Born three months premature, destroyed his optic nerve, so Frank has been blind since birth. His parents raised him to maintain a normal lifestyle, and his love of music led him to the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan and New York University, where he was a voice major.

Because he attended a specialized high school with a smaller student population, Frank was the first 16-year-old in New York to have a guide dog. He began his journey with a long-haired German shepherd who remains incredibly special to him, and who fellow students welcomed and respected.

Frank has been living an active life for 40 plus years with seven guide dogs from two different schools. He is well known for his voice, frequenting clubs, restaurants, nursing homes and private events with his repertoire of jazz, blues, gospel, and standards in the New York City area. He married and became a father and grandfather.

For awhile music was put aside to raise his family by operating a newsstand that was busy and popular - because Frank is definitely a people person. He still owns the newsstand, currently run by a manager.

Over the years Frank noticed his New York changing by sound and smell: ethnicities, languages, vendors, voice textures, storefront changes. Around 2011 Frank was presenting Dialog in the Dark at the South Street Seaport, a one-hour tour for sighted people through simulated city destinations with the use of sound and smell. The imaginary tour went “through” Central Park, a supermarket, the subway, a coffee shop, and Times Square to name a few. “I was thoughtfully educating folks about the life of a blind person,” Frank said.

Three and a half years ago Frank’s 7th guide dog passed. He thought that at his age he was done, that he was not going to need another. Then last year he realized that his life had been in the busy city, but he had never had much of a chance to explore the area where he lived. He wanted a guide dog from a smaller school with a personal touch. Knowing Freedom Executive Director Eric Loori for decades, he made the call.

Frank’s 8th guide is Ripley, a tiny, shiny female black Labrador. He said, “This was the easiest home training I have ever done. Dave Sutch, Freedom’s Director of Training, worked with me, giving advice, but giving me room to use my style.”

After working together for a little while Frank noticed a lot of things. Working a guide dog came back to him like he had never taken a break. The lack of having a guide had given him trouble hearing directionally and distorted his space perception; Ripley had opened Frank’s ears! Ripley walks a straight, confident, no-nonsense line and makes great decisions. And for over three years Frank had not made his own space in the world; he was always with another person, so no one felt it necessary to approach him. Ripley is a conversation starter and Frank is reconnecting with the world!

In the first month Frank and Ripley went into New York City to experience obstacles, loud sounds, new smells, and new routes, but now walk two to three miles a day in their own neighborhood, experiencing quieter areas that Frank has not explored before.
Continued from page 1

He is no longer concerned about getting confused on the local greenway and is enjoying some personal, private time because he is independent again.

Six months into his new partnership, Frank tells us, “This dog has lots of smarts! We are learning together, and she is amazing at new routes.

We have found our groove, a real rhythm and feeling of partnership. Her bugaboo is squirrels, but we have learned how to deal with that together.”

Things are opening up a bit in New York and Frank has plans to take Ripley to hear friends play and sing. When he is confident that Ripley is comfortable, they will start going to gigs together where Frank will be singing again. We wish them luck and large audiences!

If you are interested in hearing Frank sing, visit www.franksenior.com. It will be worth your time!

Jason and Quinn, yellow Labrador, MD
Peter and Ryker, black Labrador, MA
Bruce and Reliable, yellow Labrador, NY
Angel and Rudy, black Labrador, NY
Inez and Quesa, yellow Labrador, NY
Melanie and Ripley, black Labrador, NY
Suzanne and Ratchet, black Labrador, NY
Alice and Prince, yellow Labrador, NJ
Karen and Q, yellow Labrador, NY
Kathleen and River, yellow Labrador, NY
Frank and Rigby, black Labrador, NY
Adam and Captain Hook, Barbet, PA
Tonya and Rizzo, black Labrador, NY
Robert and Quila, yellow Labrador, FL
Martha and Quill, yellow Labrador, NH

Congratulations and safe travels to our most recent group of graduates!

Bloomin’ Bucks with Brent and Becky’s
Updating your plantings? Go to bloominbucks.com for all of your landscaping needs and choose Freedom Guide Dogs as your charity. Your order of bulbs, plants and tools comes directly to your home, and 25% of your purchase helps to support our mission!

Check out our new website at www.freedomguidedogs.org!

We’ve made a list, checked it twice. Our pups think these things would be nice:

- Gas/hotel/VISA cards
- Airline miles
- Hotel points or discount points
- DuraChew Nylabones, L/XL
- Milk Bone mini dog treats
- Dog boots size L
- Staples, PetSmart, Petco or Pet Supplies Plus gift cards

We earned a 2021 GuideStar Gold Seal of Transparency! Now everyone can view our financial details and learn about the people at our organization. Check out our updated profile at https://www.guidestar.org/profile/22-3136677

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Check out our new website at www.freedomguidedogs.org!
**Raffle Alert!**

Freedom recipient Sue Harden is sponsoring a raffle benefitting Freedom Guide Dogs! Tickets are $1.00 each or six for $5.00, drawing on May 31, 2021. Prizes include Grand Prize of $300; $50 Lowes gift card; $50 Olive Garden gift card; $30 Amazon gift card; two large hand quilted throws; medium straw tote with leather handles, handmade in Madagascar; 20” hand crafted turquoise and silver necklace; knitted shawl; large tote for knitting or crocheting, filled with yarn; framed beach/seascape photo; knitted scarf; limited edition Downton Abbey, seasons 1-3; 2 knitted baby blankets; butterfly and rose music globe; 2 sets of Freedom logo baseball hat, tote, and more; 3 Freedom logo soy candles, variety of scents and pup photos; 11 hand knitted hats (multiples raffled separately)

**Contact Sue at sharden12@tampabay.rr.com or 941-896-5122. Payments can be made by check or PayPal. Please specify if you would like the tickets mailed to you or if you just need the numbers.**

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**"He's Perfect for Me"**

John had an average upbringing and found himself joining the military when he was 20. After fulfilling his obligation his life was active. Over the next decade or so he opened his own business, explored the idea of a career with law enforcement, and did some nightclub management. He also frequented the gym and played baseball and ice hockey.

In his late 30s John purchased a brand-new car. Within the first month he brought it to the dealership complaining of a gas smell. Having been told it was fixed, he picked it up the next day but still noticed the smell. In a call to the dealership, they confirmed it was fixed and the smell would go away.

John went out in the car and it lost power. It was only 30 degrees out when he pulled over to see if he could figure out what was happening. When he opened the hood the car exploded, throwing him on his back on the ground and smacking his head, damaging his visual cortex.

In the following six years John had multiple back and neck surgeries and is in constant pain. Though he learned to use a cane to navigate, he was in denial and did not want to admit he was losing his independence. He especially felt that getting a guide dog would draw attention to him and would be admitting to himself that his life had changed forever.

Last year John applied to Freedom Guide Dogs and received Owen, a big male yellow Labrador with a huge heart.

“Owen is a busy guy and loves to chew, annihilating bully sticks in the blink of an eye. For his birthday he received a doggy birthday cake and toys, giving him a collection bigger than I had growing up!” John said. “Owen goes to the groomer regularly and loves his appointments – they give him toys, too. Though he loves the groomer, and swimming, he hates the walk-in shower. He doesn’t like water falling on him from above, so bathroom breaks in the rain are a challenge.”

Owen is an amazing worker and great companion. He lives life as a full member of the family and since John does not depend on him full time, he has time to be a dog. Owen’s favorite thing would be a ball – any kind, size, or color. He could be considered ball crazy.

“He has given me confidence,” John commented. “Instead of making me feel like I am losing my independence he has given it back to me. I use a cane for stability, and Owen is large enough to assist with that, too. He’s perfect for me!”

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Amazon’s most recent donation to Freedom was $334.42, and to date we have received over $3,000! Join us in raising donations by shopping at AmazonSmile today!

Shop at smile.amazon.com and be sure to choose Freedom Guide Dogs as your charity of choice. Place your order and Amazon donates to Freedom. It’s that simple!
In January of 2018 we received a call from Freedom Guide Dogs asking if we were ready to raise another guide dog puppy. It was a male yellow lab and his name had to start with the letter O. We named him Owen, and he came to us on a snowy winter day along with his brothers Opus and Otis. Another Connecticut puppy raiser brought them all together, and each was raised in a Connecticut home.

Owen was always big, even as a puppy, and had a big personality as well. He caught on to house training quickly, learned all his basic commands easily, and loved to practice them. Owen was always eager to please. Everywhere I went, Owen was always at my side. I told everyone that he really had that part of being a guide dog covered. He went to the casino, stores, and church, which he especially liked. We also met other puppy raisers at local events to spread information about Freedom’s program.

Everyone who met Owen enjoyed him while we were blessed to have him in our lives.

In the fall of 2019, on a very sad day for us, Owen went back to Freedom Guide Dogs and started his official training to become a lucky person’s eyes and give them a better world, all his love, and a sense of security. I received a picture of Owen when he was placed with his new man in Florida, and I was so proud. I showed that picture around like it was of my first grandchild! Awhile later I was lucky enough to get in touch with Johnny and send Owen birthday presents. This meant the world to me.

This is why we puppy raise and go through the hurt of giving pups up – to see them get placed and succeed. Keep it up, Big Boy Owen! Be the best!

In 2020 Freedom placed 14 special needs teams in seven states. These clients are visually impaired and have additional physical, cognitive or developmental disabilities. We develop dogs with a generous spirit that become guide dogs suitable for the additional sensitivity this work requires.

Including Freedom Guide Dogs in your will or estate planning ensures that your support of our work continues into perpetuity. Bequests can be in any amount and are free from federal estate tax. A gift through your will can specify a dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, or the residue after all other gifts have been completed. And you can also name Freedom Guide Dogs as a beneficiary of all or part of a retirement plan or insurance policy, direct funds from your employer’s charitable foundation, or donate appreciated stock or bonds. You can contact our office for details at info@freedomguidedogs.org.

We are so grateful for your continued support!