Book reviews

The Goodness of Ordinary People: True Stories from Real Americans

Faith Middleton. New York: Crown Publishing, 1996, 275 pages, soft cover $23.00

Faith Middleton is the host of a CT Public Radio show which airs for 1 h each week day afternoon. I have listened to her when traveling in Connecticut over the past few years. I bring this book to your attention because there are people who mirror Faith Middleton's value and connection with the media in all states and in most cities/towns. These perceptive individuals have the capacity to highlight the goodness in our neighbors that would not ordinarily surface. As we help people with disabilities develop more meaningful connections in their communities it is important to realize that the newspapers do not accurately portray the daily fabric of a community with as much accuracy as a show similar in style to one Faith Middleton offers.

The general highlights of this book

- Faith Middleton is a quiet, behind the scenes community builder. She has the role of a focalizer described by Shaffer and Anundsen (1993) *as a new-style leader, like a lens, gathers together the elements and enables synthesis to take place through the focusing of these elements into a unity.* Through her talk show she examines issues of substance to everyday life. However, these issues would not be newsworthy by today's media standards to satisfy advertisers and media decision makers.
- The day-to-day experiences of ordinary people occur away from the glitter and spotlight of community activities. Kindness, support, fellowship and being a good neighbor often go unreported because they are expected of friends, but often shared among strangers.
- In her role, Faith Middleton gives a voice to unseen representatives of the community as she listens and asks provocative questions to fine tune the subject of the day. The anonymity provides a leveler among callers and each person is treated as an equal with equally important comments.
- Many callers are individuals with current or past disabilities. She also experienced a temporary disabling condition from an accident and she aired her show from her living room explaining all the supports and challenges she was experiencing as listeners called with their own stories of disabling conditions.
- The topics she identifies for discussion include such diverse content as single-parent families, acts of forgiveness, having someone believe in them, how we have been helped by volunteers, common alliance with people experiencing racism, etc.
- Faith helps listeners discover universal messages from a combination of unique stories and experiences. She looks for the connection and common bonds among community members. Diversity is celebrated and includes the capacities of citizens with disabling conditions. Their lives are interwoven in the fabric of society as a whole.
- Callers often thank Faith for providing a forum to tell their story and to share the theme of the day with other listeners. There is a healthy

dialogue that fosters both individual and community growth.

Specific areas of excellence

- *Too often we build our identities around what we do instead of who we are. We look at our accomplishments, resumes, IQS and the amount of weight we can lift in the world to define who we are. Less frequently do we investigate our own values and the subtler contributions we make in the lives of others and our communities* (p. 132). This statement was offered by Edder Bennett who describes himself as a CS-6 quadriplegic. Faith is broadcasting from her living room sofa recovering from a recent car accident. He verifies that some of the feelings she is experiencing are typical of people who find themselves in a seemingly helpless situation.

- I read the chapter in Faith Middleton's book devoted to forgiveness right before I completed a book by Reverend Lawrence Jenco who wrote about his days as a Beirut hostage. A particularly poignant excerpt from Middleton's chapter is from a father who writes about forgiving the person responsible for his daughter's death. The letter was written 5 years after the death occurred.

- One chapter is devoted to the solidarity experienced by neighbors in Billings, MT who displayed Hanukkah Menorahs when anti-Semitism was rampant from hate groups. The New York Times magazine published a story about these episodes and acts of togetherness and Middleton devoted her show to honor those who stood beside fellow citizens who were being harassed.

- *Under the careful supervision of the state AA public information committee, we began having Alcoholics Anonymous gathering on my show in 1989* (p. 239). I have listened to one of Faith Middleton's monthly AA meetings she facilitates with the assistance of usually two AA members. The hour long meeting is attended by people on their way home from work, on their way to a regular AA meeting, caring listeners, individuals about to hit bottom and

numerous other people with an interest in helping others. The frank, non-judgmental communication among listeners and host surfaces with each and every call.

- *Friend and volunteer associate producer, Libby Patton walked into my office and said, 'I think you should do a show about people on waiting lists for organ transplants* (p. 168). This exchange is typical of how ideas are generated for shows — simple topics with profound significance. People talk anonymously about who have completed an organ Donor card. They are heroes-in-waiting to someone whose life will be enhanced by this unselfish act of giving.

Areas in which this publication can be enhanced

- A more careful scrutiny of the day's events as delivered by the media does contain elements as described by Faith Middleton. The trouble is these stories of goodness are interspersed among stories of murder, robbery, larceny and other headline grabbing events. You can find stories about the goodness of ordinary people but you often must hunt for them.

- I maintain a file of newspaper articles that describe events in which average citizens have contributed in a meaningful way to their neighborhoods. My intention is to call upon these people as the opportunity arises when I hear of people with disabilities who could be influenced in a positive way by their contact. I may not ever contact them but they add a richness to my ever expanding log of entries.

- Find a call-in radio show similar to Faith Middleton's in your listening area. Share a copy of this book with the host. Call up and discuss the ways in which people with disabilities can contribute in a meaningful way to the richness and diversity in that community.

Common threads throughout this publication

- There is a celebration of the ordinary. Community members have a voice to share their comments around a common theme. Faith Middleton listens, clarifies and draws the ra-

dio listeners into a common theme that emerges among all the callers.

● Faith Middleton creates a fascination and desire to discuss shared experiences on diverse topics. In Connecticut her talk show airs around rush hour and I can imagine drivers tuning in to help relieve an otherwise stressful time of day.

● All callers can remain anonymous. Each person's words are valued as much as the previous caller without qualifying credentials or status in the community. This book captures the conversation from typical shows and does so in a fast-paced, enjoyable way.

Recommendations of its utility to rehabilitation professionals

● Image enhancement is an ongoing process in the lives of people with disabilities. As providers of support we can contribute to society's perception of diversity by looking for evidence of success among the ordinary moments of activity in our communities. The involvement by people with disabilities in the routines and subtle experiences of the community contributes greatly to inclusion and full presence and active participation.

● How do we celebrate the achievements of people as they approach many of the goals they have established or that are determined by planning teams? If we capture the many connections that are being made on the way toward achieving one's goals and outcomes, we may be bringing attention to the 'ordinary moments' of day-to-day community life. Maybe success needs to be measured in the way we go about reaching our outcomes and not as much emphasis on the actual attainment of that outcome.

● This book has a Charles Kurault (On the Road series), Studs Terkel (Coming of Age) and Jonathan Kozol (Amazing Grace) flavor. Books, such as this current one Faith Middleton offers, provide an insight into the regular, ordinary experiences of community. There is nothing flashy or extraordinary in these stories

yet they set the stage for reality as it will probably exist for the people we support.

Ernest L. Pancsofar, Ph.D.
Book Review Editor

Learning to Listen: Positive Approaches and People with Difficult Behavior

Herbert Lovett. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes, 1996, 267 pages, soft cover$24.95

Buzz words abound in the current delivery of supports for people with disabilities: choice, respect, interdependence, self-directed and personalized. These words are attached to the current shift to a more person-directed way of supporting people with disabilities. Lovett tells us, in a succinct and coherent manner, to fine tune how we listen to people and what that means in how we support people who challenge us with their difficult-to-understand behaviors. Specifically, Lovett urges us to live our values and practice these same values in our own lives at the same time we develop supports for people whose lives we chose to impact. This is not an easy book to read because it forces us to question our long standing beliefs about what are appropriate responses to challenging behaviors. After reading Lovett's critique of several 'taken for granted' and 'professionalized' practices, we can no longer respond to people's challenges in the same way. *Learning to Listen* is about learning to change our attitudes of how to approach difficult behaviors from a different perspective.

The general highlights of this book

● Much of the content of this book originated from Lovett's work in Pennsylvania when he was a consultant helping individuals find better ways to support people with difficult behaviors. The refinement of these earlier presentations results in a poignant essay style treatment of critical topics.

- The opening chapter sets the tone for the remaining sections of the book and is aptly titled *Learning to Listen*. A key component in listening is the attitude of support persons who adopt a relationship of respect, equality and a quest to build upon each persons capacities. This foundation leads to a better understanding of the communicative intent of the difficult behaviors in a different context.

- Lovett cautions that there is no set of 'correct' strategies that are effective in reducing behaviors. The process of listening to an individual allows us to achieve a better understanding of the person and decide how to best provide our supports.

- The second chapter is devoted to the *Politics of Labeling Behavior* and provides insight into society's tendency to develop myths about individuals who share a similar label. There is an unwarranted assumption that once you know someone's formal label, you now know how to react to that person with strategies specifically geared to each individual with that shared label.

- The evolution of 'control over' individuals is detailed in Lovett's treatment of the *Politics of Behaviorism*. What started as principles about how individuals learn evolved into manipulations of how people who do not know an individual very well, but do have credentials, can produce severely controlling regimens for a person as a response to difficult behaviors.

- The chapter I found the most intriguing is one in which Lovett critiques behavioral programs including 'positive' reinforcement, overcorrection, ignore and redirect, time-out, physical restraint, chemical restraint, mechanical restraint, aversives and behavioral surgery. He contrasts current practices and experiences with which he is familiar with alternative ways he would have approached or has approached similar experiences. His arguments are persuasive and convincing in pointing out the false promise associated with traditional approaches to investigating responses to difficult behaviors.

Specific areas of excellence

- *If you like ice cream, you have to pretend you don't. Otherwise, they make you do things for ice cream* — as related by a receiver of supports (p. 76). Looking at supports from the perspective of the receiver of those supports is a necessary part of how we listen to people. Lovett continues in a later section, *What are typically considered positive reinforcements for most people with developmental disabilities are things people should have access to as a matter of good service* (p. 155).

- *In such relationships, we all make mistakes, are in some way inadequate and yet it is not the level of success that makes the relationship so satisfying to the people involved; it is the ongoing commitment* (p. 137). People who care about and have made a genuine commitment to support an individual are in the best position to help figure out what to do. They may need guidance and consultation at times but it is their commitment that matters most as they seek to better understand how to support a friend.

- *Until someone is fairly extreme in his or her demands, we tend to find ways of adjusting the person to our services rather than adjusting our services to the person* (p. 136). Burton Blatt echoed this sentiment two decades ago as he witnessed bureaucratic structure being formed in which more people benefitted by working for the system than seemed to be helped by the system.

- *... some people may be known only as 'head bangers' or 'hitters'. Few of us would be happy if we were known to everyone in these ways* (p. 129). One of the most abused uses of labels is to refer to an individual using a noun derived from an excessive behavior. Stereotypic, dehumanizing undertones permeate such an orientation.

- *Most of life is not so much about good and evil as it is about the interplay of strengths and weaknesses within ourselves and among others* (p. 107). Lovett offers philosophic insights

throughout this book and they are welcome insights that affirm many of the readers evolving values.

● *Instead of stories, we focus on incident reports. Instead of a person's history and personality we give data* (p. 52). The art of storytelling is not often in the repertoire of support persons. Yet, the relating stories is the way most community members will become aware of the achievements and competencies of the individuals we support. Very few neighbors and co-workers read journal articles, incident reports, or data collection charts.

● *As with everything else that might be construed as a positive approach, there is no right way to respond as much as a set of attitudes to act upon* (p. 47). Values precede action. I once remembered Colleen Weick from Minnesota remark, 'There is an expression — I'll believe it when I see it! Instead, the expression should be I'll see it when I believe it!' The values we now hold, orienting our actions within a structure of positive approaches, require a different set of actions than many of us have a history of providing.

● *... by listening, I mean the act of attending carefully to what is said as well as to what is meant, to regard actions as communication and most profoundly, to possess the spirit of taking other people seriously* (p. 30). This statement sums up the underlying theme held constantly by Lovett throughout this book.

● *If we are to be of help to others, we need to understand our own lives* (p. 224). The way in which we use positive practices and our ability to listen to people who are part of our network of friends and relatives contribute to a better understanding of how we can use these approaches with individuals we support.

Areas in which this publication can be enhanced

● Share the chapters in this book with colleagues and make a commitment to change the orientation of providing supports for a person with difficult behaviors.

● Discuss the ethical issues Lovett raises about

current practices and incorporate the positive approaches suggested throughout this book.

● Alert families and advocacy groups to this resource and share the stories and approaches suggested for listening to the communicative intent of difficult behaviors.

Common threads throughout this publication

● There is a sad history of how people in positions of support have responded to the difficult behavior of others. The behavioral technology, initially developed as innovative teaching techniques, assumed a new position of how people could gain control over individuals whose behavior was difficult to understand. A new, values-based orientation contains an emphasis on better understanding the role of 'relationship' between those who support and those who receive supports.

● The question people ask about a situation frames the range of response to that situation. For example, asking the question, 'How do we stop Beth from screaming?' requires a different set of strategies than 'What is Beth trying to tell me through her screaming behavior?'

● People who care about and respect the individuals they support can usually figure out how to assist them through difficult times. Outside consultants or advisors may assist in expanding the list of creative options, but the final choice should rest with the people who are most involved in an individual's life.

Recommendations of its utility to rehabilitation professionals

● This book is essential reading for all individuals who support persons with disabilities who have difficult behaviors. The insights and values offered by Lovett challenge us to focus on the process of how we support people with behaviors we don't currently understand.

● It is only when we are challenged to look at ways we have supported people in the past that we pause and critically assess how we continue to support people now and into the

future. *Learning to Listen* is a book that does just that. If there is one book you read in the area of positive approaches to difficult behaviors, this one should be it.

• There is a humbleness in the manner Herb Lovett relates his experiences as he learns lessons from the people he has been asked to support. The reader has this opportunity to follow Lovett's logic as he discovers better ways to assist people who baffle the experts. Ultimately, he tells us that the answer lies in the process of listening more clearly to what the people we support are telling us.

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Book Review Editor

Think Fast! The ADD Experience

Thom Hartmann and Janie Bowman with Susan Burgess. Underwood Books, Grass Valley, CA, 1996, 233 pages, $12.95 with free CompuServe CD-ROM disk.

I selected this book for review because it presents a trend in publication that is now available with the advent of the user friendly nature of the Internet. This book is a compilation of information and chat room notes on CompuServe, a leading worldwide on-line service. I did not review the contents as much as the format for how the authors make information available. I have questions about the accuracy of this information if novice users of the Internet expect this resource to provide all their needs about a learning style difference experienced by themselves, family members, or individuals they support in a professional/personal capacity. Access to information is perhaps one of the greatest freedoms encountered by people today. Information previously available only to professionals is now easily accessed by a few quick strokes on the keyboard. Connections among web site pages allow quick access to related topics. The initials ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) are used inter-

changeably throughout this review. I realize that readers of this journal from different countries will experience a variation of labels to describe similar characteristics.

The general highlights of this book

• This book provides a good sample of the range of discussions on the Internet even though this current topic of attention deficit disorders (ADD) is limited to a CompuServe audience.

• Many of the authors who write brief chapters in this book serve to over generalize about what attention deficit disorder is all about. Even the terminology of referring to people as an 'ADDer' projects an emphasis that the main attribute of the person is ADD instead of being one of the many attributes.

• The appendices provide excellent lists of resources for the retrieval of a wide variety of interests. Appendix A contains a list of files to download from the ADD forum on CompuServe. Resources include national organizations: general sources of information about ADD: recommendations for parents, children and adults with ADD and educators; legal rights of children with ADD; medication and other treatments; magazines, newsletters and videos; organizations; publishers; and advocacy groups listed by state.

• The contents of this publication cover a wide range of questions and concerns and provide edited transcripts from discussions by on-line users.

• Much of the information in this book contains useful advice that transfers to any group of individuals who may share a common label, i.e. knowledge of federal legislation, memorization techniques, clutter control, interaction with teachers, being an advocate, etc.

• One of the authors describes ADD from a cultural anthropological orientation using a hunter/gatherer metaphor. This presentation made sense to me and was a useful way in which to define differences based on the coping mechanism a person possesses compared to what the environments support. For

example, an ability to quickly scan the horizon for food may have been extremely important for the hunter who, thousands of years ago, was dependent upon for the critical skill of seeking and searching for food. However, these same survival skills set in a classroom in a typical modern society might be labeled as dysfunctional and disruptive.

Specific areas of excellence

● *This cyber community had allowed the experiences of many to inform and support the struggles of those who have shared in the dialogues* (p. 77). CompuServe provides a vehicle through which individuals can read about stories of others and offer moral support. If a parent of an individual with a label of ADHD has a question, a listener can provide his/her experiences as a guideline for what that person might try next. Hearing about common themes of what helped others can provide a resource of inspiration to meet one's current challenge.

● *There are children and adolescents who do not meet all the criteria (to be labeled with ADD) but who have benefitted from the same techniques and therapies* (p. 59). I believe this statement is at the core of effective teaching. Every individual should be viewed as unique and different from the norm. The amount of difference varies in kind and intensity. The teaching techniques used by professionals of some labeled groups have a generic application to all learners. Perhaps, the teaching style needs to be labeled rather than the learners perceived differences. We could label an ineffective teacher with ADD in which the teacher handicaps the learner by ineffective and inconsistent delivery of instruction. In this case the label of ADHD might stand for Adult Delivery and Handicapping Disorder.

● *The coach helps to break tasks down into manageable sized pieces, helps to translate thoughts into actions and act as a pillar of support and encouragement* (p. 161). The assistance of a 'coach' is a type of support that has received much empirical backing in supported employ-

ment for individuals with a variety of diverse disabilities. A brief chapter contrasts the supports of a coach to that of a psychotherapist. A national coaching network has been established by Nancy Ratey and Susan Sussman at Box 353, Lafayette Hill, PA 19444.

● In *Memorization Techniques for Non-Linear Minds* (pp. 156–160) Robert Freezer provides a brief description of mnemonics as a way to enhance memorization. This is an example of useful information all teachers and providers of instruction can use for people of all abilities. For some participants of CompuServe this may be their first introduction to a technique about which they might want to investigate further. For readers who may be unfamiliar with mnemonics, it is a technique of associating information to be memorized with key words/phrases/initials, etc. For example one method cited by the author for remembering the sequence of the biological classification system is the phrase Kings Play Chess On Fine Grain Sand to represent the sequence Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus, Species.

● *No two children with ADD are alike* (p. 137) Although this seems like an obvious observation there is a tendency to think of students with a diagnostic label as more similar to each other than different. The label of ADHD is just one aspect of a person and must not be the major factor we think of when a specific person with ADHD comes to mind. Accordingly, it is important to know each person's learning style, reinforcers, family environment, education successes and current challenges without a preconceived set of strategies based on the singular knowledge that we also know the individual has a label of ADHD.

Areas in which this publication can be enhanced

● Interested readers can explore the chat rooms of an on-line service dedicated to issues on aspects of specific disabilities. Most on-line services have the flexibility for generating discussion topics around any subject in which several subscribers are interested in pursuing.

- There are several resources of note recommended in the appendices. Addresses of publishers of books and newsletters are readily available.
- Readers can download essays and transcriptions of discussions from the archives on CompuServe and review issues that often surface among chat room participants.
- Be a judicious reader of material found on the Internet. Just because advice from a user appears on the screen does not provide authenticity for the accuracy of its content.

Common threads throughout this publication

- The Internet is a gathering place for people to share their stories and read about what others around the world are doing to cope with similar challenges.
- Access to information that was once only in the hands of professionals is now available to family members and individuals with ADHD themselves. Information provides the foundation for empowerment.
- Each section is concise and edited from on-line discussion/essays found on CompuServe. The interested reader can access original documents and communicate directly to authors via e-mail.

Recommendations of its utility to rehabilitation professionals

- The use of the Internet should be as common an activity as making phone calls. This worldwide source of information allows for an in-depth exploration of new areas. Rehabilitation professionals can ask questions in chat rooms within an area of interest or concerns to better assist an individual for whom they provide supports.
- One of our roles may be to help individuals identify locations where there is free Internet access, i.e. public library or local community colleges.
- This publication provides a list of resources in multiple formats including on-line essays, videos, newsletters, advocacy groups, journal

articles and key descriptors for more in-depth investigations.

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Book Review Editor

If It Weren't for Honor — I'd Rather Have Walked: Previously Untold Tales of the Journey to the ADA

Jan Little. Brookline Books, Cambridge, MA 1996, 262 pages, $15.95

Jan Little relates the odyssey of some pioneers in the disability rights movement before the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In an autobiographical set of narrative sketches, she develops a chronology of how a network of people brought issues of accessibility to several universities, developed opportunities for foreign travel, initiated wheelchair sporting events and galvanized the forces of development of assistive technology for enhancing the everyday functioning of people with a wide range of disabling conditions. The stories contained in this book are a reminder that behind every landmark legislation and litigation there exists the private tales of success and setbacks of real people who paved the way for their peers with similar life circumstances.

The general highlights of this book

- The tone is immediately set by the author in her Foreword as she issues the following WARNING: *This book contains opinions of the author that aren't very popular with federal agencies, do-gooders who've dedicated their lives to helping poor cripples and anyone who claims having a disability is either an endless struggle, a courageous struggle, a courageous act or an inspiration to all.*
- Much of the opening chapter of the book is focussed on Jan's adaptation to college life at the University of Illinois. She aptly describes the acclimation process on a college campus

where accessibility obstacles were steadily overcome — one challenge at a time.

- The author describes her activities as an athlete who competed in wheelchair competitions both in the United States and abroad. Of particular interest were the numerous strategies found for funding trips to such diverse areas as South Africa, Japan and France.
- The reader is introduced to the behind-the-scenes activities of companies who specialize in assistive technology. Jan worked as an editor of several marketing magazines for the top companies in the country who specialized in equipment and adaptive technology for individuals with disabilities.
- Several humorous anecdotes are related by the author as she accompanied a group of athletes and coaches to various functions where they gave demonstrations of athletic competition and lectured about the abilities of people with disabilities.
- The author highlights the progress made by researchers in computer technology who, when asked to apply their talents to areas of technology for individuals without speech, did so on an individual-by-individual basis. It was extremely difficult to earn a living operating in this manner but the best results typically occurred when creative and talented individuals worked on building equipment tailor made to the unique circumstances of an individual person. To make money, many companies went into mass production of equipment that was unreliable, shoddily built and often did not accomplish what the individual consumer actually needed.
- Every milestone in the advancement of human rights for individuals with a disability has a series of stories similar to the ones related by Jan Little. Her delivery is concise, entertaining and to the point as she documents the key events in her life that contributed to her self-sufficiency and success.

Specific areas of excellence

- *'My friend here', he (Dr. Bob Jackson) told the audience, 'fails to fit the role and images we*

assign to post-polio quadriplegics. The silly woman doesn't know what she's supposed to do or not do. It was her great good fortune to become disabled before we perfected rehabilitation treatment. When she found out what her limits were, she'd already passed them' (p. 6). This tongue-in-cheek statement is in reaction to the many people who functioned successfully in daily life without formal treatment plans or case management strategies. Individuals were supported by family members, peers and community members who challenged them to develop their skills to their full potential. Much of this book is a criticism on professionals in rehabilitation who focus on what a person can not do rather than building on the strengths and capabilities of that person.

- *In spite of the fact that I was accepted back into our community, there was still the pressure to learn to walk. Walking was proof that you worked hard and overcame your disability* (p. 10). I am reminded of an advocate I met in Texas last year. Joyce told me that in her family she was not looked at as a fully independent adult since she had not learned to walk and relied on a wheelchair as her conveyance of mobility. She is a person who travels quite extensively and is looked upon as an excellent advocate and peer. She comments that in her home town there is a person who had a goal that she should learn to walk and she met that goal and learned to walk around her neighborhood. As Joyce returns to her town on occasion she visits her home neighborhood and notes that the person still walks around the neighborhoods but has not learned to live on her own. To her family she is viewed as a successfully functioning person because she can walk. There are certain standards society uses to define independent functioning and these standards often go unspoken. I found this interesting because form seems to be valued over function.
- *Those of us with disabilities strongly suspected that charities caused two problems for us. People who gave to the charity felt they'd done their part and they'd rather not deal with us as employees or neighbors. The general public had a hard time*

separating the cute little crippled kid image from the reality of a capable, competitive adult with a disability (p. 68). It appears that major companies and corporations are extremely adept at creating a public image of sponsorship of agencies such as the United Way, telethons and general charitable giving. Many corporate leaders contribute to the myth of a person with a disability as mostly a person with needs to be addressed rather than an individual with talents and capacities to be enhanced. As John McKnight emphasizes in his video *Everyone Has a Gift* the needs counters of our society welcome the public display of people with their deficiencies. When individuals with disabilities are associated with charities as a main source of funds there is a subtle message that the funds were made available by benevolent patrons to address that person's deficiencies.

● *Frank, our official team cynic, remarked to me that it wasn't hard to understand how paternalism could turn malignant with the protector using protection as an excuse for oppression.* (p. 88). These remarks were made during a trip to South Africa at which time the author was commenting that benevolence can often be used as a means of demonstrating how caring an oppressor is over individuals who are oppressed. The analogy for people with disabilities is the monolithic structures (a term I first heard coined by Burton Blatt) that exist to provide help to individuals but who more directly provide a means of employment and livelihood for professionals who work within those human service entities. The paternalism mentioned in this quote can be minimized when funds that follow the individual are the general rule rather than be funneled through a human service agency as is now often the case.

● *Back then, before the laws were passed mandating that people in wheelchairs had to be protected and given equal opportunity, I found Chicago to have a natural system that supported me and made it possible for me to succeed* (p. 140). I found these words echoed by John Hockenberry who reflected that when he was

a news correspondent in the Middle East he viewed accessibility as people willing to assist him · but in the United States, accessability was about to curb cuts and other physical accommodations. Legal mandates do not have the same quality as people who willingly provide supports because they know a community member who requires a little more assistance to access neighborhood activities.

● *While federal programs and healthcare administrations wrote ponderous studies on what might be possible, a lot of very individualistic people with very creative minds went ahead and contented themselves with just solving problems* (pp. 201–202). The author continues to emphasize that when people meet together to solve problems that get in the way of a person's full participation in the community interesting and creative strategies emerge. The community contains people with creative energies who may never have been asked to channel that energy in a way to overcome an obstacle in a neighbor's life. An electrical engineer may be the neighbor of a person who is seeking different environmental controls in his/her apartment. Those of us who support individuals need to be on the lookout for who can be asked to contribute a talent or skill — but won't do so until asked.

● *We could let people with disabilities handle their own lives by dividing the money spent by the Health Care Finance Administration on supervising the lives of PWDs (People With Disabilities) which would give every one of the PWDs covered annual income of about $45 000 a year* (p. 262). I have seen previous statistics presented by John McKnight about individuals on welfare in the city of Chicago. It would appear to an outsider that people who are paid to manage the lives of people in need have a more successful career and life-style than the individuals for whom they are developing supports. The author ends her biographical sketch by comparing the legal obligations of services and supports with the spirit of accepting each other as equals who both benefit by their presence and participation in the community.

Areas in which the publication can be enhanced

- It is extremely important to be aware of the history of the disability rights movement as related by individuals who lived the struggle of the early years leading up to current legislation. Specifically, we need to read the first person accounts of pioneers like Ed Roberts and Justin Dart to compliment authors who lived through these same years and who bring their lives to our attention in autobiographic works.
- Photographs of Jan and her colleagues would have added a personalizing dimension to this book. I am unfamiliar with many of the people who provided the author with encouragement and support throughout both her athletic and employment careers.
- There were several grammatical errors in the book and the reader prior to me had painstakingly corrected each one. I found this annoying but realized it would not have occurred if the proofing process had been more thorough in the final edits of this work.

Common threads throughout this publication

- The author describes the pioneering spirit of several people that was necessary to achieve the milestones in accessibility on college campuses and athletics as well as through the political process leading up to the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Gains in a person's life occurred more frequently because of a supported network and not because of mandates or legal rights. Peers found ways to overcome obstacles long before laws required equal access.
- Studies and needs assessment that originated from congressional fact-finding committees and projects generally revealed what most everyone in the disabilities community already knew.

Recommendations of its utility to rehabilitation professionals

- It is fascinating to read first person accounts

of behind-the-scenes work that lead to the passage of major legislation. The reading of these autobiographical stories should be a high priority for people whose careers are devoted to building supports for individuals with disabilities.
- The format and style of this publication might encourage rehabilitation personnel to write a sequence of life story events for one or more individuals whom they support.
- Family members of individuals with disabilities could receive some confirmation and validation that the struggles and challenges are meant to be overcome and will result in a better quality of life than may now currently exist for their loved one.

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Computer Resources for People with Disabilities: A Guide to Exploring Today's Assistive Technology by the Alliance for Technology Access

Hunter House Publications, Alameda, CA, 1996, 336 pages, $17.95

Rarely does a publication surface in its applicability across professionals, family members and individuals with disabilities as this current book on assistive technology. As Stephen Hawking notes in his Forward: *This book offers something no other does: a guide to maneuvering the growing world of computers, both the mainstream and the assistive technology, to find what is right for you.* The authors leave no stone unturned as they explain the essential elements of computer technology in a way that more experienced users may find helpful in sharing information with other, less experienced individuals. The thoroughness of this book is highlighted by the way in which information was reviewed through several committees including a concept team, technical team, fact checkers and qualified reviewers who all combined their feedback with the experiences from the technology resource centers around the country.

The general highlights of this book

● The authors begin with brief stories of how six individuals achieved their dreams through the introduction and use of computer technology. This introduction sets the tone for the ability of assistive technology to enhance self-determination and empowerment for individuals to lead successful lives according to their own vision of a quality of life.

● A salient feature of this book is to emphasize the functions requested by a user of technology rather than to prescribe an adaptation based on the disability/deficit paradigm. That is, instead of having a section of technology for people with significant vision loss, the chapters are organized around the technology to enlarge the words/visuals for anyone who desires this function.

● Most of the chapters are organized around critical questions that should be asked by the user of the assistive technology. More detailed information is provided depending on the question under consideration. For example, if a user asks the question, 'How can I project letters on my screen in large print?' The reader with this question is referred to the most suitable hardware and software resources to specifically address this question.

● The contents of this book are arranged according to questions of input (how to get information into the computer), processing (how the computer functions with the information) and output (the way in which the computer provides the information as a finished product).

● Chapter 4 provides a basic introduction to the legislation responsible for the funding of much of the assistive technology resource centers throughout the United States as well as the stipulation of assistive technology as a reasonable accommodation in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

● Sections of several chapters are devoted to questions of how to secure funds for Assistive technology. A wide range of options are explored ranging from local civic organizations

to purchasing used equipment through a local vendor or campus users group.

● Part Two is titled The Technology Toolbox in which actual computer hardware and software are identified by function, vendor, cost, features to consider and related products.

● The publication concludes with Helpful Resources and References including:
  Alliance for Technology Access Resource Centers (by State)
  State Tech Act Programs
  ADA Technical Assistance Programs
  Organizations
  National Conferences
  Newsletters and magazines
  Books
  Telecommunications Resources
  Technology Vendors

Specific areas of excellence

● *The possibilities are limited only by our imaginations. The challenge is to use our powers of creativity to maximize their potential now and in the years ahead, as our needs change and as technology transforms the ways in which we connect with our environment and the people in it* (p. 135). Assistive technology is not a panacea that will, in and of itself, create new results for intended users. Technology, in the hands of a knowledgeable consumer, is a tool to be accessed to facilitate the ability of people to use their capabilities and advance toward self-directed outcomes.

● *Technology allows people to be different on their own terms, rather than on society's terms* (p. 17). This statement at the beginning of the book is by Tom, a user of assistive computer technology. Society tends to label individuals by what they are not capable of doing. Assistive technology levels the playing field where members of society meet more as equals. The perceived differences are ironed out when alternative access to computer technology helps to accomplish the same results that other people experience without the use of assistive devices. Instead of the difference being that

some people can communicate and some people can't, the emphasis can be on the way in which people differ in what is being expressed.

● *Universal design is an approach to the design process that results in products that are useable by the greatest number of people* (p. 44). The adoption of this principle will go a long way toward minimizing differences among citizens in a community. For example, an automatic door need not be called the 'handicapped entrance' but rather the 'universally accessible' entrance. Screen enlargement on a computer's monitor does not need to be designated as 'large print for the blind' but as 24 pt type for anyone who wants 12 pt fonts enlarged. The greater the versatility of an adaptive feature the more likely it will be used by individuals with diverse abilities and limitations.

● Web site addresses on the Internet that would be worthwhile exploring are provided in various sections of this book including:

      * Alliance for Technology Access
        http://marin.org/npo/ata/
      * Assistive Technology Funding and Systems Change Project
        http:www.assisttech.com/atfsc.html
      * Activating Children through Technology (ACTT)
        http://www.ecn.edu/users/mimacp/wiv/index.html
      * Independent Living Centers
        http.//www.bcm.tmc.edu/ilru
      * The Disability Mall
        http://disability.com
      * Trace Research and Development Center
        http://www.trace.wisc.edu
      * Yahoo's Disability Resources
        http://www.yahoo.com/yahoo/society and culture/disabilities/
      * Job Accommodation Network
        http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/
      * RESNA
        http://www.resna.org/resna/hometal.html

● *Your achievement often has more to do with the*

expectations and environment than with our real potential (p. 19). Similarly, Rene Dubose was quoted to have said Trend is not destiny. Frequently, individuals with disabilities have been told what was not possible because of their deficiences. Now, we are much more aware of the limitations we place on others by our own short sightedness. When we focus on capacities and on the talents of each person, we search for the right supports that build upon their strengths.

Areas in which this publication can be enhanced

● Chapter 2 contains a brief treatment of how individuals can be supported in setting their own goals by using a person centered planning process. Circles of support are mentioned as one avenue for developing one's goals, The interested reader may wish to pursue additional resources including the *Capacity Works* by Beth Mount (1995) and the training materials and workshops offered by the Centre for Integrated Education and Inclusion in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

● ABLEDATA is one resource worth exploring more intensely. This product is a database containing information on the full range of assistive technology products and is available on CD from the Trace R and D Center at (608) 263-1156.

● *Closing the Gap* is one of the major conferences at which to observe the greatest variety of assistive technology and is held each October in Minneapolis, MN.

● Go to a Center for Technology Access (either physically or by the web site) and browse through the most recent innovations in computer technology.

Common threads throughout this publication

● Asking the right questions leads to the proper search for the appropriate assistive technology. The questions are asked in terms of

function sought for and not the deficiency by the user.

● Information is available in multiple formats and in several locations. Every state has a place of contact for assistive technology as well as worldwide contact through the Internet.

● Non-technical language is used throughout the book the content of which should be easily comprehended by a current novice in computer usage.

Recommendations of its utility to rehabilitation professionals

● This book is the best, single source of content that covers a full range of information about computer resources for people with disabilities.

● I requested that my local public library purchase a copy of this book for general visibility in my community. You may want to do the same.

● The information is extremely valuable to share with disability advocacy groups as they lobby for greater accessability of assistive technology in their communities.

● You will find this book one that will be frequently used as you search for vendors, agencies and technology tools to address specific challenges for the individuals for whom you provide support.

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