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Newsletter of the National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico, published on www.nfbnm.org, on New Mexico Newsline, and on NFB Newsline.

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# PREAMBLE

The National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico (NFBNM) is a 501(c)(3) consumer organization comprised of blind and sighted people committed to changing what it means to be blind. Though blindness is still all too often a tragedy to those who face it, we know from our own personal experience that with training and opportunity, it can be reduced to the level of a physical nuisance. We work to see that blind people receive services and training to which they are entitled and that parents of blind children receive the advice and support they need to help their youngsters grow up to be happy, productive adults. We believe that first-class citizenship means that people have both rights and responsibilities, and we are determined to see that blind people become first-class citizens of these United States, enjoying their rights and fulfilling their responsibilities. The most serious problems we face have less to do with our lack of vision than with discrimination based on the public’s ignorance and misinformation about blindness. Join us in educating New Mexicans about the abilities and aspirations of New Mexico’s blind citizens.

(Adapted from NFB of Ohio newsletter.)

# NFB OF NEW MEXICO STATE CONVENTION POSTPONED

Dear Federation Family and Friends,

We, like you, have been monitoring the rapidly-developing issues related to COVID-19. With an abundance of caution, at this time we are postponing our state convention. While it is disappointing to postpone, it is imperative that we prioritize the health and safety of everyone involved.

At this time we are optimistic that the conference can be held on August 27-30, 2020. If you have already registered, we can simply transfer your registration to the rescheduled convention in August, if the new dates work for you.

As news and developments are changing quite rapidly, this too may cause a delay and or another rescheduled date. Please be patient with us as we get through this difficult time.

For up-to-date information on COVID-19, follow this link https://cv.nmhealth.org/

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may cause, and we look forward to greeting you in August.

Take care, and do not hesitate to contact Adelmo Vigil with any questions or concerns at nfbnewmexicopresident@gmail.com or

575-921-5422.

# NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND NATIONAL CONVENTION

Tuesday, July 14-Sunday, 19, 2020

Hilton Americas-Houston

1600 Lamar Street

Houston, Texas 77010

The National Federation of the Blind National Convention is the largest gathering of blind people in the world.

It is the premier event for training, support, and information for the blind community. It also serves as a governing body, democratically electing our leadership and establishing each year's organizational priorities.

Although the convention is open to all, our constitution states that only members of the NFB have the right to participate in decision-making when it comes to organizational policy. If you are not already a member, you can join the NFB today.

\*While the convention was originally planned for two weeks earlier, the Federation agreed to move its convention to accommodate activities in the city of Houston. We believe this change will further enhance the program, exhibits, and dynamic content provided at America's civil rights and resource convention of blind people and their families. More information regarding convention arrangements can be found in the December issue of the Braille Monitor.

The 2020 National Convention of the National Federation of the Blind will be held at the Hilton Americas-Houston hotel located in the heart of downtown Houston. Start planning your trip today and help us celebrate the eightieth anniversary of the NFB. See you in Houston.

Hotel Reservations

Room reservations at the Hilton Americas-Houston can be made starting January 1, 2020. More details to follow.

Registration

Online registration will open March 1, 2020. More details to follow.

More Information

More details regarding hotel reservations, registration, the agenda, the Kenneth Jernigan Convention Scholarship, and other special announcements are available at

<https://www.nfb.org/get-involved/national-convention>

For more information, please contact us at 410-659-9314 or nfb@nfb.org.

# COMMISSIONERS CONFIRMED: ART SCHREIBER AND DR. ROBERT REIDY GIVEN SPECIAL RECOGNITION

By Greg Trapp

On January 29, 2020, the New Mexico Senate did what it has not done for many years: confirm the three Commissioners of the New Mexico Commission for the Blind. The three Commissioners are each appointed by the governor, and must be confirmed by the state Senate. The three Commissioners had been serving as recess appointments, meaning that they were serving in expired terms and needed to be reappointed after the end of each legislative session. The Commissioners confirmed were Art Schreiber for a term ending December 31, 2022, Dr. Robert Reidy for a term ending December 31, 2024, and Shirley “Urja” Lansing for a term ending December 31, 2026. All three Commissioners received high praise during their confirmation hearings before the Senate Rules Committee. They also received unanimous favorable recommendations, which was itself an accomplishment, because at least one member of the committee had been uniformly voting “no” on all matters coming before the committee. This confirmation also brought something special, namely the recognition by the Senate of the extraordinary contributions to the State of New Mexico by Art Schreiber and Dr. Robert Reidy. The recognition came in the form of a pair of certificates. The certificate for Art Schreiber was introduced by Senator Jerry Ortiz y Pino, and the certificate for Dr. Reidy was introduced by Senator William Payne. They read as follows:

FIFTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE SECOND SESSION

January 28, 2020

SENATE CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

Certificate sponsored by Senator Gerald Ortiz y Pino, Senator Mary Kay Papen and Senator Peter Wirth

The New Mexico State Senate, Having Learned of the significant Contributions of Arthur A. Schreiber to the State of New Mexico, Does Hereby Extend its Appreciation and gratitude; and

WHEREAS, Arthur A. Schreiber came to New Mexico in 1981 to serve as general manager of KKOB radio, having previously worked as Washington bureau chief for Westinghouse Broadcasting and as a reporter, news director, national correspondent and general manager for radio stations across the country; and

WHEREAS, Arthur covered many of the most historic events of the 1960s, traveling with John F. Kennedy during his presidential campaign, covering the funeral of President Kennedy, traveling with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., covering President Lyndon B. Johnson and covering the early space missions; and

WHEREAS, Arthur covered the Beatles on their first cross-country tour of America, being one of five correspondents to travel with the band, leading to his spending many nights famously playing Monopoly with John Lennon and George Harrison; and

WHEREAS, less than one year after arriving in Albuquerque, Arthur lost his eyesight but continued as general manager of KKOB radio, and upon leaving KKOB, Arthur continued his radio career on other Albuquerque stations, concluding his broadcast career in 2011; and

WHEREAS, Arthur was appointed by Governor Toney Anaya as the first chair of the New Mexico Commission for the Blind in 1986, launching him on a new mission and purpose in life; and

WHEREAS, Arthur became the second executive director of the New Mexico Commission for the Blind in 1994, serving until December 31, 1996; and

WHEREAS, Arthur was appointed by Governor Gary Johnson to the Commission for the Blind State Rehabilitation Council in 2001, in which capacity he served as chair; and

WHEREAS, Arthur was reappointed to the New Mexico Commission for the Blind by Governor Bill Richardson in 2003; and

WHEREAS, Arthur has served numerous New Mexico organizations, including serving on the board of directors of Disability Rights New Mexico from 2013 to the present, serving as president of the National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico and serving on numerous other boards, such as the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government, the Better Business Bureau, the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science and the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce; and

WHEREAS, Arthur has received numerous awards and accolades, including the Columbia School of Journalism duPont Award, the New Mexico Broadcasters Association 1991 Broadcaster of the Year Award, the 2013 National Federation of the Blind Jacobus tenBroek Award and induction into the New Mexico Broadcasters Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, by being reappointed by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham to the New Mexico Commission for the Blind, Arthur continues his long and distinguished service to New Mexico;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that appreciation be expressed to Arthur A. Schreiber for his many efforts and accomplishments on behalf of persons who are blind or visually impaired.

Signed and Sealed at The Capitol, in the City of Santa Fe.

Mary Kay Papen, President Pro Tem

Senator Peter Wirth

Senator Gerald Ortiz y Pino

Lenore M. Naranjo, Chief Clerk

New Mexico State Senate

Fifty-Fourth Legislature, Second Session

January 27, 2020

SENATE CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

Certificate sponsored by Senator William H. Payne, Senator Mary Kay Papen and Senator Peter Wirth

The New Mexico State Senate, Having Learned of the significant Contributions of Dr. Robert W. Reidy, Jr. to the State of New Mexico, Does Hereby Extend its Appreciation and gratitude; and

WHEREAS, Robert W. Reidy, M.D., recently retired from a long and distinguished medical career that spanned over six decades as an ophthalmology specialist with Eye Associates of New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Reidy is a native of New Mexico with deep roots in the state, whose family first came to New Mexico in 1846; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Reidy is the grandson of Dr. John A. Reidy, a physician who came to New Mexico in 1904, and the son of Robert W. Reidy, Sr., a Second Judicial District Court judge who served in Bernalillo County; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Reidy graduated from Highland High School in 1960, then left New Mexico for the first time to attend Dartmouth College, graduating in 1964; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Reidy attended Cornell University Medical College and graduated with honors in 1968; and

WHEREAS, after graduation from medical school, Dr. Reidy served as a commander with the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps as an obstetrician, gynecologist and general medical officer on the Navajo Nation; and

WHEREAS, after finishing his service on the Navajo Nation, Dr. Reidy completed an ophthalmology residency and retina fellowship at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary and, at the request of the dean of the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, returned to Albuquerque to start the Ophthalmology Division at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, where he was the only trained retina specialist in New Mexico at the time; and

WHEREAS, with his appointment by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham as a commissioner on the New Mexico Commission for the Blind, Dr. Reidy continues his long and distinguished service to New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the chair of the New Mexico Commission for the Blind has lauded Dr. Reidy's contributions to the state, saying that he is honored to serve with Dr. Reidy on the Commission for the Blind, that Dr. Reidy's expertise as a retina surgeon preserved and improved the vision of countless thousands of New Mexicans and that Dr. Reidy's leadership has resulted in New Mexico having a greatly improved system of retina care;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the senate recognize Dr. Robert W. Reidy for his many efforts and accomplishments in providing exemplary eye care for countless New Mexicans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the senate express its sincere appreciation to Dr. Robert W. Reidy for continuing to serve the state as a commissioner on the New Mexico Commission for the Blind.

Signed and Sealed at The Capitol, in the City of Santa Fe.

Mary Kay Papen, President Pro Tem

Senator Peter Wirth

Senator William H. Payne

Lenore M. Naranjo, Chief Clerk

New Mexico State Senate

# SMOOTH SAILING

By Nancy Burns

While reflecting back on our recent cruise, several highlights come to mind. We cruised through the Bahamas and sailed toward the Panama Canal. Many fascinating facts surround this incredible Wonder of the World. One such fact is that the ship enters the canal from the Atlantic Ocean and exits into the Pacific. Thousands of workers died from malaria or injuries while working on this waterway. Hundreds of ships traverse this canal each day. Cruise ships, along with gigantic container ships, take turns entering and exiting the canal.

As Don and I stood on the bow of the ship, a fellow passenger described the scenery, which included jungle foliage. We were able to hear the chatter and grunting of a large gathering of monkeys. It boggles my mind to realize that we are actually cruising through the jungle. Our passenger friend then described the small trains, called mules, which pull the ships through the locks. It was a truly fascinating adventure, even though we have previously made this voyage. Don sailed through the canal three times on a Navy destroyer. He admits that he much preferred the cruise ship.

Prior to entering the canal, our ship docked at Aruba, a small and picturesque island. The tour guide was very helpful in describing the landscape. At one point he announced that Venezuela could actually be seen from where we stopped. The islanders speak their own unique language, which is a combination of English, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish. Another interesting fact is that the water in Aruba is actually ocean water which has been purified--quite good but quite expensive.

After leaving the Panama Canal, we entered the Pacific Ocean and sailed toward Puerto Caldera, Costa Rica in Central America. Costa Rica presents many opportunities to visit with residents and to experience the culture. Our tour bus took us through the rain forest and stopped at a Starbucks plantation. The plantation tour guide took us through each stage of growing, harvesting, and roasting, even in pouring rain. After returning to the tour bus, the guide explained that we would stop at a café for a traditional Costa Rican meal. It was there that I met one of our fellow passengers and her three children. I asked if her children might be interested in seeing the Braille alphabet. I wrote the alphabet and then a short sentence for them to decipher. It is rather unusual to have such an opportunity to discuss Braille. I always carry a slate and stylus for writing quick notes.

Our next stop was at the most incredible shop. It is called the Ox Cart shop and has an unusual history. Since the coffee plantations grow on the mountainside, heavy equipment is unable to make it up this mountainous terrain. Ox carts are still used to bring supplies up and take coffee down to lower ground. These talented Costa Ricans paint beautiful scenes on these carts, including on the 3-foot-diameter wheels. The shop is filled with a most incredible variety of brightly-painted vases, coasters, plates, and even coffee cups made of wood. Many Christmas gifts were purchased there.

Corinto, Nicaragua and Puerto Quetzalal, Guatemala were our two final ports in Central America. Both of these countries are rich in Mayan culture and history. This culture is reflected in the items made and sold there. The Mayan calendar was evident in many forms, including jewelry, hand towels and wall hangings. As always, we enjoyed conversing with the vendors, and they often asked questions about our white canes. We delight in sharing such information and hope it will somehow be beneficial.

Back onboard the ship, we were met with mixed comments about our ability to move about on this large ship. Don’s small amount of vision is helpful, of course, and we are both experienced cane users. With our love of travel and our travel skills, we were completing our fifteenth cruise. We always attempt to change the opinion of those who call us amazing. We met and socialized with several passengers who simply treated us as fellow travelers. For example, we enjoyed conversing with the couple who we met in the dining room on several occasions. Sandra was originally from England, and her husband Louis was originally from France. They are now both retired and reside in Florida. Of course, I seized upon the opportunity to explain about a person named Louis, also from France, who made a huge impact on my life. It is difficult to believe that another circumstance allowed me to discuss Braille. As often as we have cruised, I don’t believe the subject of Braille ever entered into a conversation.

On some of our past cruises, we have experienced stormy and rough seas, but this particular trip went very smoothly. The ship avoided any stormy weather during this journey. In addition to the dining room, these large ships offer the Ledo Deck, where food is available nearly around the clock. A Starbucks coffee shop as well as intimate, and rather pricey dining rooms are available with reservations only. As the ship travels from port to port, this provides some down time when we are able to just read or reflect. We consider ourselves fortunate in that we both love to explore new countries and just hang out together.

While docking in Huatulco and Puerta Vallarta, we again found fascinating shops to explore. In Puerta Vallarta we met a vendor who was selling Mezcal tequila. It was available with either the traditional worm or a scorpion. We moved along to the next shop. After departing from Mexico, our final port was, conveniently, San Diego, California on December 6. This gave us the opportunity to spend time with my sister and son for an early Christmas. Before flying back to Albuquerque, my son took us to In and Out Burgers, our favorite burger stop in California.

In addition to all of our fun adventures, we always leave the ship hoping that in some small way we have made a difference in the stereotypes held by the sighted public. The discussion of Braille is unusual on such a trip, but it just happened. Don and I also hope that by writing these words and sharing our experiences, it might inspire blind or visually impaired people to explore the unknown.

# TALES OF ADVENTURE AND ADVERSITY: A PROFESSOR AND ALUMNI PUBLISH BOOKS THAT EDUCATE FROM TWO PERSPECTIVES

Note: The following article appeared in the Winter 2019 issue of the UNM College of Education Newsletter and was written by Hilary Jetty. The picture was taken by Dr. Ruth Luckasson, J.D., Distinguished Professor, Chair, Department of Special Education, UNM College of Education.



Reading is at the core of education, and despite the proliferation of books available in online and audio formats, research shows that most people still prefer the satisfaction of turning pages. Two books with connections to UNM and the College of Education provide very different experiences for their readers; one is a whimsical introduction to UNM for children, the other a moving and inspiring memoir of living with the challenges of visual impairment.

Victory from the Shadows: Growing Up in a New Mexico School for the Blind and Beyond

Gary Ted Montague’s struggle to cope with a low vision disability forged his character. Raised on an isolated ranch east of Tucumcari, he was sent at age eight to be educated at what is now the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Alamogordo. Separated from his family, he was homesick, and resistant to learning Braille.

Gary’s grit and optimistic persistence enabled him to attend UNM in the late 1950’s, before the enactment of laws against discrimination and the development of policies requiring accommodations. He faced obstacles, including the acquisition of properly formatted classroom materials, accommodations for taking exams, and even the attitudes of some educators and administrators. Despite these challenges, Gary walked confidently without a cane through the UNM campus and graduated from the College of Education in 1960. He went on to a 32-year career at Sandia Labs.

Gary wrote Victory from the Shadows with his wife Elaine Carson Montague, a retired special education teacher and alumna of the College of Education, chronicling the difficulties of growing up as a differently-abled person in a time before society grew to understand the needs and capabilities of this population.

Through his experiences, readers are granted an expanded view of all people with special needs and the benefits of educational, medical and legal accommodations enabling them to reach their full potential.

“It’s important that parents of kids guide them,” Gary remarked, “so that people in the community see them not as freaks, but as people with feelings, just like anyone else.”

A labor of love, the book took nine years to write. It has been honored with the James McGrath Morris Silver Award for published non-fiction and was a finalist in the New Mexico/Arizona Book Awards. Elaine notes that it is already being used in teacher training programs and hopes to see that expand.

“This is an historical book,” she said. “Since most services are now provided by inclusion rather than separation, we wanted to present a realistic view of one man’s education at a residential school in mid-twentieth century America and to encourage colleges to provide resources. We also wanted to let today’s teens with special needs know that they are capable of changing their destiny if they persevere with integrity, whatever the challenge.”

More information about Victory from the Shadows can be found at

<https://www.elainemontague.com/>

# QVC MEETS NFB SHOPPERS

By Pat Munson

Note: Although this was written almost two decades ago, it shows that NFB members have been living the lives we want for a very long time.

Several months prior to the National Federation of the Blind Convention to be held in Philadelphia, Mary Willows and Jana Littrell came up with the idea of visiting the shopping TV channel headquarters, QVC. We were under the impression that the headquarters was a mere few miles from where we would have the convention. Public transportation sounded great, so we were ready to go. All we needed was an exact address. After some tedious investigation, we learned that QVC was not around the corner, and that it would take hours to get there.

Because all of us going on this excursion were sandwiching the trip between meetings, Mary Willows, always on top of things, decided we needed to rent a van and driver. We could round up more shoppers and divide the van rental. In just a few minutes, we had more interested shoppers than seats. Among those going from California, besides Jana and Mary, we had Sharleen Phillips, Keiko Phelps, Dorothy Fletcher, and Sybil Irvin from San Diego. Our other shopper was Dana Ard from Idaho.

We were lined up on the curb at the appointed time. But, where was the van! We waited and waited. After calling the van company, we learned that the van was waiting around the corner at the door of another hotel that the convention was using. Anyway, the van appeared and we eagerly jumped in. As we were pulling out, the driver said he had never been to QVC, but that he would be getting directions as we traveled from his dispatcher. We then settled down for our short journey.

As minutes passed, we realized all was not well. Our driver had stopped talking on his radio. Mary said she would call QVC on her cell phone; we gave three cheers for modern technology. To shorten the drama, let me explain: we left our hotel at about 1:15, and we just made it to QVC for the 4:00 PM tour. As we pulled up in front of the QVC complex, all we could think about was getting out and stretching our very cramped legs.

Before we let the driver go to look for gas, we told him that he must be ready to return at 6:00, for we had meetings to attend back at the convention hotel. He assured us that he could find QVC again, and that he did indeed know the route back to Philadelphia. Then our pioneer driver, Marc, told us the main door to QVC was about ten yards straight ahead. He was off, and we were likewise. Remember, this huge TV production complex is out in the country; there did not seem to be anyone about. We opened the door and proceeded to a registration counter. We were welcomed and were asked if we had come for the tour. We paid the tour cost, met our tour guide, and were ushered through security.

Our guide for the tour was Dave. He said he had worked in radio, so not surprisingly, he was outstanding about explaining everything. QVC has done an excellent job of breaking up the tour; most of it is walking around the huge complex, but from time to time we would enter a room and sit while Dave explained certain aspects of the operation, or showed clips of early broadcasts. Dave gets an A for giving great directions. He would stand to the right of a door and tell us to pass through the door on his left. He possesses excellent verbal skills!

Since most of this complex is production area, a bridge was built with floor to ceiling glass on both sides, so visitors could see the operation in progress. I’m sure we missed none of the visual elements, for Dave described everything he could see through each window on both sides as we passed. For example, he would explain the control room with the workers as they produced what was seen at people’s homes. He described the movable sets used for different aspects of production. If pots and pans are being sold, a kitchen is needed; if plants are being sold, an outdoor look is required. The sets are just like the ones you would see in the movies. In other words, what the viewer sees at home is not what it appears to be. We had to laugh at one window, for viewers are under the illusion that QVC has a regular house where items are displayed for sale to TV customers. Well, we saw what folks think of as the bedroom in one area, and other parts of the house scattered in different sets.

The highlight of the tour was when one of many doors was opened, but this time we walked above the live production area. For a few minutes, we could actually hear an on-air host selling jewelry. After several minutes, another camera came on where another host was instructing viewers to keep tuned for home-repair tools. What was very interesting was that all the workers carrying cameras and other needed items stood really close to the broadcast area. When I was watching QVC on TV at home, I remembered hearing extraneous noise from time to time and had wondered what it was. Now I know it is simply part of the usual off-camera activity.

Dave ended the tour at one of the QVC stores, where we could purchase many of the items we see for sale on our screens at home. Some in our group bought items, but the rest of us know how easy it is to simply pick up our phone and order anything we could possibly want. Then the items magically appear at our door some days later. Of course, later the bill appears on our credit card.

As we climbed back into our van for our return journey, we all agreed that QVC treats blind tourists as it would any other visitors. Yes, we are blind, but with Dave doing the narration, we saw QVC operations as would other visitors. However, had Dave not been so verbal, we would have questioned him until we knew everything. In the National Federation of the Blind, we have changed what it means to be blind.

Oh yes, and we were late getting back to the hotel. I for one tiptoed into a meeting, already in progress, sat in a corner, and gobbled the dinner which had been hand-carried to me. Federationists are ever so resourceful!

# RINGING THE BELL IN NEW MEXICO

By Michelle Chacon

During the last week of June, 2019, the National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico held their Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) Academy at the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NMSBVI) Early Childhood Program (ECP). The New Mexico Commission for the Blind (NMCB) provided additional support through funding to purchase materials and transportation for field trips, and to provide stipends for the individuals who worked at the program.

This summer program serves students who are blind or low vision between the ages of four and twelve years old. In 2019, we had three students from the Albuquerque metro area participate in the BELL Academy. The purpose of the program is to provide opportunities for the students to learn or continue to build their skills in Braille reading and writing. In addition, the students are provided with opportunities to participate in activities that address the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). They made their own lunches, went on a field trip to the park, and most of all, they had fun. The majority of the adults who were teachers or support staff were blind or low vision. They acted as role models for the students. Interns from the NMSU Visual Impairment Program (VIP) also participated and observed the students.

As a result, the NFB of New Mexico, NMSBVI, and the NMSU VIP have developed a strong partnership to reach students in New Mexico who are blind or visually impaired, and provide them with opportunities to learn Braille, ECC skills, and have fun! Thanks to all who made it a success!

We are looking forward to offering two programs in 2020: one in Albuquerque at the ECP, and one in Alamogordo on the main campus.

# THE UMBRELLA FACTOR

By Nancy Burns

Rain, snow, and wind conditions all have an interesting, yet often challenging, impact on travel for a blind individual using the long white cane. The cane is actually a helpful extension of the sense of touch. Along with my sense of hearing, I use my white cane to find curbs, changes in terrain, driveways, etc. My Burbank home was easy for me to locate, if I paid attention, as it was six driveways from the corner. Audible signals from my cane such as “splash” tell me that there is water in the gutter, and “thud” tells me if I am stepping into grass or mud. I have never counted steps, as is often believed by some of the general public. How would a person possibly keep track of the numbers? Remembering 214 steps to this location, 89 to another, etc.--I don’t think so.

As I am now retired and living in Albuquerque, my travel skills are not as well-honed as they were when I was working fulltime in Southern California. During much of my employment, I took buses, transferring at least one time, into downtown Los Angeles, and traveling through some rather unsavory areas. I rarely felt intimidated, but I feel certain that my confident stance had much to do with that.

When returning home, I had to walk several blocks to my house. If it was raining hard enough to necessitate the use of an umbrella, the pounding sound of rain over my head made it difficult to listen to the traffic. Consequently, when my cane found a curb, I would stop, collapse the umbrella, and listen. I waited for a new light, and I would cross when my parallel traffic once again started up. After crossing I would open my umbrella and continue down the street, wondering if an observer was trying to figure out why I decided to get wet while crossing the intersection. Oh well, perhaps one of those curious spectators will read this and decide that I am not a bit strange after all.

The winds in Southern California are rarely like any of those that blow across New Mexico. Even so, when I did have to face some brutal winds, this also threw off my ability to hear the necessary sounds that I would customarily hear along the way. The sounds of rustling branches, dancing leaves, and other debris being blown about in the street were all annoying and caused me to be even more vigilant.

Mingling with other commuters proved to be entertaining. It is amazing, although sometimes depressing, how many stereotypes and misconceptions about blind people exist in this world. Maybe I should first explain how I manage to catch a bus. If necessary, I would have someone show me the location of bus stops, but after that, my cane would easily find such stops. I remember one time leaving work, walking to the corner, locating the bus stop sign with my cane, leaning against it, and checking my Braille watch for the time. A man at the stop said to me, “you are at the bus stop and it is 5:00.” I could only thank him and say to myself, “duh.”

One rainy evening while still living in Burbank, my husband and I were returning home from the movies. Don, legally blind, and I had caught a bus and were nearing our stop. We overheard a woman say that she and her small child had a long walk after leaving the bus, and she had no umbrella. As we reached our stop and stood up to exit the bus, I said to Don, “We are going to…” Before I could finish, he answered, “Yes,” and we offered the woman our umbrella. She resisted, but we convinced her that we were only half a block from home and that we would be fine. She finally accepted our gift, and we felt good about being able to help.

A year or so later, Don and I were waiting at a bus stop in the pouring rain. We were wearing rain coats but there was no shelter, and the relentless downpour of California liquid sunshine had us thoroughly drenched. As we stood there praying for the bus to hurry, which never happens in the rain, a car pulled up to the curb and a woman got out, handed me an umbrella and said, “It looks as if you need this more than I do.” I hardly had time to realize what had just happened, to yell “thank you” before she was back in her car and driving away. We couldn’t keep from reflecting back to our umbrella gift and saying a prayer of thanks. This is just another example of giving to the universe and observing as the universe gives back.

# BLIND SENIORS WELCOME AT LOCAL SENIOR CENTERS

By Pat Munson

Note: This article is not about the center close to where I live now, but most centers provide the same services.

Since I am familiar with the senior center near my home, I shall describe what I have found there. Oh, by the way, nobody stands at the door and asks people their age. However, the center does get funding for certain programs which serve older persons.

I went to the center a few years before I retired. I heard the center had a bulletin board, and since I was looking for a reader-driver, I thought that board would be a good place to look. I look for ads that state the person would like to run errands, because I figure the person has a car. Then I inquire if the person would like to read. I did find someone, and that person worked for me for years. I also found a second reader from the center.

Five afternoons a week, my center serves dinner. The meal price is very low. Meals on Wheels is available for those who do not want to journey to the center.

Twice a week, the center van will take seniors to a local shopping mall. After shopping, the van delivers the shopper and purchases to the person’s home. This service is free to the user.

The first Monday of each month, the center support group has a meeting. At one meeting, a counselor spoke about her job. Twice a month she has appointments. She assists seniors with Social Security issues, and so on. The counselor further stated that if she cannot help, she can refer people to someone who can. At another meeting, local attorneys spoke about their assistance for seniors with legal matters. I am very pleased to learn of the useful services for persons in the senior community.

The center hosts classes five days per week. Subjects range from current events to world lit. I attended a world lit class. We, the students, chose what we wanted to read. We read books by Lessing, Melville, Shakespeare, and James. I borrowed the books from my Talking Book Library, so I could study at home if I chose. I said “if I chose” because there are no grades or tests. If one simply wants to attend and not do any more, that is fine. I started another class, but to tell the truth, I was too lazy to get up and get dressed. I got up with the birds for thirty-five years when I was working; now, I do what I want.

In the lobby area of the center, organizations such as the NFB display information for seniors to take home and read. Here is a small sample of what I found: rating nursing homes, Medicare supplements, retirement living arrangements, drug interaction, elder care, Internet library, services for older persons, healthcare information, and a local center for the blind. As I said, if an older person needs help, it is available.

When I went to the center the first time, I noted that most other seniors paid little attention to me. There was one lady who decided I needed lots of help. I said nothing, but another senior told Ms. Helpful that it appeared that I was doing just fine. I always remember Dr. Jernigan reminding us that we must take our rightful place in society. We blind seniors are so lucky to have the NFB, for we know that we can take our rightful place in society on terms of equality.

If you have never ventured out to your local senior center, give it a visit. Blind seniors have a lot to give to other seniors. Many are losing vision, so our participation shows others that blindness need not slow anyone’s pace.

# GOOD EATING

GREEN CHILI PIMIENTO CHEESE SPREAD

By Don Burns

1 lb. grated American or mild Cheddar cheese

1 pkg (3 oz.) cream cheese

1 jar (4 oz.) pimientos, drained and chopped

1 cup green chili chopped

1/2 cup pecans chopped

1/4 cup mayonnaise

Mix all ingredients by hand in a large bowl. Chill for one hour. Serve on crackers, bread or tortillas. ENJOY!

# USEFUL WEBSITES, APPS, AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

By Jim Babb

[www.ssa.gov/myaccount](http://www.ssa.gov/myaccount)

Go here to set up your personal Social Security account. When initially setting up your account, you will be asked for personal information so that SSA can verify that you are really you. Once the account is set up, you can monitor it to review your monthly and annual account balances. You can also monitor for fraud and/or account takeover. First you log-in with a username and password, and then you will receive a code on your smart phone or via email, which you enter on the SSA website. This is called a two-factor authentication code. 36 million Americans have already signed up for this valuable service; I encourage you to do this also.

[www.aging.senate.gov/fraud-hotline](http://www.aging.senate.gov/fraud-hotline)

Go here to report attempted frauds and scams. The most common scam phone call involves someone impersonating the IRS. Remember the IRS almost never calls a taxpayer; if the IRS needs to reach you for a legitimate reason, you would receive a letter first, not a call.

# MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcement comes from Nathalie Martin, President, San Juan Chapter, National Federation Of The Blind of NM:

I am now a grandma for the first time. My daughter Brianna and her fiancé Kenelm are the proud parents of a healthy baby girl born on October 18, 2019. She weighed 6 lbs 2 oz and was 19 inches long.

Important Dates:

March 31: Deadline for NFB national scholarship applications

April 15: Dr. Jacob Bolotin Award application deadline

June 21-27: NFB Engineering Quotient Program; St. Paul, MN

July 14-19: National Convention; Houston, TX

August 27-30: NFB of New Mexico State convention; Albuquerque, New Mexico