

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

<http://www.acbny.info>

**Spring 2021**

President, Karen Blachowicz

E-mail: [karenablachowicz@gmail.com](mailto:karenablachowicz@gmail.com)

Editor: Annie Chiappetta

E-mail: [editor@acbny.info](mailto:editor@acbny.info)

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## # President's Message

By Karen Blachowicz

Hello all and Happy New Year. 2020 was a challenging year for us, at best. I am feeling positive moving into 2021 and hoping and praying for the health and well-being of all our ACB NY family. 2020 was the first year of ACB NY's new

administration. Covid definitely changed the way we did things, but nevertheless we were very successful in taking on some important advocacy issues. Our legislative committee worked very hard on advocating for accessible online voting. Though the system may not be all we wanted, we were a success in being able to access our voting rights through computer technology. Our scholarship committee was able to award five scholarships this year. Our treasurer and executive board were able to get our financial house in order and on the proper path in order to serve all chapters. Our policy committee worked very diligently on providing policy and guidance for today and moving forward into the future with policies and procedures put in place to safeguard the integrity of ACBNY. We drafted two settlement agreements; one in the NY alert online emergency notification case with New York State and also the second for the accessible pedestrian signal safety case in New York City. Our members participated in some very high-profile interviews and publicity for our affiliate.

New York has started a new committee on diversity and inclusion. It appears that we are having the birth of a new chapter, the Braille Revival League of New York and I look forward to seeing their growth. I am proud to be your president and proud of all the hard work, energy and advocacy our members, committees and individuals have put into this organization. I believe this proves what teamwork and working together can accomplish.

I wish everybody the best for 2021 and I am excited to see what new accomplishments we will be successful with, stepping forward together.

I hope everybody stays safe and healthy throughout this year. Anybody can reach out and call or email me at any time, for any reason.

Karen A Blachowicz

716-510-4560

## ## Inside INSIGHT

by Annie Chiappetta

Hello readers, ACBNY members, and friends.

It's 2021, time for turning to another page and moving forward. 2020 was so emotionally draining, yet, it also assisted many of us with discovering how resilient we are when faced with adversity. As a group, we are acutely aware of adversity and the role it plays in our lives as blind people. I think we fared better than our peers without disabilities because of this factor. I'll go even further by saying we are stronger now and will continue to attain our personal and collective goals despite the pandemic.

This issue contains a little bit of everything from chapter and affiliate news to fiction and articles from the NYSCB and Visions. I'm hoping more folks will submit articles and material in the future to grow the interest in it. I believe INSIGHT has outgrown the category of newsletter and progressed to the status of a magazine. Expanding the diversity of the content is one of the reasons. I'd love to know what you think, please email me with your comments at [editor@acbny.info](mailto:editor@acbny.info).

I also wanted to congratulate the folks who formed ACBNY's fourth special interest group, the Braille Revival League of New York, bringing our chapter total to eleven; it means we are growing and keeping the passion for braille literacy alive.

Our electronic resources are growing, why not visit our website and listen to the audio sessions of the 2020 State convention? You won't be disappointed.

Until next time.

## ##Legislative Committee Update

By Ian Foley

The ACBNY Legislative Committee is once again planning for the April 2021 Legislative Seminar. Due to the ongoing pandemic issues and Capitol office closures, we will be hosting a virtual legislative seminar. We are planning to meet as a committee in late January or early February to begin planning for this year's event. We hope to have representation from all chapters on the committee, as we work to choose the issues and bills which ACBNY will be supporting this year.

We are looking forward to working together on another successful legislative event!

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## Chapter Roundup

Compiled by Kate Chamberlin

Capital District

By Kathy Farina

The Capital District chapter has been meeting virtually on Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In November, elections were held. The officers are: President, Kathy Casey, Vice President, Bill Murray, Treasurer, Nancy Murray and Secretary, Kathy Farina. Mike O'Brien will represent Capital District on the ACBNY board. Linda Hunt and Raheel Amed will represent the Capital District chapter on the ACBNY Legislative Committee.

There were some interesting guest speakers. In October, Maria Kristic, one of our members, told us about her experience testing a braille display that the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled is considering using to get braille materials to patrons. Megan Hale brought two guest speakers to the December meeting to inform us about Orienteering. Orienteering is a system that uses an app called soundscape. Blind and visually impaired participants use headphones to hear sound clues while they navigate a course. The object is to find all the clues on the course. In the future, this system may help people to find their way in various public places. Megan Hale will organize a demonstration of

Orienteering next spring. At our January meeting, two representatives from Accessible Pharmacy told us about their home delivery pharmacy specifically for the blind. They provide several types of pill packaging and labeling to make prescription and over-the-counter medications accessible to blind and visually impaired people. The medications are delivered to your home. In March, we will hear from Cindy Hollis, ACB's Membership Services Coordinator. Unfortunately, there was no holiday party this year.

## Rochester Chapter

By Kate Chamberlin

**Election:** Roger Dennis, who was elected President of our chapter in November, 2020, will continue to guide our chapter in the process of incorporating. Roger co-hosts the ACB Widows and Widowers Community Room, serves on the Legislative Committee and is affiliated with BITS.

**Programs:** Jennifer Lake, President & CEO, Goodwill of the Finger Lakes, was our chapter's guest speaker via telephone conference in January. She shared with us updates to the ABVI-Goodwill programs and policies, especially in the areas of Braille literacy and resources, adaptive computer training with refreshable Braille access, and current contact information for liaisons in the various departments. Renee Latore, Director of Advocacy Consumer Affairs and Legislative Affairs, and Carol Borsa, vice-president for Mission Services Workforce Development Good Neighbor Program, also joined the teleconference call.

**Chapter Member Profile:** Ann K. Parsons, B.A., M.S. is one of the people in our ACB-Rochester Chapter; affiliates Library Users of America (LUA), Braille Revival League (BRL), and Blind Information Technology Specialists (BITS); and our current secretary and ACBNY board representative. She has been a professional tutor since 1978, a national and international traveler, and an academic and computer tutoring entrepreneur.

**Parsons business mottos:** Knowledge is Power; Put the world at your fingertips; Use computers, adaptive equipment and Braille; Gain power by accessing accurate, up-to-date information on your own.

Portal Tutoring gives you the keys to unlock the doors to information. Walk into the light of information access! Limitations fall by the wayside. Expand your horizons now! Our computer tutoring will enable you to enter the world of high tech.

“I have made three trips to India under the auspices of the Ann Foundation,” Ann wrote, “In order to conduct workshops in the use of adaptive technology for computers. My first trip was made in December of 2004. A year later, I went to India again to expand the work we had started by doing workshops in new places and for new people. I returned to India in October of 2006 to expand the program for a third time to encompass a new venue and to promote and encourage our original programs.”

Visit Parsons’ experiences in India:

[http://www.portaltutoring.info/Indian\\_Experiences.html](http://www.portaltutoring.info/Indian_Experiences.html)

If you are interested in seeing what else Ann Foundation is doing, please access the following link: <https://india.onlinevolunteering.org/en/blog/ann-foundation-team>

Thank you, Ann, for being an ACBNY member making a difference.

Kate’s two cents: Ann approved of this profile when I interviewed her in December, 2020.

## Guide Dog Users of the Empire State

By Annie Chiappetta

We are barking in the new year with keeping in touch with one another and watching the development of the Department of Transportation’s rules for passengers flying with service animals and the airline carrier industry’s response to the new Air Carrier Access Act rules. The new rules were put in place on January 11, 2021, in part, to deter travelers continuing to pose pets as emotional support animals from flying and to align the ACAA with current ADA service animal regulations. As with all Federal mandates, some of the new rules are great and some not so much; legitimate service dog handlers are being recognized as such, but airline carriers have an option to request additional attestation forms for health and safety, which could add the burden of proof upon the legitimate handlers, rather than deterring passengers posing pets. Guide dog handlers are

some of the best advocates in the world and we will continue monitoring the processes moving forward.

We have participated in dozens of zoom meetings and presentations and cannot wait until we can once again get out and work our canine partners in public.

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## WCBNY

by Maria Samuels, WCBNY President

At the end of 2019, a groan-worthy joke circulating ended with “the blind man said, ‘At long last I see twenty-twenty!’”.

Last year was a great year, if for no other reasons than it is a nice-sounding repetitive number making it perfect for marketing slogans and vision jokes. But, as most of us know by now, last year was overtaken by a worldwide tragedy. In May 2020, WCBNY Zoomed for the first time. Little did we know that we would still be Zooming almost ten months later. We would like to blow our own horn for a bit.

Despite Zooming and yet, because of it, we stayed connected to each other and never missed a meeting. We had guests like the organization Visions. We played games, had our annual picnic and holiday party and invited guests from Poole, England, to chat with us and all ACB. And as they say across the pond, “it was smashing!”.

So, what are we up to now in 2021? Funny you should ask. Recruitment was an uphill battle during a raging pandemic, but we have increased our membership by one and feel victorious. We are looking forward to more games. And (drum roll here) we got our 501c3 nonprofit status despite all the governmental bureaucratic hurdles. We now have an exciting new challenge, how best to use



this new important tax status. 2021 is still in its infancy, but we are now 501c3 armed and ready to take on the year.

Tricky Trivia question: how many times has the word “vision” been used so far in this article?

Answer: Three - you must include the trivia question too.

And it will now be used once again.

WCBNY is lucky to have great members. Blindness might have brought us together, but, our shared vision and persistence keeps us together. It is a tad late, but nevertheless, WCBNY wishes all our fellow chapters a Happy New Year!. We are looking forward to working with you on making a bigger and better ACBNY for all the Empire State.

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## **## New York State Commission for the Blind (N Y S C B)**

### **Reviewing the First ACBNY Statewide Membership Survey**

The ACBNY is a complex, multi-faceted organization whose members come from all works of life. What follows is a review of our attempt to deconstruct, to quantify, to categorize, to analyze, and more than anything else, to understand the organization and the people who make it work.

#### **The Mandate**

Originating from a motion introduced by the Westchester chapter at the 2019 State Convention, our committee was organized and tasked with conducting a statewide survey of our membership. The mandate was to get as much

participation as possible, and to focus on identifying the attitudes and expectations of our members, and the needs that the organization can help to address. The committee worked closely with organizational leadership, but, operated with a wide range of autonomy.

## **Inherent Biases**

Throughout the process of conducting this survey, we were constantly learning. Not only were we learning about our membership, but we were also gaining a lot of knowledge about the process we were using to gather the target information. We'd dare say that, if we did the survey again, there are things we would do differently, which we believe would produce better results.

One of the things we observed, which must be kept in mind when reviewing the survey results, is that there is some statistical/mathematical bias inherent in our methodology. The word "bias" is a loaded term these days. But we're not using it the way it is commonly used on the evening news. In this context, "bias" just means that some of our numbers may be skewed a bit, primarily because of the way we got the word out about the survey.

First, we probably have an inflated sense of how many members regularly use Email to communicate, since the primary means of announcing the survey, and reminding members to submit their surveys, was through Email. And second, we probably collected more information from active participants in state and local programming than from members who are more passive and less involved. For example, members who rarely attend their local chapter's regular meetings and events would likely have had fewer opportunities to learn about and be encouraged to complete the survey.

## **The Survey**

As we said, the primary means of distributing the survey was via Email. In addition, we enlisted organizational leadership at the state and local level,

especially the local presidents, to get the word out about the survey and solicit responses. The survey was conducted using Google Forms, which is a part of the Google Sheets web application. And it was free to use. The entire survey was eighteen questions in length, but two of those were meant to gather information about the member's experience with the survey itself.

## **The Respondents**

After stripping out some unintentional duplicate submissions, we finished with a total of 55 individual responses. We did not know what to expect, in terms of a percentage of our membership who would respond. But we feel good about our response rate, as compared to many online surveys. And taken along with the comments our members included, we think members had a generally positive feeling about the survey and experience with it.

We wanted to know, in broad terms, "Who are you." We specifically did not ask for identifying information, as we wanted the survey to be anonymous. But based on the answers to some of the general demographic questions, we can get an idea of what our overall membership looks like.

Almost half of our respondents are members of multiple chapters and/or affiliates. One third of our respondents are members of a special interest affiliate. And fully ten percent of the responses came from at-large members.

Almost a third of our respondents have been members for twenty years or more. But almost twenty percent are relatively new, having joined within the last two years. And a healthy percentage (over 80%) of our members follow the Email communications that go out. Two-thirds of the respondents attend meetings, including over half who attend the state convention. And well over half of the members serve in some capacity, whether as an officer or a committee member, at the local level.

Over one-third of our respondents have a teaching background. That was the most popular answer to our inventory of professional experience. While there may be some overlap in these numbers, other professional categories scoring

high included liberal arts (31%), administration (27%), technical/computer (25%), and non-profit (22%).

We have a wide range of preferences among our membership where communication is concerned, especially that which involves technology. Most use Email (82%), if the survey is an accurate reflection of reality. (But don't forget that we expect that number to be skewed on the high side.) When it comes to social media, those who do it at all (approximately 55%) have a strong preference for Facebook as a platform. In fact, the responses for the other social media platforms we asked about (Twitter and Instagram) were almost nil.

Most of us use a computer (approximately 70%) in some capacity, whether desktop or laptop. And even more (over 75%) use a smartphone. A solid third of our respondents also report using a tablet for some things. Seventy percent use a screen reader, at least sometimes. And more than a third (36%) use Braille in at least some of their communications.

### **The Important Things**

One of our key goals was to identify the things that matter most to our members. This information has the potential to guide our efforts in providing what our members really need and really want, while also helping us to focus our recruiting efforts on promoting those things that matter most to our community.

When we asked what first attracted our respondents to this organization, we got a clear picture in the responses. The two most important aspects of the organization, from the viewpoint of prospective members, are the social aspects of our group, and our focus on awareness. Our advocacy work is a close second.

In terms of that advocacy, we drilled down in the survey to find out what broad categories of issues were most on the minds of our members. When given a blank slate to identify local, state, or national issues that they consider most important, "Improved Benefits" was the number one response, mentioned in some way by almost 70% of our respondents. Just over 40% mentioned "Discrimination." "Education" ranked high on 30% of our responses. Almost 25% of respondents

mentioned “Audible Pedestrian Crossings.” And rounding out our top five, with 16% each, we have a tie between “Technology Funding” and “Voting.”

And lest we get bogged down in the details of issue advocacy, let us not forget that most of our members, in their own experience, and in their ideas about attracting new members, believe that social activities are of paramount importance. Just to give an example, when we asked former state convention attendees about why their experiences had been good or bad, the number one answer on both sides of that question had to do with having either a positive or a negative social experience at the convention. And almost everybody who responded indicated the importance of social gatherings in attracting new members.

### **The Wants and Needs**

When we asked about the perception of the greatest challenges facing their local chapters, the respondents overwhelmingly (35%) said that recruitment of new members was their biggest challenge. Motivating existing members to participate was second (26%). And fundraising rounded out the top three at fifteen percent.

When we asked what our members would most like to see from the state organization, almost 40% said that they’d like an increased presence from the state in their local organization, and more support coming from the state to the local group. With those who named a specific area where their local group would like help from the state, they were about evenly split (15% each) between recruiting and fundraising.

### **Moving Forward**

Much of the preceding content was taken from the committee’s presentation at the 2020 State Convention, lightly edited for readability. It tells the story of a big undertaking, one that produced a valuable result, but one that is still incomplete. As a result, the committee proposed, and the organization approved a new

mandate to continue the work of the survey committee beyond the original scope. As leadership throughout all levels of the organization continues to unpack the data from the first survey, we are looking forward to another deep dive into who we really are and what we really want and need, both as an organization and as individuals.

## [##News from the NYSCB – by Laura Murphy](#)

**Editor’s Note: The following article has been revised to conserve space.**

The New York State Commission for the Blind (N Y S C B) hosted its first Annual Virtual Counselor Meeting via Zoom on August 4th and 5th. The Zoom platform received high marks with feedback that it is excellent for accessibility. Some staff noted that they missed seeing everyone in person, with other staff noting that the meeting should be on Zoom every year instead of traveling.

The Rehab Cup, which is awarded to the office that has the highest average per counselor closure rate, was awarded. This year the cup went to the Westchester District Office. Ana Duraes, Westchester District Office Manager, recognized and thanked the Westchester staff for all the good work they do, the positive impact they have on the participants they serve, and for coming together and reaching success as a team!

The NYSCB Program Unit is committed to thinking outside of the box to make sure that our youth have options available virtually, to stay engaged, and participate in services. The Pre-College Programs were held virtually this year and were very

well attended. NYSCB approved more than 25 remote pre-vocational programming options for our youth to participate in statewide.

N Y S C B has been working collaboratively with a group of their partner agencies to create a program for O&M and V R T credentials that would be available through SUNY Empire State College.

N Y S C B has been involved in the goal to establish a consistent and affirming approach and training when engaging members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning (L G B T Q+) community within the Office of Children and Family Services (O C F S) programs, including the Commission for the Blind and policies, and practices in New York State.

As a contribution to OCFS' social justice priorities, NYSCB was proud to sponsor two webinars to highlight their work and to provide knowledge and reinforcement to their peers across the agency who wish to learn more about what they do.

OCFS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Office presented at the NYSCB Annual Counselor meeting in August and the presentation was well-received. Staff's response included suggestions for more learning opportunities.

The annual meeting of the NYSCB Business Enterprise Program (BEP)/State Committee of Blind Vendors (SCBV) was held virtually with Zoom over three days in September. The sessions were well attended by both program members and NYSCB staff. Associate Commissioner, Brian Daniels, opened the meeting with a positive message for all attendees. He was followed by the Chairperson of the SCBV, Virgilio Amaral.

NYSCB celebrated White Cane Awareness Day successfully via Zoom on October 15th, 2020! The celebration started with the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Equity and Inclusion Officer presenting the history of White Cane Day. Messages of excitement, independence and activism were all part of the celebration with the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB), which included honoring three contributors and the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

OCFS Commissioner Sheila J. Poole welcomed participants and recognized the accomplishments and commitment of the NYSCB and activists. She remarked that the NYSCB opened up a supply chain and had “an incredibly amazing response to OCFS during the height of the pandemic to increase PPE [personal protective equipment].”

The commissioner also honored three people for their contributions: Edward Welsh, president and CEO for the Central Association for the Blind and Visually



Impaired in Utica; Christopher Burke, executive director of the Northeastern Association of the Blind at Albany, Inc.; and Carrie Laney, executive director of the New York State Preferred Source Program in Albany.

The celebration also featured artist Connie Avery, who found her vision with paint, tile and photographs; counselor Aaron Baier, who is an advocate and leader for the blind; and activists Cliff Perez and Meghan Parker, who discussed the 1990 ADA passage and how it (and they) have evolved.

The Garden City District Office Microsoft Office training at Helen Keller Services for the Blind (T.E.A.M) program is completing the second module of their program. The Nassau cohort returned to providing the program in-person while the Suffolk County cohort is still receiving training virtually. Both cohorts have received mock interviews with employers and have discussed career development as part of their preparation to participate in a work experience after completion of their training.

## **## History of “INSIGHT: The Voice of ACBNY”**

By Kate Chamberlin

Editor’s Note: the conversations shared in this article are excerpted from the newsletter history thread from email messages from the ACBNY membership list <AcbOfNyMembers@groups.io and may have been edited for context and consistency. December 2020

“After polling the readership for ideas,” Judy M Wieber e-mailed, “Harold and I were responsible for changing the newsletter's name to ‘INSIGHT: The Voice of ACBNY’. in January 2009. I was the newsletter editor between Frank and Satauna.”

Prior to changing the name to “INSIGHT: The Voice Of ACBNY”, it was referred to as “the ACBNY newsletter” from its inception around 1980 with Dottie and Steve Cassell as the editors. It was available in Braille and on cassette. Most likely, articles were sent to Dottie in Braille, as there were no computers back in the day. The organization bought her a cassette duplicator and she sent copies out to everybody. Dottie eventually moved to North Carolina and passed away in 1995.

“I remember helping make cassette copies,” Mary Ellen Cronin posted on ACBNY <AcbOfNyMembers@groups.io. “Proof the tapes and stuff envelopes on several occasions with Ellen, John, Betty, the Cassels, and others. It took many hours but it was fun. Besides helping Dottie and Steve, we had cassettes flying back and forth from the Greater New York Council of the Blind (GNYCB) and Lavelle. I kept many cassettes for a long time but keeping them in my basement, where there was room, did much harm to them.”

Don Horn quipped, “I’ll bet you also remember trying to get people to send back their cassettes!”

“As I remember,” Jean Mann reminisced, “the newsletter was kind of folksy in those days. When we were doing mostly cassette copies, we had a man named Tom D’Agostino who submitted taped articles each newsletter. He called himself “The Old Curmudgeon”, and he spoke about something on which he had a strong opinion. He always ended the articles with the question “What do you think?” We always looked forward to them.”

Circa January 1993, Nancy Murray (formerly, Moore) became the editor. It came out on a quarterly basis then, and it was still on cassette. Nancy had a portable stereo which had the capability of playing one tape and recording it on another, which was what she, and later Jean Mann, used if people sent them articles on cassette.

“In January, 2001, “Jean Mann said, “When I took it over, it was decided that we’d leave the duplicator at Nancy and Don’s house. They had more room than I did. They also had a braille printer. So, I would put the newsletter together, email it to Don, he would make one braille copy and give it back to me. I would then read it on cassette. Then he, Nancy, Frank and Kathy Casey, and I would set aside a day four times a year (sometimes only three). Frank would duplicate the tapes, Kathy, Nancy and I would stuff envelopes and label them, and, since we were starting to send out a few large print and email versions, Don and I would proof the copy before we sent it out. I think it was during this time that ACB of New York went on the Web and we posted it on Google Groups as “ACBnY-newsletter”. (Note: The last post was November 1, 2009) And, since more and more people were receiving it via email, we were duplicating fewer and fewer cassettes. Cassettes were also getting harder and harder to find.”

“Those newsletter days were kind of fun,” Don Moore wrote.

“I don’t remember if I edited it for two or four years,” Jean continued. “Don Moore took it after me but we worked on it together. Eventually Don retired and moved to Florida, and Frank Casey became the editor. I know I proofread some issues for him, but don’t remember much else about it. Frank passed away in 2012.”

From the Editor’s Message in the November 1, 2009 ‘INSIGHT: The Voice of ACBNY’, Judy Wieber stated, “I am very pleased with this November.’

issue of Insight, the Voice of ACBNY. I wasn't sure we would have many articles, but as you will find out, everyone pitched in and helped as usual. The newsletter committee is conducting still more research on whether or not compact discs are

the new wave of the future. I can tell you that we did not have much participation in the survey conducted last issue. For those who did indeed participate, I want to thank you for your interest, and let you know there wasn't a strong response in either direction, audiocassette or compact disc. Now I am opening things up to the entire membership. If you have an opinion either way I would like to hear from you. As I sit and think about my first year as Newsletter Editor ending, I feel as though we had a very productive year. We gave it a name, we introduced the use of synthesized speech readers, and we tossed around the idea of changing the audio medium, cassettes versus compact disc. I am sure the year ahead will bring just as many challenges and changes, and I am confident in our newsletter committee handling whatever the new Year brings.”

Also, from Wieber:

“One goal I would like to see accomplished in 2010 is some means of involving more members in article writing. Please let your voice be heard; sharing your thoughts and ideas helps us to learn and grow.

Lori Scharff became the editor of “Insight, the Voice of ACBNY” for a short time after Judy resigned and then, Satauna Howery stepped up around 2011.

“Satauna Howery did a fantastic job on the newsletter,’ Lori continued. “She had the ability to professionally record it, as her employment was as a professional voice talent. The newsletter editor used to be a board member of ACBNY. However, this was removed from the constitution in 2012.”

“During my presidency of ACBNY, Annie took over the newsletter. She does a really good job at getting everything organized and sent out via email. It is also posted on the NFB(TM) service.

Early in 2014, Annie Chiappetta stepped up to be the editor in time to put together the Fall, 2014 Issue of ‘INSIGHT: The Voice of ACBNY’ in several formats: email, website, Facebook, and NEWSLINE.

“Begging for articles was very frustrating at first,” Annie stated. “I thought about throwing in the editor towel many times. When members seemed so apathetic, it actually made me dig in even more. I refused to give up. If I could share one thing about INSIGHT it is this: when our members failed to support the newsletter, it was like they failed to support ACBNY and that is a very sad and powerful paradigm. It was because of the disinterest of others that the newsletter was saved ...My proudest moments are being able to announce the successes of our members from book promotions to featuring short stories and articles. Each time a member or partnering organization takes part in INSIGHT it builds upon our tribe and increases our organizational integrity.”

Just for fun, here is an excerpt from the last ‘Insight: The Voice of ACBNY’ posted on the google site:

Insight, The Voice Of ACBNY

Welcome to the e-mail edition of the November 2009 issue of INSIGHT: The Voice of ACBNY.

Acknowledgements

Hello, this is Judy Wieber, your newsletter Editor. I hope you have enjoyed listening to, or reading, the November 2009 issue of Insight, the Voice of ACBNY.

I would like to take the time to thank all those who made this issue of Insight possible: Jean Mann, Frank Casey, Don Moore, John Farina, Mike Godino, John Jeavons, Jenny Hwang, Ecaterina Henter (Cathy), Satauna Howery, Harold Wieber, Kathy Farina, Karen Gourgey, Sherry DeFrancesco, Audrey Schading, and Victor Andrews. But most of all I would like to thank you, the reader, for without you this newsletter would not be possible.

Kate’s two cents: Thank you to the many, many ACB members who replied to the call to supply pieces to the History of the ACBNY Newsletter puzzle posted on [AcbOfNyMembers@groups](mailto:AcbOfNyMembers@groups). If you’ve noticed a piece is in error or remember a

piece that is still missing, don't hesitate to contact me at:  
KathrynGC1@verizon.net.

## ##Our vision is for everyone to see what is possible.

By Nancy D. Miller, LMSW

Founded in 2006, the New York Vision Rehabilitation Association (NYVRA pronounced nye-vra) is a 501c4 nonprofit volunteer led coalition advocating for quality and timely services for New Yorkers of all ages with vision loss. Members of NYVRA include individuals, nonprofit agencies, consumer and advocacy groups, parents, educators and vision rehabilitation professionals. In 2021, NYVRA retained Greenberg Traurig for government relations. Two major priorities are: increasing state funds for services for older individuals who are legally blind and New York State licensure for vision rehabilitation professionals specifically vision rehabilitation therapists and orientation and mobility specialists. In addition to the two top priorities, NYVRA also focuses on the needs of blind children, blind people with multiple disabilities and the deaf-blind population. NYVRA welcomes blind individuals as members and board members. The American Council of the Blind of New York and three regional chapters have shared their state legislative agenda with NYVRA and we frequently meet together with state legislators and officials in the Governor's office. The website is [www.nyvra.org](http://www.nyvra.org). For more information email NYVRA President Nancy D. Miller home [nancymiller@att.net](mailto:nancymiller@att.net) or work [nmiller@visionsvcb.org](mailto:nmiller@visionsvcb.org) or by cell phone 917-859-9184.

## ## Treasure, Fiction

By Winslow E. Parker © 2021

It was an ordinary map for 1962. Made of paper, it was folded into accordion pleats. Each pleat was four inches wide, then folded again into thirds. Gas stations gave them away to travelers as advertisements. Most vehicles sported at least two of these maps in their glove boxes. Now, decades later when GPS renders them obsolete, they are collector's items.

I managed a small thrift store for a local charity where I was the only paid employee. The word “pay” could barely be applied to the pittance I received every month. One day, sorting through the meager, mostly-unusable donations, I found a filling-station map. It was in pristine condition, no crimps or markings on the outside, no meandering ink lines tracing a trip on the inside. I knew just the person who would salivate over this map.

“Hi Les,” he rumbled. “What’s up?”

“Dan, you won’t believe what I found. It’s a VINTAGE 1962 Colorado State map with a US map on the reverse side. It was distributed by the Sovereign Service Stations which is no longer in business. It’s in perfect condition.”

He was silent for a moment, then whistled through his teeth. “Perfect condition?”

“As far as my untrained eye can tell. I put it into a plastic envelope until you can look at it.”

“Those go for around \$20 since it’s an oil company which is no longer in business. Tell you what, I’ll give you \$25 for it. Consider it a donation”.

My voice must have revealed my disappointment. I hoped it would fetch enough to turn our bottom line from red to black that month. Still, \$25 was nothing to sneeze at. Most purchases net less than one dollar.

“That sounds great! We help nearly 100 people a month with groceries and small amounts of cash.” I said, slipping into donation-promoting mode.

“You folks do good work, so I’ll up it to a \$50 donation.”

“Thanks so much, Dan. Wish you could see some of the faces that \$50 will turn into smiles.”

“You know just which buttons to press, don’t you, Les?”

His words and his voice didn’t match. He could well afford to give a donation. He just wanted to see me work for it.

“It’s my business to know how to open donor’s wallets.”

“Last offer, \$100.”

“Wonderful! Thank you so much.” I knew when to stop pushing.

“When can I see it?”

“Any time. We’re open all week from nine to five and noon to five on Saturdays.”

“Let me look at my calendar. Tomorrow afternoon? Around four?”

“Works for me. See you then.”

He showed up at precisely four. Without comment, I handed him the envelope. He took a pair of white cotton gloves from an inner coat pocket and extracted the



map. He carefully laid it on the counter and methodically opened it. He scanned the map starting in the upper left corner, searching in a grid pattern across a line in one direction, dropped down a line and traced every square inch to the bottom right corner. He turned it to the US side of the map and subjected it to the same scrutiny.

Not being a collector of maps, I couldn't figure out why he scanned it so carefully.

He grunted. "No Interstates. They were just beginning to be built," he said, sweeping his hand across the map just a fraction of an inch above the creased paper. "That makes it more interesting to me; a bygone era with all of the joys and problems of the time compressed into a two-foot by two-foot folded piece of printed paper. Have you ever thought of that? That was the year Kennedy was shot. I was 17, I think. We didn't live in Colorado then, but had family there still. All of their daily activities, their romances and divorces, their daily grind and their joys took place within these lines," he said as he traced the rectangular shape of the State. He flipped it over to the US map. "And here we all were at that time, mostly on the east and west coasts, but a whole nation of people living within these borders with all their loves and hates, dreams and defeats."

"Never thought of you as one to philosophize. I thought you were more the tough-minded, practical businessman."

"That's a part of the charm of old maps. I'm a businessman first, but in odd moments, I can wax quite philosophical about maps, let me assure you." He flipped the paper back to the Colorado side and bent close, examining the margin of the bottom right corner.

"What's this?" he asked, pointing.

I bent over the map, examining the spot at which he pointed without touching the paper. "Dunno. Looks like a series of numbers."

"That's what I thought, too. Do you have a magnifying glass?"

I opened my odds-and-ends drawer and, after rummaging for a moment, found a 2x magnifying lens and handed it to him.

"Perfect." He bent over the odd markings again, then took out his cell phone. After pressing the button, he asked the digital assistant, "What is at...and he quoted the numbers." A map popped on the screen with a mark indicating a longitude and latitude location. "They didn't do geo-caching in those days," he mused to himself. "Wonder what's there?"

I took the phone and examined the map.

"It's near Leadville, in the Rocky mountains near Denver. My great-grandfather was a miner in the late nineteenth century in Leadville when he was young. Later, my grandfather, who was born in Leadville, ran bootleg whiskey from those mountains into Denver. My father went along as a decoy. There are lots of silver and a few gold mines in those mountains."

He took the phone back.

"It looks like an old mine dump on Google Earth," I said, examining my own phone.

He turned his attention back to the map, tracing the white margin of both sides. "Here, look at this!"

I took the lens and bent over the map. In tiny, nearly invisible print, were the words, "X marks the spot, August 5, 1962. FG"

"Got an idea," said Dan. "Use your computer? Easier to read."

He didn't wait for an answer and slid into my chair, fingers working the keyboard before he landed.

He pointed to the headline in the "Denver Post."

My pulse jumped up ten points.

"Do you think..." I asked.

His lips moved as he read the article. He finished and turned the screen toward me.

\$100,000 in gold Nabbed! screamed the headline.

The armored car carrying the bullion in mint bars was halted at a makeshift barrier 150 miles east of Denver late yesterday afternoon. Felix Gillespie, the notorious gangster is suspected in the heist. He is one of the last old-time bandits still on the loose. He follows in the footsteps of such gangsters as Ma barker, Bonnie and Clyde, John Dillinger, 'Pretty Boy' Floyd, and 'Machine-Gun' Kelly. Herbert Hoover, head of the FBI, stated, 'We'll get him and his gang very soon. They can't escape the dragnet we've thrown around the area. We'll get the gold back very quickly. We're devoting hundreds of men to solving the crime.'

“The heavily protected vehicle, with two inches of steel plate and bullet-proof glass was speeding on an unscheduled trip, when it was stopped by a barricade across the road. Gunmen, hidden beside the road, shot the tires then blew open the doors with dynamite. Both guards perished In the blast.

“An unnamed source speculated that it must have been an inside job, since the trip was unscheduled and no public notice was made of it. FBI agents and local police are interviewing every mint employee.”

As Dan finished the article, he whispered, “Do you suppose? What if...?”

Absent-mindedly, he handed me a hundred-dollar bill. I made out a receipt. He left without a word.

Two weeks later, the incident all but forgotten, I received a call from him.

“Hey Les, what’re you doing for dinner tonight?”

“Ummm, nothing much, probably a fancy TV dinner from the convenience store on the corner.”

“I’ll pick you up at five. That’s your closing time if I remember.”

“Yes. What’s the occasion?”

“We’ll talk over dinner.”

It was a very nice restaurant. Dinners cost more than my monthly salary. He ordered for both of us when it became obvious I was out of my league and didn't recognize anything on the menu.

He said nothing until after the waiter left our food on the table.

He sipped his wine, then said, "Remember that map?"

"Sure."

"I did some more research. I checked FBI records and combed through genealogical records in Salt Lake City. He was born in Moab Utah and still has family living there. I checked the Moab newspaper. The first mention of him was a brief article outlining his arrest for burglary ten years before the gold heist. His family are well-respected members of their community and their congregation. I called his brother who, rightly, I suppose, refused to say anything more than that the family had not heard from him since the robbery. The FBI still has an open file on him. They sent me a copy of the file under a FOIA request. The only new information that came from that source was a rather lengthy rap sheet. Several arrests for burglary, a couple of murders for which he was charged, but never brought to trial. A rather bad apple which apparently fell a long way from the parental tree."

"What about the gold?"

"They never found it or Felix Gillespie."

My ears perked up. "You think?"

“I’m sure of it. I’m convinced it’s still where they hid it. The FBI records show no further activity attributed to him anywhere in the US. No arrests; no other robberies.”

“What do you think happened?”

“I dunno. Maybe a falling out among the gang members. Maybe they were arrested for some other crime under another alias. Anyway, let me tell you why I asked you to dinner. If I paid the salary of someone to take your place at the thrift store and paid you to come along as my assistant, would you be interested?”

“Interested in what, exactly?”

“Going to the spot on the map, you know, to the map coordinates, see what’s there. Back then, gold was fixed at \$32 per ounce. When people were again allowed to own gold, it immediately increased in price. Today, with the economy down and gold being a hedge against economic bad time, it’s worth around \$1800 per ounce. Do you have any idea how much money that is?”

I whistled. “My goodness! That would keep my little non-profitable non-profit in business for a long time.”

“Yes, it would.”

I looked up, embarrassed. “Um that is, if you gave me any portion of it, of course.”

He laughed. “Of course. Partners. Even split.”

“So, if I figure this correctly, that would be \$180 million, right?”

“That’s about right, give or take a few dollars one way or the other. “We both turned inward, thinking long thoughts. I was dimly aware of conversations buzzing around us. I wondered, only briefly, what they might be talking about. Perhaps these wealthy men and women could speak in terms of this kind of money without reeling, but I could not. Ninety million. It was overwhelming. With that, I could hire a staff, relocate to a better facility, expand the services...I shook my head to clear it.

“Does that mean you’re out?” Dan asked.

“Oh, my goodness, no! I was just thinking how I could change the charity with that kind of money.”

“Should be able to help out a bit,” Dan said in the understatement of the year.

I took a deep breath. “Count me in. Where do we go from here?”

“Here’s my plan so far. There are old mining roads crisscrossing the whole area. This highway crosses one of them.” He turned his cell phone to me and traced a State highway. “Right there is the beginning of the road. It’s an unmarked Forest Service road at this point. Parts of the old mining road are incorporated into Forest Service roads; others are fire breaks. About ten miles from the mine, the road is abandoned.” He retrieved the phone, changed apps then turned it back toward me. “On Google Earth, you can see that the road becomes pretty rough for the last ten miles. Trees have grown up in the roadway. Brush grows nearly across it in other places. There is a washout right here...” he enlarged the image.”

“Pretty deep, looks like to me.”

“It is, but just a ways downstream, it looks like there is a ford if you have the right vehicle. Anyway, I’m planning a trip there for the first week of July. Could you be ready by then?”

I thought a moment. “Yes. There is a volunteer who would love to take my job. She could take over. She’s very familiar with the place and how it works. I’m sure the board will approve her as my replacement.” My excitement grew.

“We’ll travel to Denver, rent a four-wheel drive vehicle. We can pick up camp supplies, food, and digging tools at the same time.”

“Sounds like a military operation.”

“Sorta.”

We landed in Denver on July 4. We bypassed the airport car rental agencies and took the shuttle into Denver. Dan decided not to rent a car, so we went to a local dealership which specialized in off-road vehicles. He purchased a used Land rover. We spent the next week purchasing supplies including camping gear and food. Dan is an experienced back-country enthusiast, so he knows what is needed. I, the greenhorn, trusted everything to him. Finally, we were ready and set out early one morning.

The road became a two-lane county road. It began to twist in and out, following the contour of mountain buttresses. The roaring river a thousand feet below shrank to a stream, then to a rivulet as we climbed another thousand feet.



Cresting a ridge, a granite-mountain-ringed valley spread its chartreuse new-leaved trees before us, a colorful welcome mat. Its roof was an intense blue blanket, nestling us within its warm fold.

We turned off the paved highway onto a dirt track. Twin ruts trapped the wheels. Dan could not steer, so he idled at a snail's pace. Occasionally, he yanked the steering wheel to break the hold of the ruts avoiding a rock or stump. He shifted into four-wheel drive when the track became a muddy swamp. The mud trapped us.

Dan sighed. "I knew it was going to well." He released the winch cable and handed me the hook.

"what am I supposed to do with this?" I asked.

He sighed again. "See that tree?" He pointed to a tree whose base was four feet in diameter. "The one that looks like the one they put up in Rockefeller Plaza every Christmas?"

"Yes."

"Pull the cable with you until you get to the tree, then wrap it around it once and bring the hook back to the cable. Then grab the cable with the hook, forming a ring. Got it?"

"Think so," I answered. I did as he said.

"OK, I'm starting the winch. Move away ten feet or so."

I moved twenty.

The winch whined, winding the slack of the cable onto its spool. The cable went taut. The Land Rover began to move. The tires made a sucking sound as they came out of the mud. On dry ground again, Dan reversed the winch, allowing slack back into the cable.

“OK, unhook it and walk back with it as it winds onto the spool.”

“I’m impressed,” I said, meaning it.

“Did you ever see the movie, ‘The Gods Must be Crazy?’?”

“Yes. Not very funny.”

“Do you remember the scene in which the bumbling scientist is sent to fetch the lady teacher from the train station? Their Jeep gets stuck in the mud and distracted by the pretty lady, he hooks it to a high limb of a tree. By the time he gets his thoughts together, the jeep is dangling from a huge limb, twenty feet in the air.”

“I remember. Didn’t think it was all that funny.”

“Aw, where is your sense of humor?”

“Well, tell me this, Mr. Comedian, why wouldn’t he do like you did and run the cable around the base of the tree, not a limb way up in the tree?”

“It wouldn’t be funny that way.” He laughed at the memory.

I still didn’t think it was funny.

We ground along in granny gear, which he explained to me is the lowest gear; more power, less speed.

We had to stop to remove a small boulder. It was a bit odd, since there were no large stones anywhere nearby. The track became steeper. Dan shifted into four-wheel mode again.

A few hours later, Dan broke the silence. “Here’s where the going gets tough.” “Better get out that chain saw. Have you ever used one?”

“Nope.”

“Why did I bring him along?” he muttered under his breath, only half joking.

He showed me how to start it and how to cut a tree close to the ground, practicing on a small tree next to the road.

“Mind you don’t cut off your leg,” he said. “It’s a long way back to Denver.”

“Thanks a lot, I said.” I shut the noisy thing off and set it on the back seat within easy reach.

“Did you think to buy a rifle?” I asked as we pushed our way through dense undergrowth.

“Yep. Never know what you’ll meet in these woods.”

A bit farther, we encountered several eight-inch-diameter trees. I fired up the chain saw and cut them off as close to the ground as I could. Some were 30 feet tall, so we attached the cable and dragged them to the side of the road. My clumsiness abated a bit, but progress was slow. We inched forward until we reached a small stream.

Dan said, “good place to camp.” He reclined the front passenger seat and climbed in. His snores were loud enough to frighten any wildlife away. I set up a one-man tent, crawled in, and was asleep in seconds. I woke with the sense of having heard a sound, a small sound very close or a loud sound very far away. Dream memory did not preserve the sound itself, only the sense of being awakened. I listened intently for a long time, but did not hear it again.

In the morning, the road began to angle upward. It narrowed. The bank on the right side pushed us ever closer to the edge of a precipice. Distant mountain ranges, rank on rank, marched away to the horizon. The sky sprouted white cotton-ball clouds which drifted majestically above.

The valley of chartreuse, which is the way I will always think of it, shrunk, a small green patch enclosed in giant grey walls, an enchanted garden. Trees became sparse and stunted as we approached and passed timberline. Progress became even slower, hindered by rock falls and boulders. We shoveled the rock falls over the edge of the precipice and watched as the small stones and dirt cascaded down the mountainside, picking up stones and dirt along the way inline landslides. Some boulders appeared to be purposely placed to obstruct travel. With great difficulty, we maneuvered these to the edge of the road and sent them tumbling hundreds of feet into the forest below. Some caught on a switchback far

below. We knew that meant we would have to clear them when we retraced our route.

“There it is,” Dan said, as we rounded a final bend. A huge, inverted cone of earth and broken stone blocked our view of the mountaintop.

“That will take a lot of digging,” I said.

“For sure.”

We stopped, turned off the engine, and opened the windows. Only the ticking of the cooling engine broke the silence. A breeze fluttered the grass, a faint sigh of pain or pleasure.

“Look,” said Dan, pointing. A trace of smoke rose above the ridge to our left. We exited, closing the doors with caution.

I pointed, indicating a faint trail which led to an overlook above the smoke. We followed it. Despite careful treads, we often sent small stones skittering across the scree into the valley below. The mouth of the mine yawned open above us, the silent scream of a wounded mountain. We stopped often, listening. We heard no human or animal sound, only the soft soughing of a gentle zephyr playing across jagged stone or through the harp strings of grass tufts.

Reaching the top of the ridge, we flattened to our bellies and peered down the slope into a ravine. A rough stone structure, roofed with logs and pine boughs filtered faint wisps of smoke into the quiet air.

“Doncha move an inch!” The command floated to us through thin mountain air from the mouth of the cave above. “I gotcha covered.”

We obeyed.

Footsteps approached, each step sending tiny avalanches of pebbles against our boots.

“I knowd somun wud come alookin’ for us one day.” Came a voice with an indeterminate accent.

“Are yuh cops?”

“No,” I said. “We’re just out looking around for the fun of it.”

“Mighty determined fer sumun just lookin’ fer the fun o’ it. Been watchin’ you fur two days. Knowd yuh was aimin’ tuh com up here. I ain’t as dumb as he says I am.”

“He?” Dan asked.

“Felix. He’s down in the cabin. Can’t talk much since...”

“What happened to him?” I asked.

“Waal, I spose it don’t hurt none to tell you boys, since yer dead anyway. Yuh see, we brung the stash from the heist up here to divvie it up. Jack Horner wanted to cut me out, but Felix stuck up fer me. They argued. Jack pulled a knife on Felix. Felix shot ‘im.”

“Then I saw sumpthin’ I never dreamed I’d see in Felix’s eyes. I thought he was my friend. He turned toward me, a little smile playin’ around his mouth and pointed his gun at me. ‘No, Felix,’ I says. He laughed. ‘It would all be mine, then,’ he says. I wuz allus quicker’n him. I hit him up side the head with the ax handle I alus carried. He fell to his knees then flat out on the ground. Didn’t kill ‘im, just knocked ‘im out cold. I tied ‘im up so’s he couldn’t get away. See, I’m smarter than yuh think.” He paused in his monologue. We heard him cock a rifle.

“Them’s Jack’s bones over there.”

We didn’t look.

“Built the shack down yonder. Ben takin’ care of him ever since. Can’t quite figger out what to do, so jist stayed here. He ain’t right in the mind hisself, so he ain’t no danger no more. He can eat and poop and say a few words but that’s ‘bout all that’s left o’ ‘im. He was my friend once and fer that I take care of ‘im, but there wuz no call tuh kill me.”

“May we stand up now?” I asked.

“Cain’t see how it wud hurt nun. Go ‘head, stand up.”

We stood and turned toward him. He was a mountain of a man, still strong, with a wiry strength in long, taut muscles, though he must have been near 80. He lifted the rifle to his shoulder, aimed at my chest and pulled the trigger. The hammer clicked. He swore. I blinked, unexpectedly alive. He worked the bolt. An empty cartridge ejected. He swore again. We turned and ran down hill. He didn’t follow.

Grinding our way downhill, dan asked, "What should we do? If we tell the police, they'll want to know what we were doing up there. If we don't, then our expedition is over."

I watched small stones fall hundreds of feet, pushed over the edge by our tires. Riding on the outside edge of the Rover, was a much more intense experience. I found it hard to concentrate on our future. Death was far too close. "How about we turn this rig back in, get rid of the stuff, then take a bus east toward Nebraska. Somewhere along the way there must still be a pay phone, maybe in a bus station or lunch stop. We could call the FBI Then get a bus back to Denver. We could fly back to Portland from there."

Dan thought for a minute. "Sounds good. No tracks. If they capture them, it should be on the news, I would think. Once we see that the fuss has died down, we can come back and explore without interference. Probably take a couple of years before they stop watching the place, but we can wait that long."

"You can wait that long. I'm out of a job, remember?"

"True, true." He took his eyes from the road and glanced at me.

My fingernails left half-moons in the leather of the dashboard.

"Tell you what. I'll hire you on in my office someplace. You've surely picked up some skills working at that thrift shop of yours. Can you type?"

"Sure, but you may not want to put me in your typing pool. I've got a master's in business from Stanford."



He chuckled. "Yer not as stupid as yuh look, sonny," he drawled, imitating our erstwhile mountain host.

I grinned.

The long and the short of it is that we went back two years later. The FBI trumpeted the arrests as if they found Fritz all on their own. They claimed diligent cold-case sleuthing finally tracked down the wanted men. Felix died in a nursing home a year after his arrest. No one knew the name of his sidekick. He didn't seem to know it himself, according to the papers. He was convicted in Federal court and remains in a Federal prison.

Long story short, we never found the gold. We destroyed their cabin and dug deep underneath until we came to bedrock. We explored the mine, tearing down every wall that seemed to be built of loose stone. Every gallery ended in a blank wall. Despondent, we haphazardly dug exploratory holes in the mine tailings. That cured me of treasure hunting.

I fell in love with the place as Dan, Felicity, and I explored. You're right, I haven't introduced Felicity yet. She worked in his office, one of his Veeps. Few would call her beautiful. She's more the girl-next-door type. She has a steel-trap mind. Ours was a stormy courtship. She is, shall I say, rather headstrong. That trait intrigued me and drew something out of me that had never known of myself. We butted heads for a year over work, over dinners, which she refused to let me call a date.

"OK, Les," she said one day. "You win. Yes, I'll admit it, I love you, but I hate it that I love you."

We were married six months later. We built a cabin on the opposite side of the mountain from mine and memories. The view is spectacular, looking west over

jagged Rocky-mountain peaks. Sunset turns their snow-capped peaks pink then crimson. We outfitted the rustic home with enough electronic gear to outfit a Navy destroyer. From here, in late spring through early fall, we each do our jobs for Dan. Before first snowfall, we head down the mountain back to the real world and our cubicle offices.

The charity is doing well under the leadership of my former volunteer and the donations from Dan's company and our paychecks. They have expanded to a full-time food pantry, have a shelter for battered women, training facilities for helping educate the homeless, and have three dormitories for men, women, and couples with children. I now volunteer one day a week there as a guidance counselor. My heart is still there, not in the corporate world.

It's spring as I write this. Snow lingers in the shade of rocks. It was late in melting this year because of the heavy snow pack.

I woke early, this morning. The shadow of "our" mountain crept up the flanks of the nearest mountain to the west. The first birds of spring sing their joy of life. Mating will begin soon, then nest watching and the newly fledged hatchlings. They are fun to watch, a major distraction to work. Badgers appear, stretching and yawning their new wakefulness into life. The shrill piping of Rock coneys echoes from hard rock walls.

I stretch and yawn then turn over to cuddle Felicity, placing my hand on her belly. Come August, we will be parents. I feel her kicking against my hand as Felicity sleeps. There is no need for gold when I hold my girls.

Bio: Winslow E. Parker is retired and lives with his wife of 50 years in Portland, Oregon. He has, during his work years, been a hospital chaplain, school teacher (which taught him more than he taught), associate pastor, Mental-health tech, social worker and finally an adaptive technology instructor at the Oregon

Commission for the Blind. He flunked Freshman comp the first time around and did not begin to write seriously until 2007. Since then, he has self-published several books, including *Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence* a book of short stories and *Hitler's Hell* a book of iconoclastic Christian theology. This year, after joining Behind Our Eyes, (BOE) an on-line group of writers with disabilities, he wrote his first poem, "Tears," at the suggestion of another member. Always delighting in word manipulation, he finds BOE a receptive and welcoming environment in which to sharpen his quill.

## ## Social Distancing

By Marie Lyons, Publicity Chair, ACBWN

Social distancing sounds like a simple concept, and for most people it is. There is one group in society for whom it is challenging. Those are the members of the public who are blind and visually impaired. Yet, this group of people wishes to comply. First of all, although guide dogs are amazing, they don't understand social distancing. The mobility cane used by some is not long enough to make the 6 feet required for social distancing. These citizens require some help from the public in order to comply. I'll give you an example. I visited a doctor's office and was standing in the wrong place. I was told to stand behind the red line, which I couldn't see. Fortunately, another patient who was standing behind me spoke up and told the clerk that I was using a guide dog. That was quite helpful as another clerk said she would help me as she had seen me before. So, when you see someone who is blind or visually impaired and they aren't observing social distancing kindly let them know when they are getting too close. We all want to do our part to stop the spread of the virus.

## ## American Council of the Blind of New York, Inc.

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The following is the most up to date list of members of the 2021 ACBNY Board of Directors. Please contact President Karen Blachowicz

[karenablachowicz@gmail.com](mailto:karenablachowicz@gmail.com) or Secretary/newsletter editor, Annie Chiappetta at [editor@acbny.info](mailto:editor@acbny.info)

Beginning January 1, 2021

#### Officers

Karen Blachowicz, President [karenablachowicz@gmail.com](mailto:karenablachowicz@gmail.com) ) 716.510.4560

Nancy Murray, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President [nancy.murray1947@gmail.com](mailto:nancy.murray1947@gmail.com) 518.330.7459

Jean Mann, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President [jmann40@nycap.rr.com](mailto:jmann40@nycap.rr.com) 518.640.9572

Michael Golfo, Treasurer [mssg74@gmail.com](mailto:mssg74@gmail.com) 914.631.4870

Annie Chiappetta, Secretary [anniecms64@gmail.com](mailto:anniecms64@gmail.com) 914.393.6605

#### Board of Directors

Capital District: Michael O'Brien [m.obrien@samobile.net](mailto:m.obrien@samobile.net) 518.272.0905

Greater New York: Fitz Martin 718.536.4300 [fitzmartin@willpowerent.com](mailto:fitzmartin@willpowerent.com)

Guide Dog Users of the Empire State: Meghan Parker [mparker@ilny.org](mailto:mparker@ilny.org)  
914.417.8651

Long Island: Rosanna Beaudrie: [rosannab40@aol.com](mailto:rosannab40@aol.com) 516.661.1875

Rochester: Ann K. Parsons [akp@portaltutoring.info](mailto:akp@portaltutoring.info) 585.787.1716

Utica: Carl Gage [carlgage8@gmail.com](mailto:carlgage8@gmail.com) 518.470.5705

Westchester: Rodney Stanford [Rodney.stanford@gmail.com](mailto:Rodney.stanford@gmail.com) 516.417.4707

NYSCCLV: Bill Murray: [bill.murray52@icloud.com](mailto:bill.murray52@icloud.com) 518.452.3500

RSVNY: Alex Meister [Alexmeister@verizon.net](mailto:Alexmeister@verizon.net) 716.998.1602

ACB of Western New York: Ian Foley [ianfoley206@hotmail.com](mailto:ianfoley206@hotmail.com) 716.892.1983

Member at Large: open

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