

Blind artist sees world 'through a straw'

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When asked if you know Pat Jones, you may begin to search through your mind **for the** image of someone by that name. There must be hundreds of them, both male and female. You need more clues.

But when you know Pattie Tedesco Jones, you know immediately who she is. She might be memorable because of her sense of humor, her illustrations in children's books, her indomitable spirit - or **the** fact that she is legally blind.

Being legally blind means different things to different people. Tedesco Jones was injured in an accident 10 years ago and lost **the** sight in her right eye. She also suffered from what she called "post-traumatic dementia," losing her long-term memory, which she has gradually regained. Several years later, during cataract surgery, she suffered an aneurysm that left her partially blind in her left eye.

"I see my world as if I were looking through a straw," she said.

Painting since she was a child, Tedesco Jones was fascinated by **the** colors of a painting as she saw them through a "Viewmaster." She took it to a lamp **for** a better look and a closer examination.

"**The** colors were so vivid," she said.

Self taught, she said she won her first painting contest when she was eight. After painting with acrylics, oils and watercolors, she finally settled on colored pencils, which were easier to travel with, she said.

"Using colored pencils enables **the** painter to create layers upon layers, each a different color. No eye or strand of hair is just one color.

"When you have a gift, you can only hold it down **for** so long before it bubbles up," she said. "I do not have to allow my disability to limit my abilities."

She and her husband moved from Pennsylvania to Palm Coast after she became blind. Friends suggested she contact **the Center for the Visually Impaired** in Daytona Beach.

"I started out by taking a painting workshop **for** those who were visually impaired. I learned to leave yesterday behind, deal with what I was able to do today and move forward into tomorrow. This association with people at CVI restored my self-confidence," she said.

"I realized that losing my sight had left me very insecure. My husband had to do everything **for** me. He even had to teach me to walk again. Now I think I want my checking account back. **For** a long time I didn't feel I could manage it."

As Tedesco Jones was regaining her self-confidence and desire to begin painting again, an author of children's books from Naples was searching **for** an illustrator. A friend said she should check out an artist by **the** name of Pattie Tedesco Jones.

Virginia Saalman, 73, had retired to southwest Florida after a 35-year career with **the** federal government in Washington, D.C. After retirement, she started a consulting firm and wrote a manual **for** use by women in **the** workplace.

After moving to southwest Florida she turned to writing short stories. She was ready to publish her children's book "Kroopenopper: an Everglades Adventure," **the** first in a series, when she found Tedesco Jones.

They conducted their business over **the** phone and by e-mail.

"We met in Naples at **the** book-signing **for the** opening of **the** Collier Lighthouse," said Saalman.

"Kroopenopper" is available at **Center for the Visually Impaired**, Barnes and Nobel in Daytona Beach and on Saalman's website: VirginiaSaalman.com.

To view some of Tedesco Jones' art work, visit www.PattieTedescoJones.com. Reach her by e-mail at newsight777@gmail.com or by phone, 386-585-4922.

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