## The logo picture is inside a light-yellow circle, with words at the op and bottom in large, upper case, bold black letters. The top of the circle reads, ‘A HAND UP NOT A HANDOUT.’ Under the circle, the words are, ‘GEORGIA COUNCIL OF THE BLIND.’Diagram Description automatically generated In the center of the circle is a pencil drawing in gray tones. It is a palm of an open right hand cradling a Georgia peach. At its top, from the left side of a short brown stem, a thin green leaf hangs down and over the thumb. The peach has colors like the warmth of the sun. The vivid yellow and orange colors contrast with the black, upper case letters GCB in the middle of the peach, with corresponding Braille dots directly under the three letters

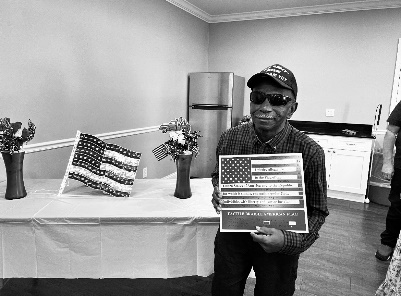
## The GCB DIGEST

## A publication of the Georgia Council of the Blind

An affiliate of the American Council of the Blind,

An organization promoting a hand up and not a handout.

Spring 2023

Pictured left is Staff Sergeant E6 Fred McDade holding his bronze Braille Flag presented to him by the Northwest Georgia Chapter to honor his service to his country and his community. He is sitting beside a table decorated with the patriotic decorations made by Debbie Young.

**GCB Officers for 2021-2024:**

Cecily Laney Nipper, GCB President, 470-218-7885, [roses828@comcast.net](mailto:roses828@comcast.net)

Marj Schneider, GCB First Vice-President, 912-352-1415, [marjschneider@bellsouth.net](mailto:marjschneider@bellsouth.net)

Judy Presley, GCB Second Vice-President, 706-878-2962, [hoyal@windstream.net](mailto:hoyal@windstream.net)

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**Judy Presley, GCB Second Vice-President, 706-878-2962,** [**hoyal@windstream.net**](mailto:hoyal@windstream.net)

**Kathy Morris, GCB Secretary,** **706-466-2253,** **[mkumorris@yahoo.com](mailto:mkumorris@yahoo.com)**

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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 considerable success. Particularly, I want to thank Janet Parmerter, Assistant Editor, for her editing skills and for the many hours she has worked on the magazine. In addition, I want to thank our President Cecily Laney Nipper, for her presidential message with information about momentous events, legislation, and projects. Also, I appreciate the contributions from our new GCB Digest committee, each member who sent articles, and those who made suggestions.

Note: The GCB Digest is on NFB Newsline and on the Georgia Radio Reading Service, GARRS.

Connect with us on social media! To find it, search on Instagram for gacounciloftheblind. That represents ‘GA Council of the Blind’ without spaces and in all lower-case letters. Also, on Facebook Georgia Council of the Blind

## Attention:

ACB Braille Forum Cartridge Subscribers

More than half of our cartridge subscribers have not returned any of them in more than a year. If you are one of them, please note that we must receive the unreturned cartridges ASAP to enable us to send new ones. The cartridges are just like the books you borrow from your NLS library – they must be returned. Look through your homes, find the cartridges, flip over the cards on the mailing boxes and put them out for the next mail pickup.

The same applies for GCB cartridges.

GCB Presidential Message:

By Cecily Laney Nipper

Greetings fellow members of the Georgia Council of the Blind! As we *spring* into this transitional season of weather that requires three different types of clothing throughout the day, we are also on the verge of springing into a wonderful new phase in our legislative and rehabilitation journey. If you follow the Georgia Council of the Blind emails, Facebook, and other social media, you are aware of the process of moving bills through the house and senate. It’s a process that takes bills across the aisle around the Capitol building and the Coverdell building into the different rooms and hearings. The process has been helped along by the attendance that has been taking place by our fantastic advocacy team spearheaded by Legislative committee cochairs Danielle Grenevitch McIntyre and Judy Presley. As a result, we have hope of finally getting a Commission for the Blind Bill in Georgia that will serve our needs, with specially trained counselors from the cradle to the grave for those of us who are blind or have low vision. For the benefit of our children, a bill has been introduced, and has passed through to committee so far that will enforce Braille instructions to be given to all blind students for whom it is appropriate. These legislative efforts underline our role as an advocacy organization including the American Council of the Blind Legislative Imperatives.

I attended the American Council of the Blind, ACB, 2023 Leadership Conference where I was on the virtual panel for the fireside chat with Dan Spoone as the host. I attended the virtual Presidents Meetings on Saturday, March 4, 2023, and S**unday, March 5, 2023, from 12:30 PM until 6:00 PM. I attended the** Legislative Seminar onMonday, March 6, 2023, and on Tuesday, March 7, 2023, from 12:30 PM, until 6:00 PM. I attended in person at the ACB leadership conference in Alexandria Virginia from Thursday, March 9 until Sunday, March 12, 2023. The ACB Legislative Imperatives include the Medical Device Non-Visual Accessibility Act; Websites and Software Applications Accessibility Act; Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility Act; Exercise and Fitness for All Act.; Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility Act; Exercise and Fitness for All Act.; Communications, Video, and Technology Accessibility Act; Exercise and Fitness for All Act.

I will be glad to share with all of you what I have experienced during this conference.

May health, happiness, and many blessings be yours throughout the rest of this year!

GCB Board Meeting Minutes:

Georgia Council of the Blind Board Meeting Minutes

Saturday, August 20, 2022

Call To Order:

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 AM, by President Cecily Laney Nipper.

Invocation:

Sharon Nichols gave the invocation.

Roll Call: Secretary Kathy Morris gave the roll call. Those present were Cecily Laney Nipper, President; Marj Schneider, First Vice-President; Kathy Morris, Secretary; Cecily Nipper, Sr, Assistant Secretary; Marsha Farrow, Treasurer; Betsey Grenevitch, At-Large Representative; Alice Ritchhart, Past President; Jamaica Miller, Athens; Deborah Lovell, Augusta; Phil Jones, East Georgia; Mike Hall, Greater Hall; Sharon Nichols, Northwest; Amanda Wilson, Rome Floyd; Tia Longmire, South Atlanta; DJ McIntyre, GGDU; Debbie McDonald, Alliance on Aging; Steve Longmire, Web Master. Guests are Debbie Young, Joan Guy, and Jerrie Toney.

Agenda:

A motion was made by Jamaica Miller and seconded by Debbie McDonald to approve the agenda. No discussion. The agenda was approved.

President’s report:

President Nipper stated that she has received calls from people new to area and how to connect to services. It is a lengthy process in Georgia with at least a 7-month waiting list. She does not feel it is appropriate and will be ready when advocacy time comes along. She is proud of the work committees are doing. GCB has been featured one on GARS. They have also been invited to attend the White Cane Safety Day at Eastpoint.

Secretary’s Report:

A motion was made by Deborah Lovell and seconded by Phil Jones to approve the April 30, 2022, board meeting minutes. Marj Schneider requested to have documents sent in Word or in the body of the email. A correction was made to minutes to change Democrats Live to Democracy Live. A motion passed. Motion was made by Devorah Lovell and seconded by Alice Ritchhart to approve the Special Board meeting minutes of June 18, 2022. Called to question and minutes were approved.

Treasurer’s Report:

GCB Main account balance is $9,264.74. $4184.05 Senior fund, $990.48 Youth Technology, $3,090.21 operating fund. Treasurer Marsha Farrow reports that the debit card has been used to pay for membership fees of $5 per member. We have 3 ACB Life Members, 128 members = $640, 10 new members = $50, total of 142 members. As of August 17th, the ACB conference account has $3,425.92, including donations from Vanda Pharmaceuticals of $1,000.00, and $500 from Democracy Live, minus small PayPal expenses. The Al and Cora Camp scholarship account has $402.50. There is a new investment with Athene of $19,928.43. Two accounts have been closed with Way Financial and moved to Charles Swabb. The account balance in March was $72,590.77 and decreased to $68,985.49 in July. Report will be filed for audit.

Finance Committee:

Jerrie Toney states the budget was sent out to everyone. The committee had a meeting on Friday, August 12, 2022. There is a discrepancy in the number of members as opposed to what she has on her spreadsheets. Phil Jones made a motion, and it was seconded by Marj Schneider. Budget was approved.

Legislative Report:

DJ McIntyre. She reports that they had a get together with the Secretary of Stated about rumors of voting machine and paper ballots. There is not going to paper ballots. Cannot use Democracy Live without a legislative change. She is getting a game plan for getting a Commission for the blind. She states if you have anyone interested, get them in contact with DJ or Judy.

Technology Committee:

Steve Longmire stated they had a meeting on August 16, 2022. It was an open forum and covered several different topics. Many People had questions about different technology. They will have more meetings and get more people interested in technology. More people have downloaded the app with over 70 IOS downloads. Special thanks to Amanda who is sending out push notifications. Cecily Laney Nipper stated that the committee has decided to hold off using Groups, who they were looking to use to send out emails. Steve Longmire also stated Apple Pay is being processed and he will let us know when it is functioning. Pay Pal and sending in checks will still be available.

Scholarship Committee:

They stated that they will start in October for the year 2023. They will maintain contact with the current recipients. States they will be making changes to application, which will be due March 1st with awards in spring. The committee will also be letting the membership know about first timers’ scholarships. Funds were raised in 2016 but no scholarships have been awarded.

Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss:

Alice Ritchhart stated the first workshop was held last week on resources. She has recordings that are available. They have two events scheduled at the State convention. More workshops will be held, with one about safety with a presentation by a police officer. She states members are trickling in.

Convention Committee:

Deborah Lovell stated the convention will be a hybrid convention on November 10 – 12th in Cartersville at the Courtyard by Marriott. You can go ahead and make reservations. Book early! October 11th is the deadline. Several activities are scheduled. Award luncheon will be held Saturday with the business meeting on Saturday morning. Several tours are being looked at.

Braille Projects Committee:

Phil Jones stated they had a meeting on August 2nd. They presented a public safety announcement on Braille. They are looking at a contest about “What does Braille mean to me?” More details to come as committee finalizes plans.

Membership and project Committee:

They report we have 141 members, 128 paid, 10 more added and 3 ACB life members.

Peach Talk is going well. Still having GCB talks. Project for convention season – bring along 1-2 can goods that will be donated to local food banks.

GCB Digest report:

Amanda Wilson states they have gotten an idea from National to go on Zoom to edit. They have five people on the zoom call to go over the newsletter. Deborah Lovell questioned if they could start back over with headings. Amanda stated that there are headings.

Public Relations Committee:

Mike Hall states they met last Monday evening. The question of how you get info about GCB was raised. Emails and board members were the stated responses. Young people are looking for a quick post instead of longer. Use Instagram to get chapter news out. Sharon Nichols agreed to head up Calling Tree to get eighteen people who do not use technology so they can stay informed. Steve inquired about putting GCB website and app onto the Instagram account.

Members at large:

Betsy Grenevitch stated she has been negligent but will be calling everyone in the next couple of weeks.

Old Business:

Marj Schneider, GGDU, held an informal meeting on August 11th. Decided to continue to have informal meetings every other month to recruit new members.

New Business:

President Cecily Laney Nipper will be reaching out to form an internal audit committee. Outside audit is cost prohibitive, so will look to determine the correct balance of all spreadsheets.

Subcommittee and resolution under the legislative committee. This will be to make the independent care waiver of Georgia software accessible.

Alice Ritchhart suggested that a resolution committee be appointed, and resolutions would be presented at our conference. Betsy Grenevitch and Jamaica Miller volunteered to be on this committee.

The next board meeting will be held at the GCB conference and Convention at 2:00 PM, on Saturday, November 12.

Adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made by Deborah McDonald and was seconded by Deborah Lovell. The meeting was adjourned at 11:32 AM.

Respectfully Submitted by

Kathy Morris, GCB Secretary

## GCB Board Meeting Minutes:

Saturday, November 12, 2022

Call to Order:

The GCB Board meeting was called to order at 2:10 PM, by President Cecily Laney Nipper.

Roll call:

Cecily Laney Nipper, President; Marj Schneider, First Vice-President; Kathy Morris, secretary; Cecily Nipper, Sr., Assistant secretary; Marsha Farrow, treasurer; Betsy Grenevitch, member at large representative; Alice Ritchhart, Immediate past president; Jamaica Miller, Athens; Chapter Representative; Debra Lovell, Augusta Chapter; Phil Jones, East Georgia Chapter; Anne Martin, Greater Hall County Chapter; Sharon Nichols, Northwest Georgia Chapter; Amanda Wilson, Rome Floyd County Chapter; No representative, Savannah Chapter; Steve Longmire, South Metro Chapter; DJ McIntyre, Georgia Guide Dog User, GGDU, Debbie McDonald, Alliance on Aging and Vision Loss, AAVL. There is a quorum.

Next Board Meeting:

Saturday, January 21, 2023, is the next scheduled time to have the GCB board meeting. Debra Lovell made a motion to meet by Zoom. Seconded by Phil Jones. Motion passed.

Marsha Farrow asked to donate to Georgia Blind Sports in the amount of $100 and Visually Impaired Veterans of America $100. Also, for Donna, a donation to support the ACB Walk. Alice Ritchhart made a motion to provide donations above and was seconded by Deborah Lovell. Motion passed. Debra Lovell made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Phil Jones.

Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 2:19 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kathy Morris, GCB Secretary

GCB Chapter News:

The Athens Chapter:

The Athens Chapter:

The Athens Chapter reported that at our January meeting we had a speaker come to address our group about exercise. Dr. Kevin McCully, is a professor at the University of Georgia, UGA. The Athens Chapter meetings are meeting over the telephone for now. We are meeting on the 4th Saturday of each month at 11:00 AM. The call-in number is 1-605-313-4818 and the access code is 463476#. When they resume meeting in-person they will be gathering at the Wheels of Hope office which is located at 367 Prince Avenue in Athens, Georgia, 11:00 AM. For more information about the Athens Chapter please contact Jerrie Toney at (706) 461-1013 or [jerriemt2@gmail.com](mailto:jerriemt2@gmail.com).

The Augusta Chapter:

The Augusta Chapter reported that we brought in a rearrangement of our officers to our chapter. Ron Worley as President; Stanley Lopez as Vice-President; Deborah Lovell as Secretary; and Kathy Morris as Treasurer. In January, we met in the new conference room at the Walton Options facility. At this meeting, Ron presented an agenda that gave a heads up of what we hope to do for the entire year. We agreed to meet every other month in person and at a local eating establishment on the off months. Some of the projects that we are going to kick off is a technology training in May or June. We are going to provide dinner for the local veterans who attend the blind center here in Augusta. We are looking at trying to set up a pontoon ride and a picnic out at the lake for our summer project. Ron is going to present an opportunity to assist a young girl who is visually impaired and attends a private school here in Augusta. For more information about the Augusta Chapter please contact Ron Worley at 706-726-9438, or via email [ron65@knology.net](mailto:ron65@knology.net).

The East Georgia Chapter:

The East Georgia Chapter reported that at our January meeting we met virtually. We celebrated Braille month with book reports on Braille-related books, Helen Keller, and Louis Braille from several members. In February, we had a program focused on heart health with healthy snacks. We welcomed ACB first lady, Leslie Spoone, for a fifteen-minute stretch and exercise routine both in the chair and out of the chair. It was entry-level fitness for everyone! Leslie is a blind personal trainer and certified aerobics instructor.

Connect with us!

Facebook (East Georgia Chapter of the Georgia Council of the Blind)

Instagram (eastgachapter)

The East Georgia Chapter meets in person at Conyers Presbyterian Church and via Zoom the 2nd Saturday of every month. For more information about the East Georgia Chapter, please contact Cecily Laney Nipper, at 470-218-7885, or via email at [roses828@comcast.net](mailto:roses828@comcast.net).

Greater Hall County Chapter:

The Greater Hall County Chapter reported that in January, our guest speaker was Ms. Lisa Kennedy, President and CEO of the Center for the Visually Impaired in Atlanta. Ms. Kennedy shared the new vision for CVI under her leadership. This includes expanding programs and services, many of which were suspended in recent years. One service includes bringing a low vision clinic to Gainesville for those who need evaluation and help but are unable to travel to Atlanta. Ms. Kennedy hopes to expand services to outlying cities as qualified personnel become available. In February, our guest speakers were deputies with the Hall County Sheriff’s Office. They shared important information on how to stay safe in a changing northeast Georgia. One main fact they stressed is that crime has always existed, but we must not let fear rule us. With common sense, caution, and good practices, we can protect ourselves in daily life. The deputies answered many questions and offered real encouragement.

In March, our guest speaker was Nancy Peeples, Executive Director of Disability Resource Center in Demorest. We look forward to learning about DRC and its mission in the thirteen counties it serves. In April, our guest speaker was Mr. Young Martin, At-Large District Director for the Georgia Lions Camp located in Waycross, Georgia. His district encompasses an area extending from Towns County to near Atlanta. He is a member of the Social Circle Lions Club. Mr. Martin will share an overview of the camp as well as events and activities planned for 2023. We welcome new member, Linda Farley, who joined GCB in February.

Longtime member, Don Linnartz, passed away on Sunday, January 8, 2023. He was a board member and the head of the calling team. Don and his wife, Margie, were an integral part of our chapter and a true inspiration to us. Don Linnertz’s obituary is in the in memory of section or our newsletter.

Low Vision Clinic in Gainesville:

The Center for the Visually Impaired conducted a low vision clinic in Gainesville on Monday, March 6, 2023. The clinic is funded by the State of Georgia with the $1.00 donation made by Georgia drivers when renewing their driver’s licenses. The Drive for Sight low vision clinic will be offered yearly, by appointment, for individuals who have a limited income. Members, Dianne Roberts, Suzanne Schilling, had individual clinic appointments on that day. Each had an evaluation performed by the low vision physician. Each lady was then seen by CVI’s Occupational Therapist to determine the level of need for assistive aids and/or magnification devices. Suzanne said, “They were very thorough. They provided several small assistive aids that I needed and can use. There is no way I could afford the optical device that CVI sent home with me for free. I can hardly believe it. They were very kind to me. Yes, I would recommend the clinic to anyone.” Dianne also received an optical device and some assistive aids. She will schedule phone training with the Occupational Therapist. A note of interest to residents of northeast Georgia: Effective May 22, 2023, CVI will begin offering a regular low vision clinic each month in the offices of Georgia Retina located at 1488 Jesse Jewell Parkway SE, Gainesville, Georgia 30501. While not part of the Drive for Sight program, the monthly low vision clinic will be a valuable resource for blind and visually impaired residents in our region. We elected two new board members at our February meeting: Jeremy Adams and Mike Hall. Jeremy’s and Mike’s short bios can be found in the GCB Member’s Spotlight. The Greater Hall County Chapter meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month, from 10:30 AM until 12:00 PM, at Smoky Springs Retirement Residences, which is located at 940 South Enota Drive in Gainesville, Georgia. For more information, please contact Judy Presley at 706-400-2185 or via email at [hoyal@windstream.net](mailto:hoyal@windstream.net).

Northwest Georgia Chapter:

The Northwest Georgia Chapter reported that they honored Staff Sergeant E6 Fred McDade with a bronze Braille Flag. The Braille Flag was presented by Marsha Farrow, Treasurer of the Georgia Council of the Blind. The purchase of the Braille Flag was in honor of Sergeant McDade’s loyal service to his country and his community. The American Braille Flag Project sponsor the Braille Flag Project to honor men and women blinded in battle as well as other military related circumstances that have led to severe vision loss. The event was held at the bank of Lafayette Community Room. Sergeant McDade’s loving wife Marcella along with Members of the Northwest Chapter were in attendance. Georgia Council of the Blind members attending via Zoom were Cecily Laney Nipper, Zack and Cecily Nipper, Mike Hall, and Jamaica Miller. Member Debbie Young created beautiful patriotic table decorations which were not only lovely, but very tactile so everyone could enjoy the celebration. President Sharon Nichols of the Northwest Chapter read the Braille on the flag as the words gave a detailed description of the flag’s colors and design. Charles Stubblefield, local chapter Treasurer, provided refreshments and has served as a dedicated driver for Mr. McDade and countless others. Ron Burgess charter member and past chapter President was delighted to hold this recognition service and chapter chaplain Robert Sprayberry presented the invocation and a prayer of blessings on Sergeant McDade and all Veterans. Angela Zimmerman, chapter member attended via phone.

At our February meeting, they heard from Jan Martin who is the president of the Walker County Chamber of Commerce.

For more information about the Northwest Chapter, please contact Sharon Nichols at 423-255-4551, or via email at [sharonnichols347@icloud.com](mailto:sharonnichols347@icloud.com).

Rome Floyd County Chapter:

For more information about the Rome Floyd County Chapter, please contact Amanda Wilson at 770-547-4700, or via email at [moonrocks@bellsouth.net](mailto:moonrocks@bellsouth.net).

The Savannah Chapter:

For more information about the Savannah Chapter, please contact Marj Schneider at 912-352-1415, or via email at [marjschneider@bellsouth.net](mailto:marjschneider@bellsouth.net).

The South Metro Chapter:

For more information about the South Metro Chapter, please contact Brent Reynolds at 404-814-0768, or via email [jbr53@samobile.net](mailto:jbr53@samobile.net).

Georgia Guide Dog Users News:

By Marj Schneider

For more information about the Georgia Guide Dog Users group, please contact Marj Schneider, 912-352-1415 or via email at [marjschneider@bellsouth.net](mailto:marjschneider@bellsouth.net).

GCB Community Phone Calls:

The Georgia Council of the Blind is holding community phone calls. The phone number for all the GCB community 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 GCB community phone calls.

Praise and Prayer:

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

GCB Book Club:

Debra Lovell and Judy Presley

Our GCB book club has read a variety of books including fiction, nonfiction, as well as biographies. Sometimes when you read a delightful book, you feel like you just must share it with others. This is what makes book clubs so much fun. That is why we encourage our members to suggest their favorite books and would love to have other book lovers out there to join us. We meet on the last Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM.

GCB Peach Talk:

From the Membership and Project Committee:

The membership committee holds an ACB community zoom call which meets on the third Thursday from 7:30 PM until 8:30 PM. In January we talked about Braille. In February, we discussed the many activities we can do outside or inside during wintertime.

In March we discussed our favorite foods such as fruits, nuts, and vegetables. We talk, laugh, and have fun.

GCB Members Spotlight:

Jeremy Adams:

Jeremy Adams was born and reared near Helen, Georgia. He graduated from White County High School in 1997. After high school, he attended North Georgia College and State University, now the University of North Georgia Dahlonega, where he earned a bachelor's degree in computer science. After college, Jeremy went to work as a Systems Administrator with a Roswell, Georgia company until 2005. He then made the move to White County government, also as a Systems Administrator, until 2014 when he lost his sight. During his career with White County, Jeremy worked part-time with the local Elections office. He served in elections from 2005 through the 2020 election cycle. Jeremy and his wife, Dawn, have two daughters, Tiffany, and Elizabeth. Much of his free time is now heavily involved with their activities, including Girl Scouts, reading Braille books in local schools and serving in his church family. Jeremy said his life goal now is to successfully guide his girls to mature adulthood then “travel the world with Dawn.”

Mike Hall

Mike Hall was born in Seneca, SC and lived near Walhalla in West Union, SC for the first seven years of his life. He started first grade attending Cedar Springs School for the Blind & Deaf in Spartanburg, SC. His family moved to Gainesville, GA for his father’s work His parents wanted both boys to attend school together and discovered that Gainesville City Schools had a Resource program which encouraged blind students to be in class with sighted students. This mainstreaming program, which included a Braille teacher, was considered an innovation at the time. Mike attended Gainesville City Schools from 2nd grade through graduation in 1973. Mike attended Gainesville Jr. College, now University of North Georgia, later transferring to UGA to pursue his degree. He earned an Arts Bachelorship in Journalism (ABJ) with a minor in History. One of Mike’s big challenges was having material read to him. The State of Georgia paid for human readers along with books on tape through Recording for the Blind (which is now called Learning Ally). Friends volunteered as well to read materials. Walking around the UGA campus was a challenge at first, but accommodations became easier over time. Mike’s love has always been radio, and after college he obtained a job at FOX97 radio station in Gainesville through an acquaintance from his junior College days. Answering the phone as a substitute for one week, and brailling commercials to fill in the time won him a job as weekday copywriter, trained by Mr. Charles Christian. FOX97 was sold in 1983 and moved to Atlanta, but Mike continued full-time in the Gainesville office lining up people for its community interview programs. After 23 years and a format change, Mike left FOX97 in 2003. Mike joined the Georgia Forestry Commission in 1996 as a part-time fire dispatcher. He took fire report calls, serving a district that grew to 21 counties. Mrs. Louise Hall later joined the Forestry Commission, also as a dispatcher. Mike & Mrs. Louise officially retired in 2014 when the Forestry Commission consolidated its dispatch stations into a central response center in Macon. Mike has been a member of the Gainesville Lions since 1981, elected President in 2011. He’s served on the Board and Newsletter, as Chaplain and Tail Twister. Mike was heavily involved in a local chapter of the Georgia Federation of the Blind in the 1970s to mid-1990s. He participated in state conventions, board meetings, newsletter, and convention committees, and was State Secretary. The local chapter disbanded in 1995. Mike joined the new chapter of GCB in 2018. He serves on the membership, Digest, and public relations committees. He hosts a monthly Prayer and Praise conference call. He is a member of Lanierland Amateur Radio Club.

Mr. Fredrick M. McDade

Mr. Fredrick M. McDade was born in October 1940 and spend his childhood years in Murry County Georgia. At age twelve, his family moved to Dalton, Georgia where he attended Emory Street School and graduated in 1957. After graduation he worked for Catherine Rug Mill for three years before being drafted to the Dodgers Baseball Association where he trained for 2 ½ years and later in 1961 was traded to the Washington Senators Ball Team where he played for one year. now the Washington Senators are known as the Texas Rangers. In 1964, he was drafted into the US Army for two years and later this would be extended for two more years due to the continuation of the Vietnam War. In 1968, Staff Sargent E6 McDade was wounded in the Tet Offensive on May 24, 1968. Sergeant McDade was being driven in a jeep by a nineteen-year-old soldier when the jeep was hit by a rocket propelled grenade, the young soldier was killed, and the jeep exploded into shreds. Sergeant McDade was unconscious and two weeks later learned that he had lost both eyes and his left foot. Sergeant McDade entered a long period of physical rehabilitation and months of adjustment to blindness training. In 1976, after he completed his physical and blindness rehabilitation, he returned home and enrolled in Dalton College. He completed his associate degree in psychology and graduated in 1978.

Sadly, and in part due to the attitudes about soldiers who served in Vietnam, Mr. McDade experienced much difficulty in finding employment. At that point, he decided to return to school to earn a Bachelor of Science Degree in Social Psychology from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and graduated in 1989. After achieving yet another college degree, Mr. McDade still found much discrimination in employment and was turned down eleven times due to being told he was simply “overqualified”. Finally in 1991, Dr. John McMiller, Principal of Dalton City High School hired Sergeant McDade after the Principal had read a newspaper story where Sergeant McDade had shared his story of triumph over tragedy with a group of youngsters. Now as a school counselor, Mr. McDade had the opportunity to encourage numerous teenagers struggling with their own challenges and Mr. McDade’s life served as a living testimony of overcoming the unthinkable. Mr. McDade retired on May 30, 2010, from Dalton High School where he served as one of the School Counselors for nineteen years. In addition to his dedicated work with troubled youth in the Dalton High School, he also volunteered for many years as a baseball coach for the American Legion Baseball Teams. At present, he is a Deacon at Mount Salem Baptist Church. He also serves as Vice President of the Northwest Georgia Chapter of the Georgia Council of the Blind and has served several terms as President. Mrs. Marcella McDade, his loving wife, is also a member of the Georgia Council of the Blind. Mr. and Mrs. McDade have several children and numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren.

GCB In Memory Of:

Donald Linnartzz

February 11, 1931 - January 8, 2023

Donald E.C. Linnartz entered eternal life on January 8, 2023. He was born near New Braunfels, Texas, on February 11, 1932, the fifth child of Emma and Eugene Linnartz. He completed high school at Boerne, Texas, attended Texas A&M University and then enlisted in the U.S. Army during the Korean war, where he completed Signal Corps Officer Candidate School at Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey. While on active duty, he met the love of his life, Margie Mantooth, who was working at Ft. Gordon, S.C. They were married at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Augusta, Georgia on September 7, 1952. They were blessed with two children; Hans Christian and Gretchen Ann; eight grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren.

After being released from active duty with the Signal Corps in Korea, Don began his career with the Bell System. That resulted in several moves across the South and a tour at AT&T headquarters in New York. He retired from BellSouth in 1994 as a Director of Procurement, Property and Services Management. Don devoted his life to his family, his Church, his work, and volunteering to help mankind. Some positions he held in the community include President of several organizations -- Exchange Club of North Dekalb, Telephone Pioneers (both Council and Chapter level), National Kidney Foundation of Georgia, Combined Health Appeal of Georgia and two different Lutheran congregations. Other Church roles included Sunday School superintendent, head elder and Stephen minister. After retirement, he taught classes in driver safety for the AARP Driver Safety Program, serving as a District Coordinator in addition to teaching.

Don was preceded into eternity by his very best friend and lover, Margie, wife for 67 years. They elected to move to Lanier Village Estates in Gainesville in 2007, where he has continued to serve in First Presbyterian Church, their new Church home. He is survived by his son and wife, Hans Christian and Ann Robertson of Raleigh, N.C; and daughter and husband, Gretchen and Hugh Canterbury of Cumming, GA; eight grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; and Elizabeth Byrum Linnartz, the mother of five of the grandchildren.

A Celebration of Life Service was held Saturday, January 14, 2023, at 2:00 PM, in the Chapel of Lanier Village Estates, Gainesville, Georgia.

Tim Barrett

Timothy “Timmy” Barrett, 57, of LaFayette, passed away on Monday, January 23, 2023. He was preceded in death by his father, Hershell Barrett. He is survived by his mother, Reva Barrett; brother, Chris Barrett; and several nieces and nephews. Funeral services were held 2 PM on Thursday, Jan. 26, in the Wilbanks Memorial Chapel with Pastor Larry Scoggins officiating. Interment was at LaFayette City Cemetery. The pallbearers were Porky Barrett, Wayne Hamilton, Carl Hamilton, Jeremy, Matt Foster, and John. Visitation was held at the funeral home on Thursday from 12 PM until the service hour.

John M. Sims

John Myers Sims, 93, of Hapeville, died Saturday, February 18, 2023. John was a U.S. Air Force Veteran, a retired Engineer with the State of Georgia, and a member of Jonesboro First Baptist Church. Preceded in death by his wife, Ann Stephens Sims, a daughter Donna Sims Roper, and all of his siblings, he is survived by his and Ann's children and spouses, J.D. & Terri Sims, Anthony & Faith Sims, Stephen Whitfield, and Susan Randall; grandchildren, A.J. Sims, Rebecca Sims, Johnathon Sims, Amber Lemley, Jason Roper, Jordan Roper, Crystal Randall, Megan Lopez, Drew Randall, and 7 great grandchildren. Funeral services were held at 1:00 PM Wednesday, February 22nd with Anthony Sims officiating. Interment followed at College Park Cemetery. Visitation was held Wednesday from 12 Noon until the service hour at Donehoo-Lewis Funeral Home, Hapeville.

Madeline Ryan Smith:

Post-election thoughts

Excerpts from an interview By Marj Schneider, December 7, 2022

In 2019, Madeline Ryan Smith was one of four recipients of the GCB Al and Cora Camp Memorial Scholarship. She was then a junior at Georgia Southern University, majoring in psychology, graduating in the fall of 2020. She stayed at Georgia Southern and began a Master of Arts in social sciences program, focusing on sociology. Madeline’s studies have included disability issues, leading to research papers she presented on campus and to the founding in 2021 of students with disabilities advocacy group at Georgia Southern. She served as the first president for the organization. Following receiving her master’s degree, Madeline mounted a campaign in District 158 for a seat in the House of Representatives of the Georgia General Assembly.

Marj: It’s been a few weeks since the election. What can you tell me about the outcome and your thoughts since that time?

Madeline: “I lost our election; however, I did really well for a first-time candidate who was running as a Democrat in a very red district. We got about 30% of the vote, which was about the same kind of numbers we saw from the 2020 election. Why that’s a big deal is that we got the same kind of voter turnout and percentage on a midterm year that wasn’t involving a presidential election. The fact that we saw the same numbers and we did just as well on an off year makes me really hopeful for 2024.

I was really proud of my team; I was really proud of myself. We moved the needle to the left a little bit and that was the goal. So yeah, it was very successful. We didn’t win, but we did very well, better than I thought we were going to do, to be completely honest. It wasn’t a disheartening loss in any way. We were all really proud of ourselves. We learned what works and what doesn’t work and we’re gearing up for a 2024 run. It’s good.”

Marj: Since I talked with you last in April, what kinds of things were you doing as part of the campaign throughout the summer and then leading up to the election in the fall?

Madeline: “Over the summer it was really busy. We did a lot of canvassing, a lot of phone banking, and a lot of outreach. I was in and around the community in person a lot. We made our mark on campus. Young people are notorious for not voting, so we hit hard on campus and made sure we were visible, and our name got out there. We did lots of events. We went to other people’s events. I got really involved in our local county party and local elections and I now sit on the executive board for our county party, Bulloch County, so that’s really cool.

And I was able to connect well with the disability caucus of Georgia. The current chair, Benny, is a really cool guy. He helped me a lot with my campaign. It was really cool to be in that kind of role, as far as being in disabled spaces went, because I was able to easily switch off my candidate switch when I talked to constituents with disabilities, because those are my people. It was exciting to see the support, the excitement around someone with a disability running for office. I got a lot of support because I was young. Everybody wants change, fresh ideas, new blood in government. I got a lot of support as far as your typical candidate does not look like me. Your typical political candidate is not 25, is not disabled, usually not a woman. Everybody was very excited for me to be the possible first of a lot of things. That was really what kept me motivated was all the individual and local support, not as much support from big PACs and corporations.

I was very clear with my campaign that I didn’t want to be a normal politician in that sense. We worked hard to make sure that we were totally funded by individuals and community members, and it was really successful.”

Marj: What about your potential rural constituents in your district? Were you able to make more connections there?

Madeline: ‘Yes and being involved with my county party really helped that. The Bulloch County Democratic Committee and the Emanuel County Democratic Committee were two big groups that helped me out with networking and just getting in front of people. I would attend city council meetings, board of education meetings, all the meetings. Even if I wasn’t running for office, I would still be doing that because I like to know what’s going on. I like to be involved in local decision making, because that’s what makes the most difference in our everyday lives, especially in rural America. I was fortunate enough to know a lot of people before I became a political candidate. I was involved with our mayor’s reelection campaign before I was a candidate myself.

That really helped, but the biggest lesson that I learned was that as a candidate you cannot do this alone. You need to be able to work with other groups and with teams and with other people to have the group be able to make concrete changes for everybody. I learned very quickly that being a politician is not a one-man job. There is no “I” in team for sure.”

Marj: It sounds like you are considering a run in 2024.

Madeline: “I am, yes. Nothing is set in stone yet; there’s been no paperwork filed. I think I want to take a second go and see what happens and then go from there.

I never planned on being a politician. That was something that was brought to me as an opportunity, and I was asked to run by a few people. That was also something that I didn’t not see myself doing if that makes sense. It was a lot of if not me, who; if not now, when sort of situation. And my opponent has historically run unopposed, so at the minimum I wanted to be a second option and not allow people to automatically win elections because they’re the only one in the race.

Marj: Over this time period approaching 2024 you’ll be thinking about that and doing other things; what else is on your plate?

Madeline: I am the communications chair for my county party now, which means I run their social media and their messaging, getting messages out about meetings and things like that. My goal over the next year is to grow our grassroots organization as Democrats in this area. Rural Georgia is not as red as people think it is. We have a lot of closeted Democrats that vote Democrat but aren’t loud and public about that. That’s something that I think needs to change. I would love to see our party throughout the state do more voter education among our youngest voters, because that’s who needs it the most.

It’s volunteer work, but I did have to run and be elected to that position. I really wanted to run for that position, just so I could stay connected and informed and have a little bit of influence over the organization of the county party, making sure that we’re including our college students in that organization and things like that. I’ve met a lot of great people, just from having this experience and I’ve made some really cool connections. It’s all been positive. It’s been stressful – don’t get me wrong – but it’s been a lot of fun.”

Marj: I’m glad to hear that you have this kind of positive attitude about the campaign, that you’re looking at what comes next and know that there’s a lot of work to do.

Madeline: “My grand plan is to continue climbing the ladder, as much as the people will allow me to. I’m not a huge believer of getting elected and then staying in that seat forever. I feel like government is something you either get into and you climb the ladder, or you get into, and you should stick around for a little bit and then pass the baton off to somebody else. In the next five years I could see myself running for a state senate position, but I could also see myself running for a house higher than that. I don’t have a stopping point, really. If I climbed the ladder high enough to be governor or a US representative or senator, that would be one thing. When I was little, I always wanted to be president. That’s not outside the realm of possibility.” [Laughs]

Most certainly, Madeline Ryan Smith has ambitious plans for her future. I will endeavor to keep you posted as to where those plans lead her, maybe next for a run again for that District 158 seat in the Georgia House of Representatives.

GCB NFB Blind Day at the Capitol:

By Jamaica Miller

I left my house at 7:30 AM, and I got in the car and my driver started driving toward Atlanta. We got to travel on some back roads to get there, which I enjoyed. We got to the Capitol and ended up having to park about one fourth mile away from the Capitol, which I did not love. It took us a while to get to the room where we were meeting, and we were a few minutes late because of traffic. The meeting had not started yet. They started by having everyone go around and introduce themselves. Then we listened to Jessica, DJ, and Dorothy who spoke about one of the 3 bills that we were wanting to get through, and they answered questions about them. They were The Braille Bill, The Commission for the Blind Bill, and the Voting Bill. After that, Representative Schofield arrived, and let us know that the House had dropped HB 341, The Braille Bill, and HB 10, The Voting Bill. We also found out that our time in the room was shorter than we had thought, so we had to hurry and take a group photo with Representative Schofield because the next group was waiting for the room. As we were leaving, Representative Scott arrived and let us know that her bill was dropped. We didn’t get a lot of explanation about why they were dropped, but I am very supportive of the Voting Bill, and I hope that I will get to go back and talk to the committee about it when they meet again. When it was time to leave, Cecily Nipper Senior and Cecily Laney Nipper offered us a ride back to our car, so we wouldn’t have to walk as far. I really appreciated that! Then my driver and I traveled back to Athens.

How I Got Back into GCB:

By Mike Hall

In a past issue of the Digest, I gave a little bit of discussion about my activity with the original Gainesville Chapter of the Georgia Council of the Blind, the chapter that existed before the Greater Hall Area Chapter. It may interest you to know that the Georgia Council of the Blind was once known as the Georgia Federation of the Blind or GFB. Certainly, there are folks who are more familiar with the early history of our organization, it's early affiliation with the National Federation of the Blind and how that changed. Even after the affiliation with the American Council of the Blind, ACB, Georgians were proud of the name Georgia Federation of the Blind, and they wanted to hang on to that name. But on November 21, 1983, the name of the Georgia affiliate officially changed to the Georgia Council of the Blind. The Gainesville Chapter was started in 1974 by my good friend Dickie Cannon. It was said that we would do all kinds of activities with this new group including playing beep ball. While we never played beep ball, I do know that some members of the Greater Hall Chapter have done so. The original Gainesville Chapter was smaller than the current Greater Hall County Affiliate Members became a close group, and we enjoyed being together. Our first meetings were held at the office of Fay Loggins -- an attorney who lost his sight later in life. Just over a year ago, Fay passed away. Another active member of that chapter, Nancy Brewer, passed away recently. It was shortly after she married that Nancy lost her sight. Both of these individuals added much to our chapter with their conversation, observations, and ideas. Our emphasis on advocacy may have influenced Fay and Nancy. Eventually, Fay was appointed to GVRA and Nancy joined the local library board, in part to support Talking Books. Speaking of the library, it probably helped us that a Talking Book Center opened in the Chestatee Regional Library in Gainesville about the time we started the chapter. Librarian Sadie Jenkins was active with us. One of the programs she presented to us was a review of a book by Tom Sullivan called If you Could See What I Hear. Part of the talking book record was played for us. When we realized that we were keeping Fay Loggins at his office late on Friday evenings, we decided to move to a restaurant known as the L and K Cafeteria on Broad Street. Afterwards, we moved to a little Victorian style cottage that was then owned by Gainesville National Bank. The Red Cross building on Bradford Street was our final meeting place. There is so much to remember about that first chapter, especially the refreshments. Two ladies decided that they wanted to provide refreshments for our evening meetings, which were then held on the 3rd Monday night of the month. Before the meeting was called to order, we sat down to sandwich halves, potato chips, a tall cup of Sprite or other soft drink and a piece of homemade cake. Some of us got involved at the state level. Deborah Lovell and I both served terms as state secretary and we both were on the GCB Digest committee. After editing the newsletter by myself for about 10 years, we formed a committee to do the work. Most phone calls were long distance, so we used the phone sparingly. Many Saturdays were spent with me taking the train to Atlanta for a newsletter meeting. It was fun but I'm glad I don't have to do that now. Getting together on the phone is much better and now we have email. With the help of the Gainesville Chapter, we brought the first GCB convention to Gainesville. By the mid 1990's, I was finding it harder to get to state board meetings. Some of those meetings were held in Macon. Trying to use a bus to get to Macon from Gainesville meant spending the weekend. People who had driven to these meetings were no longer involved with the chapter. On top of that, some of our strongest supporters were telling me that. They were tired of having meetings and making motions. Soon, the decision was made to disband the chapter and start a social group. That group was so relaxed that it only met once or twice. All of us were still friends, but we didn't get together. It was not my intention to talk so much about how I got out of GCB but how I got back. Suffice it to say that burn out may have played a part, a need for me to be freed up to do other things was another part and a loss of local support the third part. The good news is that after a time, I came back. In the next Digest, I'll tell you how that happened.

CRAB, Children Raised Around the Blind

By DJ McIntyre

We are growing and doing new things this year. CRAB launched a podcast in January. It is called CRAB Blog and can be found on Apple and Google podcast as well as Tune in Radio App. There are two episodes per month on the first and third Mondays. The second monthly episode is topic based on the month (January was Braille Literacy, February was What Do You Love About Having Blind Parent). We are currently looking to feature some guests for May and June for a Mother’s Day and Father’s Day episodes. We will ask you about 3 questions and record via Zoom. If you know someone who would love to share their experience, please let me know. Please contact DJ McIntyre at [dgrenevitch@me.com](mailto:dgrenevitch@me.com).

Peer Support Meetings:

Albany Low Vision Support Group meetings are held virtually on the first Friday of the month from 2:00 PM until 3:30 PM. We also have a one-hour Coffee and Current Events Conversation call on the third Monday from 10 AM until 11 AM.

The conference call phone number is 1-701-802-5267, and the access code is 6336 430, followed by the pound sign. For more information, please contact Debbie McDonald at 229-894-5712, or via email at [deborahk63@aol.com](mailto:deborahk63@aol.com).

ACB Conference and Convention Announcement:

The 2023 American Council of the Blind, ACB, Conference and Convention will be held in Schaumburg, Illinois, from Friday, June 30, 2023, through Wednesday, July 5, 2023. Our first tour will be on Friday, June 30,2023, with our final tours on Friday July 7, 2023. Opening general session will be on Saturday, July 1, 2023, with our banquet on Thursday, July 6, 2023.

Room rates at the Renaissance are $98.00 per night double occupancy (with an additional $10.00 charge for up to four people), plus tax which is currently 15.00%. To make reservations online visit

<https://book.passkey.com/go/AmericanCounciloftheBlind2023>. For telephone reservations call 1-800-468-3571, this is a central reservations number so please indicate you are with the American Council of the Blind 2023 conference and convention at the Renaissance Hotel in Schaumburg IL. Rooms must be reserved by June 8, 2023, to guarantee the convention rate.

For any convention-related questions, please contact Janet Dickelman, convention chair, 1-651-428-5059 or via e-mail, [janet.dickelman@gmail.com](mailto:janet.dickelman@gmail.com).

Pedaling My Way to Fame and Misfortune:

By Janet Di Nola Parmerter

Now that spring is near, we are all anxious to enjoy some outdoor activities like hiking or bike riding. Personally, I never liked hiking because twisting an ankle from tripping over rocks, hitting my head on low hanging tree limbs, or bumping into other unseen obstacles was not exactly what I considered fun. Yet, when I had better vision as a child, my brother and I often hiked through the Connecticut woods behind our grandparents Naugatuck home.

After hammering holes into the bottom of grandpa’s metal bucket and the lid of a jar, using thick nails we hiked for hours to a mountain stream to catch tadpoles. Carefully, we threw the bucket out into the water, we slowly pulled it back, watched the water spray out from the holes. Next, we gathered up all the tadpoles we could find. Though grandpa wasn’t happy with his useless bucket, our classmates back in New Jersey were thrilled watching them gradually grow front legs, back legs, lose their tails and finally become frogs. Bringing these aquatic amphibians back to the city made us sort of classroom celebrities, and Johnny and I enjoyed the fame. Our teachers brought in tanks and since I could still see, we all watched the transformation into frogs.

Soon, my own transformation into vision loss became more evident to others. Sometimes, passing on a genetic disease may be worse for the parent than for the child. How so? Some parents feel responsible for their child being ‘different’. One of my friend’s parents felt so troubled and blamed herself. Whereas children easily adapt to situations and may not even realize others see life differently. Yet, when they reach high school level, it is a different story. It can be traumatic going through the year in which their friends Pass their driver’s test, and they are hit with the reality of their limitations. Without admitting it, their self-esteem can plummet.

In my case at seventeen years old, when friends bragged about getting their license, outwardly, I feigned enthusiastic excitement while inwardly I felt heartsick. It was devastating to come to the realization that my waning eyesight would prevent me from ever driving any type of motorized vehicle. Obviously, I would be doomed to walk, take public transportation, or bum rides from faithful friends.

Still, even with limited sight, I bought a ten-speed bicycle so I could feel a bit more independent riding around my local neighborhood. With those two wheels, granted no comparison to four Goodyear tires, I did not feel quite as dissatisfied with my diminishing sight.

Having macular degeneration, I have a large blind spot in the center of both eyes, so in order to ride my bicycle, I used the scanning method. Basically, that meant for me to see what was around and to avoid the blind spot in my central vision, I continuously moved both eyes right and left in a sort of scanning motion to use the vision around the blind spot, or the peripheral vision. When I needed to know what was directly in front, that was my solution to get around the problem.

It was amazing how pedaling those two small bicycle wheels gave me a huge sense of freedom. Three days a week, I pedaled my way to Woman’s World and convinced myself the six-block ride to the gym was my pre-exercise warm up. Pedaling to the gym made me feel somewhat independent and self-confident. However, one day an unsettling event happened at the gym which destroyed my bicycling confidence.

During one exercise routine, a trainer interrupted my weightlifting and said, “You have a phone call which you can take in the unoccupied consultation office. The lights in the windowless room were off, so I clearly saw the bright flashing red light showing me which phone line had the call.

I picked up the receiver and instantly heard something that sent a chill up my spine. Bugs Bunny was yelling,

“Wake up you sleepy head, wake up you sleepy head, wake up you sleepy head!” Terrified, I began shaking and slammed the phone down so hard it almost cracked the plastic phone cradle. Why did that silly cartoon voice terrify me?

The answer to that question began weeks before this incident. For about two months I was receiving strange phone calls. Each time I answered the telephone there was no one there. Curiously, there was only the same uncomfortable message. It was the voice of Bugs Bunny yelling over and over,

“Wake up you sleepy head, wake up you sleepy head, wake up you sleepy head!” This weird cartoon voice continued until I would hang up. The first time I heard it I laughed and thought it was a normal childish phone prank. However, after a few months, this unusual and childish phone message became annoying, then disconcerting, especially when the phone calls rang as soon as I opened my front door. It was as though, no, it was not as though, someone did know exactly when I arrived home.

Now, at the gym, shaking in that dark office, the realization hit me like a punch in my gut. This was not a child; this prankster knew exactly where I was and what I was doing. That thought gave me an overwhelming sense of terror and convinced me I was being watched. Or worse yet, being stalked?

Immediately after that nerve racking phone call, I quickly changed clothes, bolted out the door, hopped on my bicycle and raced home. Naturally, I felt mentally anguished, preoccupied, and understandably distracted.

What I most regret, is I did not stop to calm down so I could concentrate on my vision and the vital task at hand, safely pedaling home. It was impossible to stop thinking about that awful phone call. Sad to say, with my distracted brain worrying about being stalked, my eyes froze straight ahead on the road, like a deer in the headlights. Bad move for me! Why?

One block from the gym, before pulling her car out of the driveway, an older woman nosed her car onto the busy main street. While she was stopped and waiting for the traffic to clear, needless to say, I drove straight into the side of her car door.

Weeks later after resolving the accident with that poor agitated woman, this is how she described the tragic incident.

"Before I pulled into the street, I stopped, looked right, and left, then saw you coming and thought you would go around the front of my car. In that instant, I became concerned and thought, she’s coming awful close, when is she going to go around the car? The next second you rode straight into my door. Your legs were in the air as you flew across my windshield, hit the street, and slid on your face to a sickening stop.”

Yes, that about sums it up, but it is not the whole story. It happened because I was so preoccupied with the phone call, I neglected to move my eyes side to side, and her car was smack dab in the middle of my stationary blind spot. There was literally nothing visible straight ahead in that center blind area.

Perhaps you can visualize an old cartoon of Wiley Coyote chasing Road Runner. Imagine Wiley riding his bike into a stationary object, flying over the handlebars with feet flapping in the sky, then skidding to a screeching stop on his face. If so, you have the perfect mental image of my five second flight over that car. The only difference is, the cartoon is usually funny, the rider gets up, shakes off the fall and happily runs away. In my case, I was also happy, happy to be alive, but no one was laughing.

After breaking the fall with a face plant, I slid to a halting stop across the asphalt. Not only did I not get up and run away, but I did not get up at all. Since I never saw the car, at first, I was baffled.

However, as soon as I smashed into the car, I did hear a loud noise and the screams of a shocked, screaming woman! Apparently, when she saw me fly across her windshield and violently hit the pavement she was horrified and went crazy. She began screaming,

“I didn’t hit you; I didn’t hit you!”

Next to my mangled bike, she left me dazed and bleeding on the street, jumped out of the car and searched for a witness to confirm she had not hit me. Since it was rush hour and traffic was heavy, I was grateful cars drove around me rather than over me. Still motionless on the street with a bleeding face, a twisted neck and shoulder, her blaring voice made a painful situation worse. How could I silence her relentless screams of innocence?

Fortunately, as she shouted to find a witness, her cries caught the attention of a few quick-thinking construction workers who jumped off their scaffolding and pulled me to safety. As this happened, the crazed woman began questioning them while yelling,

“Did you see I wasn’t moving? DID YOU SEE I DIDN’T HIT HER? Did you see her hit me? Did you see that did you? I did NOT hit her! I wasn’t even moving!”

Her frantic, earsplitting screams were so intense I thought someone better calm this woman down before she has a stroke!

Finally, I begged her, “Please stop yelling, I KNOW you did not hit me, I hit YOU! OK? So please, just stop yelling!”

While still lying on the sidewalk in pain, somewhat groggy, and very embarrassed, I looked up at the construction workers and moaned, “How is my bicycle?”

Bewildered, one of them looked at the other guy and said,

“Did you hear that? Her bike? She is worried about the bike? Forget the bike, how are YOU?” Another worker yelled,

“Someone call an ambulance!”

Immediately I pleaded, “NO, please no. Can’t anyone just take me a few blocks home?” (This was in the days before cell phones, so fortunately no one could instantly call for help.)

One guy had a truck, so they gingerly helped me into the cab, threw my bike in the back and drove me home with a broken bike and a crushed spirit. As soon as we arrived, my Italian neighbor caught sight of me and cried,

“Ooo, mamma mia” and carefully helped me into her house. Anna was quick thinking and did the best thing possible. First, she calmed my frazzled nerves with a few shots of Amaretto, then worked on saving my face. For the next few hours, as ice packs melted, she continued to put fresh ice on my forehead, around my eyes, nose lips and chin. Anna said the ice would not only minimize the swelling and bruising, but it might also prevent scars. In my still dizzied mind, that sounded like the frigid face freeze would be worth it. So, even with one destroyed bicycle and a badly damaged ego, thanks to Anna’s immediate ice remedy, with the on my forehead, nose, lips, and chin scraped off, I did not have any permanent facial scars. Needless to say, I never rode that bike again.

At that point in my life, I felt my brilliant dreams of bicycle stardom flip to a dark reality of despair. Nevertheless, in future years, that too would change, because, thanks to a tandem and a broken marriage, I did not stop bike riding.

Vincent’s bike shop was selling a used tandem for a soon to be divorced couple, so Keith and I bought it. Ironically, one couple’s unhappy breakup led to another couple’s happy togetherness. It was wonderful to know we could now safely ride together. He could do the seeing, and I could join in the pedaling. How smart! This had to be the perfect solution. Right? Well, you would think so, but no! That previous bike accident left me with terrible post-traumatic stress. On the street, whenever a car came anywhere near us, I screamed in terror and clawed, pounded, and hid my face into poor Keith’s back. For seven blocks, my screaming resulted in me unbalancing the bicycle as I screamed and grabbed him the whole way to our destination, a beautiful, verdant park. Once we finally exited the main street and were inside peaceful Hudson County Park, I was fine. Pedaling around the wide-open streets and lake was lovely, but then, we had to make our way home. After going out of the park entrance, we faced the buses, trucks, and cars on the narrow, terrifying Palisades Avenue.

When we finally arrived home, those so called, “leisurely” bike rides always ended with poor Keith taking a few Aspirin for his headache and sore back. Could you say Keith was another victim of my bike crash? Absolutely! So again, I say, poor Keith! He so loved bike riding, but he also loved his back, however, our car was too small to carry a tandem bike rack to drive to the park, thus, unhappily, we sold the bike. His back, his ears and my nerves just could not take any more of those ‘pleasurable’ rides to the park.

As far as the crazed phone calls, I made a police report, and they tapped my phone. Though they never discovered who was behind those calls, as things progressed, I began to suspect one malicious person and planned a little test. In a general conversation with my friend, who happened to be standing next to the one I suspected, I told the phone story and made sure to stress the point about the help from the police department, and how they put a phone tap on my line. Miraculously, those horrible phone calls immediately stopped. Humph?

As for my bicycle riding days? I thought it best to stick to snow skiing, give up pedaling a bike and allow Keith to have some alone time to pedal his bike in peace.

Through the years, as I lost more and more of my literal sight, I found more inner sight and learned that modesty means recognizing one’s limitations.

Sometimes, being modest and protecting our precious life is worth more than being embarrassed for one’s lack of vision, or what one can no longer safely do. Post-Traumatic Stress and fear can be the aftershock of a horrible incident, but can we learn from a bad situation? Yes, we can learn to make the most of happier things in life. We can learn that life can drastically change in a second, but it can take a good long time to heal. In one moment, a pleasurable hobby could be permanently ruined, yet that does not mean it has to ruin one’s life. There are alternative hobbies, or different ways of doing what was formerly done. Now that Keith and I live in the south, with much less traffic, we bought another tandem with a Harpo Marx horn for my handlebars. So, as we pedal around our sub-division, the children all know us, yes, we are the two old people riding a bicycle together. As we pass them, I honk and wave to all the bewildered, laughing children as they take pictures of us on their phone. We are famous!

Therefore, I conclude by saying to low vision bike riders, rather than taking the chance of never enjoying future bike rides, think of options. Is there a new hobby you might like, or if you can still ride a bike, be extremely careful where and how you ride? Better yet, buy a tandem, find a good trustworthy friend, and safely enjoy the wind across your face as you honk the horn on the back seat of a Cannondale tandem.

THE END