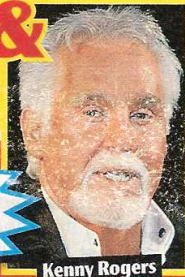


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## THE DAY THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

# I became an artist AFTER I went blind



A selection of series of floral paintings by Ketra Oberlander (far right)

**Ketra Oberlander**  
Santa Clara, Calif.

**I** WAS in my late 30s when I got the awful news. My vision was deteriorating and one day I might be totally blind. That's bad enough to hear for any sighted person, but as a working writer and editor, it was devastating. You use your eyes for everything.

Blindness affects 1.3 million Americans. Most blind people can see something. Only 10 percent can see nothing. The rest of us have some remnants of visual perception, but not enough to drive or operate heavy machinery.

My blindness was caused by severe myopia and cone dystrophy. By the time I was 40, I was blind. To imagine how I see, rub Vaseline on your glasses and stare at the sun. Instead of dark, my world is super-white, like being snow blind. I want to rub my eyes and make everything clear. There

is no sharp focus and I am color-blind.

My husband, Simeon, an engineer, has been totally supportive of my situation, but I'm used to working. I didn't want that to change and I needed an outlet for my creativity.

When I learned that they were offering a painting class at the rec center near my home, I signed up.

I wasn't there to become a great artist. I was there to enjoy the experience and to be with adults. The last thing I wanted was to sit at home and feel sorry for myself.

As the teacher began to talk, I simply followed directions. It wasn't about the outcome and, amazingly, I was able to turn out paintings that were worthy of art fairs and gallery shows. I was as surprised as anybody.

My work is acrylic or oil on canvas. I like painting flowers, landscapes and boxes of chocolate. I'm evolving as an artist, so the world is wide open in terms of subject matter.

My tubes of paint are labeled with big, black letters. I paint from memory. I know pink and blue make lavender and red and green turn to brown.

Five years after I began painting, I realized that there must be other disabled artists who were looking to earn a living, so I started the Art of Possibility Studios (AOPS). We're nationwide and we all

work from our home studios. We sell our artwork on the Web at [www.aopstudios.com](http://www.aopstudios.com). Or we also list retail stores that carry our art.

The day I was diagnosed as blind was not the day that changed my life. It was the day I walked into that art class and picked up a paint brush.

— As told to L.



## NATIONAL Examine GIVEAWAY

### Art of Possibility bookmarks for YOU

**W**E have five complete sets of Art of Possibility bookmarks, designed by Ketra and other Art of Possibility Studios artists, to give away FREE. Each winner will receive a collection of four stunning bookmarks, complete with an inspirational phrase and a tassel — a \$16 value. To order, log on to [www.aopstudios.com](http://www.aopstudios.com). For a chance to win, see page 54.

## Tell us YOUR story & WIN \$50!

WHAT was the day that changed YOUR life? Tell us about it by writing to The Day That Changed My Life, National EXAMINER, 1000 American Media Way, Boca Raton, FL 33464-1000. We'll pay \$50 for the stories we publish. Be sure to include your name and address and a daytime phone number. Must be able to provide photos.

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