



PERISCOPE

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

Winter, 2023-2024

President: Jane Peets

312 Lakebend Drive, Brandon, MS 39042

Telephone: 769-257-4515

Email: janepeets@yahoo.com

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 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 769-257-4515.

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President's Message

by Jane Peets

Hello everyone, I hope you are all having a healthy and blessed holiday season.

As most of you have heard, our elected vice president, Gary Austin, passed away on August 25th. Our sincere condolences to his wife, Patricia Austin, and his children, Amanda and Josh. Subsequent to this loss, Pshon Barrett graciously agreed to be our vice president until the membership can hold an election. To fill Pshon's board place, Billy Mayfield accepted appointment to the board.

Also, as some of you will remember, MCB owned a New York Life annuity which was based on Gary's life as he was MCB president at the time the annuity was established. Therefore, the annuity will be paid out to MCB, and the finance committee will

make recommendations to the board for the disposition of these funds. I will report on the disposition of the funds in the next newsletter.

ACB has a memorial for the recognition of deceased members called the Angel Wall. MCB, along with the ACB affiliate for blind lawyers, are purchasing a space on the Angel Wall in memory of Gary. This will be available for viewing at the next ACB convention in Jacksonville, FL. There will be an engraved plaque along with a photograph and short paragraph concerning Gary's life and accomplishments.

On a lighter note, the MCB picnic was held at Lefleur's Bluff State Park on September 23. Thirty-eight people attended. The auction was conducted by our capable and entertaining auctioneer, Juanita Bishop, raising \$636 for MCB. I would like to give special thanks to Joe and Juanita Bishop for rescuing the picnic by picking up the subway sandwich order for us and helping to setup and serve the lunch. The plan had been for Wanda and Wayne Allen to prepare barbecue for the picnic, but unfortunately, they were sick with the flu so last-minute arrangements had to be made. Thank goodness everything worked out in the end, and we are grateful to everyone who stepped up to make the event a good one. Thanks also to my sister, Wanda James, for being our cashier for the auction in the

absence of our treasurer, Rene Virden, who was attending a funeral.

Last year, Ms. Betty Dement contributed an article to this newsletter stating that our late member, Luther Dement, had three Perkins Brailers that she would like to give to someone who could use them. I called her and arranged to get the Brailers. The plan is to send them to be cleaned and repaired and given to visually impaired school children without access to a Brailier at home. Thanks again to Wanda James for taking me to Oak Grove, MS, to get these Brailers.

A special committee has been formed to write an updated brochure or flier about MCB. Ken Maddox, Pshon Barrett and Billy Mayfield are collaborating in this endeavor.

In closing, it is so true that it takes all of us to get the job done. Everyone has a part to play to further the cause of our organization, and I am grateful for every act of kindness and the willingness of our members and friends to help. Please feel free to get in touch with me if you have questions or suggestions concerning MCB.

MCB State Board Meeting Highlights

by Ralph Smitherman

The MCB Board met on Saturday, October 21, 2023, at 10 A.M. central time. We met by Zoom.

Kenneth Reed opened this meeting with prayer.

All board members and chapter representatives were present. The minutes and Treasurer's report were approved. Pshon Barrett was appointed as Vice President and Billy Mayfield is now serving on the state board. The Finance committee will research how to proceed with our investments and make a recommendation to the MCB Board. At our state picnic this year we raised over \$600 as a fund-raising project. Rene Virden maintains our membership list. Everyone is encouraged to pay their dues for 2024. Committee reports were given. Periscope Editor, Alison Smitherman, reported that our last issue was distributed in a timely manner. She stated that Mary Rogers Beal would be leaving her position at our cooperating library as of November 3, 2023. We maintain our connections with the Deaf/Blind Project of Mississippi; as well as the Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities. Plans are to work on our web site and possibly create a new brochure. Our next scheduled state board meeting will be held on Saturday, January 20, 2024.

Jackson Chapter News

by Jane Peets

Greetings of the season from the Jackson Chapter! Our chapter board recently met on November 21. The chapter has combined assets of over \$14,000. A checking account in excess of \$3,000 and a CD over \$11,000.

We have a Christmas party and business meeting scheduled for December 9th at 11:00 a.m. at the home of Wanda and Wayne Allen and Bonnie and Randy Thompson. Donations of packages of athletic socks will be collected to go to Gateway Mission. In the spirit of the season, to fulfill the Fred Moore Christmas Gift, the chapter has adopted a visually impaired adult this year who recently lost his home to fire.

Our chapter continues to sponsor the Alexander Memorial Transportation Fund administered by Rene Virden. The fund continues to sell discounted Uber Cards and cab vouchers to qualified visually impaired persons in the Jackson metro area.

An election of officers and a new board member will be held at our annual business meeting, so if you are a Jackson Chapter member, please think about serving on the board. Board meetings are open to all chapter members, so if you have something to bring before the board for consideration, feel free to do so.

In closing, have a very merry Christmas and a happy new year from the Jackson Chapter.

A Note of Sympathy

As President Jane Peets mentioned earlier in her President's Message, since the printing of our last Periscope, MCB lost our beloved Vice President and friend, Gary Austin. In case you have not seen it yet, below is a copy of Gary's obituary, taken from the Enterprise Tocsin of Indianola, MS. Thanks to Pshon Barrett for submitting the obituary. Gary will be greatly missed.

Gary L. Austin

Gary L. Austin, 74, of Brandon, previously of Indianola, passed away Friday, August 25, 2023. He was born Feb. 19, 1949, in Marked Tree, Ark., to Helen Bennett Austin and W. E. "Red" Austin.

Gary was a friendly, outgoing and intelligent individual. He enjoyed telling jokes and amusing stories from his life. He had a passion for the law and pursued a successful career as an attorney. He served as the Sunflower County Prosecutor and Indianola City Attorney, leaving a lasting impact on the community.

Gary's educational journey took him to Indianola High School and later the Mississippi School for the Blind. He pursued his higher education at the University of Southern Mississippi, Delta State and Mississippi College School of Law.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Gary enjoyed playing poker, listening to books nonstop and spending time in his shop, where he loved tinkering and piddling with various projects. His hobbies provided him with relaxation and joy.

Gary was preceded in death by his parents; the mother of his children, Jaynie Johnson Austin; and his son, Adam Austin.

Gary will be deeply missed by his surviving loved ones, including his loving wife and stepmother to his children, Patricia Smith Austin; his daughter, Amanda Austin Bass; his son, Josh Austin; and his grandchildren, Garrett Bass, Hayden Bass, Ansleigh Austin, Conner Austin and Emerson Austin.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, Sept. 30 at The Blue Biscuit in Indianola from 2:00-5:00 in the afternoon. All who knew Gary are invited to attend and share their fond memories.

In lieu of flowers and/or to honor Gary's memory, contributions may be made to the Mississippi School for the Blind, 1252 Eastover Drive, Jackson, MS 39211. Your support will help continue the important work of the institution.

Gary Lynn Austin will forever be remembered for his dedication to the law, his love for his family, and his joyful spirit. May he rest in peace.

TBS's New Books-on-Demand Service: What's It All About?

By Evan Theilman

Patron Services Librarian

Mississippi Library Commission

Some patrons may already be using Talking Books Services' new Books-on-Demand service, but for those unfamiliar, we'd like to explain how it works. Previously, books that were sent out to Talking Books patrons were sent on cartridges that held only a single book that couldn't be changed. Like a standard library book, if we didn't have enough copies of that book, it couldn't be checked out.

Additionally, the National Library Service's database contains tens of thousands of books, a number that would be impossible to store as a physical collection. As such, a large portion of the books we had access to were unable to be sent out to patrons, as we had no cartridges for those books. Less-popular books went entirely unread, since we only had space for newer or extremely popular books. It was possible to download specific books to a blank cartridge, but this was something that had to be done manually, making it impractical to do for everyone.

However, that's no longer the case. Books-on-Demand is a way for Talking Books Services to give patrons the books they want without compromises. Each patron is assigned three cartridges, each of which can store several books (the exact number of books varies based on page numbers, but it can be anywhere from 5-20). The books are downloaded from the National Library Service's database directly, meaning a patron can get any of the thousands of books in the collection and any number of patrons can have the same book checked out at once.

If there are requests for specific books, those are filled first, followed by books that match the preferences that we have on file for each patron. While the number of actual cartridges is lower, most patrons will be receiving more books overall. However, it is more important than ever to mail cartridges back as soon as they're finished in order to get more books quickly, as three cartridges at a time is a hard limit.

Using Books-on-Demand, we're hoping that patrons will be more satisfied with the books chosen for them and that books that were previously unavailable will now be more widely read. With this new system, it's becoming even more possible to provide every patron of Talking Books with exactly the reading material they want.

Need more information? Call us at 1-800-446-0892 or email talkingbooks@mlc.lib.ms.us.

Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America®
Sagebrush 2024 National BEP Training Conference
Announcement

With the Theme "Sagebrush 2024: Teaming up to Tackle the ins and outs of Randolph-Sheppard business", the RSVA® Sagebrush National BEP Training Conference begins on Monday, February 12 with Sagebrush registration at 5 pm and the welcome reception at 7 pm. The conference ends on Friday, February 16 with our special "You don't have to see it to tee it" golf outing.

The seminar sessions cover topics from business and entrepreneur related topics, technology updates, using AI for business, as well as specific Randolph-Sheppard facility information and updates. Registrants have the opportunity again to earn Continuing Education credits - please spread the word.

With so many unique events and conversations, expect to enjoy the conference!!! The conference will be held at the Golden Nugget Hotel in downtown Las Vegas, a Four-Star Conference Center. Room reservations must be made directly with the hotel. NOTE: Special Sagebrush room rates apply Monday, February 12, 2024, through Saturday, February 17, 2024. Since Monday is

overflow from the Super Bowl, the rate is slightly higher that night. There are much higher rates if you wish to stay at the Golden Nugget before Monday, February 12. Rates differ from tower to tower. A fee for one night's stay will be charged when you register for your room. For hotel reservations, please call 1-800-331-5731. When booking reservations over the phone, it is essential to give the group code: GSRSV24 to ensure the group rates and other amenities are applied. To book online: go to <https://goldennugget.reztrip.com/ext/promoRate?property=1115&mode=b&pm=true&sr=843490&vr=3>.

All who attend the event in person and register by January 1 will have their name entered into a drawing for a free in person registration for the 2025 event. Conference updates will be placed on the RSVA® website: www.randolph-sheppard.org. For further information or to receive the registration form for the conference, contact RSVA® by email: rsva@randolph-sheppard.org or call 303-963-5153.

Recipe for the Holidays

Cake Mix Cookies

Any flavor cake mix

1/2 cup oil

2 eggs

Nuts (optional)

Chocolate or butterscotch chips, whatever

Mix ingredients together and drop on a greased cookie sheet by spoon full and bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes.

A Christmas Wish for All

Keep Thou our hearts, we humbly pray,
Free from all greed this Christmas Day:
Fill us with love, and grant that we
Be clad with Christ's humility.

Peace in the manger of the mind
The gift of love for all mankind.
Lead in the homes of every kin
Joy—and "Peace on earth, goodwill to men!"

From the Editor's Desk

by Alison Smitherman

Hello, everyone!

First, I would like to thank those of you who submitted articles for this issue of the Periscope. Also, thanks to all who formatted and distributed copies of this newsletter to our members. Without your help, the Periscope would not be possible. You are appreciated more than you know.

The deadline for submitting articles for the Spring issue of the Periscope is **February 21, 2024**. Articles received after this date will not be included in the Spring issue.

As always, if you have any new ideas or suggestions for how we might improve the Periscope, please do not hesitate to let me know. My contact information is on page 1 of this newsletter.

On behalf of MCB, I wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!