



PERISCOPE

**A Quarterly Newsletter sponsored by the
Mississippi Council of the Blind, Inc.
Fall, 2022**

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Tax deductible contributions may be sent to:

MS Council of the Blind

P O Box 134

Clinton, MS 39060

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.

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President's Message

by Ralph Smitherman

Hello, MCB members and friends. I hope all is well with you. I need not tell you how hot it has been; therefore, stay cool and safe.

On August 27, 2022, the Jackson chapter of MCB will have celebrated thirty-seven years. Yes, in 1985, the chapter was established. Robert Sallis was the first President of the chapter. In 1972, our state affiliate was established, and--you guessed it--the state organization turns fifty in 2022. The old expression, "Time flies," is appropriate.

Now, on Saturday, September 24, 2022, we will hold our annual state gathering. We are scheduled to meet at LeFleur's Bluff State Park--under a pavilion. We will begin to gather at 10 AM. We will have lunch and afterwards will hold a short business meeting. Two three-year board member positions will need to be elected. As determined by the group last year, a one-day event

was voted on. I hope everyone will plan to come to this picnic. Much thanks go to the Convention/picnic committee for their diligence.

Miss Dorothy Young has begun a monthly zoom call for stakeholders in the blindness community. This call will be held on the fourth Tuesday of each month, in the afternoon--times may vary. As President of MCB, I am honored to represent our interests on these calls. Dorothy will provide updated information while the stakeholders will share ideas. Therefore, if you know of anyone who needs assistance, refer them to MDRS!

We have returned from the ACB 2022 national convention which was held in Omaha, Nebraska. The official dates were July 1, through July 8, 2022. I think around 450 people attended in person, and over six hundred attended by Zoom. This was the first hybrid convention. Many pros and cons concerning the convention in its hybrid state were discussed. A survey was sent to those who participated; I hope everyone who received that survey filled it out. Now, at convention, although I have been to several, I met several people for the first time; I also met many of my friends, who, like me, attend the national conventions. The tours were well organized. The exhibit hall was easy to navigate. Several new products were on display. Mike Smitherman did a terrific job with the exhibits. I heard no

complaints about the exhibits. I enjoyed the food as well. Someday I will have to tell you about the experience at the Omaha airport. Several Resolutions and Constitutional changes were debated. All ACB members were sent a code whereby each individual could cast a ballot for the particular election--democracy at work. In my opinion, I think this practice will continue. Therefore, I encourage everyone to vote.

You are encouraged to participate in the ACB community calls. There are various choices from which to choose. Often times when ACB holds its auctions, the money raised goes to support ACB media.

There are several new devices on the horizon for the blind or low vision consumer. For example, "Orbit Research" has some; and, NLS is beta testing its new talking book player.

In conclusion, I thank all of you for your forbearance and support. It is an honor to serve as MCB President. I know we face difficult times with covid, but we must endeavor to persevere!

MCB Board Meeting Highlights
by Jane Peets, Recording Secretary

The MCB board met on 06/18/22 at 10:00 a.m. The minutes from the prior board meeting and the treasurer's report were approved as distributed. A budget for 2022/2023 was approved for \$18,050.

An effort has been made to award scholarships this year, but no applications have been received at the time of this board meeting. The James Doyle Case award will be given to the 2022 valedictorian of MSB pending the receipt of the correct mailing address.

The board approved a one-day convention/picnic to be held in September. Further plans to be announced.

Ken Maddox was contacted concerning a fundraising project called Harness Giving. He and Pshon Barrett will explore this further and report back to the board.

Mississippi is on the NLS list to receive e-readers in the near future to be distributed to library patrons who read Braille.

The new post office box is currently in use and is P.O. Box 134, Clinton, MS 39060.

The next MCB board meeting is scheduled for 09/17/22 at 10:00

a.m. via Zoom.

Jackson Chapter News

by Jane Peets

Hello, friends. A social was held on 08/27/22 at Georgia Blue in Flowood at 11:00 a.m. This event was the 37th anniversary celebration of our chapter. Everyone had an enjoyable time.

Our chapter currently has 61 members and around \$3,400 in our checking account. We also have a CD of over \$10,000. Our committees continue to be available to receive requests for services to individuals and groups.

Our next chapter board meeting will be on 09/20/22 at 07:00 p.m. by conference call. These are open meetings. The number to call is 716-427-1589, code 6222255#.

I look forward to being with all my friends at our convention/picnic in September. Until then, best wishes from the Jackson Chapter.

New Free App Available for Blind & Visually Impaired

Below is information about WalkAssist, a free iOS app which recognizes traffic-related objects (crosswalk signal, crosswalk, and traffic signals) and alerts you through voice alerts:

Features:

- Detects traffic lights, crosswalk, announces/buzz pedestrian traffic light “Don’t walk/Walk”
- this works even without a cell connection of Wi-Fi
- optimized for the US, but could work in other countries

App can be downloaded here:

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/walkassist/id1615852366>

Support email: WalkAssist.app@gmail.com

Early Braille

by Paul Edwards

When Louis Braille died in 1852 from the tuberculosis that had limited his activities for years, his reading and writing method had still not even been accepted by the school where it was developed. This actually happened two years after he died. However, despite its many advantages, the braille system was, by no means, immediately accepted anywhere as the best reading and writing method for people who are blind. A good

part of the reason for this was probably the degree to which services were delivered to blind people through charity. Those who gave knew best what blind people needed.

In the United States, though news of braille was quick to arrive, its acceptance took a century after its invention. It went through several incarnations before finally arriving where it is today. The original alphabet and braille itself was accepted first by the Missouri School for the Blind who began producing books in the 1860s. Other schools adopted New York Point. This system used a cell that was two high and three across rather than the braille cell which is three high and two wide. Still others began to favor moon type. In the 1870s the Perkins School began to produce braille but they used an entirely different set of rules. They very scientifically decided that it would be better to produce braille using a system where the most frequently used letters would require the fewest dots. "American Braille" did not supersede Louis's original alphabet in Europe and, by 1900, England and the commonwealth had adopted a system which is pretty close to what became grade two braille.

WAR OF THE DOTS

In the meantime, though the United States had lots of advantages, it was far from certain whether braille as we know it would win the day. Relatively early, our Federal government provided funds for the American Printing House for the Blind,

which was charged with producing books for the blind schools all over the country. For a long time, however, APH refused to produce braille books and, even when braille began to have more of a foothold in the country, resisted adopting its production. The United States had, at the turn of the century, embarked on what has become known as the "War of the Dots" which really wasn't settled till a dozen years after the first world war ended. The Americans felt that the British system would discourage blind children from being good writers and spellers and wanted a braille system with fewer contractions and which absolutely required capitalization. As a result, once braille triumphed using Louis's alphabet, the United States adopted as their standard grade one and a half. During the 1920s there was ongoing negotiation between the United States and the United Kingdom to see if an agreement could be reached. In 1932, after the passage of the Act in the United States that allowed the Library of Congress to produce braille books, we came close to getting universal English braille. The American and British braille systems were nearly conjoined. However, the British would not agree to capitalization and also felt that the US was being too fussy about contractions and syllables.

So, though the systems had far more in common than they had ever had till this time, English braille remained irrevocably divided between the British and the American systems. It took

many years before the United States was prepared to give up grade one and a half.

It is worth noting that what has characterized the period from the 1930s to the present has been a gradual broadening of those involved in making decisions about braille. The producers of braille, for a long time, shared with teachers of braille the honor of making decisions about its future. Certainly blind people were allowed opinions and had many. However, it wasn't until the 1970s that consumers were truly included formally in making decisions about the braille they read and wrote. With the formation of the Braille Authority of North America in 1977, we truly did get to a place where producers, teachers, codifiers and consumers all sat down at the same table to determine the future of braille.

WRITING

Until the 1890s, only the slate was available for writing braille in the United States. This device allows braille to be written by hand. A stylus is used to punch out dots one at a time, and most slates produced braille on the back of the page which meant that braille had to be written backward and could not be read until the paper was removed from the slate. In 1893, the Hall Braille Writer was the first mechanical braille writer to be developed. A year later, a printing system for braille was also demonstrated that significantly improved the mass production of braille books.

Not to be outdone, however, the New York Point people came up with a writer in 1895 and a printer the year after that. So the "War of the Dots" was fought on the writing front as well as on the reading side. Though it seems ubiquitous now, the Perkins brailler did not arrive on the scene till 1951.

THE GOLDEN AGE?

In the 1950s and 1960s braille may have reached its high watermark in the United States. The braille code was stable. In 1952 Abraham Nemeth developed a code that was better suited for reading and writing information of a mathematical or scientific nature. The code was revised in 1956, 1965 and found its final form in 1972. More and more books and magazines were being produced though braille books were still too expensive to be bought by any but the most wealthy blind people. Most children were attending schools for the blind or were enrolled in schools at home where resource rooms tended to assure that braille was relatively well taught. With the emergence of a whole new population of blind children suffering from RLF which was later known as ROP, there was more pressure for education close to home. This disease was characterized by a loss of vision due to too much oxygen in incubators for premature children who were surviving even though they were born extremely early. During this period, too, thermoforming arrived. This technology allowed drawings and braille to be produced once on a master sheet which could then

be copied onto plastic sheets using heat. This suddenly meant that local handouts could be made more widely available and some books could be produced more cheaply. Many blind people found thermoform reading less than wonderful but it certainly had an impact.

WORKING ON THE CODES

A small group of dedicated individuals worked through the 1950s and 1960s to make changes to the way braille was used in the United States. Essentially, a joint committee of representatives from the American Association of Workers for the Blind (AAWB) and the American Association of Instructors for the Blind (AAIB) did virtually all the work on braille codes. In 1975 the National Braille Association joined this group and by 1977, it was decided to expand this committee into the Braille Authority of North America by adding new organizations including the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), the American Council of the Blind (ACB) and the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) as well as the National Library Service (NLS) and other producers.

COMPUTERS CHANGE EVERYTHING

By the beginning of the 1980s, four developments fundamentally altered braille. First, the very earliest computers arrived which could use speech synthesizers. By now, the vast majority of blind children were being mainstreamed, which

meant they were going to neighborhood schools rather than to schools for the blind. Teachers began to feel that learning could happen quite nicely using these new computers, and perhaps children didn't need to be put through the bother of having to learn to read and write using braille which many sighted teachers didn't know well or value. Second, the first braille printers began to appear, which meant that there was an alternative to thermoform that would allow the relatively inexpensive production of braille materials locally. At the same time the first electronic braille displays were emerging. They were very expensive as were the first printers. However, they offered new ways of reading and writing braille and access to information produced on computers that had the potential of substantially expanding what blind people could easily read in braille.

All these changes created a situation where blind people became concerned about the future of our medium for reading and writing. By the early 1980s the American Council of the Blind created this organization, the Braille Revival League (BRL) and the National Federation of the Blind created the National Association to Promote the Use of Braille (NAPUB). Both these organizations were created because fewer children were becoming good braille readers and more and more children who should be learning braille were not being taught how to use it. Both these organizations have worked at the state level to pass

"braille bills" which made it harder for administrators and teachers to decide not to teach braille. At the Federal level, amendments to the legislation implementing special education regulations have been made to strengthen Federal support for braille instruction.

With the emergence of computers, braille printers and braille displays, it was necessary to develop standards that would be used for interfacing braille with the computer. In 1986, BANA adopted the Computer Braille Code, which has been amended through changes made as late as 2014. (It is important to note that the computer braille code is now not an official code in the United States since it has been superseded by UEB.)

UNIFIED ENGLISH BRAILLE

In January of 2016, UEB (Unified English Braille) became the new standard code for braille in the United States. Finally, the same code is now being used in virtually all English-speaking countries. In the United States, based on recommendations made by both the NFB and the ACB, the Nemeth Braille Code remains an integral part of the American braille future as administered by BANA. The entity now responsible for changes to English braille is the International Council on English Braille (ICEB). The transition from English Braille American Edition (EBAE) to UEB will be gradual, but it is likely that within five to ten years, we will have converted to the new system and

books in the English language wherever they are produced will use the same rules.

UEB actually takes what is estimated at about three percent more space but eliminates issues that had caused translation errors for materials being translated using computer translation software. The net result is likely to be braille that is more accurate and easier to produce. A goal that has been at the heart of our efforts for the last century has at last been achieved. One language English; one code for braille!

Cooking Corner: Chicken Caprese
submitted by Gloria Miceli

1 (16 ounce) box penne pasta, cooked according to package directions
1 rotisserie chicken, meat shredded, skin and bones discarded
2 cups chopped fresh mozzarella cheese, divided
2 cups halved cherry tomatoes, divided
1 (15-ounce) jar Alfredo sauce
1 cup heavy whipping cream
1/4 cup chopped fresh basil
1 clove garlic, minced
1 1/4 teaspoons kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper

1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Spray a 13 X 9 - inch baking dish with cooking spray.
 2. In a large bowl, stir together cooked pasta, chicken, 1 1/2 cups mozzarella, 1 1/2 cups tomatoes, Alfredo sauce, cream, basil, garlic, salt, black pepper and red pepper. Pour into prepared pan. Top with remaining 1/2 cup mozzarella and remaining 1/2 cup tomatoes.
 3. Bake until golden brown and bubbly, about 30 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving. Garnish with basil and red pepper, if desired.
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From the Editor

by Alison Smitherman

First, I'd like to thank those of you who submitted articles for this issue of the Periscope, as well as those who formatted and distributed the newsletter. Without your kind assistance, this newsletter would not be possible.

Also, thanks to all of you who take the time to read the newsletter and offer feedback. Your input is welcomed and appreciated.

The deadline for submitting articles for the Winter, 2022-2023 issue of the Periscope is November 21, 2022. I hope you will consider submitting an article for this upcoming issue.

In the meantime, enjoy the remainder of your summer, and...Happy Fall, Y'all!

“Never bend your head. Hold it high. Look the world straight in the eye.” – Helen Keller