

Brainy 'Boris' helps blind read

The most significant development for the blind since Braille has come to the University of Ottawa in the form of Boris, the talking computer, reports Margaret Munro in *The Citizen*, September 20, 1979.

The machine can read everything from magazines to highly technical manuscripts and means "real freedom" for the blind, Dr. Gerald Neufeld of the university's linguistics department said.

The computer, which resembles a photocopy machine, scans the type after the book is placed face down. It requires manual attention when the scanner hits pictures or symbols such as graphics or handwriting.

Having struggled through his years at university as a blind student, Mr. Neufeld speaks from experience when he says "the reading computers represent the most significant development for the blind since Braille".

"They give you independence," said Mr. Neufeld, who has been listening to Boris continually since its installation last month. "I used to read when readers were available and if they had to go home at three in the afternoon, well that was too bad."

"With Boris I can read at three in the morning if I feel like it," he said, adding that the computers would probably prove most valuable for professionals and students swamped in paperwork.

The price of reading-freedom is steep, however: \$25,000 plus the ability to

understand machines like Boris, which has a nasal monotone voice.

The computer not only reads the pages served up for consumption, but also peppers a passage with beeps and lines like "can see no next line" which signals the need for push-button attention.

The machine is the first of its sort in Canada and will be made available to blind students and professionals by appointment. The Canadian National Institute for the Blind in Toronto is purchasing one of the devices from Kurzweil Computer Products, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Clothing designs for handicapped in new book

Handicapped people need attractive clothing, easy to put on and take off, that meets their functional needs, yet conforms in appearance to peer-group standards and fashion trends. Often, the only way they can replenish their wardrobes is to sew their own clothes, or have them made specially.

Patterns for such clothes were hard to come by until University of Alberta Press published Anne Kernaleguen's book, *Clothing Designs for the Handicapped*. Ms. Kernaleguen, chairman of the department of clothing and textiles at the University of Alberta, admits that the problem of commercial production of this clothing is understandable.

"Manufacturers of clothing for handicapped persons are depending on a limited market and one involving extreme individual variations and needs," she explains. "What results is a restricted range of choice, and a much higher cost per item than that of goods purchased for the mass market."

Her book offers solutions for the elderly, for persons using crutches, braces or wheelchairs, for mastectomy patients and for handicapped people who are also blind, obese or pregnant.

She suggests for example, front-wrap gaucho pants for the chair-bound person; tie-on garments, drop-seat jumpsuits and jumpsuits with scooped-out seats for the person who has to be dressed while sitting in a wheelchair and car slides (to help patients in and out of the car).

There are more than 350 easy-to-follow illustrations, showing how basic patterns can be altered to satisfy special needs. Sewing instructions are given.

United States pilot rescued after crash in North

Walter Yates says it was a miracle he wasn't killed when his helicopter crashed and exploded into flames on September 2 in a remote area of northeastern British Columbia.

The 55-year-old Texan also had to make it through 14 days in the wilderness with little food and only crude shelter to tell his tale of survival.

The helicopter pilot and gold prospector said a chocolate bar, cranberries and faith in God helped him through his ordeal. He was found 68 kilometres southeast of Fort Nelson, British Columbia, by a Canadian Armed Forces aircraft.

He was reported in good condition in hospital after suffering from exposure.

Mr. Yates said he was flying south 290 kilometres to Fort St. John from Fort Nelson after a prospecting expedition in Alaska when his helicopter crashed in the trees and he escaped just before it burst into flames and exploded. The helicopter's emergency radio locator was destroyed in the fire.

But the fire that almost cost him his life turned out to be his salvation. Searchers, flying over the area, noticed scorched trees, then spotted Mr. Yates frantically waving his arms.

He said he lived on the chocolate bar and ground water in the wet, muskeg-like forest for the first two days. After that, he collected and ate cranberries.

The prospector, who had lived in the Alaskan bush for a year, said he fashioned a shelter from branches and debris from the remains of his helicopter. The branches he cut for a signal fire the first day were too wet to light, so he slept on them to dry them out.

In addition to finding food, his biggest problems were the weather and mosquitoes.

Temperatures in the area recently have dipped to nine degrees Celsius at night and Mr. Yates had only a jacket and some light clothing.

One night he had to contend with a bear that circled his primitive camp. But he managed to frighten it off by making loud noises.

But not all was lost. The survivor said he found several gold nuggets he had picked up in Alaska around the burned-out helicopter.



The Citizen

Dr. Gerald Neufeld operates 'Boris' the book-reading computer.