

0. OVERCOMING THE STAMMER - Story Preface

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These portraits depict how the Duke and Duchess of York appeared in 1931. At the time, both of their daughters (Elizabeth and Margaret) had been born and the Duke had been diligently working on his stammer (with Lionel Logue) for about five years. Click on the image for a better view. Portraits online, via Royal Monarchy website.

With their three children, Lionel and Myrtle Logue traveled to London during the winter of 1924. It wasn't supposed to be a permanent move, although that's what it became. Although he was not a physician, Logue opened an office at 146 Harley Street, in the heart of the city's medical district.

Accounts differ on the Duke's referral to Logue. However it happened, they first met at Lionel's office on October 19, 1926. The speech therapist later recalled that first visit:

He entered my consulting-room at three o'clock in the afternoon, a slim, quiet man with tired eyes and all the outward symptoms of a man upon whom a habitual speech defect had begun to set the sign. When he left at five o'clock, you could see that there was hope once more in his heart. (Robert Rhodes James, quoting Lionel Logue, in *A Spirit Undaunted*, at page 98.)

What else did Logue note regarding Prince Albert's overall condition and its impact on his speech?

Good chest development, top lung breathing good. Has never used diaphragm or lower lung - this has resulted through non control of solar plexus in nervous tension with consequent episodes of bad speech, depression. Contracts teeth & mouth & mechanically closes throat. Gets chin down and closes throat at times. An extraordinary habit of clipping small words (an, in, on) and saying the first syllable of one word and the last in another clipping the center and very often hesitancy. (*The King's Speech*, page 67.)

Logue believed that Bertie could overcome his stammer, but it would take a tremendous amount of work. He also thought the Duke's problems stemmed from faulty breathing.

He prescribed breathing exercises (which Logue invented), frequent gargling (with warm water), intoning vowels for fifteen seconds each (in front of an open window) and hard work (at least one hour of concentrated effort every day). Many of the sessions would be with Logue (at his office) where the Duke of York would be treated the same as all other patients.

Logue also wanted Bertie to work with Evelyn Laye, a famous singer and friend of the Duke and Duchess. Singing lessons, including one of the Duke's favorites ("Love is a Song"), were aimed to help improve Bertie's speaking delivery.

Not only were the arrangements agreeable to the Duke, he welcomed the process. So did the Duchess, who often accompanied (and encouraged) her husband on his Harley Street visits.

Logue's office notes show nearly immediate progress:

Oct 30: Diaphragm much firmer, a distinct advance.

Nov 16: A good all around improvement much greater control, diaphragm almost under complete control.

Nov 18: As he progresses the click in the throat becomes very noticeable as other faults are cleared up. Diaphragm is now forcing air through throat muscles.

Nov 19: Never made a mistake during the hour, despite fact very tired.

Nov 20: Lower jaw became pliable. (Logue's office notes, quoted in *The King's Speech*, page 68.)

Personally relieved, Bertie realized his stammering was not "a mental problem," as uncharitable individuals had often suggested. He told his father the good news:

I am sure I am going to get quite all right in time, but twenty-four years of talking in the wrong way cannot be cured in a month. (*A Spirit Undaunted*, page 98.)

The King was as happy as the speech therapist:

Comparing his second son with the others, the King wrote that he had "more guts than the rest of them put together," an excessively severe, but revealing, comment - and Logue later said that the Duke was the "pluckiest and most determined" patient he had ever had. (*The King's Speech*, page 98.)

Logue's office records show eighty-two appointments with the Duke before Bertie and Elizabeth left on their six-month world tour. Although he did not make the trip himself, Logue gave the Duke an assignment list for every single day he was abroad.

Not only was the Duke's opening of Parliament a triumph, the whole tour was successful. After returning to Britain, Bertie met with his father. He told Logue about those meetings, which took place at Balmoral Castle (in Scotland):

I mustn't boast and I must touch wood while I write this that I haven't had a bad day since I have been in Scotland. Up here I have been talking a lot with the King & I have had no trouble at all. Also, I can make him listen, & I don't have to repeat everything over again. (*The King's Speech*, page 77.)

Eight years later, however, Bertie would have a series of very bad days.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/OVERCOMING-THE-STAMMER-The-King-s-Speech>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/OVERCOMING-THE-STAMMER-The-King-s-Speech>

Media Stream



Evelyn Laye - Friend of George VI and Queen Elizabeth

Photo online, courtesy the U.K. National Archives and "The Daily Mail."

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Evelyn-Laye-Friend-of-George-VI-and-Queen-Elizabeth>



Duke and Duchess of York - 1931

Portraits online, courtesy Royal Monarchy website.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Duke-and-Duchess-of-York-1931>

Bertie and Elizabeth - Family Joys and Sorrows

Clip from "[Bertie & Elizabeth - The Story of King George VI & Queen Elizabeth](#)," a 2002 television production. Online, courtesy PBS and YouTube.

Director:

Giles Foster

Writer:

Nigel Williams

Starring:

James Wilby - Bertie/Duke of York/George VI

Juliet Aubrey - Elizabeth

Alan Bates - George V

Eileen Atkins - Queen Mary

Charles Edwards - Edward VIII

Production Co:

Carlton Television and Whitehall Films

Also aired, [on PBS](#), in 2002 and 2005 (WGBH)

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bertie-and-Elizabeth-Family-Joys-and-Sorrows>

Evelyn Laye - Love is a Song

Clip from "[Princess Charming](#)," a 1934 film by Gaumont British Film

Starring:

Evelyn Laye - Princess Elaine

Henry Wilcoxon - Captain Lauer

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Evelyn-Laye-Love-is-a-Song>

