**THE WHITE CANE BULLETIN**

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



## September - October 2017

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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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**

"The world of Access for this American"

By James Kracht

Let me begin this message by telling you all that in response to correspondence and resolutions dating back to 2014, your president traveled to Tallahassee on August 3rd and had a very successful meeting with Pam Stuart the Commissioner of Education, and DBS Director Robert Doyle. For years, FCB has voiced concerns about the tremendous disparity in pay between DBS and DVR counselors. Our meeting went well, and the exchange of ideas, information, and dialog was very good. I am hopeful for some positive response in the coming months.

Let me also remind you of the upcoming Board meeting in Jacksonville. It will be held from November 3rd to the 5th at the Lexington Riverwalk Hotel. I have asked that the information be posted on the website immediately, so please make your reservations and travel arrangements soon. I’m hoping to see many of you in Jacksonville in early November.

As most of you know, I was blessed and fortunate to be able to spend 5 weeks in Europe earlier this summer. I was primarily in England, Italy, and Germany. While in England, I was in smaller towns – not London – but while in Italy, I was in the larger cities of Florence and Milan. In Germany, I was in Berlin. The trip was absolutely fantastic, exposing me to some incredible sights, experiences, and relationships with people.

But reflecting on what it was like to be a blind tourist in foreign lands, I thought I'd take a few minutes to remind us of just how lucky we are to live in America with the access and accommodations in our environment that we have obtained thus far. In my opinion, it truly is a more accessible world here.

Braille menus: I ate some truly great food in all 3 countries and had some very wonderful dining experiences. My waistline will certainly attest to that. But during the 5 weeks in Europe, I did not enjoy a single braille menu. We certainly don't have braille menus universally available, but the ones we have are surely better than none. I noticed their total absence in Europe and missed seeing them along the way.

Public Transportation: I used the trains in England, Italy, and Germany and the buses in Italy and Germany. Yes, bus stop announcements were present on the buses that I took. This was nice – and very helpful. My experiences on European trains were not as good. In England, I rode on 1 train that I could actually not understand or hear the announcements on. The car attendant was nowhere to be seen, but luckily I was with a sighted companion who could locate our stop.

In Italy, as a result of an unforeseen disaster and emergency, I separated from my sighted friend in Milan and took a 12-hour train trip to Berlin. With the opening of the huge Milan train station at 6 a.m., I struggled for 15 minutes before finally finding someone that would help me locate the ticket office. I did not speak Italian, and no one in the station in any way reacted to my cane or asked me if I needed help.

Then after discussing my situation with the ticket agent, she eventually sold me a ticket to Berlin that involved one train change. But they would not provide me with any assistance to make that train change or indicate which track the second train would be on. It seems that you have to request special assistance 3 days in advance. I advised her that there had been a death in my travel party, and I was ultimately told that there are no exceptions. If you didn't request assistance 3 days in advance, you didn't get it. Wow! I proceeded anyway and begged and obtained help from 2 tourists, but it certainly was added stress on my nerves.

Braille maps: I saw braille maps outside a museum and outside the subway in Italy. The museum was certainly in the process of becoming accessible – the maps were detailed and good – but they would have taken some significant time and energy to be able to meaningfully use. Still, they were great maps with detailed scales and information. Special audio guides were available in museums in England and Italy on several occasions. The descriptions were quite thorough and detailed. In Bath, England, I had one audio guide, which was much longer and more informative than the one provided to my sighted companion. Audio guides were also available and provided on the little Red train into Switzerland – and on the sightseeing bus tour in Potsdam, Germany. Museum discounts or free admission for your sighted assistant were also provided primarily in England and Germany. The large Berlin museum we went to provided a special guide to us as 2 blind patrons, but disappointingly, the actual special tour was not really that tactile.

Accessible currency: It was nice having different sized Pound Sterling and Euro notes in Europe. I really needed some kind of guide to help me know which was which, though. I'm told that such guides were available at the banks or post office but never managed to get one. Still, it was nice to know that you could differentiate the currency. One can only ask: why does this have to be so difficult in this country?

Braille markings: Seeing a braille room number on hotels from modest to high-end hotels just didn't happen. I really didn't check out many public restrooms for braille signage, but I don't think that there was much or any of it present. We truly win the braille markings and signage point hands down.

Airline assistance: Generally, I would say that the airline assistance I received getting on and off planes in England and Germany was far superior to that provided in this country. The service providers were accommodating and helpful and took me through customs and to the tax refund office. They were timely in showing up, although I had an issue and some difficulty connecting with the provided assistance in Berlin.

The cost of disability: While in Berlin, I looked at my Berlin host's folding cane. It was lightweight aluminum or graphite – nothing out of the ordinary from what I could tell. I asked him how many he had, and he said one. Wow! When asked why, he said because it cost over 200 Euros. I quickly removed my $25 or $30 extra Revolutions cane from the suitcase and left it with him. Unbelievable. But it seems that specialized aids and appliances are far more expensive in Europe than here in the States. Truly, the cane was nothing special. I was in shock.

Conclusion: From the perspective of access, we truly are miles ahead here in the United States. Some of our technology is still very expensive, but all in all, the day-to-day aids and appliances are far more affordable to us in this country. Yes, Europe wins hands down on accessible currency, but for the most part, I'm truly glad to be a blind man living in Florida and fighting our battles of advocacy here rather than in Europe.

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**Announcing the Low Vision Expo ‘17**

By Greg Lindberg

The Pinellas Council of the Blind is excited to announce the Low Vision Expo ‘17!

This is our chapter’s second annual event like this. In conjunction with the Lighthouse of Pinellas, the Talking Book Library, Care Ride, and Disabilities Relations Group, this exciting expo will be held on Saturday, October 14, 2017 from ten a.m. to two p.m. in Evans Hall of Chapel on the Hill, located at 12601 Park Boulevard North, Seminole, FL 33776.

The expo will consist of several events. First off, we will recognize White Cane Safety Day by having two walks – a shorter and a longer route – during the event. We’ll also have two important guest speakers on hand – Rick Kriseman, who is the mayor of St. Petersburg, and Trish Springer, a city councilwoman from the City of Seminole who will read a special proclamation for White Cane Safety Day.

We will also have over 35 tables set up with a number of vendors who serve the blind and visually impaired. This includes cutting-edge assistive technology, transportation services, and a wide variety of other organizations that provide useful resources.

The event is free and open to the public. If you have any further questions, please contact Sharon Youngs, who has helped arrange the event with Doug Towne, Eugene Batke, and others. Sharon can be reached at 727-937-8631.

All FCB members interested in attending are welcome to come out and support this fantastic community event. We look forward to seeing you there!

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**“Wait, Wait.” Now You Can cross the Street with Audible Help**

By Sharis Coleman-Derr

Have you ever herd the talking buttons at main intersection crosswalks? They count down the seconds and let you know when it's safe to cross the street. First, let’s look at some history:

In the beginning, there were only stop signs to signal traffic at intersections. Then someone came up with the brilliant idea of red and green lights to control the traffic. But that did not help the pedestrians crossing the street. Then they thought of painting crosswalk lines to help traffic flow and keep pedestrians safe when crossing the street. Then someone thought of putting crosswalk signs that illuminated to let the walkers and bikers know when to safely cross the street. But this did not help blind people. We had to just listen to the traffic coming from all directions and learn to differentiate between the traffic patterns and figure out when it was safe to cross, (assuming we could even stay within the crosswalk lines since we couldn’t see them most of the time.)

Finally, someone came up with the wonderful plan to have a button for the “walk” sign that would make a sound to let you know that it was safe to cross the street. But the only problem with this early model was that it chirps like that of a bird. This was not the best idea, however, as one might be confused and think they were hearing a real bird and not cross the street at the appropriate time. Now, they finally have cross walk signs that actually talk and count down the seconds for you and let you know when to walk. I had been wanting some audible crosswalk signals at my intersection for a while since I moved to Pinellas County in 2007.

I’m happy to report that these audible signals were just installed in the beginning of July of this year, but the journey to acquiring them has been a long one.

Ever since I moved to this area, I noticed that there were no audible signals at the intersection of East Bay and Starkey/Keen roads. About 4 years ago, I lost most of my vision after I had a cataract removed from my left eye. I had to have orientation and mobility training and relearn how to cross this intersection all over again because I couldn’t see the crosswalk lines anymore. The O&M teacher I had at the time was truly wonderful – she took my anxiety from 100 percent down to 50 percent. (This was at least somewhat more manageable.) However, she would not approve the audible signals as she said, in her opinion, that it was a busy intersection with lots of good traffic flow, and that she didn’t think we needed them. I was disappointed.

Just this year, I decided to try again. So, I called in February and didn’t hear anything. So, I called again in April - and in May. Still I heard nothing. Finally, in the beginning of June, I got a call from an O&M instructor at the light house of Pinellas who said that she would like to ask me questions about why I wanted the audible signals placed at this intersection. I told her that although this intersection is busy, and has a good traffic flow, there are times when the cycle has been known to change in the middle of my crossing the street so that even though I started out crossing the street at the appropriate time, I ended up getting stuck in the middle of the street while the other traffic started to go. (That was very uncomfortable!)

I also told her that it would help not just myself to cross the street safely, but many other people as well. Pedestrians who have walkers, wheelchairs, canes like myself, or people crossing with bikes or baby strollers could all benefit. There is a community for the elderly nearby, and they use that intersection quite a lot. This particular O&M instructor was kind and listened to all my arguments and then said that it would take a while, but she would be willing to make favorable arguments for the installation of the audible signals. I then commented that there are audible signals at the intersections of Seminole Boulevard/Missouri Avenue and East/west Bay Drive, and why couldn’t we have them here at Starkey / Keen and East Bay as well?

Then I got a call from someone at the Pinellas County Public Works office who gave me a phone number to the traffic controller’s office, and I spoke to them. Finally, by the first week of July, they were installed on all four corners. When I had a chance to investigate them, I found that the one on the southeast corner (by Starbucks) needed the volume turned up, but that the others worked great. I called the traffic controller’s office again and first thanked them for all their hard work and then explained that the volume needed to be made louder on the one set of buttons. The very next day, it was fixed. The person I spoke to at the traffic controller’s office said that they didn’t get thanked very often, and he was glad to help. I am very glad the audible signals are there today.

Of course, I still have to make good decisions about when to cross the street, and keep my wits about me when I do, but now I at least have a better understanding of when it is safe to cross the street, and I can find the buttons more easily since they talk.

Of course, it may be harder for those with hearing impairments to hear the signals, especially when both buttons are talking at the same time), but ultimately, I feel that the installation of these audible signals has been a great help in keeping me safe when crossing this intersection, and I wish they would put them in at every intersection!

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**Venice Chapter Update**

By Tom Hanson

The Venice chapter of FCB does not meet during July and August, but that doesn’t mean we are just sunbathing, parasailing, or swimming with the manatees. We have been busy due to the resignation of our president, Ellen Hillstrom. Unfortunately, due to her declining health, Ellen is leaving us in Florida to live with her son in Seattle, Washington.

The easy part was appointing a replacement to fill out Ellen’s term, which ends at the end of this year, and Tom Hanson was selected to fill this remaining term. The hard part was saying goodbye to Ellen. Ellen had been involved with the Venice Chapter for over 10 years since she began losing her sight.

She served as state representative to FCB and, for the past 3 years, as president of our chapter. Her enthusiasm and guidance helped create outreach activities that the chapter had not done before. Booths at local health fairs and events allowed the chapter to interact with the public and provide information on services and activities. Ellen began writing a monthly column for the local newspaper that started with how she reacted to losing her vision, which services and training were available, and what other visually impaired persons were doing in the community. Through this column, many visually impaired persons in the area learned they were not alone in their struggles, while the public learned more about the challenges and successes of the visually impaired.

Ellen was already well known in the south Sarasota County community. In the 1970s, she opened the first employment agency in Venice and was actually called in to the Venice Chamber of Commerce to explain what an employment agency was! Apparently, they liked her answer because in 1978, she became the first woman president of the Chamber, and in 1983, she was hired as the first woman Executive Director of the Chamber. After she retired in 1998, she served as Development Director of the South Venice Civic Association and was a founding trustee of the South Venice Beach Trust. Ellen’s business connections were an advantage when our VCB chapter needed a good price on printing or a venue for an event. Ellen knew everybody, and everybody knew Ellen.

Ellen has been honored with the Woman in Business Lifetime Achievement Award by the Gondolier Sun, the Paul Harris Fellow Award by Rotary International, the Women of Distinction Award from the Venice Chamber of Commerce, and the Woman of Impact Award from Sarasota County. In July of this year, she received the Pillar of Venice Award from the City of Venice, which was followed by a reception attended by several VCB members.

We reluctantly had to say goodbye to Ellen and her enthusiasm, guidance, and connections. But above all, she will be loved, remembered, and dearly missed for just being Ellen Hillstrom, our friend.

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**GOCB Update**

By Martha James

The GOCB would like to extend congratulations to Dan Spoone for his election to first vice president of the American Council of the Blind. We are proud to have him as a member of our chapter and know that the ACB will greatly benefit from his leadership.

The chapter had its annual cookout and pool party on Saturday, August 12 at the home of Gary Sinclair. Thanks once again, Gary, for opening your lovely home to us.

As a chapter, we will be getting back to work in September with our next meeting planned for September 9. The chapter, in cooperation with the NFB and Lighthouse Central Florida, is planning a White Cane and Guide Dog Safety Day Walk for October 13.

In addition, for those with computer access, GOCB is on Facebook. You can find us on Facebook by typing in “GOCB.”

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**Benefits of a GDUF Membership**

By Tom Hanson

“Is it worth $25 a year to keep my GDUF membership?”

That’s the question many of you have asked since GDUF raised annual dues to $25. Do I really need to belong to Guide Dog Users of Florida? Is it worth $25 a year? As much as we all hate to pay any kind of increase, the fact is that membership in GDUF is a bargain for what you get out of it. Here’s why we believe that.

For an annual $25 dues payment per year to GDUF, members also gain membership in the American Council of the Blind, the Florida Council of the Blind, and Guide Dog Users, Inc. All of these organizations do meaningful advocacy in areas such as access to information and access in the workplace, ensure that civil rights guaranteed under the American with Disabilities Act are understood and enforced, bring information about programs and services of importance, publicize job opportunities, provide a forum in which to communicate with peers, and provide individual advocacy and support as needed. Here are some of the benefits you receive from being a member of GDUF:

1. An e-mail chat list for sharing information and ideas

2. Bi-monthly telephonic membership meetings

3. Annual convention

4. Membership in the GDUI, FCB, and ACB. Advantages of belonging to these organizations include:

- GDUF is an affiliate of Guide Dog Users, Inc. (GDUI). Some of the benefits of GDUI are:

1. Chat lists to discuss issues covering care of your guide, using your cane, access for your guide, etc.

2. Publishes quarterly magazine, PawTracks.

3. A disaster fund, available to assist with the upkeep of your guide if impacted by such events as a tornado, hurricane, etc.

4. Advocating for our civil rights, legislative policies, and laws pertaining to service animals.

5. An annual convention highlighting current practices and new innovations which enhance our function with our guides, while offering an opportunity for GDUI affiliates to meet and socialize.

6. Provides a website with resources and information (www.guidedogusersinc.org).

GDUF is an affiliate of the Florida Council of the Blind (FCB). The benefits of FCB include:

1. An opportunity to socialize and interact with other Floridians, making new friends and long-term relationships, and enabling you to be yourself in social settings with others and be comfortable in your environment.

2. An opportunity to discuss problems of daily living and seek solutions from members who might be facing the same problems and challenges.

3. Learn about new services and technology to help you manage daily living skills with more ease and efficiency to improve your independence.

4. Advocating for legislation to improve the quality of life for blind and visually impaired persons.

5. Local, statewide, and national meetings and conventions.

6. Publishes bi-monthly magazine, the White Cane Bulletin.

7. Maintains website with information, listserv, and resources (www.fcb.org).

 Finally, the parent organization of all of the groups is the American Council of the Blind (ACB). Through ACB, your GDUF membership includes the following:

1. Provides education about blindness, resources and support.

2. Advocates for members on specific issues, including discrimination, housing, employment, availability of talking ATMs, accessible pedestrian signals, accessible websites, accessible labeling for medication prescriptions, and talking voting machines.

3. Awards and student scholarships.

4. Donation of scholarships to first-timers for conventions.

5. Finds mentors to give advice and help in problem-solving.

6. Publishes monthly magazine, the Braille Forum.

7. Hosts listserv for sharing blindness news and issues.

8. Updates website (www.acb.org) with information and resources.

9. Produces internet radio shows (www.acbradio.org)

10. Plans an annual convention including special interest affiliates.

In addition to providing information and promoting services and opportunities for the blind and visually impaired, one of the often-overlooked benefits for most members is the feeling of being part of a community. Many have formed lifelong friendships. Many have built confidence in their blindness skills after learning from others. There is strength in numbers. Networking can help find employment, share knowledge, and enrich lives.

In short, there is much to be gained by joining GDUF. GDUF provides a nonthreatening forum in which guide dog handlers can listen, learn, present ideas of importance to them and, together, set the course of the organization. There are many opportunities to give back and to improve the lives of guide dog users here in Florida and around the country. So, don’t let an increase in dues chase you away from taking advantage of all that can be gained from membership in GDUF – and thereby enjoying the benefits of membership in GDUI, FCB, and ACB.

To join GDUF or for more information, contact Membership Secretary Lois Butterfield at lbutterfield5@cfl.rr.com or at 407-276-4173, or President Tom Hanson at badgertom1@verizon.net or at 941-218-9090.

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**“Lemonade” FSB Alumni and Friends Style**

2017 Update

By Sila Miller

As they’ve done for 50-plus years now, former students of the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind (FSDB), along with friends and families, met in mid-July on the school’s lovely, old 80-acre campus. The reunion is an annual event, hosted by the Blind Alumni Association, that brings people together for fun, fellowship, food, and this year, a little “lemonade.” The Association strives to foster good relations between current and former students and staff, and the reunion is one of the ways we try to accomplish this goal.

Much planning and work goes into coordinating these reunions, which generally boast 70 to 100 attendees. Six meals are prepared and served; lodging in the dormitories, special activities, and transportation are coordinated, and entertainment and educational workshops are scheduled. Advance planning and coordination are the keys to success and sanity. This year, that was seriously put to the test! Nine days before the event was to take place, I received a call advising that our group-- 86 had pre-registered at that point-- was being relocated to the front of campus because of major roadway and building construction. Whoa, time to regroup!

FSDB is divided into two departments: one at the front of campus (which primarily serves the needs of students who are deaf), and the other toward the back (which houses students with low or no vision—the one with which most of us are familiar). Understandably, security on campus is of utmost importance and taken very seriously. Everyone entering campus must obtain a visitor’s pass and navigate through a closely monitored security gate. Those traveling to the back of campus are required to navigate only one such gate. Because of the locations of the buildings we were assigned to (the dining hall in one building and dorms in three others) being a bit spread out, we had the challenge of navigating three security gates. This meant getting initial security clearance through the main security gate, food and supplies into the dining hall via another gate, and people, luggage, Ubers, and various other things into and out of yet another one. Chaotic you’re thinking? Awe, you ain’t seen nothin’ yet!

Generally, Robert and I, along with some dear and loyal friends, go shopping a day or two before at Sam’s Wholesale for paper goods and other supplies necessary for serving over 500 meals. But this year, our cargo space was limited, so another couple of dear and loyal friends, the Colson family who live in Jacksonville, agreed to take care of this chore. Upon the Colsons’ arrival onto campus to deliver all that stuff, we hadn’t quite worked out getting clearance through those security gates, so we unloaded and reloaded, secured— or thought we did!! — that heavy stuff and tried to outwork the rain.

Well, some accidental cart crashes repeatedly occurred, resulting in a few— well, maybe more than a few— sticky drink explosions! Everything was everywhere in an unfamiliar kitchen, there was no shelving in the walk-in cooler, and I suddenly discovered: I’m getting old! It seemed that all weekend, we looked for lost items that I absolutely knew had been purchased and delivered…

The 2017 reunion was dedicated to the memories of Ewell Mauldin and Freddie Haynes, both former students and huge supporters of the Alumni Association. Freddie died suddenly and not long after last year’s gathering, and Mr. Ewell passed away shortly before this one. Both gentlemen genuinely loved people and showed it through their actions and words. Mr. Haynes worked hard to reunite and encourage participation from the black faction of FSB’s Alumni, many of whom attended school pre-desegregation. Freddie and his wife, Rosie, donated food and time and provided limitless amounts of love and encouragement. Mr. Ewell was not only a former student, but also worked for a time as a dorm parent at the school. He and his wife, Marynez, were some of the founding members of the Association and would often attend with one or both of their daughters. He’d work quietly in the background, providing feedback and direction and was always interested in the nuts and bolts of a situation. Somehow, it seems fitting that in light of this dedication, the most precious memory I’d take away from this year’s gathering was witnessing nine young heroes, ranging in age from 14 to 17, many of whom— aside from perhaps a family member or friend— hadn’t ever experienced this level of exposure to people with disabilities, test their comfort zone by working their hearts out! These kids amazed me beyond words with the way they handled chore after chore: providing sighted-guide assistance at check-in and for all meals between dorms and the dining hall, transporting and serving hot food, calling roll, displaying and describing items for the auction, moving furniture, only to name a few. They faced challenge after challenge, including (to name a few) a dead car battery, spilled gravy, fielding a myriad of complaints, torrential rainstorms, and missed or late meals. To witness the gentle, considerate interaction between my 16-year-old grandson, Jake Miller, and an elderly man experiencing dementia brought me to tears. To see a job done before I could even ask showed me impressive responsible initiative. I saw patience, respect, critical thinking, prioritizing, fortitude, thoroughness, and grace. And, I wasn’t the only one who noticed. Campus Policewoman Michelle Anderson insisted on preparing and serving some of her special homecooked food to those heroes. I’m proud and satisfied, as I know Mr. Mauldin and Mr. Haynes would be, to see that our “future” is in good hands! Jake Miller, Trisha McCaul, Nina Iscrupe, Ian McCaul, Devin Doyle, Ryan Trayer, Jyline Flores, Makayla Fulda, and Makenzie Fulda, you “stepped up and delivered” when it really counted and kept a wonderful attitude throughout. Hats off, many blessings, and all my love to you ladies and gentlemen!

Our final attendance count was 102. Of those, there were musicians, attorneys, authors, teachers, contractors, computer programmers, artists, personal trainers, caterers, and everything in between. We had folks from Utah, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, as well as five guide dogs. I had the personal honor of walking around with a microphone for our Friday evening introduction reception and got to liberally interject a few comments of my own. Our Saturday night pre-dinner entertainment boasted a trumpet duo, Ian McCaul and Jerry Nealey, performing the Star-Spangled Banner. Among our distinguished dinner guests were Dr. Jeanne Glidden Prickett, FSDB President and her husband, Dr. Hugh Prickett, as well as Carol Bogue, Principal of the Blind Department and her husband, Gary.

For some while, a spirited auction with a different twist has served as our major fundraiser and provided no end of fun and competitive banter. This year, the auction raised enough to cover the two scholarships we provide each year to a senior and an 8th-grader, with funds left over. Three items in particular were hotly sought after and brought in excess of $100 each. Those items? Honey harvested by Elizabeth Tinsley, a t-shirt from D&B Designs, the school’s gift shop, donated by the McCauls, and a Bluetooth speaker donated by Sherry Molengraft. It is really something to behold the energy and magnetism once this auction gets rolling. Of course, our auctioneer, Eddie Rivers, entertainer extraordinaire and longtime supporter lends a lot to the event, while cataloger/describer, Erica McCaul, and her team keep it all organized.

Erica offered the following interesting insight about the auction and with her permission, I’m including it here. “Each of the 3 years I’ve served as organizer for the auction, I’ve been surprised by this amazing event. The first year, just that this model WORKS; I’d never seen or heard of anything like it… and I was blown away by not only it’s monetary success, but also by the FUN in it! Each of my successive years, I thought I’d at least have somewhat figured out which items would be most hotly bidded… or how best to combine items for an interesting package. I’ve really given a lot of thought to this, as I want to maximize the efforts of our many generous contributors! And I want to honestly answer the inquiries I receive from several of our generous donors. Here’s what I’ve concluded:

1. Everyone who contributes to our little auction does so out of a genuine benevolence to the students of FSB.

2. It takes each and every donation to make this event the success it is.

3. Sometimes the flow of the auction is a factor in how much a particular donation will draw. For example, Sila’s spectacular “Dudge Frops” have garnered proceeds varying from well over $100 to about $40. I don’t think she’s changed her recipe. I don’t think they’ve gotten any less tremendously sinful! I doubt, sadly, that they’re any more calorie-free, and certainly, it’s not that we love her any less…

4. Likewise, each and every bid is a “vote”—a vote for the item, a vote of thanks for the donor, a vote of confidence for the next stellar FSB rising high schooler or graduate, a friendly challenge to a fellow alum. No matter the reason you have for each vote you cast, know that it is worthwhile and much appreciated.

Erica”

Thursday’s special activities included a beautiful sunset cruise aboard the Victory III and dinner at either a delightful little soda-fountain or a renowned barbeque restaurant. Ok, so I ate dinner at one place and dessert at the other— a girl’s gotta keep up her strength! Also on the weekend’s agenda was an educational workshop that featured home automation/digital assistant technology, including the Amazon line, (Echo, Dot, Tap, Wand and Echo-Show) as well as the Google Home device. Much good information was shared about these amazing products by Robert Miller and others.

To give you a true “flavor” of this event, I really should share just a few of the plethora of behind-the-scenes details that required tending to. Seasoning and grilling over 100 pounds of ribeye steaks (Sarah Fleischer and Brad McCormack); preparing over two gallons of delicious chicken gravy—that um, didn’t quite make it to the dining hall (Annie Crackel and Eddie Rivers); down and dirty cleanup of the freight elevator from all that lovely gravy (Jake Miller and Devin Doyle); baking 12 huge batches of brownies (Linda Doyle); keeping the “mornin’ joe” coming (Wayne King and Lloyd Jones); sorting and bagging linen (Cliff Fry, Mike Winkler, and team); and washing dishes and dishes and more dishes (Sherry, John, Toni, Doug, Kim-Marie, Glen, Greg, and many others). What a cooperative team of folks “live in my village”. What a joy to be a part of a labor of love such as this. What of a few lemons?

For further “flavor”, I’d like to share just a few of my “sweet takeaway memories”. Eating homemade Rum Cake with Erica and John at almost midnight, compliments of Bertha Reynolds, my very first boss. Not only did Bertha bake that cake just for me, but she also shared her coveted recipe. Bertha had the distinction of being our oldest attendee this year, but you sure couldn’t tell it by the way she got around, helping others and laughing and joking all the while! Running through the sulfur-water sprinklers at almost midnight with the kids, and hearing the sweet ring of Owen Moore, toddler of Tommy and Toni’s laughter when I held a cold cup against his hot face and made googly eyes at him.

With all that being said, we welcome you back to school if you haven’t been in a while. We’re family, as those who began as “guests” will attest. We have fun, we work, we laugh, and we eat! Flexibility, coffee, and little sleep are prerequisites for this “crazy magic” called the FSB Reunion!

Lastly, as many of you know, my nickname is Sidetrack Sila. However, in my defense and because of my advancing age, I must attend to a chore as it occurs to me, lest it be forgotten. If you’re one whom I told “I’ll be right back” and you’re still waiting, I’m sorry. If you can see your way to understanding and forgiving me, I’ll forever be in your debt! If you can’t, I’ll be laughing at you when you get here!

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**Beep Baseball: All Ears on the Action**

By Greg Lindberg

I was standing at home plate. It was likely going to be my final at-bat of the Beep Baseball World Series. I was determined not to strike out and sulk in my long car ride back home. So, I took my brother's advice, squared up my body, bent my knees, and hit the ball. I didn't get to third base fast enough to score a run, but I was still proud of my effort.

This was just one cool moment of several I got to experience at the 2017 National Beep Baseball Association World Series held in West Palm Beach, Florida at the end of July. I had played beep baseball in a few games with the Tampa Lighthouse back in 2012 and 2013. However, since then, I had always had the itch to compete more frequently and perhaps even start a team in the Tampa Bay area. Needless to say, after a 4-year hiatus from the game that was more of a matter of circumstances, it was a blast to participate in a tournament among the best players in the world.

This was the 42nd annual Beep Baseball World Series. Twenty-two teams from all over the U.S. – along with squads from Canada, the Dominican Republic, and Taiwan – competed in the 5-day event. I was a member of the Daytona Bats, which is the only official team from Florida. My brother, David, also got a chance to play.

On the first day, the Bats played in 3 games against opponents Indianapolis, Austin, Texas, and Long Island. We wound up dropping the first two games by large margins, but the game against the Long Island Bombers was close as we lost a heartbreaker, 3-2. On Wednesday, my brother and I only got to play in the first game due to our work schedules. This one was against the Seattle Sluggers. Once again, we didn’t end up in the win column, but our team showed improvement both in the field and at the plate as the games went on. In the end, it was the Indy Edge who defeated Taiwan to capture the team’s second World Series title in a row.

Considering that the members of the Bats team had never played together in a formal game, I felt like we held our own against former World Series champs and teams that had obviously been together for some time and had lots of chemistry among their players. I quickly learned that a team’s pitcher is perhaps the most important player on the team because he or she, who is sighted, must throw the beep ball in the “wheelhouse” of the blindfolded batter in order for that person to have a good chance of hitting the ball. Keep in mind that the fielders are all blindfolded as well. The other aspect I learned is that when going after a ball that has been hit, you really have to get on the ground to stop it from rolling so that you have enough time to pick it up and make the out. You cannot just stay on your feet and expect to be an effective fielder.

I cannot thank Willie Scales enough, who is the head coach and manager of the Bats team. He is also a proud member of the Halifax Council of the Blind in Daytona. Willie is truly passionate about beep baseball and has put in his fair share of blood, sweat, and tears into the nonprofit he has set up for his team. I also want to thank my brother for taking me to South Florida and then unexpectedly getting the opportunity to both play in some games and assist our visually impaired teammates. Plus, I appreciate the guidance provided by members of the Braille Club in West Palm Beach who took us on and off the field, filled our water cups to keep us hydrated in the sweltering heat, and offered plenty of support to our team.

As I mentioned earlier, I still would love to put together a beep baseball team here in the Tampa Bay area. If you would be interested in participating in a game, practice, or just want to learn more about beep baseball, I’m all ears. Just e-mail me at glindberg@gmail.com. As they say before any baseball game, let’s play ball!

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**Poetry Corner**

By Shelley Sawyer

On September 3 of this year, Richard and I will be married for 6 years. I believe that one of my shortcomings is that I don’t do a very good job of expressing how much I appreciate him for all that he does. I do not express to him often enough how very much he means to me. I am hopeful that the words below will convey just a very small portion of my thoughts. Richard, this one is for you. Happy Anniversary.

To the Moon and Back

Written by:

Tom Douglas, Tony Lane and Hillary Lindsey.

Performed by Luke Bryan

Through the dirt and the gravel

Through the years and the miles,

Every road that you traveled

Through the tears and the smiles,

Through the clear and the muddy

Through the thick and thin,

The quiet nights, the howling wind,

Through the good and the ugly

The blue and the black,

To the ends of the Earth,

To the moon and back.

Through all of the words, the mean and the kind,

Through the strings that unravel

And the ties that bind,

From the crazy and the different

To the more of the same,

From the coast is clear

To a hurricane,

Yeah, I'll be right beside you

On a roll or off the tracks,

To the ends of the Earth

To the moon and back;

Through the bitter and the sweet

The cold and the fire,

Lonely cotton sheets

And the burning desire,

Until our song is over

Til the stars all fade to black,

I'm gonna love you

To the ends of the Earth

To the moon and back;

Yeah, I'm gonna love you

All the way to the moon and back.

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**Phoebe Catlin: A Humble Centenarian**

By Greg Lindberg

A lot can happen in 100 years. Many wars can be fought. New technology can transform the world. The globe’s population can skyrocket.

But remaining humble for more than a century is quite an accomplishment. And that’s the perfect description of the life of Phoebe Elizabeth Carter Catlin.

Born at home on March 9, 1917 in Williamson, West Virginia, she was the only child of John Patton Carter and Lydia Ethel Olinger Carter. Both parents hailed from Virginia, and her mother was actually from a town called Olinger. Her mother was born in 1887 and her father in 1890. The family’s roots can be traced back to England, Scotland, and Ireland.

“I was home-schooled at an early age,” Catlin recalls. “I wasn’t sent to public school until I reached third grade. That grade school was in Kentucky, so I had to cross the bridge over the Tug River to get there each day.”

The school was in Chattaroy. Before she entered seventh grade, the family moved to Bristol, Virginia. They later relocated to Kentucky where she graduated from Corbin High School in 1934. She then pursued to higher education at Sue Bennett College in London, Kentucky.

Her father worked as postmaster and office clerk for Borderland Mining Company in the area. Catlin has vivid memories about the violence against the mining industry and how her father was in danger many times at work.

“The miners in the area were mostly from Hungary. The violence against the mining industry developed during those years, and the miners revolted. My father was in management being a postmaster, so he had to carry a gun and kept a rifle at home under the bed. He had to wear a belt with cartridges around it. He had to be on duty at night, which was very stressful for us. There were even shootings during the day. One day, my father’s boss said he must leave town by 5 p.m. or he’ll die. His boss was killed.”

The family’s first car was a Chandler, which they bought around 1925.

“It was good enough to drive from Kentucky to grandma’s home in Virginia,” she says. “We had to siphon gas out of the front end and put it in the back end of the car. We had to manually crank the gas.”

Her family was very much affected by the Great Depression while living in the town of Corbin

“Everyone in town did business with the same bank. Your money wasn’t protected in those days. When the stock market crashed, the bank said they had no money left, so people got nothing back from the bank. I also remember that the church in town padlocked its doors shut. We had moved to a farm, so fortunately we had enough to eat. We had 7 cows on the farm and sold their milk. My parents milked the cows, and I washed the milk bottles.”

With a degree in education, Catlin pursued a teaching career. She started off teaching in Ferriston, Kentucky and later taught in Corbin. She began teaching Kindergarten through third grade and was then promoted to teach fifth and sixth graders. Many of these classes were either held in a two-room schoolhouse or in a church.

“We put up curtains in the church’s auditorium and planned it so that one teacher would teach at a time,” she explains. “One school I taught at didn’t have any textbooks or even a building. My attic was full of Sunday school papers and reading materials, which I brought in to use. Our free books finally arrived 6 weeks into the school year. The funny thing is that they had a big section on all the boroughs in New York because they were shipped from a school district up there. So, all these kids in Kentucky were learning about these Burroughs.”

She attained a master’s degree in education with a specialization in guidance counseling. She began working on a Ph.D. as well but never completed it.

With summers off, Catlin kept busy by working at the DuPont Laboratory in Louisville.

“I helped make synthetic rubber out of materials we got from South America. The people there worked swing shifts around the clock. We all worked very hard.”

In addition to her education career, Catlin spent three years working as a civilian in the U.S. Army in the Office of the Quartermaster General. This was during World War II.

“I helped supply the Army with food, blankets, and other supplies they needed,” she says. “When the war ended, I transferred to the U.S. Geological Survey. Both of these positions were in Washington, D.C.”

It was around this time when Catlin met her future first husband,

“A friend from my hometown in Kentucky introduced us. He was all over me when we first met. He was working on his law degree at the time and then became a federal attorney in D.C. later on.”

She and Paul Beath made it official and were married in 1947 in Louisville. They had one daughter, Mary Elizabeth Beath, who was born in 1950. The couple was married for 35 years until Paul’s passing.

Mary was born in Washington, D.C. She later attended Duke University and “was really good in math and science,” according to her mom. She majored in botany and zoology there. She then went on to the Rhode Island School of Design where she earned a master’s in art design. She made a career out of being a nature artist.

“She did work for some big companies in New York,” Catlin recalls. “She went in to sell a design to the head of a prominent company, and the gentleman said he’d buy the design but also wanted to hire her. She preferred to work for herself. She actually did some artwork for the Louvre Museum in Paris.”

Mary married Christopher “Kit” French. The two live in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It was Mary who organized her mother’s 97th birthday party in Williamsburg, Virginia.

“We got 10 timeshares for a whole week for all of the family and friends who came in for it. Everyone said, ‘We’ll see you in 3 years for your 100th birthday, but please don’t have it in Williamsburg again.’ That’s because we got 2 inches of snow while we were there. So, everyone was right about seeing me in 3 years, and we had my 100th birthday party in May of this year at the Hilton here in St. Petersburg. We had 85 people come for it.”

For 25 years, Catlin worked in the Washington, D.C. public school system. She was a teacher and guidance counselor, and some of these years were around the time when integration was taking place.

“They sent me to the main large high school in Washington,” she recounts. “They said we needed to have 50% black students at the school, and we only had one at the time. They chose me to be a guidance counselor because I had experience working in lower-income schools in the past. At the time, a judge ruled that higher-income black students be sent to us, but we actually wanted lower-income black students. Some of the lower-income students had never even seen a $20 bill before. Many of them were hard to handle. But we had a wonderful black principal, and I met many very professional blacks who worked in the school system.”

She recalls a specific incident about a troubled student who later went on to become quite successful.

“As a counselor, I had a special button in my office that I could press for security if something ever happened. There was a big black boy who came charging into my office one day. He told me that he had started to kill his father that morning because he had been beating up the boy’s mother, but the mother never reported it. I referred him to a psychologist. But they wouldn’t see him because his father was in the Army and was undergoing his own psychiatric treatment. Eventually, Walter Reed Hospital took the kid at just 16 years old. He played a cello that his brother had stolen. Years later, I found out he was playing in an orchestra in Boston and was doing quite well for himself.”

She remarried in her sixties to Glenn Catlin in 1984. The two were married for 24 years until his passing in 2008.

For over nine decades of her life, Catlin knew very little about what it’s like to be visually impaired. Upon turning 93, she was diagnosed with macular degeneration, a condition more common in older individuals that affects the macula in the eye. The primary effect of this condition is either blurred or loss of central vision.

At the age of 96, she would go on to start the VIP (Visually Impaired Persons) Group in her retirement community. She was the main person in charge of the group, which met regularly to discuss various issues about blindness. She even invited speakers from the Lions Club, the Lighthouse of Pinellas and other organizations to come out and present information to the residents. They also had a talking book club where people would get together and talk about what books they were listening to. There were about 26 total members in the group at one point.”

The VIP Group was originally formed in May 2013. After a while, Catlin became aware of ACB and thought there might be a potential connection she could make with the organization.

“I first read about the American Council of the Blind a few years ago,” she says. “I was interested because we have quite a few visually impaired residents here at my retirement home. I called them up and asked how we might be able to get a speaker to come out to talk about vision loss and other topics of interest. They said ACB has chapters within states and local communities, and they referred me to the Pinellas Council of the Blind. I first spoke with Kathy Millican and then Sharon Youngs.”

The VIP Group then became a satellite affiliate of the Pinellas Council of the Blind. Some of the PCB officers have attended meetings with the group.

“I think there is a future for it,” Catlin says. “Our facility has done a great job promoting it. One of the administrators here said he thinks this type of group could go on for years and years.”

While Catlin doesn’t have as much eyesight as she once did, it certainly doesn’t hold her back.

“I say you just have to deal with it and move on,” she says.

Longevity runs in Catlin’s family. Her mother lived to be 104, while her father died at 98.

And how has this humble girl from West Virginia reached the century mark – a feat that is still recognized on NBC’s Today show?

“When people ask how I’ve lived 100 years, I say you have to be able to accept change. Some people don’t want to change the way their furniture in their house is arranged or anything else. Then they catch some disease and are gone before you know it.”

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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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