THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN

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Non-members are requested and members are invited to pay a yearly subscription fee of $10 toward the production of THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN.

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

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

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

In accepting material for THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN, priority will be given to articles concerning the activities and policies of the California Council of the Blind and to the experiences and concerns of blind persons. Recommended length is under three pages or 1800 words.

The deadline to submit material for the Summer, 2013 issue of THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN is noon, May 15, 2013.

Please send all address changes to the Executive Office.

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From The Editor's Desk

Judy Wilkinson

I never like it when errors find their way into The Blind Californian: not even little ones. Imagine my chagrin when Vita Zavoli wrote to me pointing out that while her name was spelled right in her Winter BC article, it was spelled incorrectly in the table of contents. Then Tuan Nguyen wrote pointing out not one, not two, but several typos in his report on the Fall Conference And Convention.

Most of the time it gives me great pleasure to edit the BC, but occasionally I find the task deeply upsetting, as in the case of the letter, parts of which follow.

"It has taken me a while to compose this email (I'm usually not one to write letters to the editor), but I finally decided to bite the bullet and do so.

I imagine you might want to know if a person who submits an article has an issue, and I truly hope that you will read this in the gentle spirit with which I write it- that is to say, as constructive help and not as negative criticism.

"First, let me say this: Thank you so much for including my . . . article in . . . The Blind Californian.   I was honored that you found it acceptable, and I hope people enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. . . .

"However, I have doubts as to whether I will ever submit another article to you. [The next paragraphs describe specific omissions and edits which upset the author.]

"It didn't make me happy to think that my readers were going to be as confused as I was by the omission of a necessary fact. I understand that you have editorial discretion when you receive an article, but please be more careful about what you omit. Perhaps if you plan to omit something from an article, you should first contact the author to discuss the omission. Also, I took great pains to make sure that I did NOT go over your 1800 word limit-and believe me, that wasn't easy!-so I don't understand why you felt the omission was necessary.

[Another paragraph about my editing.]

"It's very important to keep the integrity of a submitted article, and that's why I felt drawn to write to you. Editing isn't an easy job-I know, . . . but I just want to make sure this doesn't happen to someone else's article.

"Thanks for reading this email and for considering what I've told you, and the best of luck with future articles. I have very much enjoyed reading many of them."

In light of these communications, I realize it might be useful for me to share some of the challenges

we deal with in putting the BC in your hands.

From start to finish, the process takes the better part of six weeks. My goal is to begin work as soon as you send me something: whether the editing is major (rewriting entire sentences or paragraphs) or minor, spelling, punctuation, or the occasional word choice. A writer may inadvertently use the same word in two or three consecutive sentences; I'll change one. I also feel free to impose my notions of punctuation on all submissions. You may love commas; I may insist on making them semicolons. So those articles that come in early quietly take their place awaiting the deadline which has long been on noon on the first of the month.

Keep two things in mind: I have only 2-3 days to send the finalized copy first to the proofreaders, then to Lynne Laird who formats the print issue. The guidelines for the print issue dictate the magazine length: 60 pages, Verdana bold, 18 point type. Not a word more! That translates to around 72-75 thousand characters. Until deadline, I never know what articles will come in, how long they will be, or how much editing/rewriting will be necessary. When I've pasted in all the material, one of two problems may result: I have too little material--in which case I hope I've saved something without a time-specific

deadline. If not, I scramble for something meaningful to add.

The other problem? I have too much material. The ideal option is to cut an entire article: hopefully one not time-sensitive for a later issue. Then, since as a perk of being editor, I get a soapbox in every issue, I jettison my column (as happened in the Winter BC). My least favorite tactic is to go through every article determining where I can snip snip here and there. I use my best judgment about what can be deleted without ruining the integrity of the remaining material. Sometimes as the anguish in above letter so sadly attests, I don't succeed to the author's satisfaction. The letter asked why I don't send articles back to the author for final approval. I wish I could, but remember the clock is ticking. Obviously I work hard to verify things with the author about which I have questions: spelling especially of names, things that are unclear to me (which will also be unclear to you). Even if your article is within the suggested limits, I may still have to cut something. (That 60-page nemesis!).

Once we determine the magazine is of the appropriate length, two wonderful folks proofread: most often our stalwart second vice-ppresident, Roger Petersen; my husband Steve Mendelsohn does his bit, and recently-added Publications Committee member Lori

Castner has joined the proofreading team. They alert me to any errors they find, including things they don't understand. The writer of the above letter thought some of what I had to delete from the submission resulted in confusion. The author is going to know his/her material intimately: every word, every comma. The writer will notice any omission, but the more casual reader "who will read the piece once maybe twice) will hopefully find that it flows smoothly and clearly, as was the case with our proofreaders. The harsh reality is that because of the tight turnaround time between the submission deadline and proofreading, my editorial decisions are final and alas, can't be resubmitted to the author. I am a professional editor having taught English for nearly 30 years and have had many freelance editing assignments. But sometimes I fail one of you.

The proofreaders need a couple of days to complete their task; I make all corrections, but sometimes even then, an occasional error creeps back in (as in the error with Vita's name). Lynne then does her magic. The magazine is issued in several formats, and occasionally errors sneak back into one of those.

Coincidentally, a subcommittee of the Publications Committee has reviewed the timeline for the BC, and

you will notice that the new deadline for submitting material is the 15th of the month, not the first. The timeline will still be six weeks, and I will still have only a few days to put the BC together, but we hope to have even better safety nets in place. For instance, the magazine will be proofread one more time after all corrections have been implemented.

Receiving a letter such as the one above is an editor's worst nightmare come true. It haunts me that someone says they probably won't ever submit again. I truly hope the above fine author will reconsider. We need you to provide the lifeblood, your material, for our publication. I welcome all feedback, even when it is painful. And I shall continue to do my very best to be your conscientious editor.

Transitioning to One Conference And Convention

Donna Pomerantz

Our CCB Family made a very difficult decision at our Fall 2012 Conference and Convention. By now most of you know the vote was to move from having 2 Conference and Conventions a year to 1. This will begin in the Spring of 2014 on April 10 - April 13 at the Sacramento Arden West Hilton Hotel where our CCB group room rate will be the same as this year's: $95.00 inclusive of taxes and fees,

single/double occupancy.

The membership and board at the convention directed me to form a taskforce to examine all aspects related to the transition and report back to the membership on our progress, .

We decided to break the taskforce into two groups. The first group, chaired by Eugene Lozano Jr. (long-time Conference and Convention Chair) is working on issues related to the conference and Convention program structure. The second group is dealing with all issues concerning our Constitution and Bylaws. The steadfast person leading this group is our former Constitution and Bylaws Chair, Gerry Konsler.

Let me begin by sharing a bit about the issues group. The group has identified as the core structure of each convention the following: registration fees, plated meals, general sessions, business sessions, special-interest groups, committees, joint sessions, exhibits, and Board business meeting.

Ideas have come forward regarding possible changes to plated luncheons such as different days and topics such as dealing with diabetic-related issues and more. It is this group's plan to seek input at the Spring luncheons to see what ideas people may have. Also the group has discussed when the Credentials, and Nominating Committees will meet and when

elections will take place. The Board may have to adjust when it meets--that has been a lively discussion. (Actually all the brainstorming possible solutions has been very lively with this group.)

The general sessions are a topic of much reflection. Do we still have the same number of sessions? Do we have the Friday evening session an all-business session, or keep the current form with one item of nonbusiness programming? Do we bring some business to the Saturday afternoon Session, or keep it as it currently stands? One thing that all agreed on was that the Sunday morning business Session would end at noon as it does currently. Two approaches are being discussed with this group. The first is a more conservative view of how things should be, keeping much as they are at the moment. The other view is a bit more progressive: changing some aspects to different times and days as well as some changes to meeting structure. Other members of this group are Roger Petersen, Jeff Thom, Peter Pardini and I.

The second group, dealing with the Constitution and Bylaws, has been very lively as well. Different points of view have been brought forward by members of this group. Gerry, in my opinion, is one man who has the gift for breaking down and identifying all of the intricacies of our Constitution and Bylaws,

bringing to this group all that will be impacted by our change. Items that have been identified are elections, term length, season of the Conference and Convention, credentialing, location; those proposals have been put into categories. Other members of this group are Roger Petersen, Mitch Pomerantz, Gabe Griffith and I.

You will all hear more at our Spring conference and Convention in Sacramento. These two groups have been working very hard, and I thank them for giving their time and working conscientiously to bring to the membership a detailed picture of all that is before us. I hope to have a general conference call before our convention, and we will discuss your thoughts and ideas at our Presidents' Dinner and of course at the convention itself.

See you on April 11-14 for the wonderful room rate of $95 inclusive at the Sacramento Hilton Arden West!

ACB Legislative Seminar And Presidents Meeting

Ardis Bazyn

Even though I've attended 24 legislative seminars in Washington, D.C. and participated in many presidents meetings, I always come away with useful tidbits. I've learned new information which is important to affiliate

leaders as well as learning about specific legislative initiatives. I was never disappointed in the array of speakers and topics shared.

ACB was fortunate to have Google sponsor the events. Since all affiliates could not afford to have delegates attend, it was gratifying to learn that ACB radio will have archives of the presidents meeting and the legislative seminar so members can learn more about those topics they'd like to explore. After introductions of participants at the presidents meeting on Saturday, February 23, the first panel consisted of members from the Leadership taskforce who explained what had happened after the summer Leadership Institute, held during the ACB Conference and Convention. Follow-up calls occurred, and now a leadership training email list has been provided. Two upcoming leadership trainings are planned for March in Louisville and August in Missouri. Others are being investigated for the future.

During lunch, Dan Dillon, co-chair of the ACB Resource Development Committee, moderated a panel on "ultivating Corporate Relationships". Celeste Carrasco, Director of Federal Public Affairs at AT&T, explained that nonprofits trying to enlist support from corporations need to first understand their purpose and mission. Any possible proposal needs to align with their

mission. When you submit your plan, you need to include in a meaningful way, what you want to accomplish (giving statistics if possible). You should explain the outcome you expect and how you will measure it. She suggested using local companies for local events and national corporations for national events and projects. This was a very meaningful session. It was suggested that contacts be made with the diversity or hr departments in foundations or companies.

The next speaker, Sara Conrad, president of the ACB Students, stated that Washington Council of the Blind volunteered to start an "Adopt a Student" program this year to solicit students and bring one to convention this summer. She suggested leaders should mentor scholarship winners so they will stay interested in ACB. She also encouraged affiliates to contact the winners in their states so they stay interested in the organization. Members should keep abreast of what is on the student website: acbstudents.org. Other involvement could be volunteering to serve on student affiliate committees or inviting students to state or special-interest conferences. Most importantly, advertise your meetings on FaceBook and Twitter--young people are more likely to check these social networking sites.

The next topic discussed was insurance: both

bonding and officer/director liability. Each affiliate should check with an insurance company specializing in nonprofit insurance. Most commercial brokers don't have the capacity to cover organizations adequately and likely won't even be interested. Lane Waters, ACB's Controller, mentioned the three companies most likely to adequately insure your organization. He suggested finding a broker who has access to these companies and knows the correct questions to ask regarding the liability your officers and board need to cover. If your affiliate has employees Workman's Compensation also needs to be purchased.

Jean Mann, ACB Credentials Chair, then spoke about the "ins and Outs of Credentialing" asking affiliates to please contact her if they have any questions or issues to resolve before the deadline. A panel about the changes in the ACB Braille Forum was highlighted. This year, half the issues will be larger and the other half will be digital. In this way, much more information will be available to readers. The issues will hopefully soon be available on the BARD system for download as well. The various awards given by the Publications Committee were mentioned.

The final speaker of the afternoon was Joel Snyder from the Audio

Description Project. He outlined the various ways to get described movies: ordering through Amazon, the ACB website store, and in the theater. He advised that the more audio description is used, the more it will be produced. Members should ask their cable companies about accessing the SAP network for audio description.

The first session on Sunday morning concerned the new database management system. In order for an affiliate officer to use the system to input information on members, the president of the affiliate needs to approve their application. You may have multiple administrators. Each listing has several fields in which to enter information. You can just list contacts as well as members and just note which ones are to be credentialed. If you have questions about the system and wish training, several members are volunteering to assist.

Melanie Brunson, the ACB Executive Director, then asked participants to let her know if they have any advocacy experience in specific areas. Please contact her if you can assist, stating your history in that area (ACB Office: 202 467-5081). The ACB fundraising committee gave updates on the various ACB fundraising activities including the ACB Walk, the MMS program, and other projects. The final session was "office hours" so participants

could ask officers any specific questions.

The legislative seminar began on Sunday afternoon at 2 pm. First, all participants were introduced. Several first-timers were present.

After opening remarks from President Mitch Pomerantz, Eric Bridges, ACB's Director of Advocacy And Governmental Affairs, introduced the first speaker: David Capozzi, Director of the U.S. Access Board. He discussed the hot button issues of the blindness community relating to the Access Board involvement. One hot topic was website accessibility. The guidelines should be out soon.

David Morrissey, Executive Director of the International Council of Disabilities, spoke on the future of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He discussed the ludicrous myths being spread to the public about this treaty. He suggested sending representatives a link to the specifics of the treaty so they know what is included. Mitch Pomerantz then gave an update on the accessible prescription project since the passage of the FDA Safety And Innovation Act. A group of organizations and agencies are developing guidelines for pharmacies regarding how best to meet the access needs of blind and visually impaired customers. Melanie Brunson ended the afternoon by explaining

some of the legal issues in which ACB has participated. She said even though the dates have passed to let SSA know of your format needs, you can still contact them to let them know if you need specialized formats. ACB is still working on the accessible currency issue and is waiting for the Treasury Department to end its requests for input.

Eric Bridges started Tuesday morning's sessions giving highlights of recent ACB legislative successes. He mentioned the telecommunications bill passed in 2011 and the regulations which came out last summer. He also discussed the quiet car initiative which is developing the right sounds for them to use in the future. He congratulated ACB advocates for all the accomplishments we have made in the past few years.

The next topic was the first legislative imperative for this year: the need for Medicare to cover purchase of certain low vision devices. He explained the action to be requested would be a demonstration project for five years to look at the possible savings in assisting seniors with low vision devices which would likely keep them in their own homes instead of in assistive living facilities or nursing homes.

The second imperative was then discussed: the need for comprehensive special education legislation. The Ann Sullivan Macy Act could

be a stand-alone bill or added to IDEA legislation. It would more closely monitor blind children to make sure they have adequate blindness-related training so they are ready at college age.

Karen Peltz Strauss, Deputy Chief, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, gave an update on the committee's work. The deputy chief of the Disability Rights Section of the Department of Justice talked on "Knowing Your Rights and Working to Find Solutions". Ardis Bazyn told the group how the current budget crisis could hurt the Randolph-Sheppard vendors throughout the country.

Tuesday, most of the participants in the conference spoke to their Congressmen and women about our issues. We strive to visit each office and speak to someone. If no one is available, we drop off a packet of information. I encourage anyone who hasn't attended these meetings to try to do so if possible. It is always a learning experience: even for those of us who have gone often.

The Blind Californian Celebrates The Department of Rehabilitation's Fiftieth Birthday

Judy Wilkinson

At our Fall Conference/Convention,

Joe Xavier, Deputy Director, Specialized Services Division, reminded us that in

2013, The Department of Rehabilitation in its current form would celebrate its fiftieth birthday. Rather than reciting chapter and verse about that event, we take a more personal, hopefully more meaningful approach by presenting the following interview with a man many of you know well. Longtime visually-impaired rehab counselor (and supervisor) Gil Johnson joined the department just one year after it became the California State Department of Rehabilitation.

I was particularly pleased to conduct this interview since as my counselor (I had been teaching for several years) Gil respected the case I made, reopened my file, and provided me with a much-needed optacon (a then costly print-reading device) and training.

Gil Johnson has worked as a rehabilitation counselor, supervisor, manager, and director in public and private rehabilitation agencies for 44 years before he retired in 2008. He retired from the American Foundation for the Blind where he

served as Senior Advisor on Critical Issues and Director of AFB's National Employment Center. Prior to that, he directed the Federal/State Rehabilitation program for persons who are blind or visually impaired in Illinois. Following his time at The California Department of Rehabilitation, he managed rehabilitation and Recreation programs at the San Francisco LightHouse for the Blind. He designed and led intensive training programs targeted toward rehabilitation professionals. He has written several published articles, given many presentations at professional and consumer meetings, and has received several awards (including an award for employment articles for the .BC).

He and his wife Becky, who have been married for 50 years and his guide dog Nero, live in San Leandro and are guardian grandparents for three of their grandsons.

Question: Why rehab 50th?

Rehab has been around since the 1920's, but in 1963, the California legislature designated Rehabilitation as its own department.

Question: How and when did you get involved with the department?

I got my Master's degree in Counseling and Guidance from San Francisco State and sent

out about 200 resumes and had several interviews, but nothing came together. My Rehab counselor at that time told me about a test for Rehab Counselor Trainee. I did well on the test and the interview, and got the job in San Francisco in 1964. They promoted me before the one-year period was up. I moved to the Oakland office in 1966.

Question: Were there very many blind counselors at that time?

There were a few of us: 8 or 10.

Question: So how was it? What were the challenges?

I think this was the highpoint in rehabilitation. Mary Switzer was Commissioner of the then "Vocational Rehabilitation Agency". There was such an emphasis on specialized training programs. She made several national training programs available specifically for blind folks: in computer programming, as a machinist, language translator: all these things were just coming online when I started working. It was a really exciting time. Maybe because the department was so new, the staff was just some of the best that I've ever worked with: very bright, very motivated, very client-focused, and the paperwork was very minimal. I could open a case, put a person in a plan, and close them rehabilitated with five pieces of paper. Usually it took a little more than that, but that's how

easy it could have been.

I always felt very supported; I had a clerk who did any reading for me; I would dictate notes which went to the steno pool. It's not that way now.

Question: So you had more time to actually deal with the clients?

Oh absolutely! My caseload was 90-100, all visually-impaired; that was a very workable load.

At that time, pretty much all the blind counselors were sent to a federally-funded program at the University of Southern Illinois at Carbondale for six weeks of training in job placement. I credit that with my understanding of employment and working with employers.

Question: I remember at that time, a person could pretty much declare a job goal say law school or a Ph.D. and the Department would approve it.

Yes. Of course you had to make a case for it, but it was the understanding that you weren't working just to get somebody into a job. You were looking toward helping people get into a lifelong career. If a higher degree was indicated, and they wanted it, and the testing showed they were capable, and whatever you had to do to determine it, you could make a good case.

Question: What about where people could go to college?

The first preference because of expense was state college or university, but if there was a specialized training or program that met their needs and was accredited, you could make a case, and I did in a number of instances. I had a couple of people go to a Rehab Teaching program at the University of Michigan, and every now-and-again I run across a former client who went through that program, and that's pretty exciting. I sent several people to a private training school in Vancouver WA, the Piano Hospital, to learn how to be piano technicians: an excellent 2-year program.

If we needed to, we could send people for evaluation and training at a center in Little Rock AR. Their big stake in things was training representatives for Social Security and the IRS. Their standards were very high, but if someone got through the program, they were virtually guaranteed a job: not necessarily where you wanted to go but they tried their best. So you had to make a case, but the results were so good from those kinds of programs, that I never found it very hard to justify it.

Question: How many cases did you generally close?

An average of 20 per year; that was my goal. But you know, I always felt that if you focused people on this process: getting you to where you're ready to go to work and got behind them once you felt they really had hold of things, then it wasn't that hard. The other thing that I did, and I enjoyed doing it and still do, is going out and meeting and talking with employers. To develop jobs, but also so I could come back and talk to my clients: "This is what you'll be expected to do on the job; this is what the employer will pay you to do. Here's how you need to prepare yourself." And I could do that because I knew what the expectations were.

Question: Lots of counselors never do that. How did you find employers?

I always looked for leads. When I left an employer I'd ask if they could suggest anybody else I could talk to. Then I could tell Joe that this other guy sent me, and that opened a lot of doors. there were a lot of barriers too; it wasn't all wine and roses. Long before the ADA; long before public acceptance of blindness and disability. I remember one employer--I had finally gotten an appointment--who said, "I didn't sleep a wink last night because I was so worried about your coming; I didn't know what to expect." He wound up hiring one of my clients. Others said right out, "No we don't hire people with disabilities." And they could do that back then.

Question: Did the department have to supply all a client's equipment or did the employer ever do that?

It was some and some. Once I was going somewhere with the vice president of The Bank of America and was trying to get a job for a client in computer programming. I took him to observe a successfully-employed blind person in the field, and on the way back, I was giving him my pitch that we could help with equipment, and he hesitated and then said, "You know, the Bank of America doesn't need the state to buy its employees equipment." And I thought to myself, "Shut up!"

At that time there were a couple of national programs in computer programming, and then Systems Development in Santa Monica started a training program which the state funded; when a client successfully finished that training, they had a job.

The other exciting thing about my job was I had all the high school students in Alameda County, including those from the California School for the Blind in my caseload. That gave me the opportunity to bring them on early. I helped CSB build what is now called their Transition Program. Before that the school had Bob Campbell who supervised the non client reading program and George Fogarty who followed up with CSB graduates. Someone in Sacramento figured out we could get federal matching so his position came into the Department and I was George's supervisor until he retired.

Question: You went on to become one of the first blind supervisors in the Department. What was that like?

There was some tension between the counselors with visually-impaired caseloads who wanted promotion to supervisor and others who thought "Well you may be good at working with blind folks but what do you know about other disabilities, let alone supervising?" I took the exam a couple of times but was never picked until in 1972 or '73, finally , John Parks, District Supervisor in the Oakland office said, "Enough of this nonsense," and hired me.

Question: Were you the first blind supervisor?

I'm not sure; John Millan in southern California was another early one. Jim Reilly went another direction in Planning and then the BEP.

The transition worked well because I was hired in an area I knew so well with counselors whose caseloads I knew: the spinal cord injury specialist (Ed Roberts and Co), counselors who worked in poor areas in Richmond and Oakland: the whole range.

Question: When did all the red tape and paperwork start to come in.

The Rehab Act was reauthorized in 1973, and I feel to this day that the program got gutted. We used to proudly say that we were "vocational"

counselors; "vocational" got dropped off, and much more extensive reporting was instituted. The common joke was, "Well why don't we capture this piece of information too because it doesn't take much and might be useful some time." And the forms grew and grew. Perhaps not as I understand it to the point it is now. We had a week of training on the new forms in around 1975.

Question: What other challenges did you face as supervisor?

We had great support staff, but the challenge was keeping up with other information generally available in the field. This is long before Kurzweil or computers with speech. I used volunteer readers to read non case material.

When Ed Roberts became director, he wanted to upgrade the Supervisor position. We all had to take the new test: 120 for 100 positions. I didn't make it. I became a senior counselor with a caseload again; I didn't actively look for something but something found me, and I went to work for the San Francisco Lighthouse.. I've been fortunate that every job change I've had has come looking for me.

Question: After reading this, folks are going to realize the department you knew is not the one we know today. What would you say are the biggest differences?

Perhaps it's a losing

battle, but I think it's a disservice for rehabilitation counselors working with people who want jobs to say, "I don't talk to employers." I will never be content with that. There are a few that do in spite of everything. I haven't seen statistics lately, but those that actively talked with employers, their numbers were up! I think it's a real disservice for a counselor not to be able to talk in a first-hand meaningful way about expectations of work. If you've just come out of college into this civil service job and not worked anywhere else, you don't know what the world of work is. Before the Division for the Blind was created, the numbers were abysmal. Lots and lots of counselors and lots and lots of money and very little to show for it in terms of people going to work. Things are getting better; I talk with Joe Xavier now and again, and he's very much on this same track of getting more people to work and focusing on employment. You have to have the other basic skills: travel, braille or computing, maintain a home, but if you stop there, you're selling yourself short. The world is a heck of a lot more complicated and sophisticated for everyone.

Question: The department has to make tough financial decisions. Do you have thoughts on how it is deploying its dollars?

It's a complex of things. When Fred Schroeder was RSA Commissioner,

he re-emphasized what most of us have believed all along: you want to prepare people for a career, not just a job, and that is totally appropriate under the Rehab Act. Getting the appropriate services and training was not only possible but encouraged. What's complicated that is two things: I don't think a lot of counselors believe it, and they may not push the envelope hard enough. On the other hand, staff finds it easier to say you shouldn't shoot for a Master's or a law degree or even a BA degree. It's an easy way out; you'll never hear anyone say that; you'll never find it in case notes. Money is tight but it may be an excuse. If you plan enough in advance, encumber funds and then release them if necessary: I don't think enough of that is happening. A lot of money is being spent on assessments and evaluation; in my day we didn't spend near as much on this. But equipment also takes up a lot of funds; we didn't spend as much in my day on that either. Today you can spend 5-6 thousand bucks without even thinking about it.

Question: What do you see in the future for the department?

This new trend toward buying in bulk and using known vendors and trainers is more economical, also eliminating hurdles of multiple bids, but I go back to my original premise, focusing counselor attention on

employment outcomes. There are more employment opportunities for blind people these days than ever before, even in today's economy. But you have to know where to look. You have to be aware of trends in the labor market so you aren't sending people into fields that may have been pretty good but aren't any more.

Question: What about supporting career change?

If there's a darn good reason why the career you're in is deadended, and you're basically underemployed and you can make that case to your counselor, and not be afraid to appeal if you're turned down. The Rehab Act is still probably one of the better pieces of legislation that ever existed. In terms of what it allows the counselor to approve. The counselor has a lot of latitude in what the law allows.

Question: Final thoughts?

With the advances in technology, the doors that have opened in the last 20 years, with the leadership under Joe Xavier, I'm hoping things will get better. Andwith the President encouraging Congress and the country to expand employment at all levels, this could be a really good time; but those things need to come together. I'm an optimist.

How to Read CCB Treasurer's Reports

Steven Mendelsohn and Judy Wilkinson

I don't know about you, but despite all my efforts, I found that during the treasurer's report, my metaphorical eyes would glaze over. OnSunday morning I could blame staying up too late in the hospitality suite, but I didn't have a good excuse for snoozing during the Board meeting. The numbers just didn't make sense. I'd grasp the concept for a moment (say the percentage difference between some number last year and this) but then, whoosh! The thing would be gone! When I joined the Board and had a complete braille copy of the report under my fingers, the numbers were even more daunting. Let me make things perfectly clear here (as former President Nixon used to say) and while I'm at it, permit me to misquote Shakespeare to boot, the fault Dear Brutus was not in the report or our fine treasurer Peter Pardini, no the fault was in my ability to comprehend the data.

Peter works far far too hard to present his report, and the information in it is so vital to the organization, I made a vow that we would make an effort here to explain how to read the Treasurer's Report. Each of us needs to be responsible for understanding it so we can make intelligent comments to CCB officers and Board members. In the article

that follows, we've used the report from the Fall Convention, 2012 covering the period January 1, 2012, through September 30, 2012, and fake numbers to keep things simple. We haven't attempted to explain every last item, but we hope you'll have enough information to make meaningful sense of these essential documents. I'll know how successful the article is by how many of you ask Ed to send you copies of the Treasurer's Report issued at the upcoming Spring conference/convention: Let's put Peter's Treasurer's documents on the best sellers list. And if you want the fall report to follow along here, just ask. Our thanks to Peter for his input.

This article describes four documents which comprise the Treasurer's Report. Each entry begins with a 4-digit account or ledger number, and related entries will follow in the same number sequence. For example, on the balance sheet, many of our accounts are in the 1000 series; fixed assets in the 15-- range, etc.

1. Balance Sheet: A balance sheet is a listing of an organization's assets and liabilities as of a given date, in this case September 30th. The balance sheet begins with a listing of all bank accounts: checking and savings accounts (which are unrestricted, meaning they can be used for any purpose determined by the Board) and other accounts (which are

restricted to use for the purposes designated by the donors). the 4-digited item number is followed by a name, and sometimes a description, followed by a dollar amount; 15 checking/savings accounts are listed. At the end of the list appears a subtotal.

Knowing the amount of deposits is only part of the assets story. The balance sheet also lists accounts and loans receivable, (that is, money due to the organization but not yet received). There is no standard format for presenting this information.

The next assets category is headed "Other Current Assets," including accounts holding securities and investments managed by such custodians as 1132, New England Securities or 1138 WFB (Wells Fargo Bank) which holds the CCB endowment. This section ends with "total other current assets" and finally the sum "Total Current Assets".

The next category is headed "Fixed Assets" showing the value of machinery and equipment, fixtures, furniture, and vehicles.

Just as everything that goes up must come down, so must assets be offset by liabilities (expenses CCB is obligated to pay), and they come next. This section is entitled "Liabilities & Equity". First under the heading "Liabilities" comes the category "Current Liabilities". Our current liabilities include

"Accounts payable" with 4 items and the final "Total Accounts Payable". Next come "Other Current Liabilities" (8 items, 2140-2147) ending with "Total Current Liabilities" and finally "Total Liabilities".

The next section is call "Equity". How does "Equity" differ from "Assets"? Peter answered my question this way: "Basically, assets are what is owned by CCB. They include, cash, investments, and furniture, computers, and vehicles.   Liabilities are the bills that CCB owes. Equity is the difference between assets less liabilities."

2. Report on Brokerage and Checking Accounts: This report provides a greater level of detail on the subject of where our funds are and how they are doing, and gives more detail than can be included on the balance sheet itself about the securities and accounts listed on the balance sheet. This statement gives information account by account on each account's name, value, and monthly and yearly change in value. For the organization's money market account the report also shows the division of that account between general funds and a scholarship fund. There is no standard format for the description of these accounts, cd's and other instruments, but each entry provides pretty much the same information, including name of account, and name of institution where on deposit or

where managed, information on its nature, and the present value and year to date change in value. In this era of low interest on savings, still it may come as something of a s urprise to find net income for the cd during the period was only $0.28. Even such small amounts must be accounted for.

Altogether, the report presents 10 accounts or instruments, held with 8 different financial institutions (banks and brokerages and money management firms), and ranging from cash accounts to organizational investments to scholarship funds such as the Newel Perry scholarship fund.

Statements for 5 of our designated scholarship funds plus the Life Members and Crisis committee accounts follow, including one whose funds are held in a certificate of deposit.

The final two documents look very similar and have exactly the same item numbers in exactly the same order. Following the item number are 3 numbers. Each report is divided in two parts: "Income" and "Expense".

3. Treasurer's Report: in the "Expenses" section, for each of a long list of specific budget items, 3 numbers are provided: the expected or budgeted income for the year, the amount actually received and the difference between the projected and actual amounts. If the third number has a minus sign, it means we

projected one amount but received a lower one; and vice versa: if the third number has no minus sign, we projected one amount but received a higher one. On the income side, items involve both categories and named sources, including R. E. W. and Associates (a source), Tech Link Sanderson Group, the Vehicle Donation Processing Center, and membership dues, convention income and contributions (including internal contributions such as from the Ellen Murphy Fund and from Chapters). Income from fundraising is also shown, including from the Mutt Strut. There are also some one-time or so-called "nonrecurring" items of income, things that will not be repeated or increased, including a legal settlement, and there are some internal transfers and CEA loan repayments from borrowers.

The second half of the report, the "'expense" data follows the same format, but remember here a "minus" represents a positive: meaning we spent less than we expected. But lest you jump for joy too soon, remember this report covers only the first 9 months of the year so we would hope that most of the actual expenses (represented by the second number) would be less than the projected amount. Some of the expenses include staff support (employee taxes and fringe benefits), accounting, travel, office expenses (rent, telephone,

insurance, supplies and postage), membership and board expenses, and printing of the BC. A one-time expense this year was for moving CCB's Sacramento office.

4. Previous Year employs a 3-item format: first the 2012 amount; then the 2011 amount, and finally the difference between the two. As with the "Treasurer's Report", in the first half of the report, the "Income" a minus number means that 2011 was a better year than 2012. The good news being that the report deals with only the first 9 months of 2012. So if an item read $100, $150, -$50, we'd know that the amount was $50 higher in 2011. If the amounts read $150, $100, $50, we'd know that 2012 was the better year. On the expense side just as in the expense side of the Treasurer's Report, a minus number for the third number is good news, at least for the first 9 months of the year.

A CCB HVI Committee Update

Mike Keithley

A few BC issues ago, I described what the newly-formed CCB HVI Committee was for and summarized its goals. The Hearing and Vision Impaired Committee (HVI) exists to encourage hearing impaired CCB members to participate fully in CCB activities through

education and fellowship. Our first project is to update the assistive listening equipment used at CCB conventions so hearing impaired people can hear more than just general sessions and banquets.

To that end, we decided what equipment was needed and embarked on efforts to obtain funding. It soon became very clear that we couldn't get funding for everything we wanted at once, so we decided to use a stepping approach where we'd purchase basic equipment and build from there.

I am happy to report that we obtained a $1,500 grant from CCB's Newel Perry fund to buy a modern ALD transmitter, four 8-channel receivers plus headphones and neckloops. We hope to have this equipment available at the 2013 spring convention. We'll have the new transmitter installed in the room for general sessions and CCB's existing unit installed in another room where major programs are held. Since we'll be using multi-channel receivers, users can switch between transmitters, so equipment need not be moved.

The HVI Committee wants to thank the trustees of the Newel Perry fund for granting it money to start this project, and we're sure that as we obtain more equipment, hearing impaired CCB members will really

begin to enjoy the varied activities at conventions. We want everything to be audible to everyone: major programs plus committee sessions in small break-out rooms.

Governmental Affairs Report: More Mountains to Climb

Jeff Thom

I often think how nice it would be if a year went by without Washington, DC and Sacramento presenting us with any challenges, both new and old. Of course it would also be nice if I had no taxes to pay and the athletic teams I root for never lost a game, but some things are just not meant to be. So let's look at some of the challenges we face in 2013.

On the federal level, President Obama has signed the order triggering the automatic cuts required by law when He and Congress couldn't agree on a plan for cuts, revenues or both that would have negated the requirement that those federal cuts take effect. On the positive side, certain programs like Social Security and SSI, Medi-Cal funding, and Medicare benefits (other than a reduction in provider payments), are exempt from the cuts. However other programs, including special education and rehabilitation, are not exempt. At the recent Department of

Rehabilitation Blind Advisory Committee meeting, we were informed that the reduction in federal funding the department will take, which will amount to around 5%, can hopefully be absorbed without creating any noticeable service reductions. I am sure that at our upcoming Spring Conference and Convention, we will hear more about whether this preliminary assessment will prove correct.

One significant result that these spending cuts are likely to have is a one day per week furlough for many federal employees. This furlough will not only result in a 20% cut in pay for those federal employees who are blind or visually impaired, but also will likely cause serious reductions in sales by our blind vendors who operate federal facilities. Keep in mind the possibility still exists that Congress and the President will work out a deal later in the year that will replace these automatic reductions.

Such a deal could have either lesser or far greater consequences on the programs important to persons with vision loss.

Several of us recently returned from storming Capitol Hill to represent all of you on behalf of the American Council of the Blind. Those present included CCB and ACB Presidents Donna and Mitch Pomerantz, Ardis Bazyn, Christina Wood, Vincent Calderon, and

yours truly. Special thanks go to the Silicon Valley and San Gabriel Valley chapters for enabling Christina and Vince to attend. We advocated for a study to assess the impact of allowing persons with low vision to obtain low vision aids as a Medicare benefit. Much of this equipment is costly, makeing it next to impossible for those on a fixed income to afford it. Our other legislative imperative was the adoption of the Anne Sullivan Macey Act, the first comprehensive piece of federal legislation aimed specifically at reforms in federal provisions relating to the education of children who are blind or visually impaired. Stay tuned for more about these topics.

Turning now to our state capitol, the big news is something positive for a change. Due in large part to the firm hand of Governor Brown--even if sometimes wielded in a way that we might not approve--the state finds itself in a situation where further major cuts will not be necessary in state programs in order to ensure the budget remains balanced. In fact, modest increases, especially in education, may occur. The Governor is however vowing to remain firm insofar as needing to retain spending discipline so as to avoid slipping back when more reductions become necessary. There will still be budget battles to fight. For example, the Governor still wants to make a 20% reduction in IHSS funding that

was held up by the courts last year. I would expect a fierce battle by those in his own party against that cut. Those of you who read my last article may remember that the Democrats have a 2/3 majority in the Assembly and they may also have such a majority in the Senate, depending upon the outcomes of a couple of special elections to replace state Senators who moved on to Congress. Hopefully, we will not need to ask your assistance to battle cuts in areas such as library services funding, funding for the California School for the Blind and funding for college and university disabled student services programs, but if we do, we need to count on you for the same type of support that you have provided in the past.

Even if the budget is somewhat less contentious than in prior years, we will have much to keep us occupied. In somewhat of a déjà vu moment, we are again faced with a healthy foods bill, similar to AB727, that we helped to defeat two years ago. AB459, by Assemblywoman Mitchell, would require that at least 50% of the food offered by a vendor in a vending machine on state property, as defined, meet accepted nutritional guidelines by January 1, 2015, with this percentage being raised to 75% in one year and to 100% by January 1, 2017. This bill, because it impacts only blind vendors, will clearly have a dramatic

impact on the ability of blind vendors to compete with food vendors in surrounding buildings, let alone the impact created by those persons who will decide to bring their own foods to work rather than frequent the vending machine of a blind vendor.

Another ongoing issue is the commencement of demonstration projects for those eligible for both Medicare and Medi-Cal in 8 pilot counties, including Los Angeles, which are set to begin this fall. We are working on a number of items in connection with these projects, most notably efforts to ensure that recipients receive information in accessible formats to ensure that in switching to managed care, they will have all the information they need.

This year is the so-called sunset review of the Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind. It is the time when the Legislature examines the board, and looks not only at how long it will extend the life of the board, but also at what changes, if any, should be made in the statutes that govern the board. CCB will be actively participating in this examination process.

These are just a few of the issues on which we will be working in 2013. Keep an eye not only on future issues of the BC, but also on Governmental Affairs reports on the Washington Connection for other items of interest. Also, if you are aware of items that you

think we need to be working on, please contact me via email at jeff.thom@ccbnet.org or by phone at 916-995-3967. And remember that we need all of you to step up to the plate when called upon to advocate on behalf of Californians who are blind or visually impaired.

I Am Concerned That The ADA Sometimes Hurts Us As Much As It Helps

CCB Presidents Listserve

[Editor's Note: Most posts on the CCB listserves are time sensitive, but the thread reprinted below discusses a topic I thought would be of interest to our broad readership. Remember, you can subscribe to the general ccb'l list: see instructions on the BC masthead.]

Deborah Armstrong: I am concerned that the ADA sometimes hurts us as much as it helps.

I work for a large community college in Silicon Valley. We have beautiful California weather for most seasons, and the 112-acre campus is a great place to get exercise.

Despite this, our blind students don't walk anywhere. There's a shuttle for the physically disabled that delivers people to classrooms, so blind students have door-to-door transportation. They

arrive on paratransit, get whisked to class, then back to the disabled students' services office where they passively wait for paratransit to take them home. I myself use the special shuttle when I'm headed to a meeting in an unfamiliar building, and I also use Paratransit to get to work on time. But I frequently walk all over campus, eat in the cafeteria, chat with students and faculty and take the bus in the evenings to run errands or go out for fun. It's important to use services for the disabled, so they'll be available when you need them, but I'm concerned that our young people have become so dependent. They often have been assisted by aides throughout high school and use notetakers in college as well.

Some of them even require a scribe for exams who both reads the test out loud and writes down their answers. This happens, despite us having a modern computer lab, fully equipped with access technology. I prepare textbooks for the print-impaired, and blind students are encouraged to use the service. I believe it's completely fair for our office to scan and proofread a thousand-page textbook for a student, but many of them bring me single-page class handouts to scan as well, simply because they are daunted by the prospect of learning to scan materials themselves. Of

course, we do have blind students with extra challenges, like advanced age, hearing loss, cerebral palsy or simply they are newly blinded. It's crucial our accommodations are what a particular individual needs. My fear though is that accommodations become a problem when they hinder a person's ability to cope with the world effectively. Everywhere these people go, they communicate that they are handicapped and will always require special services. Instead of society spending money on Braille and O&M instruction, access technology training and independent living skills, we fund ever more "services" to supposedly level the playing field. Students are not out and about, socializing with their able-bodied peers the way I did in college. They aren't mastering the freedom of reciprocity: "I'll help you with your math if you can phone me tonight and read to me everything the teacher put on the board." For another example, I often prepared lunch for my study group when I was young, and my buddies loved my clean comfortable apartment to hang out often offering to read to me in exchange for the grub.

Are we raising a generation of blind people who will always need scribes, readers and guides? Maybe this is why 70% of our working-age adults are unemployed.

Ardis Bazyn: When I was in college 14 years ago, I was asked if I wanted a notetaker to accompany me. I said no and took notes myself. There were times in the winter when I wished I had someone to walk with since cold and snow made it difficult to walk directly across to buildings (smile). I do think independence is important when transitioning to work.

Leena Dawes: When I was in college on campus, I always took my own notes. Often, sighted and blind students asked to borrow them. I think some of this stuff like a scribe can be helpful. When I was in high school, I often had a scribe take down answers when they had to be placed on a scantron. However, I usually read the test and just told the person that the answer to problem number 1 is A, 2 is b, etc. I think part of the problem stems from teachers as early as preschool and kindergarten. If a blind child doesn't learn to read Braille as a child, the question is why? Often, the teachers or the parents will try to make the child use vision. Otherwise, the child will just be taught to type and given books on tape and told he/she can read that way. I remember taking a shuttle in college. It definitely wasn't door-to-door but I did get around the huge campus better. Since my mobility was a mess at the time, I met a lot of cool people.

Mike Keithley: As to whether the ADA is causing this un-imaginative "coddling," I'd say "not really." Instead, I think it's caused by the passive attitude of parents that doesn't encourage proactive thinking.

James Forbes, MSW, President, Humboldt Council of the Blind
Hello all.

I don't usually feel the need to chime in on notes that come down the pike on this list, but the topic of how "the ADA can hurt us (our community) as much as it helps us" was mildly irritating in so many ways.

I do appreciate everyone's independent perceptions, but when they appear as condemnations of others choices, it disturbs me. Without knowing each blind or visually impaired person's personality, goals, & loves, I cannot speak for them individually. I do know this; every college campus I have been on, is large & spread out across a vast area.

Again, I can't speak for each person's ability or drive to want to walk, schedule they have to meet, insecurities or fears they may have, or their choice to be straight-up lazy. These traits were/are not created by legislation. If the argument is that paratransit creates lazy & "passive" people who just want to sit around until they can be "whisked-off" to their next destination &

unwarranted over-use of paratransit is a product of the ADA, then I must argue against that statement. This sounds like the framework of an age-old argument that kids these days have it too good. When I was in college, I walked 5 miles in the snow backwards & had to barter with people to access the same information they are allowed to access for just being in class. I believe that the ADA has given us access to the same information that everyone else already took for granted.

For example, I love to walk on campus to classes from the bus stop, to the campus coffee shop, when I had the time to do so. In the last 2 year program I was in, I didn't even get to choose my own classes or schedule. The classes were 3 hours long, the buildings were 2 to 8 blocks apart from each other, & I often had 10 minutes or less to get from one to the next. The sighted students were running, biking, or driving their cars from place to place. I also had no problem asking instructors to make sure any information written on any white or black board make its way to me asap. No paid note-takers (which I have no personal problem with), but an open, public request for information we all must share to remain on equal terms. I would not have received an A in Calculus if I didn't have a sighted assistant, who I worked with for up to 3 hours, twice per week, outside of class. I wouldn't think

of asking/burdening a fellow student to work with me for that amount of time each week for 16 weeks. These assistants were provided to me through the student disability resource center. Thank you ADA, for now I don't have to make sandwiches for people & can concentrate on my 17 units this semester. Using homework or group projects as social springboards is great, if that is what you choose to do, but it doesn't bother me if you don't.

Parents of all children have their own personalities and belief systems. Humans all have their own personalities & belief systems. I am an extrovert who loves a good debate/fight & I don't walk away. Many of my blind friends & associates, as well as my sighted friends & associates, would rather not debate or argue & will easily walk away from confrontation. Some are introverts & others feel embarrassed by having too much or any attention focused on them. There are so many reasons why people who are blind or visually-impaired choose to use paratransit & I would never begin to condemn them for making a choice. Do I encourage people in my community to get out there & integrate? You bet I do! Do some people recoil at the thought of becoming too high profile? Yes. People shouldn't be pushed or shamed into being someone they are not, as this all too often perpetuates the negative feelings & ideas that some have about themselves, their situation, and how society perceives them. Positive empowerment, on the other hand, does often work.

I must be honest & state that, in the past, I have found myself inwardly angered by blind students/people who refuse to, at least attempt to integrate into “mainstream” society I also wished more parents of disable children would, maybe, push a bit harder at times. I also know that some people are computer or technologically challenged & that's a cross-section of all people. As I grow I have realized that not all humans, regardless of their abilities, strive for the same things as I do. I also firmly believe that the 70% unemployment rate of the blind we all always hear about is mostly a product of discrimination, lack of education of the non-disabled, & mainstream fears, apprehensions, & stigmas. Our current economy isn't helping either. I graduated 20 months ago, have had countless interviews, and still have no job while holding 4 degrees & a positive attitude. I have seen several blind students graduate around me with masters level degrees & they seem to disappear after awhile. The employment search becomes too difficult.

Negotiation is a fine art, but please don't tell me that it builds character or puts hair on your chest to have to fight or barter for an education. I would consider myself somewhat newly blind after 10 years & even with the ADA in place it was a constant battle with many instructors to get accessible documents &/or tests. I won't even go into the details, as you all probably have similar stories. I graduated at the age of 44 & I know I am 100 times stronger today than I was as a sighted post-teenager. So I try to imagine myself as a teenager again. It's a much tougher social scene for them than for me.

Finally, I find terms such as "the woosification of America" to be offensive. This is a gender-based term derived from the idea that weak people have feminine qualities. This discriminates against women & is an archaic idea.

So how can we positively effect our community to become strong advocates for ourselves & others?

As in all walks of life, some will lead & others will be glad to follow. Sometimes, a path just needs to be cleared.

Thanks for reading or listening.

Ardis: Good comments, James. The ADA has definitely been good for us in many areas. As

blind persons, we have to advocate for what we need and each of us has different needs. (smile)

Steve Fort: Hello all, I could not have said it better!! Thanks.

Margaret Buchmann-Garcia, Yosemite Gateway Council of the Blind

Well stated, James!

ADA is the “Big Stick” that advocates need to bring down barriers that impede access. As James states, there are so many factors that come to play when it comes to the individual's drive to achieve and be confident in doing things independently. The community in which they live can play a major role. We have chapter members who have had motorists yell at them to hurry up as they cross the street and even robbed by someone taking advantage of their inability to see their approach. These kinds of encounters and hearing of them can effect one's confidence to travel independently. ADA does not make people lazy, that's personality. Lazy is also a very subjective term in judging a person's confidence and abilities.

In these hard economic times, if ADA were not in place, many of the services that provide access would have been stopped. I have attended meetings where cuts to DSS and transportation are discussed. The one thing that has kept these services from being completely cut are the ADA regulations.

I personally thank ADA when the paratranit bus is there and gets me past barriers with which sighted persons do not deal. I thank ADA when the APS lets me know the light is green to cross the street, especially when there are no traffic clues. I thank ADA when I can enter my PIN myself and not compromise my security. I thank ADA, when as an educator, I know that a student can be provided equal access to an education. ADA is about access. I thank those that worked so hard to put it in place and see it enforced.

CCB Officers and Directors 2013

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

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