

Helping those who let their fingers do the reading

By SHERRY KAHAN

Picture a domino. Notice the dots along its rectangular surface. Then imagine the dots raised so they can be felt by the fingers of the blind. It may help you understand the idea behind Braille, the method used by the blind to read.

In 1824 an inventive, blind French teacher named Louis Braille came up with the idea of a cell of six dots, arranged in many different ways to equal the letters of the alphabet.

His idea had such permanent value that today a group of women meets each week in Carl Sandburg Library in Livonia to help the blind take advantage of the system of raised dots developed by young Braille. They are being trained as Braille transcribers by Mary Begle of Tri-County Braille Transcribers. Their program is sponsored by Temple Beth-El in Birmingham.

Among the students are Susan Wozniak and Dorothy Bays of Livonia, Carol Gell of Farmington and Claudia Seaton of West Bloomfield. Also in the class are Martine MacDonald, who drives each week from Grosse Pointe Woods, and Iris Naubert of Woodhaven.

With special Braille typewriters, they are learning to transcribe books to be read by the blind.

Kathy Donagrandi of Farmington Hills knows something about the contribution they make. She is teaching consultant for the visually impaired in an area that includes students from the Livonia, Garden City, Redford Township, Plymouth, Northville and the Cherry Hill school districts.

"The blind students I work with at Bentley High School are mostly mainstreamed into regular classes," she said. "The Tri-County group transcribes the textbooks they use in class. Without these books the blind students would not be an equal basis with the other students."

"Blind students used to be segregated in state schools. Today they are integrated with other students and need appropriate material. With these books they can feel positive about themselves. They are part of the group, one of the regular students."

She added that remedial reading books are also transcribed as well as books for students with special interests.

"Kimberly Carroll of Garden City knows she wouldn't be in regular class without the books labored over by the Brailleists. 'I couldn't keep up in class without them,' she said. 'I can read and answer questions.'"

TRANSCRIBING is not easy.

"It takes a lot of concentration and perseverance," said Mrs. Wozniak, who studies Braille every Wednesday from 9:30-11 a.m. in the Sandburg class. She also practices about an hour a day at home. The aim of the students is to become good enough at transcribing to pass a test given by the Library of Congress.

To become a certified Brailleist they must finish the study manual. Then they have to mail to the Washington Library a 35-page manuscript they have done in Braille. It must have no mistakes.

"We can't use anyone until they are certified," said Mrs. Begle, who has been teaching transcribing for about 29 years.

The typewriters they use each have six keys. Each key raises on paper a dot in a different spot in the cell. For example, A is a single dot at upper left, B is two dots on the upper left, and C is two dots side by side at the top. Even after using various permutations for all the letters of the alphabet, there are still a few left over for common words like "and," "for" and "the."

To speed up reading, 300 contractions have been contrived for popularly used words. For example, the word "little" would be written with the dots for L, but typed twice.

Needless to say, to acquire speed in reading or transcribing, both the blind readers and transcribers must memorize all the letters and contractions.

"EACH WEEK THERE is more to memorize," said Mrs. Gell of Farmington. "But I'm going to stick it out. Eight months ago I broke my hip, and there is not much I am able to do. But this is something I can do that is interesting and challenging, and will someday prove to be beneficial."

Homework must be perfect when turned in, she said, adding "It takes several tries to make it perfect. Errors would spoil the end product for the reader. We have to learn to be perfect."

She noted that the stress on perfection doesn't make her nervous, "but it makes me put in a lot more effort."

Mrs. Wozniak is aware there are "kids in high school who don't care about reading."

She added: "Blind people don't have the opportunity they have. We have to give it to them. Do you realize how independent the blind could be if they could read on their own? A book can be a friend and allow them to have pride in themselves."

Mrs. Bays said she is pleased she is picking up speed, but pointed out that Mrs. Begle emphasizes accuracy over speed.

"I'm surprised at how Louis Braille figured it out," she said. "How they read it is really something."

MRS. SEATON is also impressed that the blind can read by touch. "It seems so complicated for a seeing person," she said.

To her the training is a challenge. "It's difficult," she said. "But I think you have to put something into any-

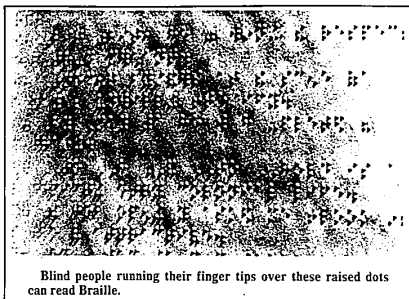
thing you do to get something out of it."

Mrs. Begle, a resident of Northville, said that Braille transcribers keep the typing machine as long as they are transcribers. They need them to work on manuscripts at home. Transcribers do about two books a year, she estimated. Temple Beth-El provides the machines, which cost \$200 apiece.

Once a new class is organized the temple provides class members with new machines. The temple also has a bindery where the books are bound, free of charge.



Claudia Seaton of West Bloomfield (left) and Carol Gell of Farmington practice Braille transcription on special typewriters. (Staff photo by Art Emanuele)



Blind people running their finger tips over these raised dots can read Braille.

ERWIN FARMS
 CORNER NOVI RD. & TEN MILE RD.
 NOVI - 349-2034
 Fresh Fruits & Vegetables Year 'Round
"Apples, Our Specialty"

Made To Order

Holiday Fruit Baskets

From **\$9.95**

Give apples for Christmas—make friends with the whole family

—WE SHIP APPLES ANYWHERE—

LOVELY CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

SHELLED & IN-SHELL NUTS

Pecans, Walnuts, Almonds, Brazil Nuts, Filberts, Chestnuts

EXPERIENCE Scissors

Hair Design

Now Open for Business

When Love and Skill Work Together Expect a Masterpiece

John Ruskin

Call for an Appointment
477-4080
 7 Mile just West of Farmington

VISIT SANTA

Fridays, 6 to 9 p.m.
 Saturdays, 12 to 6 p.m.

Free Candy Canes

Pictures With Santa
\$3.00

Santa is Located in KINNEY SHOES

in the convenient

Grand River & Halstead Shopping Plaza

Farmington

sponsored by the Farmington Jaycees & Jaycettes and the Grand River & Halstead Shopping Plaza Merchants Association

BOSGO'S

PARTY SUPPLY HDQ

Liquor • Beer • Wine
 Dolls • Kegs • Ice

12 Mile & Orchard Lake Road 553-8777
 VISA/MASTER Hours: 9:30-11 Mon-Sat, Sun 11-7.

CARPET CLEANING

"DEEP STEAM" \$39.95

ANY 2 ROOMS

Additional Room \$15.00

Includes:

- Color Brighteners • Spotting
- Stain Guard • Deodorizer
- Furniture Pads • Traffic Paper

Furniture Cleaning Specialists
 In Home or In Plant Service
 Call Today For Free Estimate

937-3800

FOUR SEASONS CARPET SALES • SERVICE

3874 LYNWOOD RD., NEW ORL

28% OFF ALL WALLPAPER

No Freight Charge
 50¢ per roll added to all orders less than Full Case (24 rls)

Visit our Unfinished Furniture Department

When shopping for price...Don't forget quality
 We take pride in our quality, service and price.

INTERIOR Latex \$10.99

From 5 Gall. Choose from 1500 Colors

20% Off Treatments

Open Daily 10 to 8; Sat. 10 to 5

Green's

CREATIVE HOME CENTER

17 N. Center (Next to Schrader's)
 Northville 348-7110

CHRISTMAS TREE DESIGN

12 Piece Dinner Set includes 4 Dinner Plates, 4 Cups, 4 Saucers

Reg. \$44.95
NOW \$31.95

CHRISTMAS TREE DESIGN

Tiered Candy/Cake Plate

Reg. \$22.95
NOW \$16.95

CHRISTMAS TREE DESIGN

Set of 4 SALAD/DESSERT PLATES

REG. \$17.95
NOW \$12.95

CHRISTMAS TREE DESIGN

4 RIM SOUP PLATES

REG. \$21.95
NOW \$15.95

Freezer to oven Safe
 Micro Wave Oven Safe

While Supply Lasts!

THE PERFECT FINISH

Great Beginnings For Gift Elegance
at 20% DISCOUNT

(\$10 & over - Gift Wrapped Free of Charge)
 FREE DELIVERY WITHIN 10 MILES
 6601 Orchard Lake Rd. at Maple
 Old Orchard, West Bloomfield 636-1500 Mon thru Sat, 9:30-5

Do To The Tressendous Secret. We Will Give You

SPECIAL ZOTOS FOAM PERMS

Reg. \$45 **\$25**

with this ad
 HOT OIL TREATMENT \$4.50 Plus Shampoo & Set

PERMS complete and up **\$14.95** all week

Hairsets \$7.95
 Precision Haircuts \$8.95

Senior Citizen SETS (Man, Tur, Set) \$6.00 & Wed.

Ann's Hair Designs

29249 Rayburn - Livonia
 (Five Mile and Middlebelt area-around corner from 7-11)
 Open Every Evening, Sat. 9-5 422-9592

THE PEARL GALLERY

FINE PEARLS AND PERSONAL ATTENTION

20% OFF REGULAR RETAIL

6340 Orchard Lake Rd. #200 West Bloomfield
 855-8340 Across from Orchard Mall in Durbin City Bldg.
 VISA Daily: 8:30-5:30, Fri 10-4, Sat 10-4, Sun 12-3 MASTER

BANKING

24 HOURS A DAY — 7 DAYS A WEEK

METRO BANK anytime teller

NOV. AT FARMINGTON AND FARMINGTON HILL AND AT 32 CONVENIENT LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT MICHIGAN APPLY FOR YOUR ACCESS CARD NOW

METROPOLITAN NATIONAL BANK OF FARMINGTON

FARMINGTON'S ONLY COMMUNITY BANK
 Locally owned-Locally Managed-Locally Staffed

Farmington Hills Office 27500 Farmington Road Telephone 553-4200 Farmington Office 33205 Grand River

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY LENDER AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER
 MEMBER - FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION