

# My Adventure in Cataract Surgery

By June Waugh



I want to share an amazing journey that I have been on during the past four months. I like to think of it as my adventure in cataract surgery. I am not really an adventuresome type, so what happened took me by surprise and led me to a place I could not have imagined.

I consider myself a very competent person with albinism, using several pairs of glasses for different circumstances and monoculars and magnifiers when needed. However, over the last few years, I could not read for sustained periods of time, even with additionally high-powered bifocals. Print became blurry and bright lights had halos. Rooms that used to be too bright appeared dull. In June, my ophthalmologist said I had two cataracts in my dominant eye. This doctor did not do cataract surgery so the difficult part of my journey began, finding the right surgeon. Although he gave me a referral, I went elsewhere to begin. First, I went to a doctor recommended by my primary care physician whose practice had a very good reputation. After the initial two hours of testing, I met him and learned about my situation. First he told me that I might hemorrhage in the surgery and that I had very

small eyes. Next he said my eyes were a very weird shape, and lastly he asked, would it really make a difference since I could not see well anyway?

I was shocked. In all my lifetime of visiting eye doctors, no one had ever spoken of my eyes in those terms. Childhood memories flooded my mind as he went on to say how rare and unusual my condition was. He sent me to a retinal specialist to be certain there was no retinal change causing the issue. The retina doctor was great and thought surgery would be helpful. It brought me back to feeling normal as I am. However, I knew I would never use the first doctor.

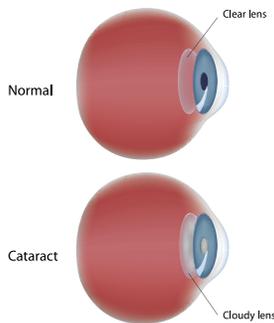
Next I went to the doctor who was originally recommended. It was an entirely different experience. I had the same tests again. The measures to determine the shape and size of an eye are difficult with nystagmus. This practice was patient and respectful. The doctor spoke frankly - we could try using Toric lenses to correct my far-sightedness and astigmatism, but I was nearly out of the range of the highest power. I came back for further testing because Toric lenses correct the shape of the eye and

have to be inserted in exactly the right place.

After doing the calculations, my doctor called about a week before the surgery and said all the data they had on the effectiveness of the lenses was for the 80% of people in the normal bell curve. Unfortunately, I was not in that group, but he thought it would be good to try even with some uncertainty. He suggested doing my non-dominant eye first to be sure.

The surgery was very successful. My new right eye could see things quite differently from my left eye. I was delighted with this outcome, however, I could no longer use my glasses - reading and navigating the world became very difficult. I waited about five weeks before having the second surgery. It was wonderfully successful too!

I see in such a new way now. I went from being very far-sighted to nearly plano (neither near-sighted nor far-sighted) in both eyes. I can see everything close and at arm's length and a bit beyond in amazing detail. Things that I could not have seen, actually never have seen, even looking very close with my bifocals, are crystal clear. Everything is very sharp and clear. I became a little near-sighted and sometimes close things look very big! A



great deal of my astigmatism is gone. The world is also brilliant, as I am more sensitive to light now.

I have been struck with how much this new way of seeing has brought back my childhood. I have had to really learn how to walk around with everything appearing closer and brighter. I have been quite impacted

at my job with the difficulty reading, although I have purchased several vision aids and glasses for this temporary time. Soon I will get the correct glasses for reading and light sensitivity.

The result of the surgery has been wonderful. I have vision I would have longed for as a child. The surgery did not increase my distance vision at all; it cannot change the impact of the retinal part of albinism. The world is bigger, brighter, clearer and more beautiful than I have ever known. I am very grateful to the kind and very competent doctor I have.

In conclusion, if you are in need of cataract surgery I urge you to inquire if Toric lenses would work for you. Finding the right doctor may be difficult, but well worth the search. The adventure takes courage and patience because for a few months you are betwixt and between your old and new way of seeing. I call these my new eyes!