

**THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN**

Quarterly Magazine of the  
**CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF THE BLIND**

**Fall 2016**

**Volume 60, No. 4**

**Published in Braille, Large Print, Cassette, Email (bc-subscribe@ccbnet.org), and Online in readable and downloadable text and audio media**

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**The CALIFORNIA CONNECTION is a weekly news service provided:**

- **by phone, in English and Spanish at 800-221-6359 Monday through Friday after 4 p.m. and all day on weekends and holidays.**

- by email subscription. Send a blank message to [connection-subscribe@ccbnet.org](mailto:connection-subscribe@ccbnet.org);
- or on the web at [www.ccbnet.org](http://www.ccbnet.org).

Submissions for the California Connection can be emailed to [ca.connection@ccbnet.org](mailto:ca.connection@ccbnet.org).

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

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 1800 words.

The deadline to submit material for the winter 2017 issue of THE BLIND CALIFORNIAN is noon, November 15, 2016.

Please send all address changes to the Executive Office.

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## **Editor's Page**

**by Mike Keithley**

Well now, I find myself editing the Blind Californian after a seven-year hiatus. Former editor Judy Wilkinson relinquished the job to more efficiently carry on as CCB president and gave me a new hat. Kinda tight but I'll try. "Master, just put it on with a rakish angle, and I'll catch it when it falls

off. It's full of kibble anyway!" That's King, my ghost guide dog commenting as usual. So welcome to this issue of the BC.

The fall edition tends to have less CCB business, so there's more space for you CCB members. Lori Castner enjoys making

bread, complete with a recipe; Sylvia Sugar Lopez encourages sighted people to see blind folks as people; and Susan Kitazawa asks us what we'd do if we weren't afraid. And we have a letter to the editor. We also have tributes to Obbie Schoeman, and Al and Connie Gil. And there's several announcements you'll want to check out. And then there's a poem by

Associate Editor Susan Glass to help the music. An hey, On the Lighter Side is back!

So have fun with the fall BC and send writings to be published here, they're always welcome. The email address is [mlkeithley@comcast.net](mailto:mlkeithley@comcast.net), and the phone is 650-386-6286.

\* \* \*

## **From The President's Desk**

**by Judy Wilkinson**

On our recent trip which included a visit to Belgrade, Serbia, Steve and I met an incredible

blind woman, head of The White Cane, her nonprofit organization providing services for blind people.

Thirteen years ago, this journalist, Zoka (her nickname) went into action! "Blind people want to move about independently, to communicate, to live independently." Last fall, Zoka brought Serbia's first guide dog into the country, and she has been fighting those battles all too familiar to guide dog handlers: denial for the dog to get on the bus, in the store or restaurant. They have hired certified O&M instructors and have trained some 45 folks to travel with a white cane. They have a small computer lab with one

computer station, and a tiny, poorly equipped kitchen. With assistance from her delightful son Marko, her right-hand man and in charge of fundraising, they are hard at work raising funds to train a certified guide dog instructor so that others in Serbia can have guide dogs.

How easy to assume that all the important battles are behind us. How easy to forget what the beginning battles were like: how hard won those battles for dignity and independence! CCB began by fighting for just such services and

demands for independence and equality. Today the battles are no less important! Who knows what educational, technological, legal and employment services CCB may provide in the future? Through our membership on the Blind Advisory Committee, we monitor those entities (such as the Department of Rehab) to make sure that appropriate services are being delivered. Our advocacy efforts continue: we are fighting for our guide dog bills in the legislature; we are hard at work demanding that Alameda County through voting

machines, allow blind voters to cast ballots privately; we are demanding AMC movie theaters train their employees on audio-description devices.

Zoka's story only adds to my determination to reinvigorate and inspire CCB as I begin my presidency! We are in the process of hiring an executive Director who will be working on fundraising and financial development. The Board has also authorized a part-time administrative assistant.



As you can appreciate, there are some issues which I can't discuss until conclusions are reached, but I promise to keep the membership informed about our activities. To that end, I will be attending several chapter meetings in the near future via conference call. Watch the connection to learn of my "office hours" and presidents calls. Please phone into board meetings. As an experiment to keep in better touch with chapters, I plan to issue brief monthly messages as audio files.

Yes I know the litany: we don't have younger members; the membership is growing old. But what I have experienced is members saying "Yes," when I ask them to serve on committees. Our committees are doing amazing work for our members. The scholarship Committee led by Christy Crespín is interviewing scholarship applicants. The convention committee under retiring Chair Eugene Lozano, has drafted a report suggesting changes for the next two years. The alternative convention committee led by Rob Turner has held

three meetings to meet the obligations of the resolution we passed last spring. The Constitution and Bylaws Committee under Gabe Griffith will bring us extensive Constitutional changes for consideration next spring. Our Mutt Strut committee headed by Donna Pomerantz and Debbie Cordero and assisted by the dynamo Amelia Sherman are planning the best Mutt Strut ever! The Publications Committee will add social networking to its oversight. The Braille Revival League of California and California Library Users of America

continue their merger discussion. The Students affiliate with Robin Patch as president has a new presence. The Technical Operations Group headed by Vita Zavoli is developing guidelines for us to improve our website. And so much more! As you can see, we are definitely fighting the 21st century battles!

I want to end my first message as president by acknowledging the shoulders of those who have helped bring us to where we are today. Teddie-Joy Remhold, Connie and Al Gil, Obbie

Schoeman and Winifred Downing would have understood what Zoka is fighting for in Serbia. They would urge us to advance our cause by fighting

today's battles! So my dear fellow CCB members: forward, onward and upward!

\* \* \*

### **Film Starring Rick Boggs by Ben Caro**

Everybody has a dream, and mine is to direct a short film that will raise money and awareness for the blind. I need your help to make it happen.

Cathedrals is an exciting adaptation of the Raymond Carver story "Cathedral" starring a blind actor, Rick Boggs. You might remember Rick. He's a

motivational speaker and an audio description business owner who's written articles for the Blind Californian. [Rick wrote a four-part series called Inclusion in the Arts and Media for the Visually Impaired in the winter and spring, 2009 and winter and spring, 2010 issues of the BC.]

At first I wanted to hire a blind actor to play the blind character for authenticity. However, it was difficult finding many actors, and I found out how difficult it was for many blind people, actors included, to find work. The process invigorated me to bring awareness to and find more opportunities for the blind in the arts (and the greater workforce).

Since our goal for the film isn't to make money, we can work towards bringing about a change rather than bringing in profit. By crowdsourcing with Kickstarter, I'm hoping we

can do a little part in making not only a good movie, but a little good, too. As part of our project, we're also donating money to CRE Outreach, which empowers under-served and blind individuals from low-income populations through performing arts; and Hearts for Sight, which increases employment opportunities for the blind through wellness.

Please join me on this journey. The Kickstarter campaign ended September 9th, but we could still use your support. See what we're working on now, and

consider jumping on  
board! Here is the URL:  
[www.bit.ly/cathedralsmovi](http://www.bit.ly/cathedralsmovi)

e. Thank you for helping  
make my dream a reality!

\* \* \*

## **Alfred Gil: In Memoriam**

**by Judy Wilkinson**

The facility at The East Bay Center for the blind in Berkeley was packed on Sunday afternoon, May 15, as we gathered to pay tribute to Alfred (Al) Gil who had passed away a few weeks earlier. Connie Gil spoke of her beloved husband of over 25 years. In fact the 2 married in this same location on Halloween because (as Al quipped) no CCB chapter would be conducting a meeting on a fifth

Saturday! Little did we know then that following her years battling cancer, we will be attending a memorial service for Connie herself in this same location at the end of August.

All Al's families were there.

His CCB family was there: represented by Steve Fort from his Bayview chapter home; Frank Welte, president of Al's San

Francisco chapter home. I had the honor to represent CCB on behalf of myself as incoming president and Jeff Thom, outgoing president. Al, his voice so frail, shared with us at a recent board meeting that we must continue with work of CCB. We thanked him for his loyalty and devotion to CCB for over 65 years.

His Orientation Center for the Blind family was there: colleagues including former administrator Mike Cole, (who shared that Al gave him a cane travel tip or two over the years.) Other OCB instructors

including Diane Smith, Phil Yocum and others shared. The OCB staffers remembered the belly laughs and classical music emanating from Al's office as in his capacity as Rehab counselor, he met with numerous students.

And of course Al's own family: his children and first wife; his second family and Connie's children. His and Connie's son Vincent hosted the event and spoke about his dad's love for his wife's chocolate cake, which we had the privilege of sharing this day.

His children spoke of their dad's involvement in their lives such as various childhood activities like scouting. They remembered trips with Dad by greyhound bus, charging from one bus door to another as updated departure announcements were heard. (Perhaps the origins of Al's famous greyhound bus imitation?)

I did my own spoof of Al's

imitation of the Cal Berkeley marching band. We roared with laughter sharing some of Al's funniest stories. Which is exactly how he'd want us to remember him: doing work to enhance the lives of blind people everywhere; sharing good jokes and memories of one who made everyone he touched happier.

\* \* \*

## **Tribute to Obbie Schoeman**

**by Ken Metz**

On Sunday, July 24, 2016, the California Council of the Blind (CCB) lost a true champion in blindness

issues and in the belief that blind folks deserved equal opportunity in all

aspects of life. His name was Obbie Schoeman.

Obbie was involved in CCB for well over 30 years after he met his wife Connie, who passed away in 2010. She was a Rehabilitation Supervisor who taught Obbie what blind folks were really capable of doing, and he quickly became a believer of their numerous accomplishments, and he wanted to see the growth of opportunity for these folks.

Obbie worked hard over his years in CCB in fundraising, running the

exhibit hall for a large number of its State conventions, and assisting folks looking for rooms in hotels. He gave the same tireless self for his local CCB West Valley and Los Angeles chapters. He was also involved in working on the merger between ACBC and the CCB in the 1980s. He was a "Life Member" of the CCB, and contributed many of his own dollars on both the State and local levels. Obbie and I became great friends in the late 90s, and after just a few years, he and I were thought of as brothers as we were almost inseparable.



The one achievement that Obbie always wanted was to be a CCB Board member, and many felt that he didn't get that position strictly due to his being sighted. Well, Obbie, you have now reached that position of a perpetual CCB Board member, and we all know that you will still find a way of getting your ideas through to us.

CCB will certainly miss you, and those who followed you in devotional services at many conventions will still hear your great tones as you lead them in song and biblical readings. And on a personal level, you and I did become brothers, and I will love and miss you until we meet again.

\* \* \*

## **Tandem**

**by Susan Glass**

A two speed Schwinn, its thirty pound frame dependable, grounded, that you bought so I might continue my sightless

escapades, with no more plowing headlong into parked cars; blindness does that to you.

What was it like to be the mother who allowed that to happen?

Mama, you knew I could not be penned in, windowed in,

walled inside the kind of sound proof, smell proof, houses they built in the Midwest to keep out the cold.

\* \* \*

## **Bread for Life**

**by Lori Castner**

[Former Editor's Note from Judy Wilkinson: It's a great occasion at Bay View Chapter meetings when Lori Castner brings home-made cookies! Now that I've read this article, we'll demand some kind of wonderful bread at a future meeting.]

Whenever someone asks me what activities I enjoy,

the first one that comes to mind is baking bread, not a quick bread that mixes up in a few minutes, but yeast bread which takes five or six hours from start to finish. When I was in third grade, one Saturday afternoon, my mother announced she was going to bake bread, and I stood beside her enthralled as she showed me the steps

to creating a loaf. She demonstrated the special process for mixing bread dough called kneading, and let me check the size of the dough several times while it increased in volume in a draft-free location. I loved the finished product, a hot light crusty slice with butter, but it was the process of producing loaves and rolls that got me hooked.

In Junior High, I discovered more about bread-baking as we spent several sessions in Home Economics learning how to bake loaves and sweet rolls. Because yeast is a

living organism, I understood I must use lukewarm water to soften the small granules so they would grow causing dough to rise and produce airy-textured bread. Because of the time needed for the rising process, our class made the dough on Monday, kneading it by pushing our hands forward and pressing downward, then turning the dough a quarter turn and pressing downward and forward. Each of us repeated these steps again and again until the dough reached the proper texture, a smooth and shiny feeling ball, which we refrigerated. Then at our next class on

Wednesday, we formed the dough into chosen shapes, loaves and various types of rolls: spirals, butterflies, crescents, clover leaves. We left them to rise throughout the afternoon and through the dinner hour, then baked them in a hot oven. At last, we carried our bounty back to the dormitory where we feasted with friends as though all of us had not just eaten a hot meal.

Over the past fifty years, from my Junior High days until now, I have collected bread recipes: at first by transcribing them from braille magazines (enough to fill three large binders),

later by purchasing cookbooks and now by searching the Internet. Over the years, few steps in my bread-making process have changed, except for the fact that today I use instant yeast which does not need to soak before being mixed with other ingredients. I do not use the very popular bread machines; but rather knead the sticky, rough dough until it develops a shiny, satiny, elastic texture. I'm still more hooked on the process of making bread than on the final product although I do enjoy my husband's eagerness as he waits for a fragrant loaf or a pan full of

rolls to appear on the cooling rack.

I have made many types of loaves: cheese-filled, oatmeal/honey, whole-wheat, cornmeal/molasses, and brioche. For holidays, I bake special breads. At Easter, I traditionally make hot crossed buns.

Occasionally I make rolls which are shaped like small pigeons; these rolls originated in the Ukraine where they were served at Easter to celebrate the larks' migration to the north. When guests see a bread basket filled with these crusty shapes, they inevitably comment in delight and surprise.

For Thanksgiving, I bake clover leaf rolls using the recipe I got from my Junior High Teacher, who taught at the California School for the Blind. At Christmas, I bake loaves of panettone (a pine nut, and raisin-filled loaf flavored with anise seeds (I received several recipes for this traditional Christmas bread from my cousin whose mother married into an Italian family)).

Also, over the years, I have acquired a large number of implements for baking breads and rolls. Of course, I have loaf pans in many sizes and muffin tins

for holding dough for rolls. I also own a pan for baking French bread. It contains two long sections for shaping loaves; and each section is covered with small holes. To use this pan, I place a pan of hot water on the bottom oven shelf. The oven's heat and the hot water combine to create steam, which permeates the holes to create that marvelous crunchy crust. I most recently purchased a Pullman pan; this pan has a cover, and closing this cover while the bread bakes creates a square loaf, perfect for sandwiches, and gives the

loaf a very dense, moist interior.

Many years ago, my husband bought me a beautiful, large, hand-made pottery bowl; I use it exclusively for bread dough. And I knead bread on a large silicone mat, a surface which prevents the dough from sticking while I work.

I never tire of reading bread recipes and blogs or of trying a new recipe or one that has its roots in another culture. The old-fashioned process of baking yeast breads has filled many delightful hours, and the results have

enabled me to share not only with family, but with neighbors and friends. Anyone planning a bake sale?

### **Yeast Rolls (Refrigerator)**

This is the recipe that my Home Ec. teacher in Junior High gave each student to use for making sweet rolls. I bake rolls for

Thanksgiving using this basic dough. You can skip the step for refrigerating the dough if you wish to bake rolls immediately.

1 Pkg. dry yeast  
1/4 cup lukewarm water  
1/4 cup shortening or butter

1 cup scalded milk  
1/2 Tsp. salt  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 egg  
about 4 cups sifted flour

Sift flour. Soften yeast in warm water. Add shortening to milk and cool milk. Beat egg and add sugar, cool milk mixture, and yeast water mixture. Stir in salt and enough flour to make a stiff enough dough to knead. Knead dough about 10 minutes until silky and pliable. Set in greased bowl turning dough to grease top. Let dough rise until double in size. Punch dough down and place in refrigerator. (Dough will

keep about a week).  
Remove from refrigerator  
and shape. Let rise. Bake

in 400 degree oven for 10  
to 12 minutes.

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## **What Would You Do If You Weren't Afraid?**

**by Susan Kitazawa**

Author's note: I've written  
this in belated response to  
Jeff Thom's call for articles  
"about those parts of your  
life that have nothing to do  
with CCB".

There are lots of reasons  
not to do things. It's too  
hot out. It's too windy and  
cold. Everyone else will be  
younger. You don't have  
the money. I'm not sure  
how to get there.  
Paratransit is always late.  
No one else is going, at

least no one we know. It's  
too hard. I don't have time.

But we likely only get one  
life here, and it might as  
well be fun and interesting.  
The world, despite all its  
problems and challenges  
is a deeply rich and  
interesting place. And we  
lucked out and are here in  
it.

Two years ago my friend  
Cristina, legally blind and  
in her 90s, called to tell me  
that she had just joined a



choir for seniors. No auditions, no try-outs. After some pep talking, she got me to commit to joining. At the end of the call, she mentioned that, by the way, the choir sings in Spanish. When I said I wasn't so sure about this, she told me that this would be a great opportunity for me to practice singing and to improve my rusty Spanish all at the same time. And for free!

When I went to the first class, it turned out that there was another blind woman who had already been in the group for a while. A year later, I invited another blind friend to join

the choir. So there are four of us blind ones among the forty members of Coro Solera.

In spite of sometimes singing Spanish words that I don't entirely understand, this has turned out to be a fun and deeply enriching experience. As Cristina promised, both of the choir leaders are delightful and very quick to accommodate not only our blind and low vision needs but an assortment of other disabilities among this group, all age 60 or older. There are several singers who didn't know any Spanish at all when they joined. Sighted and blind,

we're all learning a lot together.

Being out in the wider world, we blind ones have successfully educated our fellow choir members about ways to best help us. They've also come to understand when we'd prefer to do things in our own sometimes "slow vision" manner without their assistance. A few choir members have asked about resources and suggestions for living with their own or friends' increasing vision loss.

When our choir sings at street fairs, senior centers, and concert halls, people

see us with our white canes as we participate fully in a community activity out in the wider, mostly sighted world. Best of all, we have a lot of fun, meet new people, and have a chance to give back to the larger community.

More recently, as participants in a writers' project, another blind woman and I happened to both be part of a literary reading at the main library in San Francisco. Standing before an audience of about 100 people, she read her work in braille. I read mine in very large print, the pages a few inches from my face. (Yes, I'm gradually

getting faster at braille reading, a new challenge taken on in my 60s.)

Sighted audience members not only saw us, with our white canes, there at the podium, reading our work, they heard us read about life experiences beyond our being part of the blind community. They had a chance to know us as people defined by more than just our blindness.

As I make my daily treks around and about San Francisco, I often go for several days without seeing anyone else with a white cane or a dog guide, unless I'm within a few

blocks of the LightHouse for the Blind or at a blind event. I know that there are lots of blind and low vision folks here in the Bay Area.

Having had so much fun singing in Coro Solera and being part of the writers' project, I want to encourage more of my blind friends to get out and live in the wider world. It can be very comforting to be among our blind and low vision friends. They don't need explanations; they already get it. At the same time, it's exciting to be part of so many varied activities even when I'm the only legally blind participant. Sure,

sometimes it's pretty daunting or frustrating. But it's worth it.

I recently heard an interesting question: "What would you do if you weren't afraid?" A bit of healthy fear is a good thing; otherwise we might try to do something with predictably disastrous consequences. But some fears keep us from living the full life we can really have. I've been giving this question some creative thought.

This month or today or next week, it might be fun to stretch the limits a bit. Go somewhere new.

Change something in your daily routine. Take harmonica lessons. Try out whatever it is that you'd really like to do.

It can be scary trying new things especially if we think we have to go it alone. But we don't. I don't think I ever heard people talk about independence as much as I have since I became part of the blind community. Maybe it's a part of my Japanese American cultural and genetic heritage, but I think that independence is a bit over-rated. (In Japanese, the word for we and the word for I are the same word.) We're actually all

part of an interdependent whole. Most of us don't make our own clothes, grow our own food, take our own trash to the dump, or do our own dental work. We count on each other to get things done.

I find it much easier to step out of my comfort zone when I remind myself that independence is somewhat of an illusion. I remind myself that I'm already dependent on others for most of the important things in my life, like clean drinking water and the covers I sleep under at night. When I remember this, I find it much easier to ask for help.

If I try a new city bus line and get lost, even after carefully researching my route ahead of time, I cheerfully ask someone where I am and what I need to do next to get where I'm going. If I can't read the sign or didn't even know that there was one, I ask politely, for someone to explain what steps I need to carry out whatever it is I'm hoping to do, like getting in line to buy a ticket. Eventually I make it to the right place.

Yes, it's often confusing and sometimes exhausting just getting from Point A to Point B. At times it doesn't

seem worth the effort. Some days it's necessary to stay home, shelter in place, and gather up energy to face it all again. When getting about is just too tough, there are all the ways we can bring the world into our own living space, be it audio books, classes by mail, dancing in our kitchen to radio tunes, online courses, or having a friend come by to teach us how our much too complicated phone works.

I hope that reading this will nudge someone along toward trying something new. And I hope that when we need a nudge, you'll remind me and others to

enjoy all there is to explore in this world of ours. We'd miss much too much if we made sheltering in place a way of life. In the past, families sometimes hid blind family members away. We shouldn't be hiding ourselves from the world due to our own fear or our own inertia. And it's much less scary to be out there when we remember that it's absolutely fine to pleasantly ask someone else for help. We all have our part in helping each other get through life so we can fully enjoy ourselves in this wide world of ours.

\* \* \*

## **San Francisco Chapter Meetings Open to All Via Telephone by Frank Welte**

I am pleased to report that the monthly meetings of the San Francisco Chapter of the California Council of the Blind are now accessible through a telephone conference line. The conference phone number is 302-202-1110, and the meeting code is 340741.

The chapter meets on the third Saturday of the month at 10:30 AM (except in August, October and December) at the LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, 1155

Market Street, 10th Floor, San Francisco.

The best way to experience a CCB chapter meeting is to attend in person, but we know that's not a viable option for many people. If you don't live close to one of our great local CCB chapters, if your circumstances don't make it feasible for you to attend your local chapter gatherings, or if you just want to listen in to informative speakers and stimulating conversation, you are invited to call in to

a future meeting of the San Francisco Chapter. We will be sending regular notices to The California Connection, so you will

know about our program offerings ahead of time.

All are welcome!

\* \* \*

## **Finding Inner Strength Through Challenges**

**by Mrs. Sylvia Sugar Lopez**

[Sylvia's email address is [sugarsyl71@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sugarsyl71@sbcglobal.net).]

A while back I wrote an article for the BC called "My Unfinished Story". That article was about how through the challenges of being blind, I found that with determination and self-perseverance, there was still hope for a good life. This time I want to share how being blind has

helped me show others that even though difficult times keep coming, light is still there, and how a positive attitude can make things a little easier.

I am happy and blessed to say that it has been 15 years since I had my Kidney and Pancreas transplants, and they are doing well, considering. My pancreas is chronically rejecting and has at last



slowed down to the point where I am back on insulin after 13 years of being diabetic-free. I feel blessed to have had those 13 years needle free because it is not very common for transplants to survive that long. It has been difficult and disappointing for this to have happen, but knowing that one day this would and could occur was part of my journey.

Transplants are just a temporary fix or as I like to say "gifts," and in the meantime I have kept striving to do my best in all I do. My determination, positive outlook on life and my unwaivering faith does not compromise or stop me from being who I am.

During the past few years I have been blessed to speak to high school classes about my blindness, give resources and help guide students who need direction to better themselves and outlook in their lives. I was amazed to feel their eagerness and hear how excited they were to know how they could keep moving forward when life throws them curve balls. I still keep in touch via email.

They had a chance to use my long white cane, instructed to walk blindfolded across a room to sharpen their pencils.

There was some fumbling around, and I have to admit it brought a small smile to my face because I knew the students were realizing that it's not easy to get around in an unfamiliar location. I received comments like "it's not as easy as you make it seem."

I have also been blessed and honored to put together a "Dining in the Dark" event at my local church. The theme was "Seeing with a New Perspective", and we all sat at round tables and everyone had blindfolds throughout the event. They received a brailed note card with a few words of encouragement, and with

the help from my local talking book library, a flyer with the alphabet in braille. They could try to figure out what the words were using their cheat sheet, as I called them. There were also slates and styluses at each table for them to learn how to write their names in braille.

My challenge was to put this all together and cook spaghetti and meatballs, sauce, salad and dessert. The fact that some people didn't realize that I was capable to not only organize and host this event, but cook for 50 people, really took them by surprise. A few were fumbling around as they

attempted pouring their drinks and buttering their rolls. I heard comments like "How does she do this without making a mess of herself?" It's not easy doing this with our eyes closed!"

I found myself coaching them on finding their places around tables and how to not get sauce all over themselves. There were several white canes around the room, so they all could take turns trying to get around, still with their blindfolds on.

I noticed how many participants were trying to identify one another just by listening to each other's

voices. I said: "This is why there are times when I know some of you well because you come to me and talk, and the more you and I talk the more familiar I am with your voice. So conversation is important."

It was a fun experience for everyone all around. Most importantly it gave people an opportunity to know me as an individual, not just the blind girl. Everyone had a chance to walk in my shoes for a few hours; and this will be an experience they won't forget, and I only hope that they realize that being blind is not a game, but it is real, it is who I am. As a blind wife, mother and individual, I

have learned that what I do, how I act, and react to others determines how people see me, and I look forward to keep striving to do my best and educate people who are not familiar with blindness and all that can be accomplish with the right tools.

The CCB has been such a wonderful way of Support and a great resource for me personally. I have gained so much strength being a part of this organization: being part of the Membership Committee and being one of the monitors on the CCB-L online group.

I have been totally blind for 19 years now, and I can say that I have had, and still do, the best of both worlds. Blindness has brought me comfort, some peace and a better sense of self-worth. I give thanks to God for my husband Daniel, my family for its unconditional love and support. I am grateful for every opportunity I get to put myself out there and share about how we as blind people can live a productive life. I feel that we all have challenges in our lives, whether they are physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. They are challenges we all deal with in our daily walk.

I would like to leave you with this small thought: You are strong as long as you stay true to yourself, stay open to ask for help when needed, and be willing to return the favor.

This is how you will keep maturing personally and within the community.

Thank you, God bless you.

\* \* \*

### **A Letter to the Editor**

Dear Blind Californian editor:

I believe that the CCB Board of Directors vote to withdraw the charter of the Association for Multicultural Concerns (AMC) a long time affiliate of CCB, at a late March 2016 Board meeting, did not treat AMC as being a member of the CCB family.

Originally, at the October 2015 CCB convention, when withdrawal of the AMC charter was requested by the credentials chair, the reason for taking action was that the AMC roster listed names of CCB members who were no longer members or were deceased. Subsequently, at a phone CCB board meeting, the reason for revoking the AMC charter

was changed, and the new basis for the withdrawal was that several AMC members were listed on the roster as having a mailing address that was not a home mailing address. The CCB Board established a committee to investigate the operation of AMC.

At the late March CCB phone Board meeting, the committee reported its findings and recommended that the CCB Board withdraw the AMC charter. By way of an email message prior to the late March Board phone meeting, I brought to the Board's attention that some members in two

other chapters listed their home addresses as post office boxes, which was no different than what some members of AMC did by listing the same address. Nonetheless, the CCB Board revoked the AMC charter based on its finding that AMC had not submitted a valid roster or paid dues to CCB in three years, which violated the CCB constitution. No explanation was given for changing the basis for revoking the AMC charter to a third and different reason. When it was pointed out that AMC had submitted its roster and dues payment which was accepted by CCB during the last three years, a

member of the Board said that the roster and dues were accepted due to "administrative error".

By repeatedly changing the reason for withdrawing the AMC charter, the CCB Board demonstrated that the objective of the CCB Board was to remove AMC from CCB and not to work with the AMC leadership.

So that leaves the obvious question unanswered that is; "Why was the AMC charter revoked?"

Very truly yours  
Charles D. Nabarrete  
President, American  
Association of Visually  
Impaired Attorneys

\* \* \*

## **Technology Access Rights of State and Local Government Employees with Disabilities Part**

### **II**

**by Steven Mendelsohn**

[Editor's Note: The first part of this article was published in the spring, 2016 BC.]

Undue Hardship

But perhaps the most important part of the decision is the way the

appeals court treats the undue hardship defense advanced by the county and relied upon, without analysis or question, "as a matter of law," by the district court. The heart of the county's argument was that making MC 311 accessible would cost too much. In explaining why the district court had been wrong, the appeals court began by citing the improper way it had credited the county expert's cost estimate while rejecting the plaintiff's equally qualified expert's much lower estimate. Apart from the county expert's opinion, which was no better than the defense expert's, there

was no evidence to support the existence of these high accessibility maintenance and upkeep costs. This battle of the experts was not appropriate for resolution at summary judgment.

But that wasn't the only error in the district court's treatment of the undue hardship defense. "The district court focused almost exclusively on the cost of the accommodations, without regard to the other statutory factors." The district court had not considered the number of employees working on MC 311, including the software engineers who said they



weren't too busy to deal with it under their existing time commitments. Thus, there was dispute as to how much if at all additional personnel cost the county would incur from making MC 311 accessible.

But most important, in determining whether making MC 311 accessible would be an undue financial hardship to the county, the district court had ignored "the considerable savings the County realized from creating a centralized call center (\$10 million)." In this connection, the appeals court went on to note that the district court had relied

on an irrelevant factor, "The district court also relied on an irrelevant factor, the county's budget for reasonable accommodations, in assessing undue hardship. The county had argued that the cost of accessibility would vastly exceed its budget for reasonable accommodations (the first \$500 to be paid for by the employee's department, and remaining costs from a \$15,000 line-item in the County's overall budget).

"Allowing the County to prevail on its undue hardship defense based on its own budgeting decisions would effectively

cede the legal determination on this issue to the employer that allegedly failed to accommodate an employee with a disability [in the first place.] Taken to its logical extreme, the employer could budget \$0 for reasonable accommodations and thereby always avoid liability. The County's overall budget (\$3.73 billion in fiscal year 2010) and MC 311's operating budget (about \$4 million) are relevant factors. But the County's line-item budget for reasonable accommodations is not.

"In effect, the district court reduced a multi-factor

analysis to a single factor; cost that the court believed was simply too much for the County to bear. But while cost is important, it cannot be viewed in isolation. Rather, it is the relative cost, along with other factors, that matters."

### **A Template for Future Cases**

This appeals court analysis provides an excellent template for use by other courts and by workers with disabilities in responding to undue hardship defenses in technology access cases. After this decision, any court deciding that technology

accessibility is too expensive acts arbitrarily if it does not explain how it reached that conclusion and what other factors besides dollar cost it took into account. After this decision, workers seeking accessibility can ask the court (can plausibly and rightfully demand to know, through pretrial discovery or otherwise), what significance the court assigns to the fact that agencies implement new technology because of the cost savings or productivity gains expected to result. How much money the employer expects the underlying inaccessible technology to save becomes as

important as how much accessibility will cost, and the amount in savings or productivity gains expected will usually be a lot more.

No longer, if the reasoning of this decision is followed by other courts, will public employers be able to argue that the savings and benefits from major information technology upgrades should be disregarded in determining how much spending on accessibility is appropriate. Until the improbable day when an agency comes into court with the argument that it didn't intend to save any money or achieve any

productivity gains through its major technology upgrade, the benefits of technology and the costs of access cannot be separated from one another. In the wake of this decision, relative cost and benefit emerge as the dynamic elements of a sound decisional process.

### **Calculating the Numbers**

There is another key element of the undue hardship issue, but one that was not discussed by the court. It is one that also has great bearing on how undue hardship claims will be decided in the future. That issue is whether the county's admitted failure to

consider accessibility from the outset, in the procurement and implementation of the system, is itself a violation of the law, as failure to install a ramp at the entrance to a new county building would be.

According to the way the appeals court approached the case, the question of the county's legal obligation (if any) to design-in accessibility from the start was not up for decision. Nevertheless, because of the significance of the issue in our ever-more technology-dependent work world, and because of the number of people who will be affected by the answer, the legal

question of whether accessibility should have been included in the first place cries out for our attention.

From the standpoint of undue financial hardship, the cost of making MC 311 accessible will surely be higher as a retrofit or after-the-fact add-on, than it would have been as an integral element of the original design. From a functional standpoint too, retrofits are rarely as effective as integrated design. Thus whatever the total amount the court eventually decides the retrofit will cost, incorporating accessibility into the system at the

design stage would almost certainly have proved much less expensive and far more effective. In evaluating an undue hardship claim, one key legal question is therefore which figure (the cost of retrofitting or the cost of timely incorporation) should be used.

If the county continues to litigate this case after February's powerful jury verdict against it, it will probably continue to argue undue hardship, based on the cost of retrofitting. In fact, there are already reports that it is upgrading MC 311, once again without accessibility. If this county, or any state or

county, is permitted to include the extra costs of accessibility attributable to belated implementation, thereby inflating the costs of accessibility over what they would have been if incurred in a timely manner, the county will be rewarded for its flagrant indifference and incompetence. If allowed to include the entire cost of retrofitting in the cost of accessibility, rather than only what accessibility would have cost if built-in from the beginning, governments would be allowed to use a cost figure that, because higher than it need have been, increases the possibility

that undue hardship will be found to exist.

Public entities should not be permitted to engage in this sort of gamesmanship. They should not be permitted to forego accessibility in system design on a bet that no one will later require retrofits at much higher cost. Only the costs of accessibility at the design and contract stage should permissibly be taken into account in evaluating an undue financial hardship defense. Otherwise, whether the county's undue hardship defense prevails or not, its indifference to the law goes completely unpunished, and there is

no incentive for it to act responsibly when doing so could have made the greatest difference.

Put in equal opportunity terms and paraphrasing the question posed in Reyazuddin's Court of Appeals brief: should an employer be allowed to configure its workplace in a manner that "screens out" people with disabilities, then when it gets caught, be allowed to argue that the costs of making up for its dereliction are too high?

By failing to hold the county responsible for screening people out through inaccessible

design, the courts would be answering this question with an emphatic "yes". They would be saying that employers are permitted to configure their technology in a predictably and inevitably exclusionary manner, and then take budgetary refuge against the consequences of their negligence.

The arguments already made by the county in seeking to justify its behavior make this risk clearer. Seeking to bolster the county's position, the trial court had noted that county officials, when designing the system, had no way of knowing a blind person would attempt to

use it. But why should that matter? Would a county be permitted to forego installing accessible entrances in a new administration building because no wheelchair users were known to be employed at the time the building was designed? No! Far from bolstering the defendant's case, the county officials' plea of ignorance, if taken seriously, would make exclusion permanent and irreparable.

### **Meaningful Work**

The county's attempt to avoid the accessibility problem by reassigning the employee to another job

also underscores the inadequacy of traditional forms of reasonable accommodations in technology settings. The job to which Reyazuddin was reassigned did not entail full-time work, yet she was expected to be at work full time. Because she was subjected to no loss of salary or benefits, the county believed its accommodation was reasonable. Under the circumstances, the county probably regarded itself as benevolent for doing this, and probably, no matter what work could or couldn't be found for this employee, the county had no intention of firing her, even if it meant paying her



indefinitely for doing little or nothing except showing up.

This only highlights the dilemma; it doesn't solve it. Loyalty, sentimentality, pity or make-work jobs aside, there simply aren't going to be positions to which people excluded from their customary work by the introduction of inaccessible technology can be meaningfully reassigned. In the modern office environment (indeed in almost any contemporary work setting) there aren't going to be many jobs that people unable to access the information technology can perform, or that will

allow them to build skills and careers, or that will enable them to retain self-respect and the respect of their colleagues.

Unless the law addresses technology accessibility head-on, and until government at all levels recognizes that in an increasing number of instances, accessibility is not one possible accommodation but the only reasonable accommodation, the paradoxical problem of dwindling opportunity will only grow worse. Make-work jobs that seek to evade anti-discrimination laws at the cost of disregarding the dignity of

work and of workers can only delay the reckoning for a little while. Like the Federal government, states and localities must understand that without ICT accessibility, their commitment to enhancing

the number and quality of job and career opportunities for people with all disabilities will prove hollow, if not hypocritical.

\* \* \*

## **On the Lighter Side**

**by Evelyn Drewry**

Hello everyone. I am delighted to be back with the Lighter Side column to help celebrate the anniversary of our organization, and of course the BC. The story I have chosen for this issue is one many of us will be able to relate to.

How many times have we heard something and wrongly assumed we knew exactly what was going on? I can't speak for the rest of you, but I've done this more than once. I have a very good friend who happens to be totally blind, and she recently shared this story with me. It took place shortly before her

husband underwent heart valve replacement surgery. I'll let her tell it in her own words.

David and I were at the gym before his surgery. I was using a weight machine with my victor stream ear buds in my ears. David had been doing the treadmill but was finished. He wasn't allowed to do the free weights and when I took off my ear buds, I know longer heard the treadmill, but heard someone on the free weights. I turned to the person and started scolding, "What are you doing using those

weights? Stop it right now! You know what the doctor said." At that point, David spoke up and said, "That's not me." Another guy had come in. Well, I laughed, apologized and David said the guy smiled and laughed as well.

Oops. I'll bet that guy was wondering what was going on until he figured things out.

On that note I'll sign out, but you just never know when I might be back with another story. In the meantime, always try to look on the lighter side.

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## **Major LightHouse for the Blind Expansion to Serve the Blind and Visually Impaired of the East Bay**

**Edited Press Release**

**(SAN FRANCISCO, CA)**

**LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Northern California's oldest and largest nonprofit serving the blind, today announced a major initiative to aid hundreds of East Bay blind and visually impaired students affected by the scheduled closure of the Oakland Lions Center for the Blind.**

**"This week we're signing a long-term lease to quadruple the size of our Alameda County office,**

**effective August 31, 2016, the announced date of the Lions Center closure" said LightHouse CEO Bryan Bashin. Throughout its 114-year history the LightHouse, though headquartered in San Francisco, has served students mostly from the nine-county Bay Area outside of San Francisco proper. Recognizing the unmet needs in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, the LightHouse first opened a satellite office at Berkeley's Ed Roberts Campus in 2011, providing employment, tech skills**

and mobility training. In 2014 the California Department of Rehabilitation awarded the LightHouse a key contract to serve older blind adults in Alameda County. Today's announced expansion will allow the organization to support up to 30 teachers for working-age blind and visually impaired people in Alameda County, where most LightHouse students live.

The new Ed Roberts Campus training facility will complement the greatly expanded teaching capacity of LightHouse's new 40,000 square-foot

Market Street headquarters in San Francisco, opened just three months ago. The Ed Roberts Campus, built directly on top of Berkeley's Ashby BART station, houses a renowned group of disability organizations in a safe and transit-friendly location. Nearly a dozen progressive disability organizations have discovered that the Ed Roberts campus is an ideal place to gather people with disabilities, and their friends and family.

Shortly after the Lions Center closes, the expanded LightHouse staff will take up the slack by

teaching braille, adaptive computer skills, personal and home management, how to find employment and Orientation and Mobility to hundreds of students throughout the east bay.

"While we're sorry the chaos around the Lions Center closure has affected several hundred blind students in the east bay," Bashin said, "the new extra capacity of the LightHouse and its 100 plus employees will provide them services and to fulfill our organization's core mission to train and empower all of the region's

visually-impaired residents."

The LightHouse has chosen to announce its new expanded Berkeley office in advance of the Lions publicized closure to allow time for current Lions students to plan for a seamless continuation of their studies in September. Displaced blind students, rehabilitation counselors and concerned families can contact the LightHouse directly to arrange for uninterrupted training. Former students of the Lions Center for the Blind are welcome to continue their studies at any LightHouse facility. To

make arrangements please  
contact LightHouse  
Rehabilitation Counselor  
Debbie Bacon at 415-694-

7357, or email her at  
dbacon@LightHouse-  
sf.org.

\* \* \*

## **CCB Board of Directors Minutes Summary**

**April 7, 2016**

**by Ardis Bazyn, CCB Secretary**

Jeff Thom brought the CCB board of directors meeting to order shortly after noon on April 7, 2016, and Ardis Bazyn called the roll.

Present were President Jeff Thom, 1st Vice-President Eugene Lozano Jr. , 2nd Vice-President Judy Wilkinson, Secretary Ardis Bazyn, Treasurer Peter Pardini, Immediate Past President Donna Pomerantz, and Directors

Vincent Calderon, Steve Fort, Joe Lopez, Pam Metz, Charles Nabarrete, Paul Patche Jr., Frank Welte, and Robert Wendt. Leena Bandy was the only director who was absent.

When Jeff reviewed the agenda, Donna asked him to add the March 31 minutes. Judy made a motion to approve the agenda with the addition.

The motion was seconded and passed. Donna made a motion to table passing the March 31 minutes until the next meeting. The motion was seconded and passed with a few nos.

Mitch Pomerantz gave the Newel Perry report. Mitch, Richard Rueda, and Margaret Buchman Garcia serve on this committee. At the close of 2015, \$241,616.50 was the balance. In February, 2016 the balance was \$238,257.90. Donna made a motion to accept the report. Robert seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Since Donna provided the Mutt Strut report to the board on March 31, Peter gave the Mutt Strut budget. Registration fees were projected as \$12,000. The total proposed revenue is \$30,200.00 and including the drawing \$34,200. The expenses include \$6,000 for marketing and totals \$15,950.00. This leaves a proposed bottom line of \$16,950.00. Frank made a motion to approve the Mutt Strut activity. Gene seconded the motion. During discussion, the November 19 date was challenged since it falls on the date of the annual technology conference. A date change may be a



possibility. Donna stated May 15 is the proposed date for interviewing the marketing person. The motion passed unanimously. Jeff then explained the new car donation program.

Vince as chair of the CCB Budget Committee presented the 2016 Budget. Charles made a motion to accept a positive change in the budget for legal settlements. Frank seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Gene made a motion to increase the legal line item from \$22,000 to \$27,000. The motion was seconded by Vince and passed

unanimously. The budget showed \$149,675 for the revenue line, \$233,570 for the expenses line, and \$83,895 a negative bottom line. Ardis made a motion to accept the amended budget. Joe seconded the motion. Judy asked to add that the board receive a copy of the amended budget by June 1. Someone requested the expenses for the convention be given at the next board meeting following the convention. The motion to accept the budget was passed unanimously.

Discussion was held on the inappropriate sharing

of the San Gabriel Valley Chapter roster online to an open email discussion list. Frank made a motion to censure Charles for placing the San Gabriel Valley roster on a public email discussion list. Ardis seconded the motion. There is nothing in the CCB Constitution allowing the board to suspend any board member. Mitch asked for a future Constitution proposal about sanctions or suspensions for cause. A request was made to have the webmaster delete the archive of the post containing the roster. Vita will try to remove it. The motion to censure Charles

passed with one abstention by Charles.

Gene made a motion to actively check into identity theft remuneration for this violation. Resources could be given after facts show a direct link because of this action. The motion was seconded by Judy. Pam Poligy asked Jeff to bring a motion to the general session on Sunday about possible suspension of Charles from the board. An amendment was made to the motion to purchase insurance for San Gabriel Valley chapter members. The motion was then withdrawn. Gene made a motion to check into what

the SGV chapter really needed. The motion was seconded and then passed unanimously.

Frank made a motion to adjourn the meeting to an executive session. This motion was seconded and passed. A motion was made to pass a resolution regarding a possible conflict of interest on the voting lawsuit. The motion was seconded and passed with one abstention.

CCB received a letter in regard to the GDUC Inc. papers. A response letter was written by the GDUC board and CCB officers asking for this group to

desist using the GDUC business name. Frank made a motion to send the letter and the motion was seconded by Ardis. The letter will have the 2013 resolution attached. The motion passed. The address of the letter writer is the same as the AMC address. Charles abstained from voting on this motion.

A motion was made to adjourn the executive session and the CCB board meeting. The motion was seconded by several and passed at 3:45 PM. These minutes were approved June 12, 2016.

\* \* \*

**California Council of the Blind**  
**Officers and Board as of July 1, 2016**  
**(updated August 12, 2016)**

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

**President, Judy Wilkinson, San Leandro (16-18, 1st term)**  
**510-388-5079 c, [judy.wilkinson@ccbnet.org](mailto:judy.wilkinson@ccbnet.org)**

**1st Vice President, Frank Welte, San Leandro (16-18, 1st term)**  
**510-541-1442 c, [frank.welte@ccbnet.org](mailto:frank.welte@ccbnet.org)**

**2nd Vice President, Gabe Griffith, Concord (\*16-17, partial term)**  
**925-768-8195 c, [gabe.griffith@ccbnet.org](mailto:gabe.griffith@ccbnet.org)**

**Secretary, Ardis Bazyn, Burbank (15-17, 1st term)**  
**[ardis.bazyn@ccbnet.org](mailto:ardis.bazyn@ccbnet.org)**

**Treasurer, Peter Pardini, Mill Valley (16-18, 4th term)**

**415-990-9202 c, peter.pardini@ccbnet.org**

**Immediate Past President, Jeff Thom, Sacramento (16-??)**

**916-995-3967 c, jeff.thom@ccbnet.org**

## **Board of Directors**

**Gail Crossen, La Habra (16-18, 1st term)**

**562-691-3391 h, gail.crossen@ccbnet.org**

**Steve Fort, Alameda (15-17, 1st term)**

**510-521-4386 h, steve.fort@ccbnet.org**

**Joseph Lopez, Goleta (15-17, 1st term)**

**805-683-0007 h, joseph.lopez@ccbnet.org**

**Pamela Metz, Chatsworth (15-17, 1st term)**

**818-882-3610 h, pamela.metz@ccbnet.org**

**Sharlene Ornelas, Oceanside (16-18, 1st term)**

**619-339-6043 c, sharlene.ornelas@ccbnet.org**

**Paul Patche, Jr, Sacramento (16-18, 2nd term)**

**916-662-0861 c, paul.patche@ccbnet.org**

**Rob Turner, Sunnyvale (16-18, 1st term)**

**408-203-9300 c, rob.turner@ccbnet.org**

**Robert Wendt, Long Beach (15-17, 3rd term)**

**562-438-7100 h, robert.wendt@ccbnet.org**

**Vivian Younger, Downey (\*16-17, partial term)**

**562-879-6693 c, vivian.younger@ccbnet.org**

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**Annette Carter**

**Roger Petersen**

**Bonnie Rennie**

**Donna Sanchez**

**Dr. Catherine Schmitt Whitaker**

**\* \* \***

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.