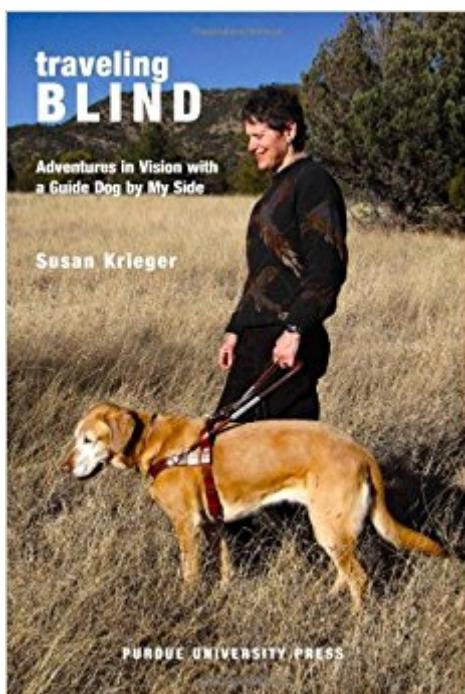


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Traveling Blind: Adventures In Vision With A Guide Dog By My Side (New Directions In The Human-Animal Bond (Hardcover))



Synopsis

Traveling Blind is a romance, a travel adventure, an emotional quest, and a deeply reflective description of coming to terms with lack of sight. It reveals the invisible work of navigating with a guide dog while learning to perceive the world in new ways. Although an intensely personal account, Traveling Blind is not simply memoir, for it extends beyond one person's experience to illuminate our understandings of vision informed by the academic fields of disability studies, feminist ethnography, and the study of human-animal bonds. What does it mean to "travel blind"? What is it like to live in a world where things are not black and white so much as shades of gray? How does it feel to navigate through constantly changing imagery that requires changing inner perspectives as well? What can experiences of blindness tell us about sight? The book confronts these questions and more. In a series of beautifully textured stories, the author takes the reader on a fascinating journey as she travels with Teela, her lively "'golden dog," through airports, city streets, and southwest desert landscapes, exploring these surroundings with changed sight. This unusual account of travel will inspire the sighted as well as the blind, offering pointed observations on processes of learning to work with a service animal and on coming to terms with a disability. In remarkably visual detail, Krieger makes palpable an ambiguous world. Repeatedly confronted with social stereotypes (that she should be totally blind and incapable of mobility), she comes to value her own unique ways of seeing and her interdependence with both her animal and human companions. Her descriptions of exquisite natural landscapes and intimate personal moments will touch as well as educate readers. A companion website to this book can be found at: susankrieger.stanford.edu/travelingblind

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"As her dog is a guide for her, Krieger is a guide for the reader to the world of 'traveling blind.' Readers will be fascinated by the insight into service animals, and guide dogs in particular, learning how these specially trained animals actually do their job. You begin to understand the taken for grantedness of the human-animal interaction; in the process, you have been privy to the intricate dance that goes into working with a guide dog. A particularly strong academic contribution of the book is the interior view of the experience of disability. This is a book that will involve and transform the reader, who comes to identify with Krieger's experience and to rethink what it means 'to see,' just as the author must do in her travels." -- Esther D. Rothblum, Ph.D. Professor of Women's Studies, San Diego State University

'Traveling Blind' is a true love story between a professor, her guide dog Teela, and her life partner Hannah. Susan Krieger writes the book as a feminist ethnographer taking a personal journey into blindness. Knowing her vision is failing on an almost daily basis, the author struggles with her need to maintain independence, deal with societal attitudes about her as a person who does not look blind, and her need to imprint on her memory the visualization of the holiday luminarias she loves. Exploring for, but fighting against, the impending shift in her life blindness will bring, she relies more on tactile cues and begins to appreciate the positive attention Teela brings to her life. Using the phrase "broken eyesight," she describes how walking with a guide dog, one walks differently; having partial vision, one sees differently. This highly personal account of the struggle and slow acceptance of her blindness is a must read for those interested in the human condition. -- Ed Eames, Ph.D. and Toni Eames, M.S. are co-founders of the International Association of Assistance Dog Partners (www.iaadp.org), a cross disability consumer advocacy organization for people partnered with guide, hearing, and service dogs. Like Dr. Krieger, Dr. Eames lost his vision in adulthood, while Mrs. Eames came to blindness as a young child. This is ultimately a book about how we agree to see the world, and what we agree to ignore, wherever we are on the spectrum of sightedness. As the author takes to the road, we come to understand that to "see" is some combination of perception, memory, and desire. As she explores the commitments between humans and animals, she shows traveling as a challenge for both, but worth it all the time. In crystal-clear writing she tells us what to watch out for, what to be surprised by seeing, shows us

the unquestioned ability to see should be questioned after all. Traveling Blind is an unforgettable experience, and at the same time a great read. --Mary Felstiner, Visiting Professor of History, Stanford University, Author, *Out Of Joint: A Private & Public Story of Arthritis*

Susan Krieger, a sociologist and writer, teaches in the Program in Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Stanford University. She is the author of six previously published books: *Traveling Blind: Adventures in Vision with a Guide Dog by My Side* (2010), *Things No Longer There: A Memoir of Losing Sight and Finding Vision* (2005), *The Family Silver: Essays on Relationships among Women* (1996), *Social Science and the Self: Personal Essays on an Art Form* (1991), *The Mirror Dance: Identity in a Women's Community* (1983), and *Hip Capitalism* (1979)

When I see a person with a guide dog, I now know I should NOT ask "training that dog?" That is just one of the useful insights I gleaned from this very personal, poignant story of a woman who shares her efforts to come to terms with her decreasing vision, her reliance on her guide dog, and her reliance on her beloved partner "Hannah." We learn something more about how it feels to be the object of curiosity, pity, admiration, disbelief, and not always be able to tell which response we are evoking. She is clear about the importance of awareness, acceptance and kindness from strangers; when she and her partner experience these, life is good. When not, they are creative and persistent in searching for the positive in a challenging situation.

Losing your sight, obviously, causes some pretty big adjustments in the way you live your life. It changes your view of the world, and of the people you come into contact with. It changes the way you think about things, and it causes you to re-evaluate your priorities. You have to learn new ways of doing familiar tasks, and you have to learn some new tasks to compensate for the old ones you just can't do any more. I lost my sight two years ago, and I could go on and on about the different ways going blind can change your life, but I probably wouldn't do it as clearly and concisely as Susan Krieger. In her memoir, *Traveling Blind: Adventures in Vision With a Guide-Dog by my Side*, Susan describes her experiences in adjusting to her blindness in plain and simple language that is easy to understand. She has a knack for putting things in layman's terms, as you might say. This is Krieger's second book about her adjustment to blindness, and as you can tell by the title, she focuses primarily on her travel experiences. She talks a lot about learning to work with a guide-dog, and the training and issues of trust that are involved in that. Personally, I've never tried a guide dog so I found this to be very interesting and informative. Of even more interest to me, were Susan's

descriptions of her own thoughts and feelings; learning to trust others for example, or trying to balance the need for assistance with the need for independence. She talks about simple things like crossing a street or picking out food at a buffet, simple for sighted folks that is, and more difficult things like navigating an airport and boarding a plane. Narrator Ann Richardson did an adequate job on this audiobook. *Traveling Blind* is a memoir so there isn't really any dialogue. That makes it hard to gauge Richardson's skill since, in my opinion, a narrator's ability to handle dialogue is a critical point. Still, I found her tone and inflection to be good, and she remained consistent throughout the audiobook. *Traveling Blind: Adventures in Vision With a Guide-dog by My Side* will be an interesting listen for a lot of people, I think. Those who are blind will enjoy it because it's always interesting to compare notes with other blind people. Sighties might enjoy it as well, if only to gain a little perspective on things. This audiobook is a good reminder to us that we should never take anything for granted, and that there is life after a devastating loss, if you have the courage to go after it.

Imagine that instead of seeing cherished, vivid sunset views, that now you see only fuzzy light toward the western sky that could disappear if you turn your head slightly. If you were to lose your freedom of independent movement, would you venture out at all to shop for groceries, knowing the event would make you a public spectacle? I imagine I would feel a sense of loss, grief, frustration and fear if my world were devoid of the visual stimuli to which I have been accustomed. *Traveling Blind*, written by Susan Krieger, gives a personal account as she travels with her partner and guide dog throughout the American Southwest. The bigger picture is the story of her journey as she loses her sight and learns to navigate independently in spite of a degenerative disease. Susan's narrative warrants an audience because she shares her reflections as her vision deteriorates and she gains new insights into her life coping with a disability that threatens to limit her independence and change her identity. She reexamines her self-identity because of the constant intrusion of strangers' perceptions of her "invisible disability." Legally blind, Susan is preoccupied with what she can still see in front of her face. Using telescopic lenses or magnifying glass, she relies on the limited sensory input she retains. She doesn't fit a stereotype. Her vision is impaired, not totally absent. Hers is a keen paradox; she still can see some things, sometimes. She is faced with the conundrum of not wanting to draw attention to her difference, but her guide dog and her queries to strangers when she needs help attract great interest and often unwanted attention. The author is courageous to share her fears and shifting reality. The account of her journey en route to the Big Hatchet Mountains, though offering a detailed visual description of the desert southwest, did not engage me as much as later chapters. I felt I was on a tedious road trip, destined to join the trio at each rest

stop, visit the bathroom and check in to each hotel. Then it occurred to me that in her world of shrinking vision, her focus tended toward close-up details. Because a major theme of the book is how the public behaved towards her and her dog, this book is educational for a general audience on how to behave in the presence of service dogs of any kind. The dogs are working. The person with a service dog, whether you can see the disability or not, is simply trying to navigate independently through life. Sadly in this instance, Susan's loss of vision equates with loss of privacy because of her choice in using a guide dog. Strangers constantly remark, approach and reproach her as she exercises her independence. Admirably, the author speaks up for people with "invisible disabilities." Also her message conveys that a service dog is not a pet, nor a robot that is programmed to work. The symbiosis of handler and dog is an intricate dance, requiring the dog handler to focus on the needs of the dog and her own needs simultaneously. Even with a guide dog, the author struggles to get around by herself. I look forward to the day that the public understands that assistance dogs are doing their jobs, and that interference only makes personal freedom harder to come by for people with disabilities. Her inclusion of a literature review at the end of the book is a valuable resource on the topic of women and disabilities. by Martha Meacham for Story Circle Book Reviews reviewing books by, for, and about women

poorly written and reeking of desperation, this work does a disservice for all others facing challenges and to able-bodied individuals seeking to understand them.

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