The GCB DIGEST

This is a publication of the Georgia Council of the Blind.

We are an affiliate of the American Council of the Blind,

an organization promoting a hand up and not a handout.

Winter 2021

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From Your Editor

by Amanda Wilson

Hello, GCB family. We thank each one who has submitted articles in this issue of our magazine. If you have any change of address, telephone number, email address, or desired change of format, please inform our GCB treasurer.

Thanks to everyone who makes our GCB Digest such a big success. I particularly want to thank Janet Parmerter, Assistant Editor, for her editing skills and for the many hours she has worked on the magazine. I want to thank our President, Alice Ritchhart, for her presidential message with information about important events, legislation, and projects. I also appreciate the contributions from our new GCB Digest committee and each member who sent articles and who made suggestions.

From this point forward, please send any comments, articles, or messages to the GCB Digest Editor in Font: Arial, Font Style: Bold, Font Size: 16-point, Font Heading Size: 20 point and please underline the Heading. This will make things more consistent for reading and for Braille.

Note:

The GCB Digest is now on NFB Newsline and on Georgia Radio Reading Service, GARRS.

GCB Presidential Message

by Alice Ritchhart

Today I am going to ask you all a thought-provoking question. Why did you become a member of the Georgia Council of the Blind (GCB)? What are some of the reasons you made your decision to join our organization? Did you join because you were seeking social interaction and peer support? I want to acknowledge that many of us know from personal experience the problems for visually impaired youth and adults when it comes to taking part in social activities. Along with the social barriers resulting from vision loss, another continuous battle is transportation. In my opinion, getting from one place to another is the largest obstacle we face. Other major issues include communication and social barriers in almost all interactions. Public events may or may not be accessible to meet our needs. Once you made the decision to join GCB, did you join when you first experienced your vision loss? Did you want to have opportunities to educate yourself and learn more information on the whys of your vision loss? Were you attempting to learn what resources were out there to assist you? Were you striving to remain fully functional in your community? Allow me to emphasize, these benefits of GCB membership are directly tied to peer support. Peer support is so valuable and learning from others who have been in your shoes is remarkable! In turn, you can pass on your successful experiences to others who are currently dealing with their own vision loss for the first time or suffering major declines in their vision loss journey. Talking to individuals who have been there before can be life changing. Self-advocacy and membership go hand in hand! Was becoming a member important to you so you could develop self-advocacy skills and then in turn you could promote your own critical need for services? Did you feel strongly that you needed to remain independent in employment or volunteer work? For example, did you want to learn how to get Vocational Rehabilitation Services to work with you so you could return to work or obtain employment? Maybe you realize the need for technology? Were you made aware of the importance of how to advocate for yourself regarding assistive devices? Did these types of items seem necessary? Did the following items seem essential? White Cane, talking watch, or any other assistive technology that would give you freedom to have the best quality of life possible. Awareness of failures in service systems could have captured your attention! Possibly you became a GCB Member to bring about service delivery system changes so that people who are blind or have low vision are not left out or behind! GCB leaders have long recognized the critical legislation which would afford people who are visually impaired the same rights as their sighted peers. Legislative imperatives have moved forward the opportunities to access television, movies, and other entertainment venues through audio description. Another example of system change would be to continue the fight for access to public accommodations with guide dogs. Additional reasons for joining GCB may have been to assist those who will, no doubt, experience vision loss in the future as our Senior Citizens with Age Related Macular Degeneration. On the other hand, our young people will face many different challenges and will need support as they fight these battles. I will share with you that for me I joined for all these reasons and many more. Now for my own story. I joined GCB because I wanted to improve my situation and make a difference for all those who came after me. I also enjoy the social interactions that my membership allows. It makes me so happy when we share time and events together. Now let us be honest, I want to ask you when you first joined did you make it a point to take an active role in the organization? Have you gotten what you expected from your membership? Have you attended Board Meetings on a regular basis? Have you made the effort to reach out to your local, state, and national legislators? Have you spoken out to your legislators to advocate for issues that would bring about the change you needed or that would have a global effect? Have you taken part in GCB fund raising activities to collect necessary funds for assisting GCB Members and non-members? Have you shared your success stories with others who were facing similar issues? Have you taken an active role to encourage our youth and their families? If so, I just want to applaud you and say thank you! However, I am incredibly sad to say that I believe many of us have now gotten complacent and are no longer engaged. I think we often feel like “I got what I needed so I no longer have to worry about others”. I think some of us have decided we are old, and we have done our part. Let someone else take over the reins. I finally believe many of us are just burned out. Whatever the cause, our beloved GCB is becoming stagnant. I want you to think good and hard about what it means to be a member of GCB, to recommit yourself to the cause, and become an active member again in the organization. If it is just for the social aspect, then get involved in community events whether it be virtual or in person. If it is so you can enact change, then get involved at any level of the legislative process. Consider running for a board position in your local chapter or at the state level. Maybe even think about getting involved at the national level. These are my challenges for you in 2021. Do you accept the challenge?

Georgia Council of the Blind Board Meeting Minutes

by Betsy Grenevitch

Georgia Council of the Blind Board Meeting via Zoom

November 7, 2020

Call to Order, President Alice Ritchhart:

Alice called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM.

Roll Call: Those present were: Alice Ritchhart, GCB President; Philip Jones, GCB First Vice-President; Jamaica Miller, GCB 2nd Vice-President; Betsy Grenevitch, GCB Secretary; Marsha Farrow, GCB Treasurer; Valerie Hester, GCB Member-at-Large representative; Jerrie toney, Athens Chapter; Deborah Lovell, Augusta Chapter; Rosetta Brown, East Georgia chapter; Judy Presley, Greater Hall County Chapter; Sharon Nichols, Northwest Chapter; Tonia Clayton, Rome-Floyd County Chapter; Marj Schneider, Savannah Chapter; Tiyah Longmire, South Atlanta Chapter Amanda Wilson, GCB Digest Editor; Steve Longmire, GCB Webmaster, and DJ McIntyre, GGDU. Guests: Mary Woodyard, Cecily Nipper, Sr., Cecily Nipper, Jr., Jennifer Bray, Cathy Morris, and Robin Oliver.

Secretary’s Minutes:

Deborah Lovell made a motion to accept the minutes as they were emailed out to the board and Jamaica Miller seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report - Marsha Farrow

The report had been read during the business meeting in the morning. Marsha made a motion that we accept the Treasurer’s report as given at the business meeting and emailed out and the motion was seconded by Jerrie. The motion passed unanimously.

The Technology Scholarship - Marj Schneider

Marj chaired the ad hoc committee that was formed to discuss how to use the money donated to GCB by Senator Kelly Loeffler. The other members on her committee were: Deborah Lovell, Mary Woodyard, Dottie Langham, Patricia Ganger, and Cecily Nipper, Jr. After much discussion they arrived at their proposal. They learned that all students in Georgia who are visually impaired use either Chrome Books or IPads. Even though this is the case, not all visually impaired students have access to this equipment when learning from home. Marj made a motion that GCB accept the proposal developed by the ad hoc committee to award Chrome Books and/or IPads to K-12 students with the funds donated to GCB by Senator Loeffler. Phil seconded the motion. Steve said that someone wanted to know if it would be possible to do the following concerning the scholarship:

Expand the items that could be purchased since Chrome books and IPads are already available in the schools.

* Make the application available on the website.
* Name the scholarship after Senator Loeffler.
* Make it possible for others to donate to this scholarship.

Marj explained that the Chrome Books and the IPads would be the only devices covered because that is what is used in Georgia schools. Steve asked if the schools are already issuing these devices and Marj explained that not all students can have these devices at home. Marj explained that the reason the applications need to be in a type-written form is because all the people on the committee are visually impaired and need a way to read the applications. She is concerned that having the form online would considerably slow down the process. Marj said that the board could consider, in the future, naming the scholarship after Senator Loeffler. This committee did discuss making this an ongoing scholarship where people could donate more funds to be able to keep purchasing technology products. Marsha wanted to know if she would be ordering the devices and sending them to the students or if this had yet been discussed. Marj felt this would be addressed in the future. Marj told us that the students will have to write a thank-you letter to Senator Loeffler thanking her for the item before they receive it. Marsha suggested that the same policy should take place with our regular scholarship fund as well.

After discussion, the motion passed unanimously. At this point, Alice dissolved the ad hoc committee. Alice suggested that this technology scholarship committee could now be under Cecily, Jr.’s Children and Youth Awareness committee. Deborah made a motion that the Children and Youth Awareness committee take over this technology scholarship and Jamaica seconded the motion. This committee would take over the process of the application and the selection of the winners of this scholarship. Cecily said that she would like to have advice from Deborah and Marj concerning how to run the scholarship. After the discussion, the motion passed unanimously. Marsha wanted to know what her involvement in this committee would entail and Alice felt that she would be involved when it came time to purchase the devices.

Legislative Session - Alice Ritchhart

The Commission for the Blind bill will be submitted to the legislators in January. The problem with voting will also be addressed. She wanted to know if GCB would support filing a lawsuit to deal with the voting issue. Marsha reminded us that we have $1 thousand in a legal defense fund that could go toward the lawsuit. Alice explained that a bill may be crafted during the Georgia Vision Alliance meeting concerning inaccessible voting. She wanted to know if GCB would support any legislation drawn up at this meeting. There was concern expressed about not knowing what the legislation would be before GCB says they would support it. Alice explained that both Marsha and Betsy will be attending the meeting.

Next meeting in January will be via Zoom.

ACB Radio

Marj made a motion that the Georgia Council of the Blind make a $500 donation to ACB Radio for helping with our conference and convention this weekend from the funds raised from our conference and convention registration fees that we took in. Phil seconded the motion. Marsha said we took in around $916 from registration plus the $1 thousand from Vanda Pharmaceuticals. The motion passed unanimously.

Speaker Donations - Marsha Farrow

Marsha made a motion that we give a donation of $100 to Wendy Mons’ foundation, to Mark Arneson for Hadley, and to the department at Georgia Southern University that works with the students with disabilities for presenting at our conference and convention. Jamaica seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Adjourn

We adjourned at 5:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted by

Betsy Grenevitch, GCB Secretary

GCB Chapter News

The Athens chapter meetings are held on the phone on the fourth Saturday from 10:30 AM until 12:00 PM. The date and time will be determined. For more information about the Athens Chapter, please contact Jerrie Toney at 706-461-1013, or via email at [jerriemt2@gmail.com](mailto:jerriemt2@gmail.com).

The Augusta chapter meetings are held on the phone on the second Saturday, at the Friedman Branch Library, 1447 Jackson Road, Augusta, Georgia from 10:00 AM, until 12:00 PM. For more information, please contact Deborah Lovell at 706-726-4054, or via email at [lovell.d2000@gmail.com](mailto:lovell.d2000@gmail.com).

The East Georgia chapter reported that they are on Instagram, thanks to Tiffany Montalvo and the Public Relations Committee. Please follow us at East Georgia Chapter; that's East Georgia Chapter with no caps and no spaces. The East Georgia Chapter continues to meet monthly via Zoom. Most members are sheltering in place. Our members joined Zoom classes taught by Steve Longmire on Tuesdays. We have found some ACB Community Zoom calls of interest.

At our October meeting Tiffany Montalvo produced a video in recognition of Blind Americans Equality Day. (White cane Day) Philip Jones is shown using his white cane. Cecily Nipper Junior is pictured with her guide dog Shadow. Rita Harris is accompanied by her guide dog Madden. You can view the entire video on The East Georgia Chapter Facebook page. Patricia Ganger shared what she is doing with her students at Parkview High School this year. Her students are making a video about what makes his/her cane the best. Philip Jones spoke about his experience as a cane user. When he began, you had to be a teenager before you were introduced to a cane. He feels the earlier use of canes now is better. Cecily Nipper, Jr., said that the cane skills she got from her O & M class at Leader Dog really helped freshen her skills before she began using a guide dog.

At our November meeting Cecily Nipper, Jr gave the GCB virtual convention report. Tiffany Montalvo received the East Georgia Loving Cup Award. Cecily Nipper, Jr was presented the President’s award by Alice Ritchhart for excellent work rendered for the convention. This is the highest award. Cecily Nipper, Jr received an award of Appreciation for her dedicated service to The East Georgia Chapter. Rita Harris of East Georgia Chapter was honored to have the opportunity to be one of the speakers on a presentation panel. In November, AVRT (Association of Vision Rehabilitation Therapists) annual conference was held via zoom. Nancy Parkin Bashizi, Lead Teacher VRS (Vision Rehabilitation Services) facilitated the presentation which was titled “Stuck at Home”, addressing isolation during a pandemic.

Mrs. Bashizi elaborated on challenges faced by people who are blind/visually impaired in isolation during the pandemic. Rita Harris followed with speaking on six key points of solutions to the challenges from a peer group leader and a blind/visually impaired perspective.

At our December meeting Elizabeth Cantrell read The Night Before Christmas assisted by Phil Jones. Cecily Nipper, Jr., hosted the fun games.

At our January meeting, Rosetta Brown introduced our January speaker, Dr. Vincent Martin. He is her friend, role model, Teacher, and mentor. Dr. Martin has seven degrees from universities including Georgia Tech. His Doctoral Degree is in Engineering and considers himself a “techie” and a social scientist. Dr Vincent Martin is the Vice President of Georgia Radio Reading Service, GARRs. He explained the research process and how it relates to his program on GARRS. GARRS is working to make things more easily accessible, especially for the visually impaired. His research assistant is an orientation and mobility specialist. She is Cinge Tyson, who has a master’s degree and is working on her Doctoral. Cinge Tyson assists Dr. Martin on their GARRS quarterly broadcast “Research Watch”. Earlier broadcasts are in the GARRS archives. Dr. Martin works as a digital user accessibility Scientist, making sure everything is equally accessible to anyone with a disability (blindness). He ran in the Paralympics in 1996, 2000, and 2004.

At our February meeting, Phil Jones introduced our Speaker, Cindy Hollis, ACB Membership Coordinator. She has been an ACB member for 35 years. She has served as president of Washington Council of The Blind, Publications Board member, Chair of Awards committee, and several other positions. Cindy is the founder of ACV Community calls. She talked about the significance of Membership. Membership retention is the key to growth.

Embrace—welcome, make sure people feel included.

Engage—interaction, talking, learn about each other; sincere in our care for one another.

Empower—bring people into leadership make sure people have the tools to be successful. There are many community calls each day. You can even start your own community call. These are links you can use to communicate with Cindy Hollis:

[community@acb.org](mailto:community@acb.org)

[chollis@acb.org](mailto:chollis@acb.org)

The East Georgia chapter meetings are held on the phone on the second Saturday of each month from 10:00 AM, until 12:00 PM. For more information, please contact Philip Jones at 770-713-3306, or via email at.[brilman1952@bellsouth.ne](mailto:brilman1952@bellsouth.neT)t.

The Greater Hall County Chapter reported that they continue to meet by conference call. For members who do not make it on the call, we send out meeting summaries and an occasional newsletter. On our February 13th call, GCB Treasurer Marsha Farrow joined us to talk about the Senior Device and Support Fund, formerly known as the Older Blind Fund. This GCB program is different than the taxpayer senior vision program coordinated by Kay McGill. The GCB program operates through donations. They have received several large donations and continue to receive monthly donations. The program helps seniors with such things as magnifiers, color identifiers, computers, Pen Friends, braille writer repairs and even some life enrichment outings. The application is very informal, usually with an email to one of the committee members. Sharing the committee with Marsha Farrow is Alice Ritchhart, Jerrie Toney, and Judy Presley. There is a $200.00 limit per individual per year depending on available funds and the program is available to seniors 55 and older who are members and nonmembers of GCB. Our chapter executive board voted to allocate $200.00 in our operating fund for one year to assist a local individual with vision needs.

Judy Presley has found a good source for Perkins braille repairs. He is John Harden, Quality Braille Repair LLC, 145 N. Halifax Ave., Unit 605, Daytona Beach, FL 32118

Telephone: (386) 846-1325

Email: jharden01@cfl.rr.com. Judy and others report excellent service. Bob McGarry received for his birthday a Green Mountain smoker/grill that operates through wifi. Using his iPhone, Bob can adjust the temperature, cooking time, set the meat thermometers and all the grill features. In January, we heard about a new ride share service called We Go. The service is available in the city of Gainesville and will spread to Hall County in July. It operates much like Uber with a phone app and same day ride requests. However, We Go is funded by the county, city, and federal transportation money. Prices are lower than taxi fares and there is a telephone option where the customer can talk to a dispatcher. The Greater Hall County Chapter meets on the phone on the second Saturday of the month, beginning at 11:00 AM. Please contact Diane Roberts at 770-932-1112, or via email at [harveyroberts2@att.net](mailto:harveyroberts2@att.net).

Members at Large:

The member’s at large group meets on the phone on the third Monday at 7:00 PM. For more information about the members at large group, please contact Betsy Grenevitch at 678-862-3876, or via email at [blindangel61@gmail.com](mailto:blindangel61@gmail.com).

The Northwest Georgia Chapter

For more information, please contact Fred McDade at 706-278-4084, or via email at [nwgachaptergcb@gmail.com](mailto:nwgachaptergcb@gmail.com).

The Rome Floyd County chapter meetings are held on the phone on the third Tuesday, at 4:00 PM. For more information, please contact Tonia Clayton, at 706-346-8940, or via email at [toniaclayton71@gmail.com](mailto:toniaclayton71@gmail.com).

The Savannah chapter meetings are held on the third Thursday at the conference room at J. C. Lewis Ford, 9505 Abercorn Street, Savannah, Georgia, from 6:00 PM until 7:30 PM. For more information, please contact Marj Schneider at 912-352-1415, or via email at [marjschneider@bellsouth.net](mailto:marjschneider@bellsouth.net).

The South Atlanta chapter meetings are held on the phone on the second Thursday, at the Piccadilly Cafeteria, 2000 Crescent Center Blvd. in Tucker, Georgia, from 4:00 PM until 6:00 PM. For more information, please contact Brent Reynolds, at 404-814-0768, or via email [jbr53@samobile.net](mailto:jbr53@samobile.net).

Georgia Guide Dog Users, GDDU News

by Betsy Grenevitch

The Revised Air Carrier Access Act

On January 25, 2021, I attended a Zoom meeting concerning the Revised Air Carrier Access Act concerning guide and service dogs being able to fly on airplanes. Melanie Brunson was the facilitator and Becky Davidson, Sarah Calhoun, and Sheila Styron helped answer any questions. This new regulation brings the requirements for flying in line with the ADA definition of a service animal. There is a form that airlines can require to be filled out before flying with a service animal. It has three sections which include: what kind of dog, veterinary information and vaccines, and attestation of your dog’s good behavior. There is a second form that will need to be filled out if you are traveling over eight hours. Alaska airlines says that once the form has been filled out you do not have to fill it out again unless things change such as you are having a new dog or a new vaccination. An attendee said that American Airlines says the form is good for a year or until the Rabies shot runs out. United Airlines is trying to make these forms as part of the booking process. The airlines are required to make both an online and hard copy of the form available to be filled out. A hard copy of the form can be sent by mail if there is time for it to be received or the form can be filled out at the airport. It is not clear whether the airline must provide someone to help you fill out the form at the airport. We may be required to fill out a form for each airline we use during a trip. The Department of Transportation has asked us to let them know if we are not able to fill out the form. All breeds of guide/service dogs are accepted under this update. Airlines can require that the dog must fit into your foot space or ride on your lap. So far, it is not known whether any airline is making this a requirement.

For more information about the Georgia Guide Dogs Users group, please contact Betsy Grenevitch, at 678-862-3876, or via email at [blindangel61@gmail.com](mailto:blindangel61@gmail.com).

GCB Community Phone Calls

The Georgia Council of the Blind has started doing community phone calls. The phone number for all the GCB community phone calls is 1-605-562-0400, and the access code is 780-5751, followed by the pound sign. If you cannot get in, then use the alternative phone number. It is 1-717-275-8940 and the access code is 7805751, followed by the pound sign.

Here is the schedule for the GCB community phone calls.

Seeking the Sunshine discussion group:

Marsha Farrow will discuss any concerns about our local events. This call will be on the first Monday of every month at 7:00 pm.

Reading with Touch:

Betsy Grenevitch will discuss all things associated with Braille. This call will be on the second Monday of every month at 7:00 pm.

Praise and Prayer:

Mike Hall will lead us in praise and prayer on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM.

Game night:

Mary Woodyard will lead us in different types of trivia games. This phone call will be on the fourth Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM.

GCB Book Club:

We are excited to announce that the Georgia Council of The Blind now has a book club. The book club meets monthly via the telephone on the fourth Thursday at 7:30 PM. Judy Presley and Deborah Lovell co-host the book discussions. All books selected are available through GLASS and are available for download from BARD. We are always seeking suggestions for future books and encourage others to lead the book group.

Here is the summary of the book that we read in January.

A Woman of No Importance by Sonia Purnell

This spy thriller is a true story! An American woman, working as an undercover agent for Britain, set up safe houses, managed prison escapes for herself and other agents, organized vast networks among French underground resistance, coordinated couriers among different operations, and provided top-grade intelligence back to London – under the very nose of the Gestapo. Before the war, she worked for the State Department of the United States, serving multiple legations in Europe in low-paying clerical jobs. Although she developed deep knowledge of politics and knew five languages, she was barred from any American diplomatic assignment. Women were not allowed – everyone thought that women were not capable of diplomatic work!

The Nazis began taking over Europe, piece by piece. Churchill created the Special Operations Executive – the SOE – on the same day that Hitler made a triumphant speech in Berlin boasting of his victories. Sabotage, subversion, and spying would be needed. Miss Virginia Hall, from Baltimore, through a series of coincidences and rules ignored, became “Liaison and Intelligence” person posted to Vichy, headquarters of a French regime that was hostile to Britain. Posing as an American newspaper journalist, she found a way to work independently when her boss proved incapable. By her insight, persistence, and unfathomable courage her work became the foundation of the French resistance. American General Dwight Eisenhower gave credit to the combined actions of the resistance, saying the sabotage, ambushes, harassment, and constant sapping of Nazi morale shortened the war in Europe by nine months. It was Virginia Hall who had organized the units and trained the French Maquis in the face of unspeakable brutality of invading forces along with the French collaborators who joined with the Nazis.

In her lifetime, Virginia Hall never revealed details about her astounding, heroic work; she always held that noble motives -- not medals, honors, or official recognition -- must be the motivation for such actions. Further, since her work was a “black ops” clandestine operation, she never felt that it was safe to reveal what she had done, or information about the people who had been her allies. She was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, which she accepted in a private ceremony.

The book tells how “a woman of no hope, no prospects, and apparently no importance” rose to be recognized by the CIA as an unqualified heroine of the war. The official catalogue for the museum that is part of the CIA offices in Langley, Virginia, includes five personal biographies. Four of the people featured are men who became directors of the CIA; the fifth person deemed deserving of individual biography is Virginia Hall. She was described by the New York Times as “one of the most effective and reliable agents” of the Second World War,

The author spared no effort in building the record for this book: she dug into family history in the United States, as well as archived records and private papers in this country, in Britain and in France. The story of Virginia Hall is uplifting at any time for anyone, but in early 2021 it stands above the fray of pandemic and confusion.

GCB In Memory of:

Suzanne Barton Jackson, age 80, passed away on Friday, February 5, 2021, in the comfort of her home after a well fought year-long battle with ovarian cancer. She was born on September 25, 1940, in Rome, Georgia, Suzanne was the eldest child of G. Winton and Frances Barton. She attended Rome High School and was the last graduating class of 1958. She then went to Jacksonville State University, class of 1961. Suzanne began her teaching career immediately for Atlanta Public Schools and then taught most of her 40-year career in Fulton County, ending by part-time teaching for 5 extra years. While teaching, she also earned her master’s degree from West Georgia College.

She adored children, education, music, learning, laughter, people, her children and grandchildren, cousins, and countless friends. She was passionate about reading and learned that she had a newfound passion and mission when one of her grandsons was diagnosed with dyslexia in kindergarten. She also loved volunteering at local schools as a mentor, Meals on Wheels of Coweta County, and the Georgia Council of the Blind after her father suffered from macular degeneration. Suzanne was married to Daniel Ray Jackson, Sr. Survivors are her brother, George W. Barton Jr., daughter Melinda Messinger Servick and husband Todd and their two sons, Brady. The family asks that in lieu of flowers, please consider making donations in her memory to the Dyslexia Resource @ [www.dyslexiaresource.org](http://www.dyslexiaresource.org/).

Suzanne, We Will Not Forget You!

by Marsha Farrow

Words are simply not enough to express what our beloved Suzanne meant to our Rome-Floyd Chapter of the Blind Members! Suzanne, her brother George, and her Dad Mr. Wint, so encouraged us to keep the Chapter going for people who are visually impaired. Suzanne served as our Chapter Treasurer for many years. Suzanne and her George have provided rides for many members to attend the Chapter meetings. Rome GCB Members acknowledge that Mr. Wint and the Barton Family were the foundational cornerstones of the Rome Chapter. The Georgia Council of the Blind honored Suzanne Barton Jackson with the June Willis Guiding Eyes service award for her many hours of volunteer service.

Suzanne and George always prepared delicious meals for our Chapter lunches and everyone enjoyed their kindness and hospitality. At our Christmas Celebrations, Suzanne always read portions of The Best Christmas Padgett Ever and George played his beautiful renditions of Christmas classics and well-known classical pieces. This has been our tradition for so many years and someway and somehow, we will continue her beloved readings, we will not forget these traditions in honor of Suzanne!

The Barton Family is our family too! We were heavy hearted that we were unable to attend her Memorial Service, but Suzanne would understand! We want to continue to hear the hilarious stories of the grandsons. She was immensely proud to have these grandsons in her life. We hope to keep in touch with George, Malinda, and the grandsons and hope that they will visit our Chapter when we can meet in person again. We will always remember Suzanne and she will remain very much alive to each of us! Never, never will a Christmas come and go without recalling Suzanne reading the tales of the Herdsman Family and all the joyous laughter that filled everyone’s heart!

GCB Self-driving cars

Self-driving cars will offer access to ride-sharing and ride-hailing with their suite of modern conveniences. However, many people with visual impairments who use these services rely on a human driver to safely locate their vehicle.

A research group led by the Virtual Environments and Multimodal Interaction Laboratory (VEMI Lab) at the University of Maine is developing a smartphone app that provides the navigational assistance needed for people with disabilities and seniors to enjoy ridesharing and ride-hailing, collectively termed mobility-as-a-service, with the latest in automotive technology. The app, known as the Autonomous Vehicle Assistant (AVA), can also be used for standard vehicles operated by human drivers, and enjoyed by everyone.

AVA will help users request, find, and enter a vehicle using a multisensory interface that provides guidance through audio and haptic feedback and high-contrast visual cues. The Autonomous Vehicle Research Group (AVRG), a cross institutional collective led by VEMI lab with researchers from Northeastern University and Colby College, will leverage GPS technology, real-time computer vision via the smartphone camera and artificial intelligence to support the functions offered through the app.

The U.S. Department of Transportation awarded $300,000 to AVRG for the AVA project through its Inclusive Design Challenge. The initiative sought proposals for design solutions that would help people with disabilities use autonomous vehicles for employment and essential services. AVRG was one of the semifinalists.

"This design challenge was exciting to us as it falls so squarely in our wheelhouse" says Nicholas Giudice, a professor of spatial Computing at University of Maine. "We have worked in the areas of multimodal information access and navigation for visually impaired people and older adults for years and have recently started a research program investigating human-vehicle collaborations for increasing the trustworthiness and accessibility of autonomous vehicles. This development project connects the dots by allowing us to bridge several areas of expertise to ensure that the technology of the future is 'accessible for all.'"

Users will create a profile in AVA that reflects their needs and existing methods of navigation. The app will use the information from their profiles to find a suitable vehicle for transport, then determine whether one is available.

When the vehicle arrives, AVA will guide the user to it using the camera and augmented reality (AR), which provides an overlay of the environment using the smartphone by superimposing high-contrast lines over the image to highlight the path and verbal guidance, such as compass directions, street names, addresses and nearby landmarks. The app also will pinpoint environmental hazards, such as low-contrast curbs, by emphasizing them with contrasting lines and vibrating when users approach them. It will then help users find the door handle to enter the vehicle awaiting them.

"This is the first project of its kind in the country, and in combination with our other work in this area, we are addressing an end-to-end solution for AVs (autonomous vehicles) that will improve their accessibility for all," says Giudice, chief research scientist at VEMI Lab and lead on the AVA project. "Most work in this area only deals with sighted passengers, yet the under-represented driving populations we are supporting stand to benefit most from this technology and are one of the fastest growing demographics in the country."

AVRG studies how autonomous vehicles can meet various accessibility needs. VEMI lab itself has explored tactics for improving consumer trust in this emerging technology.

AVA advances both groups' endeavors by not only providing another means for people with visual impairments and other disabilities and seniors to access self-driving vehicles, but also increases their trust in them. The project also builds on a seed grant-funded, joint effort between University of Maine and Northeastern University to improve accessibility, safety, and situational awareness within the self-driving vehicle. Researchers from both universities aim to develop a new model of human-AI vehicle interaction to ensure people with visual impairments and seniors understand what the autonomous vehicle is doing and that it can sense, interpret, and communicate with the passenger.

The app will offer modules that train users how to order and locate rides, particularly through mock pickup scenarios. Offering hands-on learning provides users confidence in themselves and the technology, according to researchers. It also gathers data AVRG can use during its iterative, ongoing development for AVA and its integration into autonomous vehicles.

"We are overly excited about this opportunity to create accessible technology which will help the transition to fully autonomous vehicles for all. The freedom and independence of all travelers is imperative as we move forward," says VEMI lab director Richard Corey.

Humor: Sometimes I just Need A Seeing Eye Bird

by Mike Hall

I do not know when my Mom and I became so committed to feeding the birds in our neighborhood. We started out with just one concrete bird bath. It was a heavy thing, but the neighborhood dogs would sometimes knock it over trying to get a drink. In the wintertime, water would freeze in the bird bath and it would begin to crack. Eventually, we went with a plastic bird bath that we still use. It is light weight and following the instructions, we filled the base with sand to give it more support. At one of those home improvement stores, we found a bag of sand. That is when we learned that this country is importing sand from China. There are now three bird feeders in our yard that we try to keep filled plus two bird baths. It was a routine event for my mom and me just feeding, watering, and paying attention to the birds. Then we received some neighborhood help. One day, while feeding the birds, eleven-year-old Jennifer came across the road. We invited her to help us feed the birds. We gave her a Popsicle for her trouble. Some days later, Jennifer started bringing her nieces, nephews, and neighborhood friends. Our Popsicle budget went up. But it was fun. They told us about their school, their lives, and their interests. One day, just before Thanksgiving, we noticed Jennifer and her friends digging in their yard. Soon they came over with a little bag of worms. They said it was a Thanksgiving treat for the birds. For my part, I do not know much about birds. I just enjoy all the tweets, trills, warbles, and other bird sounds. Listening to bird songs is relaxing and some are quite musical. A friend of mine is always amazed at the number of birds we have in our yard. He tells me we have quite a few cardinals, sparrows, finches, and robins. Many years ago, I am sure I heard a mockingbird at night. I believe it was a mockingbird because it made so many different bird sounds. It would start singing in my neighbor's tree about midnight and continue until about 1:30 in the morning. What a peaceful sound to hear that bird while I was trying to go to sleep. Now the job of feeding and watering those birds has fallen to me. That is where the challenge comes in. The feeders and bird baths are in the middle of the yard with no real clues for a blind man as to their location. Many times, when I head out with seed or water, the birds appear to be overly excited to see me. They are chirping away in nearby trees or shrubs. You would think that they would give me some type of hint as to the location of the bird bath or feeder. That is why I need a seeing eye bird. Perhaps a seeing eye bird could direct me right to the feeder. I imagine there are advantages to having a seeing eye bird. The guide bird would not take up much room on a plane, (if I could convince the airline that this bird is a leader bird or guide bird.) I am sure I would hear a little bit of foul language. When going to a GCB convention with my guide bird, I would not have to find the dog relief area. All I would need to do is approach a nice car and give my guide bird the command to "deposit!" (Come to think of it, I would not need to give him a command at all.) How would it be to work with a seeing eye bird? What kind of harness would be used? Would the bird match my gait, or would he fly off, expecting me to keep up? It would be rather awkward for him to fly away at a street crossing with me standing there waiting for him to fly back. I can imagine one day that we would be chased by a cat. My guide bird would fly up and away with me dangling at the other end of the harness. It is a good thing perhaps that a seeing eye bird is just a fantasy. The more I feed the birds, the better I am at finding the feeders and the bird baths. Stepping off the side of the driveway above our house, I take about 8 steps and turn to the left. Sometimes it works and I am lined up. My mom tells me I am going too far. I keep adjusting my steps. On the other side of the yard below our house. the yard dips down a little before I reach the bird bath and then again near the park bench. Once I find the park bench, the bird feeder is just to the right. Even though I do not have a guide bird, I am enjoying the exercise, fresh air, improved mobility, and the free music. Now if that robin would just show up and give us a sign of spring.

GCB One-day Virtual Event

The Georgia Council of the Blind will hold its 2021 One-Day Spring Virtual Event on Saturday, April 17th, 2021, on the Zoom Platform. Our theme is "Spring into Action." At our one-day spring event you will get the opportunity to listen to the board meeting, hearing what all is going on in GCB. Throughout the afternoon there will be sessions about topics, including technology, talking books, and more. Registration is only $10.00. To register, visit: <https://georgiacounciloftheblind.org/conv+ention.aspx>. If you have any questions please contact Cecily Nipper, Junior at 470-218-7885, or via email at [roses828@comcast.net](mailto:roses828@comcast.net).

Roar LIONS Roar!

by Marsha Farrow

Have you ever wondered “what in the world is a LION”? Do you think about the King of the Jungle with a loud mean roar? The LIONS is the largest service organization in the world, and we focus on sight conservation among many other service programs. The acronym for LIONS is L for Liberty, I for Intelligence, O N S stands for Our Nation Safety. Helen Keller asked The LIONS to be the “Knights of the Blind” and as LIONS, we honor our commitment to Helen Keller. Please join us on the second Thursday evening of each month at 8 PM for our monthly conference call. We offer a variety of topics on the work of LIONS and we encourage people who are visually impaired to join their local LIONS Club. We are immensely proud of our new Blind LIONS of Georgia Brochure and Pin. LION Ray Moore assisted us with the amazing Pin featuring an African Male Lion’s Head wearing dark sunglasses, inscription at top, Blind LIONS of Georgia, bottom inscription reads established in 2005. LION Teri Doby and DJ McIntyre, among several others, have led the charge in this effort. LIONS Mike Hall, Sonia Saylor, Rita Harris, and J.C. Coefield worked extremely hard on the Blind LIONS Pin and Brochure. We utilize LION Betsy’s conference number, and the call-in number is 605-562-0400 and the pin number is 780-5751 and then the pound sign. For more information, please contact LION Marsha Farrow at 706-859-2624 or via email at [marshafarrow@windstream.net](mailto:marshafarrow@windstream.net).

The Book ‘TOAD’ the Whole Story

by Janet Parmerter

Each state has its own beauty; however, living between the Lincoln Tunnel and the George Washington Bridge atop the majestic bedrock cliffs of the New Jersey Palisades, was unlike anywhere else in the world. Facing east, a brilliant sunrise over the twelve-mile island of Manhattan was mesmerizing. As daylight gradually peeked above the New York City’s skyline, spectacular shades of light and dark cast shadows down towering high-rise buildings. It seemed they begged to be photographed.

Those concrete ‘cliffs’ called skyscrapers, rose more than one thousand feet into the air and frame the east side of the Hudson River. In stark contrast, on the river’s west shore, a precipice of bedrock, known as the Palisades, soared three hundred feet above the city of Edgewater.

As the Hudson flowed past the base of these impressive Palisades, its brackish water quietly crept into the Atlantic Ocean. Driving up Gorge Road, past the steep bedrock cliffs, a hairpin turn brings you to Riverview Place in Cliffside Park, the former home of the famous toad of this article.

On this New Jersey side of the Hudson River, the concrete cities differ from the west side in that we had something residents of Manhattan lacked, land! For example, our home was adjacent to a 25 by 100-foot yard! True, that sounds like a miniscule piece of earth, but it is all relative. Compared to the balcony and roof top gardens found in Manhattan, our tiny yard was a regular forest which had two cherry trees, two pine trees, an apple tree, nine twelve-foot arborvitaes, shrubs, and countless perennial flowers.

Nevertheless, in this tight neighborhood, with a good stretch over the fence we could touch both adjoining houses. Yet, nestled tightly between, what is called ‘city row houses’, my husband Keith and I loved the feel of our mini park-like yard.

Excitement began early February when the first purple crocus blooms peaked up through their wintery blanket of snow. Then, every few weeks floral colors changed as daffodils, tulips, hyacinth, iris, lilies, gladiolas, Cana, hibiscus, and mums bloomed continuously until the first frost put the bulbs to sleep.

Not only did Keith and I find pleasure in our park like yard, but so did numerous nocturnal animals. In the past, we only had one family of skunks living under the shed; however, that rapidly changed after Arthur Imperatore, a successful businessman, developed the New Jersey waterfront. Modern construction forced local wildlife to relocate, so they packed up, climbed the cliffs, and moved to what they considered their new park; otherwise known as ‘our yard’.

The stately sixty-foot sweet gum tree in the middle of our yard doubled as an animal habitat. It towered over the center of the lawn and Its tenants included squirrels, birds, and one huge, mischievous, naughty raccoon I nicknamed ‘The HULK’.

Each night there seemed to be a great deal of suspicious nocturnal activity. Naturally, we attributed much of the damage to The Hulk. He chased toads, ate the fish, terrorized the frogs, and while trying to catch dinner, dumped a good number of our potted plants into the pond. While the hulk went fishing, we suspect our family of skunks met up with their frequent-visiting opossum friends for late night parties.

Unaware of all the nighttime shenanigans, some eighteen feet away, through our open bedroom window, we only heard the gentle sound of the fountain in our pond and quietly slept. That peaceful section with the pond, fountain, and fish, was our favorite spot, but all the animals loved it too.

Since I am visually impaired and did not want to inadvertently fall into the pond at night, we added some features to help me locate its perimeter. First, to reflect the moonlight, we fashioned a white marble patio around the pond. Next, to add sound, my husband designed a stone waterfall that trickled down between the rocks.

Being on the Palisades, with each new planting of trees and flowers, we unearthed enormous boulders of solid bedrock. These not only created a beautiful natural rock border around the pond, but also served a greater purpose. These huge boulders prevented me from inadvertently stumbling into the pond and making an unexpected house call on the fish.

Together on our crowded city street, our trees, plants, flowers, frogs, fish, including Comets, Shubunkin, and Koi, created a peaceful park-like ambiance. Interestingly, even though winter temperatures on the east coast often left a solid top layer of ice on the surface of the pond, when it thawed, it always amazed me to see the fish and frogs were still alive. Well, at least they were after I learned to let the ice thaw naturally. Sad to say it was a lesson I learned the hard way. Unfortunately, for me to learn it, my beautiful innocent Koi paid dearly. You see, the first year I built the pond I felt sorry when I saw those cold little fishies under that solid block of ice. Consequently, I had the not so brilliant idea to break the ice with a sixteen-pound sledgehammer. When I could not crack it after nine hard BAM, BAM, BAMS, I finally gave up. Imagine my panic the next day when my friend investigated the pond and curiously said, “Janet, I’m not sure but I think all your fish are dead!” Shocked, I kneeled and closely stared into the pond. She was right! There they were, my brilliantly colored Koi, looking like little orange ice pops stuck to the bottom of the ice layer. Apparently, in my effort to make their life more comfortable by breaking the ice, the intense shock waves of the sledgehammer sadly blew out their tiny little brains! That sad lesson taught me one thing I never forgot, it is not foolish to ask questions, before acting like a fool.

So that spring brought a renaissance as we restocked the pond with snails, fish, bullfrogs, and tadpoles. Once the tadpoles became frogs, they were my favorite aquatic pets. When I played a music box, they raced to the pond’s edge and ate from my hand. No wonder they were my personal favorites.

Considering our frogs and fish were in the city, they still had a good-sized pond. It was about nine by six feet around and four feet deep. In the summer, toads hid in and around the boulders and two large frogs lived in the pond. In the winter, they did something to survive the freezing water. Truthfully, I am not sure what they did, but there they were alive and well every spring.

In the heart of city life, imagine how delightful it was at dusk, hearing the peaceful croaking sound of these frogs. Picture it, just a few feet from our neighbor’s house, we shared a tiny piece of country life with a variety of animals, fruit trees and flowers.

To entertain friends around this relaxing pond, we arranged tiki torches, tables, a park bench, and a glider couch. One afternoon, I had photographs to share with my friend Joyce, so I brought my heavy loose-leaf book outside. It was overflowing with pages upon pages of international office buildings I visited. While sitting on the glider, the bullfrog leaped out of the pond and landed at our feet.

Usually, when the frogs left the pond, our two cats thought it was playtime and were thrilled chasing them around the lawn. Possibly, Maynard and Cleopatra thought the frogs wanted to play tag and they were always ready to be it. Cleo especially loved the game because twice, she caught two frogs, brought them into the house and like a treasured prize, proudly dropped them at our feet. Keith would praise her then gently carry the stunned frogs back to the yard.

For that reason, when our leaping bullfrog landed between Joyce and me, I quickly placed the heavy loose-leaf binder on the ground and chased after the frog. When I tried to catch, or should I say, when I tried to keep hold of him, he continued to slip away. Unfortunately, after losing my grasp on our slippery pet for the last time, and after searching the grass and shrubs, he was gone! Frustrated and worried, I hoped he would make it to the safe zone, his pond.

For the next few months, every time we did not hear the bullfrog, my husband moaned, “That’s it; Maynard or Cleo finally killed the frog!” Keith, my pessimistic husband, has always said,

“If I expect the worst, when it doesn’t happen, I am pleasantly surprised.” In contrast, I am the eternal optimist always believing the best will happen.

In this case, even though their reputation for bringing dead things into the house preceded them, I was determined to defend the honor of our kitties. Dismissing his statement, I defensively said,

“Our kitties wouldn’t kill the frogs; they would only play with them!” With my ever-positive attitude I continued, “Anyway, the frogs are too fast, they would take one giant leap and be in the pond before the kitties could lick their whiskers.” The next time Keith mentioned the missing frog, as Miss Optimist I replied,

“The frog is just not hanging out on the rocks. The Hulk probably tried to eat him again, and he is at the bottom of the pond lying low for a while.” Conversely, Keith persisted with his declarations of doom and gloom. I continued confident, never doubting that in the spring we would see that our frog had survived yet another freezing cold winter.

Leaping forward six months, my friend Deidre and I were on our way to visit a Lebanese neighbor named Nabil. She wanted to see my photo book of International Branch offices. Before exiting the car, Deidre looked through the book and hesitantly inquired,

“Um, Janet, why do you have this dried thing in the loose-leaf page?”

Surprised, I responded,

“Oh, I didn’t realize that was in THIS book. About twenty years ago, my brother Johnny mailed me that little dried toad with a cute message written on top of a card. He wrote, ‘Just a note to send you a little gift and let you know I’m thinking of you’. Johnny found this flattened toad run over and dried like cellophane on a hot California road. When I opened the card that tiny toad was stuck to it.” I continued,

“That is funny, I thought it was in another binder. Actually, I only saved it as a remembrance of my brother’s strange sense of humor.”

Nervously Deidre replied, “Maybe you should take it out, Nabil might get frightened.”

Unconcerned, I brushed off her comment and thought to myself, ‘The Branch Offices are in the front of the book and I won’t even go to the back near that tiny toad.

Once inside, the three of us comfortably sat on the couch and turned page after page. Deidre sat on Nabil’s left side and read the names of each country represented, while I sat on the other side and explained the photographs of each complex. Nabil sat in the middle with the book on her lap and was overly impressed as she attentively flipped one page after another. Suddenly, Nabil screamed and pushed the book on my lap, jumped up and shook her hands back and forth like two fans on high speed.

Since I assumed, she saw a mouse or some insect, I reacted to her terror by also screaming. As I shrieked, I slid to the end of the cushion. We were the screaming duet. When Nabil and I finally calmed down, I glanced down and right before my eyes was an enormous, black something or other lying on the centerfold of the binder. It was SO fat and huge, even being visually impaired I could still see it. Horrified, I screamed louder, and Nabil’s screams now followed mine. Instantaneously, Deidre responded to our shrieks by screaming two octaves higher and louder than both of us. Our deafening cries sounded like a chorus of three psychotic crazed women at a screaming contest.

Still looking terrified at this huge black thing on a solid white page, I began waving my arms wildly as though they were on fire and shouted,

“WHAT IS THAT? WHAT IS THAT? WHAT IS IT?”

Deidre jumped to her feet and in a confused shriek questioned me!

“WHAT IS IT? WHAT DO YOU MEAN, WHAT IS IT? YOU TELL ME WHAT IT IS!”

Shouting back, I exclaimed,

“I DON’T KNOW WHAT THAT THING IS! WHAT IS IT?” Then continued yelling, “Deidre, WHAT IS THAT BIG BLACK THING?”

Sounding even more shocked and confused, in a high-pitched voice Deidre screeched,

“Janet, THAT’S the TOAD your brother sent you!”

Quickly I cried,

“THAT IS NOT THE TOAD JOHNNY SENT ME!” Totally confused, I continued, “THAT TOAD WAS ONLY THIS BIG,” holding up my thumb and forefinger about two inches apart. Still frightened by this huge dead thing, bigger than my fist lying on my lap, I swirled my arms around my head and shouted “BUT WHAT IS THIS HUGE DEAD THING? WHAT IN THE WORLD IS IT?”

Deidre looked down at me then cautiously sat near me. In a confused, tentative manner, she slowly and distinctly repeated her words as if trying to teach someone English for the first time.

“Janet, it’s that toad I asked you about when we were in the car. The one you said Johnny sent you from California.”

Now with both of us being entirely confused, we sat on the couch afraid to move and stared down at the white page with this enormous stretched out dead thing flattened like a pancake. Deidre looked at me with hesitation, and then repeated with a stern, slow voice,

“It looks like a BIG, DEAD, TOAD!”

Nabil stood frozen above us and wondered what to make of this sudden insanity, so, attempting to regain some dignity in a friendly visit gone wild, Deidre quietly asked,

“Nabil, please run and get something, anything, get something quickly so I can get rid of this dead toad.”

As I carefully inched the book off my lap, Nabil ran back into the room and threw a crumpled towel at me. Naturally, it landed smack on the dead thing, loosened the stuck body from the page, and the dried dead amphibian slid down the book toward my unprotected lap. To prevent the dead toad from sliding onto my white dress, I lifted the book and once again began screaming. Of course, my scream initiated another symphonic harmony from our crazed chaotic screaming chorus. That chain reaction of earsplitting screams from our terrified threesome reverberated in the house and out the windows. Surely, the neighbors had strange thoughts regarding our second-floor chaotic concerto of chaos.

Finally, Deidre went into the kitchen, found a bag and the two of us slid the dead frightening toad into the sack. I grabbed the tip of his plastic coffin, plopped it into my tote bag and forever removed that frightening frog from Nabil’s home.

Now, trying to regain some semblance of sanity, I asked Nabil to rejoin us on the couch. Hesitating, she meekly whispered with her Lebanese accent,

“I afraid something more dead come out of book.” With a soft calming voice, Deidre once again invited her to the couch, patted the cushion, and reassured her by saying,

“I’ve already looked through the book and the rest of it is safe.”

Once again, with peace restored, we resumed our examination of the pictures. Nevertheless, my mind was preoccupied as I strained to recall the last time, I looked at these photographs and wondered how that frog, toad, or whatever it was could have died in the book. Distracting possibilities raced through my mind as I pondered how this dead toad ended up being a terrifying, flat dried pressed bookmark.

The remainder of our visit proved uneventful, that was until it finally dawned on me what happened. Instantly, I completely lost it! As soon as pieces of the disturbing puzzle clicked, a small giggle erupted from my mouth. Rapidly the small giggle transformed into uncontrollable laughter. As much as I tried to calm down, each time I felt composed, my mind drifted to the explanation and I broke into another fit of nervous laughter. After apologizing numerous times, I desperately tried to get serious and continue our discussion. Still, each time my thoughts returned to the poor dead frog, repeatedly like a guilty out of control child, I burst into hysterics.

How could I ever explain to Nabil what happened? With the language barrier, my remorseful story would have been too difficult, so I merely passed my laughter off as nerves and kept my murderous secret to myself.

In conclusion, permit me to explain the sad demise of this innocent amphibian. Regrettably, this dead black thing was our own little pet frog. Yes, our dear pet which I nurtured from a tiny frog into a giant bullfrog, disappeared the previous August, and was never heard or seen again. Finally, all the puzzle pieces fit, the questions were answered, and my guilty feelings welled up inside. The last time I opened that book, and the last time I saw or heard our frog, was when Joyce and I sat together by the pond. It all made sense. When my frog jumped out of the pond, I placed the heavy book on the ground to catch him, but he hopped away so fast I could not find him. Apparently, he hopped near the binding of the book and had a good old time watching me search up and down the yard. Since we had finished looking through the pictures, rather than sit through the frog hunt, Joyce left, and I finally gave up looking for the feisty frog. I shut the heavy book with a hard slam and left it outside on the patio shelf. One month later, after four weeks of ninety-degree blistering hot weather, I noticed the book was still outside. I picked it up, carried it upstairs, placed it on a cozy little bookcase and did not touch it again for six months.

Sadly, with that extreme summer heat, our fat bullfrog became as thin and dried as a pressed flower in a heavy book. Ironically, Keith was correct! For months, he had NOT heard one croak from our frog; and now, the tragic, dreadful truth was, Keith was right, my pet frog had permanently croaked!

Moreover, the title of this article is sad but true, indeed, ‘The BOOK TOAD the Whole Story!’

Yet, there is a P.S. When Hurricane Sandy hit New Jersey, a tremendous hurricane force wind swept up the cliffs of the Palisades. Astonishingly, that 60-foot sweet gum tree in the middle of the yard literally snapped from the ground like a toothpick. Now, Mr. Hulk the raccoon, not only lost his frog food supply, but is homeless…so I say…WARNING: CLIFFSIDE PARK BEWARE! A starving homeless raccoon is roaming your streets.

The End