



Presents



Directed by Joseph Lovett
Release date: October 2010
Running time: 81 minutes
Rating: Unrated

DVDs Now Available for Educational Distribution
(Chaptered & Audio Described, with English & Spanish Subtitles)

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FILM REVIEWS

The Village Voice

The word "inspirational" is so overused as to be hackneyed, but writer-director Joe Lovett's documentary Going Blind—in which he chronicles his excruciating battle with glaucoma while using his experiences to connect with five other people living with degrees of blindness—is exactly and profoundly that. . . . The film soars when the camera follows a 22-year-old Iraq War vet who lost his sight in a roadside attack, a septuagenarian architect whose experimental treatment allows him to keep working, and, especially, a no-bullshit art teacher who lost her sight to diabetes—with appealing directness and not a shred of self-pity, she says simply, "You learn to work with what you have."

The Washington Post

Going Blind encourages and inspires people to take action to preserve, prolong, and maximize the precious gift of sight—for themselves, their loved ones, and society.

Variety

Like a detective, Lovett uses his own glaucoma symptoms as clues to help determine who to track down next, immersing himself in the struggles of his various interviewees...[the film] effectively demystifies the process of going blind.

British Journal of Ophthalmology

Going Blind is an uplifting documentary about visually impaired and blind people that...instills inspiration to lead a productive life.

New York Times

Partly to assuage his fears, partly to learn how to cope if he becomes blind, and partly to alert Americans to the importance of regular eye care, Mr. [Joseph] Lovett, 65, decided to do what he does best. He produced a documentary called Going Blind with the telling subtitle "Coming out of the Dark About Vision Loss."

SYNOPSIS

What does a filmmaker do when he finds out he is losing his sight but his doctors don't want to talk about what his future might be? In Joe Lovett's case, you take to the streets. It is there that he meets others who have lost their vision, chronicling their struggle and filming the efforts he employs to save his remaining vision.

Going Blind is a unique documentary film that increases public awareness of sight loss and low vision issues profoundly affecting the lives of more and more people and those who love them.

Documentary film director and journalist Joe Lovett has glaucoma, a disease that robs 4.5 million people of their vision worldwide. Over the years, Joe has lost a significant amount of vision and in his concern about how to deal with more vision loss, he has started to talk with people who have already lost theirs.

Going Blind features a spirited and attractive cast coping with some of the major blinding diseases in America today: art teacher Jessica Jones has diabetic retinopathy, architect Peter D'Elia suffers from age-related macular degeneration, outreach coordinator for The Seeing Eye, a guide dog school, Ray Kornman has retinitis pigmentosa, veterans administration worker Patricia Williams has glaucoma and a traumatic injury, 11 year old Emmet Teran has nystagmus and Iraq War Veteran Steve Baskis lost his sight in a roadside bomb attack.

Going Blind weaves Joe's mission to slow down the course of his disease through medication and surgeries, with the stories of others whom he looks to for guidance in a darkening world.

These compelling individual stories provide a glimpse into the world of low vision and blindness. Worldwide, 37,000,000 people have lost their vision. In the United States alone, Lighthouse International reports that 10 million people are legally blind (1.3 million) or visually impaired (8.7 million).

Given our aging population and the increasing prevalence of low vision in our society, it is of paramount importance that we understand sight loss and work towards a better future. *Going Blind* encourages and inspires people to take action to preserve, prolong, and maximize the precious gift of sight – for themselves, their loved ones, and society.

ENDORSEMENTS

American Academy of Ophthalmology

“As ophthalmologists, despite best efforts, we cannot always prevent vision loss or, sadly, blindness. Your film helps patients understand their options and opportunities, allowing them to lead productive and happy lives. It’s an uplifting story.”

-David W. Parke II, MD, CEO

The Jewish Guild for the Blind

“It is a rare occurrence when one project brings together so many of the issues that individuals who are visually impaired and their families face each day. That is what you have achieved with your new film entitled Going Blind.”

-Peter Williamson, Communications Director

Macular Degeneration Support

“Going Blind covers every concern about losing vision, but it also offers important information and hope...it reinforces the concept that knowledge is power.”

-Dan Roberts, Director

VISIONS Services for the Blind

“Going Blind is truly needed to educate the medical community and the general public...Your film not only informs, but gives hope to the millions of people who could benefit, if only they knew where to turn.”

-Nancy Miller, Executive Director

AWARE & VisionAWARE.org

“The majority of individuals, in the early stages of vision loss, are simply unaware of the specialists, services and resources available to help them. This is one reason why a very small percentage of individuals with vision loss reach out for vision rehabilitation services—your film provides incentive to change that.”

-Anne Yeadon, Executive Director

American Foundation for the Blind

“We applaud your commitment to increasing the public’s awareness and understanding of vision loss...we hope that it stimulates an open dialogue about vision loss, including the fears and misconceptions that exist and the obstacles that those fears and misconceptions might create.”

-Carl R. Augusto, President & CEO

Lighthouse International

“Going Blind underscores the need for the medical community to understand and prepare patients for various options that can offer them hope and allow them to continue to lead independent, productive lives.”

-Tina Georgeou, Former Chief Marketing Officer

Blinded Veterans Association

“I wish every medical school in the country would have this film!”

-Thomas Zampieri, Director of Government Relations

New Hampshire Association for the Blind

“Several attendees [of our Going Blind screening] have been empowered by the movie to seek out specialized vision rehabilitation services for the first time. We applaud the film as it portrays a helping and positive message of hope. The movie is breaking down barriers and myths about vision loss.”

-Guy M. Woodland, Senior VP

AUDIENCE RESPONSE

“Going Blind is a must see for the sighted and low vision community, and a must hear for the blind and near blind. The concise, clear and compelling overview of various aspects of causes of blindness and the ways to deal with these challenges is revelatory.”

-Lloyd Burlingame
Tisch School of the Arts, NYU

“Going Blind should be seen by optometrists around the country, as well as by the general public.”

-Joan Muyskens Pursley
Art Education for the Blind

“Vision loss is a particularly sensitive topic for me, as my great-grandfather dealt with macular degeneration and my grandmother deals with it as well...Your film made it all a little less frightening for me.”

-Michele Snyder
Whitney Museum of American Art

“I have been totally blind for 7 ½ years now and just to watch the clip of your movie gives me comfort...Thank you for producing this film and educating the world to vision loss.”

-Melody Goodspeed
Former Special Education Teacher

“Your film introduced me to the blind as individuals, as real people, and today I hardly hesitated in asking the young man I saw waiting on the corner with his cane whether he’d like my help.”

-Ken Coughlin

“It’s usually hard to really explain the science or to really explain the human experience and, you know, this film really does both.”

-Colin Weil

“This afternoon I was able to watch Going Blind. I find it a great documentary to enlighten the sighted... You have really touched my heart today and I cannot wait to share Going Blind with my family and friends.”

-Amber Elia
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases/National Institutes of Health

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

JOSEPH LOVETT

Joseph Lovett founded Lovett Productions in 1989 after ten years as a producer at ABC News 20/20. Concentrating on health and social issues, the company has produced over 35 hours of prime time television specials over the last 20 years. Broadcasts include; *Born in my Heart, a Love Story*, Barbara Walters ABC Special on adoption, *Fat Like Me*, an ABC program on childhood obesity, and *Coming Home*, a Hallmark Channel special on forgiveness.

His film, *State of Denial*, about AIDS denialism in South Africa, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and aired on PBS' P.O.V.

Three Sisters: Searching for a Cure, an HBO film on a family dealing with ALS premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival. *Gay Sex in the 70s* explores the emergence of gay identity in the twelve years between the 1969 Stonewall Riots and the advent of the AIDS crisis in 1981. The film's television premiere was on the Sundance Channel.

The Accident, Joe's first feature documentary, is a startling perspective on love and loss in a family memoir shot over twenty-five years. *The Accident* toured the international festival circuit to sold-out audiences.

Joe wrote, directed and produced *Cancer: Evolution to Revolution*, an HBO film about what people with cancer need to know to maximize their chances of survival. The film has been honored with The Peabody Award, The Christopher Award, an Emmy nomination, as well as numerous filmmaker awards from cancer advocacy organizations.

As a producer for ABC's 20/20 in the 1980's, Joe produced the first in-depth AIDS investigations for national television. Later, as an independent filmmaker, he produced and directed *In a New Light*, an annual broadcast of AIDS education and outreach specials. *In a New Light*, aired annually for five years on ABC. Joe's continuing work fighting the global epidemic won him The AIDS Action Foundation AIDS Leadership Award.

ABOUT THE SUBJECTS

Jessica Jones- *Diabetic Retinopathy*

Atlanta born Jessica Jones met Joe on the street when she was training her seeing-eye dog Chef. A young, beautiful and talented artist teaching in New York City's public school system, at 32, she lost her sight from diabetic retinopathy in just 8 months. Jessica was exasperated by the lack of encouragement and opportunities after she went blind. During the process of filming Jessica secured a job teaching art at a school in the Bronx for blind children with multiple disabilities.

Emmet Teran- *Strabismus*

Emmet is an eleven year old [when filmed] with low vision from albinism, a condition he inherited from his father. Emmet works with a comedy troupe after school in Manhattan, and uses humor to dismiss some of the hurts a child encounters from his peers.

Peter D'Elia- *Age-related Macular Degeneration*

Peter is a New Jersey architect, and has lost vision in his left eye to macular degeneration. His career was in jeopardy when he noticed that he could not see out of his right eye. His passion for architecture gives him the drive to continue working, and the advent of new medication for wet macular degeneration restored his sight.

Ray Kornman- *Retinitis Pigmentosa*

At the age of 29, Ray discovered he had retinitis pigmentosa - an incurable eye disease that would leave him blind by the age of 40. After learning there were many services for the blind, Ray's life changed when he got his guide dog at the Seeing Eye in Morristown, New Jersey. Now, secure in his condition and content with his life, Ray's passion is to spread the message about the power of guide dogs.

Patricia Williams- *Glaucoma and Traumatic Injury*

Pat is a legally blind woman still struggling with her place in the sighted world, as well as in the visually impaired community. She works as a program support assistant at the VA center in New York City. The enlarged type on her computer screen has helped her flourish in her job. While at times she needs some help getting around, Pat is a fiercely independent woman who does not let her disability define her.

Steve Baskis- *Roadside bomb attack*

At the age of 22, Steve, a Texas native and Private First Class in the United States Army, was hit by a roadside bomb north of Baghdad. Steve was injured from shrapnel all over his body and nerve damage left him blind. He spent weeks rehabbing at Hines Rehabilitation Center outside of Chicago where he received orientation and mobility training. Despite his condition, he now looks to move forward with his life.

Dr. Robert Ritch

Dr. Ritch is a Surgeon Director and the Chief of Glaucoma Services at New York's Eye and Ear Infirmary. He is also a Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology at the New York Medical College. Dr. Ritch, a leading voice on Glaucoma, and has authored several major books on the disease as well as hundreds of scientific papers. Dr. Ritch and Joe work together to treat Joe's glaucoma.

Dr. Dong Feng Chen

Dr. Chen is an Associate Scientist at the Schepens Eye Research Institute as well as an Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School. Much of her work focuses on the optic nerves of mammals. During a meeting at Schepens, Dr. Chen explains to Joe that her research is aimed at gaining a better understanding of the effect and permanence, disease and/or damage has on the optic nerve.

Gerald Schutter

Gerald is a Service Chief at the Hines Blind Rehabilitation Center at the Hines VA hospital in Oak Park, Illinois. He has worked at Hines since the Vietnam War and continues to work closely and passionately with the veterans that come through the center. The film highlights Gerald's relationship with Steve Baskis along with the many other veterans at Hines.

Dr. Bruce Rosenthal

Dr. Rosenthal is an Adjunct Professor at Mt. Sinai Hospital and State University of New York-College of Optometry. He is also the Chief of Low Vision Programs at Lighthouse International. Dr. Rosenthal has worked with the Lighthouse for over 35 years, and written seven books on an array of vision related topics. Dr. Rosenthal helps Joe grapple with his vision and take advantage of the many resources in the low vision community.

Dr. Michael Fischer

Dr. Fischer is a low vision certified Optometrist at Lighthouse International. He is also the Chief of Optometry Service and the Department of Veterans Medical Affairs in Northport, New York. For 12 years, Dr. Fischer was the Director of Low Vision Services at the Lighthouse. In the film, he treats Emmet and enlightens Joe by demonstrating the positive effect of low vision therapy. Dr. Fischer specializes in pediatric optometry and is a fellow at the American Academy of Optometry.

SALIENT FACTS ABOUT VISION LOSS

- 👁️ Though most vision loss cannot be replaced, visually impaired people can improve the quality of their lives substantially through LOW VISION THERAPY, a term most people have never heard of.
- 👁️ There are numerous available technologies such as JAWS and KURZWEIL that will read out loud what is on the computer screen. And there are computer pads that provide Braille translations of what is on the screen.
- 👁️ 70% of visually impaired people who could be working are not because they do not know what help is available to them.
- 👁️ More than 4 times as many veterans are coming home with significant eye injuries than with lost limbs.
- 👁️ One third of blinded veterans take advantage of vision rehabilitation.
- 👁️ The majority of guide dogs are provided for free. Despite how much they may improve one's quality of life, only 1 to 2% of people who are visually impaired use a guide dog.
- 👁️ The word BLIND is a misleading term. It suggests that someone sees nothing at all, when in fact; the vision loss spectrum is vast. Most people fall somewhere on that spectrum.
- 👁️ Blindness is often preventable. EARLY DETECTION can prevent or slow down vision loss from glaucoma. There are treatments now for Wet Age Related Macular Degeneration.
- 👁️ The first successful gene therapy trials are underway to treat a form of Retinitis Pigmentosa, a generic condition and the leading cause of blindness. The therapy was first tried on birds and a French sheepdog and is now restoring sight to patients in clinical trials.
- 👁️ Charles Bonnet Syndrome (CBS) is a condition most often seen in elderly patients with macular degeneration where these patients experience visual hallucinations. For years, many people describing these symptoms were written off as mentally ill. Now we understand that CBS is just another part of the ongoing conversation about vision loss.

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Going Blind was made possible with major support from
The Reader's Digest Partners for Sight Foundation
&
Pfizer Ophthalmics

And support by

Gibney Family Foundation
Allene Reuss Memorial Trust
National Eye Institute
Allergan Foundation

Fred A. Lennon Charitable Trust
Rudin Foundation
May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation
Reid Williams Foundation

Additional Funders Include

James & Ellen Polshek
David Duplantis
Richard & Kathleen Levin
Barbara & Barry Coller, MD
Drew & Jessica Guff
Carol & Lawrence Saper
Lorenzo & Stanley Weisman
Glaucoma Optometric Society
Virginia Hatley & Steve Swiatkiewicz
Kay Bearman
Jay & Diana Goldin
David Hariton & Tod Lippy
Christopher Noey & Ghiora Aharoni
Gerard Timoney
Alice Zimet

With Special Thanks to

Andy Fisher
Susan Olivo
Toni Levi
James Cottrel, MD
The Independent Filmmaker Project
New York Eye & Ear Infirmary
The Veterans Administration

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