



PERISCOPE

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

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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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A Note from the Editor
by Alison Smitherman

Greetings, MCB members and friends! I hope you have enjoyed this past winter with all the festivities of the holidays and hope that you are looking forward to springtime and all its new beginnings.

I would like to thank those of you who submitted articles for this issue of the Periscope, as well as those who assisted by formatting and mailing the newsletter. Without your help, our newsletter would not be possible. The deadline to submit articles for our Summer, 2025 issue of the Periscope is **May 21, 2025**.

If you have suggestions as to how we might make improvements to the Periscope, please do not hesitate to let me know.

I hope to see you all at our upcoming MCB Convention in April.

Happy Reading!

President's Message

by Jane Peets

Hello, everyone. MCB has several upcoming events. On March 29 at 6:00 p.m. CST, MCB will participate in the “Fabulous Interstate Auction.” We have 11 lots to be offered for bidding. The auction will have ten affiliates participating. The event will be on the Zoom platform. To bid, a person must register in advance. I will post the link on our Google group, and I am sure it will be available on the ACB Community schedule as well. One hundred percent of the funds collected on our items will come to MCB. I hope this will be a good fund-raising opportunity for us. Please plan to join us and support this effort. Some of the items donated by Patricia Austin will be on the auction block: a Blind Shell Classic cell phone, a Six Dot Braille labeler, an electric Perkins Braille, a Braille Sense Qwerty U2.

Hopefully you have received your registration form for our one-day MCB convention to be held on 04/26/25 at Holiday Inn Trust Mark Park in Pearl, MS. Plans are currently being made for our program. If you have requests or suggestions for the

morning program, please contact me at (769) 257-4515. A block of rooms has been set aside for those wishing to stay at the hotel. These will be available for reservation until 04/05/25. Like last year we are having a served luncheon. During our business meeting we will elect officers and two board members. Chris McNair will be completing her service as board member with two consecutive terms and will therefore not be eligible for another term as board member but would be eligible for election as an officer. Alison Smitherman will be completing one term as board member and will be eligible for election for another term as board member or for an officer position. Please join us for a day of information and fellowship.

As always, I am available to hear suggestions concerning MCB. Please feel free to call or email me with your concerns and suggestions.

MCB State Board Meeting Highlights **by Ralph Smitherman**

The Mississippi Council of the Blind held its quarterly board meeting on Saturday, January 18, 2025. The roll was called at 10:00 a.m. Central time. A quorum was established. Kenneth Reed opened the meeting with prayer. President Peets called the meeting to order. The minutes from the September, 2024 board

meeting were approved as well as the Treasurer's report. Committee and Chapter reports were given. President Peets stated that our convention would be held on Saturday, April 26, 2025 at the Holiday Inn Trustmark hotel in Pearl. A motion was made and seconded to charge \$30 per person for the convention, namely for Lunch. The deadline to register for Lunch at our convention is April 1, 2025. If a person registers after April 1 and by April 7, the cost would be \$40 per person. We are gearing up to participate in an interstate auction to be held on Saturday, March 29, 2025. We stood adjourned.

Northeast Mississippi Chapter Update **by Bob Stanford**

Greetings from the Northeast MS Chapter of MCB!

We had a luncheon February 8 at the Casa Mexican restaurant. We currently have 14 members. Looking forward to Brian and Christina's wedding next month. We will be having a luncheon in April.

Have a great Spring!

Jackson Chapter Highlights

by Ken Maddox

Hello Everyone,

I hope you are enjoying the wild Mississippi weather we are having, hot one minute, freezing the next minute then wet and dry all taking place in the same day.

It's dues time! The Jackson Chapter has around 35 members at this time and around \$16,000 in assets.

We had our bimonthly social at Roosters in Flowood; we had 24 people present and everyone had good food and fun. I hope to see more of you at our upcoming socials, and don't forget the MCB State Convention will be in April at the Holiday Inn Trustmark Park.

So long for now!

Ken Maddox - President
Jackson Chapter

Join Us in the March 29th Multi-State Auction!
by Patricia Tusing

Everyone is invited on March 29, 2025 at 7 p.m. Eastern to enjoy a night of fun on ACB Media Channel 8 as we gather to bid on great items such as electronics (including a Versa Slate), and two top-of-the-line Bose speakers, but wait ... there's more! You will also find exquisite jewelry, fine wine, delightful food items and a wide selection of restaurant gift cards.

A registration form will be posted in March as people must register to bid in the auction.

Please join us on ACB Media Channel 8 as we look forward to enjoying an evening of fun and excitement. All proceeds will strengthen our affiliates. We invite all to have a fun evening with us at 7 p.m. Eastern on March 29.

On behalf of affiliates of Connecticut, Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Wisconsin, we can't wait to see you there! Thank you from the Steering Committee of the Interstate Auction of March 29, 2025.

Editor's Note: As many of you know, since the printing of our last Periscope, MCB lost a long-time member and dear friend, Mrs. Linda Miller. Below is a beautiful tribute to Linda's life written by one who knew her best, her loving sister, Janice Gable. Linda will be greatly missed!

Remembering Linda Miller

by Janice Gable

Linda Miller was born February 23, 1945, in Newton, MS. She was the daughter of Robert and Lucille Bounds. She was the third child of four, two older brothers, and I was the baby of the bunch.

As a small child, Linda was very protective of me, always showing me something to do and learn. She was very creative and would take on a challenge of something and not turn loose until it was accomplished and done; only the best would do! She was born with very limited eyesight, and what she had was lost in her mid-teens to glaucoma.

In 1951, she started school attending the MS School for the Blind in Jackson, MS. It was an adjustment for her being away from home, certainly one for me, too, because I lost my playmate and big sis. She couldn't wait to come home to show me things she'd learned at school. Yes, one of the great things about Linda was her sharing quality.

I was four when she went to school in 1951. A sweet memory was when she came home for Christmas that year, she taught me

to sing harmony with her. I was thrilled she was so patient and was so proud that I caught on so quickly!

Linda was an excellent student in her school years at MSB, graduating with honors. Not only academic excellence, but she participated in other school activities like track, Girl Scouts, band, clarinet player, school chorus, and other opportunities that came her way; she would give it 100 per cent plus!

Linda attended MS College for a half year then transferred to Hinds Junior College, but at that time there weren't scholarship programs or much rehab funding for education assistance, so she moved on and became interested in becoming a medical transcriber. She attended the Rehab Center for the Blind in Vicksburg, then located at Kuhn Memorial Hospital. After completing the course and training there, she was hired at Kuhn Memorial, promoted to become medical secretary for Dr. Nathan Lewis, hospital administrator. She worked in Vicksburg for about four or five years. She transferred to University Hospital in Jackson, working as a medical transcriber there until 1971.

She became a wife and mom at the age of 25! She has one daughter, Jana Lynn.

Linda also had an opportunity to work at the Addie McBride Center as secretary for Dr. Jimmy Cotton. She learned to operate an Apple Computer system, crafting her clerical set up to accommodate the forms needed for Dr. Cotton's reports.

As previously mentioned, she was very musical as we both were blessed with a musical talent; we played piano and sang as a duet, and in our teens we had an opportunity to appear on a noon RFD farm show at WLBT TV twice a week. From that show we gained many personal appearances of entertaining and made lots of friends and fans, a joyous part of our lives!

As you know, she was very crafty. She loved to crochet and she made Afghans, tablecloths, purses, kitchen items! Her hands stayed busy, of course at the same time an avid reader, so an audio book would play while she did her beautiful work!

She was a charter member of MS Council of the Blind and dedicated many years of service to the organization, hosting meetings, social events, serving on the board, and always contributing beautiful crochet work for fund raising efforts.

Memories are our photographs, at least that's the way I see it! She made us all so proud!

Linda passed away December 17, 2024.

Linda, we love you very much. We will miss you, but we know you are “Sheltered In The Arms Of God.”

Love you forever,
Janice Gable

Currency Readers Now Available from Talking Book Services

By Miranda Loper

Talking Book Services Director

Mississippi Library Commission

In partnership with the United States Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP), Talking Book Services of the Mississippi Library Commission now has a stock of currency readers available to our patrons. This partnership allows patrons to experience a shorter waiting period from the time in which the request is placed to when the patron will receive the device. The device is small, compact, and runs on a triple-A battery, which is included. To use the currency reader, simply insert a U.S. bill into the reader and press the button. The device will tell the note’s denomination. Each reader comes with instructions in large print, braille, and audio CD. If you are interested in a

currency reader, contact a Reader Advisor at 601-432-4151 or email talkingbooks@mlc.lib.ms.us.

Partnership Creates Groundbreaking Product **submitted by Pshon Barrett**

American Printing House has partnered with General Electric (GE) Appliances in the creation of stickers to ensure accessible home appliances and greater independence for those who are blind or low vision.

Last year, GE reached out to APH with an idea for a product after attending an accessibility workshop put on by staff members of APH. GE appliances had not only learned the importance of workplace accessibility but saw an opportunity to fill a need within their own products.

Andrew Moulton, Director of Technology and Manufacturing Research at APH, explained that as products become ‘smarter’ they also become less accessible. “Everything is flat screen, you know, there’s no physical buttons or tactile touch screen,” said Moulton. Joe Hodge, Technical Quality Assurance Supervisor at APH, said that in his experience shopping for appliances as a blind person he often searches for the oldest model possible.

This way, it's more likely to have buttons he can navigate independently.

After learning about APH's selection of tactile stickers and overlays, GE felt there was an opportunity to solve this problem. The process consisted of developing an idea, producing prototypes, and creating a lot of surveys for the redesign. APH agreed to produce the stickers in-house as efficiently as possible to keep the products at a low price. It was important to GE to ensure the product was not only available, but attainable.

Joe Hodge recalls that the desire to produce intricate designs and cover a wide scope occasionally got in the way of the initial purpose. "When we sat down with them, they had over 100 stickers with different symbols on them, and the symbols would range from 'start' to something like a pizza setting on a microwave. They had some things I had never seen before, like crushed ice," said Joe. "No one ever teaches you what crushed ice looks like in school." After a few rounds of receptive editing to the product, GE was able to come away with a set design that not only looked nice but was extremely functional.

What the team did not expect to follow was the widespread recognition of the product as something innovative and forward moving for the future of accessibility in appliances. The product was announced at the Kitchen and Bath show in Las Vegas. A

huge gathering for what's new in the world of home tech and appliances, the show attracts a lot of attention as it sets the stage for revolutionary tech coming in the following year. USA Today chooses 15 new products each year to award 'best in show,' and to the team's surprise, APH's new stickers were 2nd on the list. "I think that's pretty major because the other appliances on the list were smart televisions and app based. You know, high tech stuff," said Andrew. The fact that this super low tech set of accessible stickers was mentioned is a huge win for both GE and APH," said Andrew.

The stickers have gone on to win more awards within the past year, but more importantly, they've provided individuals who are blind or low vision with a greater opportunity for independence in their home.

To learn more or purchase your own set, visit GE's website at: www.geapplianceparts.com/store/.

New Spanish Resources Available from the NRTC

Independence begins with access to the right tools. Our collection of Spanish resources was created for Spanish-speaking individuals who are blind or have low vision (B/LV). These tools offer practical guidance on topics such as

transportation, disclosing visual impairment, and working while receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Lack of access to reliable transportation is a barrier that keeps many B/LV individuals from finding and maintaining employment. One of our most popular resources, "A Transportation Guide for Persons Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision," has been translated into Spanish and is now available on our website. It contains helpful information about finding and using transportation services effectively.

Visit our Spanish Resources Page at www.ntac.blind.msstate.edu/ to explore these resources and share them with others!

Surrounded by Braille **by Marj Schneider**

My “office” is a modest desk in our sunroom, where my desktop computer sits at a stand near my feet and the keyboard is on a low shelf that slides in and out. I spend many hours on the computer sitting in a well-used office chair, some of the time getting paid for preparing transcripts from audio files, while the rest of it is spent on email, working with other documents, visiting websites and joining Zoom calls. The default JAWS

voice, sped up to 49%, plows through all of it, whether or not I can make sense of what it reads on my screen. I could spend all day listening and interacting with all I can access through my computer, but a closer look at my desk and the bookcase and cabinets nearby would show an observant person that there's another way to read and communicate close at hand.

With a powerful computer and other talking devices available, why would I need or want to continue using braille in my daily life? The answer is easy for me. Braille can give me immediate information with no keystrokes needed, no searching through documents or webpages. When I consider how much braille surrounds me at my sunroom desk, I even amaze myself with how much there is and what it can do.

As I sit typing on this keyboard, a braille calendar is directly in front of me, one with each month on a different page. I find I can sometimes look up dates even faster than anyone can ask Alexa. To its right is a slate and stylus with a paper always inserted, just in case I need to get down a phone number or take a note on something I'll want to remember later. To the left of the calendar my eReader, the NLS refreshable braille device for reading a book or magazine, sits waiting for me to power it up and read by touch, rather than listening to JAWS.

My desk includes another shelf below the keyboard, where I keep two valuable possessions, metal file boxes that contain 4 by 6 braille index cards of names and phone numbers, often with addresses and other information as well. One box is for businesses; the other is for people. These cards are brailled from the bottom up starting with the name, which means as I go down each line my fingers are further into the box. It's the only efficient way to do braille index card writing and reading. I learned the method in high school from another blind person when I was first starting to use braille. Some of my cards still date back to the 1970s! Only a natural disaster could destroy my cards in those boxes. They'll never be lost to the failure of an electronic device and, to this day, I still add cards to those boxes.

To the right of my desk is a bookcase, mostly filled with braille. There are reference books and recipe books, some of which I don't often consult these days, but I don't want to part with them. Anyone else have the two-volume 20,000 Words fifth Edition, produced in braille in 1975 by APH? It's a dictionary without definitions, intended for looking up spellings of words. I continue to find it useful to distinguish homonyms, since those are accompanied by short definitions in parentheses. I still go to the recipe books, either to browse and get inspired or to find my favorite dishes, where I need a reminder of the ingredients and the method. I also still have several notebooks of brailled

recipes, some transcribed by my high school special education teacher. I keep the notebooks more because of their sentimental value, but a braille recipe is so much easier to follow than a recorded one or those I have saved in a folder on my computer.

The two-drawer filing cabinet to the left of my desk contains folders with a bewildering number of print documents, manageable only because I've kept up with braille labeling the folders. I wish Dymo tape still stayed stuck to things, but since it rarely does anymore, I largely use Avery label 5201. They're a half-inch tall strip, 10 per page, that allow for 14 braille characters when fitted in a slate for braille on a single line. They're easy to write and to stick onto most things. The dots will hold up as long as the label isn't handled too much.

Next to the file cabinet is a home-made set of drawers where my Perkins braillewriter rests under its cover, waiting for when it will be needed again. And in one of those drawers are the 5 by 8 index cards I use for business records. They're in a basket, not filed, but I can quickly find a client's name, what work was done for that client and who did it. I could imagine someone keeping such notes with a pencil and such cards. No need to sort through to find a print document on my computer with the information I want. I can take whatever cards are needed to consult with my husband in his own "office," or use them to prepare an invoice for a client.

I can't forget the freezer in our sunroom, humming away over my right shoulder. It also has braille inside, labels I've put on containers of garden produce and other things. I have to apply Scotch tape to the Avery labels before I write anything. Otherwise, they won't hold up long at all in that cold environment. Without such labels I'd be lost in the freezer, looking for a container of collards or the chili we made last fall. I will admit that I haven't read through an entire hard copy braille book in years. The eReader has changed that somewhat because I have been motivated to read through a few books I otherwise wouldn't have read, but my speed isn't fast and finishing a book takes forever, yet I'm totally dedicated to keeping braille part of my daily life. I'd be at a real disadvantage without it. Braille can be part of anyone's life on a regular basis. For a braille learner it's a matter of recognizing what it can do for you, finding those materials in braille that are useful to you, and practicing to become comfortable with a slate and stylus and, if you have one, the Perkins braille. There's tremendous satisfaction in knowing the braille code and being able to use it in ways that will enrich your life and independence.

“Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadows.” – Helen Keller