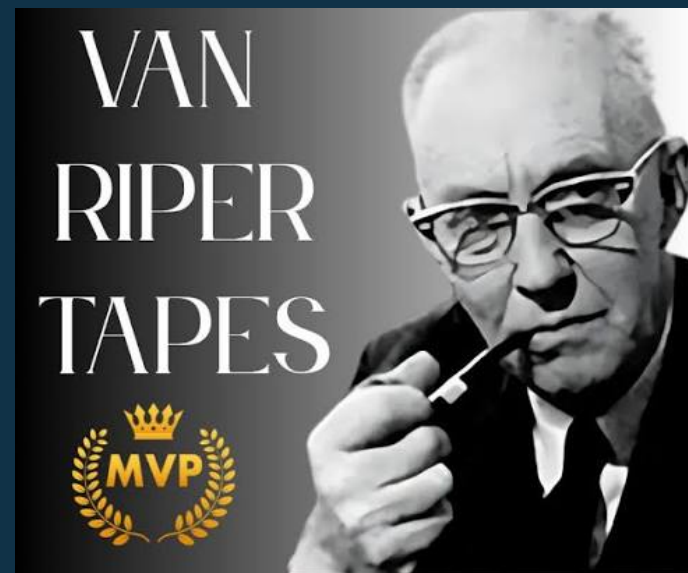
Oxford Stuttering and Cluttering Research Conference, 2025

Sources: Fall 2024 and Fall 2025 magazines.

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I believe that every clinician who works with stutterers should be opening their space to animals.

CHARLES VAN RIPER



RESEARCH

The next frontier

The presentation closes by asking what is most exciting about current and future research. Brain plasticity, imaging, temperament, and individual differences point toward a more precise understanding of stuttering.

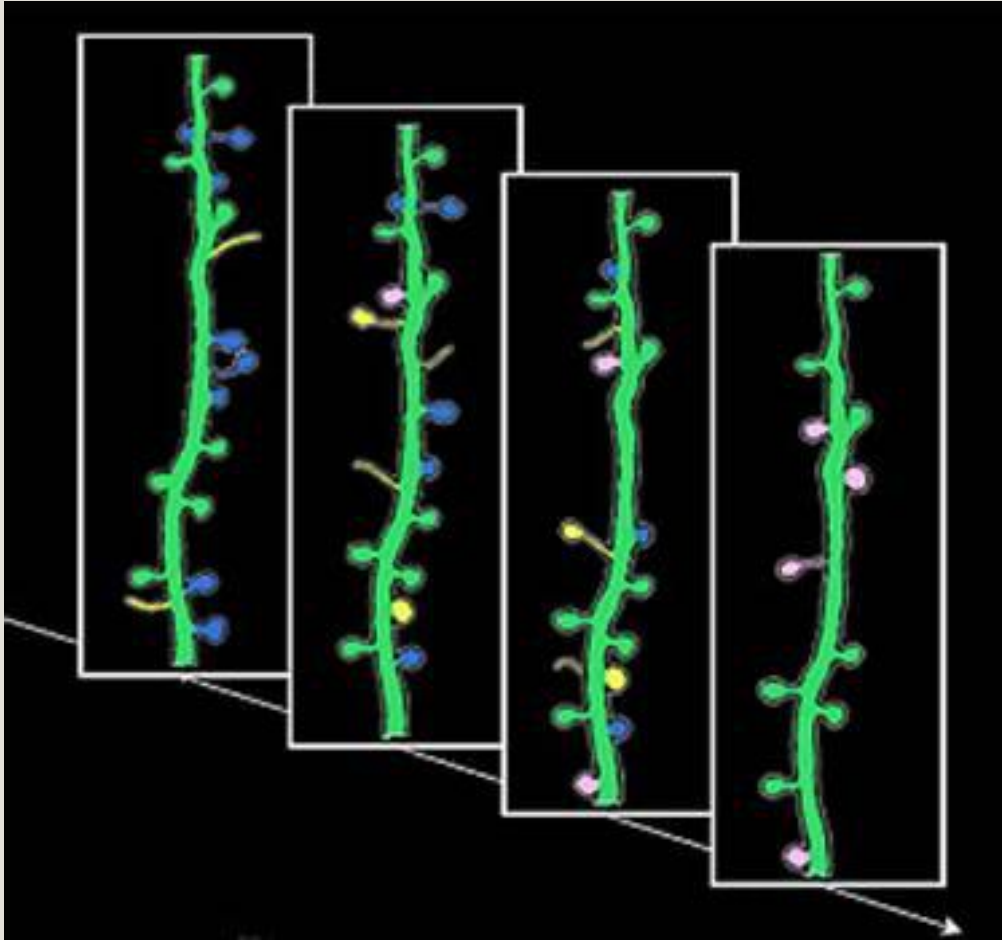


Research imagery from the source presentation.

CONTINUITY

Forging ahead - a team effort

The methods have changed dramatically since 1947, but the core pattern is recognizable: bring people together, ask better questions, translate knowledge into useful tools, and make help widely available.



Brain-imaging research featured in the source presentation.

An enduring idea

One person can begin something consequential. Its reach grows through families, researchers, clinicians, authors, translators, volunteers, and people who stutter around the world.

This digital history was redesigned from the Stuttering Foundation's 2022 Eastern Workshop presentation and updated with selected photographs and developments from the Foundation's 2024-2026 magazines.

