



PERISCOPE

**A Quarterly Newsletter sponsored by the
Mississippi Council of the Blind, Inc.**

Summer, 2024

President: Jane Peets
312 Lakebend Drive, Brandon, MS 39042
Telephone: 769-257-4515
Email: janepeets@yahoo.com

Editor: Alison Smitherman
1412 Wilhurst St., Jackson, MS 39211
Telephone: 601-331-8084
Email: amduo@bellsouth.net; alisonb_58@yahoo.com

Tax deductible contributions may be sent to:
MS Council of the Blind

P O Box 134
Clinton, MS 39060

Anyone wishing to remember the MS Council of the Blind in a last will and testament may do so by including a special paragraph for that purpose. If your wishes are complex, please contact MCB for clarification.

Contributions to the James Doyle Case Memorial Scholarship Fund or to the Carter Gable Memorial Technology Assistance Fund should be appropriately marked and sent to the above address.

Phone MCB at 769-257-4515.

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by Alison Smitherman

Welcome to the Summer, 2024 issue of the Periscope. We hope you enjoy reading it.

I would like to thank each of you who submitted articles for this issue as well as those who were responsible for formatting and distributing the newsletter. We couldn't get it done without you.

Please note that the deadline for submitting articles for the Fall, 2024 issue of the Periscope is **August 21, 2024**. Articles received after this date will not be included in the newsletter.

As always, I appreciate the hard work each of you does to help us with our newsletter, and I look forward to receiving your wonderful articles for future issues of the Periscope.

I look forward to seeing some of you at the ACB Conference & Convention in July.

Have a safe and enjoyable Summer!

President's Message
by Jane Peets

Hello, everyone.

As you know, MCB held its one-day convention on 04/27. I would like to express my appreciation to Vice President Pshon Barrett and to Recording Secretary Ralph Smitherman for their work in providing our program speakers. For those who were unable to attend, our speakers were: Dorothy Young, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind, J. D. Burns of MS Library Commission, Pam Dollar, Director of Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities, Cindy Hollis of ACB and Pshon Barrett concerning the ABLE program.

Our business meeting was held following lunch with election of Pshon Barrett to the office of vice president and two three-year board members: Gary Cooper and Billy Mayfield.

A resolution passed to request the MS Library Commission to have Dr. Michael Gandy's books added to the NLS BARD talking book collection.

As you know, the ACB national convention is being held in Jacksonville, Florida, from July 5-12. I will be attending in person as MCB's delegate, Ralph Smitherman will be our alternate and Ken Maddox will be our representative to the nominating committee. The convention is hybrid again this year, so if you are interested you can still participate without going in person.

Thanks so much for your continuing interest and support.

MCB 2024 Convention Highlights
by Ralph Smitherman

On Saturday, April 27, 2024, our convention was held at the Holiday Inn Trustmark in Pearl, Mississippi.

The morning session began at 9 AM, central time. We opened with an Invocation given by Kenneth Reed. We stood and gave the Pledge of Allegiance. President Peets welcomed all attendees, and Rene Virden presented the Treasurer's report. The presenters were: Dorothy Young, Pam Dollar, J. D. Burns, Cindy Hollis, Alison Smitherman, Ralph Smitherman, and Pshon Barrett. After the morning gathering, we enjoyed a very good lunch.

After lunch we held our annual business meeting. President Jane Peets called the meeting to order. The minutes from the 2023 annual business meeting were read and approved. The Treasurer's report--which was read during the morning session--was approved. Committee and Chapter reports were given. The membership voted to give one \$2,000 scholarship each year; with applications to be presented each year. A Resolution concerning books by Michael Gandy as to getting them on BARD was adopted. The ACB 2024 convention delegates from Mississippi are: delegate, Jane Peets; alternate delegate, Ralph Smitherman; nominating committee representative, Ken Maddox. Pshon Barrett was elected as Vice-President; Billy Mayfield and Gary Cooper were elected as three-year Board members. We stood adjourned.

After the annual business meeting MCB held an auction; and thanks go to all who participated, whether bringing an item or bidding on an item. Seven door prizes were given throughout.

MCB Officers and Board Members

June 1, 2024 - May 31, 2025

Submitted by Ralph Smitherman

OFFICERS:

President: Jane Peets, 2023 - 2025, first term full

Cell: 769-257-4515
Email: janepeets@yahoo.com

Vice-President: Pshon Barrett, 2024 - 2025, first term full
Cell: 601-613-6755
Email: pshonb@comcast.net

Recording Secretary: Ralph Smitherman, 2023 - 2025, first term full
Cell: 601-672-0973
Email: redbird26@bellsouth.net

Corresponding Secretary: Wanda Allen, 2023 - 2025, second term full
Cell: 601-720-4237
Email: wandacallen64@gmail.com

Treasurer: Rene Virden, 2023 - 2025, fourth term full
Cell: 601-937-5461
Email: rvirden40@gmail.com

BOARD MEMBERS:

1-year: Kris McNair, 2022 - 2025, second term full
Cell: 601-606-2987
Email: kris.mcnair@att.net

1-year: Alison Smitherman, 2022 - 2025, first term full
Cell: 601-331-8084
Email: amduo@bellsouth.net

2-year: Ken Maddox, 2023 - 2026, first term full

Cell: 601-937-0025

Email: madpak3@comcast.net

2-year: Alvin Daniels, 2023 - 2026, second term full

Cell: 601-813-1424

Email: adaniels121@icloud.com

3-year: Billy Mayfield, 2024 - 2027, first term full

Cell: 601-454-2004

Email: billymayfield@comcast.net

3-year: Gary Cooper, 2024 - 2027, first term full

Cell: 601-214-9683

Email: gary.cooper1209@gmail.com

CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVES:

MCBNM:

JACKSON:

MCB Resolution 2024-001

Requests the Director of MLCTBS Contact NLS and Submit Dr. Gandy's Books

Whereas, Dr. Michael J. Gandy served as a past Director of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind, Mississippi

Department of Rehabilitation Services, for twelve years and served as a former President of National Council of State Agencies for the Blind; and

Whereas, Dr. Gandy is a prolific author of mystery novels and has been sharing his writings with readers nationally and internationally via email for the past thirty years; and

Whereas, Dr. Gandy has personally recorded seventy-four mysteries and two nonfiction works, and has donated his recordings to the Mississippi Library Commission Talking Book Services (MLCTBS) for distribution to patrons who are print impaired; and

Whereas, Dr. Gandy has contributed over ninety books to Bookshare.org, an organization which distributes books and periodicals to readers who are print impaired, and has self-published numerous books on Amazon Kindle; and

Whereas, Dr. Gandy has continued to demonstrate a commitment to readers who are blind or visually impaired by serving as an active member of Friends of Handicapped Readers, a Mississippi non-profit corporation supporting the works of the MLCTBS;

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Mississippi Council of the Blind at its annual convention assembled on the 27th Day of April, 2024, that this organization requests that the Director of the MLCTBS contact the appropriate person at the National Library Service for the Print Impaired, Library of Congress

("NLS") and take all necessary steps to convert and submit Dr. Gandy's books for inclusion in the National Library Service talking book collection; and

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent to the director of MLCTBS, the Executive Director of the Mississippi Library Commission, the Chair of the Board of the Mississippi Library Commission, and the director of collection development at NLS.

Adopted.

Ralph Smitherman, Recording Secretary

In Loving Memory – Peggy Maddox
by Alison Smitherman

As you may have heard by now, since the printing of our past Periscope, MCB has lost a beloved member and friend, Mrs. Peggy Maddox. Peggy passed away on March 2nd at the age of 87.

Peggy was a charter member of MCB and served in various roles on the MCB Board as well as on committees. She also served for many years as administrator for MCB's transportation fund. Peggy loved being a part of MCB.

Peggy was also a long-time member of both the Jackson Metro and Reservoir Lions Clubs.

Peggy loved her family to the fullest and had more children than she could count, even though she only gave birth to three. Everyone claimed Peggy as their mother, and both Michael and I are proud to have been two of her “adopted” children. We always felt welcome in her home, which was filled with much laughter, happy fellowship, and delicious food.

Our deepest heartfelt sympathies go out to Rene, Ken, Jeff, and all of Peggy’s extended family during this time of great loss.

Peggy, “Mama,” thank you for your service to MCB and for giving us many wonderful memories. We will miss you!

Gary L. Austin

American Council of The Blind Angel Wall Tribute 2024

Submitted by Pshon Barrett

It is with deep honor that the members and friends of the Mississippi Council of the Blind (MCB) and the American Association of Visually Impaired Attorneys (AAVIA) share our admiration and respect for our beloved colleague and friend, Gary Austin. We are proud to memorialize his life and recognize him with a deserving place on the ACB Angel Wall.

For most of his career, Gary was engaged in the general practice of law in Indianola, MS, where he also distinguished himself by serving as the elected county attorney and city prosecutor, all while operating a catfish farm. In addition to being an active member of his local community, he also served in various leadership positions in MCB and AAVIA, including president of both organizations.

Gary was a fun loving, caring friend to many who knew him, and we will always remember his sense of humor and storytelling. He had a remarkable memory for details about people and events in the past. He loved to discuss access technology and was always eager to try out a new piece of technology or gadget and share his experience with others.

Gary was a devoted father and husband and was very proud of the accomplishments of his children. His memory and legacy will live on in the hearts of those who had the privilege of knowing him. As we reflect on his life, we are compelled to recognize that the world is a better place and our lives have been immensely enriched because we have walked the path with Gary Austin.

Jackson Chapter News
by Ken Maddox, President

Hello, everyone.

The Jackson Chapter folks enjoyed the face-to-face State Convention, and we made a little money for the chapter with our 50/50 drawing. Ninety-five dollars (\$95) dollars was raised for the chapter and for one lucky attendee.

We are planning a social for the month of June; look for more information on this later.

Our board met on May 21 by conference call. The chapter has \$4082.18 in the bank and a CD worth \$11,295.16. We have 60 members with 4 of them being new.

Hope to see y'all at our June social.

NRTC Recruiting Participants for Career Mentoring Survey

The NRTC is conducting a survey about career mentorship experiences and employment. Help us identify characteristics of successful mentoring relationships and the factors that shape the quality of mentoring relationships. Your input matters, whether your experiences were positive or not.

The study is open to people with blindness or low vision, between ages 30 and 70, and who have received career mentorship. The survey will take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete and can be conveniently accessed on your computer or mobile device.

As a token of our appreciation, qualified participants who complete the survey may enter a drawing for a chance to win one of three \$100 gift cards.

For additional information or assistance, please contact Jamie Boydston (jboydstun@colled.msstate.edu) or call 662-325-2001.

A Surprise for River

by Jane Peets

On April 3rd Wanda James and I traveled to Ellisville, MS. Our mission was to deliver a Perkins Braille writer to a five-year-old student of South Jones Elementary School. River Autry was born blind and is being raised by her grandmother, Joyce Batton.

Several months ago, I received a phone call from Anita Fleming, President of the Ellisville Lyons Club. She had been referred by Ralph Smitherman to ask if MCB could help provide a Braille writer for River. As you all will know from previous issues of the Periscope, Betty Dement donated three Braille writers that had been given to the Late Luther Dement, long time member of the Pine Belt Chapter and of MCB. These machines were sent to Mr. John Harden in Daytona, FL, to be cleaned and

refurbished. One of the machines was a washout, too far gone to be refurbished and was not a Perkins Braille, so the parts were not available. Two were able to be refurbished. We took one of these to River.

Wanda and I went to the school office thinking we would just meet with Anita and Joyce to deliver the Braille, but it turned into a real event. The principal of the school, the coordinator of special education for the school district and River's Braille teacher were also on hand to see this special student get her own Braille. River was called to the office. You know, that is a little scary for any student. She asked her teacher if she was in trouble. Her teacher asked her if she could think of any reason why she might be in trouble. She said she couldn't, so that was OK. When River came into the conference room, we all told her our names so she would know who was present. I told her we had some surprises for her. She was very excited to get the Braille. Her SPED Coordinator also had a new hot pink mobility cane for her. River then asked, "Is that all?"

It was such a pleasure for Wanda and me to see this beautiful little child receive something that can make a difference in her life. She is doing well in her Braille class, and I feel sure that having her own Braille at home can only accelerate her progress. This embodies our motto, "Improving today for tomorrow."

Patricia Austin has also donated three Perkins Brailles to be given to someone who needs them, an electric Braille, a jumbo Braille and a regular Perkins Braille. Let's keep this project

going. If you know of any Perkins Brailers that are just sitting around gathering dust and in a condition to be refurbished, let me know.

Dots Everywhere!

by DeAnna Quietwater Noriega

When I lost so much vision that I could no longer see clearly enough to read print, I was a sad little girl, because my great grandfather taught me to read at three. Learning braille gave me back a way to dive again into the magic of books.

My mother taught me how to sew. A stitch called a French knot made it possible for me to create markings on headbands, socks, and the labels of clothing. I have made French knot braille labels that way ever since. They are inexpensive to make, go right through the washer and dryer and if they start to come loose, are easily repaired. To make a French knot, is almost as simple as knotting a thread. Wind the thread around a finger several times. Rub the threads back and forth, slip the finger out of the loops and pull the free end with the needle on it taut. A larger knot will result. Put the tip of the needle through fabric and pull through, leaving the oversized knot on one side. Run the needle back through the fabric and the knot and back through the knot and fabric to stitch it firmly in place. You now have one dot. Tie it off and cut on the underside of the cloth. Make another French

knot in relation to your first dot and continue filling in the dots to make a letter or several to make a label. Usually, two letters are enough to identify colors. For example, I mark black with (B K), blue with (B L), beige with (B G), burgundy with (B U), and brown with (B R). This amount of braille is easy to hide on a clothing tag or the seam at the back of a hair band. If you match the color of the thread to the color of the garment, they blend in and hardly show.

Gum drops, jellybeans, or M and M candies can make writing braille on cupcakes, cookies, or birthday cakes easy.

I once helped my brother design a silver bracelet with a woman's birthstones spelling out "I Love You." Since her birthday was in January, we decided to make the bracelet embossed with a vine with leaves and spelled the message with garnets for berries on the embossed silver vine. With a little planning, and creativity, almost anything can be brailled!

I Made A Butterfly **by Larry Johnson**

Let me begin by saying that I have been using braille all of my life, well since I was six years old anyway, which is now more than 80 years, and I think I am considered a good braille reader, and writer for that matter. I use contracted braille and have

pretty much mastered UEB although I don't much like all those silly symbols for quotation marks, bolding, underlining, etc. I also do a fairly good job of reading and understanding braille maps, charts and geometric designs.

But when it comes to recognizing embossed pictures and drawings created with raised lines and dots, I am at a total loss. A couple of years ago I went with a group of other blind folks to the San Antonio Museum of Art. Wanting to make the museum experience a more enjoyable and accessible one for us, they had reproduced on paper some of the oil paintings using embossed lines and dots. They even tried to depict the colors by changing the height of the raised lines and dots. A really valiant effort. The museum docent took my hand and traced my finger across the page excitedly telling me that this was the woman's blue velvet skirt. "This is the purple blouse she has on," he said, "and, if you try really hard perhaps you can feel the beautiful gold chain around her neck." I said: "Oh yes. Fascinating." In truth, I had no understanding of or experience with flat line drawings of people or things. I was a tridimensional kind of person. To show me what a dinosaur looks like, or the Eiffel Tower, put a miniature replica in my hands. But a bunch of squiggly embossed lines and dots on a piece of paper were pretty much meaningless to me.

At least they were until last June, when I was invited to join the Saturday afternoon community call of Braille Together. Hosting the event was Dorlyn Catron. She was extremely gracious and very welcoming to all newcomers. She said: “Okay, today we’re going to make a butterfly.” And then she proceeded to take us step by step through the process, line by line, braille cell by braille cell, using our Perkins braille writers. And here is how it went.

Line 1, Space twice then braille the wh sign (Dots 1, 5, 6) space once, then braille the letter s.

Line 2, braille the letters s, c, then the wh sign, (dots 1, 5, 6), then a lower g (dots 2, 3, 5, 6), then the letters s, c and then the wh sign (dots 1, 5, 6).

Line 3, braille the letter o, space once, then (dots 4, 5, 6) followed by the full braille cell (dots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), then the letter l, space once and then the ow sign (dots 2, 4, 6).

Line 4, braille the gh sign (dots 1, 2, 6), followed by (dots 3, 6), then the ar sign (dots 3, 4, 5), then the letter g, then the gh sign (dots 1, 2, 6), followed by (dots 3, 6), and ending with the ar sign (dots 3, 4, 5).

I studied what I had made a long while. It didn’t feel like a butterfly to me. But then I have never felt a butterfly. “The two little braille symbols on the top line, the wh sign and the letter s, are its antennae.” Dorlyn explained. Sceptically I decided to

show my braille picture to my grand-daughter, without telling her what it was. She squealed in delight. “Grandpa, you made a butterfly.”

Wow! I did indeed. It’s a whole new perceptual experience for a totally blind person to be able to interpret flat line drawings. It’s a skill I had never been taught. I hope today’s braille teachers are teaching blind children how to see pictures and drawings in braille.

I learned that there are two books which can teach you how to create braille drawings using your Perkins braille writer or slate and stylus. One is called “So What About Drawing? Instructions for Drawing Using a Braille Writer” by Marie Porter. The other is “Drawing With Your Perkins Braille” by Kim Charlson.

You can cleverly create more than three dozen drawings or pictures using braille, and if you are sufficiently patient and ambitious you can create even more on your own.

I am very grateful to Dorlyn for introducing my fingers to a whole new world with which, until now, I’ve been totally “out of touch”.

“Just because a man lacks the use of his eyes doesn’t mean he lacks vision.” – Stevie Wonder