

**Insight: The Voice of
The American Council of the Blind of New York, Inc.**

<http://www.acbny.info>

Winter 2019

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The American Council of the Blind of New York is the largest consumer advocacy and support organization of blind and visually impaired people in the state. Your financial contributions help ACB NY's work to promote the educational, vocational and social advancement of blind and visually impaired people in New York. Send your tax-deductible donations to ACB NY, 104 Tilrose Ave., Malverne, NY 11565.

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##

President's Message
From the Desk of the President

By Lori Scharff

Well, it is hard to believe that another year is in the books! 2019 is right around the corner and winter sure is here.

The American Council of the Blind of New York, Inc. ACBNY will have a busy 2019. Our Legislative Committee will be meeting shortly after the first of the year to select our legislative priorities. All chapters should have someone that they appoint to the Legislative Committee. Please send the name, email address and phone number for your legislative committee representative to Mike Godino at mikeg125@optonline.net and use the subject 2019 ACBNY legislative committee member by January 30.

From July 5-12, 2019, the American Council of the Blind will hold their Annual Conference and Convention in Rochester, NY. So, several ACBNY members have been working on the national program committee, and the local host committee. The week will be packed full of general sessions, focus groups, learning sessions, an exhibit hall with any kind of adaptive item to assist people who are blind, and tours.

For more information please consult the ACB Braille Forum or the ACB website at www.acb.org. There is also a convention list that posts information on tours and special interest meetings as they become available. To subscribe to the list, send a blank email to acbconvention-subscribe@acblists.org. If you received updates for the 2018 convention, you do not need to re-subscribe. This list will also provide a description of the hotels, street layout in Rochester... prior to the conference and convention. The convention coordinator is the only person who can send messages out over the list.

The 2019 ACBNY Convention will be from October 25 to the 27th in Albany, NY. On Thursday October 24, the ACBNY board will meet along with 1 additional representative from each chapter for a leadership seminar. This meeting will take place at 5:30 pm until 9:00 pm. Chapter Presidents should send me the name, email address and contact number for the additional person attending from their chapter. Please use the subject line of 2019 leadership and email me at lorischarff@gmail.com by September 1, 2019.

New officers will be elected during the 2019 ACBNY Convention and take office January 1, 2020. Each chapter needs to appoint a member to the nominating committee by September 1, 2019. The nominating committee meeting will be held at convention Thursday evening at 9:15 pm.

People on the nominating committee cannot be running for an office. The nominating committee is a closed meeting Please email me at the above email address and use the subject line of 2019 nominating. Once I have all representatives, I will then select the chair of nominating and send their contact information out over both the ACBNY email listserv as well as the ACBNY board listserv.

Looking to meeting many of you at activities across the state. Stay warm during this winter.

Editor's Message – Annie Chiappetta

Greetings, all, welcome to 2019. I hope you shared the holidays with some peace and warmth. For Christmas, our clan cooked some goodies, watched football, and relaxed. As of this writing, we are trying to avoid thinking about the government shut-down, as my husband works for DHS and is basically working for free at this point. Troubling times for many and I hope it ends soon.

Are you getting excited yet? I am speaking of the anticipation building up for the 2019 ACB National Conference and Convention taking place in Rochester, New York. I hope you will attend, even if it is not for the entire week. Witnessing a National convention is thrilling and shows us the passionate foundation our beliefs are built upon, and cements our group identity as capable and independent people who are blind 🙄

Our 2019 State convention is also an affirming event; we have nominations coming up, so please consider serving on the ACBNY board in some capacity.

This issue has three educational and interesting articles, I hope the choices provide a little bit of news in this world of instant gratification. Because the article about Nemeth is very long, other articles planned for this issue were held back in favor of the Nemeth article.

Speaking of news, chapters still need to provide updates for the newsletter, only half are submitting information. Please think of who in your chapter could reach out to me for this purpose.

Finally, I welcome comments and suggestions on how to improve this publication. Comments can be emailed to editor@acbny.info
Bailey and I hope you ring in a warm and peaceful New Year.
Your Editor,
Annie C.

###

Pay Ahead and Save By Mike Godino

Announcement to All ACBNY Members

As we all know, the ACB National Convention will be in Rochester NY during July of 2019. The host committee has made arrangements with the Rochester Riverside Hotel to use the ACBNY tax exemption for our members. Therefore, we are opening a registration process for those interested in attending the ACB National Conference and Convention. The dates for the convention are July 5 through 12, 2019.

The room rate is \$89 single, double plus tax per night and is good from July 2 through July 13. However, if you choose to reserve your room through ACBNY, your room rate will be \$89 plus \$10 each for triple and quad per night, tax free. This can save you upwards of \$100 for the week, so start thinking about the days you want to attend.

If you choose to reserve your room through ACBNY, your registration form and payment in full MUST be in to Mike Godino no later than April 30, 2019. We cannot accept PayPal payments as PayPal charges a fee for each transaction. Please note that our tax-exempt status is only good for the Riverside Hotel, and you must make reservations through ACBNY to take advantage of it. If you do register through ACBNY and find you are unable to attend after April 30, it will be up to you to cancel your reservation with the hotel. Your payment will be refunded when your cancellation is confirmed.

NOTE: Please contact Mike Godino if you wish to pay ahead, in full, using this option. His contact information: phone -- 516-612-3368 or mikeg125@optonline.net.

##

Chapter Round-Up:

Greater New York Chapter (GNYC) ELECTION RESULTS

Terrance Page – President; Barbara Robins -Vice President; Gail Susman, Treasurer; Karyl Cafiero - Recording Secretary; Rachel Graff - Corresponding Secretary. Board Member 1 - Ellen Rubin;

Board Member 2 – Sal Moscato; Finissions term from the previous year: Board member 3: Victor Andrews;

Board member 4: Karen Kacen. Delegate/ ACBNY Director: Maureen Moscato.

Congratulations to all and best in the upcoming term.

##

Chapter News fall 2018

The Capital District chapter of ACB had a summer picnic in July at the home of Bill and Nancy Murray. Everyone enjoyed the pool, the food and the company.

We participated in the Northeastern Association of the Blind's Low Vision Health and Technology Fair on October 15, 2018. It just so happened that October 15th was White Cane Safety Day. There were two speakers; one from the Diabetes Association and an ophthalmologist who spoke about diabetic retinopathy and other eye conditions. There were also various vendors with items and services of interest to those with visual and hearing impairments.

Several chapter members participated in the ACBNY convention in Rochester in October 2018. It was good to see so many folks there.

At our November meeting, we elected officers. Kathy Casey is President. Bill Murray is Vice President, Nancy Murray is Treasurer, Kathy Farina is Secretary and Mike O'Brien is our board representative. The annual holiday party will take place at our December meeting. We are preparing to host Dinner in The Dark on March 23, 2019.

##

WESTCHESTER COUNCIL OF THE BLIND – GETTING READY FOR 2019 By Maria Samuels, President

It is the beginning of a new year and like most beginnings it is often necessary to reflect before we move forward. The ancient Romans knew this and Janus, the god of beginnings and transitions has two faces; one looking back to the past and one looking forward to the future. The month of January, aptly named after him, is finally here after one of perhaps the most tumultuous years in American politics. Westchester Council of the Blind (WCB) had a brief foray into one of the darker and sadder aspects of local politics with our Rev Up the Vote campaign to encourage all people with disabilities to cast their vote last November; to have their voices heard. Rev up the Vote is an annual nationwide campaign but this was the first time Westchester had ever done it. What should have been a well-supported event turned into a political football, the media was banished from the event and it was almost canceled. After multiple unforeseen obstacles the event finally happened as planned and WCB members turned out in force. Looking back, we came out slightly bruised, looking forward we know what not to do next year.

Unlike Rev Up the Vote, our second annual Dining in the Dark was an unqualified success. Partnering with the White Plains Lions, we held this second annual fundraiser at a popular restaurant. The sighted got a chance to have an entertaining blindfolded culinary experience. Our Vice President Annie Chiappetta, who is also the President of the Lions, emceed and the White Plains Mayor dropped in to say hello. Again, it was the WCB members who sold the most tickets and turned up in force.

There were other 2018 highlights that come to mind: 1) after floundering for a while without a meeting place, a White Plains church warmly welcomed us and gave us their best room. 2) We added two standing committees to our

constitutions – Finance and Membership. 3) Our July picnic was so much fun; the weather cooperated, the delicious potluck was enhanced by games and just being together before the summer break. Definitely an enjoyable opportunity to introduce our family and friends, and 4) Vanda Pharmaceuticals, the creator of Hetlioz, the treatment for non-24 sleep-wake disorder presented at our November meeting.

What does 2019 hold in store for WCB? Your guess is as good as ours. We may have to continue to struggle to get new members. It's not easy recruiting in a suburban community that has perhaps the most expensive Paratransit system in the state. We may encounter other oddball obstacles at the next REV Up the Vote campaign. Yet we look forward to the good stuff - the state and national conventions are both in our great Empire State and we have enough money to hold much needed assistive technology workshops. At our next in person meeting we plan to pat ourselves on the back. Why not? We're still here, we're still strong and we're ready for whatever 2019 brings.

##

GDUES

We are preparing for the upcoming 2019 ACB convention and are busy making plans to introduce ourselves with an ACB Marketplace table. We are also working on an e-commerce program, but it is still in the development stage. We hope to have it up and running before the summer. Warm wishes for the new year to both you and your dogs.

##

New Remembrances and Tributes Program by Mike Golfo

If you recall, during a recent membership meeting the ACBNY officers and board of directors was charged with creating a way to remember those ACBNY members and loved ones who have died, similar to the ACB National Angel Wall. To this end, the committee has met and is working on the logistics. The Remembrances and Tributes Program (RTP) committee has agreed upon the following program description. Mike Golfo, Chair; members Nancy Murray, Kathy Casey, Jean Mann and Annie Chiappetta.

This program shall strive to create a welcoming and memorable virtual wall for former ACBNY members or loved ones who have passed.

Individuals wishing to request a place on the virtual wall housed on the ACBNY website shall submit the electronic information and required fee {not yet decided}. This fee covers the administrative costs and perpetuity of the program.

Members of the committee will gather and prepare the memorial information written for each person to be remembered and communicate with the individuals requesting the memorial should any information require corrections or additions.

The word limit for a tribute is 500 words or less. One Photo will also be posted.

The memorial or tribute will then be sent to the ERC for final review, then sent to the webmaster for posting. The tributes will be listed by the person's first and last name, alphabetically for easy reference.

The Electronic Resources Committee will assist in directing the webmaster regarding posting the actual content as well as ensure the content is accessible with assistive technology.

The ERC will work with the R&TP committee to create an online, accessible form and forwarding email address for the committee members for oversight and to share the management of the forms and submissions.

Note: the question of tribute to a former guide dog was discussed and the committee will leave guide dog tributes to GDUES, recognizing GDUES is the logical choice to handle guide dog tributes, should they wish to create a similar electronic wall of remembrance.

More to come as we prepare the submission form and documentation process.

Respectfully Submitted by

Mike Golfo, 1st VP, ERC Chair and RTP committee Chair

##

Potpourri

Why a School for Blind Musicians Is Being Evicted at Christmastime

Article link: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/20/nyregion/blind-school-filomen-dagostino.html?mc_cid=2868564e57&mc_eid=92c6d83477

It was supposed to be a cheery holiday performance in front of the large Christmas tree at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, but the music school ensemble seemed to be singing for its survival.

The school, which has served blind and visually impaired musicians in Manhattan since 1913, finds its existence imperiled by its own parent group — a charitable organization with a mission to help the blind.

Singers were led into place by volunteers or guide dogs, but before the music started, the school's executive director, Dr. Leslie Jones, told the crowd inside the museum's Medieval Sculpture Hall that the school would be "separating" at the end of the month from its longtime parent entity, Lighthouse Guild International.

This was a cordial take on the situation.

The Lighthouse Guild sent a letter to students in June — in large print, for the visually impaired — notifying them that the 105-year-old school would no longer be part of the Guild's future and that it must leave the Guild's building on West 64th Street.

"This decision was difficult because the school has been a part of the fabric of Lighthouse Guild for over 100 years," Dr. Alan Morse, president of the Guild, wrote in the letter.

Jillian Racquet, 24, who sings in the vocal ensemble and volunteers at the school as a music teacher on Saturdays, recalled getting the letter over the summer. "To

find out in some dry letter that we have to look for a new home, it just seemed like, ‘Oh, we don’t really care about you,’” Ms. Racquet said.

Faced with an order to vacate by the end of December, school officials will spend Christmas week packing up 12 grand pianos, its estimable Braille music library and other items, presumably to go into storage.

Ms. Jones declined to comment on the situation, explaining that she did not want to jeopardize the school’s separation arrangements with the Guild.

She referred requests for comment to the Guild; a Guild spokeswoman said its officials would not comment.

Ms. Racquet provided The Times a copy of Dr. Morse’s letter, which said that the school’s leaders must make organizational changes to “direct our resources to support and serve the largest number of people who are living with or potentially facing vision loss.”

School volunteers and students said the school, officially known as the [Filomen M. D’Agostino Greenberg Music School](#), was scrambling to find temporary space in Manhattan — a daunting challenge, given its limited budget and Manhattan’s high rents — by late January to avoid canceling the spring semester.

Ms. Jones, they said, was scrambling to incorporate the school as a nonprofit in order to organize its own finances and raise funds as well as transfer its endowments and funding streams out of the Guild’s control. The school’s revenue has come from its modest tuition, grants and private fund-raising, as well as funding from the Guild, which also provided space for the school.

“She’s been trying to fight for the future of the school and the survival of the school,” said David Malkin, a lawyer in Manhattan, who helps the school with its endowment.

“What’s going to happen for them is uncertain,” he said of the school. “They’re hoping they’ll find a new home and sustaining support to continue their mission.”

The school has been an unsung staple of New York City arts circles for decades, including 20 years of performances at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and holiday recitals at Midtown Manhattan office buildings.

The blind teenage jazz prodigy [Matthew Whitaker](#) is a student there and accomplished alumni include the blind musician José Feliciano, who is currently traveling in Vienna but sent a statement recalling that the school helped him learn music transcription and other skills.

Mr. Feliciano called the Guild's decision to no longer house the school "callous."

"Perhaps they don't care anymore," he said. "When you consider the school's benefits and how important and meaningful it is to so many people, it's just very sad."

The school serves 120 students, children and adults of varying musical levels. All students attend part time, for lessons, classes and other services, including Braille music transcription.

In addition to several performance groups, the school has an archive of roughly 25,000 Braille and large-print musical scores that it said is second in size only to the collection held by the Library of Congress.

Losing their home has been particularly upsetting for students, some of whom spoke of their disappointment in the Guild, which has long promoted itself as a beacon of hope and an advocate for the blind.

"The school has been such an empowering place and it's just so painful to see these students being sent a message that blind education doesn't matter, and that the school is not worth keeping open and they have no say in any of it," said Leona Godin, a former student.

For more than a century the school was part of Lighthouse International, which in 2013 merged with Jewish Guild Healthcare to form the Lighthouse Guild.

The Guild has also closed the Harriet and Robert Heilbrunn School for students who are blind and have other severe disabilities. Its 33 workers were laid off this month and its 53 students were placed in other schools.

The music school is named after its main benefactor, [Filomen D'Agostino Greenberg](#), a self-taught stock trader who died in 2000 when she was 101.

Mr. Malkin is the director of the Filomen M. D'Agostino Foundation, which donates \$100,000 a year to the school, and had served on the guild's board of

directors. But he said he resigned from the board because he was so disturbed by its decision.

Regarding the students, he said, "They are at risk for so many other things, and to lose this resource and opportunity puts them even greater at risk."

After the holiday concert on Wednesday, one student, Daniel Gillen, 24, tucked away his Braille choral music and picked up his long white cane. He said he was hopeful that the school would find at least interim space.

"We're not going to be left on the sidelines," he said.

Correction: December 21, 2018

An earlier version of this article misstated how The New York Times obtained a letter sent to students of the music school by Dr. Alan Morse, the president of Lighthouse Guild International. The letter was provided by Jillian Raquet, a student at the school, not by Leslie Jones, the school's director.

##

TO LIGHT A CANDLE WITH MATHEMATICS

by Abraham Nemeth

Mathematics is a field which has often been considered beyond the capacity of the blind to master. This attitude continues to exist despite the evidence presented by the careers of world-class blind mathematicians such as Dr.

Abraham Nemeth. In 1985 Dr. Nemeth retired, having spent forty years teaching college-level mathematics. His successful career has provided inspiration and hope to later generations of blind students interested in pursuing jobs involving mathematics.

In fact, he invented the basic system for reading and writing mathematical and scientific materials in Braille which has been used by thousands of blind students.

Here Dr. Nemeth tells the story of his struggle first to obtain an education in mathematics and then to obtain a position teaching it.

I was born congenitally blind, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in New York City. And I want you to know that my parents raised me in a very close and loving family. I had a brother and a sister and two sets of grandparents and lots of aunts and uncles and cousins. We led a very happy life. And although my parents were both immigrants and lacking in any kind of formal education, they instinctively knew not to over-protect me on account of my blindness. So, I became street-wise in a tough neighborhood on the Lower East Side of Manhattan at a very early age. Without knowing it, my father taught me what today would be called mobility and orientation. Whenever we walked to a familiar destination, he would take me there by a different route. As we talked, he would tell me such things as "We are now walking west, and in a moment, we will be making a left turn, and then we will be walking south.

We are passing a luncheonette, and after that we will be passing a bakery.

Now the traffic on t

his street is one way going west. On the next street the traffic is one way going east, and there is a fire hydrant at the corner. Across the street there is a mailbox." So, he instilled in me a very good sense of direction.

He also taught me the formation of printed letters by letting me touch the raised letters on mailboxes and on police and fire call boxes. He bought me wooden blocks with raised printed letters to play with, and he got me large rubber stamps on which I could feel the printed letters.

My elementary education began at Public School 110. Now you know that New York is such a big city that we run out of eminent people's names, so we just put numbers to the schools. The one I went to was Public School 110, which happened to be within walking distance of my home. One of my aunts walked with me every day to and from school.

In my daily activity, I attended regular classrooms with all the sighted students for general curriculum subjects like arithmetic, spelling, and reading.

But when the sighted students were engaged in activities like art, penmanship, and things of that kind, I returned to the resource room for training in specific blindness skills like Braille, typing, and even geography. There was a very large globe of the world with raised land masses and even more highly raised mountain ranges. Because of family circumstances, I went to live and continue my education at the New York Jewish Guild for the Blind in Yonkers, New York. At the Yonkers Home children were encouraged (although not required) to

engage in activities like music, handcrafts, light sports and athletics, and religious education after school. While I was there, my father came to visit me almost every Sunday, no matter how severe the weather was. My mother would come whenever her busy household chores would allow about every other week, I would say. They would bring me my favorite foods, and they were refrigerated and dispensed to me during the week by kindly kitchen staff.

In the spring and summer months many of my uncles and aunts would also come to visit me. We would all go to a picnic area in a nearby park and enjoy the food they brought as well as such activity as the park provided. My father's

favorite was rowing.

One of my grandfathers was particularly attentive to me, and he gave me the religious training that I now possess. He would try to find messages that would be encouraging to me and that would serve as a guide for me as a blind person. One of those messages, which has stayed with me and which has had particular impact on me during all the years that I was growing up and by which I am still guided, is: "It is better to light a candle than to curse the dark."

Now you may not believe this, but at school I experienced particular difficulty with arithmetic. I graduated from the eighth grade of PS 16 deficient in mathematics, but with my father's earnest and sincere promise to the school that he would see to it that the situation was remedied. So, I enrolled in the fall at Evanderchild's High School in the Bronx, to which I was also bussed back and forth from the Yonkers Home. In one year's time, I not only caught up with all the arithmetic skills I should have had in elementary school, but I also

received top grades in a first-year algebra course in which I was enrolled.

I continued to do well in all my high school courses, and during this period I became keenly aware of an ambition to be a teacher particularly, believe it or not, to teach mathematics. One of the boys at the Yonkers Home was a good friend, but he was one grade behind me in school. As I learned algebra, I shared with him my knowledge and my enthusiasm on that subject. When he entered high school a year later, he was able to pass an algebra exam with honors and was thus exempted from first-year algebra.

In due course I graduated from high school and returned to live at home with my parents and my brother and my sister, who by now had moved to Brownsville, Brooklyn.

Then it was time for me to go to college. By that time, I had already acquired independent travel skills. I knew the routes of all the New York City subways and most of the Brooklyn bus lines. Equipped with this skill and with a high proficiency in Braille, I entered Brooklyn College. I knew that I wanted to major in mathematics, but my guidance counselors were not at all supportive of this goal. They insisted that mathematics was too technical a subject for a blind person, that notation was specialized, that there was no material available in Braille, that

volunteer or even paid readers would be difficult to recruit, and that no employer would be likely to consider a blind person for a position related to mathematics.

Counselor after counselor told this to me. You know, my wife told me that her mother said if three people tell you that you are drunk, you better lie down. So, after several counselors told me this, I obediently declared psychology to be my major a subject more amenable to the abilities of blind people, my counselors told me.

I took as many psychology courses as I could fit into my schedule.

Nevertheless, whenever there was an opening for an elective course, I always chose one from the math department. In taking these courses, there were two things that I did which were, I would say, decisive in my later career. When I found that there was no way of putting mathematical notation down in Braille, just as my counselors warned me, I began to improvise Braille symbols and methods which

were both effective for my needs and consistent from one course to the next.

So

this was the beginning of the Nemeth Code.

The other important skill I developed was the ability to write both on paper and on the blackboard. Sometimes it was the only method I had of communicating with my math professors. And although I was certainly no calligrapher, my handwriting was perfectly adequate for these purposes, and it was surely far superior to the alternative of shouting and arm waving.

In this way I graduated from Brooklyn College in 1940 with a B.A. degree and a major in psychology. Nevertheless, I succeeded in having completed courses in

analytic geometry, differential and integral calculus, some modern geometry courses, and even a course in statistics.

I knew that a B.A. degree in psychology was not a sufficient credential for anyone intending to enter that field professionally. So accordingly, I applied for graduate admission to Columbia University. My grades were adequate to ensure my acceptance at that prestigious institution, so in 1942 I graduated from Columbia University with an M.A. degree in psychology.

Meanwhile, it was time to begin looking for a job. The only work I could find was of an unskilled nature. At one time I worked at a sewing machine, where I did seam and hemming on pillowcases at piece-work rates. I worked for seven years at an agency for the blind, and there I counted needles for Talking Book phonograph records. I collated Talking Book records. I loaded and unloaded trucks in the shipping department. I typed letters in Braille to deaf-blind clients of the agency, transcribing incoming Braille letters from these and other clients on the typewriter. I also designed and organized itineraries in Braille so that they could be read by Helen Keller.

After graduating from Columbia University with a master's degree in hand, I began to look earnestly for work more suited to my training. The employment environment for the blind is never too hospitable, as you well know. But in those days, it was more inhospitable than it is today. In 1944 I was already

married; and as time went on, my wife perceived my growing frustration.

After working all day at the agency, I would find relaxation in taking an evening course in mathematics. By 1946 I had already taken all the undergraduate math courses offered by Brooklyn College, and my wife perceived that I was much happier in mathematics than in psychology. So, one day she asked me if I wouldn't rather be an unemployed mathematician than an unemployed psychologist.

Well, I began to wonder how we would support ourselves if I quit my job and went to school full-time, working toward a graduate degree in mathematics.

My wife

suggested that I give up my job and do just that. She would go to work while I went to school. If I couldn't find work as a mathematician even after completing my training, I could always get an unskilled job like the one I was currently holding at that same skill level, she pointed out. By 1946 the war was over. Men were returning to civilian life. At Brooklyn College there was a large contingent of men who had taken a first-semester course in calculus, and now (a war later) they were returning to enroll for a second semester course in calculus. I leave it to your imagination how much of the first semester they remembered.

So, I offered to be one of the volunteers in a corps that was organized to assist those men. I offered to be one of their volunteers after classes were over in the evening. Each student was stationed at one panel of a blackboard which ran clear around the room. Each wrote on the board as much of the problem as he could do, and the volunteers circulated helping the students to complete their work.

I would ask the student to read me the problem from his textbook and then read as much of the solution as he was able to put on the blackboard. Many times, the blackboard panel was blank. I would do my best to show the student how to proceed. Unknown to me, I was being observed by the chairman of the math department. One Friday night I received a telegram from him. He informed me that one of his regular faculty members had taken ill and would be disabled for the remainder of the semester. He asked me to report on the following Monday evening to assume that professor's teaching load.

Over the weekend I got the textbooks, boned up to know just enough to teach the following Monday evening, and launched my teaching career.

My ability to write on the blackboard, I believe, was the difference between continuing as a mathematics teacher and finding some other work to do. I continued this way, doing part-time teaching at Brooklyn College.

In 1951 I again applied to Columbia University and was admitted as a doctoral student toward the Ph.D. degree in Mathematics. My wife went to work.

In the summer of 1953 I registered with an employment agency for teachers. I received a call from that agency to report to Manhattan College the following Monday, there to conduct a course in the mathematics of finance a course I had neither taken nor known anything about. But anyway, I made sure I knew what to do. Manhattan College is a school run by the Christian Brothers. Brother Alfred was a little dubious when a blind man showed up, but he really had no choice. Classes began in an hour. However, when the summer course was over, Brother Alfred naturally assumed that I would return to teach in the fall, and he handed me my teaching schedule for the semester, beginning in September.

When January came, I received another call this time from Manhattanville College to fill in for a professor who was on sabbatical. Now Manhattanville College is a very elite girls' school run by the Order of the Sacred Heart.

As a matter of fact, Jacqueline Kennedy attended that school, although not in the time that I was there.

Dean Mother Brady received a glowing letter of reference from Brother Alfred, and so I had no difficulty securing the position at Manhattanville College.

Commuting to Manhattanville College was an entirely different matter, however.

To do that commuting, I had to walk six blocks from home to the local BMT subway station, take the train to Fourteenth Street in Manhattan, and change at Fourteenth Street from the BMT to the IRT line through an intricate maze of stairs and tunnels which, however, I was already familiar with.

Then I had to take the IRT to Grand Central Station. I had to negotiate a complicated route through the New York Central Railroad, and that took me to

White Plains, New York, where finally I was picked up by the school bus for the final fifteen-minute ride to the school in Purchase, New York. And of course, I had to do this in reverse at the end of the day.

The Sunday before reporting to work, I went alone to Grand Central Station; and there, all day long, I practiced negotiating the route between the IRT subway station at 42nd street and the Grand Central Railroad Station. The most important landmark on that route was the New York Central Railroad Station Information Booth. Every morning I would stop at that booth and inquire on what track the 8:02 for White Plains would be leaving. It was a two-hour commute each day, and I was surely glad when the semester ended. It was time to begin to search for permanent employment. By 1954 I was becoming tired of part-time work. The search for employment is stressful for anyone, particularly for a blind person. So, I embarked on a campaign of letter-writing with a view to securing permanent employment.

I consulted hundreds of college and university catalogs in the local library to determine which ones offered a math curriculum in which my teaching skills would be valuable. I arranged my choices in the order of geographical preference by section of the country. I composed a master letter, tailoring it from time to time as circumstances dictated, and I sent out about 250 letters and resumes. I felt it necessary to inform a potential employer in advance about my blindness.

Most replies were negative. They went something like: "At present we have no opening for a person with your training and experience." Many of them were noncommittal: "Thank you for inquiring about a position at our institution.

We will

keep your letter on file and will contact you if any opening should materialize in the future." Sound familiar?

Some were downright hostile: "We do not feel that a person with a visual impairment can effectively discharge the duties required of professors at our institution."

Nevertheless, I did receive two letters inviting me to appear for an interview: one from the University of Detroit and one from the university in Boulder, Colorado. Since, however, the University of Detroit offered a position leading to eventual permanence and tenure, I responded positively to the invitation from that institution first.

My wife and I both appeared at the university's request. I was interviewed for a full day, and at the end of the interview we were told to return home and that we would be informed of the outcome within a week. So, I mentioned in passing that we were going on to Boulder, Colorado, for another interview.

The University of Detroit is a Jesuit university. The following day, early in the morning, I received a call from Father Dwyer. He told me that the position was mine if I wanted it. He was calling early so that I could cancel the trip to Colorado if I so desired. I accepted on the spot.

I went to work at the University of Detroit as an instructor in 1955. And in due course I progressed through the ranks to become an assistant professor, an associate professor, and finally a full professor. Along the way I was awarded

tenure, and I also completed the requirements for the Ph.D. degree in mathematics and got it from Wayne State University. I received that degree in 1964. For fifteen years I taught all kinds of courses in mathematics at the

University of Detroit. But it was becoming increasingly evident to me that my training and skills would soon become obsolete unless I acquired knowledge and skill in computer science. Accordingly, I applied for, and was fortunate to receive, a grant from the National Science Foundation to spend two summers at Pennsylvania State University in State College to train in computer science.

Each session was nine weeks long, and all the students in this program were also college teachers. The pace of instruction was, to say the least, quite lively.

My wife and I gave up the comfort of a nice home in Detroit to live in a dorm room for nine weeks of a hot summer during two consecutive years. These were 1968 and 1969. When I returned to the University of Detroit in the fall of 1969, I designed and implemented a graduate curriculum in computer science, and I taught most of the courses. They included elementary courses like FORTRAN and ALGOL and more advanced courses like data structures, artificial intelligence, non-arithmetic programming, automation theory, systems programming, and so on.

During my early years of studying and teaching mathematics I realized that no adequate system existed to represent complex mathematical concepts in Braille.

So, I set about inventing my own system. Eventually it became a very efficient tool. It worked well for me, and others who learned about it asked me to teach it to them.

In 1952 my system was published as the Nemeth Code for Braille Mathematics.

The Nemeth Code features very close simulation of the printed text, and it is that feature which has made it possible for me to communicate with my students just as if I were holding the printed text in my hand. Very complicated formulas I put

on cards which I arranged in a small card file in my left jacket pocket in the order in which I planned to present them. At the right moment, I casually walked up to the board and put my left hand into my pocket, read the formula from the top card, and copied it with my right hand onto the blackboard. It gave the students the impression of what a big genius I was, and I tried not to disillusion them. I have been retired ever since September of 1985. I tell my friends that looking back on my working days, I reflect that work wasn't that hard. But it took a whole day.

I believe that the experience that I have had in my lifetime demonstrates how important are the early acquisitions of Braille skills, facility in mobility, a knowledge of print practice, and good attitudes. Equipped with these skills, a blind person can - progress as far as his motivation, his ingenuity, and his talent will permit. Without them, a blind person is restricted to semi-literacy and lack of independence.

##

msn lifestyle The Reason This Groom Blindfolded All His Wedding Guests Will Make Your Heart Melt by Murphy Moroney

<https://tinyurl.com/ybxmepu>

When Robbie Campbell set out to marry Stephanie Agnew in Australia, he was determined to make the day as perfect as possible. To do that, he blindfolded all 54 of his wedding guests so they could experience their wedding the exact same way as his bride, Stephanie, who went blind shortly before meeting Robbie.

James Day, a local photographer, captured the most precious moments of the day, and the photos are the definition of stunning.

According to James's Facebook post, Robbie made an announcement to the guests right away, saying: "When we lose one of our senses, the others become heightened. This allows us to experience something as beautiful as these vows in

a totally unique way. Today, we get to experience them from Steph's perspective."

Although the request was certainly out of the ordinary for attendees, it meant a lot to Robbie as well as Stephanie's mom, who, like her daughter, went blind from cone-rod dystrophy.

"I couldn't control my emotions as she walked down the aisle," Robbie told The Daily Mail. "She looked like a true princess bride in the dress. The blindfolds were received well by the guests as they were experiencing that moment in the same way Steph and her mom, who is also blind, were experiencing it."

For Stephanie, who's never seen her husband, the moment was one she'll never forget. "I've never seen him. I know his build," Stephanie said. "He is 6 foot 4 inches and I am 5 foot 4 inches, so he is a lot taller than me. And I know he has broad shoulders, but other than that I have to rely on descriptions. Everyone has hurdles so it's important to dig deep within yourself and understand that life can be hard but there are always ways to deal with things."

##

Bookshelf

New on BARD/NLS

[Follow Your Dog: A Story of Love and Trust DBC11582](#)

Chiappetta, Ann. Reading time: 4 hours, 27 minutes. Read by Ana Maria Quintana. A production of Perkins Library, Perkins School for the Blind. Animals and Wildlife. Drawing on her skills as a poet and a therapist, the author of this candid memoir explores her life-changing relationship with her guide dog. Ann's book is also available on Bookshare and all eBook sellers as a digital book and print soft cover. Go to www.dldbooks.com/annchiappetta/

Passings

Morning all,

It is with deep sorrow that I, as secretary of RACB, announce the passing of our friend and member, Janet Wettenstein. Janet had been ill for several years, struggling with various ailments including diabetes and congestive heart failure. She will be greatly missed.

Janet was a long-time member of ACB, ACBNY and RACB. She was serving as our treasurer when she entered the hospital for the final time.

There is currently no word about arrangements, Janet died about 6:00 P.M. yesterday evening {1/8/19}. When there is more news, I'll pass it along.

Ann P. {Ann Parsons} Secretary, RACB

##

American Council of the Blind

Officers and Board of Directors Contact List

The following is the most up to date list of members of the ACBNY Board of Directors. If there are any errors, please notify Lori Scharff at president@acbny.info and your newsletter editor, Annie Chiappetta at editor@acbny.info

January 2018

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