**Attachment 1**

**Script by Susan Harrell, Tuscumbia Lions Club**

**Tour of Ivy Green, Birthplace of Helen Keller, and tour of Lions Club Memorial**

Hello Lions. I am Susan Harrell and I do tours at the Helen Keller Birthplace and I am so happy today to be telling you more about Helen Keller. I am also happy to report that I am a member of the Tuscumbia Lions Club and the incoming President. As you know, Helen was a wonderful, wonderful lady. Now I am standing in front of her home at Ivy Green. In case you ever wondered why it was called Ivy Green and still named Ivy Green today was because when it was built 201 years ago in 1820, it was a lot of English Ivy growing on this property so it was named Ivy Green. Now today we are down to 10 areas but ivy continues to grow everywhere – sometimes it even grows up through the 200-year-old pine floors in the house. Beautiful gardens that Helen loved - as we walk around today. The azaleas are blooming and many other plants.

Now Helen, as you know was born with vision and hearing. She was born in 1820 – excuse me – the house was in 1820. She was born in 1880 and was born in the little cottage that we will be touring over to the right of the property. Now when Helen Keller was born, she had normal vision and hearing. It wasn’t until she was 19 months old that she had a high fever. The fever lasted for several days and when it broke it left Helen totally deaf and totally blind. The doctors back in that day called it a brain type fever but more modern doctors believe that she had either meningitis or scarlet fever. So, for several years the family had no idea how to help Helen. They didn’t know how to train a deaf-blind individual. Fortunately, they did have money so every doctor they would hear of, they would carry Helen by train to see that doctor. But there was nothing though the doctors could do. So, each year Helen was getting more and more mischievous. When she was 6 years old, her little sister, Mildred, was born and she dumped her out of the cradle. Well, it didn’t hurt the baby fortunately but that was a wakeup call for the family.

They were very concerned of what in the world was to become of Helen. Then they heard about Alexander Graham Bell of all people. Now everyone usually knows that Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, but most don’t realize that he was first and foremost a teacher of the deaf. He was married to a lady who was deaf and even his mother had a severe hearing loss. When he invented the telephone, Alexander Graham Bell was working on communications devices for the deaf. So, after they took Helen to Washington DC by train to meet him, he informed the family that she did not need a doctor for help. He said Helen needs a teacher and he encouraged them to write to the Perkins School for the Blind which is still located near Boston, Massachusetts.

So, when they wrote there, Anne Sullivan happened to be finishing school at this Perkins school. Now the reason she was even at a school for the blind is because Anne Sullivan had a vision loss. In fact, in today’s terms, she would be considered legally blind. She had usable vision. Anne had a very-very sad childhood. She had been abandoned by her father after her mother passed away with tuberculosis. She and her little brother, Jimmy, were placed in a very dirty poor house about 30 miles from Boston in a town called Tewksbury. Her brother died there. Anne developed this eye disease due to the unclean environment she lived in and was never able to go to school before age 14. Someone, after she begged them, helped her go to the Perkins School for the Blind near Boston. So, at age 14, she starts to school. At age 20 Anne is finishing and that is when the Keller’s wrote a letter asking for help for Helen, Well, she agreed to come here. Now, I believe it was because of the $25 a month they were offering her which back in 1887 was a lot of money.

Now, the day Anne arrived here by train, the first thing she tried to teach Helen or at least introduce her to, was this manual alphabet that deaf individuals use. Helen, being deaf-blind, Anne signed into Helen’s hand. The very first word she signed to her that day was doll because Anne brought a doll with her. The children at the Perkins School had purchased it for Helen. So, she gives Helen the doll and signs D-O-L-L into Helen’s hand. Well Helen signs D-O-L-L right back to Anne again and this back-and-forth finger spelling went on between the two of them for the next month and two days.

The problem was, Helen thought they were playing a little finger game. She had no idea those words had meaning until the two of them were right outside the back door of this home at the water pump. Now we are going to be looking at the water pump here shortly, but that is where that Helen, one month and two days later on April 5, 1887, as Helen and Anne were at the water pump and that water was flowing over Helen hand, Anne was signing W-A-T-E-R over and over again and that is when it clicked with Helen. She had a flashback and she informed or later wrote about it; I should say – she realized that cool something flowing over her hand is what she remembered that she had called WA-WA.

So, when Helen was nine years old, Anne felt like she had taught Helen all she could in the homeplace, so she encouraged the family to let her take Helen away to other schools and they agreed with that. So, the two of them went back to the Perkins School for the Blind that Anne attended near Boston and then they went to the Horace Mann School for the Deaf that is still located in Boston. She was ten years old when she attended that school and that is when she decided she wanted to learn to talk.

Now Helen would learn by feeling the vibrations of the throat of the person speaking and at the same time, feel the way the mouth would move, the tongue movement as well as other facial features. It is interesting to me that her first sentence was “It is warm.” So, I guess it must have been warm in Boston that particular day.

Now, Anne was by Helen’s side all through high school. She went to a prep school to prepare for college, then Helen entered Radcliff College at the age of 20. Back in that day Harvard and Radcliff were separated. The men went to Harvard. Helen graduated Radcliff in four years with honors. In fact, she was the first deaf-blind person in the whole world to ever complete college. Now at some point her IQ was checked and it was genius level – 160. So that had to be how and why she picked up so quickly on everything.

Now once she graduated college, she started travelling and working and that is when she hired another lady named Polly Thomson as her personal secretary. Polly travelled with Helen and Anne and Polly is also the one that took over the role of Anne with Helen once Anne passed away. Anne died at the age of 70 in October of 1936. She had arrived here to start teaching Helen at the age of 20. So, 50 years is what she devoted to Helen. However, when the secretary, Polly died in 1960, she had been with Helen for 46 years. So, both of these ladies had devoted their life to Helen.

Helen lived to be almost 88 years old. She died eight years after the secretary passed away, 3 ½ weeks short of that birthday on June 1, 1968 and at Helens request, all three ladies – Helen, Anne and the secretary Polly, are entombed together in the National Cathedral in Washington DC. It is our understanding that Helen was invited to be placed there upon her death but she told them she would only agree to it if the other two ladies could join her because she said that was a thank you to them and that she would not have been able to do what she was able to do without their assistance.

Now we are in the house of the Helen Keller Birthplace. Eighty-five percent of the furniture you are about to see in this home you are about to see is original. Next door in the cottage, all of the furniture there is original but it never left the Keller family until 1952 and that is when the city of Tuscumbia purchased it. Two years later in 1954, it opened to the public and Helen was here for the last time. She was 74 years old and spoke to hundreds and hundreds of people out on the front lawn that day.

Now in the front bedroom, this is where the grandparents that built the home originally slept but when Helen was five years old, she and her mother and daddy quit sleeping in the cottage next door and this front bedroom is where the parents began sleeping. We will find Helen’s bedroom in a few minutes upstairs. The bed is very old – hand carved. Now that quilt on the bed is called a crazy quilt and it was made by Evelyn, Captain Keller’s sister that lived here.

The dresses hanging up are Helens at different ages of her life. There is also a picture of Helen above the fireplace at age 13 and then the picture of the man on the dresser is Helen’s little brother. Now he was born when Helen was 10 years old. His name was Phillips Brooks Keller. He became an engineer and raised his family in Dallas, Texas where his decedents continue to live today.

Now Helen also had two half brothers from her father’s previous marriage – James and Simpson. One married, one did not have children so there were no decedents, but they were also engineers. And then Helen had a little sister named Mildred that she had dumped out of the cradle and she was a teacher in Montgomery, Alabama. Her decedents live right here in Tuscumbia, so all of the family had very good jobs.

Next, we are going to look at the parlor. It is very formal furniture in the parlor. Now as you look in the parlor, these lamps – and really throughout the house – were oil lamps back then. There are two photographs over the red sofa on the left in the parlor. That is Helens great, great, great grandparents – three greats. Her grandfather has a long white wig on – Alexander Spotswood and his wife, Anna. He was an early colonial governor in Virginia and there is a lot still named after him in Virginia today. There is Captain Keller’s writing desk in there. Over the fireplace – not over the fireplace, but to the right of it – that is a beautiful stitch that the Keller ladies made – beautiful stitching used as a fire screen.

Now I have opened this closet because I wanted you to see how small it is because back in that day this was a pantry that Helen’s mother, Kate, stored dry goods in. Helen locked her mother in this pantry when Helen was five years old. Now this is almost two years before Annie Sullivan arrived to begin teaching her. This is also the first time that Helen knew what a key would do. We are talking about the skeleton key that stayed in the doors back in that day. Mom went into the pantry to get some dry goods. Helen turns that key, locks her mother in here and then goes and sits on the front porch steps and giggled and giggled about what was going on.

The reason we know this is because Helen wrote this in her first book. We actually sell her first book, “The Story of My Life,” here in the home place. She wrote 12 books in all but the first one is the only one still in publication. Now in the book, she went on to write the reason it was so funny to her that day is because even though she couldn’t hear her mother, she could feel her mother. The vibrations were so strong from all the noise of the pounding her mother was making trying to get out of this closet that day that it vibrated all the way out to the front porch where Helen was sitting and that was Helen’s entertainment.

Then she knew what to do with a key and so in a little bit you will be seeing Helen’s bedroom upstairs on the left and that is the bedroom she locked Anne Sullivan in the first day Anne arrived here. In fact, the whole family thought Anne Sullivan was upstairs resting from her three-day train trip only to realize when she never came back down, that she was locked in by Helen and the key was no where to be found. Now the key was later found and we do have it in what we call our museum now. So, we will have to get a shot of that in just a little bit as well. So needless to say, Helen Keller at a young age was quite mischievous.

Now we are going to look at the dining room. Most of you that have seen the Miracle Worker play or movie may remember the dining room scene. This is the first experience that Helen and Anne had together eating and Anne Sullivan could not believe how the parents would allow Helen to eat. But for all those years Helen just walked around the room eating with her hands off of everybody’s plate. That kept Helen happy and it was not a problem with she or the family but it was a real problem that day for Anne Sullivan. She kept moving Helen’s hand away from her plate assuming her parents were going to stop Helen but they never did.

Finally, Anne took action. When Helen came back around the table trying to grab her sausage off of it, that is when Anne slapped her on the hand and that is when war broke loose. Helen, at that point in her life had never be shown no – disciplined in any way. She growled out at Anne. Captain Keller was also upset with Anne. He said leave Helen be and give her what she wants. Obviously, that is what they had done all of those years because they did feel so sorry for Helen. Anne was very blunt, very outspoken. She informed the family that they had sent her here – brought her here to teach Helen and the discipline must go along with that. Then she wanted the whole family to leave the dining room so she could teach Helen how to properly eat.

Once the family left, Anne locked the two doors that adjoin this room and the food fight started. Now it lasted for several hours so it was a late lunch. When the family did return, the room was upside down as you could imagine; however, Helen had learned to sit down to eat with her spoon and even learned to fold her napkin. So, this was quite an accomplishment. The parents were pleased. So was Anne Sullivan; however, she realized that she needed to get Helen away from her parents, even if it was just for a short time in order to teach her properly. So, for two weeks she tried to convince the parents to let her take Helen off of this property – even to another state would have been wonderful, but they would not allow that.

That’s when she asked about the little house next door that Helen was born in. She wanted to use the house as a school house for Helen and the parents agreed with that for two weeks. So that Helen would not recognize where she was, they rearranged the furniture in the little cottage and then her parents rode Helen around and around the property by horse and buggy so she would think she’s far away. That way they could peep in on her next door. Now it was the last day that Helen and Anne had been at the cottage teaching that they were over at the water pump, as I shared with you earlier, when that water was flowing over Helen’s hand as Anne was signing W-A-T-E-R over and over again, that is when it all began – that is when the miracle at the pump began.

Now this room is what we use as a museum. It was originally slept in by Evelyn. This was Helen’s father’s sister that lived in the home and this statue that I am standing by now that is bronze – the artist made two of these and the other one is located in Washington DC in the Capital. In fact, every state has two states that represent their state and one of our statues for Alabama is Helen. Now this statue is the only one in Washington DC you are allowed to touch and that is because it has Braille on it. He had many dogs and there are pictures of her many dogs throughout her lifetime. She also met every President from Calvin Coolidge to John F. Kennedy and she was even good friends with Mark Twain. In fact, Mark Twain was the first person to ever call Anne Sullivan the Miracle Worker. That is why when William Gibson wrote the play that later became a movie, was named The Miracle Worker.

Now this is Helen’s bedroom that she moved into when she was five years old after leaving the little cottage with her parents. This is also the room, as I mentioned earlier that she locked Anne Sullivan in. The small bed was Helen’s bed. This double bed was brought in the Anne to sleep in. Of course, the window is the window that I mentioned earlier that Captain Keller had to climb with a ladder and rescue Anne because they had no idea where Helen had hid that key.

And this is the water pump where it all began when Helen realized that this cool something flowing over her hand that day is what she remembered that she called WA-WA.

Ok, now we are inside the cottage where Helen was born. This cottage is 201 years old. It was originally used as a office for the property but when Helens father married Helens mother, Kate Adams, he turned it into a bridal sweet for the two of them because it was so many extra people living in the home place. It was his two sons from his first wife’s marriage, plus his sister that lived in the home place. That is the cradle that was actually Helen’s cradle so many- many years old. This is where Helen was born and as I mentioned earlier this is where Anne brought Helen to teach her and she thought she was far away from here for that two weeks.

Now we are outside of the Helen Keller Home and we are going to be going to view the Memorial – The Lions Club Memorial for Helen Keller. You are going to be seeing the beautiful grounds. The Lions Club is the largest organization – as you all know since you are lions – in the whole world. As you may also know, it

Page 8

wasn’t until 1925 when Helen Keller spoke to the Lions Club at their International Conference in Ohio that the Lions club served blindness. This is our main mission, and we have a video over here playing – you may can hear it in the background. It is not Helen; it is a reenactment of the speech that she wrote and gave to them that day encouraging the Lions to become – to serve blindness. Many displays are located on the Lions walk. Now this particular one is from New Zealand.

This is the challenge that Helen Keller presented to the Lions Club that day in 1925 – “Will you not help me hasten the day when there shall be no more preventable blindness, no little deaf, blind child untaught; no blind man or woman unaided”? She went on to say, “I appeal to you Lions, you who have sight, your hearing, you who are strong and brave and kind. Will you not constitute yourselves Knights of the Blind in this crusade against darkness?” Helen Keller – that was June 30, 1925. Now we have a plaque here in memory of Helen Keller who inspired Lions to make sight their leading service project. It was erected by the Alabama Lions through the Alabama Sight Conservation Association in 1972. Right behind me is the video of the reenactment speech she gave to the Lions Club that day. Also, there are many displays inside this building and flags from all over the world.

Continuing on the Lions Walk, we have our latest statue that was erected in June of 2017 of Helen and Anne at the water pump. This beautiful display is made out of marble and it was made from a man from Sylacauga, Alabama. It was a four-year project.

Ok, we continue on the Lions Memorial. Now this walkway is full of people’s names and even businesses that have donated to the Lions Club Memorial. The bricks are $100 and placed at various locations on this walk and the monies for this go toward the upkeep of the memorial.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share Helen Keller’s Birthplace and the Lions Club Memorial with you today. It has been my pleasure.