

A LESSON FROM THE BLIND VISIONARY VIRGINIA'S AMAZING JOURNEY

Doug Eadie, who resides in Oldsmar with his wife Barbara Krai, is the author of 17 books. His newest book, written with co-author Virginia Jacko, is entitled *The Blind Visionary: Practical Lessons for Meeting Challenges on the Way to a More Fulfilling Life and Career*. Other works, in addition to *The Blind Visionary*, include the best selling *Meeting the Governing Challenge* and *Building a Rock-Solid Partnership with Your Board*.

The co-authors made a personal appearance recently at Syd Entel's Gallery and Susan Benjamin Glass in Safety Harbor to talk about this inspiring biography of how one woman overcame the challenge of becoming blind to become a real success.

The Blind Visionary tells Virginia's amazing true story. The story begins at Purdue University, where Virginia had worked her way up to an important position that she loved and was great at, working directly with Purdue's president and provost as a senior financial executive. Life was really sweet for Virginia and her husband, Bob, who is a full professor of engineering at Purdue.

But there was a rub, and a big one. She discovered that she was slowly but surely losing her eyesight to a condition known as retinitis pigmentosa. By November 2000, Virginia recognized that she couldn't continue to work at an executive level without special training, so she took a medical leave from Purdue and started all over – in her mid-fifties – in January 2001 as a vocational rehabilitation student at the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

After completing her training at the Lighthouse, Virginia resigned from Purdue, acquired a guide dog, volunteered at the Lighthouse, and in 2005 became the first blind president and CEO of the Miami Lighthouse in its history. She's done a great job, more than doubling revenues and adding a number of innovative new programs. Virginia lives alone in a condo on Biscayne Bay much of the year, but her husband Bob spends as much time as he can with her in Miami while continuing to teach at Purdue.

WRITING THE BOOK

Doug Eadie met Virginia in 2006, when he was retained as a consultant to assist in updating the Lighthouse Board of

Directors' governing role, structure, and processes. They began to talk about writing a book on her extraordinary journey from Purdue to the Miami Lighthouse in the summer of 2008 and they began work on their book a week before Christmas. Just a year later *The Blind Visionary* hit the streets.

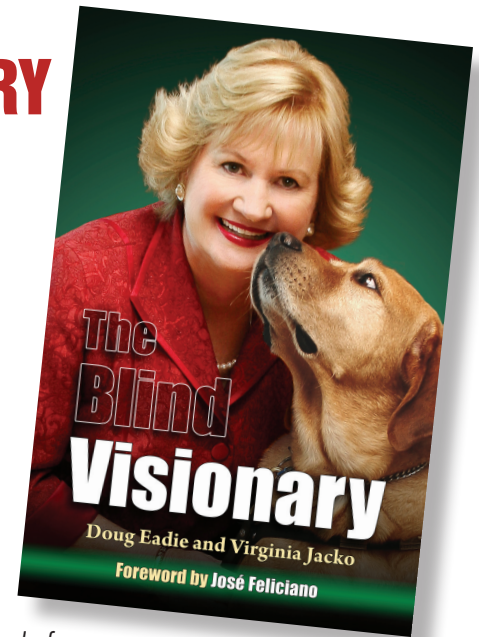
Parts One and Two of the book tell Virginia's story largely in her own words, based on many hours spent sitting together at a table with a digital recorder between them. In Part Three, "Lessons to Share," Virginia and I discuss four lessons gleaned from Virginia's story that readers can put to work in their own lives in meeting challenges and building more satisfying personal and professional lives. In the following excerpt from the book, Virginia tells an amusing story that illustrates how important it is to keep your sense of humor intact while dealing with challenges and barriers and displays her personal courage and concern for others.

VIRGINIA TAKES A DIP IN THE BAY

One Saturday, when I was back at my condo in Miami, Tracker and I were walking along my condo property looking onto Biscayne Bay. You know, your guide dog is trained to lead you when the harness is on. I was just bending over to put the harness on Tracker when, unknown to me, as I found out later from a security guard, a nanny came along with a baby buggy and cut between Tracker and the grass where he was finishing doing his thing.

When I bent over to put the harness on, Tracker stepped to the side to let the nanny and buggy pass between the grass and him; this meant I also stepped to the right and immediately realized my right foot was not on the ground but, like in slow motion, I was on my way into the Bay. I'd never seen Biscayne Bay, of course, and naturally I never thought about whether the tide was out or in. That's wasn't a small thing, since at low tide the drop would have been about twenty feet—onto cement-like sand and rock.

So I told myself to let go of Tracker, since it'd be tremendously difficult to get him out of the Bay on a ladder, and I resigned myself to having a swim, just like in a pool. Indeed, the tide was in and the water was deep, so it really was like falling into a swimming pool. When I came up, a gentleman who was standing on the sea wall looking down at me yelled, "Virginia, I'm a



friend of your husband's. How can I help?"

By the way, I was a little embarrassed since I was sure he'd heard the expletive that popped out of my mouth when I got my breath—understandable, but not my normal style. Bobbing in the water, I looked up and said calmly, "Oh, why don't we get a ladder so I can climb back up." That's what he did, and I climbed back up to the sea wall, to the applause of a crowd of onlookers that'd gathered for the unplanned entertainment. What a sight I must have been!

Someone was nice enough to walk with me and Tracker back to my apartment. Tracker had just stayed on the edge watching the show, by the way. I thought to myself, "Virginia you've got to change your clothes pronto and get back out there and walk around." And that's exactly what I did. You see, Doug, for one thing I didn't want to get scared and lose my confidence. And I wanted people to see I was all right and not to worry.

The Blind Visionary (Governance Edge Publishing, 2010), which is available in hard and soft cover and as an ebook, can be ordered at www.TheBlindVisionary.com. It will be available as an audio book in October 2010.

ABOUT AUTHOR DOUG EADIE

Doug's experience prior to founding his firm includes three years as a Peace Corps teacher in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Believing strongly in giving back to the community, Doug has provided pro bono consulting assistance to numerous organizations over the years, including the Good Samaritan Health Clinic of Pasco County and the Upper Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce. You can reach Doug at Doug@DougEadie.com or 813.814.9274 and learn about him at www.DougEadie.com.