

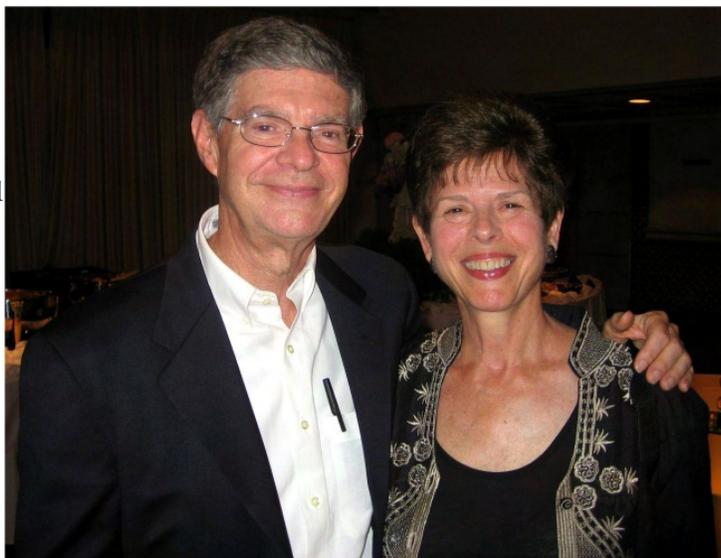
Remarks in Honor of the Retirement of Charlie Freeman

**Michael Collins, Director
Hilton/Perkins Program, Perkins School for the Blind**

Editor’s note: Charlie Freeman, the officer overseeing deaf-blind projects under the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), retired in May 2006 after many years of service. A celebration was held in his honor at the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness topical conference in San Antonio last May. At the event, his colleagues shared memories and thanked Charlie for his leadership and support over the years. The following remarks by Mike Collins were delivered by telephone since he was unable to attend the conference.

Hello Charlie, and everyone! A very big congratulations to you on your well-deserved retirement. I offer my sincere apologies for my inability to be present this evening.

I first would like to offer a few thoughts to consider. Charlie came to OSEP after the departure of Bob Dantona, who oversaw the deafblind program in more favorable and financially generous times. At the time, there was a movement in place for the program to be absorbed into the umbrella program for all children with severe handicaps, and for it to be eliminated as a separate category of service. This was way back in the 1980s! Many of you have been around long enough to remember that the deafblind field revolted, created the National Coalition on Deafblindness to protect the program, and pressured the Congress to retain specific services for the deafblind.



Charlie and Shirley Freeman

As you can imagine, you-know-who was in the crossfire of this action! Yet he handled it diplomatically, patiently, and with the usual “Charlie” polish and reserve. You all know the outcome; the deafblind field has survived and flourished for two and a

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