



PERISCOPE

**A Quarterly Newsletter sponsored by the
Mississippi Council of the Blind, Inc.
Fall, 2021**

President: Ralph Smitherman
514 Edgewood Lane, Brandon, MS 39042
Telephone: 601-672-0973
Email: redbird26@bellsouth.net

Editor: Alison Smitherman
1412 Wilhurst St., Jackson, MS 39211
Telephone: 601-331-8084
Email: amduo@bellsouth.net; alisonb_58@yahoo.com

Tax deductible contributions may be sent to:

MS Council of the Blind

P O Box 31112

Jackson, MS 39286

Anyone wishing to remember the MS Council of the Blind in a last will and testament may do so by including a special paragraph for that purpose. If your wishes are complex, please contact MCB for clarification.

Contributions to the James Doyle Case Memorial Scholarship Fund or to the Carter Gable Memorial Technology Assistance Fund should be appropriately marked, and sent to the above address.

Phone MCB at 601-672-0973.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Ralph Smitherman

Hello, MCB members and friends. I hope all of you are staying safe during this difficult time. At present the COVID numbers in our state continue to rise; therefore, continue to practice proper protocols.

As of now, MCB continues to plan for a face-to-face state convention in late October. If we are able to do so, it will be great to see everyone. Of course, the dates are October 29, 30, and 31, at the Holiday Inn Trustmark in Pearl. By now you should have received a registration form, so, fill it out and join us. If you did not receive a registration form--and you would like to have one--contact me, either at redbird26@bellsouth.net or at 601-672-0973, and I can make sure you will have one. Remember, room rates are \$109 plus tax. I encourage everyone to participate.

As you know, ACB held its summer convention during the month of July; it was a virtual convention. Altogether, there were over 160 various sessions. I know that many of us are involved in several special interest affiliates through ACB; and, if you are like me, you have made many friends throughout the years because of that fact. Just a few highlights: On the first Friday of convention, Friends In Art presented its showcase; I thought it was terrific. Elections for Officers, Board of Directors, and Board of Publications were held throughout the week. ACB used the Vote Now service, where each member could cast their vote by computer or telephone. The daily newspaper was read on one of the ACB media channels and several of the presentations were prerecorded. The summer auction was held on Tuesday night. ACB is planning to host the 2022 convention in Omaha, Nebraska, from July 1 to July 8.

Many of the presentations will soon be available through podcasts.

In closing, I want to thank you for your patience and understanding during these uncertain times. Thank you, Board of Directors and Committee members, for being ready to take action when necessary. Call me if you need to talk. Remember, it is not about me; it is about us!

STATE BOARD HIGHLIGHTS **Submitted by Wanda Allen**

The MCB State Board met via Zoom on Saturday, June 19, 2021, at 10 o'clock a.m.

After establishing a quorum and opening with a word of prayer from Robert Thomas, President Ralph Smitherman called the meeting to order.

The Minutes from the March 20th meeting and the **Treasure's Report** were accepted as distributed. Chapter & Committee Reports were given and approved.

Service Projects chair Kris McNair reported that the committee approved the request to donate \$500 to the Sea & Sun Camp project. Rene Virden read the thank-you note that was received from Teresa Martin, thanking MCB for the generous donation.

Scholarship chair Ken Maddox reported that after the deadline was extended, the committee received and approved one application from MSB Valedictorian, Trinity Adams. The motion was made and approved by the board to award Ms. Adams the Scholarship.

Convention chair Eddie Turner reported that the 2021 MCB Convention will be held Halloween weekend. The contract has been signed and approved by the Hotel. The committee will meet again real soon now that we are a go. The motion was made and approved by the board to keep the fees the same as in previous years to cover expenses: \$100 for full registration per person to attend, \$50 if you attend with just one meal, \$25 administrative fee to attend with no meals and the same \$25 late fee after the deadline of October 10th.

The deadline to register with Trustmark Park Holiday Inn located in Pearl will be September 29, 2021. After this date, they will take away the block for rooms. Room rates remained the same as in the past at \$109 per night.

Award Committee chair Terry Shelton reported that the deadline has been extended in hopes to have recommendations submitted for an Award that will be presented at the Convention in October.

President Ralph Smitherman reported that in Early May he met by conference call with an organization on the Coast known as “Never Lose Sight.” Several other entities were also on the call. The spokesperson for the organization was Charlotte Searcy;

also, a lady from the Coast, Brenda Ramsey was present. Brenda started a Braille production company called Family First Braille; will update as soon as more information comes through about her company and what she offers.

The next MCB State Board meeting will be held at the home of Eddie Turner at 1:00 p.m. on the 25th of September, 2021.

JACKSON CHAPTER NEWS

By Jane Peets

A big “hello” to all of our friends and MCB members. The Jackson Chapter continues to hold board meetings as scheduled.

On July 24th we had our first social in a long time at Rooster’s in Fondren. Twenty-four attended. A 50/50 drawing was held for a fund raiser won by new member, Shirley Walker, who generously donated her winnings to the Chapter. It was great to be able to enjoy the fellowship again.

The next Chapter board meeting is scheduled for September 14 at 06:30 p.m. by conference call.

Best wishes until we meet again.

SEA AND SUN CAMP CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF FUN IN THE SUN

By Kris McNair

This past May the Sea and Sun Camp for blind and visually impaired youth celebrated its 25th year of providing fun in the sun for blind campers. The first camp was held in 1997 at Seashore Methodist Assembly on the beach in Biloxi. The camp thrived at this location and had its largest number of campers in May of 2005 when the camp hosted 51 campers. In August of that year Hurricane Katrina made it necessary for many South Mississippians to make a new plan. Although the facilities at Seashore Methodist Assembly survived the power of Katrina, the location was needed to accommodate relief workers traveling to the Coast to help with the storm's aftermath. Not wanting to miss Sea and Sun Camp's 10th year anniversary in 2006, camp planners sought a new location for the camp and found it at Camp Wilkes. The camp has been at this location ever since.

Sea and Sun Camp was the brainchild of Greg Crapo. Greg joined the LIONS in 1981, and it was his dream to have a camp for blind and visually impaired kids on the coast. Greg knew how to secure funding and facilities, but he needed a connection to campers and their families. In a moment of true synchronicity Greg met Nancy Ann Sherman, another LION who also had the dream of starting a camp and also had the connections in the blindness community that Greg lacked. After about a year and a

half of planning, the first camp came together in 1997 and continues. Camp went virtual in 2020 due to Covid 19; activities were conducted via Zoom conference, but campers were back at Camp Wilkes in 2021.

In the early years of Sea and Sun Camp, campers aged 5 to 12 years of age came from Mississippi, Alabama, and occasionally Louisiana. Currently the camp still hosts campers from the same geographic areas, but the age range has expanded to include kids aged 5 to 16 years. All campers must meet the Mississippi Department of Education requirements to receive visual impairment services.

Through the years, as staff and volunteers accrued experience and knowledge about campers with visual impairments, activities have evolved and expanded. In the early years, USM Research Lab brought marine animals for campers to touch. Libraries and museums were a big part of the activity plan. As time went on activities expanded to include tandem bicycling, basketball, soccer, archery, kayaking, fishing, and swimming.

The camp strives to keep a two to one staff/volunteer to camper ratio and is usually blessed with numerous volunteers. Campers are grouped into “Prides”, groups based on age and gender. The Prides cycle through activities so there is no standing around

waiting for the next thing to happen. Everyone comes together for meals, transportation and large group activities like dances.

In its 25 years Sea and Sun Camp has collaborated with the University of Alabama Birmingham, William Carey University, and the University of Southern Mississippi. The Mississippi Council of the Blind (MCB) supports the camp with service project funding and also has members who regularly volunteer. Community support includes funding, supplies, and volunteers from AT&T Pioneers. The Pioneers have provided golf carts to shuttle campers and luggage from the parking lot to the campgrounds. Of course, major funding for the camp comes from the LIONS, but individuals, community grants and even Amazon Smile support the camp.

If you would like more information about Sea and Sun Camp visit the website: www.seaandsuncamp.org;

E-mail Sea and Sun Camp at: seaandsuncamp@gmail.com

The physical address is: 2109 Camp Wilkes Road, Biloxi, Mississippi 39532

The mailing address is: P.O. Box 182, Biloxi, MS 39533

Camp is held the third weekend of May. Next year's camp is planned for May 20 through 22, 2022.

Sea & Sun camp is a 501 C3 not for profit organization and a Member of the LIONS of Mississippi Activities Corporation.

AMAZON ECHO SHOW

By Melvin Smitherman

The Amazon Echo Show 8 is a rather neat and handy piece of technology. Using voice control, the Echo Show can play music, audio books from Kindle & Audible as well as music and podcasts, including video podcasts, for about \$130 including shipping from Amazon, for Prime Members anyway.

The \$130 price tag includes a convenient pivot stand which the Echo Show just slips into for a slight angle for convenience. What I have found as one of its most useful features, is the item recognition feature. What this feature was designed for is recognizing pantry items. It works this way: Get an item from your kitchen cabinet, hold it in front of the screen and simply say “Alexa, what am I holding?”. If you can’t see, the Echo Show 8 has voice prompts to locate the item properly in front of the screen. Although it’s not perfect, it truly is amazing how accurate it is.

Remembering a time when such a piece of assistive technology only cost a little over \$1500, and this one is available for anyone

from Amazon, I am truly glad I now have the resources to afford this without having to get a Technology Grant to receive one.

The WARP-SPEED with which technology changes is astounding to me. Well, I've lived through a period where the big-ticket item in an American household was a 13 inch Black & White mono audio output TV for the family to handheld televisions called "Smart Phones" and from a party-line phone to ZOOM. I truly am impressed and can't wait for what marvels the future holds for especially the Blindness Community!!

Just for laughs, while writing this note, I found that the Amazon Echo devices now have a pleasant new Male voice. So, if some of you have multiple Echo devices, it's nice to have a different voice for a separate device. Enjoy!

NEWS FROM N.R.T.C.

Submitted by Emily Damm

1. The NRTC is recruiting our next class of Vision Specialists in Vocational Rehabilitation. Our online graduate certificate program, funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, lasts one year (January to December). Some students will receive stipends to cover the cost of tuition. Applications will be accepted until October 1, 2021. Read [our news item](#) for more information.

2. The NRTC has a new free resource - “Community Outreach Guide: How to Host A White Cane Awareness Day Celebration” that introduces the reader to the history of White Cane Awareness Day, provides inspiration for activities, and offers general event tips. It’s available on [our website](#) for free.

Please let me know if you have any questions!

Emily Damm

Communications Coordinator

National Research & Training Center on Blindness & Low Vision

Mississippi State University

www.blind.msstate.edu

662.325.2001

(Editor’s note: Many of us who have been reading talking books for a long time will remember Mitzi Friedlander, a beloved narrator of talking books for many years. Mitzi passed away recently, so I thought you might like to see her obituary, a copy of which is below. Mitzi Friedlander will be greatly missed!)

MITZI FRIEDLANDER OBITUARY

Mitzi Friedlander Louisville - Mitzi Friedlander, 91, passed away on 8/11/21. Mitzi was a performer (actress and singer), narrator of Talking Books, social activist, teacher, mentor and

friend to many across Louisville. Her light brightened many rooms and lives. She loved big parties with friends, especially the legendary Friedlander Christmas parties. She is enshrined in the Atherton Hall of Fame, a University of Louisville Alumni award winner, and is an American Federation for the Blind Alexander Scourby Awardee for excellence in narration. She was preceded in death by her husband of 60 years William, and is survived by her daughter Fadel Fulkerson (Greg) and her son Eric (Indigo). A memorial party (she did love a party) will be held outdoors (masks, please) on Saturday, August 21st, 5 pm until..., at the Commodore Garden, 2140 Bonnycastle Avenue, Louisville 40205. Mitzi will also be celebrated during the regular Sunday Eucharist at Christ Church Cathedral, 421 S 2nd Street on Sunday, August 22nd. In lieu of Flowers, the family would appreciate donations in Mitzi's honor to Christ Church Cathedral, Louisville Interfaith Paths to Peace, or the American Printing House for the Blind.

A NIGHT AT THE OEPRA

by Judy Wilkinson

When I had my first apartment in 1962 during the summer after my freshman year at UC Berkeley, Saturday afternoon was for cleaning. But I had the vague impression I was supposed to be doing something in addition to mopping the kitchen floor. Of course! Saturday afternoon was for listening to the Texaco broadcast from the Metropolitan Opera in New York City which always began, "This Is Milton Cross." My mother often listened during my childhood, and I'd wander in and out, but once in college, I knew what Saturday afternoons were for!

My love of opera expanded and exploded during my junior year when a roommate introduced me to Verdi's *Aida*! I remember our apartment shaking as our stereo reverberated as the boulder closed the doomed *Aida* and her beloved *Radames* in their underground tomb—though there was plenty of time for glorious singing before the oxygen ran out.

Almost a decade later, a friend and I were driving along the coast on a glorious California Saturday afternoon. But I felt like I was supposed to be doing something: *Milton* again! This time with Mozart's charming seductive *Magic Flute* with *Papageno* singing his wonderful song about being a birdcatcher.

Ok, now I was well and truly hooked! But how to get the words that went with such grand opera! I wanted to know what they were saying! Thus commenced a problem and a journey I struggle with to this day.

In the early years, my reader would record on cassette the libretto (Italian for "book" meaning the opera text.) I'd listen again and again; But sitting in my seat at the San Francisco Opera, I was on my own.

As technology improved and I got my first braille printer in the mid 80's (a *Romeo* which printed on one side only), I'd get my reader to input the text into my Apple IIE. So it cost money! I had my text. One of my happiest memories is of taking *Winifred Downing* (a long-time braille enthusiast and BRL affiliate supporter) to the opera and handing her (act by act) her very

own copy of the libretto. We sat quietly, unfolding our tractor-fed braille texts on to the floor beneath our seats! She said she had never been so thrilled: being able to follow along with the text.

More time passed and along came scanners and braille displays. Now I could download braille and not worry about accidentally losing hardcopy pages on the floor!

But the process of obtaining the original libretti is not for the faint-hearted! NLS's Music Division has a number of libretti; and I've borrowed them all! Some websites have free libretti; I've downloaded and cut and pasted many. I've scanned libretti (right side page for English). I bought an edge-to-edge glass flatbed scanner so I could get right to the book's binding! With more modern scanning systems, I can plop the text under my iPhone camera and flip pages (again mostly right side only). When I'm willing to spend the money, Kindle comes to the rescue!

But another problem arises when considering formatting libretti. Imagine how excited I was to discover the NLS complete Libretti by Puccini: in 15 volumes! Trouble is, there is one line of English, then one line of Italian: a nightmare if you're trying to follow along with a live performance. Just try finding that next line of English!

Sometimes NLS does character by character (song by song) or page by page (of the original print text), and one can quickly look at the reiteration of the character name to move forward.

But sometimes you don't know who is singing next! Still a huge problem. I've laboriously deleted the other language leaving only an English text. But there are no standard guidelines for producing interlinear documents in 2 languages! And now to compound the challenge, I also want those other languages: at least the French and Italian!

Beginning in 2015, I thought the new millennium had arrived when I discovered that the San Francisco Opera could provide me with a listening device which reproduced audio versions (thanks to the Alex voice) of the super titles (text above the curtain), which is how sighted folks know what's being said.

I couldn't wait: *Louisa Miller*, a lesser-known Verdi opera which I had not found and certainly had no time to cut and paste. Well, some of you who have struggled with audio players in movie theaters are probably way ahead of me here. After being shown the button, Not To Touch, for fear of turning the device off, I couldn't get it to play! No nearby usher! Near the end of Act One, the sound blasted on, nearly blowing me and people six seats away out of our places! But for that night, my opera experience had been ruined!

Over the next couple of years, I've tried this process again with mixed results. I've seen operas I never would have experimented with such as the modern *Dream of the Red Chamber* and this year's *Girls of the Golden West* (about a mining camp in goldrush days). But I still always fear, the device won't work! In short, having the braille is best!

It's bad enough not knowing what the stage sets or costumes are; for me, knowing what's being said is crucial! Some people can just let the music flow over them, but being a type A personality, not me!

I'll never give up! Much of the time, I sit in my comfortable chair, libretto on braille device, studying some opera: stopping; starting; repeating; looking at the other language: (what in hell is the Italian for "handkerchief"? A crucial word in Verdi's Otello!) I'd love to know what other opera lovers have done to solve the problem of spending A Night at The Opera.

DOLLY PARTON'S LASTING LEGACY

Submitted by Ralph Smitherman

In 1990, the high school dropout rate for Dolly Parton's hometown of Sevierville Tennessee was at 34%.

Research shows that most kids make up their minds in fifth/sixth grade not to graduate.

That year, all fifth- and sixth-graders from Sevierville were invited by Parton to attend an assembly at Dollywood.

They were asked to pick a buddy, and if both students completed high school, Dolly Parton would personally hand them each a \$500 check on their graduation day.

As a result, the dropout rate for those classes fell to 6%, and has generally retained that average to this day.

Shortly after the success of The Buddy Program, Parton learned in dealing with teachers from the school district that problems in education often begin during first grade when kids are at different developmental levels.

That year The Dollywood Foundation paid the salaries for additional teacher's assistants in every first-grade class for the next 2 years, under the agreement that if the program worked, the school system would effectively adopt and fund the program after the trial period.

During the same period, Parton founded the Imagination Library in 1995: The idea being that children from her rural hometown and low-income families often start school at a disadvantage and, as a result, will be unfairly compared to their peers for the rest of their lives, effectively encouraging them not to pursue higher education.

The objective of the Imagination Library was that every child in Sevier County would receive one book, every month, mailed and addressed to the child, from the day they were born until the day they started kindergarten, 100% free of charge.

What began as a hometown initiative now serves children in all 50 states, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, mailing thousands of free books to children around the world monthly.

On March 1, 2018, Parton donated her 100 millionth book at the Library of Congress: a copy of "Coat of Many Colors" dedicated to her father, who never learned to read or write.

EDITOR'S CORNER

Hello, everyone! I hope you enjoyed reading this issue of the Periscope. Thanks to all who submitted articles for this issue, as well as those who assisted with formatting and distributing this newsletter. Without your help, the Periscope would not be possible.

The deadline to submit articles for the Winter issue of the Periscope is **November 21, 2021**. If you need assistance with writing your article, or if you have questions or concerns regarding this newsletter, please feel free to contact me at the telephone number or email address provided on page one of this newsletter. I'm here for you and am always happy to help.

In the meantime, enjoy the rest of your summer, and....

Happy Fall, y'all!

Alison Smitherman
Editor

