

# Notes and News

The Bulletin of Prosthetics Research welcomes contributions to this department. Receipt of clippings, meeting programs listing speakers and titles, or other material that calls our attention to a newsworthy event, will be appreciated.

## COLONEL ROBERT S. ALLEN 1901—1981

Newspaper columnist, political commentator, friend of powerful people, and arm-amputee veteran, Colonel Robert S. Allen was found dead in his bedroom February 23, 1981. He played an important role after World War II in helping to stimulate an organized program of prosthetics research and development.

A witty, colorful speaker, he could be caustic in comments about people and prostheses alike. I recall his pounding on the lectern with his conventional voluntary-opening, rubberband-closing hook at a meeting of the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, about 1948, and practically screaming that it was "nothing but a slingshot!" He often attended early meetings of the National Research Council's subcommittee on upper-extremity prosthetics, providing not only consumer input but fascinating anecdotes and insights about politics.

For some years, he was a member of an influential group of advisers to the Veterans Administration's prosthetics program. He played poker with President Truman and others (at unofficial places, not at the White House) and apparently used such opportunities to talk informally with the president about the needs of the national prosthetics program and of rehabilitation generally.

Born in Latonia, Kentucky, he was educated at the University of Wisconsin (1923), the University of Munich, the U. S. Cavalry School, and the Command and General Staff College. He served in the Cavalry on the Mexican border in 1916, then in the Wisconsin National Guard in the Twenties. He re-entered active duty in the U.S. Army in 1942. Eventually becoming a Colonel, he was operations executive, G-2 Section, Headquarters, of General Patton's Third Army throughout its operation in the European Theater of Operations. He described its history in a book, "Lucky Forward." He received numerous American and French decorations, including the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Legion d'Honneur, and Croix de Guerre.

After early work as a correspondent for a number of leading newspapers and the UP wire service, he became co-author with Drew Pearson of a nationally syndicated column, "Washington Merry-Go-Round." Later, he developed his own column, "Inside Washington." Both columns and other observations led to a series of readable books on national politics consisting of insights, anecdotes, and disclosures, with criticisms and complements for members of both parties and a wide array of individuals at many levels. He also edited "Our Fair City" and "Our Sovereign State."

Like many newsmen, Allen was a hunt-and-peck typist. After his amputation, he obtained an early electric typewriter. He told some of us enthusiastically that with it he was able to type faster with one hand alone than he had been able to do with both hands on his manual machine.

He married Ruth Finney in 1929. She died in 1979.

As a tough-minded and shrewd observer, skilled writer and editor, and colorful speaker, Bob Allen enlightened as well as entertained millions. As formal adviser and informal supporter, consumer, and friend over some years, he made substantial contributions to the Veterans Administration, prosthetics research, and rehabilitation. He remained an active member of the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped from its establishment by President Truman in 1944 until his death.

Eugene F. Murphy

## Drs. Chase and Giannini Elected to Institute of Medicine

Dr. John D. Chase, who was Chief Medical Director of the Veterans Administration from 1974 to 1978 and is now acting dean, School of Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle; and Dr. Margaret J. Giannini, Director, Rehabilitative Engineering Research and Development Service, Veterans Administration, were recently elected to 5-year terms of membership in the Institute of Medicine. Service began January 1, 1982. The National Academy of Sciences established the Institute for "the protection and advancement of the health of the public." IOM membership is by election from the health professions, the sciences, and such related fields as law, public administration, and engineering.

## LEVITT'S TELECOMMUNICATOR FOR THE DEAF WINS \$10,000 JOHNS HOPKINS AWARD

A hearing and speech professor at the City University of New York, Dr. Harry Levitt, who programmed an off-the-shelf low cost mass-produced pocket-size computer so that it could be used by the deaf for rapid communication over public telephone lines, has been awarded the first prize of \$10,000 in The Johns Hopkins University First National Search for Applications of Personal Computing to Aid the Handicapped.

Dr. Levitt, a member of the Editorial Board of this Bulletin, was presented the top prize of the year-long search and contest at the awards dinner at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. Second prize of \$3,000 went to Dr. Mark Friedman, a professor and research engineer of the Carne-



Dr. Harry Levitt with off-the-shelf low-cost pocket-size computer he programmed to permit rapid communication by the deaf over public telephone lines. For his development, Dr. Levitt who is a hearing and speech professor at the City University of New York, won the top national award of \$10,000 in The Johns Hopkins University First National Search For Applications of Personal Computing to Aid the Handicapped.

gie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pa. and to colleagues Mark Dzmura, Gary Kiliany, and Drew Anderson, who developed an Eye-Tracker communication by severely disabled persons. The system allows a person to cause a word or phrase to become audible by looking at it on a computer screen. The third prize award of \$1,500 went to Robin L. Hight of St. Louis, Missouri, who developed a Lip-Reader Trainer. It aids in teaching of lipreading by converting typed sentences into displayed animated mouth movements.

The Johns Hopkins First National Search was initiated in November 1981 to encourage and inspire ideas, devices, methods and computer programs to help handicapped persons cope with difficulties in work, home, and community settings.

Seven other inventors received honorable mention awards of \$500 each. All ten had been first place winners in regional competitions held during August. The search was sponsored by the National Science Foundation and Radio Shack, a division of the Tandy Corporation. Many organizations participated as Program Associates.

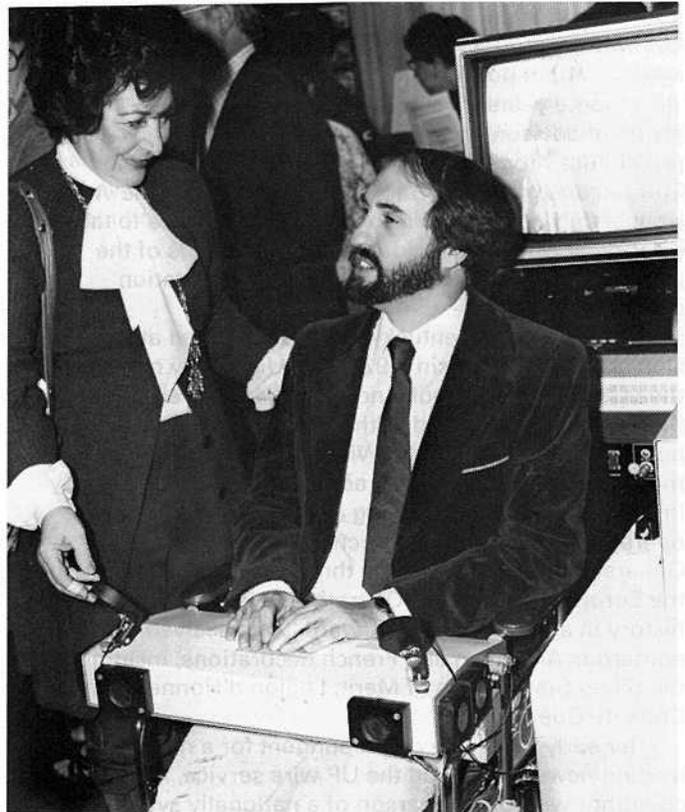
Dr. Levitt's prize-winning entry, which he calls a Portable Telecommunicator for the Deaf, uses a TRS-80 programmed off-the-shelf pocket computer with memory and logic. The components are substantially less expensive than other teletype systems. It also costs less to operate because of more efficient use of the telephone channel. It can be connected to a private or public telephone for instant communication or reception, between deaf or the hearing non-impaired. Messages stored in the pocket computer memory can be transmitted instantly or the user can send a message via the pocket computer's keyboard. A compact inexpensive line printer can be linked to the

pocket computer, both of which would be not much larger than a pocket secretary. Messages can also be sent from a standard audio cassette.

The use of a pocket computer as a convenient and inexpensive communication device introduces the deaf telecommunicator user to the concept of an intelligent, computer-based communication system of almost unlimited scope and flexibility.

Dr. Levitt says that with the advantages of compactness, memory, and economy of telephone time and cost, the new system should reduce communication barriers between the deaf and hearing users. For some years deaf individuals and groups have campaigned for access to telecommunication with keyboard input and visual display at each end. Early efforts involved refurbishing and use of obsolete teletype machines over leased lines. Later equipment fitted in a dispatch case and allowed acoustic coupling to the transmitter and receiver in any telephone handset.

Dr. Friedman's personal-computer-based eye tracking system allows severely handicapped nonvocal persons to express words and even sentences audibly by simply viewing them on a screen. It was developed by him at the Rehabilitation Institute in Pittsburgh with colleagues to al-



Dr. Margaret Giannini, director of Veterans Administration Rehabilitative Engineering Research and Development Service, observes as David L. Jaffe demonstrates his wheelchair at Johns Hopkins Personal Computing to Aid the Handicapped Exhibit, National Academy of Sciences, October 31, 1981. Mr. Jaffe, who is associated with the VA RER&D Service at Palo Alto VA Medical Center, used ultrasound distance ranging technology to develop his Ultrasonic Head Control for paraplegics operating powered wheelchairs.

low a severely handicapped grade-school girl (who has never had a voice) to "speak" in tones compatible with her age and sex. The sequence is triggered by an infrared camera which associates the look in the girl's eyes with the word she wants to vocalize.

Robin Hight, who works for Surface Systems, Inc, in St. Louis, Missouri, describes his Lip-Reader Trainer (for hearing impaired) as an aid to teaching. It instantly converts typed sentences into animated mouth movements or high resolution graphic images which are brought to a screen for use by teacher or student. His program also includes teaching sequences providing choices and corrections for the student. The system, says Hight, does not replace face-to-face lipreading practice, but he feels it will augment the teaching of a skill which could enlarge the communication scope of the hearing impaired.

### **RECREATION PROGRAMMING FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

"Recreational Programming for Visually Impaired Children and Youth," Jerry D. Kelley, Editor, published by the American Foundation for the Blind, New York, 1981, at \$12.50, is intended primarily for the recreation consultant or trainer concerned with assisting the community recreation leader in his or her efforts to provide recreation programs for the visually impaired child.

The book deals particularly with the connection between two areas which have received increased emphasis in recent years. The first is an awareness of recreation as a vital learning and socializing experience; the second is an awareness of the problems, and the possibilities for an active life, of the individual whose visual impairment while severe is far short of total blindness. However, the text many times points out either similarities or differences in the activities possible for the totally blind and the low-vision person. The emphasis is on visual handicaps, however, and there is no attempt to deal with the problems of the multiply handicapped child.

Preparation of the volume was assisted by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation, U. S. Department of Education, under a 3-year project directed by Marion V. Wurster. Numerous people participated in an advisory committee, a curriculum development team, and in state workshops followed by trials of materials and suggestions for improvement.

Both text and illustrations provide background information on visual impairment, hazards and strategies for coping with them, and special equipment. A final chapter lists numerous resources.

### **Donald F. Gearhart, D.M.D., 1907-1980**

Dr. Donald F. Gearhart, former head of the Plastic Eye and Restorations Clinic in the Veterans Administration Prosthetics Center, New York, died suddenly December 11, 1980. He was one of the pioneers in the application of dental techniques to plastic artificial eyes and maxillofacial restorations, and he displayed a continuing interest in transferring his knowledge of precision casting, metal molds, and plastic materials further to other aspects of prosthetics.

Dr. Gearhart was born May 21, 1907. After he graduated from the University of Pittsburgh Dental School in 1931, he practiced dentistry in Pennsylvania. He served for 4 years in the U.S. Navy, where he was a Lieutenant Commander.

He joined the Veterans Administration in 1947 as a dentist at the Cushing VA Hospital at Framingham, Massachusetts. He developed and headed the Plastic Eye Clinic at the Boston VA Hospital. After the retirement of Dr. Mervin Cleaver, Dr. Gearhart became Chief of the Plastic Eye and Restorations Clinic of the VAPC, where he remained until his retirement in July, 1972. He contributed five papers to the Bulletin of Prosthetics Research. After retirement he continued as a consultant on artificial eyes and orbital restorations in Florida.

Dr. Gearhart was a member of the American Academy of Maxillofacial Prosthetics, the American Dental Association, and Delta Sigma Delta, dental fraternity.

He is survived by his wife, one daughter, and four grandchildren.

*Eugene F. Murphy*

### **MICROCOMPUTERS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

A National Topical Conference on the Use of Microcomputers in Special Education is scheduled for March 10-12, 1983, in Hartford, Connecticut.

Advances in microcomputer technology offer great potential, not only for direct service to the handicapped of all ages, but for the education of handicapped and gifted children and youth.

Program information, and preregistration and housing forms, may be obtained from John Grossi, Conference Manager, The Council for Exceptional Children, Department of Field Services, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.

### **1982 NATIONAL YEAR OF DISABLED PERSONS**

The President and Congress have officially declared 1982 the National Year of Disabled Persons. Self-help, grassroots activities at the community level, with the support of private organizations and corporations, are being encouraged. The National Office on Disability has been established to improve communications and technical assistance to participating communities. Their address is 1575 Eye Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.