

L. G. G. F.

Francis Guhin

If you were blind, do you think you would be living a normal life? For me it would be a struggle just to get up in the morning. I know a man who is blind, but if you ever met him, you would think he had perfect vision. This man is my grandpa Francis Guhin! He has been virtually blind for his whole life, but lives his life to the fullest with all the other talents and skills he has been blessed with.

Francis damaged his optic nerve when he was just a baby, but he managed to lead a normal kid's life. He played with his friends, learned to drive a car, and more importantly, could watch the sun rise. Francis attended Sacred Heart School for seven years until he was fourteen. He quit going to Sacred Heart when the ten percent of vision in one of his eyes decreased to zero.

Francis never wanted to rely on other people to help him, but he knew he needed to go to a school just for visually impaired people. He was admitted to the School for the Blind in Gary, South Dakota. While he was in Gary, ~~South Dakota~~, he witnessed a demonstration by a blind man about Seeing Eye Dogs. Later that year Francis applied for a Seeing Eye Dog, not yet realizing the importance the dog would have on his life.

A few weeks later Francis got news from the Seeing Eye Dog Foundation in Morristown, New Jersey. The foundation told him his application would be accepted, and he would need to go through four weeks of training with the dog. When the training was over, Francis came home with the first Seeing Eye Dog in South Dakota, named "Mav". It wasn't easy for Francis to train his dog. He had to do a lot of walking, at a

faster pace than normal. He also had to trust an animal to lead him to safety. I think a lot of people would have difficulty doing this. It was also hard for the people of Aberdeen to accept the new form of transportation for a blind person. People weren't used to a dog in a harness leading a blind man across streets. Lots of buildings wouldn't even let the dog inside. But people got used to the Seeing Eye Dog, and soon all of the buildings would let the dog inside.

Since Francis got the Seeing Eye Dog, he could again have the freedom he had before he lost his vision, so the hard work paid off.

Francis once again led a normal life. He graduated from Central High School in Aberdeen, South Dakota, got married to his wife Marion, and raised six daughters and five sons. He even used to pitch baseballs to his sons by listening to the direction from which their voices were coming. Of course to be truly "normal", you must have a job.

What kind of job do you think a blind man could be good at? Well, Francis learned how to be a great Masseur. A professor from Northern State University, and the physical director at the YMCA taught Francis the techniques and important information about giving massages. It took Francis a long time and a lot of hard work to be an admired masseur, but he overcame his disability, and is respected by many people. Francis was a masseur for thirty-eight years until he retired.

Francis Guhin lives his life like a normal person, with one exception. He has been blind since age fourteen. I respect his ability to deal with his disability and succeed in everything he does. He showed others how to turn a horrible situation into a minor setback!