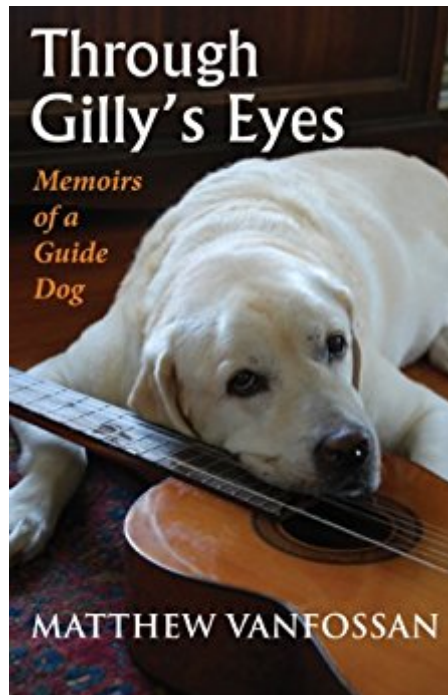




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# Through Gilly's Eyes: Memoirs Of A Guide Dog



## Synopsis

Through Gilly's Eyes is a moving coming-of-age story about a young man and the guide dog who loved him. What would you do if you were sitting in school one morning and suddenly found you couldn't see? When it happens to Matt VanFossan during his third year of college, it's the start of a life he hasn't planned on and definitely doesn't want. When he's paired with a new guide dog a few months later, he's still in a state of denial. But Matt's new companion, named Gilly, isn't one for self-pity or modesty, as he describes himself as "one of the handsomest dogs at guide dog school." A keen observer of the human condition, especially his human's condition, Gilly provides a running commentary on Matt's progress. And as Gilly and Matt learn to work together, the two gradually forge a relationship that transcends the ordinary bonds between dog and man. From dog training school then back to college, from home and on to Brazil, Gilly relates their story with humor and insight. Through Matt's challenging adventures, new friendships, and ultimately, lasting love, Gilly provides him with guidance and companionship for six years – a lifetime that will last forever. Not a dog lover? You will be once you've finished this tale and looked at the world through Gilly's eyes.

FROM THE BOOK: Matt and I made our first solo foray onto campus. I had no idea where we were going, and Matt, it turned out, had only a vague one. The two of us made an extremely awkward team. As we started off down the block, he began counting his steps in a low voice. Smart boy, I thought. I wouldn't be able to find our house on the very first return trip. He'd be able to cue me on the way back. Unfortunately, walking and counting at the same time didn't seem to be one of his strengths. I distinctly heard him say the number 'sixty' twice. Then, I heard him curse. Finally, we reached the intersection. "Two hundred and fourteen," he announced. Give or take a few dozen, I thought.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For me, this book was powerful example of our fundamental interconnectedness, and how it can manifest itself in many different ways. In this memoir, the relationship between a young man and his guide dog grows and deepens as they face numerous challenges together, and it seems that the foundation of their unique relationship opens us a space for broader connections amongst friends, family and community. I was reminded of the importance of both asking for help and offering help to others. Although American culture often promotes an ideal of individualism and total self-sufficiency, in actuality everyone needs help sometimes, and by reaching out to each other we strengthen our connections.

I just finished reading "Through Gilly's Eyes" by Mathew VanFossan. This is an extraordinary story of a young blind man's rocky journey in a sighted world. Who could not fall in love with Gilly as he narrates this beautiful memoir? You don't have to be a dog lover to appreciate Matt's and Gilly's amazing relationship-and to cheer for both of them on every page of this book. Be prepared to laugh and cry and to be thankful that you can read each word with two good eyes.

This was one of my favorite dog stories I have read for years. I liked the writers style of seeing through "Gilly's eyes". I enjoyed the interaction and adventures of Matt and Gilly and honestly didn't want the book to end however on the other hand I had trouble putting it down. The challenges of learning to depend on a seeing eye dog was so interesting bringing into play things I had never realized. It isn't just taking the harness and start out walking with your companion, It requires so

much trust on both sides. I'm sure at some point I will return to this book and read it once more. I thoroughly connected with Matt and the love for his dog.

Our family is now raising our first guide dog puppy and I bought this book hoping to get a little more perspective on what her life may be like. This book was a fascinating and informative read, though of course it tells us as much about the writer, who was the guide dog's person, as it does about the dog. A good insight on how the dog impacted his life and a great motivator for us as we raise a dog for someone else's service. I hope others will consider contacting Guide Dogs For The Blind to look into being puppy raisers for them.

I met Matthew and Achilles for the first time last month and got to hear him sing, too. I was impressed by Matt's sweetness and presence and eagerness for new learning. I purchased and read his book and I am still reverberating with it. The story was heartwarming and engrossing (yes, I stayed up until 2:00 a.m. a couple of nights reading it). He really pulled off seeing the world from the point of view of a guide dog quite well and of course, I wept at the lovely ending. The way he portrayed himself through Gilly's wise, attentive eyes, was vulnerable, honest and loving. Nothing was left out of the emotional and spiritual journey of a young man navigating not only through being blind, but through adolescence and manhood, family and romantic relationship and the various cultural differences in the countries he visits, as well as the healing of a heart from turbulence to peace. Matt, I applaud your courage and perseverance, willingness to see and present yourself with such honesty and humor. I look forward to a sequel.

"Through Gilly's Eyes" is an exceptionally honest portrayal of one young man's journey to being independent after the loss of his sight. Originality is shown with this tale (pun intended) being told from Gilly's, the guide dog, point of view. Comically he relates how handsome he is, how much he loves belly rubs, and lest I not forget his love for kibble. While this narrative could be wrought with angst, it is refreshingly not. It is a well written, truthful and straightforward story that moves at a fast pace with gobs of charm coming out of its proverbial ears. Any one who has a pet will want to embrace them once completing this touching and inspirational story. And if you want more then check out pictures of Gilly at Matt's website: [...]

Gilly has a great personality and wry humor that Van Fossen uses deftly to keep the story engaging and fun as Gilly helps his master through intensely real and harrowing challenges. This is much

more than just a memoir of a blind person's relationship with his guide dog. It is a rich coming of age portrait of a an amazingly frank young man's courage and fortitude as he refuses to let the formidable challenges of navigating the world without the help of his eyes keep him from living life fully. He takes on the risks of moving to places, such as Brazil, with minimal preparation and very little support, if any. How he handles the crises that he encounters makes for a riveting tale.

This is a wonderful book! I enjoyed the story and how it was told through Gilly's eyes. It was very sweet way to tell the story of a young man who lost his sight and yet found his way in life through the love of his guide dog and several amazing people he met along the way as he grew and became comfortable with his disability. Their journey was fraught with bumps along the way, as are the journeys of most but their resilience and the way life turned out for both Gilly and Matt was very satisfying.

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