
THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN

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CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF THE BLIND

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Submissions for the California Connection can be emailed to ca.connection@ccbnet.org. Non-members are requested and members are invited to pay a yearly subscription fee of \$10 toward the production of THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN.

If you or a friend would like to remember the California Council of the Blind in your Will, you can do so by employing the following language:

"I give, devise, and bequeath unto the California Council of the Blind, a nonprofit charitable organization in California, the sum of \$_____ (or _____) to be used for its worthy purposes on behalf of blind persons."

If your wishes are more complex, you may have your attorney communicate with the Executive Office for other suggested forms. Thank you.

In accepting material for THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN, priority will be given to articles concerning the activities and policies of the California Council of the Blind and to the experiences and concerns of blind persons.

Recommended length is under three pages or 1800 words.

The deadline to submit material for the Fall, 2014 issue of THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN is noon, August 29, 2014.

Please send all address changes to Executive Office.

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From The Editor's Desk

by Judy Wilkinson

As you will have figured out by now, this issue of the Blind Californian is very, very late. For the first time in my life, during nearly three weeks in June, I attended a trial. It would have been even more fascinating if it hadn't

involved my own family. Briefly, my brother-in-law, who has lost his entire long-term memory as a result of electro-shock therapy, sued several entities. A misunderstanding led me to think the trial would last

only a few days; it took three weeks. We lost our case which frankly, was devastating to us. Various issues have led us to submit a motion for a new trial, and we await the results of that motion. Couple that with the increasingly serious illness of my best friend for over 50 years, and you can understand that the summer has been difficult.

But it's an ill wind that blows no good as the saying goes. I am able to bring you recent news from the ACB convention where California received an award for the greatest growth in total number of members and where I was elected to the Board of Publications which oversees all communications policies

and protocols of the American Council of the Blind.

Some 40 Californians attended, and 18 women gathered for breakfast at the Banana Leaf Cafe. We had a room to ourselves but I'm telling you, we were loud! I'd like to think it was the acoustics but I fear we just kept talking over each other in our excitement to chat. I can still hear Alice McGrath saying, "Please, use your indoor voices."

The BC was further delayed as I caught up on writing minutes in my role as your CCB secretary. But, remember that ill wind? Working on those minutes allows me to share with you some of the moving public comments made at our preconvention

board meeting. A reminder: all the convention proceedings are available for listening or download on our ccbnet.org website. And thanks to the incredible work of the TOG, (Technical Operations Group) you can listen to specific sections of most of the activities.

As I begin my fifth year as your editor, I can think of nothing more moving or inspiring for all of us in CCB than paraphrasing comments from Al and Connie Gil who are once again with us here in The Golden State though they have never ceased to be CCB members.

Al Gil: I've been a member of CCB for 63 years. I first joined after high school in 1951. I think it's an

organization all of us should be very proud of. The main thing I want to say is that despite the fact there has been a money problem, we can't just ignore that, but the committees of CCB work hard: many times in the minus territory, but CCB has always come through. People have donated to CCB for what I call a rainy day fund, and we've been using that opportunity to continue our work. We must continue to work and be proud of our organization. And continue not to be discouraged. Let's stick together and work hard. CCB has done a lot of things over the years, and the odds were greater than those we face now. People donate not so we can have money in a bank account but so we can do

our work.

Connie Gil: I was going to speak to Judy about an article, but I'll just say what I was going to say right now. I've been a member for about 50 years, and in the BC there's always this little invite for members to pay the \$10 a year to help out. [Editor's Note: Non-members are requested and members are invited to pay a yearly subscription fee of \$10 toward the production of THE Blind Californian.] So I think it's time that I pay up. So I have a check here for \$500.

My tears made it difficult for me to continue taking minutes. Connie's generous gesture certainly inspires me to continue sitting in the Editor's chair. When Linda Porelle (Chair

of the Publications Committee) asked me at the California Caucus as I was running for the ACB Board of Publications whether I would drop my BC editing job if I won, I said, "Absolutely not!" I didn't have time there to give my complete answer. When I returned to CCB in 2009, the first large task I took on was editing the Blind Californian. I can never sufficiently thank Bernice Kandarian (then Publications Committee Chair) and Jeff Thom (then president) for entrusting me with the task. Thanks to the recent BC survey which a number of you completed and because one of the strategic plan items concerns revisiting the entire BC matter, new developments for the publication may be ahead.

But I plan to remain as your editor for as long as

the organization asks it of me. -----

Presidents' Message

by Donna Pomerantz and Jeff Thom

It seems as if it were yesterday when I shared with you in our family room (the Fall Conference and Convention) that I would not be seeking another term as your President due to serious health reasons. Many of us shared tears that day as a number of you contacted me later and let me know you would be sending me prayers and good thoughts. Those prayers and good thoughts continue to give me strength and support. We still do not know exactly what is happening, but it is definitely related to how my body is choosing to deal with stress and this work. This has not been an easy decision to make as my parents have raised me to be a strong woman who

faces everything head-on, and acknowledges the good and the bad of all that comes my way to make me stronger. As I have chosen to move away from the seat of CCB president for myself and those I love, I do that with peace as I know I must think of me and my family first so that I may move toward healing. I will continue to work on a much smaller scale on projects Jeff wishes me to continue supporting. I also know the CCB president will be someone who has sat in this seat before. He has been of great support in the policy arena during my 4 years as your CCB president. It is with continued forward movement I ask you to read below some of Jeff's

words he wishes to share with you in the remainder of this article.

It is almost impossible to imagine how someone can work as hard as Donna has continued to do under the adverse circumstances which she has had to face. Yet that is exactly what she has done, and fortunately for all of us, she intends to continue doing so in a number of areas. Her assistance will be absolutely invaluable. In those moments when I am not pounding away at the computer or talking on the phone, I have engaged in a great deal of reflection on the many positive lessons that I have learned under Donna's four years of leadership. It is my hope, (and only time will be the judge), that what I have

learned from her during the last four years will help to make me a better leader.

However Donna's accomplishments go far beyond her leadership style. Under her leadership and through the work of so many of you performed on her watch, we have advanced in a variety of areas, from website improvements, to the policy arena, from scholarships to the Mutt Strut. In my view however, the centerpiece of Donna's term is that your board of directors, under her leadership, has put into place a bold but necessary strategic plan. This plan is a blueprint which if we take on the incredibly difficult task of its implementation, will make a tremendous difference in virtually every

aspect of the way in which CCB operates. Most of all, implementation of the strategic plan will enable us to successfully tackle what I perceive as our two greatest challenges: fundraising and membership. This president's message does not contain sufficient space to go into the myriad of details covered in that plan. Suffice it to say however, the many potential initiatives envisioned by this plan will not come to fruition without both input and work by you the membership.

Thus we are at a crossroads. We can take the easy road, where we continue to do some very fine work on behalf of persons with visual

impairments, but where we gradually decline as a result of a lack of resources (both financial and otherwise), or we can take the hard road. The hard road requires the will to succeed and to embrace change, constructive dialogue, the putting aside of egos and personalities, the willingness to compromise, and a lot of elbow grease. Moreover this doesn't just apply to the president, the board of directors and the committee chairs. The culture to move this organization forward must come from each and every one of you.

I will end with one more request, and although it is one that every president makes, it is perhaps never more important than

during this time in our history. Let me know in what ways you think you can contribute to CCB. Where do you think your knowledge, skills, and aptitudes fit in to moving CCB forward? Even if you are unsure, contact me to talk about it. You may

always call me at 916-995-3967 or email me at jeff.thom@ccbnet.org. We are here to improve the lives of people who are blind or visually impaired through the California Council of the Blind. Let's get on with the task!

Calling All Campers

by James Kracht

[Editor's Note: I had the pleasure of being interviewed by Jim about my experiences at Enchanted Hills Camp. In its first year I was the youngest camper. I so enjoyed reminiscing with Jim. I hope you will contact him if you were involved with the camp. As you talk with him, you'll find you keep remembering more and more.]

After almost 65 years of

operation, where campers have listened to "the songbird say hello, and the redwoods whisper low", I think it's time to put the Enchanted Hills Camp on the book map. I would very much like to write a book based on the experiences and stories of staff and campers who have attended sessions of Enchanted Hills camp from 1950 to the

present time. I truly believe that for many of us, Rose Resnick and Nina Brandt's dream which culminated in this beautiful camp has greatly enriched our lives and provided some wonderful experiences.

Please contact me by email at jkk48@bellsouth.net or by phone at 305-724-3720. Without your cooperation and in depth interviews, this project cannot succeed. My hope is to spread the

word and maybe also help the camp with critically needed fundraising. I really do think we have a story to tell and hope to hear from all of you in the near future. Please contact me so I can schedule a convenient time and or place to interview you. Your memories, words and thoughts are very important. I hope you can help. Thank you. -----

**Spring Conference/Convention: California
Council of the Blind
by Patricia Nash**

[Editor's Note: It's been far too long since we've had this column. We're glad to have it back and we will print it whenever space permits.]

Yes, it's true!!! Guide Dog Users of California (GDUC) is out of the Dog House and on its paws, moving forward with speed. We are

more than pleased at this time to report that this great affiliate is back on its feet and again growing in membership and stature in order to work to advance the rights of all guide dogs and their handlers in California.

We have begun writing advocacy letters on behalf of GDUC. Our program at the convention will be a hands-on workshop: Pamper Your Pooch, learning how to provide a massage for your guide dog with Carla Campbell. We'll have a booth at the convention selling dog beds and other goodies. Of course, we will have our traditional luncheon with updates on the various California guide dog schools.

For many years we have worked on the rights of guide dog handlers to bring about equal access using guide dogs as their mobility partners in such areas as housing, public transportation, employment, hotels, motels, all public places of business including, but not limited to, grocery stores, restaurants, department stores, etc., and so much more.

We have also worked for a long period of time to aim for fines or penalties for persons and/or their pet dogs who interfere with our guide dogs while they are working, increasing fines for pet dogs attacking our guide dogs. Other concerns of interest include arbitration with guide dog schools when they took our dogs away

without any provocation other than someone in the public reporting us as being cruel to our guide dogs for giving what they assumed was an inhumane correction by giving a quick jerk on the training collar if the guide dog misbehaved. Such incidents led to the guide dog ownership laws in California.

Well, my friends, we still have many directions to go to ease the problems we have with our guide dogs in California and are ready to fight the battle with you and for you. We can accomplish this in a couple of ways. One would be by your joining Guide Dog Users of California (GDUC)

and working with us, and the second is by notifying us of issues that you are facing with your guide dogs which may require favorable resolution.

To obtain further information about joining GDUC, or how to notify us with any problems you are having with your dogs be it with your family, the public, or even a guide dog school, please notify our President, Frank Welte by email at frank-welte@sbcglobal.net, or contact the current GDUC Advocacy Chair, Ken Metz at kenmetz1946@gmail.com or by phone at 323-793-1805.

Michael Collins and CCB's and CSB's Own Dr.

Perry to be Inducted Into the APH Hall of Fame!!

by Stewart Wittenstein

CSB's own Dr. Perry to be inducted into the Hall of Fame!! Along with our good friend from Perkins Mike Collins.

May 2014

Michael Collins and Newel Perry to be Inducted into the Hall of Fame for Leaders and Legends of the Blindness Field in 2014

The Hall of Fame is dedicated to preserving the tradition of excellence manifested by specific individuals through the history of outstanding services provided to people who are blind or visually impaired in North

America. It is housed at the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) in Louisville, Kentucky, but belongs to all.

The ceremony to induct Collins and Perry, will take place on Friday evening, October 17, 2014, in conjunction with APH's 146th Annual Meeting of Ex Officio Trustees and Special Guests, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky.

Joining the fifty-two outstanding legends previously inducted, are these two remarkable figures who changed lives around the world. Their stories of accomplishment

are powerful.

The Class of 2014:

Michael T. Collins 1948 - 2008

Mike Collins dedicated 30 years of his career to Perkins; first as supervisor of the Perkins School for the Blind's campus-based Deafblind Program and then as founder and director of the Hilton/Perkins International Program, with the mission of training teachers to teach children who are deafblind with multiple disabilities in developing countries. Under his leadership, the program grew from serving a few hundred students to helping more than 10,000 children annually in 63

countries. He traveled to dozens of countries as a "missionary" for children who are deafblind and blind with additional disabilities working with education and government officials. He was, however, most comfortable on a mat with students explaining to parents and teachers how to help students achieve more than their families and teachers thought possible. Before his extensive work in special education, Michael studied theological studies at St. John's Seminary in Boston. He brought that care, compassion and understanding with him to his work with students who are deafblind.

Mr. Collins served as vice president and president of Deafblind International and

was a board member of the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment. He also founded the National Coalition on Deafblindness. Collins received the distinguished Perkins' Annie Sullivan Award and Deafblind International's Lifetime Achievement Award and their Distinguished Service Award.

"His love for children with multiple disabilities and his deep understanding of their needs was evident when he visited programs and dangled children on his knee." Nandini Rawaf, project director of the Blind People's Association in Gujarat, India

Newel Perry 1873-1963

Dr. Newel Perry was called the father of the modern civil rights movement of the blind. According to Matson (1990), Perry "presided as mentor and godfather to the [organized blind] movement," spawning the California Council of the Blind (1934), the National Federation of the Blind (1940) and the American Council of the Blind (1961). In 1912, Dr. Perry took the post which would define his career, Director of Advanced Studies at the California School for the Blind, and was in this position until retirement in 1947. He is best known for having mentored "Perry's Boys (and Girls)," a group of talented blind young men and women who would, with Perry's assistance,

begin the organized blind movement of advocacy and civil rights.

Honors include: California Council of the Blind, Hall of Fame, 1996 (original member), California Council of the Blind's Newel Perry Endowment Trust, the National Federation of the Blind's highest award – named for Newel Perry, and, within NFB's Jacobus tenBroek Library, the Newel Perry Conference Room, appropriately named for tenBroek's beloved mentor.

"Newel Perry educated, indoctrinated and persuaded a distinguished group of cohorts to join him in carrying on the struggle and carrying out its goals. Those whom

Doctor gathered around him were other blind men and women, mostly former students whose special talents and professional positions uniquely supplemented his."

Jacobus tenBroek, 1961
When asked what was his most important work, Dr. Perry answered, "Oh, my most important work was my dragging the blind out of their sleep, stirring them up, putting some ambition into them, and then helping them."

Additional information regarding the 2014 Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony will soon appear on the APH website, www.aph.org. Visit the Hall of Fame website at http://www.aph.org/hall_fame/index.html for information on the Hall and

those inducted.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
SUPPORT.**

**The Hall of Fame Voluntary
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**Questions? Please contact
Bob Brasher, Hall Curator,
at 800/223-1839, ext. 369 or
bbrasher@aph.org.**

Thank you.

**Hall of Fame: Leaders and
Legends of the Blindness
Field is a project of the
entire field of blindness,
curated by the American
Printing House for the
Blind, a 501(c)(3) tax-
exempt organization. -----**

Governmental Affairs Report

by Jeff Thom

**Starting with federal
legislation, the American
Council of the Blind has
two important pieces of
legislation on which we are
working. Our first bill HR**

**4040, the Alice Cogswell
Anne Sullivan Macey Act
would include a wide array
of important reforms for
the education of children
who are blind, low vision,**

deaf, and hard-of-hearing. I won't provide you with the list of six California co-sponsors for the bill, because there will probably be more by the time you read this, but you can always let me know if you want that information in order to ask your member of Congress to co-sponsor the bill if he or she has not already done so. Secondly, ACB is working for passage of HR 3749, which would establish a Medicare pilot project to pay for low-vision aids. We need you to likewise urge your members of Congress to support that bill. Finally, the reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which seemed to be stalled only a few weeks ago, is now beginning to gain steam. Fortunately however, the parts of that

bill that would have had a very negative impact for our population have been removed and there is little more to say at this time.

In April I represented this organization in a group of advocates working for more funding for transit, paratransit and pedestrian issues. There happens to be a growing pot of money that is not able to be used for general state purposes, and for which transportation is one of the few uses to which this money can be placed. That fund will be around for at least another five years, so we must make sure that public transit and paratransit get their share.

As I write this, the Legislature is poised to pass the 2014-15 budget,

and it is a mixed bag for CCB.

On the positive side, the governor, through advocacy by many parties, (which began with CCB talking directly with the governor's office), decided to take a proposal off the table (at least for this year) under which each school district would be responsible for paying the cost of producing its own braille and large print books for children in kindergarten through eighth grade. This proposal would have resulted in the elimination of a system whereby the state, at very low cost, lends books to the school districts and saves everyone money while providing timely and good quality books for pupils

who are blind or who have low vision. We may still be fighting battles concerning this system next year, but we have educated the parties as to the need to maintain the state's involvement in book production and keep any fee that the districts are required to pay low enough to ensure that the districts will not withdraw from the current system.

On the other hand, although the governor has indicated that revenue projections are substantially higher, he has also said that Medi-Cal program expenses are way up and thus he will not agree to fund new initiatives. In the final budget compromise the Legislature agreed to abandon many of its

proposals, including state cost-of-living increases for SSI recipients, and resumption of various optional Medi-Cal benefits, including podiatric services which are so important to many persons suffering from diabetic retinopathy. The Legislature has agreed to put a major initiative on the ballot that will put billions of dollars aside for bad revenue years. Moreover the governor did compromise with the Legislature on overtime hours for IHSS providers. He withdrew his proposal to forbid overtime hours and instead, agreed to allow 66 hours per week for a provider, with exceptions that will permit additional hours in limited situations.

The governor's stance against new expenditures could spell trouble for CCB's bill AB1703, which would include reader services in the In-Home Supportive Services program. The bill has however passed the Assembly and will soon be heard in its first Senate committee.

Another important bill, AB1602, may also be put in jeopardy, although it arguably has a better chance for success than AB1703. AB1602, which would remove a requirement under which Business Enterprise Program vendors operating roadside rest stop vending machine locations must pay for the cost of utilities, has also passed the Assembly and

is so far proceeding smoothly in the Senate. Not only does that bill have a lower cost estimate than AB1703, but it is arguable that it will cost the state thousands of dollars in federal funds, and thus the governor may look more kindly toward it.

In conclusion, let me say what a pleasure it has been serving as your Governmental Affairs Chair under President Pomerantz. At the outset of her administration, she promised to make CCB more out-front in the array of public policy areas that impact us. She has carried out this promise, and make

no mistake about it, that isn't easy to achieve with all of the president's other duties. However it is up to each and every one of us to continue our president's vision of making this organization the best advocacy entity that it can be. By the time you read this, our new Governmental Affairs Chair, Mitch Pomerantz will be at the helm, and there is no one more qualified to hold this position in CCB than he. With his leadership and your hard work, we will succeed in our efforts to make a difference in the lives of persons with vision loss. --

The Road to Accessible Movie-going

by James Forbes, President Humboldt Council

of the Blind

[Editor's Note: In the Awards article in this issue, you will learn that at our CCB conference/convention, the Humboldt Council of the Blind received a Chapter award for the efforts which James describes in this article. Kudos to HCB. It just goes to show what a chapter can do when its members take on a challenge.]

In August of 2008, we at the Humboldt Council of the Blind decided at our monthly meeting, that we would construct a letter to Coming Attractions Theatres (located in Ashland, OR), asking them to install audio narration closed caption devices at their location in Eureka. Coming Attractions had

recently purchased all of the movie theaters in Humboldt County. We decided that the Eureka location was the most centrally located for everyone. This technology had been around for a few years, but was still a bit more expensive to purchase and install than it is currently. At the time, Mopix quoted us a cost of around \$8,000 for one screen, and the current cost through Do-Re-Mi Labs is around \$1,235 for the same one screen.

We all worked on constructing the letter and we sent it off to the company. An employee named Julie, the VP in charge of operations at the time, contacted us and told

us that they were discussing the possibility. In our letter, we offered to promote the devices and we also even offered to do fundraising to raise up to half of the needed funding for the project. Well, months passed and we had several emails back and forth and suddenly, Julie was no longer with the company. I would call them up and would get the run-around and finally was connected with a new employee. After months of emails and phone calls, that employee was no longer with the company. This back and forth went on for several years and five different employees.

During all of this, we did perform fundraising with the intent of assisting in funding the project. For

example, I put together our first HCB benefit compilation CD titled, "Making Blindness Fashionable". It consisted of over 20 local bands and artists who each offered up a song for the CD. We sold it at local record stores and at our annual benefit concert. We sold them all and made a profit of almost \$600. Through all of this, we still did not see any action on the part of Coming Attractions.

Sometime in 2011, I called the theater's office in Ashland and spoke to the wonderful receptionist who said to me, "Oh, it's you again. You just don't give up, do you?" I asked to speak to the president of the company, Mr. John Schweiger. She said she would give him the

message and he would call me back if he chose to do so. He never did and further phone calls were greeted with the same tone. So I decided to bypass the receptionist and go through their phone tree. I typed the first letters of the president's name and was connected to his direct line. It's not rocket science. When he picked up the phone, he seemed amazed that I was able to locate his direct line. Again, not rocket science. This began our back and forth that lasted until early 2013. He was not a nice person and gave me the same verbiage we all are used to hearing. His responses were, "the ADA doesn't regulate our industry" and "we'll get around to it when we are able to do so."

During this time, we at the HCB would write letters to local papers about our efforts. I was on Humboldt State University radio station and was interviewed about audio narration, since so many do not know about the technology. I talked about our efforts and how people could help. That summer, the council held public education events, where we would gather in front of different theaters or at monthly local events like Arts Alive in Eureka. We would have a table with pamphlets we created and printed. We handed out the information brochures and we had letters of support that people could sign. We ended up with hundreds of these letters and we mailed them to

Coming Attractions office in Oregon. We received no response from the company. This did become discouraging at times, but we kept pushing. We offered to assist in funding, then rescinded our offer eventually. We presented the venture as a business model which could bring in an unrealized revenue stream that would ensure that the installation would eventually pay for itself. All this time passes and the cost of the devices kept decreasing.

All of these points were made over and over again to various employees and to the president. They still would not act. The relationship between myself and the president of the company did become

contentious at times. I can't always be nice. In 2012, the president did tell me that they had a demo of a system that they were attempting to install, but the technology wasn't good and it just didn't work. He wouldn't tell me where the device came from, but I asked the right questions and found out for myself that they bought equipment through American Cinema Equipment (ACE) and that the DVS/CC system was manufactured by Ultra Sound Labs, Inc (USL). I called USL and spoke to a salesperson. She told me that the system was sent out as a demo and that the company was not obligated to pay for it until it was installed and was working. Coming Attractions kept the

system for 8 months and finally returned it to USL, stating that it wouldn't work. They received a second system from USL, kept it for 8 months, and then returned it again. Through all of this time, from 2012 to 2013, I was in contact with USL and ACE. I was told repeatedly that Coming Attractions would need to have a person from one of the companies "walk them through the installation process." I was also told that no one from Coming Attractions ever requested any assistance. Coming Attractions told me a different story, but that is standard operating procedures for them.

In late 2012, I began discussions with a well-known law firm, in hopes

that they would represent the HCB in taking legal action against the company. Eventually, I was told that Coming Attractions was too small and that representation was probably not going to happen. They did assist me in other ways, such as drafting further letters and using legally-specific language. We still did not get the desired results. I tried other legal advocacy groups, but none would take our case. Finally, in 2013, I wrote to Donna and explained our dilemma. She said that she had an idea and she connected me with Margie Donovan. Margie had run into the same type of discrimination and subsequent difficulty in acquiring legal representation. She had

developed her own method and she shared it with me. When she would go to a business that had inaccessible features associated with being able to independently fulfill her needs, she would then write a letter to the company alerting them to the fact that they were violating her civil rights under California Civil Code section 51 (f); the Unruh Act. She would request a remedy and when the company in question did not act on her letter, then she would file an action in small claims court. She was successful in her efforts and the businesses in question would eventually install the required and necessary accommodations; such as accessible point of sale machines. She suggested

that I use the same method with respect to Coming Attractions. I have since deemed this “Guerrilla Advocacy”, because talk minus action equals zero. So in June of 2013, my youngest son and I took our now yearly visit to the Broadway Cinemas in Eureka to see a film on Father’s Day (I stopped going to the movies a few years ago, except for on this day). The hassle of having him try to narrate the film while fighting the loud sound of the film and the constant shushing from other patrons became too much of a problem and could also become contentious at times. I don’t mind a good fight/discussion, but this is not the place for it.

After we attended the film

in June, I wrote a letter to Coming Attractions and let them know that my civil rights were violated and that I would require a financial remedy, due to the fact that they did not offer audio narration at their theater. I received a response close to a month later from their lawyers. The letter was poorly written and offered me the same old stance, "These laws do not regulate our industry." The letter even stated that there are many aspects of going to the movies that I could still enjoy, such as social interaction, snacks, and even video games. This lawyer obviously has no clue. So I then wrote a second letter in rebuttal to their response. I made my case and stood my ground and let them know, under

no uncertain terms, that I would be filing a lawsuit in small claims court soon. I received a second response. The letter contained the same stance. In both letters from the lawyer representing Coming Attractions, they did state that, while they did not believe that they were legally bound to do so, they would be attempting to install the accommodations which were requested. I would call the theater and ask the manager if there were headphones for audio narration and they would always say "no."

I finally went to the courthouse in Eureka in early January 2014, six months after my visit to the theater in June, and filed a suit in small claims court,

citing a violation of the Unruh Act. Coming Attractions was served notification of the suit on January 27, 2014 and two days later, on the 29th of January, I received an email from the president of the company-my first in almost a year. The email stated that he was happy to report that the Broadway Cinemas in Eureka now were equipped with audio narration and closed captioning systems. He referred me to their new COO and told me to call this person, so he could personally accompany me to the theater. I don't want or need to be accompanied to the movies by an employee. So I waited until there was a film in theater one, the only screen in the 12 screen theater with the new accommodations, that

I actually wanted to see. My family went to the movies together two weeks later to see "RoboCop". This was not my first choice, but was more appealing than The Lego Movie in 3-D. The next day, on Margie's prompting, I sent an email to the president of the company, thanking him for the monumental step that his company had taken. I also told him that the case would still be heard in February and that I await the day that I could choose to see any movie of my choice, like other sighted patrons, as opposed to only having one choice of viewing pleasure. The next day I called the theater to ask which film would be playing in theater One starting on the following Friday. The manager told

me that they would be rotating three different films through theater One. He also told me that I or anyone else could request to view a specific film with 24 hours notice, and they would move that film into theater One. This was the president's way of accommodating my newest request to have the ability to view any of the twelve films they offered in any single week.

On February 26, 2014, I went to court against Coming Attractions Theaters. Margie thought this would last around ten minutes, but I was in court for almost an hour. I showed up with a very detailed file for both the judge and the defendant. The file included more than five years worth of letters

and email contacts, examples of case history with respect to accessibility in theaters across the country, CA civil code section 51 (f), and other relevant documents. Coming Attractions did not send their lawyers, but sent the new COO and their "digital manager". These two people did not know about all of the history between myself, the HCB, and their employer. They made several misleading comments during the hearing and I was always prepared to rebut their misguided claims. The judge had no idea what audio narration was and it took a bit of explaining. He said he would make his decision in two weeks. I left the court feeling very positive about the

experience. I may have missed my calling, but it is never too late to redirect my life; so I have learned several times over now. I promised to take legal action and I also promised to promote and market the accommodations locally, once installed. I always keep my promises. So the next day, I called the theater manager in Eureka, because the local news station wanted to do a piece on the new accommodations. They wanted to film the piece in the theater and show how the new devices work. The theater manager said he would need to get authorization from the home office in Ashland.

The following day, I received a call from the manager stating that they

were on board with the news piece and having it filmed in the theater. They also invited us to come before the theater opened, so they could run a film, show off the devices, and have the film crew conduct the interview right in the theater that had the accommodations installed. My wife, Patty, and I went there on the Friday morning and the piece ran on our local news broadcast that same night at 5, 6, and 11 PM. I posted the information on my personal FaceBook page, the HCB page, and on other FaceBook pages for which I am an admin. Yes, FaceBook is the best way to communicate to a large audience today. The local response was phenomenal. The word definitely got around. I was pleased to

find out that the piece was then picked up by NBC news affiliates in the San Francisco Bay Area. I was contacted by several friends over the following weekend, mostly through FaceBook, who live between Santa Rosa to San Jose. They all told me they were watching their local news and saw the piece! I called the local TV station (we only have one) and asked them how the piece got out of the area. They told me that they are contacted daily by NBC affiliates and that, if interested, they can take any news piece and run it in other markets.

This was very exciting. Then, a week later, I was contacted by Lainey Feingold. She sent me a congratulatory email which

contained a link to the same news piece that was seen on two different TV stations in the Portland Oregon area. This came out of the blue and, again, we were all very excited about the mobility this news piece has gained on its own.

So while it was a small step in accessibility locally, we are all very happy up here that we can now go to the movies independently and do have a voice in which films we can enjoy. Of course, having the accommodations installed on all screens in all theaters is our ultimate goal, but this is a very important step. Now I don't have to wait to travel out of town to go to the movies, not that going out

of town guarantees me that audio narration is available. I also don't have to wait for the DVD release and hope that the audio narration makes it onto said DVD. We sent a letter to the president of New Line Cinemas last year, due to the fact that The Hobbit did not offer audio narration on the DVD release. We received no response. We just watched "Gravity" on DVD

and, even without audio narration on the DVD (no thanks to Warner Brothers), it was an incredible film. We recently distributed the address of the president of Warner Bros via our various FaceBook outlets. Several people said they would write letters of support. I only wish I could have caught "Gravity" in the theaters. --

CCB Women's Group: Sharing Imagination, Inspiration, Innovation and Insight

by Alice McGrath

At the Spring CCB Conference, the CCB Women's Group gathered for a 7:00 AAM breakfast and the meeting room was packed. The Convention Program invited women to

come and read personal or favorite writings or quotes. It was a delightful experience and we heard personal reflections in a variety of formats; poems, essays and reflections

about all stages of life from the perspective of a blind woman. You can hear this meeting and these readings on the convention archives.

The energy in the room lasted far after the morning breakfast, and over 25 women joined the established email list, where CCB women members continued the dialogue. It is apparent that this rejuvenated group has hit the mark with the members who have joined. Members have posted their own life stories, and we continue to learn and laugh with each other via this list.

Connecting on this list has produced an interesting by-product, finding a place to connect with new and long-standing CCB women.

This sense of familiarity and belonging may result in members getting involved in all aspects of the work of CCB.

We put the word out to anyone attending the ACB Convention in Las Vegas, if they were interested in attending an informal breakfast to let us know. Originally, we thought about five members would respond. Our breakfast group numbered around 20, quite a showing for ACB attendance for this group.

We also held a telephone meeting for Thursday, July 24 from 7 to 8:30 PM. During our call, members were invited to share their thoughts about the women in their lives who have inspired them. Future

conference calls will be planned by volunteers from our group.

Are you interested in joining the CCB Women's Group, or any of the activities described above? Questions related to the CCB-Women's group may be emailed to:

CCBWomen@gmail.com. Women who are CCB members wishing to subscribe to the list can do so by accessing the page: http://www.ccbnet.org/mailman/listinfo/ccb-women-l_ccbnet.org or by writing to the email address above. -----

Okay I Can't See

by Bonnie Rennie

[Editor's Note: And speaking of our Women's Group, here is one of its members. What would we do without this fine Publications Committee member! Her contributions to the BC issue after issue are awesome.]

The poem below is in response to a frustrating situation that I, and

probably other blind people, have experienced periodically. I strove for a civil comeback. Folks don't mean to be thoughtless and ignorant. They do not realize that their pity is our least valuable, least helpful commodity.

No, I have not actually recited the poem in reply, the fewer words being

more appropriate. I guess it's in the category of "what I'd like to say." It would be interesting to hear what other readers say in a similar circumstance.

Okay I Can't See

Some say "so sad that you can't see."
But that simply seems so silly to me.
The sights from sounds in symphony
So sensational, not to be scrapped or scorned,
Sincerely!
I savor the songs
And seriously!

There'd be no room to perceive them,
If I could see!

Sultry shouting sea,
Squishy sandy shore.
Silent sheltering sunset,
Who could seek for more?
The so-called secondary senses see how to celebrate life.

Were I to see now, it would surely bring strife.
So please don't say "sorry" that I can't see.
Seek to set aside the shallowness,
Love what my soul can see.

2014 CCB Resolutions Summaries

by Jeff Thom, Chair Resolutions Committee

Resolution 2014-1 urges the state to adopt procedures under which the Department of

Rehabilitation would be permitted to contract with other state agencies to provide for the acquisition

of technology, both hardware and software, for those employees who are blind or who have low vision, and provides that this organization work with the California Health and Human Services Agency, the Department of Rehabilitation, the Department of General Services and other appropriate state agencies for the commencement of this practice.

Resolution 2014-2 calls upon the Director of the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) to establish a working group comprised of decision makers from within DOR and a minimum of two Blind Advisory Committee members to develop, within six months, a policy for implementing the State

Price Schedule in a manner that addresses the concerns outlined in this resolution, and provides that should DOR fail to meet this timeline, the California Council of the Blind will seek legislative redress for this long-standing inequity.

Resolution 2014-3 provides that CCB strongly oppose the governor's 2014-15 budget proposal concerning production of braille and large print textbooks and urges the Legislature and the Governor to maintain the Department of Education's existing responsibility for providing large print and braille textbooks.

Resolution 2014-4 provides that CCB seek legislation to provide for instruction in

the expanded core curriculum.

Resolution 2014-5 commends and congratulates Dr. Stewart Wittenstein for his outstanding service to persons who are blind or visually impaired and wishes him our very best in his future endeavors.

Resolution 2014-6 urges CCB members to contact their congressional representatives to encourage support and co-sponsorship of HR 3749, which would establish a pilot project for Medicare coverage of low-vision aids, and provides that should HR 3749 is enacted, if it is to be implemented only in certain geographical areas this organization do all in its

power to advocate to make California part of the demonstration project.

Resolution 2014-7 demands that the Health and Human Services Agency institute immediate and effective measures to address and rectify the violations of law identified in this resolution concerning the failure of the State Department of Health Care Services and other entities to provide information in accessible formats, and offers its resources and expertise in the investigation and implementation of appropriate remedies. The resolution also provides that, unless meaningful action is taken by the California Health and Human Services Agency within 90 days of the

delivery to it and to the governor's office of this resolution, the California Council of the Blind will consider feasible and appropriate legal action to protect the civil rights of persons who are blind or visually impaired in the publicly-funded healthcare arena.

Resolution 2014-8 urges the president of the UC system and the chancellor of the CSU system, in collaboration with affected employee bargaining organizations and other stakeholders, to implement the same or comparable classifications within their personnel systems, that shall include comparable benefits and protections, and provides that if these systems do not address this problem within a

reasonable amount of time, this organization shall consider the possibility of introducing remedial legislation.

Resolution 2014-9 expresses its profound appreciation for the outstanding work of each and every one of the volunteers at the 2014 Conference and Convention of the California Council of the Blind.

Resolution 2014-10 expresses CCB's appreciation for the outstanding services provided during its 2014 conference and convention by the staff of the Arden West Hilton Hotel; and provides that the president of this organization forward this resolution to

the hotel management.

Press Release and Message

by Elena Thomason

[Editor's Note: Elena Thomason is an active member of the Capitol Chapter. Among many other projects, her business "Equal Access" produces our convention documents in braille.]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
For Information, Contact:
Elena Thomason or
Michael S. Dunne 916-735-7838

12 Steps to Living with Low Vision": A Small Book with a Big Message

Every year, tens of thousands of Americans

experience some degree of vision loss, leaving many wondering how to adjust and proceed with their lives after a visual impairment. A new book, "12 Steps to Living With Low Vision", by blind entrepreneur and educator Elena Thomason, promises to be a valuable resource not only for the individual dealing with a vision loss, but also for family members and loved ones.

"It's a small book with a big message", says Ms. Thomason, who added that, "losing vision is not the end of the world, but a beginning a new life. It's a

big, beautiful world and nothing is stopping you from being fully in it.”

The 12 Steps cover the full range of concerns and questions that can arise from a vision loss, including gaining an understanding [sic] the changes in one’s vision, communicating with doctors and making changes to one’s personal environment. In addition, there are steps dealing with transportation, adaptive devices, living independently and how to

get one’s family involved. The book wraps up with steps on being fully involved in the community and has a list of national resources.

According to Ms. Thomason, 10% of sales income from “12 Steps to Living with Low Vision” will be donated to the Foundation Fighting Blindness. For more information or for order inquiries, please contact: elenathomason@surewest.net.

CCB Board of Directors

Meeting Summaries Gabe Griffith, CCB

Secretary (through 2013)

October 17 2013 Pre-convention Board Meeting

President Donna Pomerantz called the meeting to order at 6:53

PM.

Roll Call

Present were President Donna Pomerantz, 1st VP Gene Lozano, 2nd VP Roger Petersen, Secretary Gabe Griffith, Treasurer Peter Pardini, Immediate Past President Jeff Thom, board members Ardis Bazyn, Vince Calderon, Leena Dawes, David Hanlon, David Jackson, Linda Porelle, Erik Smiley, Judy Wilkinson, and Robert Wendt.

Agenda

The meeting agenda was adopted with an amendment to have an executive session added to the end of the meeting.

Minutes

The minutes of the September 22nd 2013 meeting were approved.

Mutt Strut Report

Donna Pomerantz, Gita Jackson, and Peter Pardini gave a combined mutt strut report. They talked about donations that have been given, the regions where the mutt strut would be held, timing companies, and finances. A general discussion followed the initial report. The report was accepted.

Treasurer's Report

Peter gave a report on the account balance, balance sheet, income statement comparison, and general

treasurer's report. The report was adopted.

Publications

Committee Report

Linda Porelle gave the committee report. She talked about Blind Californian publication costs, alternative formats to cassettes, and more. The committee report was accepted.

Technical Operations

Group (TOG) Report

Vita Zavoli gave this report and talked about what the TOG does including website maintenance, investigating new tools, beginning a Twitter and FaceBook account and more. The report was accepted.

Newel Perry Report

Cathie Skivers submitted the report and Jeff Thom read it. Cathie announced that she is resigning as a trustee. The report was adopted and it was voted to have Mitch Pomerantz be the new chair of this trust.

Ellen Murphey Trust

Fund Report

Cathie submitted the report and Jeff read it. The report was adopted.

Board Expectations

Document

Jeff read the document. It laid out expectations for members of the board of

directors. The document was adopted.

Status GDUC

Roger Petersen and Judy Wilkinson reported on the status of GDUC. They have reconstituted their board and are in compliance with as much as is in their power to be of the CCB board of directors requests. Their suspension has been lifted and they have been reinstated as an affiliate of CCB. The report was accepted by the board.

Chapter Charter Issues

Several chapters are not in compliance with their charter requirements. It was decided to revoke the charters of two chapters.

Strategic Plan

Donna gave an update on the strategic plan and hopes to have a full report at the spring 2014 convention. The report was accepted.

There was some public comment on topics including mutt strut, convention registration, chapter charters, devotional committee, and the job the board is doing.

Executive Session

Legal matters were discussed.

November 6 2013

Conference Call

Roll Call

Present were President Donna Pomerantz, 1st VP Gene Lozano, 2nd VP Roger Petersen, Secretary Gabe Griffith, Treasurer Peter Pardini, Immediate Past President Jeff Thom, board members Ardis Bazyn, Vince Calderon, Leena Dawes, David Hanlon, David Jackson, Linda Porelle, Judy Wilkinson and Robert Wendt. Erik Smiley was absent.

This meeting was held entirely in executive session. Legal financial and personnel matters were discussed.

November 26th 2013 Conference Call

Present were President

Donna Pomerantz, 1st VP
Gene Lozano, 2nd VP
Roger Petersen, Secretary
Gabe Griffith, Treasurer
Peter Pardini, Immediate
Past President Jeff Thom,
board members Ardis
Bazyn, Vince Calderon,
Linda Porelle, Erik Smiley,
Judy Wilkinson and Robert
Wendt. Absent were Leena
Dawes, David Hanlon, and
David Jackson.

This meeting was also held entirely in executive session. Legal and financial matters were discussed.

December 11 2013 Conference Call

Roll Call

Present were President
Donna Pomerantz, 1st VP

**Gene Lozano, 2nd VP
Roger Petersen, Secretary
Gabe Griffith, Treasurer
Peter Pardini, Immediate
Past President Jeff Thom,
board members Vince
Calderon, Leena Dawes,
David Jackson, Linda
Porelle, Erik Smiley, Judy
Wilkinson and Robert
Wendt. Absent were Ardis
Bazyn and David Hanlon.**

Executive Session

**This meeting was also held
in executive session. It was
decided to accept the
proposals for the
Sacramento, San
Francisco, and Los
Angeles regions to hold a
mutt strut. The board
decided to have the
president and treasurer
look in to a new web
environment for the mutt
strut registrations. -----**

**Touching Your Water Garden: How to Water
Garden Without Seeing**

by Doug Rose, Patti Rose

**[Our Humboldt Council of
the Blind Chapter is well
represented in this issue.
Doug submitted an article
which we were unable to
include in the Spring BC.
But I think this article was
well worth waiting for.]**

**As an avid water gardener
who is blind, I have been
asked by sighted
gardeners, “How do you
garden and what do you
enjoy about water
gardening since you have**

no vision?" It took some reflection on my part to discover why I enjoy water gardening other than I just knew it felt good.

I have been without sight most of my life. I grew up on a farm and enjoyed farming but it all changed to a new level once I started water gardening. My sighted wife and I have been water gardening as a hobby and as a business.

The sounds, sensations and odors involved with water gardening are unique compared to the rest of nature. I never get bored with listening to water features and all the various sounds you can make them create. It can be a simple trickle sound to a more intense rushing sound. Originally I disliked

the softer trickle sounds. But as can happen with music, I have come to acquire an appreciation for the gentle trickle. To me a waterfall sounds like a jazz composition. Even though the flow rate is consistent the water will create variations in sound over time. I have spent countless hours experimenting with the sound by placing rocks or other objects in the flow to create new water melodies. Hopefully the sound changes I make are also visually pleasing. Other sounds I have noted are the kissing sounds fish make when they feed or the distinct sounds of dragon flies when they move. Every summer night is filled with the courting sounds of frogs. But it is not just the sounds that

make water features so attractive. There are many unique sensations to be felt. Water has a smooth flat surface feeling and a therapeutic feel when flowing. Perhaps this is why fish swim into the flow off a waterfall. I am continuously fascinated by the feel of water lily leaves floating and their various sizes, shapes and sinus constructions. The stems are hollow and make for good drinking straws. When I touch a dying leaf and stem I sense a different feel from healthy counterparts as they are soft. In murky water, my sighted wife often asks me to feel inside the pot of waterlilies and see how many growing points have developed. I have also made braille labels for the waterlilies. They aren't

affected by nature like print labels are so I can always tell her which plant is which. The braille dots on plastic are resilient and never break down or become unreadable by a covering of algae.

Repotting a water lily is like uncovering a mystery. It is easy to divide waterlilies by touch. The anchor roots and the feeder roots are easily distinguished and the growing points are easy to find. With a little experience I can find new plants and separate them from the old root stock with just my sense of touch.

Most marginal plants can be identified by touch or fragrance. Aquatic mint and acorus both have a

distinct smell. Grasses are obvious and some have edges. Corkscrew rush curls and iris have strap leaves. Floating hearts might be a bit of a challenge because some water lilies have small leaves too, but their flowers definitely are different.

String algae are another venture into mystery land. In the spring it is mushy and doesn't stick together. The summer version is where it gets its name. I don't need sight to collect string algae but Pea Soup algae are a different story. I only know about Pea Soup algae after a sighted person reports it. But without sight I can still enjoy a green pond whereas sighted folks want to change it.

The water lily flowers have so many different fragrances. From my above-ground pond I can pull a flower to my nose to savor the smells. My above-ground pond also makes it easy to access all the sensations of water gardening and it is ergonomic for seniors.

Much of the work of pond maintenance and pond construction can be performed without vision. I use a talking tape measure, beeping level, talking weight scale, and talking thermometer to aid in construction and maintenance. As soon as a talking salt meter and talking water test kit come on the market, I will have them too.

My talking computer gives me access to the same tools as a sighted gardener; for example I gather information about water gardening, calculate water volumes, receive weather reports, and perform as president of our local water garden club.

Water Gardening is a very viable option for visually impaired gardeners done

as a hobby or as a job. I welcome anyone interested in following-up on this topic to contact me: info@ncwgc.org 707-839-0588.

**Rosepond Aquatics
http://www.rosepond.com
North Coast Water Garden Club http://www.ncwgc.org
Easy Pond Vac
http://www.easypondvac.com**

**Awards Presented at the 2014
Conference/Convention
by Roger Petersen**

[Editor's Note: Roger Petersen sends the following information concerning the plaques which were presented at the banquet at CCB's annual convention, Saturday April 12, 2014.]

**[solid walnut 8 by 10, gold plate and black lettering, landscape mode]
California Council of the Blind Hall of Fame
Mitchell Pomerantz
whose decades-long**

career with the City of Los Angeles, culminating in the position of ADA Coordinator, coincided with a volunteer life of leadership and advocacy, beginning with state and local leadership and progressing to the presidency of the American Council of the Blind. In California, he created the Committee on Employment Assistance, which funds loans for equipment needed by blind or visually impaired people to obtain or retain employment. In the American Council of the Blind, he led the organization through a comprehensive strategic planning effort to chart the course for ACB's future. Now he is on the world stage as a member of the Executive Committee of

the World Blind Union. Inducted this Twelfth Day of April, 2014 in Sacramento, California [smoked glass 8 By 10, silver underplate and silver lettering on black plate, landscape mode] California Council of the Blind Humanitarian Award To Margie Donovan whose long-term activism was recognized by a Community Service Award from CCB in 2005. Now she has used her advocacy and communication skills to bring together the California Musical Theater and the ACB Capitol Chapter, CCB's Sacramento area affiliate, to make local theater productions accessible to blind and visually impaired audience members with audio description and contact with cast and

props. Presented this Twelfth Day of April, 2014 in Sacramento, California [smoked glass 8 By 10, silver underplate and silver lettering on black plate, landscape mode]

California Council of the Blind Humanitarian Award To California Musical Theater (CMT) of Sacramento, California with Richard Lewis, President, Chief Executive Officer and Barbara Haig, Assisted Arts Program Coordinator who have instituted a full-featured accessibility program for blind and visually impaired audience members of their productions, including one audio described performance of each production, as well as opportunities to meet cast members and examine props and costumes. This

program has been developed with maximum input from the blind and visually impaired community, notably, ACB Capitol Chapter, the CCB affiliate in the Sacramento area. Presented this Twelfth Day of April, 2014 in Sacramento, California [smoked glass 8 by 10, silver underplate and silver lettering on black plate, landscape mode]

California Council of the Blind Publications Award Best Issue-Oriented Article of 2013 to Vita Zavoli for Wearing My Heart Out on My Unemployment Sleeve (The Blind Californian, Winter 2013 Issue)

Presented this Twelfth Day of April, 2014 in Sacramento, California [black glass 8 by 10, silver underplate and silver lettering on black plate,

landscape mode]
 California Council of the
 Blind Publications Award
 Best Lifestyle Article of
 2013 to Alice McGrath for
 The Best and Brightest
 Stars At The National
 Braille Challenge (The
 Blind Californian, Fall 2013
 Issue) Presented this
 Twelfth Day of April, 2014
 in Sacramento, California
 [solid walnut 8 by 10, gold

plate and black lettering,
 landscape mode]
 California Council of the
 Blind Chapter of the Year
 Award to Humboldt
 Council of the Blind For Its
 Extraordinary Group
 Efforts In Getting Audio
 Described Movies into
 Local Theaters. Presented
 this Twelfth Day of April,
 2014 in Sacramento,
 California -----

California Council of the Blind 2014 Officers and Board

[Editor's note: We are indebted to Bernice Kandarian who updates and corrects the list of CCB officers and board members, including the number of the term each is presently serving, the year elected to that term and the year next up for election. Terms begin on July 1 following election. The presence of an asterisk means that the individual served a partial term before the first full term.]

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Donna Sanchez

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