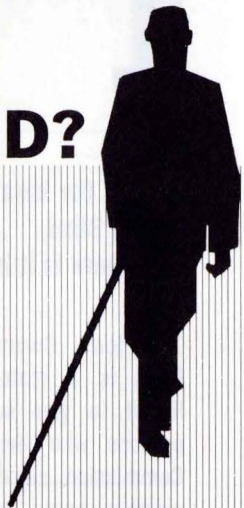


WHAT IS THE IOWA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND?



STATE LIBRARY COMMISSION OF IOWA
Historical Building
DES MOINES, IOWA 50310

Published by the State of Iowa, Des Moines.

1

What is the Iowa Commission for the Blind, and where is it located?

The Iowa Commission for the Blind is a state agency established to give services to blind persons who live in Iowa. The Commission consists of a three member board appointed by the Governor. The present members of the board are: Mrs. Wayne Bonnell, Fort Dodge; Elwyn Hemken, Blairsburg; and Mrs. Dan Frudden, Charles City. The Director of the Commission is Kenneth Jernigan. The principal office is located in the Commission Building at Fourth and Keo in Des Moines, Iowa. The Cedar Rapids Office is at 732 Higley Building, the Waterloo Office at 620 Black Building, and the Sioux City Office at 427 Frances Building.



2

How many blind persons are there in Iowa?

No exact answer to this question can be given, but the best available estimates indicate that there are somewhat more than 6,000 blind persons in the state.

3

Are all blind persons totally blind?

No. In fact, only about 20 percent of the blind are totally blind.

4

Who is blind?

For most purposes, any person is considered blind who has a central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting glasses or has a field of vision which at its widest diameter subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees. To put it simply, a blind person might see at 20 feet what a person with normal vision would see at 200 feet. Of course, many blind persons see much less than this definition indicates, and some are totally blind.

To put it still another way, a person is blind who must devise alternative techniques to do efficiently the things he would do with sight if he had normal vision. A widespread, mistaken notion exists that only those without any sight at all are blind.

5

Besides the Iowa Commission for the Blind, what other public programs for the blind are there in Iowa?

There are two other public programs for the blind.

a. Education of blind children. In many Iowa communities, blind children are being educated in the public schools today. These children receive assistance through the Division of Special Education of the State Department of Public Instruction. They also receive books and materials from the library of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, as well as assistance in techniques and family counsel.

In addition, there is the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School. Administered by the State Board of Regents, located at Vinton, and usually having an enrollment of somewhat over 100 students, this school provides elementary and secondary education for blind and

partially-seeing children from anywhere in the state. Except for clothing and incidentals, the services of the school, including board and room, are provided without cost to the child or his family.

Anyone knowing a child with poor eyesight or wishing to have further information should write to the Commission for the Blind, Des Moines; to the State Department of Public Instruction, Des Moines; or to the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School, Vinton.

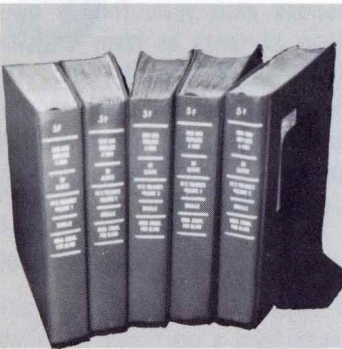
b. Supplemental Security Income for the Blind. Administered by the federal government through the Social Security Administration, this program provides cash grants on a monthly basis to blind persons who are not able to support themselves. Some people have the mistaken notion that all blind persons receive (or are entitled to receive) Supplemental Security Income—or, as it is sometimes called by the uninformed, “the blind pension.” This is not true since grants are made only to those in need. Anyone desiring further information should contact his local Social Security Office.

6

What are the different departments and functions of the Iowa Commission for the Blind?

The Commission offers a variety of services to the blind of the state. In general its departments and functions are:

- a. Library
- b. Rehabilitation
- c. Orientation and Adjustment Center
- d. Rehabilitation Teaching
- e. Vending Facilities
- f. Home Industries
- g. Special tools, devices and aids
- h. Register of the blind
- i. Public education and information about blindness



The five Braille volumes above represent one print book of 270 pages. The Commission also has books on cassettes, open reel tapes, and on talking book records.

7

What is the Library of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, and what services does it offer?

Established on July 1, 1960, the Library is one of the newest departments of the Commission. Before this date, the blind of Iowa had no library of their own but received limited service from a library located in a neighboring state. As the new and expanded program of the Iowa Commission for the Blind began to take shape in 1958 and 1959, the need for improved library services was a major concern. In 1959 the Division for the Blind of the Library of Congress designated the Commission as a regional library for the blind. This designation meant that the Commission, along with the other regional libraries in the nation, would receive without

charge copies of all talking books and Braille books produced for the Library of Congress—several hundred titles each year. It also meant that a great many books recorded on tape would be available. In addition, the Library of Congress and other regional libraries contributed a large, initial collection of books.

The Library is located in the Commission Building at Fourth and Keo in Des Moines. It has reading and listening rooms available for any blind person who wants to come to the building.

It also sends books by mail to blind persons anywhere in the state. The services of the Library (and the other services of the Commission) cost the blind person nothing, and the books go to and from the borrower postage free by federal law. The Library has Braille books, books recorded on open reel tape; books recorded on cassette; large type books; and talking books, books read onto long-play records. The Commission also provides without cost talking book machines (small record players to use for the talking book records). The Library gives service to more than 10,000 blind, visually impaired, and physically handicapped borrowers throughout the state. One need not be totally blind to receive the services of the Library. For further information, write to the Library, Iowa Commission for the Blind, Fourth and Keo, Des Moines, Iowa 50309.

8

What is the Rehabilitation program of the Iowa Commission for the Blind?

From the point of view of tax dollars spent and saved its rehabilitation program is the most important function of the Iowa Commission for the Blind. It is the goal of the Iowa Commission for the Blind to have every employable blind person in the state working at his full potential and earning his own way.

To rehabilitate a blind person is to train him for and place him in a situation where he can operate to the full extent of his capacity. There are blind people who are successful lawyers, teachers, electrical engineers or secretaries; others who are excellent masseurs, packers, farmers or machine operators. Like sighted people, blind people do not have exactly the same potential. Talents, abilities, and capacities vary. Some blind people are able to achieve complete self-support; others, only partial self-support. With some the goal is to return to their homes as competent housewives and homemakers, functioning again in a fully active capacity. The objective is the same in all cases, to as-

sist the blind person to realize to the full his maximum potential of independence and self-support.

The Commission for the Blind complies with Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act* and serves blind persons without respect to race, color, creed, or national origin. Any applicant or recipient who feels there has been discrimination may appeal to the Commission or to the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

There are members of the Commission's Rehabilitation and Field Staff headquartered in the Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, and Sioux City offices and at the Commission Building in Des Moines. The duties of these people are twofold:

a. They work with blind individuals—contact them in their home communities, inform them of job opportunities and work being done by other blind people, counsel with them concerning vocational goals, help them secure training when needed and arrange to have the Commission pay the costs involved when indicated (under certain circumstances the Commission can pay for training, tools, supplies, etc. to assist a blind person vocationally). Finally, they help the blind person to find employment or go into a business of his own. After train-

ing, the blind person may be able to return to the job he formerly held in his own community. He may need training for a new vocation. Or, he may be helped to go into business for himself.

b. They work with the public at large, particularly employers. It is not enough that a blind person be well trained and that he be able to do a given job in business or industry as well as or even better than his sighted competitor. More often than not, he is simply refused the chance to try, merely because the employer does not believe the job can be done. It is the job of the Field Staff to explain to employers the potential of well trained blind workers and to help place these blind people in job opportunities.

The Commission is now rehabilitating approximately 150 blind Iowans each year. This is more than 12 times as many as were being rehabilitated in 1957. The job is difficult and much remains to be done, but real and exciting progress is being made under the Commission's program.

9

Does the Rehabilitation program of the Commission save the taxpayers of Iowa any money?

The answer to this question is definitely yes! Even a brief examination of statistics will make the point. The entire state appropriation and federal matching funds for Commission operations comes to somewhat less than two and one-half million dollars a year. This is not merely for rehabilitation but for every program and activity of the Commission.

The financial difference to society when one blind person is rehabilitated is surprisingly great. If, for instance, a blind person in Iowa begins to draw Supplemental Security Income at the age of 21 (some begin sooner) and if he continues to age 65 (some continue longer, and some stop before), he will draw, according to present standards, approximately \$160 per month for twelve months each year for forty-four years—or, \$84,480. If the blind individual has dependents, the amount received from Supplemental Security Income and other public assistance programs would normally be substantially more. If, on the other hand, he goes down the road of rehabilitation and self-support, the result will be quite different. Any self-supporting person in our society will pay at least \$850 a year in taxes. Thus, from age 21 to age 65 (forty-four years) at least \$37,400 will be paid in taxes.

When this \$37,400 is added to the \$84,480 not drawn in Supplemental Security Income, it makes a total difference of at least \$121,880 to the taxpayer. This still does not tell the whole story, for it fails to take into account the value of the added produc-

tivity which the person's labor gives to the community and the nation. It also fails to take into account the effect upon the children of seeing their parent supporting the family and earning his own way instead of merely vegetating at home. And, finally, it fails to take into account the effect upon the individual himself of being able to earn his daily bread.

Of course, each rehabilitation is unique. Some persons become blind after the age of 21, and some lose their jobs after only a few years or die before age 65. On the other hand, some (as has been pointed out) draw Supplemental Security Income for far longer than forty-four years. Some achieve full self-support, and some only partial self-support. It is not necessary to set the figure of saved tax money at \$121,880 per rehabilitant to make the point. Even if one is ultra conservative and cuts the figure by half, the answer is conclusive. Even if only \$60,000 is saved on the average for each blind person rehabilitated (and this figure is unrealistically low), then forty-two rehabilitations each year would pay for the entire operation of the Iowa Commission for the Blind—not for just the rehabilitation function of the Commission but for each and every one of its programs and activities, for every phase of its work. The Commission is now rehabilitating more than three times this number.

10.

What is the Orientation and Adjustment Center of the Iowa Commission for the Blind?

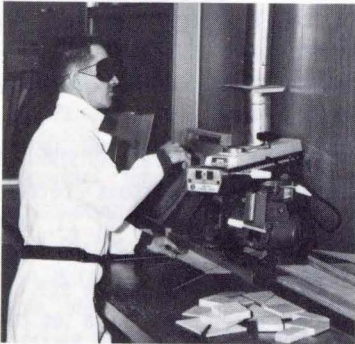
In many ways, the Orientation Center (sometimes called the Rehabilitation Center) is the symbol and the heart of the Commission's new program for the blind. Until 1959 Iowa had no training facility whatever for its adult blind, no place at all where the newly blind could receive encouragement and instruction in techniques. It now has one of the finest programs in the nation. The Orientation and Adjustment Center of the Commission for the Blind located at the Commission Building at Fourth and Keo in Des Moines gives intensive training in many techniques. Any adult blind person living in the state can come to the Center for training. The Center does more than teach. It exemplifies the philosophy: blindness need not be as tragic and limiting as most people consider it to be. Many totally blind persons are working every day as machinists, lawyers, farmers, factory workers, and scientists. With proper training and opportunity, a blind person can be a successful housewife, schoolteacher, or almost anything else. This is what the Center must help its students to learn and accept, emotionally

as well as intellectually. At the Center, a blind person may learn how to travel by himself independently in city traffic or rural areas. This is done by using the new "long-cane" method. Also, he may have classes or instruction in physical conditioning; problems of daily living, cooking, sewing, and other homemaking skills; personal grooming; typing; spelling; handwriting; the use of dictating equipment; switchboard operation; Braille reading and writing; Braille shorthand; and machine-and-wood shop.

The Orientation Center has as its basic philosophy the idea that it is respectable to be blind. For the purposes of the Center, a person is blind who must devise alternative techniques to do efficiently the things he would do with sight if he had normal vision.

Each member of the orientation staff strives to help the individual come to the realization emotionally and intellectually that he can lead a normal life. The skills which he learns, such as Braille, travel, typing, home economics, etc.—are taught, in part, in order to aid him in this realization. When he has mastered these techniques and has accepted the fact that he can lead a normal life, he is helped to realize that he still may fail; he does not come to understand the public attitude toward blindness and why that attitude exists; and if he does not learn to understand and control his responses and reactions to the public attitude.

No formal techniques are used for determining admission to t



The whirring blade of a radial arm saw is no threat to this blind man as he learns confidence in the Commission's training program.



The long white cane symbolizes the technique of independent mobility for a blind person through busy traffic—to get a job, to self support, to full participation in the community.

Orientation Center. It is done through in-the-field interviews between the applicant and home teachers and counselors, with a final interview with the Center staff. Usually the applicant must be a high school graduate or eighteen years of age.

An effort is made to have a balanced group with some younger trainees and some older and about an equal number of men and women. A four-to-one ratio of trainees to instructors is maximum for the type of intensive, individual training provided by the Orientation and Adjustment Center.

A new trainee, perhaps a former insurance salesman, does not believe that he can now support himself or lead a regular social life. When the orientation instructors tell him he can return to competitive employment and continue to fit into the regular social and civic life in his community, he finds this difficult to believe. He may even resent being told that it is possible. And when he sees for the first time the shop machines—band saw, jointer, wood lathes and metal lathes, milling machine, radial arm saw, table saw, power hack-saw, wood shaper, drill press, etc.—all regular pieces of equipment with no special attachments or devices and is told that he can make a bookshelf of commercial quality (even doing the varnishing, shellacking, and staining himself), the trainee is certain that this is impossible.

Blindfolds (called sleepshades) are used in class by those students with some remaining vision to

overcome a false dependency on inadequate sight and to learn faster the alternative techniques of blindness. If the individual continues to try to use visual techniques (even though they are inadequate for him), he will probably not learn blind techniques at all. Also, if he has 10% or less remaining vision (the generally accepted definition of blindness) and learns, let us say, to operate a power saw or some other tool, he will likely think the reason he can do it is because he still has some sight. He wonders what will happen if he loses any or all of the remainder.

If, on the other hand, he blindfolds himself and learns that he can function with safety and efficiency in the manner of a totally blind person, it tends to remove the fear. When the techniques have been learned to reflex perfection, he can remove the sleepshades and use that combination of visual and blind techniques best suited to his own personal need. His willingness to undergo such training will depend almost entirely on whether he perceives it as "relevant" to his situation—which, in turn, will largely be determined by whether his instructors have the experience and maturity to see the "relevance." If the atmosphere is such that the student must be "required" to wear the sleepshades, use a cane, or employ any other technique, the value is probably already lost. At the heart of the matter are the subtle and often unrecognized attitudes about what blindness really is and what it really means—whether the blind

person can truly compete on terms of equality, whether he can actually perform as well as others, and whether he can really be a full-fledged, first-class citizen with all the rights and privileges and also with all of the responsibilities. Here, in this crucial area, many professionals in the field fall short (often without even knowing it) and do much damage.

However, if in three months he has made such a bookshelf, he is well into the essential process of re-evaluating his potential as a blind person. In all classes the trainee is helped to realize what blindness actually means as opposed to what he may have thought. In shop he learns to build what was before impossible. In Travel he learns to go where he wants whenever he desires—alone and efficiently.

At the same time while the trainee learns that a blind person can have a successful life, he himself is having just that. Confidence, social and vocational skills, and a true understanding of blindness build daily, and the trainee graduates not merely from the Orientation and Adjustment Center but into a complete and competitive world

12

What is the Vending Facility program of the Iowa Commission for the Blind?

At the Commission building at Fourth and Keo in Des Moines a cafeteria is located which is open to the general public as well as Center trainees and Commission personnel. Not only does this cafeteria offer the opportunity for one blind person to make a living as its operator, but it also serves as a training facility for other blind persons who are interested in restaurant or vending operation. As soon as one trainee becomes proficient he is helped to go into business and another trainee takes his place at the cafeteria.

More and more new facilities are being opened. At these locations newspapers, magazines, tobacco products, food, coffee, confectionery items, etc. are sold. The Commission is placing more and more emphasis on the operation of restaurants and cafes, as opposed to the small newsstands. Blind managers are now operating cafes in many state and federal buildings in Iowa as well as in private enterprise, and further expansion is contemplated.

11

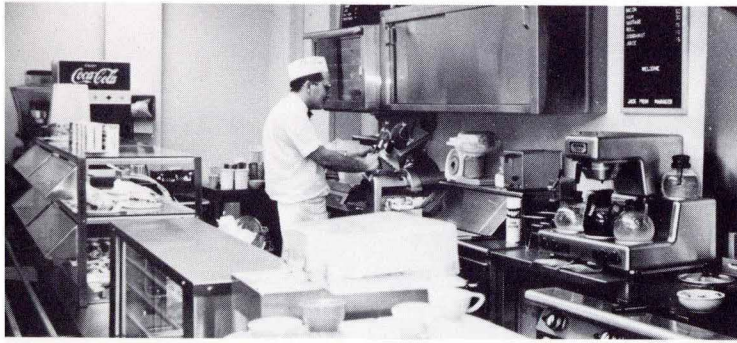
What is the Rehabilitation Teaching program of the Iowa Commission for the Blind?

The Commission has rehabilitation teachers who visit blind persons throughout the state in their homes to teach the skills and techniques of blindness, disseminate information regarding blindness, and prepare referrals to other divisions of the Commission for the Blind, or, in some cases, to other state agencies. Now that the Orientation and Adjustment Center is in operation, much of the work of the rehabilitation teachers is done with elderly blind persons who are unable to receive intensive training. They are helped to acquire skills to make them independent in daily living activities so that they will not require or demand the additional attention of others who might be working.

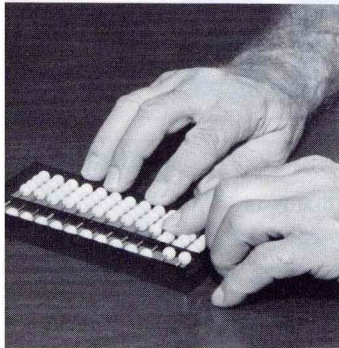
13

What is the Home Industries program of the Iowa Commission for the Blind?

The purpose of the Home Industries Department is to give employment to blind persons who, because of age or some additional handicap, are unable to work in competitive occupations. Products such as rugs, towels, tablecloths, dishcloths, ironing board covers, and aprons are made or assembled by blind persons in their homes and are then marketed through the Federated Womens Clubs of Iowa. Over the years hundreds of blind persons have been helped by this program.



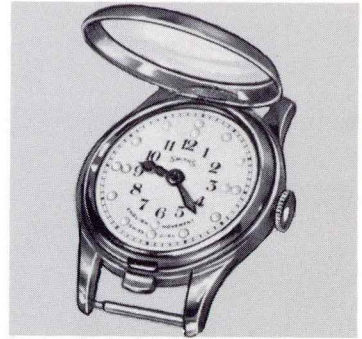
This attractive food service was recently opened by the Commission for the Blind. The cafeteria is operated by a working blind manager.



The abacus is one of the devices used by the blind to perform tasks that sighted persons would do a different way. With proper training a blind person can use it to add, subtract, multiply and divide. The abacus, long used in the Orient, is now one of the many devices available to blind lowans through the Commission for the blind.

What does the Iowa Commission for the Blind do to make available to the blind of the state special tools, devices, and aids?

The Commission serves as a central source of supply for a great variety of specialized products, tools, and aids useful to the blind. Braille watches and clocks; Braille writing devices; Braille paper; specialized rulers and other measuring devices which can be read by touch; canes of all types; cooking utensils with specially marked dials; standard playing cards with Braille markings added; other games such as chess, checkers, bingo, and scrabble (with special markings as needed); Braille thermometers and barometers; specially marked volt



A Braille watch is a blind person's method of telling time. The hours on the watch are noted by raised dots in addition to printed numbers. The glass case of the watch opens to allow the blind person to feel what time it is.

meters and similar electrical measuring devices; specially marked insulin syringes for blind diabetics; and Braille cookbooks are samples of the items stocked. These items are made available to the blind of the state at the Commission's cost, or they are provided without cost when the blind person is unable to pay, when there is a clearly demonstrated need for the product, and when the resources of the Commission will permit. The Commission also assists blind persons to procure at cost certain needed nonspecialized items such as tape recorders, tape, and headphones for talking book machines. Again, there are instances in which these items are provided without charge when there is need and when resources will permit.

15

What does the Iowa Commission for the Blind do with respect to keeping a register of all known blind in the state?

The Commission maintains a register of all known blind in the state. It is, of course, impossible to keep this register entirely up to date in respect to current addresses, deceased persons, and

similar information, but every effort is made to do so. The register currently contains more than five thousand names and addresses. Other details, such as causes of blindness and age are also included. The information contained in the register is confidential except for use in the administration of the Commission's program and other officially authorized purposes.

16

How many blind persons receive services each year from the Iowa Commission for the Blind?

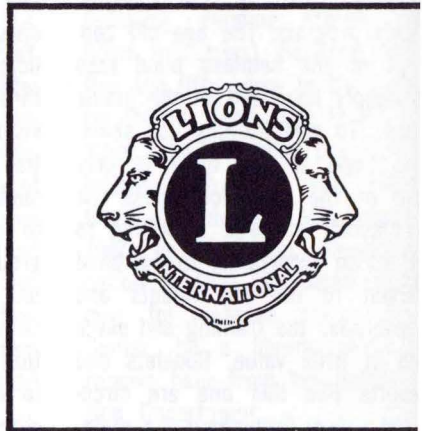
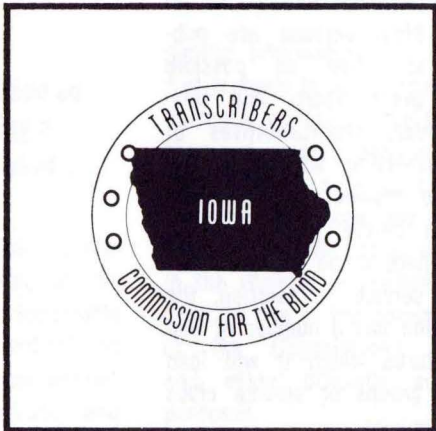
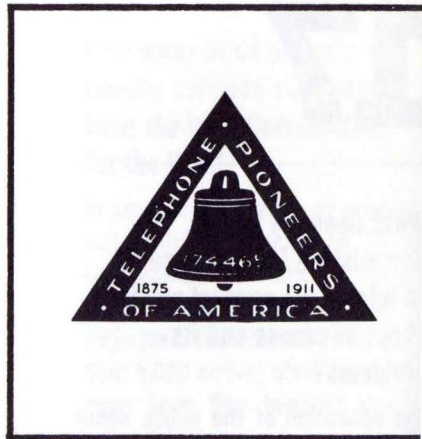
In view of the variety of program and activities carried on by the Commission, the answer to this question must necessarily be an estimate. The Library has more than 5,000 active, blind borrowers more than five hundred persons are contacted each year by the Field Units (rehabilitation, home teaching, vending stands, and home industries). Between thirty five and fifty come to the Center for training each year. In addition more than 500 blind persons are helped each year with special tools, aids, devices, and products. There is, of course, some duplication in that the same person may, for instance, come to the Center, be a library user, and receive help from the Rehabilitation Department.

17

What does the Iowa Commission for the Blind do to inform the general public about blindness and its problems?

The education of the public about blindness and its problems is an important part of the Commission's program. The age old concept of the helpless blind man is deeply imbedded in the public mind. To give training, job skills, and hope to the blind is only half of the task; for unless the community at large is willing to afford an opportunity to the blind person to use his talents and capacities, the training and skills are of little value. Booklets and reports like this one are circulated widely throughout the state,

and the work of the Commission and the accomplishments of individual blind persons are publicized as often as possible through press, radio, and television. Also, representatives of the Commission will, upon request, go anywhere in the state to speak before any interested group. There is no charge made for this service. In addition, the Commission has a number of motion pictures which it will loan to civic groups or service clubs without charge.



18

Are there groups and organizations in the state which assist the Commission's program?

To bring about a total resource program for the blind of Iowa requires close co-operation from many groups. Such co-operation has been one of the keystones of the program of the Iowa Commission for the Blind.

Iowa Lions clubs have worked in many areas to promote the welfare of the blind. The Lions have supplied many pieces of library and training equipment for the Commission. Above all, Lions have carried word of the program to hundreds of Iowa towns and have helped immeasurably in the general success of the work accomplished.

Women of the Jewish Temple Sisterhoods have produced many hundreds of books in Braille and on tape. Increasingly, individual members of the general public are volunteering to do taping, Braille transcribing and copying of books into large type for the Commission. Such volunteers receive instructions through the Commission.

The Hawkeye Chapter of the Telephone Pioneers of America, the Thomas Griffith Chapter of the Independent Telephone Pioneers, and other telephone people play an active role in the Commission's program. (The Telephone Pioneers are employees or retired employees of the telephone industry.) The Pioneers personally deliver talking book machines to blind borrowers throughout the state and help with a variety of other activities — explanation to the borrower of how to operate the talking book machines, help with book selection, location of blind persons needing service but not known to the Commission, repair of talking book machines,

and overall interpretation of the Commission's program to the general public. Since there are more than two thousand Pioneers in Iowa, the value and effectiveness of their work are vitally important.

The Federated Womens Clubs of Iowa render valuable service by selling items made by homebound blind persons. Of even more importance, the clubwomen of Iowa spread the word of the new concepts of blindness to every corner of the state, and stimulate community support for the Commission's activities.

The blind themselves have combined into a state-wide organization — the National Federation of the Blind of Iowa. This organization (with local chapters throughout the state) holds an annual meeting and works to improve the general welfare of the blind of Iowa and the nation. The National Federation of the Blind of Iowa is an Affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind.

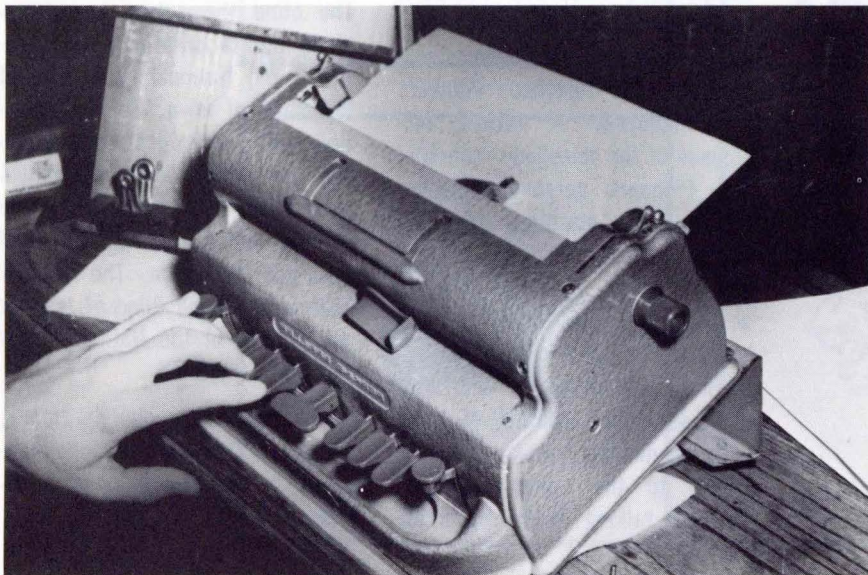
In addition, many church groups, sororities, and others too numerous to mention help in a variety of ways.



Orientation students on a sight-seeing trip to the grottos of West Bend. This outing is one of many field trips taken by the Orientation students during their stay at the Center.

The Brailleing of a book.

One 100 page volume of Braille costs approximately \$12 just for materials, binding and proofreading. The Brailleing is done solely on a volunteer basis. Volunteer Brailleists are needed in order to make more books available to the blind of Iowa.



19

How are the programs of the Iowa Commission for the Blind financed?

The Commission receives an annual appropriation from the state legislature, and it receives federal funds. In addition (and extremely important to the program) the Commission receives gifts and donations. Without such gifts and donations, many phases of the work of the Commission would be greatly curtailed or altogether impossible. Donations or bequests should be made directly to the Iowa Commission for the Blind.

20

What can people do who want further information about making use of the services or facilities of the Iowa Commission for the Blind?

They can contact the Iowa Commission for the Blind, Fourth and Keo, Des Moines, Iowa 50309. Phone (515) 283-2601.

21

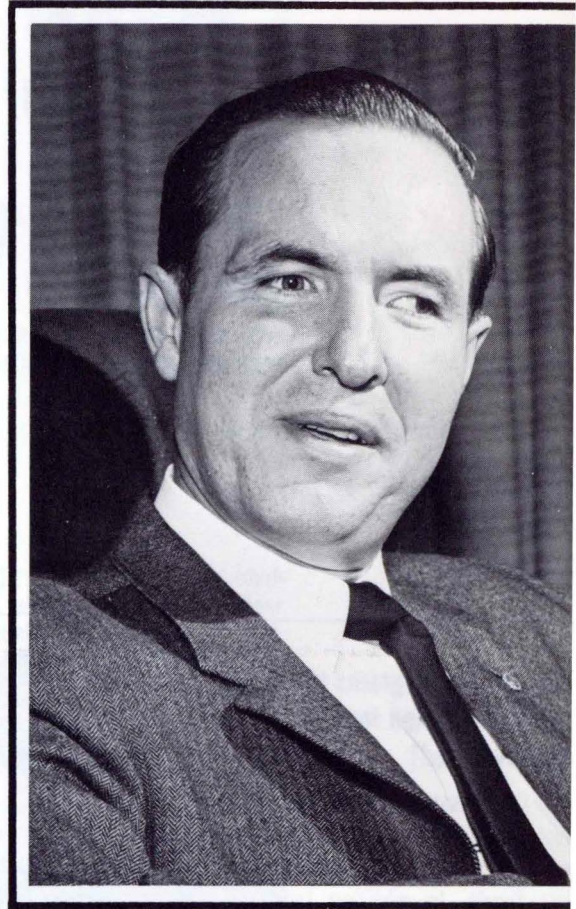
What can people do who want to assist the Iowa Commission for the Blind in furthering its programs?

They can contact the Commission and register as volunteers. The need is great for many types of volunteer services—driving, typing, binding Braille pages, etc. Interested persons may also volunteer to receive instructions to become Braille transcribers. More Braille material is badly needed and this in turn means a need for volunteer transcribers. Volunteers are also needed to read material onto tapes. Employers can contact the Commission and arrange to have a field representative make a survey of their business establishments to determine potential employment opportunities for the blind. Members of civic, social, fraternal, or church groups can arrange to have a Commission representative invited as a program speaker. Finally, cash contributions are most helpful, and most appreciated.

22

What is the overall philosophy of the Iowa Commission for the Blind?

The Iowa Commission for the Blind believes that blind people are essentially normal people and that blindness in and of itself is not a mental or psychological handicap. Each blind person should be judged according to his individual talents and capacities or shortcomings and weaknesses. Generalizations about the blind as a class are usually false and are based upon preconception and prejudice instead of knowledge and understanding. What the blind need is not sympathy but opportunity. They should be expected to carry their full share of responsibilities and burdens.



The real problem of blindness is not the loss of eyesight. The real problem is the misunderstanding and lack of information which exist. If a blind person has proper training and if he has opportunity, blindness is only a physical nuisance.

Kenneth Jernigan
Director
Iowa Commission for the Blind