**STONE SOUP – Fall 2013**

**Interviews with Retiring CEOs**

**Subie Green – Center for the Visually Impaired in Atlanta**

**Bob Hanye – Association for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment in Binghamton, NY**

**Les Stocker – Braille Institute in Los Angeles**

**Q. When did you start working in the field? What was your title?**

**Subie Green**: Started in the field at CVI in Atlanta as president in 2001, but had been involved in vision issues late 1970s when my husband, Phil, was diagnosed with RP.

**Bob Hanye**: I started working in the blindness field on

January 3, 1974 after a few years working in mental health and substance abuse. I was incredibly fortunate to start out working for and with Harold Richterman, a larger than life icon in our field who was, among many other things, the first mobility instructor in a private agency in the country. Ric was the Director of Rehabilitation at National Industries for the Blind and I came on board as a Rehabilitation Specialist. Our job was to help the associated agencies with all aspects of rehabilitation programming including recruitment, training, upward mobility, accommodations and special programs for severely disabled persons.

**Les Stocker:** While my entire career has been in the non-profit world, I entered into our field in March 1979 when I became Braille Institute’s Development Director, alias Fund Raiser. The organization was much smaller then, so at age 31 I got to grow up with it. Five years later they made me Assistant Executive, or chief operating officer. Then, in 1995 upon my predecessor’s retirement the Board elected me to be President. When I retire I will have been with Braille Institute for 35 years and President for the last 19 years.

**Q. What changes have you seen over the course of your career?**

**Subie:** Biggest change: technology advances. Built in accessibility is revolutionizing communications yet the basics of our field are every bit as valuable as ever – Braille, O&M, etc.

**Bob:** A very significant change I have seen is that the national agencies and organizations are much more willing to partner and work together for a common goal. There is a much greater recognition that a field as small as ours needs to speak with a unified voice on the significant issues of the day. The shift to real leadership development of and by people who are blind is perhaps the most significant change.

**Les:** Three have been countless changes, small and large over those decades in how we do business. Some have been sea changes, such as technology. And not just in daily business today, but the entire world of assistive technology visually impaired people has developed over that time. Another massive change was precipitated by the Americans with Disabilities Act. That one event has changed the way we view all disability from a societal point of view. It’s OK to be disabled today and to be accepted as a normal person. Not as much so 35 years ago. Yet, unemployment issues for the visually impaired have not changed a whole lot over that time, in spite of technological advances. We have so much more to accomplish.

**Q. What are your most memorable moments?**

**Subie:** My most memorable moments at CVI are working with great boards and staff, our new building, and special awards. Most important is watching clients gain confidence and the skills of independence to change their lives in significant ways.

**Bob:** I remember receiving the AER John H. McAulay Award in 1998 and then having the honor to present that same award to Kathy Gallagher last year in Seattle. I have a myriad of fond memories from engaging with my peers over the years both socially and professionally. Recalling the singing of Chuck Berry songs with Carl Augusto will always bring a smile.

**Les:** This truly has been a wonderful career with literally countless memorable moments for me personally. Some are longer lasting than others. Let me mention just two. Some years ago, as we pondered the great issues of our field and what we could uniquely address at Braille Institute, we landed on Braille literacy for blind children. Out of those ideas arose the Braille Challenge which has now grown with 43 Regional Challenges. Our Braille Special Collection of children’s literature now has 2,600 titles, all provided free to one half of all Braille reading children in North America. Another memorable part of my career has been with VisionServe Alliance. I am probably the only member today who attended the foundational meeting of the National Council of Private Agencies for the Blind at Hadley in the early 1980’s. My predecessor was one of the 15 founders and I was along as a partner in those days. I have seen the Association grow and wane, but in the mid-1990’s several of us had the opportunity to help revive it and that effort has continued steadily into today. The benefits have been so enormous. Not just forming acquaintances and deep friendships that will continue, but in exploring so many different organizations and niches in our field which has helped us re-evaluate our business at home. Numerous conference presentations on leadership have been enriching, allowing us to step out of our routines and reflect on how to be a better leader. We have had so many fun times together in some truly crazy activities like when Carl Augusto fed the alligators in Florida or Bob Winn who is blind driving a duck tour boat into the Charles River in Boston.

**Q. What are you planning to do with your new found free time?**

**Subie:** Phil and I are moving back to Fort Worth, TX where we lived many years and where our son and family live. Until then we are in the throes of selling a house – such neatness is killing me! It has been wonderful to be able to enjoy the beautiful fall weather with walks during the day and daytime hyoga classes. We are also visiting a former VisionServe colleague, Cornelia Pelzer in Charleston and in November we drove to Arkansas so I could participate in a NAC onsite review with Larry Dickerson at World Services for the Blind. Phil is going along so that we can visit the Clinton Library and then go on to the Crystal Bridges museum.

**Bob:** For a while, I plan to relax by riding my brand new road bike, hiking in the Smokies and spending quality time with my grandchildren. After a while, I might look for some community oriented activity in which to become involved. Sue and I hope to get in some of our bucket list trips while we still can.

**Les:** What are my plans after leaving Braille Institute? I need to be re-potted. To that end I have been working on a fresh Executive MBA at the Peter Drucker Graduate School of Management. With only one class left, I am synthesizing a lot of new and more current ideas and concepts with career long experience in leadership. Several other retiring nonprofit CEOs (none from our field) and I intend to form a consulting group focused on sustainability for the social sector. Certainly an important aspect of my post-retirement plan is to lay aside the daily commute along with the burden of responsibility (always knowing where the buck stops). Having more time for family and travel is right up there as well.

**Q. What words of wisdom would you like to leave us with?**

**Subie:** James Baldwin said it best, “Not all things that are addressed can be changed but nothing can be changed that is not addressed.” And I’ve always been inspired by the quote from Henry Ford, “Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right.”

**Bob:** Be diligent, be grateful someone thinks you are worthy, and always remember it is about the people we serve.

**Les:** One observation I could end with has to do with opportunity. Whether it is for us as individuals or as organizations, I have come to see that wonderful opportunities actually come often. But we seldom capitalize on an opportunity for one of three reasons: First, we do not recognize it as an opportunity until it is too late. We get so bogged down in the routines and issues of the day to see the possible. Second, so often when we see an opportunity we are not prepared to take it. Whether it is capital for investment, specific education or some other required preparation, the opportunity slips away. Third and perhaps more insidious is fear itself. How often does an opportunity require some level of risk – risk of giving up some existing security or comfort – especially when there is no guarantee that the new opportunity will succeed. I truly believe that in spite of the tumultuous times we live in, there are rich opportunities for each of us individually and for our organizations if we are alert, prepared and willing to take a calculated risk.