

Recording for sightless takes expertise

By BRITT KENNERLY
Daily News-Sun staff
SUN CITY — Whether a blind college student needs to study Latin poetry, a medical dictionary or an elementary reader called "Marshmallow Muscles," where can he or she turn?

One answer might be the Sun City studio Recording for the Blind Inc., one of 30 RFB studios in the country and two in the Valley.

Based in Princeton, N.J., RFB was founded in 1948 for the purpose of recording textbooks for veterans blinded in World War II.

Now, in its 45th year, RFB lends tapes, free of charge, to print-handicapped students in all fields of study. There are 30,000 borrowers in the United States and a master library in Princeton that boasts 80,000 volumes.

Sun City RFB, which makes tapes for the master library, is at 9449 N. 99th Ave., Peoria.

There, about 110 volunteers serve each week as monitors, readers, checkers, correctors, book preparers and clerical assistants.

New volunteers usually learn the ropes by first serving as monitors, said Bob Briscoe, studio director.

In addition to running the tape-recording machine on which books are taped, monitors follow along with readers in books, stopping the reader if they miss or mispronounce a word.

"When a monitor has done that for a while, and is comfortable, he or she may want to become a reader," Briscoe said.

That's not as simple as just sitting down and picking up a book.

Readers, who usually read once or twice a week for three hours, must be tested in whichever area of expertise they choose, whether it be engineering, law, medicine or elementary readers, Briscoe said.

Production has soared in the past few months, cat-

apulting the Sun City studio into third place in the nation in terms of increased production. From May 1 through December, for example, volunteers sent 80 completed books to Princeton.

"Society tends to put people on a shelf after they're 65 and retired," he said. "We want to let them know we need their talent, experience, interest and ability."

That's because there are 160 different areas in which readers can be tested, and Sun Citizens, retired from a variety of professions, may just fit the bill, Briscoe said.

"We have three or four doctors, three or four attorneys," he said. "We also have people who can read Hebrew, Spanish, French, German..."

And Latin. Elmine Sweet of Sun City is a retired teacher and one of only two Latin readers nationwide for RFB.

A volunteer for the past 17½ years, her impetus was the memory of a blind student teacher with whom she

See Text reader, Page 6



Stephen Chernak/Daily News-Sun

Studio director Bob Briscoe confers with volunteers Carol Meltzer, in the booth, and Marjorie Hall at Recording for the Blind Inc. More than 100 volunteers produce audio tapes of textbooks on a wide array of topics, including law, medicine and languages.

Text reader speaks 'dead' language

— From Page 2

worked many years ago.

"He just fascinated me because he was so brilliant and got along so well with the students," she said. "At the time he was using readers, and tapes weren't so available. I never got him out of my mind and wondered, 'What do you do when you can't see?'"

Sweet became part of the answer after she moved to Sun City in 1974.

"I met a couple of people

who were already in RFB, and it took me no time at all to get interested," she said. "I took the tests and got in right away."

The rumor that Latin is a dead language doesn't cut muster with Sweet, who has recorded three kinds of textbooks, from vocabulary words and syntax right down to the appendix.

She also has recorded classic Latin works by Virgil, Horace and Cicero and excerpts from many other

writers.

Now, Sweet is recording a book of Latin poetry.

"It takes a long time, that's for sure," she said. "But this is one of the greatest projects I've ever been involved in."

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"We have a blind attorney in Sun City West who retired from California, and

we're recording the Arizona bar exam for him," Briscoe said.

Fred Hindley of Sun City worked in bacteriology and clinical pathology for the Army for 22 years, and later worked for 10 years as the director of the laboratory for the State Health Department of Rhode Island.

His medical background makes him a natural for recording medical books such as Merck's Manual, a 2,000-

page book. It takes Hindley and several others who read medical books several months to record the book, with each reader taping about 10 pages a week.

Why keep doing what some might consider tedious, unpaid work for 20 years?

"It helps the students, and it keeps me up on the medical industry," Hindley said.

For information, call 977-6020.

Volunteers perfect reading for blind

By JEFF OWENS
Staff writer

You don't have to be a movie star to volunteer at Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind in Sun City, but it helps.

Recording is an exact science, and when people step into the small soundproof booth to read selected articles from the Daily News-Sun, the Sun Cities Independent and Modern Maturity, diction and pacing must be perfect.

Not pretty good. Not almost perfect. Perfect.

"Reading is pretty tricky," said volunteer G.L. Tisdall, glancing toward the woman reading into a microphone inside the silver booth, which looks like a walk-in fridge with windows. "You've got to have the right kind of voice. Movie stars are the best, but you don't find too many of them around here."

As it is right now, about 35 volunteers see to the task of making sure that more than 250 blind and visually im-

paired subscribers in the Sun Cities area get their weekly news capsules, which emphasize Northwest Valley news items television soundbites often don't cover.

Eleven months each year, they spend up to 4,300 hours selecting news stories, editing, reading, taping, checking and mailing the three-hour cassettes.

The non-profit agency has provided the free news service for more than 25 years.

The small green plastic cases which hold up to four tapes each are delivered free of charge by the U.S. Postal Service to subscribers, who are given special playback decks.

The agency has about 500 of the dual-speed tape decks, which means that they can service twice as many customers as they now have. Hence, they are in the midst of a push to find more subscribers.

"There are certainly more potential users of this free service to the handicapped," said director Alma Weatherly.

Tisdall, one of the studio's several

technicians, said blind subscribers take after their sighted counterparts in one way especially.

"You don't get that news to them, and you hear from 'em," he said seriously. "They're on that phone — 'WHERE'S MY PAPER?'"

Fred Halleman of Glendale is one of the "telephone pioneers" — the studio's small group of repairmen/technicians who are ex-AT&T telephone company men. Sitting at a workbench calibrating his fourth tape deck after six weeks with the studio, he said he likes the work so far.

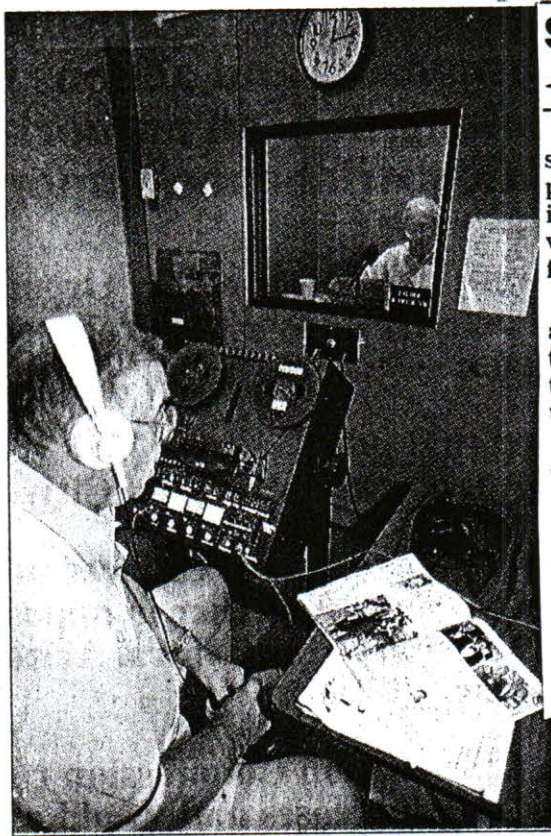
"It's really neat, because I used to own a small-appliance shop in Youngtown, and this fits right in," he said.

Finished with her reading, Marion Best stepped out of the booth to confer with her husband, Joe, who had been monitoring her performance under a heavy-looking set of headphones.

"It's a lot of fun," she said in a clear, well-paced and pleasant voice. "And it's good volunteer work."

► See Subscribers count, A5

Verne Griffin follows while Doug Wright reads in the booth at the Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind. The group needs volunteers to read newspapers and magazines for sight-impaired folks in the area.



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Subscribers count on local news

◀ From A1

And it is work — four hours spent yakking as clearly as possible inside a giant Frigidaire can be rough on the old voicebox. But it has to be perfect.

"Every word has to be exact," said Best, who is more than qualified for the job thanks to "a lot of little theater" and film voice-over work.

Plus, this is an outfit that does more checking and double-checking than NASA. Best said the finished master tapes are scrutinized for errors twice in the Sun City

studio, then sent to the Phoenix office for a third listening.

"Then they send it back for us to do all over again," joked Joe Best, fiddling with the recording console.

After double and triple checking, the tapes are sent out to the subscribers every Thursday.

"It's got to be right," Tisdall said. "The readers are the most important thing."

Anyone interested in volunteering for or subscribing to the service may contact Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind at 933-0985.

over

Hear all about it

Audio tapes help vision impaired

By JEANNIE JOHNSON
Daily News-Sun

Macular degeneration slowly robs Caroline Merrick of her sight. It slowly robs her of an active lifestyle and the ability to read.

Thanks to the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, the Sun City Talking News, the Sun City Chapter of the Telephone Pioneers of America and many volunteers, Merrick doesn't have to be robbed of news in her community.

"Reading for me is very, very difficult," she said. "I had to quit taking the Daily News-Sun, and I miss knowing what's going on. A lot of people wonder how you can miss reading the obituaries, but these are people I've known. I've lived here for more than 20 years."

Volunteers send tapes to vision impaired

—From A1

"I'm trying very hard to maintain my independence by going to a support group. That's where I learned about talking news. They thought it would be a good idea for me to start getting used to listening to tapes."

There are two types of macular degeneration — one of the leading causes of blindness, said Dr. Warren Victor of Sun City. Dry macular degeneration is age-related and the vision falls off, but doesn't completely degenerate.

Wet macular degeneration occurs when the layers of the retina degenerate and there is

an ingrowth of the blood vessels, Victor said. It is called wet macular degeneration when these blood vessels begin to leak. Sometimes this form of the disease can be treated with laser surgery.

Several residents of the Sun Cities area suffer from macular degeneration or some form of blindness. Jim Greer, director of the Sun City Talking News, said he serves more than 500 vision-impaired clients. These blind and handicapped people can listen to news from Sun City, Sun City West and surrounding communities.

"We send out about 250 tapes a week," he said. "It

changes all the time because we have people dropping out and other people signing up. In the course of 24 years, close to 200,000 cassettes have been produced here."

Those 250 tapes a week are played on recorders provided by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. These recorders are fixed by the Sun City chapter of the Telephone Pioneers of America.

Sun City West resident Rudolph Sikler said volunteers from the Pioneers fix between 80 and 100 recorders a month. Phoenix library sends the recorders to various shops around the state where vol-

unteers like Sikler fixes them.

"If anything goes bad with the recorders, they can call the central office and someone comes and gets the machine — no questions asked," he said. "Then they send the recorders to us and we fix them — no questions asked."

Working with electronic systems is nothing new for the telephone company retiree. Sikler started by connecting telephone numbers, moved to installing phones and was promoted to working with computers.

"I've always liked working with my hands," he said. "Sometimes I take the circuit

boards home with me and repair them. It keeps me out my wife's way and in the garage."

In addition to repairing recorders from Arizona, the group also fixes recorders for blind and handicapped people living in 11 other states.

Merrick said she appreciates all the work the volunteers do to keep her in touch with her community.

"I've been in denial for a long time," she said. "But I've learned to accept the fact that I've got a disease that has no cure and it's not going to go away. Even though my vision is going I don't want my mind to go."

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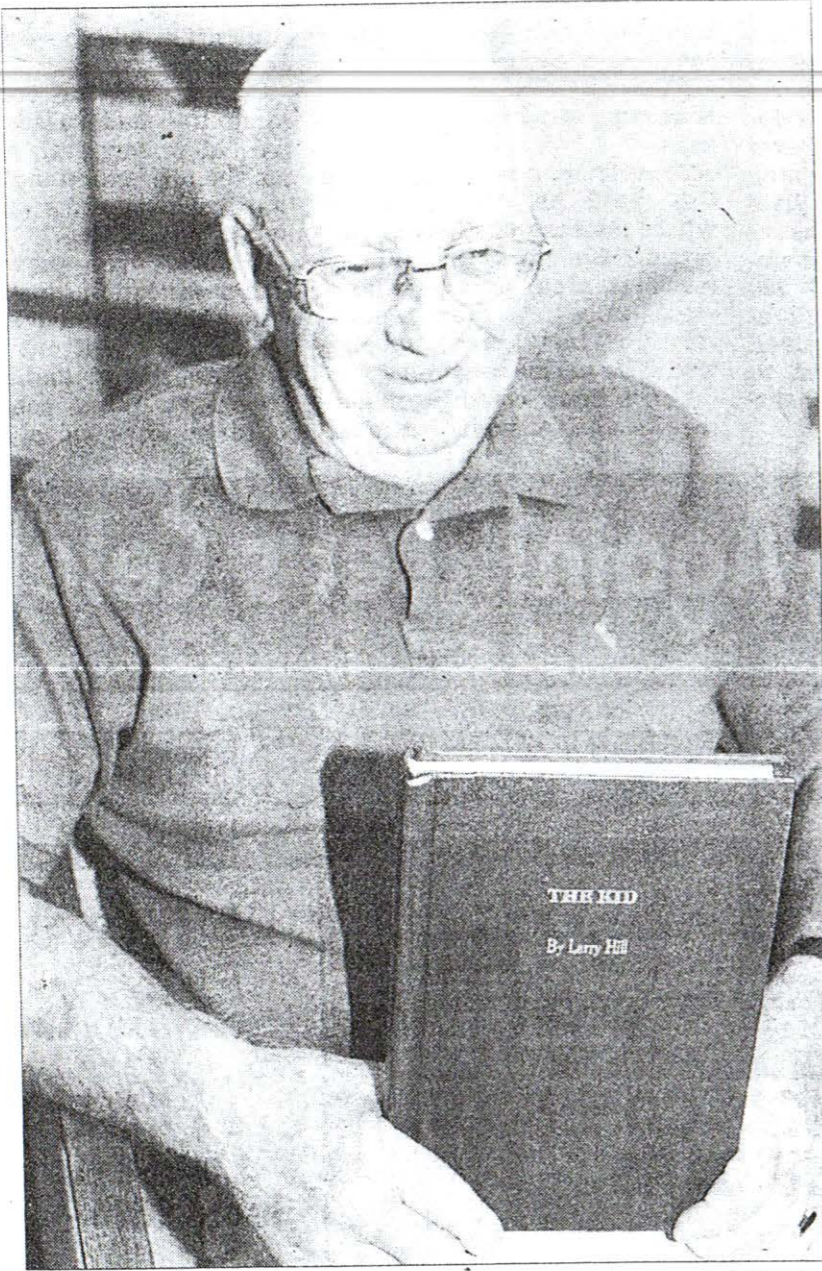
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Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Sun Citian Robert Ryan displays the Western novel — "The Kid" — that he wrote and published to donate to the blind and visually impaired.

Sun Citian pens book for visually impaired

By JULIE LARSON
Daily News-Sun staff

Robert Ryan knows sight is a precious thing — so much so that his own experience of almost losing it prompted him to give a gift to those who are less fortunate.

Several years ago, the Sun Citian was diagnosed as having a slight case of glaucoma. He has undergone several laser treatments and may have to endure more.

"The operations started the idea," said Ryan, a Sun City resident for about 16 years. "Because I'm so fortunate, I thought I'd make some kind of thank-you message. ... I think that 20 years ago, I probably could have been blind, but thanks to the treatments, I still have my sight. I don't see a golf ball as far as I used to see it, but I play every day."

Ryan's "thank-you" is in the form of a Western novel he wrote and published for the blind and visually impaired. He published approximately 50 copies of the book, called "The Kid," about a month ago and has contacted several organizations for the blind and seeing-impaired to see if they can use them — free of charge.

Ryan said he has written about six Western novels and is working on his seventh.

"I think I'm very lucky, so what I'm going to do now is each year, try to put all my Western novels out for the seeing impaired," said Ryan, a retired administrator of a vocational technical school in Connecticut.

His interest in writing the novels stemmed from his travels with his wife throughout the Southwest.

"Since 1959, my wife and I have toured the Southwest almost every year. We've been to almost every Indian reservation, done the rapids of the Grand Canyon and been to almost every national park," he said.

"The Kid" is about a pre-Civil war family that ends up out West. The book focuses on the only son in the family and his trials. The son ends up in Tucson and the book includes descriptions of the Catalina Mountains, Sabino Canyon and Picacho Peak.

So far — not counting equipment — binding and printing the book have cost Ryan \$1,200.

"I'm looking for someone to help defray the costs of printing and binding," Ryan said. "If someone could print it and bind it, they're welcome to the book. If not, I'm going to continue to do it on my own, but I may have to spread it over a number of years to do so."

Ryan is sending the book out to various printing organizations to see if they can help. The first page of the book explains that it is being distributed to organizations for the blind and seeing-impaired "without remuneration."

"Anyone wishing to copy or republish this book, may obtain expressed consent of the author, so long as the distribution of such copies are restricted to the blind and/or seeing-impaired," the first page reads.

"The reason I feel so fortunate," Ryan explained with a smile, "I'm married to a rare girl — I don't think too many people can say that today — and I was brought up by a wonderful man, and I was fortunate to meet Dr. Errol Sweet. Don't you think I ought to give something back?"

Sweet is the Sun City doctor who has been treating Ryan.

Ryan's pen name, "Larry Hill," is sort of a tribute to his family, he said. Larry is after his father's father, Larry Ryan, and Hill is after his mother's father, Robert Hill. "I had a great family," he said.

Service helps blind tune in to TV programs

Library offers access to descriptive video tapes

By IAN MITCHELL
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Fred Siegel enjoys the public television series "Nature":

"Last night they had the most wonderful program about the wild dogs of Africa, and I sat there spell-bound," Siegel said.

It wasn't the scenery which mesmerized Siegel — he's legally blind and has only peripheral vision.

Siegel watched the PBS program with the aid of the Descriptive Video Service, whose narrators describe the action on-screen for the benefit of the visually impaired. The added narration is broadcast on a second audio channel which newer television sets and special adapters can pick up.

"I don't watch regular television because I can't see it unless I get within one foot of it," said Siegel. "Normally I just listen to television."

Siegel is one of several Sun Citians with little or no vision who participate in the Visually Impaired Program, which meets Monday mornings in the Olive Branch Senior Center.

The visually impaired, legally blind and blind residents gather for exercise, bridge and a discussion session led by Merwin Graubart, administrator of the Sun Cities Area Community Council-sponsored program.

Graubart plays the role of talk show host Phil Donahue to the group of about 20 residents, passing around a microphone to amplify voices for those with hearing problems.

Monday morning the topic was methods of coping, and Dorothy Carroll had the microphone to talk about the program's library of descriptive video tapes.

"By sitting back and listening to the descriptive video, I learned things that I didn't see when I watched it with two eyes," she said.

The Visually Impaired Program

has a free lending library of about a half-dozen such tapes, Graubart said. The library is the only one of its kind in the state, he added.

"I've had all of them that Merwin has and I wish we had a dozen more," Carroll said.

Before his group meeting, Graubart demonstrated the descriptive service by playing a videotape of "Dead Poets Society."

The film's difference was different from the moment the Touchstone Pictures symbol appeared on screen. "A logo appears — a blue sphere shot through with lightning," intoned a woman's voice.

Every action and scene in the

movie was similarly described, making the visual audible.

"For example, if I'm smiling, the visually impaired can't see it," Graubart explained.

Siegel said watching and listening to descriptive videotapes or broadcasts takes a little more concentration, but it's worth it.

The visually impaired have to find ways to fight the darkness, Siegel said.

"You've got to make an aggressive move to help yourself," he said. "You can't just sit there and die."

In the Phoenix area, KAET Channel 8 broadcasts several programs which carry descriptive narration on a second audio channel. These programs are marked with a "D" in the KAET member monthly guide. Owners of newer television sets can access the second channel, usually with a button marked "SAP" (for Second Audio Program).

For information on renting a videotape with descriptive narration or other aspects of descriptive video for the visually impaired, call Merwin Graubart at 974-5691.



Steve Chernek/Daily News-Sun

Fred Siegel of Sun City, who is visually impaired, pays attention to a movie which includes an audio

track with a narrator who describes the action on the TV screen.

Recording for sightless takes expertise

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Stephen Cherek/Daily News-Sun
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For information, call 977-6020.

Cassettes air news in Sun City

Talking news reports tell people who have lost their eyesight what's going on in their community.

Sightless or visually impaired people stay informed because Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind each week produces audio cassettes containing news and feature stories published in the Daily News-Sun and other community newspapers.

Volunteer readers with Recreational Reading for the Blind record condensed news stories each Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Editor Grace Wright produces weekly scripts that contain condensed stories, editorials and letters to the editor. Wright includes obituaries that volunteer Leona Ziemann has listed on her computer.

"We read anything that refers to Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown," said Al Ziemann, Leona's husband and vice president of the service's board of directors.

Each week except during the Christmas holidays, the free service mails about 200 cassettes to visually impaired subscribers.

Donations and memorials pay expenses.

"We never ask for money. We get money all the time," said Ziemann, who since 1976 has been volunteering with the independent, nonprofit Sun City agency.

"If I didn't get your tapes, I'd be dumb," many people who receive the service tell Ziemann, he said.

About 35 people staff the all-volunteer group, informally known as the Sun City Talking News.

The service leases a recording studio for \$1 a year from the Lions Foundation in the Sun Cities Community Services Complex at 9447 N. 99th Ave. Space is shared with the local chapter of Recording for the Blind, a national organization.

Talking news began in 1971 with Jane Hilverkus who patterned the organization after a similar service she had encountered elsewhere. John Meeker of Del Webb Corp donated office space on Coggins Drive.

Over the years, Ziemann has been one of the group's staunchest supporters. But he said, the No. 1 man is board President Jim Geer who has been leading the group for 20 years.

Volunteers Ted Richter, Cleo Klemann, Elaine Hunter and Catherine Holler with Geer and Ziemann have given more than 10 years to the service.

"Geer works harder than anyone else," Ziemann said.

He said that satisfaction is a volunteer's pay.

"We're always getting letters about how thankful our subscribers are."

Ziemann became involved shortly after moving to Sun City. Instead of taking to the golf courses or bowling lanes, Ziemann, who has concentrated on his church work and

Recreational Reading for the Blind, said, "As long as my battery holds out in my hearing aid and in my pacemaker, I should do well."

Eyes for the blind

Volunteers record textbooks needed by students

By Lori Baker
Staff writer

SUN CITY — Olga Smith paced her voice at 40 words per minute.

Timing and accuracy are important because blind students will be relying on her when they listen to the tape of how to use a word processor.

"For some people, reading a book on word processing may be difficult, but I taught typing for a long time and it is easy for me," said Smith, a Sun City resident who was a high school business teacher for 35 years.

She is among 100 volunteers from the Sun Cities, Peoria, Glendale and Youngtown who lend their time, talents and voices to record books at the Sun City Recording for the Blind studio.

Nationwide, there are about 4,000 volunteers who read books for an estimated 27,000 blind, visually impaired and learning disabled students from elementary school through graduate school.

These volunteers also serve business and professional people in almost every occupation who want to stay current in their fields.

The Arizona unit, which also has a Phoenix office with about 125 volunteers, started in 1951. It was one of the six initial units founded by Anne Macdonald to help blinded veterans of World War II attend college under the GI Bill of Rights.

The organization's belief is that visually impaired individuals should be able to have educational texts available to their sighted peers, including books in law, medicine, the sciences and foreign lan-

guages.

There is a one-time \$25 registration fee, and cassette tapes of recorded books are provided free.

The non-profit Recording for the Blind, with headquarters in Princeton, N.J., receives no government funding and is not part of the United Way. It has more than 80,000 books in its library.

Community donations and volunteer labor keep the service operating. For example, the \$135,000 annual operating budget for the Arizona unit is paid by donations made by individuals and businesses.

"The volunteers are being the eyes for students so they can learn and pursue a career," said Nancy Martin, director of the Phoenix and Sun City studios.

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Russell Gates / Staff photographer
Kitty Sonefeld (left) of Sun City West threads a tape recorder as Olga Smith of Sun City waits in the recording booth, ready to read an elementary schoolbook.

OVER

BLIND

Recording books on cassette tapes makes it more convenient for blind clients than Braille books.

"A 1,200-page book would take up a 6-foot bookcase if it was in Braille, and only one person at a time could use the Braille book," Martin said. "We can duplicate any number of cassettes for students so more than one student can be served by the cassettes."

Besides having a clear speaking voice, volunteers need to have knowledge in the subject area about which they are reading. They pass voice tests in chemistry, law, engineering, math and an array of other subjects.

When a request for a book is made, a search is done among the 31 studios nationwide to match a volunteer with experience in the subject area.

Readers read in soundproof rooms while checkers have duplicate sets of books and check for accuracy. After a book is completed, another volunteer double-checks the accuracy. If mistakes are found, corrections are made.



Bob Hird, 80, of Sun City records a book in the Sun City studio of Recording for the Blind.

Other volunteers make duplicates of tapes and decide how books should be divided up by readers. Volunteers typically spend three hours a week in the studio.

Dorothy Thaler, a Sun City resident, has generated \$300 during the past three years from her former employer, Honeywell Corp.

"It's very worthwhile volunteering," Thaler said. "We have a

volunteer recognition luncheon and get to meet some of the people who have benefited from our reading."

The Arizona unit does work for students at Arizona universities and community colleges. Students bring the books that they will need during the following semester because it takes several months to record a book.

One of the most challenging books was for a University of Arizona student who was pursuing a master's degree in library science. The book included 20 different languages, such as Chinese, Serbian, Croatian, French, German, Spanish, Greek and Russian.

Martin called Recording for the Blind's New York studio for help. Three people from the United Nations headquarters were able to read all the languages.

Volunteers are constantly being sought and are especially needed in the summer, Martin said. Information on volunteering is available by calling the Sun City studio at 977-6020 or the Phoenix studio at 468-9144.

Seniors see need to read

By BRITT KENNERLY
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — When a blind University of Arizona student needed to study the Dewey Decimal System, Recording for the Blind had just the words she needed to hear.

Those words, which Mary Allen needed to help earn her master's degree in library science, came in the form of tapes recorded in Recording for the Blind's Sun City recording studio.

The organization, which has its national headquarters in Princeton, N.J., and studios across the country, tapes free educational books for print-handicapped students in 17 states. The Sun City studio sends out as many as 400 tapes each month, which are returned after the user is finished with a needed course.

About 100 Sun Citians serve as readers, monitors and checkers during taping sessions of which may last from three to three-and-a-half hours once or twice each week.

The taped books serve as a measure of independence for the blind student, said Patrick Skelly, former Sun City studio director.

"It gives them one more dimension of freedom to listen to a book at their own convenience, without being dependent on someone," he said.

Louise Brown, Alma Watts and Pearl Sherman read, monitored and checked the book Allen needed for course work, while the opening was read by Max Oppenheimer of Sun City.

With 3,827 hours logged over the course of 17 years, Brown, a retired French teacher, was recognized at a recent Recording for the Blind luncheon as the Sun City volunteer with the most hours on the job.

"It seems so many people do things after they retire just to enjoy themselves," she said. "I felt I wanted to do something to help somebody else, but I didn't know what. As a teacher, I was always interested in helping the blind, but I never got involved with Braille work."

Once she signed on with Recording for the Blind, Brown found a permanent volunteer home.

"I derive personal gratification from helping blind students achieve their goals and become independent," she said. "That's so important, to help in some small way to help somebody else reach their goal."

University of Arizona student Mary Allen is flanked by three women who helped her with her college studies. Recording for the Blind volunteers, from left to right, Louise Brown, Alma Watts and Pearl Sherman recorded tapes for Allen, who is blind.



Britt Kennerly/Daily News-Sun

Services for blind mark 10th year in local quarters

By JACQUE PAPPAS
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Ten years ago this month, two groups that help visually impaired residents opened permanent offices in a building built on a foundation of community support.

Local residents donated \$82,568 for the building, which became the home of the Sun City Talking News and Recording for the Blind. The building is in the Community Services Complex on north 99th Avenue, south of Peoria Avenue.

Sun Citian Sam Higginbotham is credited for acquiring the land from Del Webb Corp. and putting it under the supervision of the Lions Foundation.

"I wanted to do something for the community and thought this building was needed," Higginbotham said. "I just formed a fund-raising committee to get the community involved."

Higginbotham collected money for the building through a newspaper recycling drive he started with the Lions Clubs in 1968.

At one time the building was called Higginbotham Studios,

but Higginbotham said he was embarrassed by the name and changed the complex name to Community Services.

This month the two volunteer-supported groups that help blind residents renewed their 10-year lease for a \$1 annual fee.

James Geer, studio director and president of the Sun City Talking News, said he is grateful for the community's support.

"I think this building represents the interest Sun City people have for those who are less fortunate," Geer said. "The donations we got 10 years ago and that we get today are a real indication that the people in this community want to help others."

The Talking News, which goes by the corporate name Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind, was established in 1971.

Geer said the idea started when Sun City decided to record stories in local newspapers and give the tapes to people who are blind or visually impaired.

The idea developed into a local non-profit organization that now makes more than 200 cassettes every week.



Daily News-Sun photos by Mollie J. Hoppes

NEWS ON TAPE — James Geer spot checks tapes that have been duplicated to make sure the sound is correct before mailing them to local residents who are visually impaired. Geer is the director of the Sun City Talking News studio.

Geer said volunteers record stories and human interest material from local newspapers and magazines. All the recording and cassette duplication is done in the offices with machinery purchased with money donated by local residents.

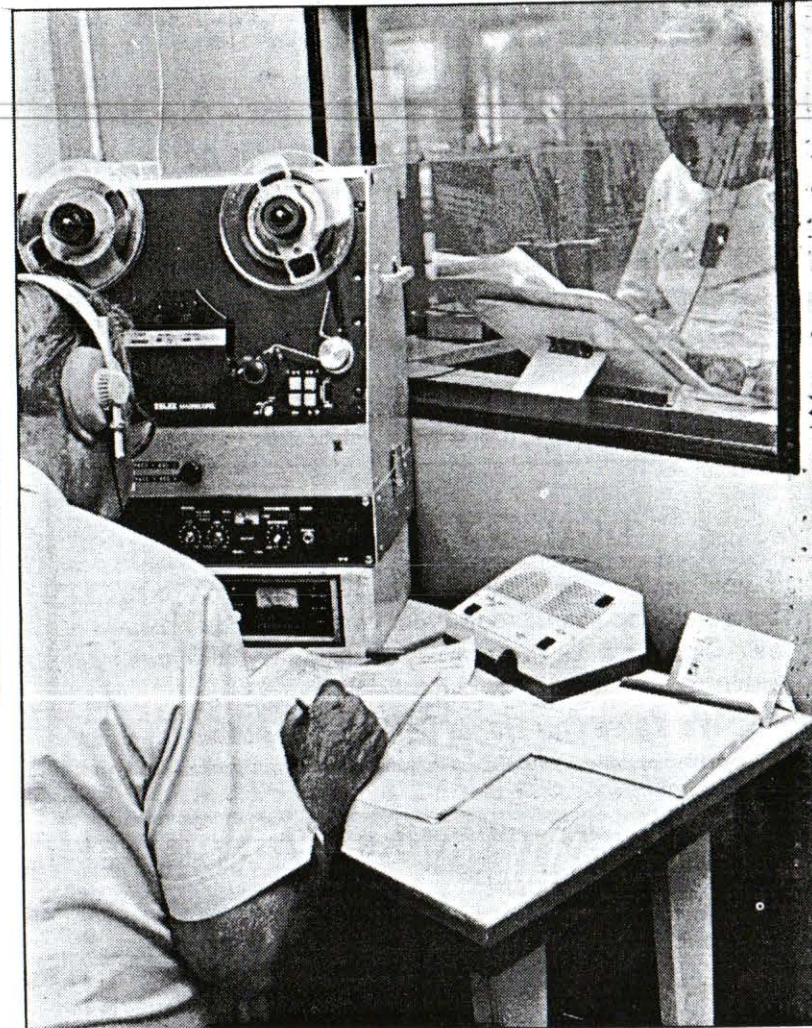
"This is targeted toward Sun City people who have lost their vision and want to know what's going on in the community," Geer said.

A year after the Talking

News got started, a national group called Recording for the Blind started a service in Sun City.

Bob Schollmeyer, director of the Sun City office, said the organization based in New Jersey records text books for blind people in all parts of the nation.

The two groups, established to make the lives of visually impaired residents easier, now work side-by-side in the same building on the acre lot.



SECOND LANGUAGES — Bill Rodgers reads a Spanish lesson in the sound booth at Recording for the Blind while Bob Schollmeyer records for him. At the same time, two other volunteers are recording French lessons in another booth.

The building was the first of three buildings in the complex. About six years ago, the community services building was built and the Sun Cities Area Transit System built an office in the same complex about seven years ago.

State calls on Pioneers

Blind benefit from program

SUN CITY — At the beginning of this month, two groups of Telephone Pioneers joined forces to help the Talking Book Program.

The Talking Book Program transforms reading materials into tapes, so the blind can read by hearing. The state supplies the talking book machines to qualified residents.

Those machines are maintained by members of the Sun City Life Members and Saguaro Life Member Club. Together, they are the sixth repair center in the state.

Howard Schmidt, director of the program, said the volunteers have combined their efforts to repair 76 instruments.

Al Bruce, supervisor of Talking Book machines for Arizona, determines which residents will receive them. There are now 8,000 machines in use in the state; cassettes Pioneers have been trained by Chuck Kruppe of Phoenix. He

has been honored by Channel 12 for repairing 5,500 units in more than 12,000 volunteer hours.

"The Telephone Pioneers are the indispensable people in this program. We could not afford to pay to have the Talking Book machines repaired commercially. The

program would collapse without them," said Bruce.

Last year, volunteers repaired 3,800 machines across the state.

Cassettes may be ordered through the mail or obtained at the Arizona State Talking Book Library, 1030 N. 32nd St., Phoenix.

Information: 255-1850.

2/16/90
by Bob

Eyes of the blind

Volunteers record news for unsighted in Sun Cities

By Betty Latty
Special to Community

For the unsighted of the Sun Cities, blindness does not also have to mean ignorance.

Thanks to about 25 volunteers who collectively devote three days each week to transcribing news and literature to tapes, blind people can remain informed about what's happening in their communities.

Since 1972, Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind Inc. quietly has been sending the tapes every week to its subscribers free of charge. In addition to news gleaned from area newspapers, the organization also records *Modern Maturity* magazine and occasionally makes tapes of books written by local authors.

"We try to honor requests for a certain story or book if we can," says James Geer, the group's director and president.

Recorded Recreational Reading is a division of the Arizona Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, popularly known as Talking Books, which serves as one of about 60 field libraries for the U.S. Library of Congress.

Subscribers, who must be enrolled in the Talking Books program, now number about 200, primarily in the Sun Cities area, Geer says.

"Our subscribers are mentally alert, interested and want to be able to discuss things with their friends," Geer says. "This helps keep them from feeling



Jacques Barbey / Staff photographer
This detail shows the carton that has a special flap arrangement so the cassette can be returned to the center after use.

isolated."

Tapes also are mailed cross-country to a few former residents who want to keep in touch with things going on around the Sun Cities. During the summer, tapes also follow vacationing subscribers.

Because the organization's tapes are transcribed at a non-standard speed and must be played on Talking Books equipment, the recording efforts are not

regarded as a copyright infringement, Geer says. He says Recorded Recreational Reading has obtained transcription permission from publishers on that basis.

Sun Citian Edith Kenn, a former editor, reads and marks publications for the transcribers and chooses the material of interest to subscribers.

Kenn has ample motivation for volunteering: Her husband, Melvin, a retired

attorney and once an avid reader, has lost his sight and is a subscriber.

"He enjoys these tapes so much and would be devastated without them," Kenn says. "I just couldn't not help out."

A longtime volunteer, Esther Borkenhagen, is one of several women who erase incoming tapes, readying them for the next transcription. They also make sure that folders and mailers are sorted, alphabetized and made ready for mailing.

"It's a project that is very appealing to me," she says, "I felt I could be of help doing this job."

Quality checks of the recording operations are overseen by the organization's vice president, Alvin Ziemann, who also is one of the news readers.

The volunteers' lengthiest project is the transcription of *Modern Maturity*, which takes about six hours of reading time and uses one cassette, Geer says.

"We do the whole issue, except advertising and some puzzles. When it's feasible, we include puzzles and place the answers somewhere later in the tape," Geer says.

Master tapes of the recorded magazine are shipped to about 20 of the Talking Books regional libraries, which prepare additional tapes for distribution to their own subscribers, Geer says.

More information about Recorded Recreational Reading may be obtained by calling its Peoria office at 933-0985 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.



Director James Geer "cuts" a news story on cassette in the specially designed sound room at Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind Inc. Jacques Barbey / Staff photographer

Talking News: Second sight given with hands-on care

By PEG KEITH
Sun Cities Independent

There are many organizations in Sun City that reflect a spirit of neighborliness and concern for the welfare of fellow residents.

One such organization is composed of volunteers who work in and outside a sound-proof booth at the office of Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind (The Sun City Talking News).

The Talking News serves Sun Citians in a quiet sort of way.

So quiet, you could overlook it. If your vision's clear and your hands are strong, you might forget about it, or, perhaps, never even know it's there.

The Prides are clearly visible in their reflective orange vests, as they go about their work keeping drainage areas and medians along major thoroughfares neat and tidy.

The Sun City Posse members, making routine house checks, assisting with traffic and carrying out their other assignments, are impressively uniformed and readily identified.

Recreational Reading for the Blind is different (readers are a quiet lot). Theirs is a program that supplements Talking Books.

The organization is in no way connected with, nor is it part of the Sun City unit of the

organization called "Recording for the Blind," which maintains a recording studio in the same complex.

Recording for the Blind is a national organization, involved exclusively in the recording of school textbooks to aid handicapped students in getting an education.

Jim Geer, president of the Talking News organization, explains that Talking Books is a federal program which serves blind and disabled, and, at the same time, protects copyright holders.

People who are unable to read print in any way, whether they're blind or have physical impairments (such as arthritis or stroke that make holding a book difficult or impossible) are eligible for the Talking Book cassette players and tapes from Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind.

"If we don't unlock the door, no one else will do it," Mr. Geer says.

"We don't have a supporting organization with mastery of technical aspects, political or clerical help. It's all up to us.

"It's a production job, which calls for a scheduled delivery. If one volunteer can't make it,

See NEWS, page

From page one

someone else will have to step in."

The Sun City Talking News has no sponsoring organization and no paid positions.

The work force is made up entirely of volunteers who prepare tapes, select news stories, read, operate tape recorders and the high-speed duplicator, audit and package completed tapes, keep clerical records, maintain the studio and recording equipment, purchase supplies and machinery.

Each position is important. Tapes and recorders must be properly set up, monitors watch for noise or errors that distract the listeners.

"The object is to do as good a job as possible ... the better job we do, the more pleasure it will give the listener," says Mr. Geer.

"It's very distracting and disturbing to listen to reading that is not accurate."

Readers audition for the position, says Mr. Geer. "It's really storytelling. Not everyone is a good storyteller."

There's no sponsoring organization, but Talking News has had lots of help. That's where Sun City comes in.

Individuals who formed the Sun City Talking News began tape-recording local events from the news in 1971.

An important contributor to the work, and its progress, has been the Del E. Webb Development Company, which originally provided rent-free space in the Sun City Professional Building.

The Sun City organizations producing tape recordings for the

blind subsequently required larger quarters and the Webb organization committed to donate a site and build a building at cost, for the joint use of the Talking News and Recording for the Blind — each with its own studio.

The Sun City Lions Foundation agreed to underwrite the construction and hold title.

The space for the recording studio is made available to the Talking News by the Sun City Lions Foundation, at a rental of \$1 per year.

The all-volunteer staff of the local recording studios produces 46 news tapes a year. There's no production during August, and a Christmas vacation, as well.

All told, that's close to 9,200 cassettes, as the staff puts out about 200 a week for people in and around Sun City, or for previous residents of Sun City.

The volunteers also do "Modern Maturity" magazine: six issues a year, 1,500 cassettes, for a total production of 10,700 items.

"We've done well over 100,000 tapes, total," says Mr. Geer, noting that the project has been in existence since 1971.

News tracks run about two hours in length. There are four sound tracks on a tape, with the first two sets covering current events from the *Sun Cities Independent* and the *Daily News-Sun*.

Sides three and four are reserved for human interest items, pieces with no particular time limit. Here you might find local feature stories, or a general feature: Ernest Hemingway; something humorous: an Erma

The all-volunteer staff of the local recording studio produces 46 news tapes a year.

Bombeck column.

The main focus, though, is production of current events and locally-oriented news. It's material selected to assist residents of the Sun Cities area (90 percent of the recipients are in Sun City) who might, otherwise, have no access to what's going on, outside the door and down the block.

"We're the only source of local news there is. Of course, we have Sun Sounds, and radio stations, but they're not covering the Sun Cities (exclusively)," says Mr. Geer.

"What we're trying to do is send to people who are mentally alert a report of what is going on in their own community. If they don't know, they tend to become even more isolated. It's important that they can talk about what's going on.

"Perhaps the blind person can comment on something, and someone will ask, 'How do you know about that?' and the answer will be, 'From the newspaper'."

What's on Jim Geer's mind, when he looks at people reading, monitoring, copying, sorting, mailing?

People. (Read that volunteers.) If you'd like to help, contact him at Recreational Reading for the Blind, 9447 N. 99th Ave., Peoria; 933-0985.

Center for Blind Eases pain, lends support

By PEG KEITH
Sun Cities Independent

Nearly 500 Sun Citians are legally, or totally blind. If you're legally blind, you can't see the big E on the eye chart — with any kind of corrective lense.

(Catherine George, technician with the America Eye Institute, Sun City, is more specific. She says Arizona law provides that a person is legally blind if the best eye, with corrective lenses, has a visual acuity of 2200 or less; or, if the visual field in the better eye is constricted to within 20 degrees or less.)

In the Sun Cities, the Center for the Blind, Inc., a satellite program, serves as a meeting place for the blind and legally blind. Many of those who attend are past 70; some in the group are live-alones.

The center's offices are at 9451 N. 99th Avenue, in the Lions' Community Services Building, "the house that paper built," says Merwin Graubart, center administrator.

Thirty years ago, society's focus was on the young blind. The emphasis, then, was on vocational rehabilitation, so that the blind would be no burden to society.

"Today, we are living longer. People who once were productive, with no visual problems, are 70 years old ... and, lo and behold, they have vision problems."

The effort, now, is not to get them into the rat race, but to have them live independently and confidently, with as much dignity as possible.

Macular degeneration, the aging eye, is blamed for 80 to 90 percent of the loss of sight in this age group, says Mr. Graubart, adding that there's no medical treatment for macular degeneration.

The Center for the Blind provides a place where people with vision problems can get together as a group for meetings and seminars, to receive individual instruction in Braille, for entertainment and to play bridge.

"Bridge has caught on tremendously," says the administrator. "You can find people here who are totally blind, using Braille playing cards; and people who are legally blind, with large-type cards."

Typing was popular with men and women for a while, but the popularity waned because the students had no way to proof-read their copy.

Fridays are for the live-alone group. They're all women.

Females can verbalize, while men, he says, are more inhibited. Especially from this generation, men were brought up to be macho. Never to show their feelings. Never to cry.

"Males who are blind will accept certain activities: off-campus bowling — they'll go for that.

"Crafts? Males will not go for making little dolls. They will do some leatherwork, woodwork and copper.

Blindness is not painful, says Mr. Graubart, looking at the positive side. And, it's not fatal. "You don't die of blindness — unless you're hit by a car."

The most common complaint

from the group at the center is the loss of mobility. The blind are isolated, they can't drive; they've lost their independence. Depression takes emotional and physical toll. Talking Books help. Laughter always helps.

Basically, the Center for the Blind is a support group.

Aid to the blind, says Mr. Graubart, is the oldest categorical assistance, dating from Biblical times. "It's an easy sell ... But it's a double-bladed sword, because being blind carries with it the stigma of dependency."

He adds, "Blind people are looking for two things: medical miracles or divine miracles. Medicine will not give it to them. And I have never seen a divine miracle."

He concedes that cataracts are not the problem they once were; to that extent, medicine has acted.

Mr. Graubart is a social worker by profession; he took on the duties of center administrator in 1977.

"I was in the parole business back east. I went from bad to sad — and I found sad far more threatening."

Some 40 or 50 regulars, most of whom have only recently had to cope with their disability, are active in the Center for the Blind. Monday meetings are 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

There are regular volunteers, who help keep things moving smoothly. One coordinates the entertainment; another teaches aerobics. A lady whose husband is blind is the crafts person. A former nurse takes blood pressures.

Mr. Graubart says, "Without the volunteers, we could not exist."

The Red Cross provides transportation ... without the Red Cross, we could not exist."

Coping

by Mildred Baker

SMILING THROUGH

Residents continue to enjoy life, remain active even though blind

Sun Cities residents who are blind continue to enjoy activities in their dark world—encouraged by friends and service organizations that literally provide light at the end of the tunnel.

Since she became blind eight years ago, Annabelle Lippincott and her husband Sam have pedaled more than 18,000 miles on their tandem three wheeler. Indeed, on the very day her doctor pronounced her blind, Annabelle visited the Lakeview Clay Club to ask whether she could continue her membership.

Blindness hasn't prevented her from continuing to construct forms for bird sculptures.

Early on when her vision started to fail, Annabelle began to learn to type. At the Center for the Blind in Peoria, she learned to walk with a cane. Richard Brown, an employee at the center, taught her basic Braille.

Annabelle typed a 200-page report for a writing class at Arizona State University, plays bridge using Braille cards, prepares food, and does the laundry. She continues to make cabbage salad with a butcher knife just as she did when she could see.

Braille is useful for labeling musical cassettes and hats.

"I wear a hat when my husband and I ride our tandem and marked the one I wore this morning with a 'y' for yellow under the lining," she said.

Services such as Talking Books and Sun City Talking News entertain and inform her as she knits. Another service to the blind, Sun



EXERCISE IS part of the daily life style of Annabelle Lippincott of Sun City and her husband Sam. Since Annabelle lost her sight eight years ago, she and Sam have pedaled more than 18,000 miles on their tandem three wheeler.

Sounds, is her companion while she works in her kitchen.

Jim Cunningham is another blind member of the Lakeview Clay Club, continuing to work on sculptures in wood. Ironically, his work as a commercial photographer in a dark room in Minneapolis may have helped prepare him for blindness.

"I know the size my wife shapes loaves of bread so I free-form baking containers from clay," Cunningham said. A bread slicing device he created eliminates irregular slices.

The ceramic angels, wind chimes, chess figures, and pie birds he makes to vent steam from a fruit pie are

popular at Lakeview Clay Club, reflecting his imagination and sensitive fingers rather than molds.

When he lost his sight 15 years ago, Cunningham studied typing, learned to use a cane, and mastered Braille. Today, he walks to the bank, swims regularly, and dances with his wife Lois.

Like Annabelle Lippincott and Jim Cunningham, Laura Perner continues to live life to the fullest.

"Blindness isn't the worst thing in the world," she said. "Giving up is the worst."

When she became blind at age 60,
BLIND, Page 32

BLIND, from Page 30

Laura acquired a guide dog and began marking clothing, condiments, and important papers. Because the number seven is most frequently used in Sun Cities telephone numbers, Laura taped it on her rotary telephone to identify other numbers by their position in relation to seven.

She feels in control of paper money with \$5 bills, identifies quarters and dimes because of ridges on edges, and nickels and pennies by smooth edges. An avid knitter, Laura telephones a knitting instructor at Bell Recreation Center who reads pattern directions. As the instructor speaks, Laura tape records the information step-by-step.

She still does the laundry and cooking. Since her husband doesn't drive, Laura relies on Sun City Area Transportation (SCAT).

"Other senses improve when sight is gone," she observes. "Hearing smell, and touch become more acute. When I touch, I really feel."

Richard Brown, blind since age one, instructed persons at a Veterans Administration Hospital in Illinois before retiring. He's available to teach Braille in the Sun Cities area.

When shopping in a grocery store, he finds an employee to assist him. As he chooses canned items, he af-



MILDRED BAKER PHOTO

JIM CUNNINGHAM, a blind member of the Lakeview Clay Club, works on sculptures in wood. He created a bread slicing device to eliminate irregular slices.

fixes Braille labels he made, securing them with rubber bands. Brown also composes lyrics and then sets them to music.

Adele, his wife, has been blind since age 20. She has used guide dogs, teaches blind persons, instructs those interested in sewing, and has published three reference volumes to assist the visually impaired in both hand and machine sewing.

Titled, "So What About Sewing?" the volumes are in the Bell Library.

Mildred Leffler of Sun City West,

who isn't totally blind, makes services of the Arizona State Talking Library available to residents of her community, Surprise, and El Mirage. She invites low vision people to her home to demonstrate how her husband has altered kitchen lighting to benefit the sight impaired to the fullest.

"It's important that kitchen light doesn't shine directly into the eyes," she said. "Cupboards, utensils, and even measuring cups are different in color to maximize their use." **FL**

Talking News 'sees' for some

By LAURIE HURD

Sun City Talking News recently received a letter from an 83-year-old woman, expressing her appreciation for the service provided by the organization.

The woman had lived in Sun City for 20 years, but was now residing in St. Louis. Typed poorly, many words were misspelled — except for two — "hug" and "love," which were consistently spelled correctly.

Such letters of gratitude are not uncommon for Sun City Talking News, officially known as The Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind. The organization provides cassettes of various print material for the blind and physically handicapped.

Founded in 1971 by Jane Hilverkus, the service has become an example of what can be accomplished when a community works together to achieve goals.

Local Lions groups provide 60 to 65 percent of the organization's funding. In-

dividual contributions comprise the next largest slice of the pie and various organizations provide the remaining needed funds.

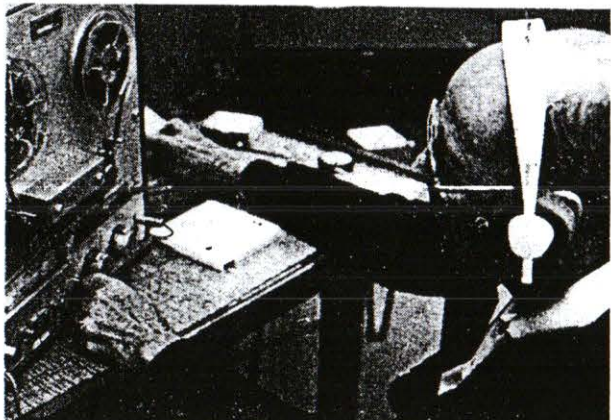
The organization is located at 9447 N. 99th Ave., on land donated by Del E. Webb Corp. Webb constructed the building at cost.

Volunteers of all ages keep Talking News in operation. Workers read newspapers, magazines,

and books from beginning to end. The readings are recorded onto a master tape, and duplicates are then made from the main tape onto cassettes.

Volunteers box up the cassettes, which are mailed to approximately 175 homes in Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown. A few tapes are sent to residents who are visiting

See TALK/page 3



SUN CITY TALKING NEWS provides recorded news and information each week to nearly 200 area residents. Volunteers from the non-profit organization record articles from newspapers and magazines and then mail them out the tapes to visually handicapped residents.

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• TALK

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other states.

When the cassettes are mailed back to the service, more volunteers erase the tapes and reset them to each tape's beginning point so the cassettes can be used again.

Postage is free for the organization and its listeners. Address flaps on the cassette box are switched depending on if the tape is being sent or returned, so those visually impaired can feel the round or squared-off edges of the box to determine which address flap is showing.

James M. Geer, president of Talking News, says they record stories from local newspapers such as the *Sun Cities Independent*, articles from *Modern Maturity*, a magazine for retired citizens and various library books.

"We offer local things such as the recreation center controversy and things that are not on television. Stories like the petitioners at the Rec Centers, Sun City West Condominiums and Youngtown's senior citizen zoning," he says.

Every item in *Modern Maturity* is read, except the advertisements. A "beep" sound on the

cassette indicates the beginning of new articles so listeners can pick and choose from six-hour magazine tapes or two-hour news tapes.

Approximately 70,000 news cassettes (92,000 with the magazine material) have been completed in the service's 15-year history.

"We are an organization of Sun City. We've never had a sponsor organization. And never has anyone done anything like this before. We have learned by doing," says Geer.

"We started with simple recordings and now we use professional-type equipment such as those used in radio stations," he adds.

The group can also boast of having never paid a staff member and they have never missed a taping day in their 15 years, Geer says.

The reader volunteer behind Talking News must pass an audition before he/she can join the staff, Geer says.

Skill is required of the readers. Geer says excellence in the product is required by all who volunteer their time.

Those interested in either donating their time or money, can call 933-0985.

Visual aid

Sun City-area volunteers read, record so blind hear what others see

First in a two-part series

By A.J. FLICK
Staff Writer

Loss of vision should not necessarily mean loss in the quality of life, and two local organizations are striving to live up to that credo.

Though their names sound the same and they share a common wall in the same building, the groups' functions serve different needs and interests.

Recording for the Blind (RFB), which is affiliated with a national organization, disperses audio tapes for educational purposes.

On the other hand, Recreational Recording for the

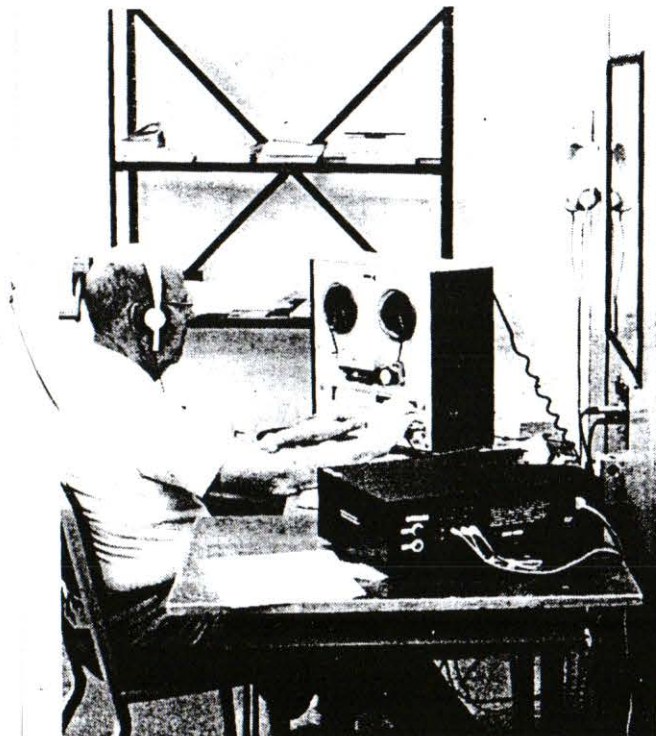
Blind (RRFB) is a local organization that mails out tapes of community news, magazine articles and books of interest to senior citizens.

They share one important bond: Volunteers from the Sun City area who donate their time and eyesight to help the visually impaired.

Louise Brown, who has logged over 2,000 hours in the soundproof booths at RFB, says she donates her time "because it's interesting. It's a pleasurable avocation. I know I am helping others who are losing their eyesight."

For director Bob Schollmeyer, the only paid worker there, "I'm getting an education myself on a lot of the

* Visual aid, D3



Recreational Recording for the Blind volunteers, from left, John Braxton and Alvin Ziemann.



Recording for the Blind volunteers, in booth, Caryl Meltzer, and monitoring reading, Anna Rae Underwood. (News-Sun photos by Jim Painter)

—From D1
subject matter. Some of it rubs off on you."

The Peoria studio, located at 9449 N. 99th Ave, is one of 29 across the nation. It began operations a decade ago.

Its parent organization, Recording for the Blind, Inc., was founded in 1948 and incorporated in 1951.

Not only does the local studio furnish recorded tapes to students at Arizona State University, but all across the nation.

Schollmeyer explains that each studio provides RFB headquarters at Princeton University with a list of volunteers and their specialties.

"To read a chemistry book," he says, "we need to have someone with a background in chemistry."

For instance, when Princeton hears of an anthropology student needing to have a book transcribed, the university sends the order to a studio anywhere in the nation that has an anthropology reader.

RFB volunteers come in three categories:

—Readers, some specialized, some general, who are the voices;

—Monitors who follow along with the reader during recording to catch errors;

—Checkers who "proofread" tapes to double-check accuracy.

Although RFB encourages anyone to volunteer, Schollmeyer says good readers are few and far between. Someone who has a voice like a professional announcer is all well and fine, he says, but familiarity with specific subjects is what counts.

"A good voice is nowhere near as important as the knowledge a person has," he stresses.

Right now, the studio could use anyone who has a background in math, science and language (native speakers only).

In order to become a reader, volunteers must subject themselves to a nit-picking test designed and approved by Princeton. And, Schollmeyer emphasizes, evaluators are picky.

He displays a test evaluation sent back to the studio.

"Stumbled on the word 'mixed,'" it says.

"Page turned noisily."

Upon approval, readers spend a few hours a week at the studio in cubicles lined with soundproof tiles.

Textbooks are first recorded on reel-to-reel tapes that are then copied onto four-sided audio cassette tapes.

Herschel Perlman, a retired physician from Minneapolis, has been a volunteer for 5 years specializing in medical books.

Schollmeyer says readers like Perlman are hard to find because they do more than just recite sentences.

"You never know if the student is blind or can see somewhat," Schollmeyer states. "So all the figures, charts and graphs must be described. They all have to make sense to someone who can't see them."

The hard work pays off, the volunteers say. At annual meetings, the studio invites students who use the service to meet the people behind the voices.

"Something like that," Perlman says about meeting students, "really charges you up. They're so appreciative to the work that you're doing. They say they couldn't get through college without (RFB)."

Next door to RFB at 9447 N. 99th Ave., Recreational Recording for the Blind (RRFB), helps many people make it through the day.

Begun 14 years ago, RRFB has had a difficult time trying to distinguish itself from its neighbor, says Jim Geer, who heads the studio.

He explains the differences between the two groups: "Their objective is completely educational; ours is recreational. Theirs is national in scope; ours is entirely local, targeted to the people of Sun City."

Its audience, he continues, is the people who have lost their vision—oftentimes late in life—and can no longer read the community newspaper.

The service lets people who might be physically restricted by their handicap to envision the world around them without leaving their living room.

"It's very easy to become isolated unless you have awfully good friends and family. Otherwise, it's easy to become lonely."

The studio, which he stresses is funded entirely by local donations, was started by a woman who "saw that there were people here starving for local news," Geer states.

Over the years, it has taken on several monikers, like Sun City Talking News, but none really conveyed what the service does, he says. They've stuck with Recreational Recording for Blind because it comes the closest, but people still confuse it with Recording for the Blind.

A corps of about a dozen volunteers churns out audio versions of the News-Sun, complete with summarized letters to the editor and editorials, features, news stories and obituaries.

In addition, the RRFB records Modern Maturity, which is the bimonthly magazine of the American Association of Retired Persons.

The magazine is recorded with a complete table of contents at the start of the tape. Then, a beep sounds between each article.

This way, if the listener is not interested in a particular article, he or she may fast-forward the tape to the next story.

"It gives blind people a chance to do selective reading," Geer says.

Special tape recorders that can

pick up four sides in one tape are provided by The Talking Library, which is located in Phoenix.

Tapes are mailed with flip-top containers that have the client's name on one flap, then when reversed, has the studio's address.

Everything—from the service to the mailing—is free. Equipment is paid for through donations. All workers are volunteers.

The studio has one recording booth. Unlike RFB, Geer stresses pleasant voices for readers. The studio also takes into consideration that some listeners have problems hearing, which means male readers are better than female.

"When you lose your hearing," Geer explains, "the first to go is the higher frequencies. So men are generally the best readers."

Geer pulls a file-cabinet drawer open and takes out a folder

stuffed with letters of appreciation. People take the time to write when they like what the studio is doing, he says, but the problem is many people who could use the service don't know it exists.

"We don't reach as many as we should, as many as we could," he says.

But, he adds, fan mail keeps up the morale.

One woman summed up her feelings for the service in a note.

"I feel guilty," she writes, "for not writing a love letter to everyone there who makes it possible for me to keep up with the news."

A thank-you note like that is "what keeps you going," Geer states.

"I wouldn't last here unless this kind of thing happened. That's the only reason for getting up in the morning and coming over here."

Next: Helping the blind at home.

Recording volunteers find selves in service

By LYNN PYNE
Staff Writer

John Braxtan volunteered for Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind because he views Sun City as a self-help community.

He wanted to pull more of his own weight.

Cathie Holler already had been reading aloud for her visually-impaired mother-in-law. She volunteered so her efforts would benefit more than one person.

Art Hanshaw volunteered because he saw a need and decided to do what he could to fill it.

Duane Wendele had felt empty and purposeless when his wife died. He heard of the recording group and volunteered and now he sees himself contributing to the world. He's made good friends.

ELMINE SWEET and Louise Brown volunteered for Recording for the Blind because self-centered retirement activities left a void. They wanted to accomplish something worthwhile.

Probably there are as many reasons for volunteerism as there are volunteers. But, regardless of this, each individual is vital to the operation of Recreational Recording for the Blind and Recording for the Blind.

The recreational recording group needs about 12 volunteers each week just to record and send out the weekly tape cassettes of news taken from local newspapers.

"Our main reason for existing is to provide local

news to local people," said James Geer, recreational group director. Some tapes are sent to people living as far away as Alaska. Circulation is 125 and increasing.

THE GROUP also records the New York Times Large Type Weekly (circulation 70) and the bi-monthly AARP magazine, Modern Maturity (circulation 175). In the past year, 17 books of fiction or non-fiction were recorded from print text.

The recreational group has about 30 volunteers, fairly evenly divided between men and women. In March, they donated 478 hours of work.

The Talking Book program (a federal program directed by the Library of Congress) provides tape players for subscribers and provides tapes for the local recording group to use. The group must provide all other equipment, office space, and necessities.

Recording for the Blind, directed by Beatrice Crane, is associated with the Phoenix and national organizations. Textbooks are recorded for use of high school, undergraduate, and graduate students and professors.

WITH THE work of 100-120 volunteers, the local group averages 65 tapes per month. The number of tapes per book varies—one recently-completed book, "Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry," had about 2,600 pages and took about one year to record on 50 reel-to-reel tapes, Mrs. Crane said.

Master tapes are stored in the Recording for the Blind main library in New York, which now has about 38,000 such tapes and sends student copies to those who need them.

Volunteer readers are required to pass a voice test on a tape that is sent to New York for strict evaluation by a panel. This is required also for those who will read in specialty areas, such as law and medicine.

Mrs. Crane said the group always is looking for such readers. Specialties include biochemistry, biology, botany, chemistry, college math, classical Greek, computer sciences, elementary math (operations), French literature, German, Hebrew, Latin, linguistics, macroeconomics, middle English, physics, Russian, and Spanish grammar and literature.

BOTH LOCAL groups use sound-proof booths and lapel microphones for recording. Monitors listen with earphones and stop both tape and reader if a mistake is made.

For example, when Louise Brown read the words "brilliant star" in a textbook, she unconsciously said, "Bright star." Monitor Mrs. Sweet stopped her and they rewound the tape and started the passage again.

Pronunciation is important. Thick dictionaries are on hand in each of the Recording for the Blind booths. The word "diffuse," which is pronounced differently depending on how it is used, is one example of a troubling word.

Mrs. Holler, a Canadian who speaks with a mild accent, sometimes pronounces words in an unusual way. Once she and another volunteer were trying to resolve whether the word "threshing" is pronounced with an "a" or an "e" sound.

THEY FINALLY asked a Kansas woman how to pronounce the name of the machine used for harvesting. She replied with assurance, "Why, 'combine' of course."

The recreational reading group's narrators generally research and

OVER

read the materials beforehand. The other recording group's readers sightread, but books are prepared for them with markings, such as written picture descriptions and page turn notes.

With each page turn, the monitor pushes a button that makes a beep on the tape. Students can find their selections easily this way by counting the tones.

"I don't know how they visualize some things," Mrs. Brown said. "I read (on tape) a crossword puzzle in a workbook once."

Volunteerism has its rewards and many of the volunteers say they get more from it than they give.

"I AM substituting this for something wonderful I used to have," Wendele said, referring to his wife's death. "It's a selfish thing in many ways. I get a feeling of contributing to the world even though I'm retired."

"I get a feeling of purpose. Without a purpose, you sit around and wonder what it's all about—why are you living? With a purpose, you're not just dying on the vine, going sterile."

Wendele has met some dear friends through volunteer work. One of these friends is Laura Perner, who receives the tapes and like many others has listened to Wendele's voice for years.

He returned home one day to find a pair of knitted slippers and a note from Mrs. Perner that read, "I knitted these while listening to the tapes and want you to have something, too."

WENDELE HAS been inspired by the sightless persons whom he's met. "They're not going to sit back and be blind," he said. "They say, 'Come on, life. I'm willing to box with you.'"

People living outside Sun City have asked Wendele if he thinks Sun City is a sterile community. "With this, it

makes it alive, a productive place, concerned with the day's living," he replies.

Miss Edith Henry and Mrs. Dorothy Butzow, volunteers for Recording for the Blind, both get a sense of personal gratification in helping blind students accomplish their goals and become independent.

"I really do feel there's a lot of talent in Sun City and this is one of the opportunities people have to use that talent," Miss Henry said.

MRS. BUTZOW added, "In retirement, there is always the feeling of being unwanted or being to some degree up on the shelf, but this is something retired people can do and can do well. That in itself is worthwhile."

Mrs. Sweet, a former English and Latin teacher, said, "We meet interesting people who have similar interests and backgrounds."

Mrs. Brown, who gave up two bridge afternoons to volunteer at the studio, believes that many retired people live for themselves at first, feeling that they've worked all their lives for this reward.

"They are happy with this only for a certain time and then they feel they can do more," she said. After a recording session, she feels good inside because she's accomplished something to make the day worthwhile.

Volunteer Ward said, "I was looking for something to do to fill in some spare time. I never thought of any rewards. There's something about this—I don't know what it is—something you like to do. Nobody wants to quit."



Bea Crane, director of Recording for Blind, checks tapes for errors. These then must be corrected, as it is especially important for textbook tapes to be perfect for students.



Elmine Sweet, former English and Latin teacher, monitors tape while Louise Brown, reader in booth, describes diagrams in astronomy book. Nothing can be left out in preparing recordings for

Blind. Book preparers write descriptions of pictures in texts beforehand so readers can zip through without stumbling. Mrs. Brown is former English and French teacher. (News-Sun Photos)

Tapes from mini-studio open books for blind

Someone once made a comment about the wise truism: The thirst for knowledge is never quenched. They asked, what do you do when you don't have a cup?

A cup, of course, is the thing which holds the knowledge so you can easily drink it, i.e., a book. Now the question, what do you do when you can't read a book because you are blind?

About 75 Sun Citians are answering that question for probably hundreds of blind high school and college students all across the country.

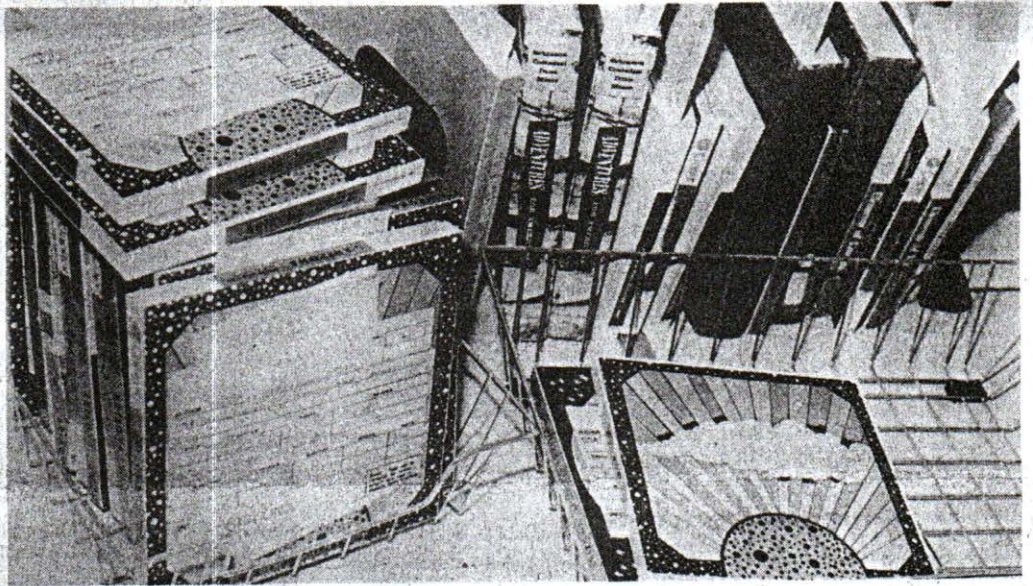
As many of them volunteer a morning or afternoon per week with page after page of textbooks spread before them, local participants in the Recordings for the Blind program may think it's only a "drop in the bucket." But they're really making a big splash.

"SINCE FEBRUARY, we've recorded 11 complete books on tape and have more than a dozen in the process right now," said Mrs. Ruth Thompson, studio director.

"These are not light-hearted, entertaining things. They are mostly college books on highly technical subjects. They are vital for the student to continue his education and it is equally vital that they be recorded precisely as written."

The little room which holds the Sun City unit "studio"—two recording booths, shelves of tapes and texts, files, dictionaries, recording equipment, desks, and a drinking fountain—is located at 99th and Peoria avenues in the VNB building.

"We could accomplish much more if we only had



Books and tapes in process of being completed show busy atmosphere in local Recordings for the Blind studio. With only 22 units in the country, requests for more than 22,000 books had to be turned down last year. Braille is not practical for books much beyond the elementary school level, so tape is only other way to help blind students.

facilities large enough for five recording booths," explained Mrs. Thompson. "Sun City residents have the professional background to be able to read a chemistry or medical text with accuracy, putting inflection in their reading so the students understand the meaning, and they are eager to volunteer."

RECORDINGS for the Blind is a non-profit, volunteer-centered national organization which is supported by contributions from the public. Started more than two decades ago to provide texts for Korean veterans who were visually or physically impaired, the New York headquarters now has more than 20,000 completely recorded titles which are available without charge to high school, undergraduate, graduate, and adult students as well as business and professional people.

"As research goes on in every field of human con-

cern, more books are written, and that's why the job never ends," explained Mrs. Thompson, who was director of the Phoenix recording unit for twelve years before coming to Sun City.

The process of getting a book recorded is simple. A student anywhere in the country purchases two copies of the book he needs and sends them to the RFB headquarters. This is his only cost. The office sends them to one of its recording units (located in 14 different states) where volunteers record it.

A copy of the tapes (about 12 to 14 tapes for a 200-page book or 24 to 28 hours of recording) is made at the unit and sent directly to the student. The original is sent to the headquarters library where it is recorded on 8-track tape, and from then on any other student who needs the book can obtain it, again free of charge.

"WHAT HAPPENS at the recording unit may not win a prize for the dramatic, but we do have fun," Mrs. Thompson laughed, noting that readers and monitors often find typographical errors in the text, discuss pronunciation of an unusual word before consulting the dictionary, and admit they enjoy it because they learn so much while reading or listening.

"The reader and monitor are a team. Both have identically notated copies of the book (the reason the student must supply two books) and the monitor follows every word spoken by the reader," she explained.

"The monitor operates the recorder—stopping when an error is made and serving as the first checkpoint of the tape."

All 'Recordings' volunteers important to accuracy

A person applying to become a reader records about 12 minutes of subject material in a field he or she is familiar with. No corrections are made on this "test" tape. The recording is evaluated at national headquarters on the basis of pleasantness of the voice, manner of reading, phrasing and pronunciation.

Since the college student can obviously comprehend much faster than the average person can speak, the reader must be able to read rapidly, but clearly.

"Yes, sometimes we have readers gradually slowing down because they're getting bored with the material, but more often our readers get so absorbed in the subject that they read too rapidly. They want to learn for themselves and they forget they're actually reading for someone else."

(Continued on Page 2)

(Continued from Page 1)

THE MONITORS must be trained to "catch" the reader on these and other "slips."

"We like to have people who can do both, so they can trade off between chapters, but we have many who come in as monitors even though they don't record," said Mrs. Thompson.

Still other volunteers do

clerical work, or double-check completed tapes—again word for word against the text, or prepare the two books for the recording.

"You can't just open the book and start reading," Mrs. Thompson explained. Everything from the table of contents to the bibliography has to be 'set up' for the reader. "Textbooks usually have several chapter headings which often

summarize the high points of the unit, and the order for reading these has to be marked. The person who sets it up actually has to go through the whole book so the readers present everything the same way all the way through.

"And because the book is copyrighted, we must read exactly as it is in print. We cannot edit, and if a reader is an expert in the field and knows something is wrong, we cannot 'correct' it.

"**GRAPHS**, tables, charts, maps, pictures, and other illustrations also present unique problems because we must try to convey the visual aid to a non-visual person."

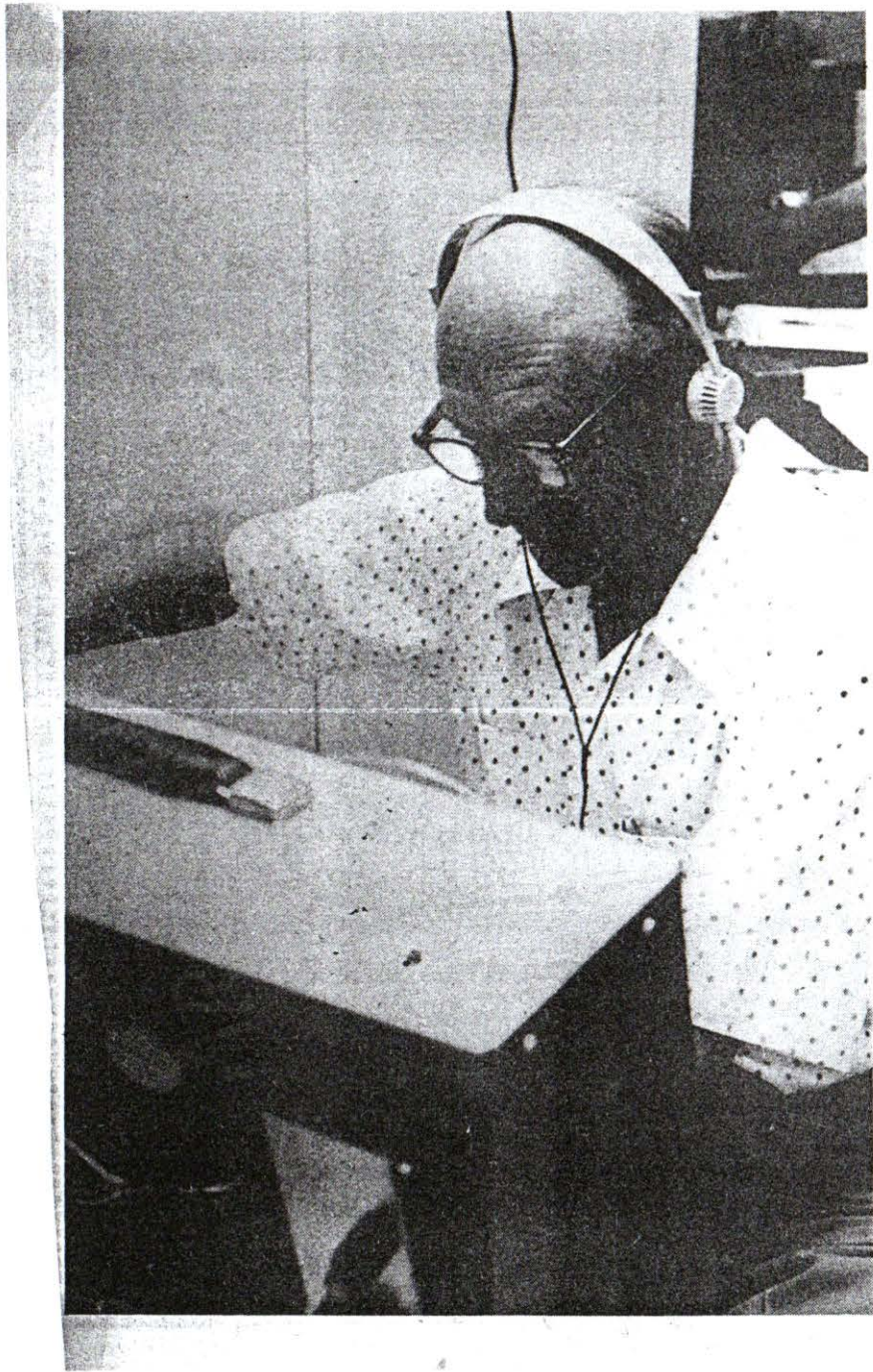
The Sun Citizens who volunteer—and four were volunteer readers even before the Sun City unit was set up, driving into Phoenix to read—do it for good reasons.

"There are no awards or special recognitions. Sometimes I can't even get them to keep track of the number of hours they're in the office. Many of our people know someone who is blind; all of them realize the tremendous impact these recordings have on the life of a blind person who is trying to get an education so he can take a useful and productive place in society.

"I've even had one or two people who knew they were going blind themselves and wanted to give something of their last sighted days to someone else," she said softly.



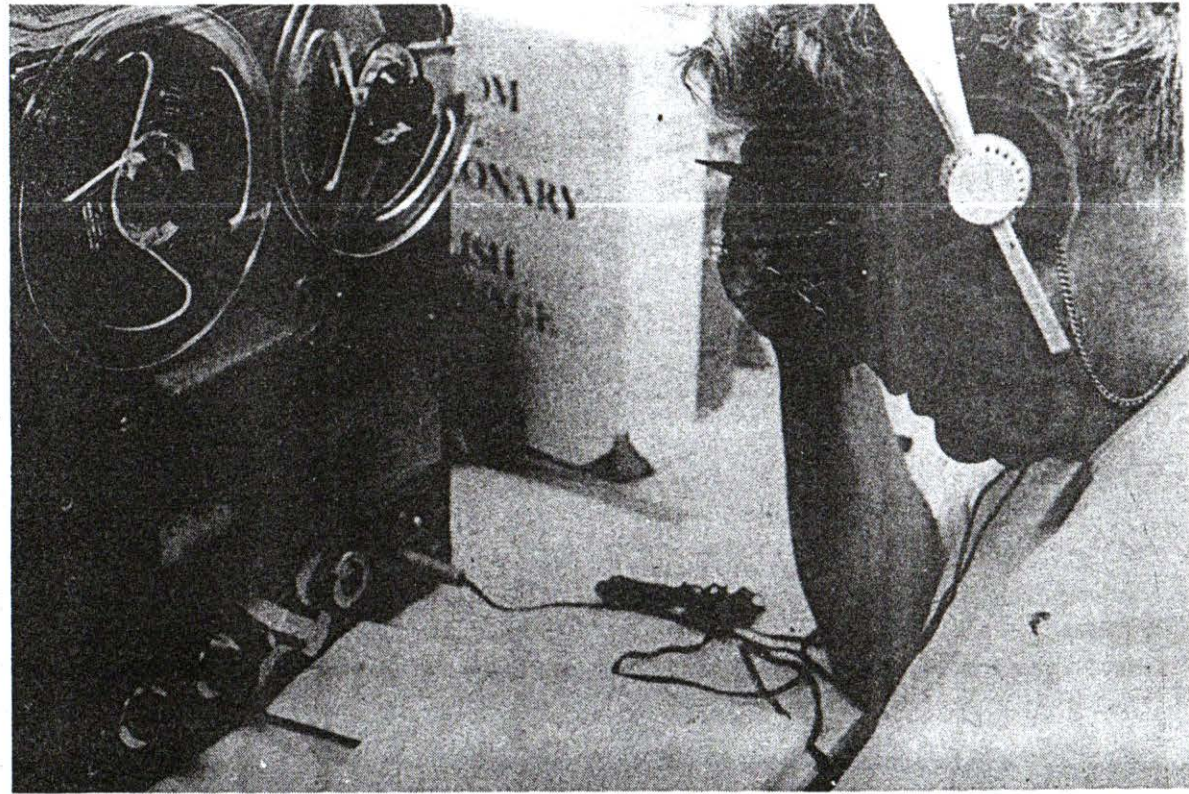
Setting up the two textbooks on the play "Diary of Anne Frank," Mrs. Helen Forbes checks each page to make sure penciled notations are identical. Literature books, like this one, are fun, with readers sometimes becoming overly dramatic.

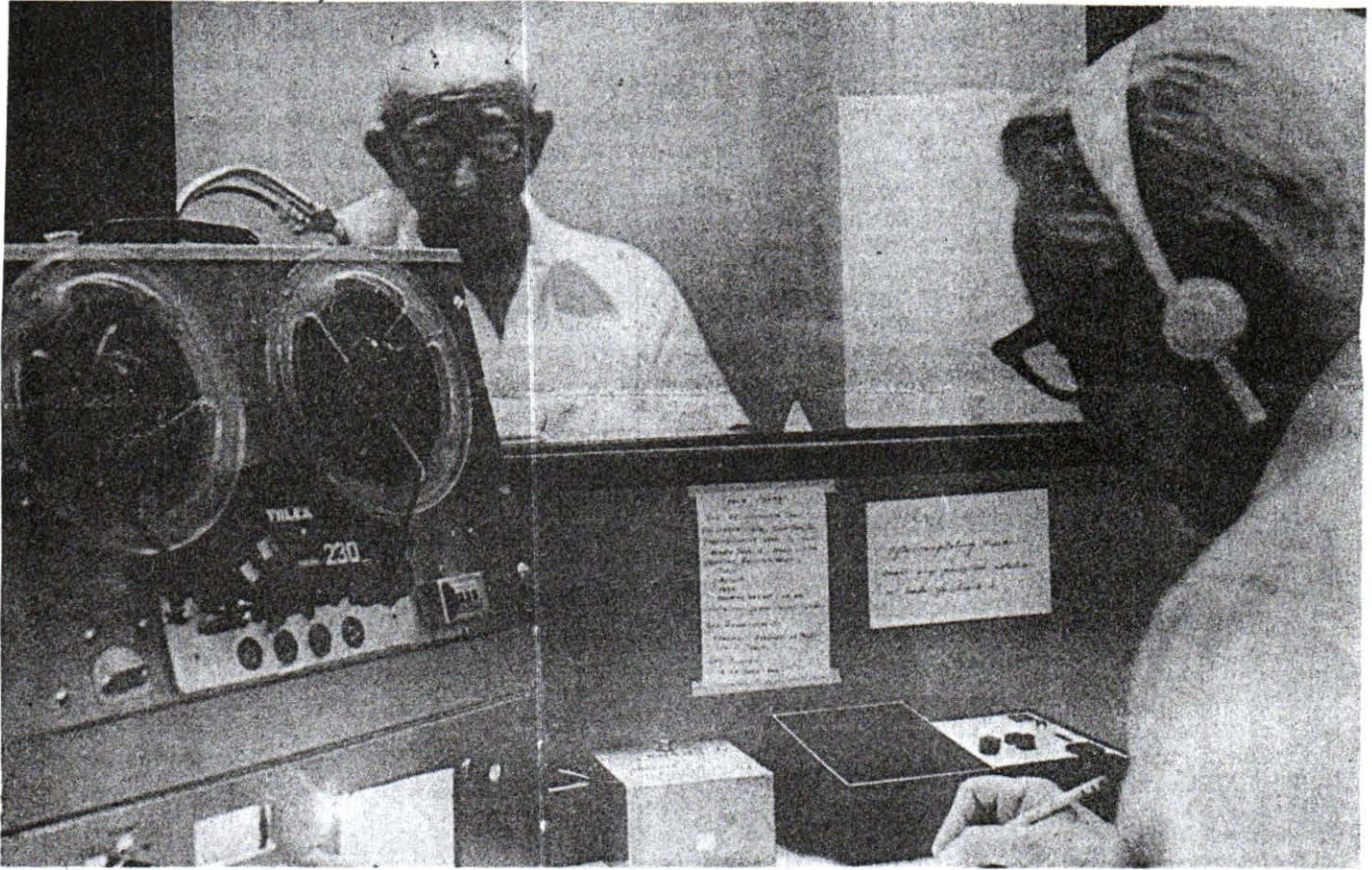


Story and photos

by Val Bembenek

Monitor Jim Geer (left) finds lighter moment during recording session which usually lasts more than three hours. Mrs. Alice Hindley (right) listens to completed tape for last word-for-word check before tape is duplicated. Her husband, Fred, is a regular reader for unit; they are one of several husband-wife teams who come in once a week or oftener. Local RFB office is open every day. Marge Warnecke is assistant to Mrs. Thompson. Last year national headquarters served more than 10,000 borrowers at all educational levels with 62,000 completely recorded titles.





Especially in this area, readers are found first, then the Sun City unit requests books in their specialized field since their background makes it easier for them to convey text information. For example, George Weigel reads book entitled "Short-term Psychotherapy and Structural Behavior Changes" while Milton Reiner monitors, pencil in hand. Other subject areas where volunteers are needed include law, the sciences, math, medical, and computer sciences.

Talking News keeps residents informed

By JACQUE PAPPAS
News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Friday is a special day for Sun Citian Laura Perner.

She goes out to her mail box and pulls out a cassette delivered with local news highlights of the past week.

"After you've lost your eyesight, that's an empty spot in your life. It takes a lot of pride you have to swallow to accept being blind. I think it is even more difficult for people who are older," Perner said. "Sometimes I talk to people and they are surprised that I know so much about what is happening. I think I may actually know more because I hear it instead of read it."

Perner, who has been blind for about 18 years, is one of the nearly 200 area residents who receive local news information every week from the Sun City Talking News.

Since she came to Sun City about 15 years ago, Perner has served on the Talking News board of directors and has seen the organization grow from delivering 25 tapes to making more than 100,000 through the years.

"You can get information on the radio and TV, but that is not local information. I am so dependent on the Talking News. They're doing a marvelous job. I can't praise them enough," Perner said. "I only wish more people who can use this service (would) become interested. Being able to know what's happening in the local news is important."

But the Talking News services are not only restricted to those people who are visually impaired.

The service is offered to any person who has the use of book machines or cassette players given on loan from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, said James M. Geer, president of the organization since 1973.

"There could be a lot of physical problems that limit people from reading a good book or reading the paper," Geer said. "It's a lifesaver for those who love to read but can't for any reason."

More authors are willing to allow their work to be used because the machines allow re-

'After you've lost your eyesight, that's an empty spot in your life. . . Sometimes I talk to people and they are surprised that I know so much about what is happening. I think I may actually know more because I hear it instead of read it' — Laura Perner

records to be taped on a special low speed, he said.

Geer said the group is chartered by the state of Arizona as a non-profit corporation under the name Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind.

The name Sun City Talking News is used because its purpose is to help visually handicapped persons keep abreast of events taking place in their community, he said.

More than 30 volunteers help the organization, which was formed in 1971, to tape, duplicate and organize the cassettes for residents in the Sun City area.

Although the majority of the clients live in Sun City, Sun City West and Youngtown, some former residents who now live in California and St. Louis actually receive tapes with local information on a weekly basis, Geer said.

"We try to get the same people reading so we have a consistency. It's a friendly voice coming in every week," said Geer of the two-hour long news cassettes. "It's important for all of those who get all their information from reading only. We try to get a good selection of people and listen carefully to how they read. The better the reading, the more enjoyable it is for those who listen."

Many of the recordings are completed in a sound booth the group bought in 1974.

Six years later, the group moved into an \$82,000 building, 9447 N. 99th Ave., built on land donated by the Del E. Webb Development Co.

Funds for the building, which also houses the Recording for the Blind, were raised through local associations and individual

contributions.

"This is not like the Recording for the Blind. There is a 180-degree difference. It's a fine program, but there is this confusion and there's no way getting around it," Geer said. "We do more for the blind people that are here in the Sun City area."

Recording for the Blind, which maintains a recording studio in the same building, is a national organization involved exclusively with the recording of school textbooks to aid handicapped students get an education.

Geer said there are about 100 organizations in the United States that handle recordings for the blind.

Although the Talking News studio is filled with machinery such as high speed duplicators and magnetic belt tape erasers, the organization has a remarkably low budget operation, Geer said.

About 61 percent of the funding for their \$5,000 annual expenses is contributed from the Lions Club Foundation, Geer said.

The bulk of the money is used for skilled technicians who must maintain machines.

And although money is important to keep the service going, Geer said the volunteers are the people who keep the Talking News alive.

"This is a unique organization because we have no sponsorship, we just have people coming in every week and have been for four years now. We all try to do a good job because somebody benefits from it and appreciates it," Geer said. "That's what keeps us in business. And many people don't know we are here and that our service is available. We always need people who can come in and keep it going."

Geer said the majority of work is completed in the studio Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings although it will be closed Christmas and New Year's week.

"It's amazing that there are some people living alone in Sun City that really can't see," Geer said. "Hopefully our services shine a light of information that makes this world a better place for them to live." OVER



NEWS FOR THE BLIND — Sun City Talking News, engineer Frank Corwin Sun City, operates the tape machine while Elaine Hunter, a retired librarian from

Phoenix, reads the sports section of the Daily News-Sun.
(News-Sun photo by Stephen Cherek)

Telephone: 933-0985

Facts About
SUN CITY TALKING NEWS

Since 1971 a small group of volunteers has been tape recording local news for Sun City area people no longer able to read print because of declining vision or other physical problems. Weekly news tapes are provided without charge and distributed to recipients by mail, postage free.

The volunteer group performing this service is chartered by the State of Arizona as a non-profit corporation under the name of Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind. However, its recording activities are carried on under the simpler title of Sun City Talking News, since this name is easier to recognize and relates to the principal mission of the group: to help visually handicapped persons keep abreast of events taking place in their own community.

The Sun City Talking News operates a recording studio at 9447 N. 99th Avenue, approximately one-third of a mile north of Olive Avenue, in an area served by the Peoria post office. Volunteers are usually working in the studio three days each week: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, except during the Christmas holidays. Visitors are welcome.

Membership in the group is open to anyone interested in our tape recording program, including the blind and handicapped. There are no dues.

The Sun City Talking News has no sponsoring organization and no paid positions. The workforce is made up entirely of volunteers who prepare tapes, select news stories, read, operate tape recorder and high speed duplicator, audit and package completed tapes, keep clerical records, maintain the studio and recording equipment, purchase supplies and machinery.

Space for the recording studio is made available to the Sun City Talking News by the Sun City Lions Foundation at a rent of \$1 per year. Operating funds are from local sources, various local Lions clubs, other organizations and individual donors.

NOTE: Sun City Talking News (legal name Recorded Recreational Reading for the Blind) is in no way connected with or part of the Sun City unit of the organization called Recording for the Blind, which maintains a recording studio in the same building. Recording for the Blind is a national organization and is involved exclusively in the recording of school text books to aid handicapped students to get an education.