



The 2017 Accessibility Conference:
**Becoming a Catalyst
for Inclusion**
May 30 and 31, 2017 University of Guelph



A Day in the Life of the Blind

Transcript from the 2017 Accessibility Conference

A Day in the Life of the Blind, Keith Bundy, Siteimprove

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Transcripts are available courtesy of [Ai-Media](#) who provided live captioning at the 2017 [Accessibility Conference](#).

Note: The following text is taken from a live transcription of the speaker's presentation and, as such, may not be wholly accurate. Please contact the speaker first before publicly attributing remarks to them based on this transcript.

SPEAKER:

Good morning everybody.

Keith Bundy is a consultant with Siteimprove. He is completely blind. He received his degrees from various universities.

If you have any questions at the end, can you please put up your hands and I will run the microphone over to you so that the captioners can caption your questions as well.

Without further ado, I will turn things over to Keith.

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KEITH BUNDY:

Good morning, everybody.

Can everybody hear me?

It's a privilege to be back at Guelph this morning. I always like to start with a little quote from Steve Martin.

I like to start with this quote from one of his movies. "I was born a poor blind child in the hills of southern Indiana."

That is actually true! I was born in a very impoverished situation, and it has been quite an experience, growing up there and moving on with life, and that is what I want to talk to you about today – how I do things on a day to day basis as a totally blind person. Hopefully you are going to gain a better understanding of the barriers faced by people who are blind.

I was born totally blind. It means I see hardly anything. I can see some light and dark, but basically I see absolutely nothing.

When I was born, but in the late 1950s, they did know what caused this blindness thing. They told my parents, "All right, guys, you have got this guy. He is totally blind. Just have one and be happy with it."

My parents listened to the good doctors and I was an only child.

I grew up in a sighted world, in some impoverished conditions. I learned to do things educationally very well. My condition was diagnosed as congenital malformation of the brain.

Now, what that simply means is the area that tells me what I'm seeing doesn't work. It's not there. So I'm probably seeing things...

Anyway, congenital malformation of the brain means I don't know what I'm seeing. My friends will say it goes further, to some other issues. Basically, it just means that the vision centre of my brain didn't form.

I did receive a mainstream education with normal classes. All of my peers pretty much were

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sighted. Except for the first couple of years it was normal, except that I learned Braille.

Out in the job market, I have a Masters degree. This was back in 1980, before the AVA appears. I look for jobs. I knock on doors. I make phone calls. I spoke to people and our standard line was, "we don't have a job that a blind person can do."

I have a Masters. "Well, you are overqualified."

So, I was unable to find a job. A lot has changed in the last 35 years. I want to tell you about who I am today.

First of all, I have a wonderful wife named Peggy. If any of you have watched the comedy, Married with Children, yes, she is named Peg Bundy. She's nothing like that individual, but that is her name!

I'm a father of four, and it took a while to get the first job, but thankfully I've been employed continuously for almost 36 years.

After a variety of jobs. I have been a counsellor at a university, where I worked for 16 years. One of the things people can't believe I also do is I'm a public address announcer for a sports team in Dakota.

So, that's another thing that I've been able to do in the last few years.

Also, I'm a motivational speaker. Basically, guys, I'm an ordinary guy. I just determined what I want to do in life and have gone out and been able to do it.

I do consider myself a blindness evangelist. Why do I call myself that? Most people don't know someone who is blind. They may have seen people walking around town with visual impairments, but most people don't know somebody who is blind well enough to talk to them.

That word "blind" has a lot of meanings. It can be totally blind, like me. It can be somebody with a significant visual impairment that affects day to day performance.

I find that most people don't know a person who is blind well enough to talk about it. My vision is to teach others about my day to day experience for somebody who is blind, and I do answer

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questions. My philosophy is that people who are blind really do need to be included in all aspects of daily life. I want to help people do that more effectively.

I'm going to give you some thoughts today that are solely my thoughts for some others who are blind might disagree, and that's OK. When we are done, hopefully we will have a bit of time for questions.

How many of you remember David Letterman?

Well, it's true that people who are blind have come a long way in the last 100 years. 100 years ago, you were blind, you would either work at a law firm or in a factory or something like that. Today you will find people who are blind in all aspects of life doing very well.

So, we are going to go with Bundy's top 10 questions that I'm asked, as a blind person. Ready? Buckle your seatbelts. I don't drive well, but hopefully we will do this well.

Question 10 – how do you get ready for work?

Well, I use old school stuff and some new school stuff. My iPhone provides the alarm that I need. How many of you realise that every iPhone has a screen reader on it? It has a screen reader called Voice-over. I use it religiously. I set it at night. The alarm goes off in the morning and my first thought, contrary to public opinion, is not, "I'm blind, how am I going to cope with today?" It is, "Lord, why did that alarm go off so early?"

I have also learned that being organised is the key to success. When you are blind, you are either going to learn to put things where you will find them or you are going to be very disorganised. I know where everything in my department is. A lot of getting ready for work as a touchy-feely experience.

I use a regular razor and then I feel to see if I have got all the whiskers, that kind of thing. I feel to see if the hair is clean.

What we can wear can be a very interesting challenge. There are basically three ways people who are blind can organise their clothes.

One is you have a personal organiser. I'm happily married. This last year, though, I have lived on

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my own for a year while working on Siteimprove. My wife could organise my clothes. I've also got an app. I take a picture of my shirt and it will tell me what colour it is. Yeah, there's all kinds of cool apps.

If I want to know if light or dark socks go better with these pants, I can send a picture to this place, send a text to it, and a volunteer will send back a text or message letting me know. You guys can do that if you want. You can sign up at Bespecular.

Another one is called Be My Eyes. It has just got some press on YouTube. You can contact somebody live and direct, immediately, and find out what of the answers they need.

In my case, the other day, I took a new shaving back to a hotel and lo and behold I forgot to organise the difference between the shampoo and whatever else, so I'm sitting in his hotel going, "oh, my God, what am I going to do?" I thought of Be My Eyes. I was able to organise things perfectly well.

A third ways to cut little slits in your clothes. Everything with one slit goes together, everything with two slits goes together... It is pretty cool.

That's how I get ready for work.

Question nine – what about your guide dog?

Well, the dog down here is Mercury. Has everybody seen him? Merc, get up here. Everybody see him now? Let me lead him up front.

Come on here and say hi to the good people at Guelph. That's Mercury. He is 7.5 years old from Guide Dogs for the Blind.

He was actually trained in Boring, Oregon. I'm not picking on Oregon. That is the name of the suburb near to Portland. He was trained there. Guide dogs are trained initially by puppy raisers for about a year. They teach them how to behave in public. That is why he has not been around meeting all of you already this morning. He has been trained better than that. He loves people, though.

Then they are trained for 2-4 weeks in guide dog work. Then they are trained for two weeks

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with their owner.

I am responsible for his feeding and care and also picking up the poop. Ever wondered how a blind guy picks up dog do?

You can tell by the pull on the leash. You reach down and touches back to see which direction he is squatting in. You take the little doggy bag out, you go to where his back is, you bend over, and you go around in a circle, make sure you pick it up, tie it up like that. You never touch the stuff. Then you are good. But that's my job, every day.

The guide dog leads me around obstacles. He stops at curbs. He does not know where we are going. I have to teach him that. It is my job to teach him that.

People ask me two other questions – how does he fly on a plane? Right between my feet. He is good about that. Airlines allow guide dog to do that. And then they ask – can I pet him? Well, every school has its own philosophy. So, you always want to ask that question. Can I pet your dog? In my case, if the harness isn't in my hand, you are safe to pet Mercury.

Question eight – how do you know who you are talking to? We have all done that, haven't we? My wife asks and I say, I don't know, I don't know who they are.

Most of you use face recognition. If I know you fairly well, I will recognise your voice. There are exceptions to that, especially when I'm tired after 10 hour flight. Kevin, my co-worker and I have flown in from Denmark a few weeks ago. Kevin said he would pick me up off the plane. We walked off together since I was riding home with him.

I got on with another guy, and so we are going to get off the plane and this guy comes by and says, "hello, buddy, are you ready to go?" I thought it was the guy from Wisconsin and I said, "No, I got a friend coming to pick me up off the plane."

I wait and wait and wait and finally the guy comes and says, "there's nobody else on the plane."

I got off, and thankfully Kevin is a good guy. He had come back and waited for me. I had not recognised his voice. Occasionally, that will happen when you are tired or whatever. Usually, it is voice recognition.

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Another thing that can help is a product you can see on display here called Or-Cam. You can look at somebody and it will have them in their database for some if I have met somebody and I knew I was going to see them again, I would put them in the database, and when they go by, their device would say their name to me. Cool feature.

If you don't know who someone is not, it is always easy to say your name.

Question seven – what about money?

Well, what about money? We all need more of it, right? Money is easy to identify as long as it is coinage. They are easy to identify by the shapes and sizes and edges. Bills pose more of a problem, especially in the US. In Canada, your currency is awesome. Have you looked at it? There are the little briefings of Braille dots.

In the US, that is not the case. I'm going to pull out a bill here. You can see what this is here, right? Don't tell me. I will tell you. You can touch it all day. You won't find out what it is.

It is the same size, whether it's a one, five, 10, 20, 50 or 100. No way of this distinction. Shamefully, with the only main country in the world that doesn't have accessible currency. In Nicaragua, they have it. We don't.

So, we either trust people or we have a little app. There's a free one called i-Note. You can run your iPhone camera over the page, over the bill, and it will tell you exactly what it is.

I happen to know this is a dollar. Once I know what a bill is, I have a folding system in my wallet. If it is straight like this, it's a dollar. If it is a five, I fold it like that. 10 is like that. 20 years like that. If it is a 50 or 100, I spend it.

(Laughter)

No, there are other ways. I just don't have those a lot.

That is the money thing. I love your currency appear in Canada. I commend your government and the people who have worked to make it so accessible.

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Question six – how do you read printed material?

OK, several ways. Printed material now is much easier to read than it was when I was younger. The first machine that came out that read printed material cost \$38,000. It was big enough to take up most of this desk. Only rich people like Stevie Wonder could have those.

Finally, they have come out with more portable stuff to help people. Today, you can scan something with your phone and read it very smoothly with a couple of apps. I use one called KMFB reader. It is very good. Sometimes I ask people to send me an email, but people in my apartment sometimes leave notes, things like that.

I always read those with that.

You can point your finger, take a picture and it will read it to you, word for word.

There are good ways of reading. Of course, there's always sighting for distance if you want a reader. There's no app that can read handwriting. They are working on it, but they are not very good at it yet.

Question five – what is your favourite way to read?

I'm a big believer in Braille. You may hear it is dying. I contend that it is increasing. With technology, Braille displays can make it much more affordable. They look pretty expensive.

The one on the desk costs about \$2500. But they are constantly making them cheaper, and probably in the next month they are coming out with one in the States that costs \$500. It will be very affordable.

I think every child with a serious visual impairment needs to learn Braille. Why? Because I have lots of friends that grew up with low vision, and they are so angry that nobody forced them to learn Braille. At this point, their vision has deteriorated, print today is a bigger challenge than before, and, of course, if you don't learn something as a kid, you probably won't. So they wish they had.

Braille is more affordable. You don't have to end up getting these books produced. You can buy one display and download almost anything to read it.

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There can be a book coming out in Kindle format today and I can be reading it today. That is something we haven't had until recent years.

The National Federation of the Blind in the US says that 70% of the blind are unemployed. But 80% of those who are employed use Braille every day. I would concur.

I have apps for audio books. I have been known to use Audible. Audio reading is good, but if it is something detailed or something that I'm just doing because I have time, I like to read Braille. I read about 250 words a minute in Braille. I can go about 400 in audio.

Question four – how do I know if someone who is blind needs to be helped?

Well, the best way to find out is simply to ask.

Most people who are blind are going to be very nice. If you ask if they need help, they will tell you no, if they don't. Sometimes they don't need or want help. But sometimes everybody needs a little help.

They will tell you, yes or no. Sometimes we just get tired, and things we would do ordinarily – if you ask us if we need help, you don't know what kind of day we have had. If it has been an exhausting day or week, we might welcome the help.

One of the things I like to do, when I have my dog or white cane, when I going to a noisy restaurant, I like to use my sighted guide.

The thing about independence is it doesn't necessarily mean doing everything by yourself. It means you are doing what you want to do, when you want to do it, in the way that is most convenient for you. Sometimes it just means walking the dog and doing whatever. I'm not afraid to do anything by myself. In a restaurant, I will ask the waiter or the hostess for a guide sometimes. The best thing to do is ask if somebody needs help.

There is a law that I like to call Bundy's law. Listen carefully. Inevitably, when I need help, there's nobody within 5 kilometres.

When I donate, there's always somebody asking.

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I flew into a European hotel. Everybody was tired. I went into this little hotel room and I am looking for a closet. I circled that room about 10 times looking for a closet. I tried doors that won't open looking for a closet. I finally conclude, after half an hour, this place is crazy. There's no closet.

Of course, everybody is taking a nap so I don't want to bother anybody and there's nobody to ask for help.

Later that day I go back to the room for something. I just move my arm up and I bump into four hangers on a rod that I never would have done on my own. So, Bundy's law. Nobody within 5 kilometres if you need help.

But it is always good to ask. Make the best of those things and laugh at them.

Number three – are your other senses better since you are blind? Biologically, no. But they are more developed. I will hear things that most of you won't hear, not because my hearing is better. In fact, I'm losing some hearing. Sometimes I even wear hearing aids. But I will still hear things that you don't hear, just because I've gotten into practice of using this.

It is that the person who is blind has the super senses, like Superman or somebody like that, Wonder Woman or whatever. But it is really not true. It is just more developed.

Now let's talk about frustrations. Another question I'm often asked. What frustrates you the most about being blind?

Five particular things. One is ignorance of others. There are still people who believe people who are blind are non-functional in other ways. How many times do I go into a restaurant and the waiter will be talking normally to everybody else and he will come to me and say (shouts), "What would you like for lunch?"

My favourite – they will look at my friend, and then at me, and they say to my friend and say, "What does he want?"

That is a frustration.

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People still believe blind people are extremely handicapped. They still believe blind people can't do things fully, still believe blind people can't hold jobs. You can't say that legally nowadays but there are still a lot of people who believe that a blind person can't do a job. There are people that think I'm remarkable just because I go out and speak in public and held a full-time job and have held a job for 36 years.

But why is it remarkable? It is the ignorance of others.

The next one is being able to drive. I have driven both a car and a semi-tractor, and on a real streets and highways. Nobody was killed, but I'm not able to drive legally and safely.

My wife had a little situation in January where she had some health issues and needed surgery. Had I been able to drive that 300 kilometres to where she lives, I could have seen her within 3-4 hours. Instead, I had to make a decision. It is serious enough for me to pay 150 bucks for a round bus ticket tomorrow, or do I just wait?

But that is what I deal with when I can't drive legally and safely. So, yeah, that is a frustration. I will be the first person to try a driverless car. People say, "Aren't you scared you will be killed?" Not really. There are always pioneers.

I don't have a death wish, but I will try a driverless car. I will be first in line.

Other frustrations – having to ask for assistance that my peers may not need. Guys, sometimes, let me just be real honest and frank with you – sometimes, it gets old, asking for help.

I know that people are more than willing to help, but sometimes you just get tired of it. It is tough. But you learn to deal with it. It is either I get this help or I can't do what I want to do. Eventually, if you are on the right track or what I believe is the right track, you get the assistance and people are happy to help you. But it is a frustration.

Another one – this is a biggie – public restaurants. I tell my wife and kids I'm running for Congress in the US. They said, why? I said, I have one goal in mind, and I want to pass the ABBA – the accessible bathrooms for the blind act.

First of all, don't take this wrong. We need accessible bathrooms for wheelchair user. I'm fully glad we have them, aren't you?

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But let me ask you something – if you are a guy, where is the urinal in each bathroom? It is in a different place. How about the sinks? How do they work? Where's the darn soap? And the last one – where are the paper towels? There's no consistency! We are accessible for some disabilities, but they are totally inaccessible for people who are blind.

Here's the other thing – in the United States, we do a good job. Here, not all times are the bathrooms labelled. That can be interesting. I'm used to going up and feeling the men and women labels and going in. Here, I dare not.

Yesterday I went to one because I heard a toilet flush. I thought, oh, man, is it a he or a she toilet? I thought, know what? I'm going to wait until someone comes out. Fortunately it was a guy.

The last one – there's not much you can do but accept this. I will never see, barring a miracle, my wife, my son, my daughters, and my grandchildren. It doesn't bother you to often, but once in a while it does. Graduations, weddings, things like that. But you learn to deal with it.

So, now, that question – question number one. Come on, drumroll... Here it is!

What can I do to include someone who is blind?

Let me give you some cool clues. Number one, talk to them like you talk to everybody else. We have interests, the same as you do. We are not preoccupied by our blindness. I love baseball, football, anything with a ball or a puck.

Talk to me about them. I'm just like you are. Talk to me about yard work. I have to do some at home. Not good at it, but I have to do it.

Talk to me about raising kids. I might give you some advice if you are younger. I have looked through four of them.

I watch the same TV shows that you watch. Don't be afraid to use terms like see, watch.

I have had sighted people be offended because I say, "See you later." How dare you be offended? I use that line all the time!

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How is this going to be for a person who is blind? What kind of help can I offer or what can we do to make sure this is a smoother experience? A lot of times, making a person who is blind feel included is simply a matter of mindfulness and thinking about what you are doing.

I'm going to skip the next slide because I want to come back to it. Right now, I want to show this last slide here.

Really, for blindness, guys, it's all about attitude. People who are blind need to develop an attitude that is a can-do attitude. Attitude basically says, "how can I do this?" Not, "can I do this?"

I don't believe in the word "impossible". Looking at me today, you will never believe this. When I was younger, I used to climb rocks. I'm talking 150-200 feet up in the air. If I tried today, I would die. I proposed to my wife on a rocky ledge of a creek, about 200 feet above the ground.

You develop a can-do attitude. It is not good to sit around and feel sorry for yourself. It does no good. It accomplishes nothing. There are plenty of people who do it. I did it when I was younger, found that nobody would come to my pity party. I decided I needed an attitude change. Thank God that happened. My kids are blown away, because when I started working at Siteimprove last year I said I would travel worldwide. My kids are just blown away, not because I'm doing it as a blind person, but just because I'm willing to do it and go out.

I will be who knows where else by the end of the year?

Those with vision need to learn acceptance and inclusion of people who are blind. Be mindful of how you include those who are visually impaired. Expect blind people to function like other people. That's what I like about travelling with Kevin. He doesn't feel too sorry for me. He expects me to do things on my own. Guys, that's the best thing you can do for a blind person. We are all human beings in this room, right?

For most of us, if somebody will do something for us, what do we do? We let them do it. It's really easy to let your expectations down and go, oh, man, Kevin is going to take care of me and we are going to be all good and fuzzy and warm, and I don't have to do a thing for myself. That's the worst thing you can do for a blind person.

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If I ask Kevin for help, he will do it in a heartbeat. The bottom line is, he expects me to function normally. That is what is really good in a situation with blindness. You are going to get what you expect. If you expect abnormality and weirdness, that's what you will get. If you expect normal functioning, you are most likely going to get that.

Remember – low expectations are the most dangerous thing for blind people. It is all about attitude.

All right, next question – how does a blind person... How do I use a computer as a blind person? I'm going to do a little demo, and then, if we have time, we are going to open up for some questions. You should be seeing a website now on the screen. I'm going to turn on my speech.

Blind people use screen readers on computers and smart technologies like iPhones. I use two screen readers, one called Jaws for Windows, and a free screen reader called NVDA. It is very good. I also use Voice-over on the Mac and the iPhone.

I'm going to do a quick demo for how those of us who are blind go through a website. I have picked a very accessible one. You will see which one it is. That is only partly because I am in Canada. I did a study a few years ago for a presentation, finding some of the worst and best websites, and this was the best one I found. So, kudos. I know you have got some people here.

Hey, dude. You want to move so I can use the computer? Right there. Thank you.

There are several ways you can browse the web. First of all, here's the speed I usually work out.

You guys all understand that? All right, let me slow it down to your place. The reason I know this is because most people prefer this.

That a little better? Yeah. Now, I can read through this line by line. This is where accessibility comes in. When you open a web page, you can visually stand that puppy, right? If you are blind, that is hard to do. I can feel that screen all day and I'm not going to get anything out of it. I can feel my Braille display and I get one line of Braille.

How can a blind person scan a webpage? You hear a lot of talk in accessibility about proper semantic markup, including heading tags. Guess what? They are how people who are blind can

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scan the page.

Let's do this a minute. They tell me that they have changed yours and you can watch this. I don't know that for a fact. There's accessibility links.

All right.

Featured content.

See how I can go right down those headings and scan the page?

I can go to the top of the page, do a one...

That's the first one.

That is one way a blind person can browse the web. Another way that is helpful is that a person who is blind can bring up a list of links.

Now, you can see all those links up there in a list format.

Do you understand a bit of why we don't like "click here" and "read more"?

If this is my way to choose to browse... Doesn't get me any context. It just gives me the links, the text labels.

That's good on this page. Some pages are not so good. That is good on this page.

Sometimes who are blind, they will look specifically at graphics on a page, believe it or not. So, you can do this. Pretty good description of that graphic.

See they have got their graphics with the alt tabs?

You can also tap between elements on the page. We will just use "skip to main content". That will get us past all the navigation bars.

If I want to read an article, I can just hit enter on a link. It will get me to this article. And then I

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can read the article.

See how it reads there?

Those are just some of the reasons why accessibility is important. I know that we are running out of time here. I don't even know what time it is? Let's see.

I have got a couple of minutes. We have got time for just a couple of questions if you have questions you would like to ask about some of this. Any questions?

SPEAKER:

Hi, there. My name is Julie and I work for a municipality. How can we make a washroom accessible for you?

KEITH BUNDY:

Here's what you can do. First of all, make sure it is labelled with Braille labels, men or women.

The other things you can do, in your municipality, if people could know, the sink and dryer and urinal is going to be here, here and here. That is really helpful. If I know where things are in a restroom, it's so much better. Nobody likes going around touching the tops of urinals, things like that.

It takes work and effort, but if you have consistency in your municipality, it makes it better.

SPEAKER:

Thanks for your workshop this morning. I just wanted to ask a question – you are a power user in both Mac and PC base. Just for some of our younger users, just moving towards Macs and Voice-over...

Sometimes Voice-over is not as accessible here in Ontario, so we have got a different system of getting them their materials, just downloading them for them, to make it easier.

Are you finding that there is a cultural shift for younger users just to use Macs as opposed to other types of being power users in kind of a more traditional platforms?

KEITH BUNDY:

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I think that shift wants to occur, and I see it in quite a few people. I'm going to make a really strange statement – the Mac is very accessible. We were the first computer to come out with their own screen reader. But Apple programs are the only ones that are guaranteed to be accessible. So you find a lot of people go to the Mac and they are still running a Windows virtual machine, because the Windows environment is still a bit more accessible than the Mac environment for the blind.

I think it is a shift that wants to take place was of the Mac is more stable in a lot of ways and a lot of people really prefer the Mac but they are finding that Windows interface in a lot of cases.

That's a good question, too. Do we have time for one more?

SPEAKER:

I'm nervous to ask this question but I don't know how to frame it...

KEITH BUNDY:

No problem.

SPEAKER:

How sacred is the cane to you?

The reason I ask is because there seems to be technologies that are slowly coming up that either add or augment the cane. I have done some as a hobby, nothing serious, but the feedback has been that you don't touch the cane. It is sacred and traditional, is ours, and something we are proud of.

Just wanted to know your thoughts on that.

KEITH BUNDY:

Some people feel that way. I do not. To me, the cane is a tool and I'm more than willing to expand my mobility horizons. I can't wait to get my hands on some of these devices.

The cane is very useful. Mercury will be my last guide dog. That is not because I don't like guide dogs but because I'm getting older and slower. I will be the first to embrace more ability tools with him or with the cane. It is all about making the environment as safe as we can.

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I don't care how much you love the cane but it is not going to find an overhead. You're walking down the street... I'm a tall guy. It can't tell me where the overhead cable is.

I saw something the other day called a buzz clip. Anyway, I'm going to get one of those because it is supposed to let you know about overheads or signs, things that I have issues with. I'm all for that.

Some blind people – a friend of mine and I like to call one organisation the Religion of the White Cane. I respect that viewpoint, but I'm not there.

Good question. I want to thank you guys for having me here at Guelph. Thanks for coming.

(Applause)

SPEAKER:

Thank you so much for that, Keith, and thank you to everyone for coming to the session.

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