

Delores Homer Story
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As the eleventh child in a family of twelve children I led a spoiled, happy life.

Active in softball I became quite good at batting and out fielding until age 13 when I started striking out and missing pop flies.

My mother took me to an optometrist for an eye exam. The doctor had a private consultation with her and I was fitted with eyeglasses. I still had trouble seeing after dark but everything seemed normal to me except softball remained difficult.

I stopped participating in sports and reading became harder. I relied on memory to get me through and graduated public high school.

My first employment was with Northwestern Bell as a long distance operator in Sioux City, Iowa. I was proficient and loved the job very much. I married and transferred to Kansas City where I had two children and was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), an inherited eye disease which leads to total blindness. Looking back, I believe my mother was told of this in my first eye exam but luckily did not burden me with the knowledge. After five years in Kansas City I returned to Sioux City, divorced.

I began working again as a switchboard operator at the Warrior Hotel in Sioux City. There I met a wonderful man, John, who recognized my night blindness on our first date. He had deaf siblings and seemed to understand coping. We married and John adopted my two children.

We moved to Ames, Iowa where John began working at ISU while he attended college and I became a stay at home mom. Three of John's nieces became homeless and we adopted them. I commuted to Des Moines and attended classes at the Commission For The Blind where I learned Braille, refreshed typing skills, sewing, and cane travel.

We had a tandem bicycle, which we taught our children to steer. Now we could go to doctors, dentists, shopping, and parent-teacher conferences. We could carry a lug of peaches across the rear handlebars. We must have been a sight.

One time we bicycled to a veterinarian. It was a cold day and I wore a coat with large patch pockets. I carried our Yorkshire Terrier in one of the pockets.

I walked into the office with the cane and asked to have my dog examined. They asked me if my dog was in the car or do I want them to go out to get him. I guess they thought it was a seeing eye dog because they laughed when I pulled the little dog out of my pocket.

I checked the children's grooming every day before school. Hugs allowed me to smell fragrance from perfumed soap and their breath for toothpaste. I checked their clothing by seeming to adjust and brush them off.

With the children in school all day I now had time to fill so I looked into child care for working mothers. I started with newborns and progressed to a range

from infant to 5 year old. My vision allowed me to continue for 33 years.

I am blessed with many great memories and the love of many children who keep me in their life and thoughts. I attend many graduations and weddings and take great pride in their successes.

I now am totally blind and still do all the house cleaning (except for vacuuming), dishes, cooking, and laundry. We have developed several systems which make it easier for me.

Soiled kitchen linens are bagged before going down the clothes chute because they are the same texture as the bathroom linens.

Soiled bed linens are placed into their respective pillowcase to keep them in sets. I then wash 1 set of bed lines at a time.

John heats a stylus and Braille marks my plastic measuring cups and Braille marks tags for frozen and canned food. Our Dymo Braille labeler makes labels which we stick on magnetic strips for canned goods.

Tip: We bevel cut labels with the narrow side UP for easier reading. John writes with a Sharpie so he can read it too.

We place the used up labels on the side of the refrigerator which becomes our grocery list.

Microwave Oven, Electric stove, Dishwasher, Typewriter, Washer, and Dryer are all marked with Dymo tape and stick on dots.

I have recipes on several cassette tapes. Cassettes are categorized into Bread, Cookies, Desserts, Main dishes, Meat, Salad, and Casserole

I have a button system which keeps my clothes sorted in sets. I search for odd shaped buttons in packages.

I assign the buttons to colors and sew them on the clothes tags. For instance white blouses or pants with star shape, blue with squares, black with apple shape. I can mix and match my clothing in this manner.

I tie the shoestrings together to keep my shoes matched. If there are no strings I use a pincher clothespin to hold them together.

I keep my earrings together with small empty containers purchased at flea markets and garage sales.

I still wear makeup, do my own hair, manage my checkbook, and handle my own money. I try to have friends and family set up systems that I can maintain myself.

I volunteer at church by cooking for priests, special events, and funerals.

I love to bake so we have an endless supply of cookies, rolls, and quick breads which we share with many friends and family.

I also stuff envelopes and even help count collection money.

Donations are often twisted, folded, smashed, etc. and I straighten the bills. Once the bills are sorted, I count them into packets. I endorse the checks, which are passed to me face down and correct end up.

We make a good team.

Our children are all raised now and we have five children , 11 grand children and 8 great grandchildren. Thanksgiving is our big family holiday and I cook for at least 20 guests every year.

God has been good to me.

**Delores Homer
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