

Jalapeños in the Oatmeal

Digesting Vision Loss



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Fear and Rage

Posted on [November 16, 2010](#) by [dtabak](#)

I am not afraid of what blindness might do to my eyes. I am afraid of what it might do to my soul. Example: Walking home from the bus stop, my guide dog, Randy, and I skirted a truck blocking the sidewalk. This took us into the street and into a maze of construction barricades. There seemed no safe way to cross the street. I told Randy to sit, then barked at the man alongside the truck, "Are you going to help us or just stand there?" With that, Randy and I forged across Clark Street. We left that guy in the dust. Even had he lain in the gutter and begged us to walk across his back, we wouldn't have accepted his help. Having channeled my fear into rage, I felt righteous.

My exultation quickly faded to regret. For the pleasure of revenge, I had jeopardized safety. I had proven that blind people can be hostile and shrill. I had muffed the opportunity to educate the public by showing this one guy how to serve his fellows, and almost got my butt run over in the process.

For the record, for every Samaritan who misses his cue, ten step forward with, "How can I help?" Under most circumstances I remain civil when stressed and I have become comfortable asking for directions. Still, there are times I lose it; times when I lash out. I am not always on my best behavior, yet I accept that anger is part of vision loss and I know there are times when anger prevails over calm, rational thinking.

I cannot control my vision loss. I can control what I make of it, how I adjust, and what kind of person I am as a result. I fear blame, self-pity and resentment will become my M. O.

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How I See Myself

Posted on [November 1, 2010](#) by [dtabak](#)

I have been given twenty-five years to absorb the idea, if not the fact, that I am gradually losing my eyesight. I say I am losing my eyesight rather than losing my vision, because for me, there is a difference. Eyesight is what in the world I see; vision is how I see myself in this world.

My eyesight sees the bus, or it doesn't. My vision is using the bus to enhance my independence, to increase my quality of life. Losing eyesight is a biological process; losing vision is the death of faith and hope.

For years after I was diagnosed with RP, I still had enough eyesight to drive a car, see the sights, photograph the world. All the while, I was terrified of the vision that, in time, I would become helpless, hopeless and useless.

My vision of life as a visually impaired person improved as I relearned life skills. I thought I'd never learn to type 30 words per minute, now I type 40. I was sure Braille was too difficult, now I label CDs, food containers and important papers. My ability to solve problems has been enhanced as my eyesight worsens.

Life still holds fear for me: loud noises, angry voices, strange places. I feel panic when I'm lost and alone. I rely more on less eyesight and I am afraid of becoming totally blind. I want to think this won't happen. It makes me sad and angry to think that it will. I want to make a deal: Please, just leave me with the eyesight I have, and I promise I'll be good.

These days, when I think about what I might become, I do not see a helpless, hopeless or useless person. I can keep my vision of myself as worthy, capable and creative. Sometimes, I think it has taken every minute of twenty-five years for this lesson to sink in. I might be a slow learner, but I'm grateful nonetheless.

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[The Pros and Cons of Vision Loss](#)

Posted on [October 19, 2010](#) by [dtabak](#)

I'm a lucky guy. I've been offered the opportunity to write a blog for the Guild for the Blind in Chicago. I'm excited and a bit overwhelmed about being the new kid on the playground of the worldwide web.

Friends ask, "What's a blog?" It's a way to share thoughts about life with vision loss. It's a way to stay in touch and not feel isolated and alone. Use your computer to tune me in much the same as tuning in Andy Rooney on your TV. Hear what I have to say. Talk back to me.

I hope my blogs will strike a resonant chord with you. I enjoy writing, the whole process from spark to finish. I've had several stories published. Oh, and I know the subject – I've spent the last twenty-five years watching the world turn into a thick, gray fog. I see the world through all my senses except sight.

So, blindness. I didn't want it and I didn't ask for it. I thought it would be the end of the world, but it isn't. It's not a picnic either. For me, blindness has its pros and cons. You may disagree. Here are a few of mine:

Blindness saves me from having to sit through endless baby pictures; it pains me not to see the face of my beloved.

Blindness rescues me from my brother's vacation videos; it hijacks the pleasure of sightseeing.

Blindness saves me a bunch on car insurance; it sucks when I want to get away.

OK, now I've said it: blindness sucks. Some days, it's jalapenos in my oatmeal when I swear I reached for the raisins. Yes? I am grateful for the honesty to say what, for years, I feared to admit. I wanted to accept vision loss graciously, not to let them see me sweat, all the while, I felt like I was going nuts. Anybody out there feel the same?

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[Welcome to Jalapeños in the Oatmeal](#)

Posted on [October 15, 2010](#) by [dtabak](#)

Welcome to Jalapeños in the Oatmeal, the Guild for the Blind's new blog. Jeff Flodin, a published writer and Guild member, will be writing about his quarter century of trials and tribulations associated with losing his vision. His goal is to have the blog be a conversation where thoughts and feelings about vision loss can be shared. Twice a month, Jeff will focus on a facet of the issue that is both helpful and humorous. See what Jeff has to say and feel free to post your own comments to get the conversation started.

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