**THE WHITE CANE BULLETIN**

**Florida Council of The Blind, Inc.**



## September - October 2016

Articles for the White Cane Bulletin must be submitted to Greg Lindberg no later than the 15th of the month before it is published. Greg’s email is: glindberg@gmail.com

If you do not have access to a computer and email please find someone in your chapter to help you. We want to hear from anyone who wants to contribute to our newsletter, so if you can not find a way to submit your article, call Greg and he will be glad to assist you.

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To remember the Florida Council of the Blind in your Last Will and Testament, you may include a special paragraph for that purpose in your Will or Trust. If your wishes are complex, please contact the FCB at 800-267-4448.

The FCB is a 501(c)(3) organization.

For other ways to support the Florida Council of the Blind, visit our Fundraising page found at [www.fcb.org](http://www.fcb.org).

ARE YOU MOVING? – Sally Benjamin

If you are moving please notify me of your new address so you will continue to receive your White Cane Bulletin. Also if you know of anyone interested in joining FCB and who would like to receive the White Cane Bulletin and the Braille Forum please contact me at: (850) 877-1512 or E-mail: salbenjamin@comcast.net

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**President's Message - September-October 2016**

**By James Kracht**

Last time I sat down to write this column, I was getting ready to depart for the ACB convention held this year in Minneapolis, MN from July 1st through July 9th, 2016. I am pleased to report a very successful convention with much discussion of the issues of the day, including accessible currency, accessible websites, promises about upcoming solutions and products from Apple, Google, Comcast, and Amazon, just to name a few. Discussion was lively, debate was ongoing, and everyone in attendance seemed to be having a very good time.

At the annual Friday night banquet, I was pleased to share a table with our new WCB editor, Greg Lindberg, and his parents, Dr. David and Marsha Lindberg, who are a wonderful, giving, and caring family. At the banquet, we were entertained by the motivational speaker and Canadian singer, Terry Kelly, who is blind. I invite you all to visit his website and become excited, energized, motivated, and enthused by his talented words and songs of wisdom, accomplishment, and success.

On July 3rd, the Brenda Dillon ACB Walkathon took place and was a huge success with the Florida Hurricanes under the captain of Leslie Spoone's outstanding leadership. The Florida Hurricanes led the challenge with $18,360 from 153 individual donors. Thank you Leslie for a job well done. Thank you members and friends for the contributions you made to help us break all records and bring over $9,000 into the operating funds of FCB.

In my last column, I also mentioned a scheduled summit of leaders in the blindness field. They met to strategize about the future of DBS, the delivery of services to the blind in Florida, and the role of advocacy organizations and FAASBI with its private agency members. FCB was well represented at this summit by Paul Edwards, who served as its moderator, Mikey Wiseman, and Paul Lewis. The result was a definition of a stronger relationship and commitment to collaboration between Florida's blindness advocacy organizations and private agencies. They made a strong commitment to develop strategies that will implement objectives of FCB resolutions. DBS Director Robert Doyle was present. He promised to bring supervisory and senior staff members to upcoming scheduled summits to promote better communication between the advocacy organizations, private agencies and DBS. This will provide improved delivery of specialized services for Florida's citizens who are blind or have low vision. The summit was the first step in developing better communication. Everyone looks forward to future meetings and the resulting improvements in service delivery and program operation. FCB's leadership will continue to be involved in the relationship and interaction of FAASBI and DBS.

On the voting front, 2nd Vice-President Doug Hall and his wife, Nancy, became certified to register voters in their county. This is an excellent way to get all FCB members registered and voting by the time of the upcoming November general election. Members of local chapters and their officers have been encouraged to undertake similar certification. FCB chapter meetings can be a place where our members can more easily and efficiently register to vote.

The Publix situation has moved forward slightly. Contact with our attorneys has confirmed receipt of the request for structured negotiations. Publix asked for additional time to respond. While there are no assurances, your President believes this is a very good sign. We will continue to keep you informed of our progress.

On a personal advocacy level, I was involved in two incidents during my travels that are both frustrating and instructive. While visiting a large, well-known entertainment complex (hotel and park) in Concord, North Carolina, I did what I always do – checked for a Braille room number on my hotel room. It was not there. My 9-year-old Grandson looked at it and said that "the Braille was there but was all chopped off." Quick inquiry and examination of room number signage and meeting room and restroom indicators showed that they were all marked in something that looked like Braille visually but has no tactile dimension to make it Braille. I have not yet heard back from the property manager but will follow up shortly. I was most disappointed and frustrated that the property has been operating since 2008, and this had not been brought to their attention before.

I doubt that I will uncover the vendor that sold the expensive signage with pictures of Braille, but it’s a travesty and a shame. The resort obviously thought that they were complying with the legal requirements of accessibility.

Traveling on to Charleston, I visited one of the best steakhouses in the country. As is my usual custom, I asked for a Braille menu and when they did not have one, I asked to speak to the manager. At this time, I was visited by an owner of the restaurant. He was sympathetic to the request for Braille menus and said he would investigate providing them. But more disheartening, after extensive questioning and discussion, he insisted that he had never heard of a Braille menu. To me, these incidents illustrate a sad story. Many of us are simply sitting silently in the wings, waiting for others to do the heavy lifting. We can no longer afford to do that. We must advocate for what we need, for what is required, and for that which helps to make our lives easier and fuller. It is time for the kinds of advocacy I described above to become the norm for all of us.

Together, we can be heard, together we are strong, and together we can and we will make a difference.

Thank you.

James Kracht, FCB president

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**Thank You to the ACB Board!**

**By Sheila Young**

I would like to thank our president, Jim Kracht, for writing a letter of recommendation for me to apply for the opportunity to attend the national convention this year. It was an honor to be chosen by the ACB Board to be one of the 8 leadership fellows funded by the JP Morgan-Chase Co. grant to attend the ACB National Conference and Convention in Minnesota this year.

It was very exciting and exhausting. I attended as many meetings as were humanly possible, met some wonderful people, and learned so much.

I would highly recommend that anyone interested in learning about our parent organization apply for the grant to attend next years' convention if it is offered again.

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**One Word To Describe The 2016 ACB Convention? Wow**

**By Greg Lindberg**

Thanks to my involvement in the Pinellas Council of the Blind since October 2013, I’ve had a lot of firsts in my life. For the first time, I joined an organization in which I can relate so well to others. I became secretary of an organization for the first time. I became editor of this awesome statewide publication. I made a trip to Jacksonville for the first time. And, most recently, I attended my first national convention with any organization.

As the east coast recipient of the Durward K. McDaniel First-Timer Award, I had the opportunity to attend the American Council of the Blind national convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Keep in mind that this weeklong event took place just 6 short weeks after the Florida Council of the Blind state convention in Jacksonville, which was also my first-ever convention. Needless to say, it’s been quite the whirlwind for me.

Much like the 3-night FCB gathering, I was uncertain of what to expect at the national level. I knew I’d be surrounded by four or five times the number of attendees, white canes, and guide dogs. Plus, the Hyatt in Minneapolis would be 24 floors compared to just a handful of stories inside Jacksonville’s Lexington Hotel.

On the first day of the convention, I enjoyed breakfast with Allen Casey, the chair of the DKM First-Timer Award committee, and Marja Byers, the other winner from Salem, Oregon. Allen gave us the lowdown on what to expect throughout the week. He encouraged us to attend as many events as we could and shake as many hands as possible.

Later that day, I went to an audio darts training session. If you’re unfamiliar with the adaptive game like I was, it involves throwing regular-sized darts at a large board full of numbers. The difference is that you must wear a blindfold, and the dartboard verbally announces where each dart hits on the board, along with a clock reference like “9 o’clock” or “3 o’clock” to help you determine your accuracy. I had a few errant throws, but I hit the bulls-eye once and some of the other numbers that would’ve netted me lots of points in an ordinary game. I learned that the key to audio darts is to align each dart with your nose. Then you have to throw it as straight as possible.

On Sunday evening, I was recognized during the opening session for my DKM award. I gave a brief speech in front of perhaps 700 people, by far the biggest crowd I’ve ever acknowledged.

On Thursday evening, the DKM First-Timer reception was held in the hotel’s presidential suite on the top floor. During this gathering of some of ACB’s finest, Allen Casey presented me with a framed certificate that denotes my humble honor. I delivered a few minutes about myself to the 50 or so members in which I explained my passions – technology, beep baseball, recruitment of younger ACB members, and my convention observations as a newbie.

Throughout the week, there were general sessions in a large ballroom at 8:30 a.m. These sessions included awards being handed out to various scholarship winners, a number of business activities, the election of new board members, and a handful of insightful speakers from various organizations. The representatives from Apple, Microsoft, Uber, the FCC, and the Department of Transportation truly stood out to me.

On the tech front, I learned that by December of 2016, all cable companies and satellite TV providers will be required to provide blind and visually impaired subscribers with accessible set-top boxes. These boxes should be able to speak all of the text on the program guide and various menus. In addition, Microsoft developed a wearable headset with a hypersensitive GPS that uses artificial intelligence to identify people, places, and things within one’s path.

A gentleman named Charles Mossop, who is involved in the World Blind Union, also delivered a fantastic presentation about how visually impaired citizens are treated in other countries. Mossop noted that there are about 300 million visually impaired and blind people in the world – a number that knocked my socks off. He said that in China, a blind mother’s baby was taken from her as the government did not deem her fit to be a mother. In Tibet, blind citizens are extremely cautious about being seen with a white cane due to potentially being beaten or even killed. In Tanzania, Albinos with visual impairments are often killed, and their remains are considered a type of secret to longevity and good health when consumed. I cannot believe how fortunate we are to be living in a free country where there are so many resources and opportunities for those with visual challenges when I hear about these incredibly sickening circumstances on other parts of this planet.

I was blown away by so many of the individuals I heard speak or got to meet. Among them was a blind girl who had recently finished her undergraduate studies at Harvard and was set to begin graduate school at Yale. Oral Miller, a former ACB president, said the Minneapolis convention was his 47th-consecutive convention. Another gentleman close to 90 years of age had joined his local blind support chapter in 1948 and remains an active member.

I was extremely impressed with the exhibit hall in Jacksonville. However, it couldn’t compare with the one in Minneapolis. There were over 60 vendors set up in a large hall that was almost too big to navigate comfortably. I finally purchased an OCR device that I’ve had my eyes on for some time – the Optelec ClearReader from Freedom Scientific (now under the VFO Group). I also picked up a new white cane and a USB drive containing narrated yoga and meditation lessons. The variety among the vendors was just amazing. If I had spent every minute of my time at the convention in the exhibit hall, there’s no way I would’ve seen everything.

I should also mention a few workshops I attended. One was a test I took on the “employability quotient,” which calculates how employable a visually impaired professional is for the workforce. Another seminar was on using LinkedIn. I’ve used this social network a bit, but I learned some of the keys to career advancement in terms of what to include on your profile and how to present yourself if you have a disability. Google also held some workshops on the accessibility features of Android phones and handy mobile apps.

Beyond the walls of the beautiful Hyatt, I went to the Mall of America and some local restaurants. We had tickets to go to the Twins-Athletics baseball game at Target Field, but Mother Nature had other plans, bringing on a major storm with 60-mph winds and 2-inch hail. Needless to say, we didn’t make it to the game, which actually was played that night with the first pitch at 10 p.m. local time. Come on, MLB! Why not play a doubleheader the following day?

Friday night brought the wrap-up banquet with a wonderful musician who wowed the crowded ballroom with his own songs on piano and guitar. I admit I got quite teary-eyed during these songs, which tugged at the heart with their lyrics about the struggles of being blind and the support so many of us take for granted. His singing and playing were tremendous, and I was so overcome with emotion after a long week.

The convention was undoubtedly a late-to-bed, early-to-rise affair with limited opportunities for even a quick powernap. While I came home with the heaviest eyelids I’ve carried on my face in recent memory, the experience was absolutely worth the anticipated exhaustion. I cannot offer up enough thanks to Jim Kracht and the DKM committee for sending me to the “land of 10,000 dreams” as the saying went throughout the week. I must also thank Kathy Millican, Kathy Warth, Sharon Youngs, Eugene Batke, and Sally Benjamin for their support. I never would have made it this far and this quickly in ACB without them and so many others I wish I could thank here. I must say that if you have never attended a national convention, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of this fantastic program that ACB has put on annually for over 5 decades. I certainly hope to attend many more in the coming years.

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**Meet Sara Conrad, FCB’s Affiliate Liaison**

**By Greg Lindberg**

The American Council of the Blind has recently developed an affiliate liaison program through which several ACB members serve as a go-to source of information for state affiliates around the country. In turn, these liaisons can also communicate information from state affiliates to ACB. Sara Conrad, a very active and young ACB board

member, is currently serving as the affiliate liaison for the Florida Council of the Blind.

Conrad is a second-year law student at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. On top of that rigorous curriculum, she is pursuing a master’s degree in public affairs at the same time. She has been actively involved in ACB since graduating from high school 7 years ago after receiving an ACB scholarship to attend Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

“I was a scholarship winner for ACB in 2009. I went to my first national convention in Orlando that same year. I then got involved in what’s now known as ACB Students, and I gained a position on the ACB board in 2012,” she explained.

Thanks to her early connections to the Sunshine State, she had the honor of speaking at FCB’s state convention in Jacksonville back in May of this year.

“FCB is a very large and active affiliate,” she said. “It was so exciting to get to speak during the banquet at the last convention there.”

As far as her liaison position, she believes it has lots of potential to benefit both ACB and FCB.

“I was appointed by ACB President Kim Charlson to hold this position,” she said. “The program is rather undefined at this time, but essentially, affiliates are asking for more assistance, so I’m trying to stay in contact with them by reaching out to their membership so people can ask questions, get answers, and share ideas. It’s designed to connect ACB with its affiliates so that everyone feels like they are connected. Each liaison has about 4 or 5 states and 3 special interest affiliates to connect with.”

Charlson described the program from her perspective. “This program was established in the fall of 2014 to foster closer relationships between ACB and its state and special interest affiliates,” Charlson explained. “It is hoped that our board liaisons and the presidents of the various affiliates assigned to them will establish and maintain communication to further the work and operation of each affiliate.”

In terms of her goals within ACB, Conrad has plenty of them in store and is confident that this new affiliate liaison program could help her achieve some of them. “I really want to see ACB continue to grow as an organization. I’ve been working with the board to expand how much we can reach out to children who are blind and visually impaired. It was difficult for me growing up because my family didn’t have the resources and knowledge they needed to help me. So, I want to expand how much we can support parents and children. I also want to increase our advocacy, not only what we do nationally but in local communities around the country.”

You may contact Sara Conrad by phone at 269-470-0996 or by e-mail at sjconrad@gmail.com. She is always willing to answer your questions or help communicate your thoughts and ideas to ACB.

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**2016 FCB Fall Board Meeting**

**By Kati Lear**

The 2016 board meeting for the Florida Council of the Blind will begin on Friday afternoon on November 4, and will conclude around noon on Sunday, November 6. The location for this year’s meeting is in Orlando at the International Palms Orlando, which is located at 6515 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819. The phone number is (407) 351-3500. Hotel reservations must be made by Tuesday, October 4 to get our room rate of $85 per night.

The FCB convention will also be held at this hotel from May 18-21, 2017.

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**FCB Annual Raffle 2017**

**By Mike Ulrich**

Well, it’s getting close to that time of year again where chapter board reps can pick up their chapters’ 2017 raffle tickets at the FCB Mid-Year Board Meeting in Orlando, Florida! Then those Board Reps can bring them back to their respective chapters and let the FCB Raffle ticket sales begin!

The FCB Raffle Program is not only a fantastic way for all chapters of the FCB to bring in some much-needed funds, but also is a great way for chapters to get out there and network with John Q. Public! So, get your ticket sales attack plan in place now!

First, all you chapters must sit down and figure out just how many tickets you want to pick up at the upcoming FCB Mid-Year Board Meeting this November 4 in Orlando. So, I’m now asking all you local chapters to inquire at your next chapter’s monthly meeting, “Hey, guys. How many tickets do you think we can sell in 2017?” Then get back to me and place your official ticket order. Remember, we are once again packaging these tickets in bundles of 200 tickets.

You can place your ticket order by e-mailing me at mulrich@centurylink.net or by calling me at my home phone number – 239-540-7431.

When your chapter board rep comes to the November 4 FCB Mid-Year Board Meeting in Orlando, your chapter board rep can pick up your reserved tickets. It’s just that easy!

Then all you’ve got to do is sell, sell, sell! Remember, your chapter keeps 65 cents out of every one-dollar ticket you sell! If you go with the 6 tickets for five dollars scheme you must still pay the 35-cent assessment on all of those 6 tickets. Plus, once your chapter sells over 1,000 tickets, your chapter can then keep 100 percent of the one-dollar ticket price!

If any of you have any questions about this great way for chapters to bring in some bucks, along with doing some great networking with the public, just give me a call some time.

See ya out on the streets, and remember; Sell Sell Sell!......Mike

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**GOCB Update**

**By Martha James**

The Florida Hurricanes walk team finished first in the ACB Brenda Dillon Memorial Walk, raising $18,360, at the annual ACB national convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Patti land, a cherished member of GOCB, was honored as an ACB Angel on Sunday night during the opening session. One of our members, Sheila Young, was honored by being chosen as one of the 8 Leadership Fellows to attend the ACB National Conference and Convention. A highlight of her trip was listening to and having a conversation with Martha Harmon Pardee, one of her favorite talking book narrators. Martha Harmon Pardee made herself part of an auction item by offering a brunch with her on Thursday during the convention week.

GOCB held its annual pool party and cookout on Saturday, August 6 at the home of Gary Sinclair. There were approximately 25 members and friends in attendance.

Our chapter is looking forward to getting back to business in September with our meeting being held on Saturday, September 10. Our membership drive is underway for the 2017 year. Anyone interested in learning more about our chapter may contact Charles or Dawn Brooks at 863-496-4744, or Sheila Young at 407-425-9200.

In addition, for those with computer access, GOCB is on both Facebook and Twitter. You can find us on Facebook by typing “GOCB” and follow us on Twitter@GOCB\_FL. GOCB invites all readers of this newsletter to “like” and “follow” us on these social networks, respectively.

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**Twilight Man**

**By William H. Grignon**

[Written at the Carroll Center for the Blind, Chestnut Hill, May, 1987, when I was losing the last remnants of my eyesight to RP]

I am the twilight man.

I bash my battered brow against the sweaty glass of an ever shrinking fish-bowl,

thrash in the thick black gore drained from the ruined socket of an island monster,

crash my fists into the leering loomings which press with vague impatience,

smash the eggshell and thin-ice webs wound like iron round my shadow dance,

and dash along streetlamp archipelagoes: strung out, beckon and beacon across an Aegean midnight.

Outside, in the sharp noise,

the Mole people claw out their soundscapes,

bristling with silent points on which their ragged indiscretions flutter

like flags marking the reef and rock, shoal and shark.

They tip-toe and tap-toe all their Mole ways,

their Mole entrances and their Mole escapes.

Tap-tap-tapping with one long white finger.

Bone Finger-

sending shivers down the spine of the street.

Dead Finger-

morsing out the flinch and hunker of the world,

poised to circumscribe horizons

or point the point in a blank abyss.

Rude whispers, rough hands and a kick,

I am an alien: lost, alone and sick.

I am a windmill in the eye of the tempest.

I am a whirlpool in the mirage oasis.

I am a monolith livid with lewd inscriptions.

I am a candle stretching one long white wick to a dying sun.

Tap-tap-tap.

it's almost five o'clock.

Tap-tap-tap.

I hear their fingers drumming.

They wait to hurry and hurry to wait,

too busy, too tired and, after all, too late

to do any real good before they die.

Perhaps, I should have asked them, "Why?"

So I turned and I returned

to a shore littered with the XMas mornings of pent-up playmates

who have shut up their toybox wonder behind euphemisms for terror.

"Tap-tap-tap.

The blind man took a nap!

He dreamed he could see

just like you and me!

So he jumped right out of bed

and fell right on his head!

Because, you see,

he could not see!

Hee-hee! Hee-hee! Hee-hee!"

The children sing the ancient superstition

to the rap and the tap of Bone Finger.

The black hole fills with winter rain. I chase away the remnants of the nightmare rote,

splashing storms in the puddle where my bark remains afloat,

tied to my one long white mast,

erect with sail,

a net taught with inferential places,

a noose tight around my chosen utter spaces.

I navigate by pitch and plunge,

roll and run,

uniting landfalls to my island chain

around the sweet madness of siren songs.

Agape on the swell of manic distraction,

a shade at the brink of desperate meaning,

I work my one long white needle up and down, up and down,

through the fabric of feeling and feelings,

threading the warp and woof of all my nights and days,

spreading out my tap-tap-tapestry.

I am a twilight man,

probing the dusk with one hand in the mouth of a there which has no name,

where thing and other appear and vanish

like hard ghosts outlined against the gray encroach,

transfixed at the tip of my tap,

informed by the subtle subterranean ways of Mole.

My senses unfurl,

all aquiver with the tension of opening to receive the mysteries

you have brought from the other side of the in-facing glass

in which I saw the images I have forsaken:

drowned lovers scratching at the pane of frozen tears,

scarecrows lamenting their trick-or-tatters,

bereft of rune and rainbow in a ruined land

where the wind gathers the yellow leaf and golden wing

and carries them away beyond distractions,

but within the distance of a call.

Your voice thrills in my soul,

weaving meaning and making worlds.

I unsheathe at your touch.

a fruit ripe and rejoicing, blossoms from the one long white limb

which I planted just outside the chapel door.

Threshold miracles drawn from the tap-tap-tap-root.

Let us come to an understanding,

cosmos of ebbing corners and shy faces

and I with my one long white finger

poking existence right between the eyes.

I am bus-station listener:

the scuff and shuffle of tired feet in tired shoes,

the quick slick hard click of city heels,

the halt and hurry of rustic boots wadding tickets in sweaty palms,

the teen-age chuff and squeak of eight new aglet-dragging sneakers,

the stamp and mill of staccato tongues translating time-tables,

the quaquaversal skip and scamper of tug-along toddling,

the scrape and bump-bump-bump of homeward student laundry bags,

the slide and shift and tap-tap-tap of a fellow Mole.

All a-hurry, all a-scurry, all a-ravel to and fro,

from there to there, from there we come and there we go.

arrival and departure, disembarking and embarking,

getting off and getting on, on and off, off and on,

to the herd warnings of the muffled megaphone,

"Now leaving... Now leaving... Now leaving... Gone."

When everyone thinks they are watching,

I pivot, swing and step into the limitless sweep of the nocturnal

where life keeps its intimations to itself

until sudden echoes expose themselves,

naked and substantial behind masks of necessity.

When no one is looking,

I breathe in a reality too real to live for more than a mortal moment.

I huddle in my shell,

one amid a multitude of ones,

a piece of debris kicked into place to form a predetermined pattern,

to fill a quota of misery

and file in one long white procession.

I stumble in line.

corpses domino away before and behind. vultures come and pick them clean,

then turn to me and wait for me to lean,

bend a knee and fall.

And, yet- and yet, it is time to say goodnight.

It is always time to say goodnight.

Goodnight, blue crest, green curl and white crash of mermaid waving

bay light.

Goodnight, flower spangle and forest tangle of emerald-vaulted fawn and fay light.

Goodnight, silver-sickled harvester of the flaxen fields of feathered

hay light.

Goodnight, turquoise-robed, golden haloed, pink-breasted dawn of birds at play light.

Goodnight, vesper gleaming leather-bound stained-glass pages when I

pray, "Light!"

Goodnight, good-night,

and, after all, and after all,

it will be a good night.

It is a good night.

"Because you see,

He couldn't see.

Hee-hee, hee-hee, hee-hee!"

Goodnight, dancing dust dazzling in the last shaft of daylight.

Goodnight, hazy hover of wood-smoke smudging the snowfall gray light.

Goodnight, Homer, good night. Goodnight, John Milton, good night.

Goodnight, James Joyce, good night.

"More light! More light!" the Philosopher said.

"I am the light," the Stranger said.

Dear Mr. Einstein,

What is the speed of darkness?

Sincerely,

Bone Finger

"Turn out the lights, the party's over.

They say that all good things must end.

"Turn out the lights."

"Hey, buddy, got a light?"

"You are the light," the Stranger said.

Here, in the hard noise,

we Mole people claw out our soul-scapes,

our battered brows bashing Life.

And, yet, it will be a good night. "

Wait for me."

"Because, you see,

we will not see.

Hee-hee, hee-hee, hee-hee!"

The twilight rocks the sun to sleep.

The dawn awakes with stealthy creep

of shadows across my creaking lids.

I recall that Icarus died of too much light

as I tap-tap-tap my Mole way into this good night.

"Hello, hello, is anyone there?

Can you tell me please, is this the road from Damascus?"

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**Poetry Corner**

**By Shelley Sawyer**

Greetings to you Dear Reader:

This one is because of a conversation with friends. While riding home from a meeting, for some reason our conversation turned to songs we had sung in our formative years. Some of those were pretty scary, and it made us laugh to remember some of the crazy things we learned during grade school. Someone said something about a red rose and a briar. I commented that it came from a poem I read in high school literature. I remembered that the poem was called Barbara Allen, and I decided right then to make that the selection for this issue. However, I had to do quite a bit of research. I discovered that the actual poem is anonymous. According to the information I found, it dates back to around the 1700s and comes from Scotland. It has been sung by many, including Joan Baez and the Everly Brothers. There are many versions of the tragic love ballad "Barbara Allen." The one presented below here is one of the oldest, and so it may be as near to the original Scottish story as any that can be found.

Barbara Allen

By Anonymous

In Scarlet Town, Where I was born

There was a fair maid dwellin'

Made every youth cry "Well-a-day"

For the love of Barbara Allen

'Twas in the merry month of May

When green buds were a swellin'

Sweet William came from the west country

And fell in love with Barbara Allen.

He courted her for seven long years

'Til his heart in him was failin'

And begged his love to marry him

But "No" said Barbara Allen.

Then on a somber autumn day

When all the leaves were fallin'

Sweet William on his deathbed lay

For the love of Barbara Allen.

He sent his servant to the town,

To the place where she was dwellin',

Sayin' "You must come to my master dear,

If your name be Barbara Allen."

"For death is printed on his face,

And o'er his heart is stealin'

Then haste away to comfort him

Oh lovely Barbara Allen."

So slowly, slowly she came up

And slowly she drew nigh him

And the only words to him did say

Were "Young man I think you're dyin'"

"Oh yes, I'm sick and very low

And death is o'er me dwellin',

But better, no better, I ever shall be

If I can't have Barbara Allen."

"You may be sick and very low,

And death be o'er you dwellin,

But better, no better you ever will be

For you can't have Barbara Allen...

Don't you remember in yonder town,

In yonder town a-drinking?

You gave a toast to the ladies round,

But you slighted Barbara Allen."

"Oh yes, I remember in yonder town

When we were in the tavern,

I gave a toast to the ladies 'round,

But gave my heart to Barbara Allen."

"If on your deathbed you do lie,

What needs the tale you're tellin'?

I cannot save you from your death.

Farewell," said Barbara Allen.

He turned his pale face to the wall,

As death was drawing nigh him.

"Adieu, adieu, to my friends all.

Be kind to Barbara Allen."

As she went walking through the fields,

She heard the birds a-singin',

And as they sang, they seemed to say:

"Hard-hearted Barbara Allen!"

As she walked further through the fields

She heard the death-bells ringing,

And every note to her did say:

"Hard-hearted Barbara Allen!"

Her eyes looked east, her eyes looked west

She spied the corpse a-comin

"Lay down, lay down the corpse!" she said,

"That I may look upon him."

And as she looked upon his face,

She bursted out a-crying,

"Oh pick me up, and take me home,

For now I am a-dyin'."

"Oh mother, Oh mother, go make my bed,

Make it both long and narrow

Sweet William died for me today

And I shall die tomorrow."

"Oh father, oh father, go dig my grave

Dig it both long and narrow,

Sweet William died of love for me

And I shall die of sorrow."

"Hard-hearted creature, him to slight,

Who hath loved me so dearly –

Oh, that I'd been more kind to him

When he was live and near me.

She on her deathbed as she lay

Begged to be buried by him

And sore repented of the day

That she did e'er deny him.

Barbara Allen was buried in the old churchyard

And William they buried nigh her

Out of William's heart, there grew a rose

Out of Barbara Allen's, a briar.

They grew and grew up the old church wall

'Til they could grow no higher,

And there they formed a true love's knot –

The rose wrapp'd round the briar.

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**As I See It**

**By Ellen Hillstrom**

To R. Dupont, Venice Gondolier Sun

Our Venice chapter of the Florida Council of the Blind has adjourned for the months of July and August, so activities have slowed down in case my readers wonder if I am still around. However, our monthly support group luncheons on the second Wednesday of each month continue (come join us – just contact me).

Our chapter had a booth at the Health and Wellness Expo at the Senior Friendship Center, which was co-sponsored by the Venice area Chamber of Commerce (my old haunts) and the Venice Gondolier Sun. I believe there were over 50 booths, all of which were focused on the services for the elderly. I was amazed to learn about the number of retirement and assisted living facilities now available, and the medical and recreational options. Every new retiree to the Venice area can find friendship and safety as well. Our booth featured information for those who may have low vision and may not know about our services to the community. Aston Gardens is holding a similar Expo on July 21 from 111 a.m.to 2 p.m. and I hope many of the same services will be displayed.

Thinking about national news, I shudder to watch the "breaking news" on such a regular basis. The bombings in our country with their death tolls have been so numerous that I cannot remember where and how many lives have been lost. When it happened in Orlando, it felt like my safety was next. I know I have nothing to fear, but I still look around for "suspicious" activities.

And the political brouhaha is heating up to a point where whoever wins the presidency or is elected to Congress will not give me much assurance that my safety or quality of life will change for the better.

I do have a great respect for our local police force. They are probably on higher alert these days because of the horrible massacre in Dallas. I learned that many citizens from throughout the country have been sending candy, flowers, cards of support, and holding special events for their local police officers. We, in Venice, should do the same, too.

Love your country, your home, and your friends and family. Say hello to one another at the store. Smile! It all helps.

Ellen Hillstrom is president of the Venice Chapter, Florida Council of the Blind. You may contact her at Ellen 91@comcast.net.

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**Another Successful and Enjoyable FSB Alumni and Friends Get-Together 2016**

**By Sila Miller**

With late July’s heat and humidity also came the Florida School for the Blind Alumni and Friends’ annual get-together. We were 89 plus this go-round, and it was one of the smoothest events ever in terms of planning and organizing.

This year’s gathering was dedicated in loving memory to the bright lights and sweet spirits of Patti Ann Land, FSB graduate, and Father Rene Robert, longtime school Priest and friend to many students. Patti died in October 2015, and Father Rene was killed in April of this year. Their commonality was seeking out those (people and animals) whom many turned their backs on and showing them love and acceptance. Father Rene and Patti made the world a brighter place, and countless lives were enriched by their presence. They will be forever missed. However, I believe they continue to be with us in spirit, reveling in the sound of our laughter, the ring of reunited conversation, and the quiet breeze coming off the water at sunset. I shall carry them both in my heart always.

Since 1963, former students and their families and friends have gathered for this event. For many years now, we’ve been allowed to stay on the beautiful campus of the school – free of charge for a majority of the gatherings. This goes far to offset the cost for attendees, many of whom are financially challenged and would otherwise be unable to join us. We are permitted to prepare and serve six meals on site. Highlights of our menu this year were meat loaf, prepared by Annie Crackel, Rosie Haynes’ collard greens, huge, all-beef hot dogs, and Maryann Laird’s homemade cupcakes. Many attendees contributed their time, muscle, talent, and money—everything from kitchen cleanup, to assisting other attendees, to bagging linens, to driving, to entertaining, to cooking, to banking, to… On and on the list could go. Suffice it to say, our “village” of helpers is strong and vibrant and much appreciated!

It has become a tradition to extend the weekend to include an extra event on Thursday. This year’s event was a sunset/moonlight cruise aboard the Victory III. The weather cooperated with clear skies, millions of twinkling stars, and a huge, bright moon, made more brilliant by its reflection on the water. The Victory’s crew went above and beyond in making us feel at home and comfortable. Some sipped beverages on the top deck in the open air, while others hung out inside, catching up with old friends. There were even a couple of door prizes. Dinner beforehand at Mojo’s was a bit noisy but the food and drinks were good and plentiful, and it set the mood for a happy time on the water!

Friday began well before the crack of dawn. I swear, some of those folks don’t need more than 30 minutes’ sleep! <Grin> Richard and Shelley Sawyer graciously donated coffee. Try as we might, there was just no staying ahead of the demand for java! A “magic” coffeemaker is definitely on my wish list!

The day saw folks arriving, getting settled in, and volunteers organizing items for the Saturday afternoon auction. At one point, I pulled a good joke on one of my young helpers, Will, whose 12 years old. Someone had forgotten her purse in the registration area, and I asked him if he’d deliver it to her. Readying my ever-handy camera in advance, I got a priceless picture of him with that purse and an embarrassed grin on his face. Will began the weekend shy and a bit reluctant to talk, but, God love him, by weekend’s end, he was giving as good as he got!

The MacWilliams Hall kitchen boasts an ice machine to die for with the “snow cone” style ice that is a treat itself. Sadly, the machine was out of commission but as always, staff at school were beyond accommodating and allowed us to get ice from the building next door. That afternoon, attendees visited Alumni Hall, home of the museum and school archives and D&B Designs, the school’s store. Plans for archiving some of our precious history are in the works. Thanks to my time and service to FCB, I have come to recognize and appreciate the importance of preserving memories and history.

Following a huge supper, Eddie Rivers, entertainer extraordinaire and a talented jewelry crafter, took “the stage” (a portion of the dining room in front of the water/ice dispensers). Though the surroundings are rudimentary (a huge lighted ICE sign provides the “light show”) Eddie’s larger-than-life personality, talent, and flexibility outshine the backdrop, and what comes through is great music, applause, and laughter from his satisfied audience! Eddie and his lovely wife, Christy, have become family and each year they outdo themselves with their participation and invaluable contributions.

A smartphone workshop was co-hosted by Cliff Fry and Robert Miller. Many were in attendance to learn of the boundless benefits of iPhones and Androids. There was a question-and-answer session with several experienced users from the audience providing valuable input and tips. Braille and print material were also available, outlining gestures for the iPhone.

On Saturday, we held the Association’s annual business meeting and met the newly chosen principal of the Blind Department, Carol Bogue. Carol comes to the Florida School with much experience, having worked at the Perkins School for many years. She was excited to discover that our Alumni group is so active and involved. Our association has an account earmarked for students’ needs. In addition, we collect cash for the principal to use for incidental expenses that arise throughout the year. This year’s collection totaled $352.00.

Election of officers for our august group occur every other year. The 2016 – 2018 slate of officers is: Robert Miller, President, Mike Winkler, Vice President, Shelley Sawyer, Recording Secretary, Lloyd Jones, Treasurer, and Sila Miller, Correspondence Secretary. I believe I speak for each of us in saying this is a labor of love and joy. Nothing equals seeing folks reunite, share memories, laugh, pitch in for a common cause, and just have a good ole time!

With the advent of Facebook and other social media, communication has totally changed. Thanks in no small part to FB, we were honored to welcome five new attendees (all of whom graduated from FSB after 2000). We also welcomed Michele Anderson, FSB Campus Policewoman, as a new member. Now I’m learning about yet another new application, Roger, which lets you talk to a group or individual. I’m hoping to twist the arm of some volunteers with more time than me who might help me capture some of the precious memories that have been flowing over Roger. With history and archiving in mind, I’d like to thank Peggy Baggett-Fleischer and Wayne King for capturing a great interview with Bertha Reynolds, longtime switchboard operator and teacher from D&B. Along with Bertha, senior members, Ewell and Marynez Mauldin and Billy and Charlene Griggs joined our festivities this year. Of course, at the beginning of our time in St. Augustine, we made time for a visit to Ms. Dot Sowell whom I’ve recently had the pleasure of interviewing. We gave her a CD of the tribute to Mr. Sowell that many participated in during our 2015 gathering.

Saturday afternoon, it was time for the fast-paced “Chinese Auction”, a different twist on a traditional auction. Each bid costs a “dolla” and the bidding becomes hot and heavy and fast! Popular items create bidding wars and, this year, there were many of these items, such as iPads, a Bluetooth Bose speaker, and paintings. Recognizing bidders is complicated by the layout of the MacWilliams Hall dining room with high-backed booths and pillars, and by the fact that the majority of us are blind or low vision. Thankfully, Eddie, the auctioneer, has eyes in the back of his head and helpers who alert him to a raised “bidding card” (homemade signs with the person’s name on them). This is where the young, energetic folks with good eyes are invaluable. They snatch those dollas and make change, smiling and laughing all the while. At one point, my young helpers were pooped out and I, being of little vision, was pinch-hitting. I grabbed Juan Carlos, one of our first-timers by the nose by accident. Realizing my mistake, I leaned down to apologize, only to find him howling with laughter. We collapsed into each other’s arms in helpless hilarity! Typical weekend scenario!

Five guide dogs graced our gathering and, like us, they need a little “R & R”. After the auction, we had a little “doggie ice cream social”, and they were allowed to run free in a fenced-in play yard. Wouldn’t the person who figured out how to extend these angels’ lives be a rich person? My own Sherman celebrated his 4th birthday in this fashion some years back, and I think I had more fun than he did!

That evening, George Smith, former electronics instructor, and Mary Lou Hofmann, former Blind Department Principal, surprised us with a visit. There were also other visitors throughout the day, Enrique Oliu, sports announcer for the Tampa Bay Rays’ Spanish broadcast, Patrick Turnage, current Technology instructor at the school, and Joel Vinastrom, former dorm manager. Later in the evening, Folks with amazing talent shared it at the open microphone. Rumor has it that a talent show might be in the works. Bring it on, I say!

And, sadly, another weekend came to an end. A small part of me was relieved because there was sleep and rest following the sheer exhaustion. Where do youth, boundless energy, and stamina go?

And the funniest quote heard throughout the weekend? A bit dicey, but oh so funny: “Coffee without cream is like sex without a partner.” I can’t take credit, but I wholeheartedly agree!

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**Tech Corner – Charging a phone's battery, are we doing it right?**

**By John Richards, Technology Committee**

The "Smart phones and other smart devices" we seem not to be able to live without use a lithium-ion battery instead of older nickel-based (NiMH and NiCd) batteries. Instead of charging your battery from 0 to 100, charge it for short bursts throughout the day. When your battery's power drops to around 50%, plug in the charger. Don't charge it to 100%, try and not let it get below 50%. Sometimes unforeseen circumstances will cause you to fully charge the battery. Do this as infrequent as possible. Constantly doing a full recharge will shorten the lifespan of your battery.

Most people are conditioned to charge the battery from 0 to 100%. "Battery memory effect" used to be a problem with the nickel-based (NiMH and NiCd) batteries. Battery memory effect is when batteries remember a previous charge. Experts recommend that you do a full zero to 100% battery recharge maybe once a month. Many Android phone manufacturers create products with a removable battery. This option allows the user to remove and replace it when needed.

Regardless of which smart phone you prefer, properly charging the battery should extend its functionality.

Supporting Article: "Charging your phone right? Should you do a full recharge from zero to 100%?" by Simon Jary

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Project Insight: (800) 267-4448

Bureau of Braille & Talking Book Library: (800) 226-6075

Division of Blind Services, State Office: (800) 342-1828

American Council of The Blind: (800) 424-8666

 (Available 3:00 to 5:30 P.M. EST Monday-Friday only)

ACB Legislative Hotline: (800) 424-8666

 (Available evenings 8:00 P.M. to 12:00 Midnight EST

 and weekends 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. only)

AT&T Disability Services: (800)872-3883

 Press 00 and speak with your long distance carrier,

 or Florida only: (800)982-2891

BellSouth Disability Services: (800)982-2891

 (From anywhere)

Social Security: (800) 772-1213

 (24-hour voice and touch tone accessible

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