

Park Tower Profile

Terry Gorman, Resident With a Story to Tell

by Terry Gorman



Most long-time residents will recognize Terry, the gentleman pictured above. Slim, erect, dark glasses, either navigating alone or on the arm of his partner, Sheldon.

Terry kindly agreed to be interviewed for this profile piece but, no surprise to those of us who know him, he followed up with meticulous written responses. My notes pale by comparison, so what follows are Terry's own comments about his remarkable life these past 70 years. [Editor]

Back around the time I was born, hospitals began installing incubators to save the lives of premature babies. Administering extra oxygen was part of the treatment and until the dosage was eventually moderated, several thousand "preemies" like myself were inadvertently made blind.

The public schools in Manitowoc, Wisconsin were not equipped to teach blind children, so beginning at age six I attended Wisconsin School for the Visually Handicapped in Janesville, a boarding school about 150 miles from home. At first my dad drove me, but by age nine I was taking Greyhound buses (with a transfer in Milwaukee) for the seasonal commute to and from school. Drivers would show me to a seat in the terminals, and when I heard the departure announcement I would navigate to the area and board the bus. And, yes, I learned to ask for help occasionally!

My education in Janesville continued through twelfth grade. It was good in some surprising ways, music being one of them. Piano lessons began in third grade, violin in fifth. There followed junior and senior

orchestras, chorus, and classes in music history and piano tuning. Among my fondest memories are learning the Scottish ballad, "Barbara Allen," probably in fifth grade, and singing carols in multi-part harmony most every Christmas.

We blind kids moved freely around campus performing in plays, wrestling, roller skating, and not learning to use canes until 11th or 12th grade. By then we were acting like teenagers anywhere, raising a little hell occasionally and even nick-naming our school "Braille Jail," due to its rules and regulations!

During one summer of high school I sold Watkins Products door to door in Milwaukee, carrying a kit of sample products and ringing doorbells. It was much safer to do that sort of thing in the 1960's. The fresh air was great, as was the conversation with the women who, probably stunned, answered their doors!

I attended University of Wisconsin in Madison for two years but dropped out because I couldn't see exactly how it was preparing me for a career. Thereafter, I worked in customer service at the Milwaukee Journal/Sentinel followed by a much longer stint at a National Industries for the Blind factory in Milwaukee.

Then, when I was about 22, I heard that Wisconsin was sending blind people to Little Rock to be trained as IRS customer service representatives, I asked for and was granted that training, which turned out to be extensive -- three months for blind trainees as opposed to three weeks for sighted ones.

There being no talking calculators in 1973, I had to master the abacus (a simple one pictured).



Now I had had a bit of experience in high school with the abacus but nothing like what the Little Rock school demanded.

Tests were mostly essay questions and you had to get a perfect score to graduate. When I got a score of 92 on the final abacus test, the teacher said, "Great, you would give 8 taxpayers per day the wrong answer!" He asked the state to pay for one more month of training, and I wound up with a score of 100.

My first posting was to IRS offices in Cleveland, Ohio. But having always wanted to live in Chicago, I soon applied to be transferred and, true to form, took an overnight Greyhound bus to my morning interview. The Chicago IRS office had had a couple outstanding blind employees. That plus my solo bus ride and favorable interview got me the coveted Chicago position. I was 26 years old.

I held three positions at IRS in Chicago: taxpayer service representative, taxpayer service specialist and tax law specialist. This was work at a call site with about four hundred employees, some 15 of whom were blind and had come from the Arkansas program.

Initially, the work involved answering basic tax questions, referring to IRS publications which were brailled for us or which we brailled ourselves outside of working hours. Later I handled more complex issues and taught classes to other employees, some sighted, some blind. Eventually, my assignment required answering written inquiries on very technical issues and answering them in writing -- always a touchy issue and very carefully handled.

"Gorman vs Regan," (Donald Regan was President Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Treasury) was a federal lawsuit that I assembled on behalf of blind employees seeking to have specialized electronic equipment installed in IRS offices. The suit was successful and enabled blind employees to work at higher technical levels similar to their sighted colleagues and to earn commensurate salaries.

At age 58 I retired from IRS, with almost 32 years of service. Having recently met Sheldon, my partner, it was an easy decision to make when the agency decided to move its Chicago office to St. Louis. Looking back, IRS enabled me to continue the customer service work I had done years

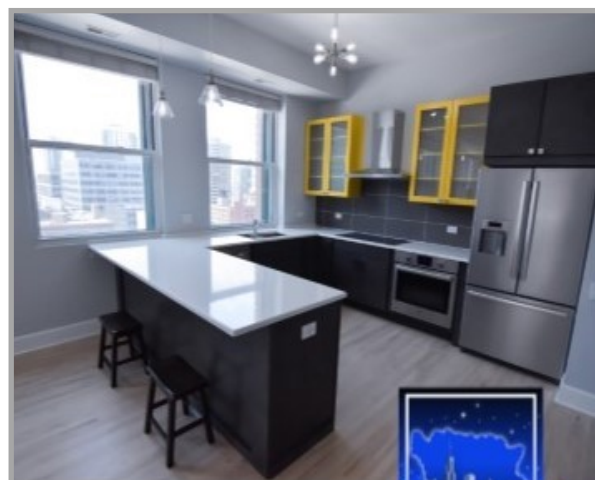
before, using computers and up-to-date technology, plus earn a middle class income and a lifetime government pension -- in short, the American dream.


And retirement is enabling me to pursue three passions. First, I volunteer for Bookshare.org, scanning, proofreading and correcting braille translations which are then available to other Bookshare members. 145 books so far, and going strong! The titles often reflect my interest in classical music (two biographies on G. F. Handel) and LGBT issues (**Gay American History**, by Jonathan Katz, and titles not otherwise available).

My second retirement pastime is bicycling. I've always loved it and bought my first tandem in 1972 while in Madison. Sheldon and I have bicycled some 27,000 miles since we began in 2007. Mostly we take the Lakefront Trail which runs south to 71st street, but occasionally other routes like the Green Bay or North Branch Trail to the Chicago Botanical Garden.

(Sheldon and I have an understanding: I drag him out on the bike whenever I can, and he feeds me broccoli, cauliflower and brussels sprouts. Exercise + diet are working; we've both lost weight and feel great.)

My third passion is classical music. Personally, I favor Baroque vocal music but together we attend a fair number of opera and small ensemble concerts. Over the years I've collected and catalogued 6,500 or so CDs. And digital streaming offers a variety of radio stations including WFMT and a Finnish station I'm enthused about.



Park Tower is a great place to live because of its location near the Lakefront Trail, the buses and Red Line, Clark Street's many restaurants, and the community of people who live here. **I do have one simple request of residents who know me and want to be sociable: Please start off by telling me your name, as in "Hi Terry, I'm _____!"** 

Terry has lived at Park Tower since 1994.

Committee Focus

Home Improvement


Package Room

As TowerTalk goes to press, the newly rebuilt Receiving Room, now the Package Room, is near completion. We have contracted with [Luxer One](#) to manage package deliveries. Both deliveries and pickups are via codes unique to each package, which are entered onto a screen just outside the room. Residents will be informed of package arrivals by email or a phone text and then be able to pick them up 24/7. Refrigeration is available for perishable items, as is a space for oversized packages.


Directly across from the Package Room are lockers, installed by [Pressbox](#), for residents who want clothing professionally cleaned or laundered. Pickup is at or shortly after 8:00 am. Expect a two-day turn-around. For more info, go to www.ptcondo/news


Carpeting & Light Fixtures

The durable flooring selected for the Package Room will also be installed this coming year in the hallways of 1P and 2P, then eventually in the service elevator areas on all floors.

New light fixtures will be installed in the 55th floor hallway -- one row of similar fixtures per side of the hallway triangle. These are intended as sample fixtures, and Owners are encouraged to provide feedback about the ones they prefer. Replacements on all remaining floors will be done in 2021-22, by which time the appropriate fixture will have been chosen. 

Cable & Internet

The Board has voted unanimously in favor of a resolution to accept the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee for Cable and Internet to pursue renewal with RCN for bulk cable and Internet service. Management is now negotiating terms and conditions. Our current contract with RCN expires April, 2019. 

JUST IN The *Condominium and Common Interest Community Ombudsman Act* requires that condo associations have clear written policies for resolving Owner complaints in place by January 1, 2019. Plans are to include a draft with the budget mailing early in December, then discuss it with Owners in an open meeting prior to formal acceptance by the Board. 

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