



Journey to Driving with Low Vision

Dawn M. Adams

Journey to Driving: Low Vision Style

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Introduction

This book is the story of my experiences with driving as a person who has low vision. My eye condition is Coloboma of the iris and retina. This means that the nerves did not properly form and where this happened, there is a cleft or missing section of the iris and retina. Regular glasses do not improve my vision, only magnification in the form of monocular telescopes, hand-held magnifiers, CCTV, and magnifying lenses have helped me to see better. With the Ocutech, the telescopic lenses I use for driving, I have 20/40 vision in the right eye. I have good peripheral vision in the left eye. Having the good acuity in the right eye helps me see all of the details I need to see, while having good peripheral field to the left side, helps me safely merge onto interstates and change lanes.

As of now I have officially been driving for eleven years. However it did not start the way most people today learn to drive. Because I did not take driver's education where people gain experience in various driving situations and are coached through them, I had to learn some of these lessons the hard way. I'll talk more about that later in the book. Now I am comfortable driving in most situations, although I do know my own limits. Even though there is no restriction on my license for night driving, I refrain from driving at night unless the matter is of high importance. Also driving into the sun is very difficult - even worse than driving at night - and so I will not drive somewhere if I know the route leads into the sun when it is low. I either take an alternate route or go at another time. Ultimately each person with low vision, who is able to drive, will have to learn his or her limitations and respect them.

While I am comfortable driving, I sometimes would rather ride. So when a group of us are going somewhere together, I will generally let someone else drive. *It is worth noting that while an individual may be able to drive, he or she should know how to access other modes of transportation to help compensate for times when driving may not be the best option.* Driving is just a tool that some people with low vision can use to be independent. Having other tools such as use of public transportation, getting a ride with a friend, or hiring a driver are necessary for most people with low vision to be totally independent. When I lived in Dallas I drove nearly everywhere I went. But when I wanted to go to hear the Dallas Symphony Orchestra at the Meyerson Symphony Center in downtown Dallas, I either rode with a friend or took the bus. I did this simply because I did not want to bother with having to find and navigate the parking garage, much less deal with all of the heavy traffic in an area which was mostly unfamiliar to me. Having access to and knowledge of how to use the bus and light rail was very helpful to me.

It is my hope that this book will help individuals with low vision find answers to questions they may be asking as well as provide some suggestions for using vision efficiently for driving. So fasten your seatbelts and come along with me as my journey into low vision driving unfolds.

The Journey Begins

Driving for most people actually begins at about age five when you sit in your dad's lap and put your hands on the wheel while he actually drives. Not only that but by observation you learn many of the rules of the road such as go on green and stop at red lights and stop signs. As kids enter into the teenage years, they may begin to talk about the kinds of cars they like and what kind of car they will have one day. They can hardly wait for the day when mom and dad let them have the old family car for their own, or when they get driving privileges from their parents. Or maybe they are going to get a new car if their parents can afford it. Some teens obtain hardship licenses so they can begin driving earlier than the normal age. But by tenth grade most people are driving at least with a beginner's permit. This is not the case for most individuals with visual impairments - and it was not the case for me.

I remember asking my dad about taking driver's education at school with the plea that, "all my friends are taking driver's ed - everyone else is driving!" And the reply from my dad was always the same, "When you turn eighteen, the State will have to decide if you can see well enough or not to drive." I didn't want to wait until I was eighteen! I wanted to drive now! After all, I had a pair of telescopic lenses and I used them efficiently. I saw no reason why I should not be able to take driver's education and at least find out if driving was really going to be possible for me. But I was waging a hopeless battle. Dad was not going to give in on this issue.

Some adult friends of mine did help. They so kindly let me get some practice driving on the country roads of our small town - and they coached me along. I actually started driving a golf cart on an isolated dirt road. This may sound funny, but for someone who had never driven anything before, it helped me learn how to drive in a straight line, how much to turn the wheel to make a turn, and how hard to push the gas pedal.

When I did transition to driving a car, going slow helped me teach myself to use the telescopic lenses while driving. After I had mastered the mechanics of handling the car, one of my friends, Mrs. McReynolds, let me drive the ten-mile stretch to church once a week. One time I even drove forty miles to a somewhat larger city to a nursing home facility where we were visiting a fellow church member.

I am so grateful to Mrs. McReynolds and the others who taught me to drive and were willing to let me learn using their vehicles. Having these closely supervised opportunities helped me feel like driving was not as far away as it sometimes seemed. My dad knew I was getting to drive and he was nervous about it, but he did not object to it either.

During my senior year my vision teacher took me to Houston to the Low Vision Clinic where I was evaluated for driving. They tested me with my telescopic lenses. It was much more involved than the test most people take at the driver's license office. I did have to read an eye chart with my glasses I already had. In addition, they also tested my visual fields (how well I can see to the sides), my reaction time to things that were brought into my visual field, and my overall efficiency with the telescopic devices. They did recommend me for driving, and they also recommended a different telescopic device. It was a pair of black metal-framed glasses with a hand-held telescope mounted in the right lens.

When a person has low vision and requires the use of telescopic lenses for driving, it is almost if not completely impossible to pass the vision test at the driver's license office. This is because the glasses themselves prevent a person from being able to see through the little machine you look through to read the chart. Because of this an eye doctor has to do the vision testing and make a recommendation that the individual has adequate vision for driving. There is a form that is available at the Department of Public Safety that the eye doctor completes based on a visual examination with and without the telescopic lenses. Once the eye doctor has completed the form, it is taken to the driver's license office. From this point the procedure is the same as it is for others seeking to obtain or renew the license.

When I graduated from high school, one of the first things I did was begin studying for my license. My friend Julie let me use her car to go take the driving test. One day after I had gotten my license I was home with my dad. He wanted to go to town to get some grocery items. I wanted to ask him to let me drive to the store and back, but I just could not bring myself to do it because I knew how he felt about it. The whole time we were in the store, I was just dying for the chance to drive home. So before I could talk myself out of asking him if I could drive home, I just came out with it, - "Dad, you know I have my license now. Can I please drive the truck when we go home?" I expected to hear, "no" but instead he said, "We'll see."

As we left the store and headed to the truck, he handed me the keys! I was so excited that I could hardly contain myself! I now had the opportunity to show him that I could do it, and it would be okay.

We climbed in and I put on my glasses and seat belt. Then I cranked the engine and put it in reverse. Dad helped me watch as I backed it into the street. As I drove home dad gave me suggestions, which I appreciated. He told me when I looked at the road to try to look as far ahead as I could possibly see. He said that would help me keep the wheel steadier! I had not been having problems keeping the car steady, but this was the first time I had driven a truck.

Plus, wanting to do my very best for him made me more nervous than usual. But I took his advice, and it did help. I think he was relieved when we made it home. But we made it without any trouble! It wasn't long after that experience until dad began talking about buying me a car one day! Wow! A car of my own - I could hardly wait!

My First Car

My father began talking about buying me a new car during my junior year in college at Stephen F. Austin. He told me that he had a certificate of deposit that would mature in six months or when he passed away, and that I could use it to make a down payment. The certificate of deposit did not mature before dad passed away. And there were legal issues involving the probating of his will. And honestly, at that point having a car was the last thing on my mind! Several months after he had gone to be with Lord, I received a check from his estate that would serve the purpose of the down payment for my very first car.

I was only twenty years old and knew absolutely nothing about buying a car! All I knew is I wanted one! And I knew I did not want to be driving around in a boat-sized vehicle! I asked a couple from my church to help me with the process of buying a car. You see, I had no way to go shopping for a car because all the better dealerships were twenty five miles away. So Vee and Troy took me to Lufkin, Texas to Al Meyer Ford. When we pulled into the parking lot, we had a short discussion where we decided that \$10,000. was the top price we would pay for any car. Well we had only been on the lot about five minutes before I saw the car I wanted! It was a bright shiny 1996 Ford Escort. If it is possible to love a car, it was love at first sight for me!

There was just one problem - the sticker price was two thousand dollars more than what we had agreed we would pay. About that time the car salesman walked over to us and asked how he could help us. I told him that I really liked the car and wanted it, but that I was not going to spend anymore than \$10,000. He just looked at us and said that the best he could do was to take one thousand dollars off the price. My heart sank. I really wanted this one so much. I thought about just taking this first offer of his. But before I could say anything, Vee and Troy told him that we would be shopping around and would come back later if we did not find anything better.

At that moment I felt so proud to have such wise friends to help me. If it had been me, there by myself, I probably would have taken him up on it. They explained to me that the first offer that is made is never the best offer that can be made. And that you always try to talk them down even further. And it could be that another dealer would have a similar car for a lower price. With that we went one by one to the other dealers in Lufkin. At the last place we went, I found an Isuzu in the same teal green color for nine thousand dollars. But I could not get the Escort off of my mind. At this point, we decided to go back to the Ford dealer and tell the salesperson about the deal we found at the Chevy dealer. And again we reminded him that I only had ten thousand dollars. He asked us to come into his office. While we waited there he spoke with the manager. When he came back, he asked how much down payment I was planning to make. "Four thousand dollars", I replied. With that he stepped out again. A few minutes later he came back and said that he would sell the Escort to us for \$10,000.! I could hardly believe it!

We then began the process of filing out and signing all the various paperwork that has to be completed when purchasing a vehicle. I

remember feeling both excited and nervous. I knew I was "signing my life away." The huge feeling of responsibility swept over me as I signed my name to the last page. With taxes, title, and license the total cost ended up being around eleven thousand dollars. At last I owned a car!

I remember when the salesman drove the car around and said it was ready. A strange feeling came over me when I realized that I had ridden to Lufkin with Vee and Troy, but now I would be driving myself home. I was so nervous that I asked Vee and Troy if I could follow them home. I got in the car and fastened the seatbelt, put on my glasses, grabbed the wheel, pressed the break, and put it into drive.

During the short drive back to Nacogdoches, my mind ran wild! I was so happy to finally have my own wheels, so nervous because this car and anything that might happen to it were ultimately my responsibility, and I was sobered realization of the monthly payments. And of course I could not forget that my dad, who was no longer with me, was the one who made this possible. And yet he would never get to see me driving my own car. I would never get to take him for a ride in it. I guess it was a good thing he let me drive the truck home from the grocery store that day a year or so earlier.

When I reached the loop in Nacogdoches, I remember thinking to myself, "So far so good, just a little ways further. You can do it." I was so relieved when I finally arrived at my apartment. I was actually so ready to get out of the car, that I didn't even park it straight. The back wheel on the passenger side was out of the lines. I didn't even bother to get back in the car to fix it. I was so happy to be home and so proud that I had made it. Vee and Troy came over and I thanked them for everything. Now they would not have to pick me up for church anymore, and I would not have to ask them for rides to the store – and no more expensive taxi fares just to go five or six miles down the road!

And of course – what did I do as soon as I stepped inside? Of course - I went and told my friends about the car! Most of my friends at college were also visually impaired, but were unable to drive. So this was good news for them too because now I could help them get to places where they needed or wanted to go. And it began right away. We all hopped in the car and went to Sonic to get soft drinks. All the way there and back I was so cautious at every turn. Probably over-cautious would describe my driving for the next few weeks. After all, I had a brand new car and I did not want anything to happen to it!

Learning the Hard Way

As the weeks and months went by I felt more and more at ease with driving. I began driving quite a bit both for pleasure and for school. I had to drive to Lufkin State School twice a week for my practicum in Orientation and Mobility, not to mention back and forth from the university campus each day. When I had a free weekend I would drive to Normangee to visit my friends. This was about a two-hour commute each way. Driving had taken me to an entirely new level of independence that I had never known before.

However, I still had a lot to learn about driving. Perhaps the weakest aspect of my driving ability was the lack of formal training. I was parked along a curvy street. As I put the car in reverse, I looked both ways and through the rear view mirror, and began slowly backing. The next thing I heard was "Crash!" A pickup truck had been coming around the curve and I could not see it, and backed right into it. Fortunately, neither the truck nor my car sustained much damage. But I was devastated because my new car had just gotten its first blemish! I did not know what to do at this point. I had never been in an accident before. The other driver asked me if I had insurance. And of course, I did. So we exchanged information. Then the campus police arrived on the scene. The officers were very nice. They talked to me and then to the other driver. They told me that anytime you back into someone it is your fault. However they did not issue a ticket because they knew this was a difficult location to get out of because of the curvy street. Before he left I asked him if I needed to do anything else. He explained that I just needed to contact my insurance company and let them know what had happened.

My insurance agent worked in the same office complex as I did. And we saw each other every day. So it was not a big deal for me to tell him about my fender-bender. All that my car needed was to have the tail light replaced. And there were a couple of minor scratches that could be covered up with touch-up paint. He did tell me that this would cause my insurance premium to go up slightly. And it did.

It was not long after this incident until it was time for me to do my student teaching. I had been placed in Tyler Independent School District with Elsie Rao, teacher of the visually impaired. So I relocated to Tyler. Each morning I had about a ten minute drive to the school. And from there, for the first few weeks, I rode around with Elsie as we went to see various students.

The time eventually came for me to begin seeing students on my own and this meant driving to the various campuses by myself. One day we needed to go the district's warehouse to pick up some equipment. From there I was going to go to a campus. Because I did not know how to get to the warehouse, and Elsie and I were going different places afterwards, I decided to follow her in my car.

I was nervous because I was afraid we would get separated in traffic and if that happened, I did not know how I would find her or get to the warehouse. So I followed her very closely. And I was keeping my eyes on her and not necessarily the road or other cars. We were going up a four lane divided highway, two lanes each direction. Shortly before we reached the next intersecting street she gave her left signal and turned,

crossing over the opposite side of the highway. I did the same without even looking. And the next thing I knew, a red pick up truck slammed into the passenger side of my car. I felt the car lift off of the ground and move through the air a short distance. Then I felt it hit the ground. At least I was still on all four wheels! I honestly did not know what happened. The driver of the truck said, "Didn't you see me coming?" I told him I never even looked his direction because I was just following someone. I had been so intent on keeping up with Elsie, that I was not watching the road! I had never driven on a road like that before and did not really know how to handle it. It never occurred to me to look to see if anything was coming. I thought if she made it across, then I should be able to go also.

I was able to drive my car into parking lot on the corner so at least it would be out of the street. There we waited for the police to come. I was so frazzled that I just broke down and cried. I knew I was at fault, would probably get a ticket, and now my car was *really* wrecked! But at least no one was injured. Elsie saw the entire thing happen and she pulled into the parking lot to wait with me. When the police arrived, they talked to the other driver first and then came over and issued me a citation. I did not even know what to do with the citation. But I was so shaken up I did not even ask the officer what to do. A wrecker had been called to take me and my car to the body shop.

Once we arrived at the body shop, they estimated the cost of the repair at around three thousand dollars! I could not believe my ears! That was almost as much as I had put down on the car when I bought it! Then I found out I would have to pay my \$500 deductible for the collision insurance. I did not know how I was going to get my car fixed because I only had around two hundred and fifty dollars in my back account. And I needed that for living expenses. Not only that but my friend's wedding was coming up. I was the maiden of honor and had to pay for my gown, which was going to cost around two hundred fifty dollars. "Welcome to the real world," I told myself. "But what am I going to do?" I have to have a car, and I have to find the money to get it fixed." I know that God must have heard my crying because Elsie helped me with deductible AND paid for the dress, too!

I had no idea that it would take three weeks to get my car repaired. But it did. Elsie was so good to come pick me up every morning for school and bring me home in the afternoons. I was so blessed to have her as my mentor teacher and friend.

The day did finally come when I was able to go pick up my car. It looked so good! After seeing it all fixed up and shining again helped the awful image of the crumpled quarter panel and shattered glass fade away. I had learned many lessons at this point in my journey. I've heard it said many times that experience is the best teacher. And even though I had some hard lessons to learn, I had learned some things that I really needed to know to be a successful driver in the future - as well as a successful driver with low vision.

Now with two at-fault accidents on my record in less than three months I was regrettably considered a "high risk." And that meant that my insurance rate increased significantly. I really began to question whether I should drive or not. I asked myself if the accidents were due to my vision or if it really was just lack of experience. As I replayed the two accidents

over and over in my mind I began to see that it was not my vision. But to be sure I even went so far as to ask others who were familiar with me and with the accidents what they thought. And we concluded that it truly was a lack of experience. During this time I took defensive driving. I did this for two reasons. One, I felt the need to take some sort of class to teach me more about driving, and two, by taking the course I could get the ten percent discount on my insurance - which I *really* needed at this point!

On the Road Again

It has been almost nine years since those two accidents. It took three years for the accidents to go off of my driving record. And now I am considered to be a safe driver. I even get offers from various insurance companies trying to get me to switch. They say they only advertise to "safe" drivers. I am on the road all of the time due to the itinerant nature of my job. And I am usually as comfortable with driving as I am with walking. There are some techniques I have developed to help me in certain driving situations. These will be shared in the coming chapter.

Visual Efficiency Techniques for Driving with Bioptic Telescopes

Lessons Learned

Plan your driving route. Know the time of day you will be traveling and your landmarks along the route. This can be done by looking the route up on a Mapsco or by driving the route in a low-traffic time of day. This helps you become familiar with the route and be able to not feel hurried by other motorists. If the route is short enough, walk it first. Wear your glasses or use a hand-held telescope to become familiar with the street names, speed limits, and / or location of stop signs. Your skills in Orientation and Mobility will be useful as you study the route. Things like counting the number of streets you cross before you arrive at the street(s) you want to take to get to your destination. If night driving is allowed, you can use this exercise to make a decision about whether it will be too difficult to drive at night if you need to travel it at such a time. You can also determine the direction the streets or highway runs to determine if the sun will be a problem in case you are traveling early in the morning or during the late afternoon.

As I discovered in my early experiences with driving, if you decide to follow someone remember that it is more important to focus your attention on driving safely than to the person you are following. I rarely choose to follow anyone. Instead I usually get the route ahead of time including turns, landmarks, etc. And then I get there by myself. It can be too distracting to try to keep watch of the road, lights, all the other cars and the person you are trying to follow.

It is not entirely necessary to read every sign you see. It is necessary to be aware of speed limit signs and caution signs, but billboards, recreational signs, mile post markers, etc. are not usually important for reaching your destination. You really only need to worry about these if you need the information on them. For example, you may want to read the billboards, food, gas, and lodging exit signs if you are in need of these items.

Use landmarks. If you know that there is a McDonald's or a U-Haul place right after the street you want to turn on, look for that landmark rather than trying to read the tiny street sign. Use a Mapsco or other map to count the number of streets you should cross before getting to the one you are looking for. (Not while you are driving – before!)

I prefer to make right turns even if it means going out of my way a short distance. There is a particular restaurant I eat at quite often. It is located on a heavily traveled four lane highway. And it is almost impossible to make a left turn out of the parking lot at certain times of the day. And when I leave I usually need to go to the left to get home or back to work. During times of heavy traffic, I make a right turn and go down one block to Hastings, a book, video, and music store. There I make a right turn into their parking lot. Then I can turn

around and go back to the street and make my left turn at a lighted intersection. This way I do not have to wait and wait for a chance to zip out and make the turn. I get to go with the light instead.

There is a technique that I call verification that is very useful in various situations. One such situation is when it comes to making left turns where there is no traffic control such as a light. Before making a turn where there is not a light, look with your eyes both ways first. Then look with the telescope both ways to see if anything is coming. Looking with your eyes first helps you see the entire road and any cars that are very near you. Look with the telescope to help you see cars that may be further away. This will help you determine if you have enough time to pull out and make the turn safely. Remember, if in doubt just wait until the cars pass and the way is clear.

Another common situation is this. You are driving along and for seemingly no reason, the car in front of you puts on his or her blinker and gets into the other lane. When you have low vision, you may not be able to tell why the person wants to change lanes. It could be something simple like his or her turn is coming up and they need to change lanes to be in position to make the turn. Or it could be that the person in front of them is hitting the brakes really hard or going very slow. Although you should never follow so close that you can not stop in time if you need to, it is still a good idea for the low vision driver to know what is going on up ahead of the car in front of you. When I see the car in front of me start to move over, I use my telescope to verify what is going on with the next car. So let's say the car is switching lanes to the left. I use my telescope and look slightly to the right so as to see around the car that is changing lanes and be able to see the next car's tail light. I will know if they are stopping or just going slow or if there is nothing to be concerned about. This only takes a few seconds and it gives me information in advance so that if I need to stop or slow down, I can do so.

If you have not already discovered this you probably will before long. Some people are very impatient drivers. I have noticed this at signals where there is no protected left turn. If you don't go the instant the last car passes, they honk. It may take a low vision driver a second or two longer to look through the telescope to see if something is coming or not; and if there is a car to tell if it is far enough away, and going slow enough for you to make the turn safely. When you are sure nothing is coming or that other cars are so far away you could make the turn safely, then proceed. Don't go just because someone is honking at you. You need to know for yourself that it is safe.

Become very efficient with a hand-held telescope and all of the visual efficiency skills necessary to use a hand-held device efficiently, i.e. tracking, scanning, etc. This will make it easier for you to transition to using a telescopic device. Using a hand-held telescope while sitting in a chair on the ground is much different than using a telescope mounted to a pair of glasses while your car is in motion. However, the visual skills still transfer. So if you

have never used a telescope of any kind before, start now. Ride with someone and use the telescope to locate landmarks or read signs.

Get a feel for what it is like to be in motion with the telescope. Get used to your head moving up and down slightly to see traffic lights.

Look for traffic lights and stop signs in the appropriate visual plane. That is, look slightly upwards to see signals at lighted intersections. Look to the right to see stop signs. When in an unfamiliar area, this will require you to scan upwards and also to the right to find these in advance of when you need to start breaking for a stop.

Know your own limits and use common sense. If it is raining and you don't have to drive somewhere, DON'T. If the sun is low and this affects your vision, use an alternate route or wait until the sun is down or up enough that it won't be in your eyes. Don't drive at night if you don't have to, even if you don't have a restriction.

Good driving, no matter if you have low vision or not, requires experience with driving. Learn from your mistakes, and don't take chances. Become familiar with accessing other modes of transportation in your area and use these options when driving may be too difficult.

Questions and Answers

Below I have listed and answered some questions that myself and others with low vision have asked.

What is the minimum visual acuity before and after correction for driving (in Texas).

To be able to drive without a restriction a person must have visual acuity of 20/50 or better. When vision is worse than this, certain restrictions will apply, such as no expressway driving, restriction to not exceed 45 miles per hour, glasses required, etc. There is a restriction "P" for "other." The specific restriction such as, "mounted telescopic lenses", will be printed on the back of the license.

What if I get pulled over? Will the officer say anything about my glasses?

No, unless you are not wearing them. When the officer asks to see your license they will check for any restrictions and to see if you are following them, e.g. restriction to wear mounted telescopic lenses.

Will I automatically be at fault in an accident because I am visually impaired?

No. But you will be at fault if your actions or failure to react appropriately contributed to the accident occurring. As long as you were wearing your prescribed glasses, it is unlikely that anything will be said about your vision at all.

Will being visually impaired affect my insurance premium?

No. Your rates are based on your age and driving record. Having tickets or accidents will cause your rate to increase

What if I am pulled over and I am not wearing my glasses?

It depends. You may get a warning the first time. But you will be subject to having your license suspended, just as other drivers are if they violate a restriction. It is definitely a chance you do not want to take! It is not only the lives and safety of others, but when you drive you take your own life and your safety in your hands.

What will others think when they see me driving with my glasses?

It is hard to know what others will think. I can tell you that others will notice your device. One time a lady I went to college with

followed me out to one of the schools where we were doing a practicum. When we arrived she asked me about my glasses, and said she had noticed that I moved my head up and down a lot. So I explained everything to her. She thought it was neat that I could drive using such a device. My advice is that you should not be bothered by what others may or may not think. The bottom line is safety. With that in mind, what others may think hardly seems important. So don't worry about it.

How much does the Ocutech cost and how do I get fitted for one?

The price for the older model of the Ocutech which has a manual focusing wheel (you focus it yourself), costs around \$1500. There is an Ocutech with auto focus and it is around \$5000. These are available by prescription from a low vision therapist. Your local low vision clinic or eye care specialist can help you locate a low vision therapist in your area. A low vision driving evaluation will be conducted.

How do I obtain the device if it is recommended?

If you are recommended for driving, the Division of Blind Services may purchase the device for you. If they do not provide it for you, then you can seek assistance from LIONS Clubs or other organizations. School districts are not a likely source for obtaining the Ocutech, unless it is going to be used for educational purposes such as reading the overhead projector screen or other visual displays.

Is it okay to leave my glasses in the car between trips?

It is generally recommended that the device not be left in the car. This is especially true during very hot or cold weather. During the summer the inside temperature of a car can get up to 145 degrees. The device may melt or warp if left in the heat. Leaving your glasses in the car during cold weather may cause them to crack. It is better to try to keep the device at a fairly consistent temperature. And you should always return them to the case when not in use. This will help protect them if they are dropped, etc. I carry a large purse so that I can have a place to carry my glasses, case and all.

What do I do if I put my glasses on and the telescope is out of alignment?

For this purpose I carry an allen wrench in my glasses case so that I can make adjustments when needed. My low vision therapist, Nance Powers Bowman, gave me the appropriate sized allen wrench.

I have a lot of trouble reading small print. What if I need to pull over and read a map? Can I use my Ocutech to read the map?

Yes. The Ocutech can be focused for near viewing. But if at all possible, try to find the "ballpark" or section of the map you need before you look through the telescope. Placing a finger on this section will make it easier to find when looking through the telescope. Locate your finger through the telescope and then move your finger out of the way so you can see that section of the map. Again, this takes you back to the technique of using your vision first to get the big picture, then using the telescope to see details.

Resources Specific to Driving with Low Vision

Bioptic Driving Network

<http://www.biopicdriving.org/AOA.htm>

This website provides information about the low vision driving population, laws, etc.

Low Vision Care

<http://www.lowvisioncare.com/visionlaws.htm>

This website provides information on driving requirements for each state as well as other resources for people with low vision.

Dallas Services Low Vision Clinic

Dr. Stephanie Fleming and Nance Baumann Powers

Phone: 214-828-9900 Ask for the Low Vision Clinic.

Nacogdoches Eye Associates

Dr. Ashley Risner

Phone: 936-569-2020

University of Houston Eye Institute, Center for Sight Enhancement

Randy Jose

Kia Eldred

Phone: 713-743-0799

Low Vision Clinics in Texas

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/Education/low-vision-spec.htm>

This site provides a list of low vision clinics in Texas and their contact information.