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### Blind student receives diploma, continues for master's degree

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6/12/69  
state + csBLIND STUDENT RECEIVES DIPLOMA,  
CONTINUES FOR MASTER'S DEGREEBy Rebecca Lee Yates  
UM Information Services

MISSOULA, Mont.---

When Pershing M. McClean walks Sunday (June 15) with other black-gowned, tassle-capped graduates of the University of Montana he will not be able to see the coveted diploma he receives.

But loss of sight will not detract from the satisfaction McClean feels in reaching a hard-earned goal, met under the stringent handicap of almost total blindness.

The tall, gray-haired man of 50 will receive a B.A. degree in business administration. Blindness has not deterred him from completing this degree in only two years; nor has blindness deterred McClean from obtaining a graduate assistantship to continue towards a master's degree at UM.

Blinded four years ago from an automobile accident in Great Falls, McClean, a Helena native, had to adjust to a world in which light is only partially admitted through his left eye. His percentage of sight is so minuscule that it is unmeasurable.

Formerly in electronics sales and management, McClean went to the Northwest Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Seattle, Wash., and learned to read in Braille, to type and to achieve mobility in his new world.

Then, two years ago, he decided to return to school.

McClean, who now lives at 526 Connell Ave., Missoula, had attended UM in 1935-36 as an electronics major. Returning to the Missoula campus, he changed his major to business administration and entered into a university stay which has proved arduous but rewarding.

"My biggest problem," McClean said, "was getting the reading and writing done."

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The lectures and textbook material are recorded on tape for McClean to hear and study. Writing a paper or an examination, he said, is a slow process. His wife, Helen, then types his material.

"The hardest classes were accounting," he related. "My wife attended accounting classes with me, did all the written work and then fed it back to me."

Despite such circuitous studying, McClean is managing to graduate with a grade point average many students would envy--approximately 3.4 out of a 4.0.

McClean's superior scholastic performance also brought him a graduate assistantship, mainly attained through the efforts of his adviser, Fred A. Henningsen, professor of accounting and finance at UM.

Next academic year, McClean will begin another battle with the books, this time as both student and teacher. As a member of the business administration faculty, he will teach two sections of production management.

He admits the work will be hard. Unlike other teachers, he will not have the benefit of written notes to consult in class.

"I'll just have to know the textbook and outside material thoroughly," he said. As a graduate student he plans to specialize in management and marketing.

McClean has adjusted well to his handicapped world and said he finds few problems in being blind. He still enjoys his hobbies of sports and music and continues to participate in activities with his wife and 10-year-old son, Bill.

He also continues to enjoy UM. "I've received tremendous cooperation from the faculty in the School of Business Administration and the Department of Economics," he said. "Also, the campus is real easy to get around and the students are a real good bunch of kids." He also expressed appreciation for the State Services for the Visually Handicapped, which financed him through his undergraduate years.

McClean admits he was a little apprehensive about returning to school two years ago, and he admits to some apprehension in continuing. "We'll give it a try for a while," he said, but if the past two years are an indication, his try should be highly successful.