

Blind, He'd Rehabilitate The Visually Handicapped

Special to The Sentinel

BOB HEISER uses the bus. "They say, 'Thanks for going, Greyhound.' What choice do I have? I've been blind since birth," he said laughing.

But Heiser, a senior at the University of Wisconsin—Green Bay, is excited about living. The 21 year old Green Bay man is an amateur radio enthusiast who also swims, plays the organ and clarinet and enjoys traveling.

He credits two philosophies for his positive attitude.

FIRST, HE mentions his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Clem Heiser.

"Some parents hold their handicapped children back," he said. "When I was growing up, I wanted to do everything and I kept up with the other kids even in things like bike riding and roller skating."

Second, he cited the advantage of a school system which allowed him to attend regular classes.

"I always went to school with sighted persons," he said. Heiser attended Fort Howard Elementary School for grades one through six. Except for a special Braille class, he participated in normal classroom activity including physical education. In the fifth grade, he started swimming at the YMCA and by the time he was a senior at West De Pere High School, Heiser was swimming a half mile in 45 minutes.

"I live in a sighted environment, so of course I'm limited in sports. I can't play golf but I can sit down at the ivories or send a little code to escape and relieve frustration," he said.

MUSIC PLAYS an important role in Heiser's life. He took lessons on the piano, organ and clarinet. Two years ago, he joined the University Pop Singers and performs with the group. The Carpenters top his list of favorite vocalists.

A high school radio club sparked an interest in electronics. He attended code



BOB HEISER
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classes and passed the test for an advanced license, which permits him to operate on more frequencies.

He uses a cane when walking through unfamiliar territory but needs no help in areas like the campus.

"I took electronics, literature, theater and sociology courses and finally settled on the social service field," he said. He will specialize in rehabilitation of the visually handicapped.

HEISER WILL TEST his choice of professions in the fall when he participates in the UWGB program of practice counseling.

"There is lots to be done. I want to show people how to live life to the fullest. I'm convinced 'Hire the Handicapped' is a myth. The handicapped must prove themselves and show industry their capabilities.

"They must adapt and find new ways. Each individual is unique and any physical disability can be compensated for by other abilities."

He said his only concern was the difficulty in maintaining objectivity: "I get hung on certain people. I've been warned not to become emotionally involved."

"If I can't get a job, I may go to Madison and attend grad school. After that I'd like to be free a year or two to travel," Heiser explained.

THIS WINTER, he will travel to England with the UWGB London program. He hopes to compare the English Braille teaching methods with those used in the United States.

He uses a Braille typewriter and takes class notes with a metal slate designed to reproduce the raised dots on notebook paper. He uses tapes extensively. Books are read into the tapes and he replays them to study the material.

Heiser is proud of his membership in Alpha Phi Omega, a UWGB service fraternity.

"There is satisfaction from service projects. Last year, we planted 1,500 trees at Lily Lake and collected two semi-trailer truckloads of clothes for the underprivileged in Kentucky. This year, a 24 hour basketball marathon with St. Norbert College netted \$600 for the heart fund," he said.

Playboy's plans to issue a monthly edition for the blind caused Heiser to smile.

"And what do you think they will do with the centerfold?" he asked.