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THE GIFTS OF KENNETH JERNIGAN

November 13, 1926; October 12, 1998

by Tim Cranmer

Kenneth Jernigan lived and died for the organized blind movement in America. He now belongs to all blind people; to be proud of, as one like ourselves in blindness.

He belongs to all of us as an icon symbolizing what blind men and women can be.

His gifts of philosophy and wisdom reflected in his writings will inspire future generations of blind people.

His numerous tangible gifts are often cited in newspapers and other public media. I will not enumerate them here, except to say that the National Center for the Blind is truly spectacular.

This article is prompted by a desire to call attention to what I regard as his most valued contributions. He gave to all of us the Organized Blind Movement as we now know it.

Of course I know, as well as you do, that Dr. Jacobus Tenbroek was the leader that started the National Federation of the Blind and was prevented from completing the task by his untimely death.

From the small beginning of the organized blind movement in 1940, a stormy history began to unfold. Local organizations of blind people quickly formed. Their number steadily grew over the years. These organizations were loosely associated, sometimes by common names and sometimes by

philosophy.

It was the work of Dr. Kenneth Jernigan to make these separate organized groups into one great organization, one great movement. Thanks to his genius, the National Federation of the Blind has become one organization with a presence in all states as chartered chapters. Thanks to him, we have the history, music, philosophy, traditions and solidarity of a great social movement.

In the early years, little towns, big cities, and about half of the States had organizations with variable names, disparate structures and fragmented philosophies. Kenneth Jernigan introduced State Charters to the movement that were granted, one per state, to organizations that exhibited a common NFB of State name structure and a constitution that tied it to the National organization. Through these and many other measures, he legitimized our slogans "Its respectable to be blind," and "We are not an organization speaking for the blind, WE ARE THE BLIND SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES."

And so, the greatest gift was bestowed: The movement itself based on accountable charismatic leadership. And then, he knew, that to survive, it is essential that the Federation Philosophy be passed on to an acceptable successor. Some one with the talent, dedication and commitment to lead for another generation. He groomed Marc Maurer to assume this role. He spent well over a decade preparing his successor. His wise choice has been affirmed and reaffirmed as we elected Marc Maurer for seven terms as the NFB president.

The soundness of the movement is demonstrated by the fact that we have had seven presidents, and chose to keep only three. These are the great blind leaders of the 20th century, well known to the readers of this newsletter.

These are but a few of the thoughts that came to mind as I sat and quietly wept on learning of Kenneth Jernigan's death on the evening of October 12, 1998.

Some of my most cherished memories of Dr. Kenneth Jernigan were formed at the close of the day. When, on winter evenings, blind visitors from around the States and foreign countries would gather in the Harbor Room in the National Center for the Blind as he stacked logs in the giant fireplace and set them flaming with a torch to the tender. With flickering noisy

fragrant fire as a backdrop, our host would tell of great Federation moments from the past and visions of future progress for all blind people, with occasional stories of fine wines, great coffee, fine food, and fellowship appropriately tossed in.

And, at the end of the work day, on long summer evenings, Dr. Jernigan would invite all who were at the National Center attending committee meetings and other Federation business, to join him for a cook out in the back yard of his home. There, he rolled out the huge iron grill that he had designed, and went to work building a just-right charcoal bed of hot coals. He personally placed the steaks, fish, chicken, burgers and franks on the grill, watched over them and flipped things over at just the right moment. The many Kentuckians who shared the wonderful evenings will tell you that they never had better food or more gracious hospitality before or since.

We all know about the great works of Dr. Jernigan as the leader of the organized blind movement in this country. We have read about these deeds, and we have personally witnessed many of them. But I, and many other Kentuckians will remember him most as a wonderfully warm and caring personal friend.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

For those of you, who were not able to attend our September state convention in Owensboro, here are some of the Federation activities which were mentioned in the Presidential Report given at that time.

Last year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the birth of the National Federation of the Blind of Kentucky, and this year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of our having received a Charter of Affiliation with the National Federation of the Blind. This charter was presented in 1948 at the Lord Baltimore Hotel in the city which now houses our National Center for the Blind. Kentucky was the twenty-seventh state to seek affiliation with the National Federation of the Blind.

We experienced an extremely busy legislative year. Because of the efforts of many of you, the Kentucky Department for the Blind got one hundred thousand dollars added to its budget. Also, the Kentucky Use Law will continue to list the Kentucky Industries for the Blind Inc. as a source for state agency purchasing--even after KIB becomes private nonprofit. We almost secured

the passage of our Information Technology Access Bill, and we appreciate the hard work of Pamela Wallace, our Legislative Chairperson.

During the last Kentucky legislative session, a bill was signed into law which gives recognition to the Kentucky School for the Blind as an educational resource center. I was pleased to represent our organization at the signing of this bill.

Nine Kentuckians were among the approximately 500 Federationists who attended the Washington seminar this year. Two members of our newly organized student division, Tonia Boyd and Michelle Lauer, participated in this special event. We have been successful in getting one of our Kentucky senators and three of our representatives to sign on as co-sponsors of the Social Security Linkage Bill. Such accomplishments require a great deal of letter writing and telephoning on the part of committed individuals, and it is apparent that NFBK has been an active organization.

Federationists have always been proud of our national scholarship program, which is among the largest and best in the country. Kentucky has had a number of NFB scholarship winners over the past few years, and I interviewed and wrote letters this year for six Kentucky applicants.

While at the national convention in Dallas this summer, we learned that our Randolph-Sheppard program for blind vendors is once again in jeopardy nationwide. It appeared that the Department of Defense planned to take over the vending locations in military facilities. The Kentucky Department for the Blind, which is the licensing agency for blind vendors in our state, was unable to bid on an available location at Fort Knox. Our NFBK Board of Directors met shortly after the convention to determine what steps should be taken by our organization. We recommended that an arbitration and injunction should be sought in the Fort Knox matter to allow time for appropriate negotiations. When this failed, Charles Allen, Chairman of the state vendors' committee, met with Secretary Allen Rose on behalf of Kentucky blind vendors. Shortly thereafter, it seemed appropriate to reinforce the strong feelings about this issue which existed among the blind community and NFBK in particular. Lloyd Agnew, Chairman of the Advisory Council for DFB, Pam Wallace, Kentucky ADA networking administrator, and I as NFBK President, met with Secretary Rose to emphasize the importance of this matter and to demonstrate support of our Kentucky vendors. There are nearly four thousand blind vendors nationwide.

The Federation is committed to the support of this worthwhile program in every way possible.

While working with the student division during this past year, I have become more convinced that we are witnessing the emerging of a strong fourth generation of Federationists. This group of capable young adults have created an effective means of networking among themselves. Their President, Tonia Boyd, has maintained contact with the members of that division, and she has attended national and other state conventions to learn about the activities of student divisions around the country. Certainly, this group gives us cause to feel good about the future of our organization.

I must commend our Murray Chapter for their efforts in placing Kernel Books and other Federation materials in libraries throughout several counties in their area. Many of you have either heard or read Dr. Jernigan's accounts of the magnitude of public education which has been provided by the Kernel books. Our public schools and county libraries should have these books available for loan. This is the best means we have of educating the public about blindness and familiarizing Kentuckians with the name of the National Federation of the Blind. Keep in mind that our Community Outreach office is making telephone calls all over the state and mailing out literature regarding blindness related issues. Each of us can have a part in the public education process by placing NFB literature wherever possible.

Now, just a word about our future. Although much has been achieved, there is still much to be done. Newslines must become a reality in Kentucky. This program is up and running in several states and now provides seven national newspapers which can be accessed simply and quickly through the use of a telephone. The information technology Access Bill must be passed in the next legislative session. Most of the positions available to blind job seekers are those requiring some computer skills. We will need to do everything in our power to see that blind individuals have access to the training and opportunity which will place them on an even playing field with their sighted peers.

We must devote time and energy to the task of insuring quality education for the many blind and visually impaired students who are just beginning to dream about employment and independence. Increasingly, their parents and teachers are looking to us for information about alternative skills.

More and more parents are advocating for their children, and we must strive to give them whatever assistance we can muster. This will mean that youngsters with visual disabilities can receive a better foundation on which to build a future of happiness and independence.

FROM THE NFBK HISTORY BOOK

The National Federation of the Blind has two documents which are kept up-to-date for distribution. They are: "What Is the National Federation of the Blind" and "Who Are the Blind Who Lead the Blind." Both were written by Dr. Kenneth Jernigan and were first released for distribution at the 1954 national convention which was held in Louisville. Also, that was the first national convention attended by our own Dr. T. V. Cranmer.

Kentucky hosted the NFB national convention again in 1966, and it was headquartered at the old Kentucky Hotel. Mary Ellen Jernigan attended her first NFB convention at that time. When our affiliate hosted the convention in 1985, she proudly announced that she was enjoying her twentieth convention in the city and state where she started on the convention trail.

A DREAM COME TRUE

The National Federation of the Blind of Kentucky now has a Parents of Blind Children Division. It was established and got off to a good start at our 1998 state convention held at the Executive Inn in Owensboro. Parents are the best advocates for their children, and this new organization will lead the way in efforts to provide a better future for blind and visually impaired students throughout the Commonwealth. The officers who will be leading this new NFBK division are: Maria Jones, President; Nancy Meehan, Vice-President; and Carol Dahmke, Secretary/Treasurer.

This new parents group has many exciting plans for future endeavors. Membership in this organization is open to all of Kentucky's parents and educators of blind and visually impaired children, as well as others who share this special interest. For information about the Kentucky Parents of Blind Children Organization, write to Maria Jones, 3827 Chevy Chase Road, Louisville, KY 40218; or call (502) 456-4806.

SHARING GOOD NEWS

The Charles McDowell Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center has recently undergone a program facelift, which will mean improved service for Kentucky's blind and visually impaired citizens. This is the result of long hours and several months of planning on the part of the Kentucky Department for the Blind.

The Strategies for Success plan, which the Center followed, allowed staff members to make position choices based on their education and experience. New classes dealing with such matters as home maintenance, health issues, resources for visual aids, and self-advocacy were added to the curriculum and help to stimulate the interest of consumers. A new group class in success building enjoys growing popularity among participants in the Center program.

Jane Lyons, Director of the McDowell Center, is excited about the results of this facelift. Staff morale is better, and consumers are happier. Consequently, the future looks brighter for the Center as it strives to improve opportunities for independence and employment for blind and visually impaired residents of the Commonwealth.

Visitors are welcome at the Charles McDowell Center, 8412 Westport Road in Louisville. Tour arrangements can be made by calling 327-6010. Those living outside the Louisville area can contact the Center by calling 1-800-346-2115.

FRONT AND CENTER

Once again this year, Kentucky had a National Federation of the Blind scholarship winner. She is Nhu Nguyen, a graduate of the University of Louisville, who is attending law school at Vanderbilt University. Nhu serves as Treasurer for the Kentucky Association of Blind Students. She was presented with a \$3,000 scholarship at the banquet during the national convention in Dallas, Texas. You may recall that she won the first \$1,000 Emerson Foulke Memorial Scholarship at our state convention last year. This scholarship was established by the Kentucky affiliate in 1997 to honor the life and work of Dr. Emerson Foulke, a distinguished blind educator and researcher.

The 1998 NFBK Emerson Foulke Memorial Scholarship of \$1,000 was presented at the banquet during our state convention to Melanie Crowe. She is a graduate

student at Murray State University and is working on a masters degree in Human Services. Melanie serves as Second Vice-President of the Student Division and has demonstrated significant leadership ability. We wish her well in all her endeavors.

Also at our 1998 state convention, The Henderson Chapter awarded a five-hundred-dollar scholarship in memory of Mrs. John Steel who died during the past year. The recipient was Ronnie Brock, a student at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond. Ronnie is a junior there, and he is pursuing an education degree. Certainly, our best wishes go with him.

WORKING AT THE HEART OF APH

NOTE: This article appeared in the November/December issue of "In Touch," the newsletter of the American Printing House for the Blind.

It would be hard to find anyone working at APH who hasn't met Denise and Dennis Franklin, and been touched by their warm hospitality. They work together at the "heart" of operations, affectionately referred to by some as the "APH food court."

It was the Kentucky School for the Blind that initially brought Denise and Dennis together, although they did not attend at the same time. According to Denise, "He's much older than I am." They met at a KSB reunion and have been married since 1973, recently celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary with a trip to Hawaii.

Dennis has been in the food service business for 25 years, working with the Business Enterprise Program of the Kentucky Department for the Blind. He has managed the APH cafeteria since 1994. Denise began working with Dennis in 1995. Dennis had lost his part-time help, and the Braille Service Center at which Denise worked had closed. They both enjoy working at APH, citing a strong sense of cooperation with management as a major factor.

The Franklins both enjoy traveling, and found it difficult to return to "reality" following their trip to Hawaii. In her spare time, Denise loves to read, particularly romance novels, and she writes poetry. She "specializes" in writing amusing poems for friends and family on special

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occasions, taking every opportunity she can to make people laugh. Denise has been active in a bowling league for 24 years. Dennis also enjoys reading, but prefers nonfiction. He is an avid reader of our own "Newsweek" and "Reader's Digest" magazines.

The Franklins' "pride and joy" is daughter Kim. A graduate of Western Kentucky University, Kim is now working and planning to attend graduate school. She is 22 and lives in Bowling Green. Most of you probably have noticed that Denise and Dennis are rather fond of UK football and basketball.

APH President Tuck Tinsley says about the Franklins, "They make a great team, and I'm proud of the way they have transformed the cafeteria into a pleasant place to spend time. They have a customer service attitude--look at the variety of food items they offer--and the music. Whether you're looking for a snack or a smile, Dennis and Denise will do their best."

COMPUTER USERS DIVISION UPDATE 1998

by Jenny Tyree, President

Web Site Address: www.angelfire.com/ky/draynes/Nfbk.html

I would like to update everyone on the great things the Computer Users Division has been doing. Our web page is growing by leaps and bounds. There is a great deal of activity, and our site has received many hits from all over the world. We should be proud to know that it is helping individuals who are blind or visually impaired. At this time we are developing a Parent's of Blind Children page, as well as an NFBK chapter page, for general information. Our web site has both fun and facts related to technology.

I would like to formally thank all my board members for putting this page together. They are: David Raynes, First Vice-President; Kevin Pearl, Second Vice-President; John Glisson, Secretary; and Glenn White, Treasurer. Without their creativity, dedication, and hard work, Kentucky would not have the ability to link up with others around the country to promote the use of assistive technology. Thanks to all for creating this great Web Site.

Those who prefer e-mail to web browsing can join our listserv: nfbkcud@onelist.com.

For more information about this, contact Kevin Pearl: kev@megsinet.net.

We welcome any comments or suggestions; so feel free to send them to draynes@bellsouth.net or to jmtyree@megsinet.net.

BRaille HAPPENINGS

Some exciting plans are afoot in the Kentucky Division of the National Association to Promote the Use of Braille. The new officers, which were elected at the state convention in Owensboro, are looking forward to a productive year. Those elected were: Lora Felty, President; Tonia Boyd, First Vice-President; Pam Wallace, Second Vice-President; Phyllis Bogard, Secretary; and Rebecca Murrell, Treasurer.

We are making some exciting plans for a Braille Institute to be held in the spring of 1999. Our Braille Division will be one of the sponsors of this special event, and we will be working with the Office of Special Education which is providing funding for the Institute. It is our hope to involve several agencies and organizations in the planning of this worthwhile project.

Also, we are anticipating a significant growth in the distribution of "The World Under My Fingers." This is a wonderful little book written by and about blind individuals and their experiences with Braille.

SO WHAT ARE THE STUDENTS UP TO?

by Tonia Boyd, President

If you joined us in Owensboro for our 1998 State Convention, you probably spotted a college student every time you turned around. That's because we were there in full force. We had more than twenty students from ten Kentucky colleges and universities in attendance this year for our second annual Student Luncheon. Since this was the first convention for many of us and the first time others of us had seen each other since last year's convention; we spent much of the weekend getting to know each other, catching up, and sharing college experiences with one another.

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After taking care of business at our Luncheon on Saturday, we discussed our goals for the Student Division in 1999. Our highest hope is to raise enough money to send several students, who have never been before, to the National Convention in Atlanta next summer. Before adjourning we elected our new officers for the upcoming year which are as follows--President, Tonia Boyd of the University of Louisville; First Vice President, Nick Drake of Centre College; Second Vice President, Melanie Crowe of Murray State University; Secretary, Michelle Lauer, a graduate of the University of Kentucky; and Treasurer, Nhu Nguyen of Vanderbilt University. We were glad to note that our own Glenn White of the University of Louisville was elected Treasurer of the Computer User's Division.

On Saturday evening at the banquet, we helped two of our students celebrate their winning of scholarships. Melanie Crowe of Murray State University was the recipient of the Second Annual Emerson Foulke Memorial Scholarship in the amount of one thousand dollars. Ronnie Brock of Eastern Kentucky University was the recipient of a five hundred dollar scholarship given by the Henderson Chapter. Also during the banquet, we raffled off an adorable Cookie Monster stuffed animal which Denise Placido won. This proved to be a very successful fund raiser. So we'd like to give Mr. Jim Lepping, who donated Cookie Monster to the student division, a great big "Thank You".

Since the convention we have found some time between writing research papers and studying for exams to sell the APH Insights calendars; and we are planning a Walk-a-thon to be held either next spring or summer. Thanks to the help of Kevin Pearl, we now have a listserv which you can find at "nfbkabs@onelist.com". We are very grateful to Glenn White for setting up a web page: <http://athena.louisville.edu/~rgwhit01/project.html>. He has worked very hard to make continual updates and improvements to the web page. Both the listserv and the web page allow us to keep in touch more often and they also give us another opportunity to make other college students aware of our Student Division.

While many of us from Louisville were taking a short break from our studies during the Thanksgiving Holiday; we gathered at KSB for a night of fun and fellowship. After going out to dinner, we played games and sat up most of the night talking and laughing and catching up with friends. We're all very much looking forward to getting together at President Niceley's

house one evening during the Christmas break.

Now that December is upon us, we're all pretty stressed out trying to study for finals. Most of all we are quite eager for the semester to be over and to return home to spend time with our families, to enjoy Mom's cooking and to sleep in our beds for a little while. Before we look up again though we'll all be back at school with our noses buried in the books again. So for now, we'd like to wish everyone across the Bluegrass State a Happy Holiday Season and a most prosperous New Year!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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