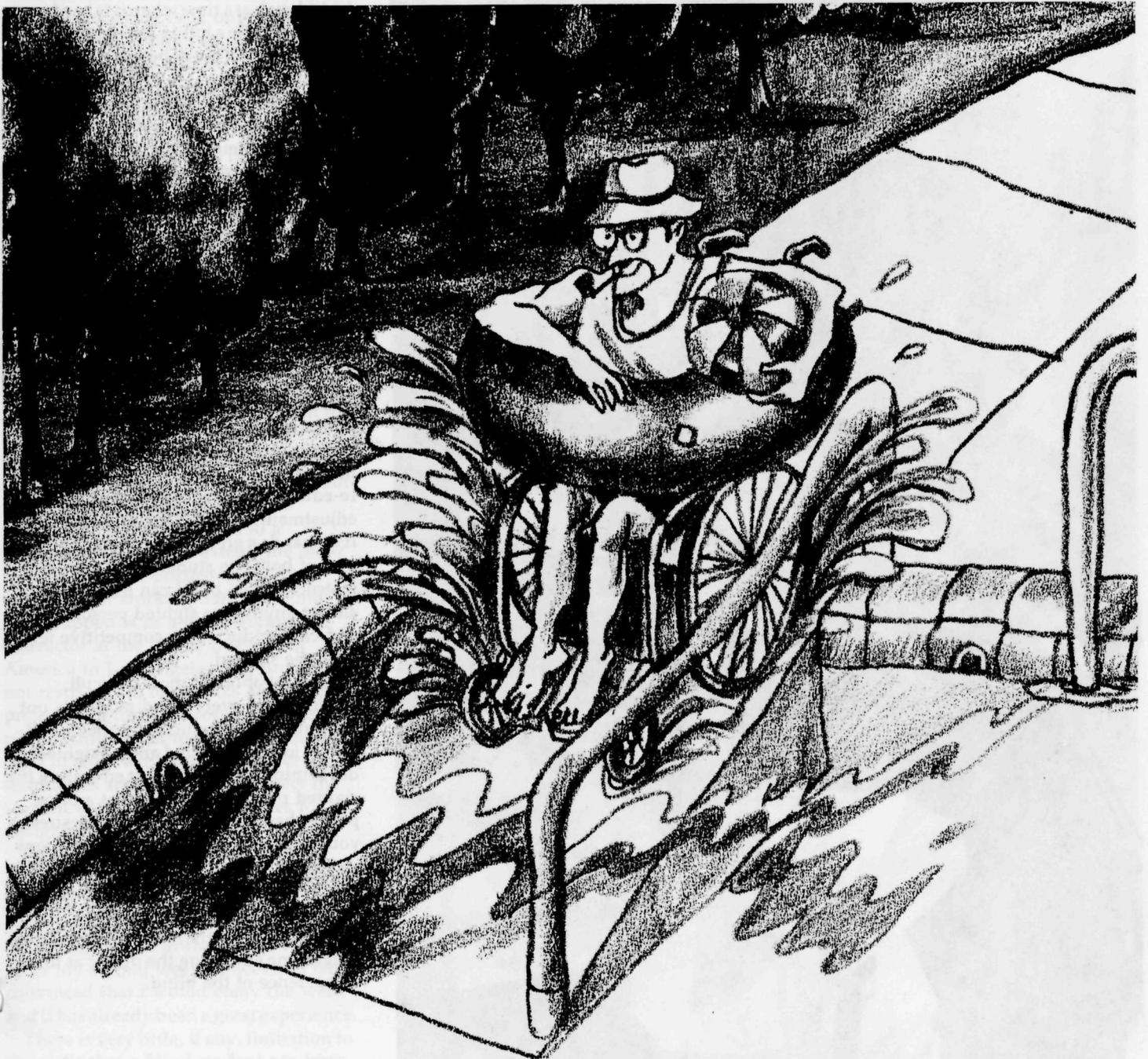


Guideline

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Woodshop For The Blind

by Jim Traynor

David is a fifty-three year old exforeman for a machine shop. He was recently called by his former employer and asked to return to work on a part-time basis; a lucky break at a time when it is hard to get a job and make a living. But for David it is an extra special break because he is totally blind.

David started to lose his sight five years ago and became too blind to continue his work approximately two years ago. Since then he has been going through programs of re-conditioning of normal habits and skills to fit his handicap. He is still very capable of operating all the shop machinery due to the special training he has received at several facilities, and has thus retained his value as a long-standing, experienced employee at the shop.

The re-conditioning that an individual must go through after blindness sets in, is in essence, a re-education based on approaching normal tasks in a methodical, step-by-step manner. A re-education is exactly what it is, an adjustment to a different approach to life. It demands a great deal of patience on the part of both the student and the instructor. The blind can learn to do almost anything a sighted person can do and can produce on a competitive level with the sighted.

But probably the most difficult challenge for every blind person is not learning Braille (which is difficult and timely for both sighted and unsighted) or developing a new skill, but educating the sighted public to the fact that a blind person has the same goals and desires as you, and not an invalid who needs any pity or very much help. The Centers for the blind throughout the country and the world can re-educate the visually handicapped but they seem to be having a tough time educating the public as to the competence of the blind.

After working with the blind handicapped for almost one year, my attitudes toward all handicapped and especially the deaf and blind have changed. I know that relatively few need any special favors, and that it should be everyone's attitude to treat the blind as they would any other individual.

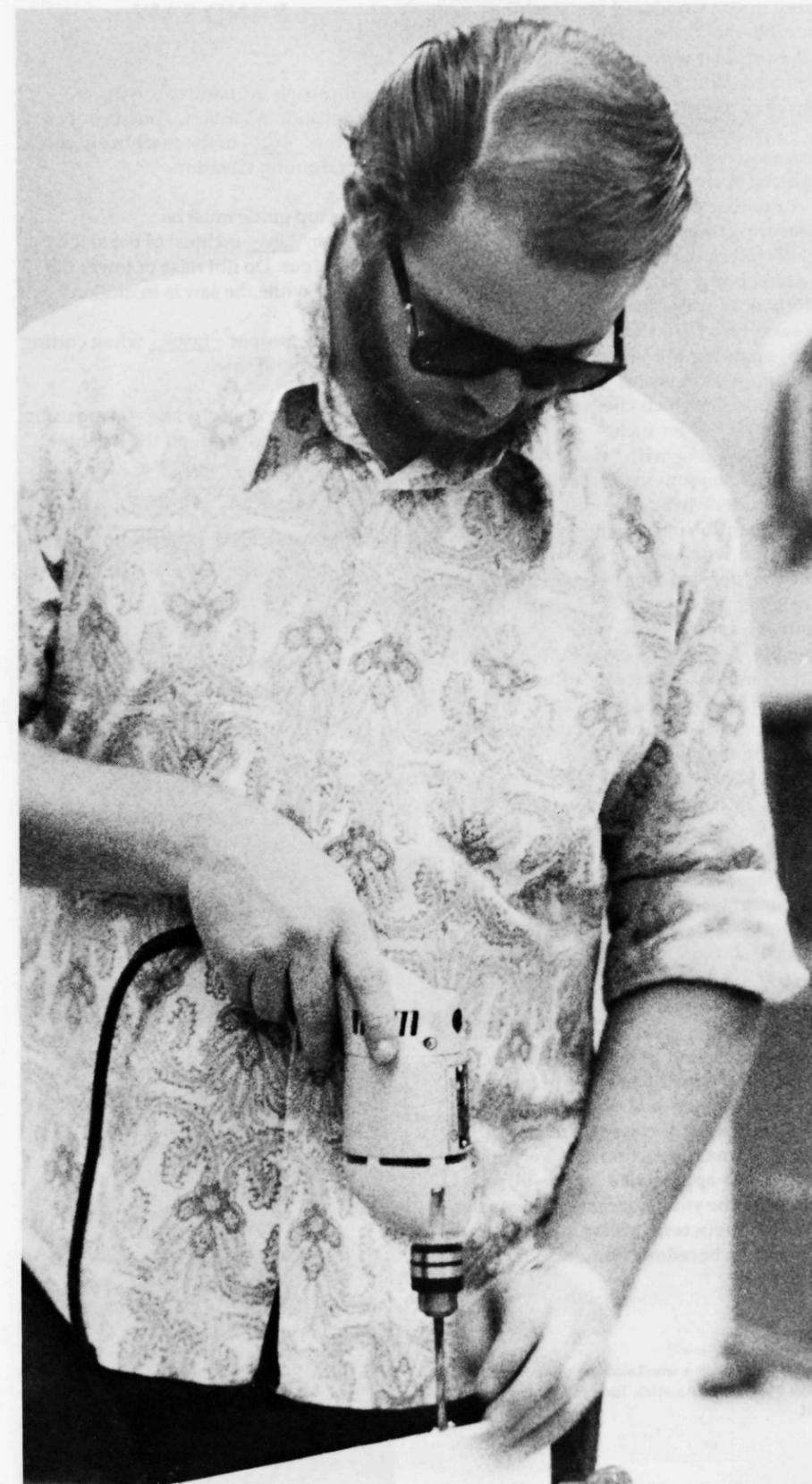
Through re-conditioning, the blind are taught to work with their handicap, not to work around it or avoid it. Enjoying the pleasures of living is as important to someone who is blind as it is to anyone else. Blind people enjoy a symphony orchestra, a stage play, dancing, or the latest best selling novel much as would anyone else.

These activities include indoor as well as outdoor events, such as sports, summer camp, snow skiing, etc. Their key to enjoying these activities is the idea that by using specialized techniques in place of vision, they can function almost in the same manner as the sighted. Once a blind person learns that even though he has lost his vision, he is still himself, he is free to function as a normal person, thinking and acting intelligently and partaking in the same activities with the sighted. His other senses do not automatically become sharper or more intense (a common misconception), but with the proper training he relies on and sometimes develops to a greater-than-average extent, the other senses which he possesses.

My role in working with the blind handicapped is as a woodworking instructor at the Braille Institute of America in Los Angeles. My program is not restricted to hand tools and simple projects, but instead stresses the uses and relationships of all tools and machinery used in woodworking. A wide variety of techniques are taught and I expect the student to use his own resources for designing his projects.

Before the offer to establish this program at Braille, I had no thoughts of teaching the handicapped. My background is as a Woodworking and Design Instructor at the college level. After my second week, however, I was convinced that I would enjoy the work and it has already been a great experience.

There is very little, if any, limitation to the skills that a blind student can learn with proper instruction. My wood shop facility is large (4600 sq. ft.) and contains



every major woodworking machine found in most shops. These machines are not equipped with special guards and devices for the blind (although they can be easily made for convenience), as this program is meant to teach the blind how to use the standard machinery used by the sighted, with a stress on safety.

A number of my students use measuring tools for the blind, particularly braille rulers, or a click-rule. The click rule is a long bolt with threads like a screw set 1/16th of an inch apart. The top of the screw threads are shaved off every 1/4 inch, enabling the user to accurately measure with this tool. The rule-bolt fits into a sheath which clicks as it passes every 1/16th of an inch.

After working with students for some time now I am convinced that the average blind student is much more aware of safety than the average sighted student. The blind woodworker approaches the problem step-by-step with great care directed toward safety. They will work at their own speed with as little assistance as possible. To give you a more concrete idea of the kinds of safety precautions required, the tests below are just two examples of those given to the students orally and must be passed before students can work in my shop.

The key to success in a program concerning the handicapped is teaching proper techniques according to the handicap. With the detailed knowledge of how to do something and the freedom and incentive to explore, the average blind person will work and learn with a great deal of independence. This freedom becomes a valuable tool of expression for a person whose creativity may be stifled because someone who doesn't know better, feels that a person is not capable just because they're blind. Therefore, the workshop, special classes, and any kind of educational opportunity is very much needed and appreciated by the blind today. For the young, it can well mean the difference between developing a skill and a career, or boredom from lack of challenge.

BAND SAW

1. Approach the band saw with appropriate caution. Touch your cane to the BASE of the machine to check for running vibration.
2. The top guide must be within 1/4" inch(es) of the stock being cut. Do not raise or lower the guide while the saw is in motion.
3. Use the proper GUIDE when cutting on the band saw.
4. If the blade breaks while you are using the band saw, turn off the machine and move away until the wheels STOP turning.
5. To prevent tipping, all stock cut on the band saw must have sufficient FLAT surface resting on the table.
6. Before cutting stock, students should check the blade path to be sure that their fingers do not come within 2" inch(es) of the blade.
7. The band saw must be running at MAXIMUM speed during all cutting operations.
8. If you have any doubt about an operation, you must get assistance from the INSTRUCTOR.
9. Deposit all scraps in the BIN next to the saw.

RADIAL ARM SAW

1. Approach the radial arm saw with appropriate CAUTION. Do not reach for the handle until you are sure the saw is not moving.
2. All material to be cut must be held firmly against the GUIDE FENCE.
3. The operator must have a firm grip on the HANDLE of the saw as it is pulled into the lumber.
4. When you are operating the saw, you must take great care not to force the saw into the stock FASTER than it will cut.
5. You must keep your HANDS away from the path of the saw blade at all times.
6. After using the saw, be sure it has STOPPED before leaving it unattended.
7. At the completion of each cut, the carriage must be returned to its neutral position BEHIND the guide fence.
8. All stock that is warped, cupped, or in wind must NEVER be cut on the radial saw.
9. When cutting all stock on the radial saw, the piece being held must be at least 8" inch(es) long for safety.
10. Deposit all scraps in the BIN next to the saws.

Working With The Elderly In Park And Recreation Settings

How many times have you seen an elderly person sitting on a park bench, staring into space?

We have heard all too often about the forgotten generation. Yet, we still see parks and recreation areas making elaborate plans to meet the needs of the young, neglecting the other end of the generation spectrum who have as much, if not more leisure time.

The recent issue of *Trends* magazine outlined a number of ideas for making parks accessible for the handicapped. Many of those ideas are applicable to the elderly, who often have difficulty in moving about, tire easily, or have problems seeing clearly.

A park or recreation area can contribute a great deal of meaning and enjoyment to the lives of the elderly with a little special effort.

The elderly are faced with the problem of a lack of productivity, a desire to feel needed and to retain their self-esteem.

There are any number of homes for the elderly, housing developments with primarily elderly residents, and whole church groups and clubs made up of elderly people.

If your facility has a sports area, there are programs which require less activity which could easily involve the elderly. Shuffle board, volley ball, badminton, bowling, are all sports which many elderly people can enjoy with minimum exertion. Exercise programs or courses or physical fitness days are also ways of including the elderly in park and recreation area programs.





Park and recreation areas unwittingly give the impression that they are solely geared to the young. A good way to overcome that assumption is to make contact with various groups within the community and invite them to use your facilities, let them know that you are interested in them and in meeting their needs. Plan with them activities which they would enjoy—a picnic, a dance, a special outing.

Many older people have strong family ties. A good way to bring in two generations is to organize special grandparent days where youngsters participate in special event with their grandparents—relay races, contests, and programs. There are dozens of activities which suit the joining of the two generations and would make your park or recreation place a special draw for family activities.



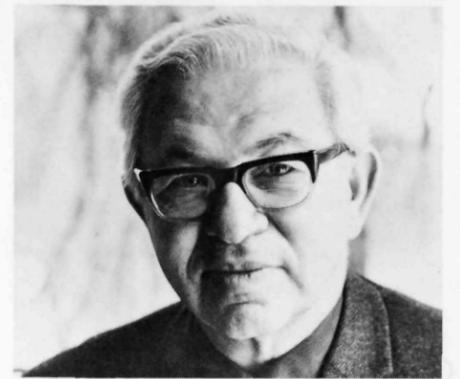
Any activity has to be well publicized because all too often the elderly do not move around or outside of their own neighborhoods due to transportation difficulties, simple fear or lack of knowledge of the benefits that can accrue to them by participating in community activities. Many cities and counties have buses to transport the elderly to places they wish to visit. And many cities have special offices to handle the needs of the elderly.

Probably one of the most important programs you could offer the elderly is one in which their services, their expertise is used by the community. The R.S.V.P. and S.C.O.R.E., programs organized at the Federal level bring older people into contact with others to share their expertise and are good models to follow in planning ways to tap the resources of the elderly.

If you are planning a series of courses at your facility—why not try and see if volunteers can be found among the elderly groups with whom you have had contact? If you have a day care facility on the premises, why not see if there aren't any older people who would like to work, either for salary or as a volunteer?

Many parks have interpretive programs to help people understand about plants and trees. At the same time, there are many older people who spent years gardening and working with plants who now live in apartments where they can't use their knowledge and experience. It would be extremely satisfying to an older person to be asked to help participate in an interpretive program revolving around plants.

A number of historic sites have found older people make excellent workers in living history demonstrations. Many older people have had the kind of apprenticeship training necessary to perform skills more popular in an earlier period in history. Their interest in the topic and their patience as they explain their art often exceeds the time a younger person might take.



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