

Dear friends -

What an exquisite
birthday card with all the
sweet words and signatures!

I'll always treasure it and
am putting it with my
other keepsakes.

I'm very proud of the
handsome plaque that
Barbara brought me.

My association with
braille transcribing began
in 1959 in Dallas. I learned
braille through

Blind student learns to cope through independence

by Julie Johnson
North Garland High School

Having the handicap of being blind doesn't always prove to be an obstacle. For Jackson Middle School eighth grader Kris Eades, it has become a fact of life he has learned to deal with.

Though blind since birth, Eades has led a life that any would lead. Eades and many others have proven that being blind doesn't always stop one from performing the normal facts of life.

Eades has accomplished learning braille and is able to use it in his daily life.

"Learning braille was not that hard," Eades said. "Since braille is my only way of communicating with everyone who writes I had the determination to learn it, which made it easier."

Eades and his family moved to the Garland area from Princeton, Texas, because of the time travel for Chris to ride the bus and to be able to save time for his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Linsley.

"I rode the bus to and from school and it took an extremely long time, so for my parents to save time going to and from work and me such a long ride on the bus we moved," Eades said.

Though Eades has been in the band at his previous school, he didn't continue his playing after the change in schools.

"I felt too much pressure when I was a member of the band," Eades said. "One incident that has stayed in my mind is once when we were at a performance, a person in the audience asked why I wasn't watching the band director without knowing. I was actually pretty funny, I just kick up my ear and learn the tempo."

Before Eades enrolled in Jackson Middle School, many preparations were made. Mrs. Carolyn

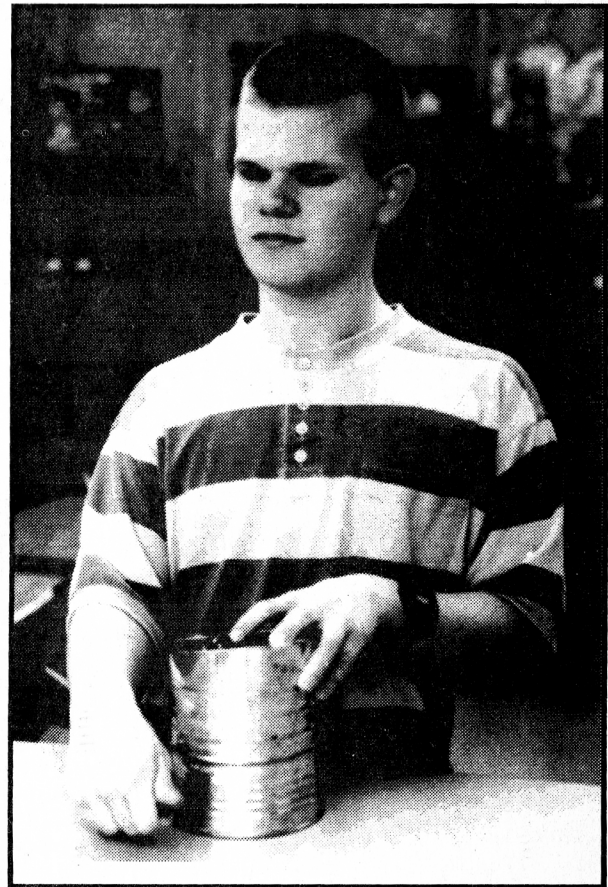


photo by Robert Condit

Learning to Cook

Practicing sifting flour for a cake he is about to bake, eighth grader Kris Eades prepares for his Home Economics class. Eades, who is completely blind and has no perception of light, strives to be "just like any other kid."

Eades learns independence at Jackson middle school

■from page 1

Schwille, a teacher of the visually handicapped, set up a program for students at Jackson to experience what it is like to be visually impaired.

"I wanted the students to feel what it was like to be visually impaired," Schwille said. "They had guides to lead them around just as Kris has and it seemed to do very well. I also went to each class that Kris had chosen to take and explained the do's and don'ts about being handicapped."

Being the new student is hard, but according to Mrs. Hattie Collins, an English teacher at Jackson, Eades is an inspiration to not only the students, but adults.

"The students that I have in class have changed their attitude. The ones that you wouldn't expect to show any compassion, show an extreme amount," Collins said. "He has really changed a lot of peoples views on many things."

With the help of Region 10 and Clancy Faulk, a volunteer from Region 10, Eades has adapted to his new environment. Region 10 has loaned not only Eades, but other visual impaired students, a Keynote computer that is able to speak and help the blind with the daily assignments they are given.

"I received the Keynote computer and it has been really helpful," Eades said. "I can tell when something is wrong with it and they can fix it. I use it during class, but sometimes I have to use headphones so that the noise of it's voice doesn't interrupt the teacher."

When asked how Eades' teach-

ers prepared for his arrival, Mr. Jon Ellis and Mrs. Lynn Hammer both made the changes of gearing their lessons and lectures to a more auditory level.

"I have worked with two other visually impaired students so I knew what changes to be made,"

"The ones that you wouldn't expect to show any compassion, show an extreme amount,"

Hattie Collins

Mr. Ellis said. "Kris is a terrific student. When he first arrived he was ready to jump in and learn."

Mrs. Hammer, Eades Home-making teacher, felt timid when she first found out Eades would be entering her class.

"I was fine at first, then I began to think about what other students comments would be and if I should change my lessons. Also, I was worried about how Kris would react towards utensils that are used in Homemaking class," Hammer said. "My worries were soon over, because Kris was ready to jump in and learn and the other children made him feel wanted and comfortable."

Eades hobbies consist of girls, jumping on the trampoline, bowling, and listening to his favorite music, Southern Gospel.

"I think my favorite hobby is girls. Right now I can tell them apart, but many of them sound so much alike that it becomes quite confusing," Eades said. "When I am not talking to a girl on the

phone I am usually jumping on the trampoline, which I received for my fourth birthday, or listening to the sounds of the Southern Gospel music."

When Mrs. Linsley answered about Eades favorite hobbies her main concern was the trampoline.

"I can't watch Kris jump on the trampoline for very long," Mrs. Linsley said. "He is really good at it, but I am afraid that he will fall off, but he's crazy to watch, especially when he starts doing flips and turns. I guess he is the neighborhood clown."

According to Mrs. Linsley the extent of his dating are talking on the phone and rides to church.

"I noticed the other day that a few girls were standing at the fence talking to Kris, but he really doesn't go out. I am hoping that will grow some," Linsley said.

Eades learned braille from a teacher, now he is doing the teaching.

"I am learning some braille. I purchased a homestudy book that helps me comprehend what the dots mean," Linsley said. "Kris really helps by giving me sentences and letting me answer them, then he checks my work. I haven't gotten it down yet, but I am progressing."

A new edition to the Linsley family has given Eades the chance to test his patience level.

"Kris becomes very irritable towards his little brother because he is at the squealing stage and Kris's hearing is very sensitive so he just tells him to tune it down about half an octave," Mrs. Linsley said.

"I am really glad that I moved here. Even though it has a lot more people than Princeton, the people here are very nice and polite."

Braille-based portable PC unveiled

BY CHRISTOPHER LINDQUIST
CW STAFF

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif. — Telesensory, Inc. recently announced a portable computer designed for the visually impaired. The Braillemate can reportedly fit in a coat pocket and can be used as a calculator, notebook, clock, address book, calendar or telephone book.

The 1-pound computer consists of a speech synthesizer, an electronic braille cell, a braille keyboard and 100K bytes of internal memory — enough for approximately 128 braille pages. A slot for external 64K-, 128K- and 512K-byte memory cards to increase storage is also included.

The computer can be used both in educational settings as a teaching tool and as a true portable computer for taking notes in meetings or while on trips, according to the company.

Power is supplied by either a

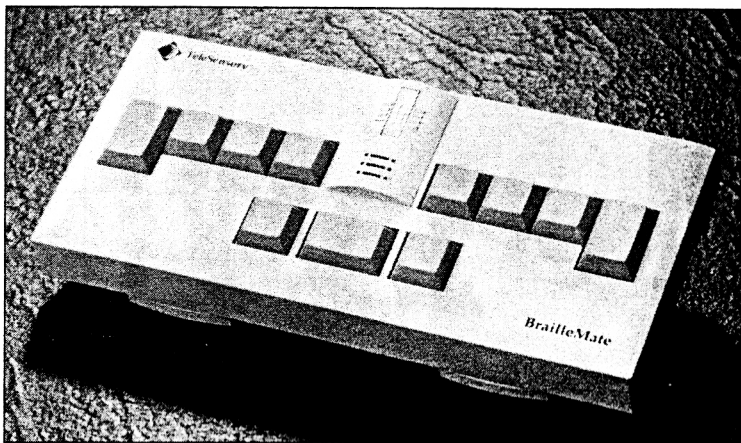
rechargeable battery pack or AC outlet.

As a user types in information, the Braillemate speech synthesizer responds with vocal feedback, helping prevent input mistakes. Grade 2 braille can automatically be translated to text for printing.

The Braillemate can also be

attached to Telesensory's Navigator braille display, which supplies a 20-, 40- or 80-character braille format and can be attached to either the Braillemate or an IBM Personal Computer or compatible.

The \$1,595 Braillemate is scheduled to begin shipping by the end of June.



Telesensory's Braillemate weighs 1 pound and features a speech synthesizer, an electronic braille cell and a braille keyboard

EDUCATION

Declining use of Braille increases illiteracy

New York Times Service

WASHINGTON — Kenneth Silberman was in graduate school when he realized that he had to learn to read and write.

Silberman, who is blind, discovered the tape recorders and computers he had always used to get through school were of little help in the advanced studies required to earn a master's degree.

He ended up teaching himself Braille and earned the degree, in aerospace engineering, from Cornell University. But he is bitter that, as a child with limited vision, he was not taught Braille, finding himself illiterate in his mid-20s.

Braille, once taught to all the visually handicapped, has been partly supplanted in the last 40 years by such technology as tape

recorders, voice-activated computers and machines that translate print into voice.

As a result, illiteracy is on the rise among the nation's 13 million people with visual handicaps. The most recent figures available, from the American Printing House for the Blind, show that in 1989, only 12 percent of visually handicapped students read Braille, down from nearly 50 percent in 1965.

The illiteracy rate is at the center of a battle over whether the best approach is technology and some Braille, or a wholesale return to Braille. The conflict pits advocacy groups dominated by those without visual handicaps against more militant groups dominated by the blind.

Those without visual handicaps want to teach Braille selectively.

“There are a lot of blind people who can't take advantage of better employment opportunity simply because they can't use written words with facility.”

— Marc Maurer, president, National Federation of the Blind

They say the other aids have a valid place and that the pool of visually handicapped people includes those with other disabilities, like mental retardation or tactile insensitivity, that would preclude them from learning Braille.

But the groups dominated by the blind argue that Braille should be mandatory for any visually han-

dicapped person who is able to learn it.

Seventy percent of the visually impaired who are of employment age are either unemployed or underemployed, according to Susan Spungin, associate executive director of the American Foundation for the Blind.

The tension over the teaching of

Braille grows out of changes in education in the last 50 years. Historically, all people with vision handicaps had been taught Braille in separate schools for the blind.

But in the 1950s and 1960s, there was a shift toward integrating these students into public schools and an emphasis on encouraging them to use the vision they had.

Silberman, a 30-year-old administrator at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md., is among those who entered school in that period, just as technology like tape recorders, computers and machines that translate print into voice were becoming cheap enough for classroom use.

For Silberman and groups like the National Federation of the Blind, Braille is the solution not only to illiteracy but to dependence

on machines or on other people.

“There are a lot of blind people who can't take advantage of better employment opportunity simply because they can't use written words with facility,” federation president Marc Maurer said.

“It isn't that we're opposed to technology. Technology has enhanced Braille, has made it cheaper, made it more accessible and opened up more jobs for those who are blind.”

But Dr. Richard Welsh of the Greater Pittsburgh Guild for the Blind disagreed. “Braille is a good medium for some students, but it's not the answer for every student,” said Welsh, a former superintendent of a school for the blind in Maryland who opposed a Braille bill two years ago.