

# Proposal for: Walking Out of the Dark

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**Submitted to:**

Minnesota Historical Society Press

**Submitted by:**

Steven R. Malikowski, PhD

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This proposal describes the book *Walking Out of the Dark*—which is based on real events, people, and places in Minnesota. Specifically, it’s about the time my brother, Mike, lost most of his sight and attended a school for blind adults. That makes parts of the story sad, but other parts are surprising and inspiring. One of the surprises involves romance, and another involves a downhill ski race, where the racers are blind.

My brother and some of those racers lost their sight because of bad luck. Their response has inspired me, particularly their humor. I wrote this book to inspire and entertain others who have experienced an intense dose of bad luck, in person or from a loved one.

Except for my brother, fictitious characters and places are used in the story because Mike wanted to protect his friends’ identity. In some ways, fictional characters make the story stronger. They allow a few composite characters to be shown in-depth, instead of many real people who are briefly described. By showing characters in-depth, readers get to know them personally and often consider the characters their friends. This is one of the fundamental elements of the emerging genre of creative nonfiction, which is applied in this novel.

Since this genre offers a range of creativity and facts, I’ll briefly describe my views on it. To me, the “nonfiction” part of the genre is more important than the “creative” part. I also consider this genre similar to historical fiction, but the people and places are less often considered historic. Sections 1 and 6.4 contain more details about how and why creative nonfiction was applied.

The rest of this proposal closely follows the MHS Press Submission Guidelines, with one exception. I expanded the section called *Marketing/Competition*, to include several marketing efforts I could make if this proposal is accepted. This novel has not been submitted to other publishers.

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## 1 AUTHOR INFORMATION

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I currently live in London, but I lived in Minnesota for more than thirty years and frequently return there. My present position is Lecturer and Manager of Learning Technology Services at St. George's Medical School, which is part of the University of London. My curriculum vita is included in appendix A. As it shows, I've published nine academic articles, received grants totaling over four hundred thousand dollars, had twelve conference proposals accepted, and review manuscripts for three research journals.

For me, the best research articles tell a story, so I decided to write a story based on facts. I chose to write my brother's story because of the way he makes people laugh while working through challenges. Some challenges involve blindness. Others involve work, love, hopes, and fears. Since my family has lived in Minnesota for generations, Mike's challenges and solutions have a style that is uniquely Minnesotan. Ironically, living in London for six years has taught me a lot about Minnesota's culture, using the maxim "You can't see the picture until you're outside of the frame."

One of my qualifications for writing this book is my experience with a variety of research methods, including ethnographic research. My PhD studies provided formal training in this research method, and I have conducted and reviewed ethnographic studies, as shown in my curriculum vita. This experience is important for rigorously applying the genre of creative nonfiction. Section 6.4 contains more information about how creative nonfiction is applied.

Another one of my qualifications is the close relationship I have with my brother. This motivated me to write and revise each chapter several times, to tell the best story I could. This motivation also makes me interested in promoting the book, as described in section 6.5.

The rest of this proposal gives many details about the book. Since this section is more personal, I want to finish it by personally thanking you for considering Walking Out of the Dark.

## 2 WORKING TITLE

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The tentative title and subtitle are:

### **Walking Out of the Dark**

Bad luck took his sight. My brother didn't let it take more.

Alternatives are listed below.

#### **Beyond Bad Luck**

Luck took his sight, not his hope or humor.

#### **Ordinary Courage**

The journey of returning to normal, after losing eyesight.

#### **Mike's Sight**

A story of losing eyesight and gaining insight.

## 3 DESCRIPTION OF THE BOOK

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Even after bad luck took Mike's sight, he still enjoys an adventure. In one of them, he helped with a ski race, where skiers were blind. He likes to say, "You might think skiing without sight is tough, but we had the hard part, since we told them where to turn." Then, he laughs and adds, "That meant standing on a ski slope with blind racers headed right for us." His adventures and jokes help all people work through challenges, not just blind folks.

The book is based on real events in Minnesota and begins when Mike attends a school for blind adults. A simple lesson is cooking without sight. A challenging lesson is about finding work. Mike learns that adults with low vision have a low chance of returning to work, which becomes his biggest hope. He wants to find a job again, so he can own a house again. Other students are encouraging and discouraging. Some students cry a lot. Others laugh a lot, and a few compete in downhill ski racing.

During the race, the speed of the blind skiers amazes Mike. A racer who pushes her limits more than most is a teacher at the school, who also pushes some limits when she flirts with Mike. The characters in this novel are blind Minnesotans, but the message is how anyone can work through bad luck. For many, it can take a home or a job. For Mike, it took his sight. This story shows how he worked through bad luck and blindness, and laughed a lot along the way.

A multimedia website for this book is at  
<http://walkingoutofthedark.wordpress.com>.



## 4 TABLE OF CONTENTS/OUTLINE

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The summaries below combine showing and telling, to describe each chapter. Telling resembles business writing and is used to broadly summarize a chapter. Showing resembles storytelling and is used to clarify important events.

### 4.1 CHAPTER 1: BACK TO SCHOOL

Chapter 1 shows that Mike is starting at a school for legally blind adults. It also introduces the place, time, and key characters. The place is Portage Bay, a fictitious town that's similar to Bemidji. The time is 1976, in the winter. This was a tough time for Minnesotans because the Vikings had lost two of the last three Super Bowls and were about to lose one more, in January 1977. It was a tough time for Americans because they were still troubled by Nixon's pardon. It was a tough time for Mike because he lost most of his sight. The novel focuses on Mike, but those other events enrich the story. The story is also enriched by mentioning bicentennial events in 1976, cardboard milk cartons with unfolding spouts, and new gadgets of the time—like color TVs, microwaves, and Pong.

The main characters are introduced when Mike walks into his first class, starting with Pam. She's a teacher who greets Mike and helps him find a place to sit. Mike notices that she's small in size but large in stature, reminding him of a 1950s grammar teacher. Just as Mike is about to introduce himself, another student shows up, whose name is George. Mike quickly likes him. George is about his age, has a curious mind, and is quick to tell a joke. After the introductions, Pam describes some classes and activities. One of the classes is Independent Living, which includes cooking without sight. One of the activities is downhill ski racing, with blind skiers.

### 4.2 CHAPTER 2: EXPLORING

Chapter 2 shows more about Mike and the town of Portage Bay. The description of Mike shows how he is more legally blind than blind, so he can see enough to walk without a long, white cane. The description also shows how he used to enjoy driving snowmobiles, building his house, and settling into it. Losing his sight meant losing his job, so he no longer owns that house.

At the start of this chapter, Mike wakes up just before sunrise and can't get back to sleep. He decides to explore the neighborhood by taking an early morning walk, which feels comfortable because there are fewer pedestrians and cars to avoid. When he starts walking, Mike remembers that he must find some landmarks, to find his way back. That's harder than expected, since most of the shops are closed and dark. Eventually, he comes to some cars that are stopped at a red light. Mike glances around and starts crossing the street. A horn blares, a driver shouts, and a car stops inches from Mike. He feels angry and remembers that Minnesota just passed a law that allows cars to turn right at a red light, good for drivers but bad for blind folks.

Minutes later, he finds a grocery store and a bar with lit storefronts, which Mike enjoys looking at. A moment later, he finds a café that's open. He walks in, orders breakfast, and has a pleasant conversation with a waitress. Like many people in Portage Bay, she knows George. Later in the story, Mike returns to the grocery store, bar, and café.

### 4.3 CHAPTER 3: LESSONS

Chapter 3 starts at the school and shows a typical class, called Independent Living. Pam teaches the class and gives an overview of how it will work. One of the topics is cooking, and whenever they cook, she will pick two students to lead the effort. Today's meal will be simple, since they're just starting. The meal is coffee and muffins, from a pre-made mix in a box. Pam overhears Mike and George joking about whose cooking skills are worse, so she asks them to lead today's lesson.

Cooking takes longer than expected. Sometimes, this is from challenges like measuring water without sight, and other times, it's from Mike and George exchanging too many jokes. Pam continually tries to keep them focused on cooking, which isn't easy.

When the muffins are in the oven, students discuss how long it took to cook. Pam says this improves with practice, but Mike and George ask questions about faster meals. George mentions Dominoes Pizza, since they introduced a thirty-minute delivery guarantee in the mid-1970s. Since Mike has always enjoyed gadgets, he asks about microwaves, which also became popular in the mid-1970s. Pam discourages both options because of their poor nutrition and taste, but Mike and George remain unconvinced. The class ends with all the students having muffins and coffee, still wondering about how long it took to make this simple meal.

### 4.4 CHAPTER 4: HAPPY HOURS

Chapter 4 starts with Mike sitting alone in the dayroom of the school, after classes on a Friday. He's thinking about what he's learned and waiting for George, since they are going out for drinks. Some students walk by, followed by a teacher a few minutes later. She also has limited sight and doesn't see Mike, as he sits still in a dark corner. Mike can see her well enough because she stops in bright light to search through her purse. Even with his limited sight, he can tell she's beautiful. She opens her purse wider, searches more, swears intensely, and rushes out of the room. Mike talks to himself, commenting on her good body and lousy language. George walks into the room, overhears Mike, and tells him about the woman. She's a young teacher called Samantha, or Sam for short.

The two men leave the school, board a bus, and go to a bar. Being young men, they drink more than they should. George tells some funny stories about blind sports, like beep-ball and skiers who compete without sight. Eventually, they discuss tougher topics, like the low chance of finding work, getting married, and even having sex. George also asks Mike how he lost his sight. Mike enjoys George's company, but answers by saying it was bad luck and changes the topic.

### 4.5 CHAPTER 5: CLEANING UP

This chapter starts with Mike waking up in his, very cheap, motel room. It's the morning after his night out with George, which means Mike is feeling the effect of having too many drinks. After taking some aspirin and a long shower, he decides this is a good time to clean his room and do laundry. A funny moment happens in the laundry room. While looking for an empty machine, he finds a red bra. After he sets it down, one of his neighbors shows up. She's a prostitute who

Mike has talked with a few times. She learns that he was looking at her bra and offers her services to Mike. He declines, but his hangover slows his quick wit.

He returns to his room, cleans for a few hours, and decides to get groceries, at the store mentioned in chapter 2. As that chapter also mentions, there is a bar nearby. After getting groceries, he stops by the bar for a drink and meets a small group who is planning the next downhill ski race for blind adults. Mike is enjoying the group when Samantha appears, which makes him nervous.

A couple of drinks help him relax, and eventually, he and Sam flirt. She also asks if he wants to help with the ski race. They need people to tell the skiers where to turn, by shaking a tambourine at the ski gates. Mike replies, “Let me see if I got this right. You need somebody to stand in the middle of a freezing ski slope and shake a tambourine while blind skiers head right for you?” He playfully resists for a while but eventually agrees, to impress Samantha. He also agrees to find one other volunteer, who will also shake a tambourine at a ski gate.

#### **4.6 CHAPTER 6: CHALLENGES**

The chapter starts with Mike being excited about talking and flirting with Samantha, the night before, but he’s also worried. Students and teachers are not supposed to flirt, and he told Samantha he’d find another volunteer. The first person he thinks of is George, but the volunteer needs some sight. Mike still considers asking him, since George knows so many people. Unfortunately, asking him is risky. George might ask uncomfortable questions about why Mike volunteered, which could lead to him learning about Mike’s interest in Samantha. That could lead to George telling other people, probably with jokes.

The chapter continues at school, with another cooking lesson. After the meal, Mike and George wash dishes. Mike spontaneously, and cautiously, asks George to find another volunteer for the ski race. George is surprised that Mike wants to stand on a freezing ski slope and shake a tambourine, but fortunately, George thinks that Mike is helping because of his generous tendencies, instead of trying to impress Samantha.

The chapter ends with George and Mike talking in the dayroom, of the school. George tells Mike that he’s been volunteering in a store that sells car parts. There’s a chance that George could work at the store, since the manager told him about a job opening. Only about half of blind people find work again, so George is excited about the possibility. The chapter ends with Mike walking George to a bus stop, since George needs to go to the car parts store where he volunteers.

#### **4.7 CHAPTER 7: NIGHT LIGHTS**

After saying good night to George, at the bus stop, Mike walks toward his hotel by himself. He passes a bar and decides to stop by. It’s dimly lit, so he runs into a barstool. The bartender asks if Mike is all right. He tells her that he is, and they talk. She offers him some corn whisky, Minnesota 13. He accepts and explains how his grandfather used to make it. She smiles and explains how her grandparents used to buy it, for this bar.

The bartender leaves, and Mike listens to people. Some women are talking and laughing, several barstools away. The bartender returns and brings another drink. Mike says that he's had enough, but she tells him that a woman has bought it for him. He accepts the drink and walks toward the woman, thinking she's one of the women he heard laughing. The short walk takes a while and is frustrating, since the bar has become crowded. Even though Mike takes out his long white cane, other customers quickly move in front of him, assuming he has normal sight.

He's surprised and nervous when he finds her, since it was Sam who bought the drink. He sits across from her in a booth. The conversation starts with sharing some personal stories, but soon, they flirt more than before. Eventually, Mike feels her foot under the table, wandering up one of his legs. They walk out together and talk about seeing each other again. They also talk about keeping their relationship a secret, since Samantha could lose her job if people learn that she's attracted to a student.

#### **4.8 CHAPTER 8: WORK**

This chapter starts in the café Mike went to in chapter 2. He enjoys talking with a waitress and listening to the news, using a transistor radio and earphone. The most exciting news is that the Minnesota Vikings are going to their third Super Bowl in four years. There's also a news report about the high unemployment rate. Mike wonders about getting a job again and owning a house again. When he finishes breakfast, he notices that Pam has been having breakfast with friends. They walk out together, and Mike asks her about work.

Pam describes some common jobs, like tuning pianos and serving food in a cafeteria. They don't appeal to Mike. Pam says there is another job but avoids describing it. When Mike asks why, she says it's for health reasons. This puzzles him, and he convinces her to say more. The job involves fixing and filling vending machines, which he instantly likes. He enjoys fixing machines, especially when he can snack on a variety of candy bars. Pam explains that is what she was worried about, since she still hopes he'll occasionally cook for himself.

The chapter ends with Mike and George enjoying some laughs, gossip, and drinks—in the bar they went to in chapter 3. The tone becomes less pleasant when Mike asks George about the job he's been hoping for, at the car parts store. George answers that he came very close to getting it, but the store owner is going to hire his nephew, who hasn't been able to find work. Mike is disappointed, but George is much less so. He's known the owner's nephew for years and likes him. George also says that he'd rather feel determined than disappointed.

#### **4.9 CHAPTER 9: PLAY**

Chapter 9 shows the excitement of a blind ski race and the romance between Mike and Samantha. It begins with Mike standing next to his gate on the ski slope. He's shivering, waiting for the race to start, and wondering why he volunteered. After the race starts, the blind racers impress him so much that he forgets about the cold. They turn a few feet from Mike, so he can see their effort and skill. Some racers are experts and ski very fast. Others are new, ski slower, and tell jokes when they pass. A few racers push their limits too far, like Samantha.



Two teams compete in the race. One team has blind skiers, and the other has sighted skiers who wear blindfolds. Each racer skis twice. The competition is close and comes down to the last skier, who is Samantha. Mike watches and listens to loudspeakers, which broadcast the voice of a sports commentator. In her last turn, her body wanders over her outside ski, nearly falling. She recovers and wins the race, for the blind team.

After the race, Mike and George enjoy the celebration, in the chalet. They exchange their own highlights and jokes. As the celebration continues, Sam shows up to a hero's welcome. She enjoys the attention, and Mike wonders if he'll have a chance to talk with her, since she's surrounded by admirers. Eventually, she passes by Mike and whispers in his ear to join her at the bar, in a few minutes. She walks away, and Mike is thrilled. Unfortunately, the bar is crowded and dark, so the walk is slow and frustrating. He finds her, and they take a short walk. Soon after, passion takes over, and they end up kissing in a coatroom, with scarves and hats falling around them.

#### **4.10 CHAPTER 10: LUCK**

The last chapter returns to the school. Mike and other students are worrying about Pam and George, since neither are in class. George is often late but not Pam. Throughout the story, Mike and others describe their fear of wandering into traffic, and this morning, the roads are slippery. Their fears change to excitement after Pam and George arrive. They tell everyone that George has a job, at the car parts store. Some less pleasant news is that George has to start today, so each student gives George a bittersweet good-bye.

Mike walks out with George and remembers that the store owner was going to hire his nephew, instead of George. He asks about this, and George answers that the owner is hiring his nephew and George for six months. Mike is disappointed by the short time, but George is not. He prefers having some work to none and chooses to believe things will work out.

George tells Mike that he's never learned exactly how Mike lost his sight. When Mike says it was bad luck, George asks for more. Mike finally tells him. It started when an eye doctor skipped a test. On the next Friday, about half of Mike's sight was gone. On Saturday, staff at a hospital in St. Cloud realized they couldn't help, so they sent him to the University of Minnesota Hospital. On Sunday, he learned that a new surgery could restore his sight, but the surgeon didn't work on weekends. On Monday, he had surgery but little sight was left.

George is sad about the story, but Mike tells him that he chooses to believe things will work out. The chapter ends with Mike thinking more about luck. He decides that luck doesn't matter. All he can do is try to make more of the good kind and worry less about the bad.

## **5 READERSHIP**

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This book will appeal to three audiences. The first is anyone who has experienced an intense dose of bad luck, personally or from a loved one. Several issues led to Mike losing his sight, but the most prominent was that his condition became critical on a Friday evening, which is bad

luck. Only one surgeon in Minnesota could help, and he didn't work on weekends. The most important message in this book is not about blindness. It's about responding to bad luck. This could involve losing a job, having an accident, or other event where people need empathy, humor, and a message about getting through it.

The second audience is Minnesotans and people living in nearby states. This audience will appreciate the many references to recent Minnesota history, since this story occurs in 1976. One reference is the Vikings losing three out of four super bowls, and another is Walter Mondale becoming Vice President. The book also shows how Minnesotans tolerate and make the best of winter. In the story, Mike tolerates frigid wind gusts and worries about cars sliding into him on icy roads. In contrast, he enjoys winter by walking in a gentle snowfall and remembering times when he played snowmobile tag, as a teenager. A final reference to Minnesota's winter is the downhill ski race and celebration in the chalet.

The final audience is people who have lost their sight or who have other disabilities. Appendix B contains sixty-one groups that provide services for blind adults, in the US and UK. I plan to contact each group, as described in section 6.5. I expect some of these groups will be interested in working together to promote the book and their services, which will help reach other audiences. Another benefit of working with these groups is that their members have sighted family and friends who should be interested in this book.

An element of the book that will appeal to all audiences is the combination of drama, humor, and surprises. The humor is especially important. It makes the story more pleasant, the characters more likable, and the overall story more engaging for any audience.

## **6 MARKET/COMPETITION**

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This section begins by describing three recent books that are similar to *Walking Out of the Dark*. Each description contains a brief summary from Amazon. After the descriptions, there is a summary of how *Walking Out of the Dark* is unique. This section ends by proposing some marketing efforts that I have completed or could complete.

### **6.1 NOW I SEE YOU: A MEMOIR**

Nicole C. Kear, St. Martin's Press, 2014, \$15.99

At nineteen years old, Nicole C. Kear's biggest concern is choosing a major--until she walks into a doctor's office in midtown Manhattan and gets a life-changing diagnosis. She is going blind, courtesy of an eye disease called retinitis pigmentosa, and has only a decade or so before *Lights Out*. Instead of making preparations as the doctor suggests, Kear decides to *carpe diem* and make the most of the vision she has left. She joins circus school, tears through boyfriends, travels the world, and through all these hi-jinks, she keeps her vision loss a secret.

### **6.2 NEW LIFE, NO INSTRUCTIONS: A MEMOIR**

Gail Caldwell, Random House, 2014, \$16.00

New Life, No Instructions is about the surprising way life can begin again, at any age. “What do you do when the story changes in midlife? When a tale you have told yourself turns out to be a little untrue, just enough to throw the world off-kilter? It’s like leaving the train at the wrong stop: You are still you, but in a new place, there by accident or grace, and you will need your wits about you to proceed.

### **6.3 Focus**

Ingrid Ricks, RC Strategies Group, 2012, \$9.99

At the age of 37, Ingrid Ricks walked into an eye doctor's office expecting to walk out with a cute pair of red cat-eye frames. Instead, she learned she suffered from Retinitis Pigmentosa, an incurable eye disease that was stealing her eyesight and would eventually leave her completely blind. Gripped with the terrifying fear that she wouldn't see her two young daughters grow up, would become a burden to her husband, and would lose the career and independence that defines her, Ingrid embarks on a quest to fix her eyes that ends up fixing her life.

### **6.4 HOW WALKING OUT OF THE DARK IS UNIQUE**

The books described above have been successful and are written by accomplished authors. They are also all memoirs, which leads to a fundamental difference. Walking Out of the Dark is creative nonfiction, which has been growing in popularity. Several awards exist for books written in this genre. One of them is part of the Minnesota Book Awards, since 2006. In my analysis, no similar, recent, and successful books have been written using creative nonfiction.

My perspective on creative nonfiction is that it must stay true to the key facts, such as the events, settings, challenges, and personalities. The creative part comes from small and careful changes to make the story more engaging, starting with the characters. A story based entirely on facts can easily contain many people for a reader to remember and follow. Creative nonfiction allows for fewer composite characters.

Each composite character accurately represents a few real people. One implication is that there are fewer characters in a story, so they can be shown in-depth. This allows readers to empathize with their feelings, anticipate their actions, and even laugh at their jokes. Stories like this have the potential to make history more appealing to a wider audience of readers. Another implication of composite characters is that the dialogue between them is also fictitious, while staying true to real issues. This flexibility in dialogue allows it to be crafted in ways that engage readers even more. Through the dialogue, readers see how each character deals with vision loss, with comments that show sadness, frustration, humor, and hope.

The overall effect is that Walking Out of the Dark is different from other books because it shows the real challenges and sadness of blindness in a very personal way. However, those are balanced with humor, romance, and action—all of which happened when Mike attended a school for adults who lost their sight.

## **6.5 PROPOSED MARKETING EFFORTS IN THE US & UK**

If this proposal is accepted, I would like to help with the marketing efforts. This section describes some marketing ideas, but with its success in publishing, I'm sure MHS Press has recommendations for authors. I would be happy to adjust my ideas to accommodate those recommendations. Since I live in London and make frequent trips to Minnesota, the options below describe working with bookstores, audiences, and other groups in the US and UK. This section ends with a marketing plan that coordinates the efforts described.

### **6.5.1 Communicate with Social Media, Webinars, & Other Online Resources**

I have actively used Internet resources since 1988 and continue to post in blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social media sites. One of the blogs I have created is for this novel, at <http://walkingoutofthedark.wordpress.com>. This blog currently contains the following: a summary of the entire book, chapter summaries, the entire first chapter, and short audio recordings from funny or dramatic parts of the book. After I submit this proposal, I am going to start creating a video trailer for the book. Hopefully, it will be finished by the time this proposal is reviewed. In any case, the blog will help in a few ways. First, I'll display it during webinars and in-person events. Second, people can view it after these events, to learn more or buy the book. And third, I'll use it to gain the interest of groups who serve blind adults.

### **6.5.2 Contact Groups that Serve Blind Adults**

I have found sixty-one groups that serve blind adults in ways that match key topics of this book. Some of these groups advocate for the rights and needs of the blind, and others organize blind sports. Appendix B contains a list of these groups, and appendix C contains an email message I could use to contact them. After establishing relationships with some groups, I will ask them to review or endorse the book, which will increase the effectiveness of other marketing efforts.

### **6.5.3 Attend National Conferences for Blind Adults**

The groups just mentioned are usually part of national organizations, in the US and UK. These organizations have conferences to discuss and display new technologies, services, books, and other resources for the blind. I could attend some conferences to publicize the book and become better acquainted with the blind community.

### **6.5.4 Perform at Literary Events**

The Twin Cities and London both are very active with literary and performing arts. Part of this activity includes events where authors read from their work, in formal or informal gatherings. I enjoy attending these events and reading excerpts from the book, as demonstrated by the audio clips on the blog mentioned above.

### **6.5.5 Present the History of Blind Minnesotans**

I could coordinate or help with events that show the history of blind Minnesotans, by working with the groups listed in appendix B and the Minnesota Historical Society. There should be grant opportunities to fund these events, by collaborating with the groups that serve the blind. I could help with these funding efforts, since I have written and reviewed grant proposals.

### 6.5.6 Work with Bookstores

I have already met the former owner of the Hungry Mind Bookstore in St. Paul, David Unowsky. He gave me several suggestions for publicizing this book. I would enjoy contacting others who are active in bookselling. This effort will be more effective after creating relationships with groups that serve the blind. After completing the efforts described above, I'm particularly excited at the thought of contacting the many bookstores that exist in London.

### 6.5.7 Proposed Marketing Plan

The sequence below shows one approach to marketing this book. The goal is to gain, sustain, and expand the interest of all the audiences described in section 5. The groups mentioned below are those listed in appendix B, which contains sixty-one groups that serve blind adults.

1. I send an email message to about five groups at a time. The messages will:
  - **Suggest simple options for working together.** This should lead to working together in more ambitious ways with some groups.
  - **Request a brief telephone conversation.** Part of this conversation will be discussing simple options for working together, but it's just as important that I show my sincere interest in each group.
  - **Be customized for each group.** This will be easy because the book contains details about blind skiing, beep-baseball, teaching blind adults, and other blind services. A sample of the email message I could send to groups involved with blind skiing is in appendix C.
2. After groups show an interest, I would learn which marketing options appeal to each group. Simple and ambitious options are listed below.

#### Simple Options

- I post summaries of the group's events on the blog for this book.
- Their website links to funny or dramatic audio clips on the blog for this book.
- We link to each other's website.
- I read segments at one of their social events, in person or with a webinar.

#### Ambitious Options

- We co-present at literary events, bookstores, conferences for the blind, or at other events.
- We work together to show the history of the group's work, which could involve blind skiing, beep baseball, or educating blind adults.
- Someone from the group reviews the book.

3. After implementing several marketing options, I should reach the audience of disabled readers and have relationships with some groups that serve blind adults. This support will make it easier to move into the most important part of this marketing plan. That involves repeating the steps above to reach audiences in Minnesota, across the US, London, and across the UK.

## 7 MANUSCRIPT LENGTH

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The manuscript has 82,000 words and contains no photos, illustrations, or maps.

## 8 SCHEDULE

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The manuscript is ready for publication or very close.

Since authors sometimes use this statement too quickly, I'll describe how the manuscript has been reviewed and revised. I considered the first draft complete after discarding several pages and some chapters. I asked friends and other professors to critically read each chapter, telling them that I preferred comments about weaknesses more than comments about strengths. Eventually, I revised each chapter at least four times, on screen and on paper.

## 9 SAMPLE PAGES

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This section contains twenty-three pages from chapter 9. It is formatted according to MHS Press guidelines for manuscripts, so the sample is double spaced. This chapter was selected because it represents the writing style used in the book and is easily read in isolation. However, the sample is still easier to read with a description of some characters.

### 9.1 CHARACTERS IN SAMPLE PAGES

#### **Mike**

By chapter 9, the book shows how he is attracted to Samantha, or Sam. They have flirted a few times, but he's still not certain if she considers him special or just another guy who makes her laugh.

#### **Samantha**

She's an energetic young teacher at Bridgman School for the Blind, with long red hair. Her energy makes her a good teacher but also causes problems, for herself and others. People enjoy her enthusiasm and quick wit, but they become impatient with her quick temper and tendency to bend the rules.

#### **George**

He is Mike's closest friend, in the town of Portage Bay. Like Mike, he's a young man who enjoys making people laugh. Unlike Mike and Sam, he enjoys relaxing in a bar more than being active with blind sports.

## 9.2 CHAPTER 9: PLAY

Minnesotans get used to cold weather, slowly. It starts in the autumn, after the hot and humid summer gives way to the first frost. That change feels cold, but with warmer clothes and a few weeks, they get used to it. But then, a few more weeks lead to high temperatures below freezing. That makes it feel cold again, and they get used to it again. The wind is harder to get used to. A gust can drop the temperature ten degrees in seconds. It feels more than suddenly cold. It's a shock, which starts by freezing exposed skin and finishes with a chill deep in your chest. During those gusts, you are up close and personal with winter, and you know it isn't going away soon. The best way to avoid this situation is not to stand in the wind on a cold day. If that's not possible, sometimes, it helps to swear.

"Jesus Christ!" grumbled Mike as another gust blew by. He was standing next to his gate on the ski slope, at White Pine Ridge. It was the third gate of four total, which Mike learned from a ski patrol. The man gave him a lift up here, on a snowmobile. He also gave Mike instructions. The first one was to listen for more instructions, from loudspeakers along the ski run. A sports commentator would use those speakers during the race and to give more instructions.

The ski patrol then showed him where to stand, to avoid the skiers. That was about an arm's length from the flag at gate 3. The last thing Mike learned was when to shake the tambourine. He was supposed to start shaking it when a skier was about twenty yards up the hill from him. The ski patrol emphasized that it was important not to shake the tambourine too soon or too late. Shaking it too soon could make it difficult for the blind or blindfolded skiers to tell if the sound was coming from Mike or from the previous gate, about fifty yards up the hill. Shaking the tambourine too late could make it difficult for the skier to locate Mike's gate, or Mike.

He thought about that last part. Even though a few skiers told Mike the chance of getting hit was very small, he knew an impact wouldn't be. After worrying about it for a while, he decided to take a deep breath a few seconds before shaking the tambourine. That would give him plenty of air to call out to a skier who came too close, especially with a pinch of adrenalin.

He was wearing every piece of warm clothing he brought to Portage Bay and a couple of plaid shirts from George, but he still felt a small chill in his chest and a larger chill in his toes. He rocked left and right, which helped warm his toes. He also tried another trick to stay warm, which was to stop thinking about the cold.

He scanned the area around him. That was easier than usual because it was a bright day, sun coming from a clear sky above and light bouncing off the snow below. As Mike looked up the hill, he could see the blurry shape of a person that was another volunteer, standing by gate 2. Farther up, there was a short, blurry line, which was probably the starting gate. Around it all, he saw some dark parts, which were the trees on White Pine Ridge.

He turned and looked down the hill. Another volunteer was below him, at gate 4. Farther below, a long fuzzy line crossed the ski slope, which was probably the finish line. Past that, the sight was mostly white, with a dark spot in the middle. Mike guessed the spot was the ski lodge, where all the white ski slopes converged. He thought about the lodge. George was in there laughing, telling stories, and enjoying a cold drink by a warm fire.

Mike thought about what he would do in the lodge, if he were there right now. The laughs, stories, and drinks could wait. If he were in the lodge right now, he'd put his cold feet up to the warm fire. He rocked back and forth again and looked around some more, when a voice came from the loudspeakers.



“Good morning everybody!” the announcer said in a tone that reminded Mike of the voices he heard during a Vikings game. “I want to welcome you to the 1976 Darkside Ski Race! You may have heard of people taking a walk on the wild-side, but in this race, skiers race down the dark-side. Many of you are probably new to blind racing, so I’ll explain a little. In a short while, two teams of skiers will compete for the best time without the luxury of sight. One team is the Moonlight Skiers, who are all from the blind community in Portage Bay. The other team is the Risky Racers. They are sighted skiers who have volunteered to race while wearing a blindfold. There’s one last thing. Some of the legally blind skiers will also be wearing a blindfold, since a few have some sight. All this makes the Darkside Ski Race something where skill matters more than sight.”

“Right now,” Mike mumbled to himself, “my toes matter more to me than anybody’s skill.” He hoped the announcer would just tell the first racer to start, since watching a racer might take his mind off the cold. Unfortunately, the announcer continued with his introduction.

“We also want to keep things safe, so I’ll explain a little about that. There are only four gates, and they’re spread out more than usual. All of our racers have been practicing for weeks or months, so they have a good idea of what to expect.”

“All right, that’s a great safety briefing,” Mike mumbled again. “Now, my toes would really appreciate it if you’d tell the first skier to ski.”

“There’s just one more thing before we begin.”

“Of course there is.”

“This race wouldn’t be possible without the help of some great volunteers, standing by each gate. Each one shakes a tambourine to tell the skiers where to turn. In case you’re

wondering, we don't use things like electric buzzers or whistles because they freeze out there. Everybody, please give a big round of applause for our volunteers!"

"I freeze out here too." Mike said while folding his arms close to his chest. He started making more of his own commentary when the applause surprised him. He hadn't noticed all the people who'd gathered to watch. He looked at them, waived, and listened to the announcer.

"The race will start in about a half hour. Anybody hearing this is very welcome to join us. We're on the ski run right in front of the chalet, so please stop by if you want to see a great race. It's free to watch, but if you feel like giving something to our Darkside racers, there are donation buckets along the course, at the finish line, and in the chalet. All proceeds go to the visually impaired in Portage Bay. Right now, I have some things to tell the volunteers shaking tambourines, so the next few announcements are just for them. The first thing I want to do is make sure all those volunteers can hear me. If you can, waive your hands way up high."

Mike was happy to comply, since it might warm him up a little.

"Good, good, it looks like we have everybody. You should do the same thing if any problems come up during the race. The next step is to give you some practice knowing when to shake your tambourine. We have some skiers at the top who'll help. They'll take a couple slow runs and call out when you should start and stop shaking your tambourine. If anybody shakes their tambourine too early or late, I'll mention it from here."

Mike was relieved that something would be happening soon. It seemed like most group events moved too slow. Normally, he just became quietly impatient, with an occasional joke to himself or anyone within mumbling range. At the moment, he was impatient, feeling colder in his chest, and feeling less feeling in his toes.

“All right, our first practice skier just started, so you’ll be seeing her soon. When you hear her yell ‘start shaking’, you should shake your tambourine. After she passes you, she’ll tell you when to stop shaking.”

Mike looked up toward the first gate, trying to see the skier. After a few seconds, he heard a muffled yell, due to the distance and snow absorbing some sound. A faint ringing followed, and then, another muffled yell. The ringing stopped, and Mike could see a dot moving down the slope, toward the second gate. The next sound he heard was more clear. He could barely understand the skier telling the volunteer above him to start shaking the tambourine. The ringing started, continued, and stopped with another yell from the skier. Mike’s gate was next.

He’d become very focused on watching the skier and shakers, so Mike was startled when the skier yelled at him, to start shaking the tambourine. That meant he started shaking it later than others. He kept shaking it as she came closer to his gate, a bit closer than he expected. He thought about taking a deep breath when he heard her call out, “Hi Mike!”

The voice seemed familiar, and he instinctively looked for long red hair. Sure enough, it was there, flowing in the wind behind her. When she called out again to stop shaking the tambourine, he realized he already had, probably when she said hi.

“Jesus Christ,” he mumbled to himself. “She skis by, and you manage to show that you can’t even shake a tambourine at the right time.” He heard Sam call out to the last gate and hoped nobody noticed how his timing was off, with the tambourine. When the last ringing sound stopped, he sighed and realized that his chest wasn’t cold anymore. One small advantage of being annoyed at himself is that it may have warmed him up. He wiggled his toes and mumbled to himself again, “Little feeling in my toes, not too much.”

“All right, that went pretty good,” said the announcer. “Everybody shook their tambourines at almost the right time, but I have to ask our volunteer at gate 3 to start just a little sooner and keep shaking a little longer. Our next practice skier is ready to start, so we’ll go through it one more time.”

“Great.” Mike mumbled to himself. “So much for people not noticing.” Another gust of wind went by, and he did his best to ignore it. A muffled yell and ringing came from above him, and soon, the skier came toward Mike’s gate. This time, he carefully started and stopped shaking his tambourine when he was told to.

“That was perfect,” said the announcer, “great job everybody. I’d say we’re now ready for the main event. Our first racer is in the starting gate, but I want to check with our volunteers one more time. Hold your hands high and shake your tambourines if you’re ready!”

Mike held up his hands and shook the tambourine a little. When he heard how loud other volunteers were shaking their tambourines and cheering, he joined in, but his cheering was different. He knew his cheering would be drowned out by the noise, so he called out, “Yeah, I’m ready! I’m also freezing, so get going!” He laughed at his own joke, which had one more benefit. It made him feel warmer.

“That sounds great!” replied the announcer. He continued with enthusiasm, “Everyone watching, are you ready to watch some skiers race down the dark side?”

Mike heard the crowd cheer and saw people waive their hands.

“All right! That’s the way to get our racers ready. The first racer is Sharon Halverson, and she’s with the Moonlight Skiers, our blind skiing team. Sharon is sponsored by The Tacklebox, in Portage Bay. They’ve been helping us with The Darkside Race since we started two years ago. They’ve had good luck with their racers, so we’re hoping for a great opening run.

I see the referee at the starting gate giving her a countdown. I think I see two, now one, and there she goes!”

Mike looked up the slope but couldn't see Sharon. He squinted, waited, and heard the faint sound of a tambourine, from gate 1. He looked at the source of the sound. A blurry dot appeared and moved through the white scene. The dot turned, and the faint ringing stopped. In a few seconds, a clearer ringing started. The moving dot was larger and faster. “Jesus Christ, she's going that fast and can't see? Wow.” He could now make out the racer's shape, and how it shifted from tucked down to angled out, when she shoved her skis into the turn above him.

A nagging feeling told him to stop watching and start thinking about when to shake his tambourine. The ringing from the gate above stopped, so she would be coming to his gate soon. He watched carefully and waited for the moment to start shaking his tambourine.

He was surprised at how soon that moment came and more surprised at how fast she went around him. “Hey, great job!” Mike called out without even knowing he said it. He barely remembered to stop shaking his tambourine and never remembered to hold his breath, to call out if the skier came too close.

“Wow, that was pretty cool.” He said to himself while watching her ski to the next gate. The sound of a tambourine started, followed by the sound of Sharon's skis cutting into the snow. He focused less on her as she became a faint dot and as he heard cheers from the crowd at the finish line.

“That's going to be a tough time to beat!” said the announcer. “Sharon Halverson almost set a record for the Darkside Ski Race, with a time of fifty six point seven seconds! If she takes about two seconds off that time, she'll have the record. She could still get it, since all the skiers take two runs.

Our next skier is now at the starting gate. His name is Johnny Anderson. He's the first sighted skier in today's race, and it looks like he's had some fun with his blindfold. It's certainly the most colorful blindfold I've ever seen. Anyway, Johnny's with the Risky Racers and is sponsored by our friends at Northland Timber. He had the best time last year, so we're hoping for a great run. The referee at the top just started the countdown, two and one and Johnny's off! It looks like he's getting a fast start, so my guess is that he's trying pretty hard to stay on top."

The announcer continued, but Mike didn't pay attention. He was too focused on finding Johnny. The faint ringing from the first gate started. Once again, Mike used the ringing to find the racer, and once again, he instinctively added comments. "Jesus Christ, did these guys forget that they can't see?" He shook his head, amazed at how fast Johnny was skiing while wearing a blindfold. Johnny was approaching the second gate when Mike added more comments, still too focused on his own thoughts to hear the announcer. "All right Johnny, do us all a favor and stay clear of the nice tambourine shaker, and please do the same for the next one—namely me." The ringing stopped, and he got ready to shake his own tambourine.

No comments came to mind as Mike watched Johnny come closer to his gate. The speed continued to impress him. As the racer turned by Mike, he was also impressed by the sound of the skis, cutting into the snow around his gate. Mike instinctively cheered again and was even less certain that he stopped shaking the tambourine soon enough.

"Wow, that is pretty cool." He said while watching Johnny quickly change from the shape of a person, to a shadow against the snow, and finally to a blurry dot. When the dot faded away, Mike noticed more cheers from the crowd.

"Another amazing run from the Darkside Ski Race!" the announcer called out. "Johnny Anderson has barely come out ahead of Sharon Halverson! He finished about a half-second

faster, at fifty six point one seconds. It looks like things will be neck and neck as we move to our next skier.”

The next skier and the ones after that were slower than the first two, but they still impressed Mike. Even the slower skiers were faster than he expected. Mike wondered if he should worry less while walking down a sidewalk. He also noticed that his toes didn't feel cold anymore. He fell into a routine of listening to the announcer, watching the skiers approach, shaking his tambourine, and hearing the sound of their skis around the gate. This routine changed when the announcer called out the name of the last skier. Mike listened carefully.

“The last skier in the first round is Samantha Smothers, skiing for the Moonlight Skiers. Samantha is sponsored by Bridgman School for the Blind in Portage Bay. It continues to be a close race, so a lot is riding on her run. Her countdown is on, two, one, and she's off!” Mike tried harder than before to find the blurry dot up the hill, which was Sam, and the announcer continued. “She's approaching the first gate a little closer than other skiers. Wow, if she cut it any closer, she could take the tambourine from our volunteer at gate 1.”

“It's not a good idea to cut it close to the gate, Sam.” Mike mumbled to himself and found the dot a moment later.

The announcer continued. “It looks like she'll be doing the same at gate 2. Yep, once again, she came very close to the flag. That's a risky way to ski, when you can't see, but it does make for a fast run.”

“Not good, Sam,” Mike muttered. “You shouldn't cut it that close to the gate. The nice volunteers would really appreciate it if you'd not clobber them.”

“She's now getting ready for gate 3,” said the announcer.

As she approached his gate, many thoughts went through Mike's mind—that he couldn't screw up with his tambourine, that he was impressed with her courage, and that her courage could lead to clobbering him. The last thought was on his mind the most, so he stepped away from the flag and stretched an arm toward it, when shaking the tambourine. That way, only his arm would get hit and not his body, if she cut it too close.

Now that he'd seen a few skiers approach, Mike could tell that Sam was faster than most but also more unstable. As she came closer, he could see that she had to adjust a lot to stay in control. Just after Mike started shaking his tambourine, she quickly moved up from her crouched position. That would reduce speed but standing higher also made it easier to wipe out, especially in a turn. When she went around Mike, her body leaned outward. She fought to stay above her skis and made some comments, which he'd heard before.

“Dammit! God Dammit! God Dammit!”

Mike thought he heard a growl at the end of her curses, like George mentioned a while ago. Sam shoved her skis harder into the turn than other skiers, which Mike could tell from the sound alone. That kept her in control, but it also led to more of a sliding stop than a turn through the gate. She swore some more and quickly dug her poles into the snow, to regain speed. “Damn, gutsy skier but lousy language,” said Mike after she continued down the hill and crossed the finish line.

“That was a tough run for Samantha,” said the announcer, “but she'll have another chance in the second round. We'll start that round in a moment, for now, I'll give you the score. It's a close contest at today's Darkside Ski Race, with the Risky Racers just seconds ahead of the Moonlight Skiers. The total time for the Risky Racers is seven minutes and twenty-five point eight seconds. The total time for the Moonlight Skiers is only about ten seconds more, at seven



minutes and thirty-five point two seconds. With a race this close, it all comes down to the second half. We'll start that half soon, but since more people are now watching, I'll tell you a little about it and invite anyone else to join us."

The announcer repeated the rules and asked people to make donations. Mike looked around and noticed some changes, next to the ski run. Some dark areas he previously thought were small trees were now longer, shifting shapes. He now thought the shapes were groups of people. He looked at other groups along the ski run. There were more people than he expected. After enjoying the race, he could understand why they wanted to watch, but blind sports still reminded him of girls basketball in high school. Even when his sisters played, he and others didn't show up as often as they did for a boys game. That thought made him appreciate the larger crowd.

His thoughts shifted to the racers in the first round. The first two stood out from the rest, with their combination of grace, power, and determination. Mike hadn't seen all that so close up before. Other racers clearly had less experience with blind skiing. They kept their speed lower by standing higher and took wide turns around Mike's gate. One of them even called out a little joke to Mike, asking if he was headed in the right direction. Mike just cheered him on and respected how less experienced skiers were also enjoying the race.

Then, there was Sam. He shook his head as he thought how her skiing matched her style when they had drinks a couple weeks ago, in a booth at The Speakeasy. "She's a full-throttle woman," he said to himself with a little smile. Mike gazed down the slope toward the chalet and wondered what would happen later. A few people from Bridgman's School for the Blind came along on this trip, which was good and not. He liked seeing people from school, but having them here meant that he'd have to be careful when talking with Sam. In the last few days and weeks,

he'd heard more about how it was fine if students and teachers had fun together, as long as they didn't flirt together.

The announcer was now talking about businesses that sponsored some racers. Mike thought how that sounded like a commercial, ignored the announcer again, and scanned the finish line, past gate 4. He used to see the finish as a thin grey streak across the run. Now, it was a larger and darker line, since the crowd continued to grow.

A sudden thought concerned him. This was his first ski trip, so he wasn't sure what Sam would do after the race. Maybe she'd want to ski some more. Since he didn't ski, that would mean she'd enjoy herself without him, or with other guys. Or maybe, she would be talking with other skiers in the chalet, and who knows, maybe she was looking forward to spending time with one in particular, or more. Weeks ago, George did mention that Sam had a reputation for enjoying guys. That didn't happen by staying alone on weekend getaways, especially with a bunch of athletic men. "Bummer, never thought of that."

His toes were getting cold again, so Mike rocked back and forth. "In that case, I suppose I'll drown my sorrows with George and probably have a few laughs." He looked around again to take his mind off of the thought of Sam with another guy. He also wanted to enjoy the colors from White Pine Ridge, especially since this view was a lot better than the one from his room at Mariners.

"We're almost ready to start the second half of today's Darkside Ski Race. There is one more fact you might want to know about blind ski racing. This was the first year it was part of the Paralympics, in Sweden. Who knows, if some of our skiers keep pushing their limits, they just may end up there someday. Right now, we're going to start from the top, so Sharon

Halverson is in the starting gate, skiing for the Moonlight Skiers. The referee is signaling so the second half will start in two and one, and Sharon's off!"

Mike enjoyed watching Sharon fly by and Johnny after that. They were focused and controlled. When the ski run was straight, they stayed low to gain speed, and before a turn, they slowly skied more upright to lose speed and gain control. When turning by Mike, the racers leaned in, dug their skis into the snow, and pushed their way past him. In the second round of the race, Sharon was slightly faster than Johnny, so the overall contest continued to be close.

Sharon and Johnny were a pleasure to watch, but in the second half, he also enjoyed the less skilled skiers. When the announcer called out their names, Mike almost recognized some, but he didn't try very hard to remember, since there was so much to see and hear during the race. In one case, the sights came a little too close. Mike had to step out of the way of a skier, when she wiped out while lining up for gate 3. That led to the first disqualification, for the Risky Racers.

Another close call came from the skier who called out to Mike in the first round, asking if he was headed in the right direction. The skier asked the same question, but this time, Mike answered, "Just keep your skis pointed down." He regretted that answer when the skier laughed and wandered off track. Mike had to step out of the way again, quickly. The skier didn't wipe out, but he passed the gate on the wrong side. That led to another disqualification, for the Moonlight Skiers this time.

The announcer added some comments. "We're always sorry to see another skier get disqualified, but that means we have a razor-close race going down to our last skier. The entire contest now rides on Samantha Smothers. If she can get under one minute and two point nine seconds, she'll win it for the Moonlight Racers. That's just a few seconds faster than her first

run, so she could pull it off, since Sam had some problems in gate 3 last time. All she really needs is a smooth run through all the gates, to give a win to the Moonlight Racers. She'll be off in three, two, and one. There she goes!"

"Come on, Sam, just keep it steady," Mike mumbled to himself as he tried to find her. He couldn't hear the faint ringing from gate 1 this time because the crowd was too loud.

The announcer sounded more excited than before. "She's flying by gate 1 again, fast and close to the gate! It looks like Samantha is trying to take off more than a few seconds."

"Don't be a hotshot, Sam," Mike mumbled and found her blurry dot. "And please, don't clobber the nice volunteers."

"Samantha is now lining up for gate 2. She's fast but seems to have a tough time staying in control. Oh, that was tough! She had a little too much speed in gate 2 and took a wide turn around it. Samantha lost some time on that one."

"Just ski, Sam," said Mike, "don't push it so much. For God's sake, relax."

"She's really trying to make up for that last turn. I don't know if she could get any lower in her skis."

Mike watched Sam line up for his gate and focused on shaking the tambourine at the right time, since Sam would probably growl in anger if he didn't. He also repeated the technique he used during her first run, shaking the tambourine with an outstretched arm in case she cut this gate too close.

Sam flew by Mike's gate with the same speed as Sharon and Johnny. The blur and sound of skis cutting around the turn made him cheer louder than he ever had. He quickly rotated and watched her line up for gate 4.

“That was a beautiful turn through gate 3, and she continues to pick up speed heading into gate 4. It looks like she’s standing up a little to lose some speed, and now standing even higher. Now for the turn, oh-no!”

Mike couldn’t see the problem but still cringed. “Dammit, Sam!” He said, feeling like the announcer’s words were coming out in slow-motion.

“Sam barely stayed above her skis in gate 4, standing straight up on the outside ski, just to keep control. It wasn’t pretty, but now, she’s tucked down again, getting as much speed as she can for the finish. And that’s it!

Samantha Smothers gave us a great final run, but what matters most is her time, since the entire race depends on it. The judges seem to be talking it over more than before. I’m sure they just want to be careful. While they’re double-checking, I’ll say again that she needed a time of one minute and two point nine seconds, to win it for the Moonlight Racers. All right, I’ve just been given her official time. Wow, you are not going to believe this.” He spoke slower than before. “On the final run of the 1976 Darkside Ski Race, Samantha Smothers had a time of . . .”

After noticing how the announcer was pausing on purpose, Mike called out, “Enough already!”

The announcer spoke slowly, emphasizing each word. “One minute and . . .”

The entire ski slope was silent, for longer than Mike wanted. “That’s enough dramatic effect!”

“Two point . . .” The announcer paused again.

“Jerk,” Mike mumbled.

“One seconds! Samantha Smothers has won the race for the Moonlight Skiers, with a time of one minute and two point one seconds!”

The quiet ski slope burst into a roar of cheers. Mike and all the other volunteers joined in, jumped around, and shook their tambourines.

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Mike cheered again, in the chalet this time. He and many others had been cheering for about an hour, during a meal and several toasts. After this cheer faded, he felt the friend next to him lean closer, to ask a question.

“Hey Mikie, mind filling me up again?”

“Already? Wow George, I’m impressed.”

“I’m just enjoying the celebration.”

Mike slid George’s glass closer, on the long dining table they were sitting at. Then, he picked up one of the pitchers of beer and filled George’s glass. Before he could set the pitcher down, someone from across the table asked for it. Several people were sitting over there, so Mike didn’t know who asked. He just handed it in the direction of the voice and added “Here ya go,” in case the person didn’t have enough sight to easily see the pitcher. Mike felt someone take it and heard another comment from George.

“I have to give you credit, Mikie, standing out there in the freezing cold, dodging skiers. I heard you were at gate 3, so I tried to keep up on how things went for ya.”

The comment surprised Mike. “You mean you were outside watching the race?”

George laughed. “Oh no, I’d do a lot of things for you, but that falls short of standing in the freezing cold when I can stay nice and toasty in a chalet.” George took a drink. “Especially when you’re the one who volunteered to freeze out there.” He laughed some more.

“Then, how did you listen to the race?”

“The good people in the bar tried something new this year. They piped in the sound from the announcer, so we could listen to the whole thing. I gotta say, there were some tense moments.” George chuckled again. “It’s a good thing I had a cozy chair by the fireplace to relax, not to mention a cold beer. Otherwise, all those tense moments could have made me downright uncomfortable.”

Mike laughed with his friend, “I suppose.”

“Seriously though, this was probably the best race yet.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, the other two weren’t that close. In the first race, our folks clobbered them, and last year, they clobbered us.”

“I see.”

“So, what kind of action did you see, all up-close and personal? It sounded like Sam’s close-call may have been near you.”

“Which one? She had a couple.”

“Spoken like a man who was in the middle of the action.” George laughed and took a drink. “It really is fantastic that you saw it all close up. I still think you’re half-crazy for being out there, but it’s still fantastic.” Both men took a drink and George continued. “Now, you got me wondering, which *one* of Sam’s memorable moments stood out the most, from your up-close and freezing perspective?”

The first answer Mike thought of was Sam calling out his name, during a practice run. He didn’t want to give that answer, though, since it might tell George too much. Mike was still keeping things with Sam a secret. He took a drink and thought about the question.

“I admit that I was a little worried on her first run. She cut it close to most of the gates, and it looked like she was going faster than she could handle.”

“That sounds like Sam,” replied George.

“And you should have heard her when she messed up on my gate, swearing and even growling.”

George laughed and said, “That sounds like Sam too.”

“I was pretty impressed when she flew by my gate on her second run. Sam really did nail that turn, but the part I remember most is the tough time she had with gate 4.”

“That’s what I thought. Some guys in the chalet said she was standing straight up on one leg in that turn, just to stay in control.” George smiled. “I can almost see it, one more inch over that outside ski.” He showed an inch with a thumb and pointer finger. The same hand moved down in an arc. “And, her body would have tumbled over in that turn, within sight of all the good folks by the finish line.” He ended with a laugh. “She would have been so mad, I bet the snow would have melted under her.”

Mike laughed with him and thought about Sam laying in the snow, angrier than he could imagine. “Yep, that could have been ugly.”

Both men laughed some more and George said, “But, she hung on. That’s what matters.” They took a drink, and he made a suggestion. “Hey, what do you think of heading over to the fireplace? Normally, this crowd slowly makes its way over there. We can probably get a good seat if we leave soon.”

Mike agreed, and George made another suggestion. “Why don’t you liberate one of those pitchers and bring it with us? We really should do everyone a favor and have a pitcher over there. After all, they could easily forget to bring one, when they finally move to the fireplace.”



Mike laughed, recognizing George's ongoing effort to get some free drinks. He stood up and took a pitcher of beer. The two men walked out of the dining room with their hands full. Mike had a glass in one hand and the pitcher in the other. George also had a glass in one hand and held Mike's elbow with the other. It was fairly easy for Mike to walk with his hands full, since the light was brighter than most bars. The staff at the ski lodge had more lights on, to accommodate the blind skiing group. As they walked closer to the fireplace, Mike saw the flames more clearly and noticed the scent of burning pine.

"Are there many tables open near the fire?" asked George.

"Most of them are full, but there might be one open." Mike walked to the table and put the pitcher on it. He then guided George to a large chair. His friend sunk into the overstuffed chair and sighed with delight. "This is my favorite part of a ski race. I could sit here for hours. As a matter of fact, I think I will." He took a drink from his glass, stretched out his legs, and crossed them.

"Glad to see you relax George. You've had a tough day," said Mike with a chuckle.

"You damn right. It's time for a nice long break."

"While you're recovering, I'm going to check out the fireplace. I put the pitcher on your side of the table."

"You're a good man, Mikie. Don't be too long, or else some gorgeous woman's likely to take your chair, and being a gentleman, I don't know if I could just tell her to go away."

"I suppose," said Mike while stepping toward the fireplace. He paused, examined it, and took a drink from the glass he was still holding. The fireplace was a large square, in the center of the room. Each corner had a grey pillar, with open sides to make the fire visible from all around. A vague memory told him the fireplace was made of stone.

Mike touched one of the pillars and felt smooth stones, in many sizes. He wandered around the fireplace, enjoying the warmth, feeling more of the stones, and examining the pillars. They changed to a stone arch over the fire, which came together in a wide chimney. He slowly stepped around it and enjoyed the glow, sounds, and smooth stones. The fireplace was between him and George when he stopped. A long, relaxed sigh came out, and no particular thoughts came to mind, as he gazed at the fire.

He had no idea how much time had passed, when a familiar laugh made him glance away from the fire. The relaxed feeling faded, as he thought about the woman laughing. A group walked toward him, and he started feeling nervous. She was in the back of the group, replying to people congratulating her.

Mike felt more nervous. He wanted to congratulate her too but wondered if this was her night of being a celebrity, which made him think he had a small chance of talking with her. He realized she would be walking right by him and decided his chances were smaller if he said nothing. He hoped one of his clever comments would come to mind. They were getting closer. He guessed there were three or four people in the group and tried harder to find something to say. The first part of the group passed by. Nothing came to mind. Now, she was walking by. He had to say something. Mike took a step toward her and made the best comment he could.

“Hi Sam.”

“Oh, Hi Mike,” she said while slowing down. “I was hoping I’d see you here. Are you having a good time?” She stopped walking.

“Yeah, a great time. I heard about the fireplace, so I wanted to check it out.”

“It is a great fireplace,” she replied.

Mike thought about asking her to enjoy it with him for a while, but she continued before he could say anything.

“We were just looking for a table, before they’re all taken.” She glanced in the direction of the group she was with, which had kept moving.

Mike glanced toward it as well. The shadows of her friends were moving slower now, and mixed in with the other, lower shadows of people sitting at tables. He looked at Sam again. “Good idea, the place is filling up fast.”

“Yeah.” She took a drink from her glass. Mike noticed it had a red-orange color and wondered if it was a Double Sloe Screw, like the one she bought him a couple of weeks ago. He also took a drink, from his beer. He thought again about asking her to join him by the fire, and again, she spoke before he could.

“I should go join them.” An awkward pause passed. She looked at her friends again and back at Mike. “It looks like they found a table, maybe you can stop by later. It’d be great to catch up.”

Some thoughts quickly went through his mind, about how the next few moments might unfold. The easy response was to say he’d join them later and stay by the fire. A problem with that response was that the place was filling up, so stopping by later could make it hard to even get a seat near her, much less talk some more. After all, many people wanted to talk with the star of today’s race. The other option was to take a chance and ask Sam if he could join her group right now. The answer seemed clear, until someone else called out.

“Hey Sam, great race today! We’ll try harder next year.”

“Thanks!” she replied and turned toward the voice. “You *better* try harder next year. I’m only getting started.” She laughed and turned toward Mike.

He thought about how the young, attractive, and determined woman in front of him really was the star of today's race. She was also the most impressive athlete he'd ever known. The thoughts led to another moment of shyness and loss of words.

She spoke again. "Well, it was good seeing you, hope you stop by later." Sam looked toward her friends and took a step in their direction.

"Hey Sam," said Mike.

She looked at him.

He still felt shy but forced out some words. "You really did a great job today. I couldn't believe how fast you went."

"Thanks, it was a lot of fun, and thanks again for helping." She seemed to wait for Mike to say something else. When he didn't, she did. "Well, I better get going." She took another step toward the group.

Mike quickly asked, "Would it be all right if I stopped by now? I mean, if that's okay. I've been standing here for a while, so it'd be great to sit down and relax."

She smiled. "Of course, it's okay. We're just over here." She took a couple of steps away from the fire and glanced back at Mike one more time. He felt excited and nervous as he followed.

After a few steps, Mike saw Sam set her drink on a table, with two other people sitting at it.

"Mike, you probably remember Fred. He was at the planning meeting you joined, about a month ago."

Mike told Fred that it was good to see him again, and Fred said the same.

"And, this is Johnny," introducing the other man at the table.

Mike saw the man hold out a hand and heard him say, “Hey Mike, how ya do’n?”

Mike shook the man’s hand, put his beer on the table, and sat down. He felt like he should know why Johnny’s name was familiar, but Mike was so focused on Sam, he couldn’t remember.

Sam answered the question. “You’ve actually been close to Johnny a couple of times, when he went by your gate today. He’s the star skier from the Risky Racers.”

“Oh yeah,” said Mike, “I couldn’t believe how fast you were going with a blindfold on.”

“Thanks,” replied Johnny. “I used to ski in college, so it’s a lot of fun competing again.”

“He did a little more than compete in college,” Sam added. “He went to the State Finals twice.”

“Wow, that’s pretty cool,” said Mike.

Johnny took a drink and replied, “Yeah, it was fun, but I was firmly in the middle of the pack both times. These days, I ski for the fun and a challenge, which is how I started wearing a blindfold.”

“Johnny’s a little modest,” Sam added. “He still gets the best time.”

“And, Sam can be a little flattering,” said Johnny. “Sharon beat me this year.”

Mike also wondered how Sam was being flattering, toward Johnny.

## 10 APPENDIX A: CURRICULUM VITA

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# STEVEN ROY MALIKOWSKI, PHD

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London W12 0LZ England

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[SRM34@outlook.com](mailto:SRM34@outlook.com)

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### ***Experience***

**Manager/Lecturer:** St. George's Medical School, University of London—England

- April 2008 to Present
- Lead the workgroup Learning Technology Services & manage £46,000 (\$75,900) budget
- Show professors how learning technology can be an exciting and efficient part of teaching
- Review quantitative and qualitative research from professors and students
- Lecture on topics including e-learning, teaching strategies and research methods

**Manager/Assistant Professor:** St. Cloud State University—St. Cloud, Minnesota

- August 2004 to April 2008
- Led the workgroup Statistical Consulting and Research Support & managed \$20,000 budget
- Led research group investigating use of Desire2Learn by 120 professors over 3 years
- Taught classes and workshops focusing on e-learning and instructional design

**Instructional Design Contractor:** PLATO Learning—Bloomington, Minnesota

- May 2004 to July 2004
- Wrote design documents for computer-based lessons, teaching adults remedial math
- Advised on teaching and evaluation methods for computer-based lessons

**Instructional Designer/Adjunct Professor:** Walden University—Minneapolis, Minnesota

- August 1999 to September 2003
- Assisted teaching staff, who resided in multiple states and countries, in developing distance education classes offered exclusively over the Web
- Taught online post-graduate classes, describing effective use of technology for learning

**Teaching Assistant/Instructional Designer:** Indiana University—Bloomington, Indiana

- January 1996 to August 1999
- Advised corporate, university, and K-12 clients on the use of learning technology
- Worked with a variety of research teams analyzing the effects of learning technology

**Instructional Designer:** Northwest Airlines Flight Training & Development—Minneapolis

- August 1993 to November 1995
- Developed computer-based instruction for pilot training
- Created lessons for Annual Recurrent Training with the assistance of ground instructors

**Computer Programmer/Instructional Designer** University of Minnesota—Minneapolis

- September 1992 to July 1993
- Designed and developed computer-based instruction in the School of Education, the School of Journalism and the School of Veterinary Medicine

## **Publications**

### **A Three Year Analysis of CMS Use in Resident University Courses**

- Malikowski, S. R. (2010-11). A Three Year Analysis of CMS Use in Resident University Courses. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 39, 1, 65-85.

### **Factors Related to Breadth of Use in Course Management Systems**

- Malikowski, S. R. (2008). Factors related to breadth of use in course management systems. *Internet and Higher Education*, 11(2), 81-86.

### **A Model for Research into Course Management Systems**

- Malikowski, S. R., Thompson, M. E., & Theis, J. G. (2007) A model for research into course management systems: Bridging technology and learning theory. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 36, (2).

### **External Factors Associated With Adopting A CMS in Resident College Courses**

- Malikowski, S., Thompson, M., & Theis, J. G. (2006). External factors associated with adopting a CMS in resident college courses. *Internet & Higher Education*, 9(3), 163-174.

### **Using Web-Based Cases to Enhance, Extend and Transform Preservice Teacher Training: Two Years in Review**

- Bonk, C. J., Daytner, K., Daytner, G., Dennen, V., & Malikowski, S. (2001). Using Web-based cases to enhance, extend and transform preservice teacher training: Two years in review. *Computers in the Schools*, 18(1), 189-211.

### **Holy Cow: Case Based Conferencing On The Web With Preservice Teachers**

- Bonk, C., Angeli, C., Malikowski, S., & Supplee, L. (2001). Holy cow: Scaffolding case based conferencing on the web with preservice teachers. *Education at a Distance*, 15(8).

### **We're in Title to Dream: Envisioning a Community of Practice**

- Bonk, C. J., Hara, H., Dennen, V., Malikowski, S., & Supplee, L. (2000). We're in TITLE to dream: Envisioning a community of practice, "The Intraplanetary Teacher Learning Exchange." *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 3(1), 25-39.

### **Web-Based Case Conferencing for Preservice Teacher Education**

- Bonk, C. J., Malikowski, S., Angeli, C., & East, J. (1998). Web-based case conferencing for preservice teacher education: Electronic discourse from the field, *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 19(3), 267-304.

### **Interacting in History's Largest Library: Web-Based Conferencing Tools**

- Malikowski, S. R. (1997). Interacting in history's largest library: Web-based conferencing tools. In B. Kahn (Ed.), *Web-Based Instruction* (pp. 283-294). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Educational Technology Publications.

### **Invited Reviewer for Research Manuscripts**

The journals listed below have asked me to review manuscripts submitted for publication.

- **Journal of Educational Computing Research**, Published by Baywood
- **Internet in Higher Education**, Published by Elsevier
- **Instructional Science**, Published by Springer

## **Conference Presentations**

### **Increasing the Use of Interactive E-Learning Features**

- 2014 Moodle Moot Conference—Edinburgh, Scotland

### **Student comparisons of tutors, Google, Wikipedia and other resources**

- 2009 Association for Medical Education in Europe Conference—Malaga, Spain

### **Factors affecting VLE use over 3 years: 2005, 2006 and 2007**

- 2009 ALT-C—Manchester, England

### **What Colleges Get from D2L and How to Get More**

- 2007 Desire2Learn Users Conference—Duluth, Minnesota USA

### **Factors Related to Breadth of CMS Use**

- 2007 American Educational Research Association Conference—Chicago, Illinois USA

### **How Course Management Systems are Used and Factors Affecting Use**

- 2006 University of Wisconsin Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning—Madison, Wisconsin USA

### **Successfully Starting All Students: Small and Large Efforts to Prepare Students**

- 2005 University of Wisconsin Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning—Madison, Wisconsin USA

### **Recommendations for Addressing Drop-Out in Online, Teacher Education Courses**

- 2005 Conference for the Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education—Phoenix, Arizona USA

### **Online Learning: Good News, Bad News and One Orientation Course**

- 1999 Topics in Distance Learning, Purdue University Summer Workshop Series—Calumet, Indiana USA

### **Online Mentoring of Pre-Service Teachers with Web-Based Cases, Conversations and Collaborations: Two Years in Review**

- 1999 American Educational Research Association Conference—Montreal, Canada

### **Case-Based "Conferencing on the Web" with Pre-Service Teachers**

- 1998 American Educational Research Association Conference—San Diego, USA

### **Writing on the Internet: Creating a Space, Supporting Interaction and Integrating Advanced Technology**

- 1998 American Educational Research Association Conference—San Diego, USA

### **A Case-Based Electronic Learning Environment for Pre-Service Teacher Education**

- 1998 Society for IT and Teacher Education—Washington, DC, USA



## ***Funded Grant Proposals***

**Received £200,000 (\$330,000) grant** from the Joint Information Systems Committee in 2008

- Developed and implemented virtual patients at St. George's, University of London

**Received \$6,500 grant** from St. Cloud State University in 2007

- Hired students to assist with longitudinal research

**Received \$14,000 grant** from Indiana University School of Graduate Studies in 1999

- Funded my doctoral research

**Received \$120,000 grant** from North Central Research Laboratory in 1998

- Developed and delivered workshops describing how to create Web-based distance learning

## ***Education***

**Doctor of Philosophy in Education**, Major: Instructional Systems Technology

- Indiana University: Bloomington, Indiana
- Dissertation Topic: Case Study of an Online Orientation Course
- Graduation: August 2004
- Minor: Library Science
- Grade Average: 3.7 on a 4.0 scale

**Master of Education**, Major: Curriculum and Instructional Systems

- University of Minnesota: Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Graduation: August 1998
- Grade Average: 3.8 on a 4.0 scale

**Bachelor of Arts in English**, Major: Technical Communication

- St. Cloud State University: St. Cloud, Minnesota
- Graduation: March 1990
- Grade Average: 3.4 on a 4.0 scale

## ***Video-Recordings of My Work***

- Introduction to a new system for creating ambitious e-learning projects at St. Georges Medical School, which is part of the University of London
  - Full 18 minute version: [http://youtu.be/GOTIN\\_0lynA](http://youtu.be/GOTIN_0lynA)
  - Short 4 minute version: <http://youtu.be/XGtDDVp8Uyc>
- Lecture about creating effective surveys in e-learning medical education
  - Full 58 minute version: <http://youtu.be/pvF-wREFjvQ>
  - Short 5 minute version: <http://youtu.be/c0MtzZmiqJw>

## 11 APPENDIX B: GROUPS TO CONTACT FOR MARKETING

This section lists sixty-one groups that serve blind adults, in the US and UK. The list contains five categories: 1) Groups in Minnesota, 2) Groups Serving the Entire US, 3) Groups Serving London and UK, 4) Beep Baseball Teams in the US, and 5) Miscellaneous Groups. A sample of the email message I would use to contact each group is in appendix C, and a marketing plan is in section 6.5.

### Groups in Minnesota

1.	<a href="#">Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute</a>	Duluth	ckriduluthsportsandrec@allina.com
2.	<a href="#">Minnesota Millers Beep Baseball Team</a>	Rochester	minnesota@nbba.org
3.	<a href="#">Minnesota Resource Center for the Blind</a>	Faribault	mde.special-ed@state.mn.us
4.	<a href="#">Minnesota State Academy for the Blind</a>	Faribault	jdavis@msab.state.mn.us
5.	<a href="#">Minnesota State Services for the Blind</a>	St. Paul	ssb.info@state.mn.us
6.	<a href="#">MN Braille and Talking Book Library</a>	Faribault	mn.btbl@state.mn.us
7.	<a href="#">Ski for Light, Minneapolis</a>	Minneapolis	info@sfl.org
8.	<a href="#">University of Minnesota</a>	Minneapolis	vankuijk@umn.edu

### Groups Serving the Entire US

9.	<a href="#">American Council of the Blind</a>	Arlington, VA	info@acb.org
10.	<a href="#">Disabled Sports USA</a>	Rockville, MA	form@web.site
11.	<a href="#">National Beep Baseball Association</a>	Rochester, MN	secretary@nbba.org
12.	<a href="#">National Federation of the Blind, MN</a>	Minneapolis, MN	jennifer.dunnam1829@gmail.com
13.	<a href="#">National Library Service for the Blind</a>	Washington, DC	nls@loc.gov
14.	<a href="#">National Sports Center for the Disabled</a>	Denver, CO	deustace@nscd.org
15.	<a href="#">Society for the Blind</a>	Sacramento, CA	info@societyfortheblind.org
16.	<a href="#">The American Blind Skiing Foundation</a>	Schaumburg, IL	absf@absf.org
17.	<a href="#">The American Foundation for the Blind</a>	New York, NY	communications@afb.net
18.	<a href="#">US Association of Blind Athletes</a>	Colorado Springs, CO	msimpson@usaba.org

### Groups Serving London and UK

19.	<a href="#">Action for Blind People</a>	London	actionlondonse@actionforblindpeople.org.uk
20.	<a href="#">BlindAid</a>	London	enquiries@blindaid.org.uk
21.	<a href="#">British Blind Sport</a>	Warwickshire	info@britishblindsport.org.uk
22.	<a href="#">CLARITY</a>	London	form@web.site
23.	<a href="#">Greater London Fund for the Blind</a>	London	info@glfb.org.uk
24.	<a href="#">Metro Blind Sports</a>	London	roy.smith@metroblindsport.org
25.	<a href="#">Royal London Society for Blind People</a>	London	enquiries@rlsb.org.uk
26.	<a href="#">Royal National Institute of Blind People</a>	London	helpline@rnib.org.uk

**Beep Baseball Teams in the US**

27. Albany Vipers	albany@nbba.org
28. Athens Timberwolves	athens@nbba.org
29. Atlanta Eclipse	atlanta@nbba.org
30. Austin Blackhawks	austin@nbba.org
31. Bayou City Heat	bayoucity@nbba.org
32. BCS Outlaws	outlaws@nbba.org
33. Boston Renegades	boston@nbba.org
34. California Rays	california@nbba.org
35. Carolina Warriors	carolina@nbba.org
36. Chicago Comets	chicagocomets@comcast.net
37. Cleveland Scrappers	cleveland@nbba.org
38. Colo Springs Falcons	cosprings@nbba.org
39. Colorado Storm	colorado@nbba.org
40. Columbus Midnight Stars	columbus@nbba.org
41. Indianapolis Thunder	indy@nbba.org
42. Iowa Reapers	iowa@nbba.org
43. Lone Star Roadrunners	lonestar@nbba.org
44. Long Island Bombers	li@nbba.org
45. New Jersey Lightning	nj@nbba.org
46. Pennsylvania Wolfpack	pa@nbba.org
47. RHI X-Treme	xtreme@nbba.org
48. Seattle South King Sluggers	seattle@nbba.org
49. Southwest Slammers	southwest@nbba.org
50. Spokane Lion Pride	spokane@nbba.org
51. St. Louis Firing Squad Beep Baseball	stl@nbba.org
52. Stephen Austin University Lumberjacks	sau@nbba.org
53. Tyler Tigers	tyler@nbba.org
54. Wichita Sonics	wichita@nbba.org

**Miscellaneous Groups**

55. <a href="#">Adaptive Sports Association</a>	Durango, CO	info@asadurango.com
56. <a href="#">Black Hills Ski For Light</a>	Rapid City, SD	bhskiforlight@gmail.com
57. <a href="#">Blind Skier's Edge</a>	Breckenridge, CO	form@web.site
58. <a href="#">Blind Sports Radio</a>		form@website
59. <a href="#">Discovery Blind Sports</a>	Kirkwood CA	discoveryblindsports@yahoo.com
60. <a href="#">Maine Adaptive Sports &amp; Recreation</a>	Newry, ME	info@maineadaptive.org
61. <a href="#">SE Wisconsin Adaptive Ski Program</a>	Milwaukee WI	form@web.site

## 12 APPENDIX C: SAMPLE EMAIL MESSAGE FOR MARKETING

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I could use the message below to contact groups involved with blind skiing, but if this proposal is accepted, I would apply suggestions from MHS Press. In any case, the message would be customized to suit the interests of other groups that serve blind adults, although the fundamental structure would be similar. For example, groups working with blind baseball would receive a message that gives examples of how blind baseball is used in the book, but the message would still list simple marketing options and request a brief telephone conversation.

Subject Line: Question about Blind Skiing

Hello [Contact Name],

My brother, Mike, used to volunteer with downhill ski races for blind adults. In those races, he and other volunteers shook tambourines by the gates, so the skiers would know where to turn. Mike still likes to joke that, “You may think the racers had it hard, but we had the tough part, since we were standing on a freezing ski slope with blind racers headed right for us.”

Mike lost his sight when he was 26, and I’ve always respected the way he deals with it. Because of that respect, I wrote a book based on his experience, called *Walking Out of the Dark*. I’d like to briefly describe the book and ask if you’d be interested in talking sometime.

Parts of the book are sad because it shows the challenges of blindness, but other parts are funny and surprising. One surprise involves romance, and other surprises involve blind sports, like skiing or beep baseball. If you’d like to learn more about the book, please visit the blog for it. It’s at <http://walkingoutofthedark.wordpress.com>. The site contains a description of the entire book, chapter summaries, and audio clips of me reading excerpts.

If you’re interested, I’d like to have a brief telephone conversation, with you or someone else at [Organization Name]. In this conversation, we could discuss options for working together. With some options, I could:

- Include updates about [Organization Name] in the blog for the book.
- Mention [Organization Name] when I read segments of the book.
- Provide free entertainment at one of your social events, by reading and discussing a segment of the book that shows an exciting moment in a ski race.

Please let me know if you or someone else at [Organization Name] would like to talk. In that case, I’ll tell you when I’m available. Thank you for considering my request.

Cordially,

Steven R. Malikowski, PhD

<http://uk.linkedin.com/pub/steven-malikowski/14/3b6/8b3/>

PS Here is an excerpt from the book that describes blind skiing. This excerpt occurs during a ski race. Mike is standing next to gate 3. The name of the skier is Sharon.

Mike looked up the slope but couldn't see Sharon. He squinted, waited, and heard the faint sound of a tambourine, from gate 1. He looked at the source of the sound. A blurry dot appeared and moved through the white scene. The dot turned, and the faint ringing stopped. In a few seconds, a clearer ringing started, from gate 2. The moving dot was larger and faster. "Jesus Christ, she's going that fast and can't see? Did she forget that she's blind?" He could now make out the racer's shape, and how it shifted from tucked down to angled out, when she shoved her skis into the turn above him.

A nagging feeling told him to stop watching and start thinking about when to shake his tambourine. The ringing stopped, so she would be coming to his gate soon. He watched carefully and waited for the moment to start shaking his tambourine.

He was surprised at how soon she reached that point and more surprised at how fast she went past him. "Hey, great job!" Mike called out without even knowing he said it. He barely remembered to stop shaking his tambourine.

"Wow, that was pretty cool." He said to himself while watching her ski to the next gate. The sound of the next tambourine started, followed by the sound of Sharon's skis cutting into the snow. He focused less on her as she became a faint dot and as he heard cheers from the crowd at the finish line.